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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The Necessity to Know

AKEL ISMAIL KAHERA

Our point of view in this, the inaugural issue of the *Journal of History and Culture (JHC)*, is perhaps best characterized as a commitment to the spirit of intellectual development. Thus, in setting out, we take account of the academic mission of the Texas Institute for the Preservation of History and Culture. The Institute views indigenous culture, architecture, and community development as potentially symbiotic, yet moves beyond these disciplines to integrate a breadth of knowledge and methods—e.g., oral history, historic preservation and comprehensive documentation—for the purpose of engaging the community and (re)generating human understanding.

With this goal in mind, and with the overwhelming support of the editorial advisory board, *JHC* endeavors to encourage scholarship that sustains the spirit of academic freedom whilst providing a forum for public discussion. This and subsequent issues of *JHC* will proceed within an interdisciplinary framework encompassing the disciplines of art, architecture, anthropology, geography, literature, etc. We employ this *modus operandi* fully aware that the current state of interdisciplinary discourse is often too broad or too static, thus ignoring innumerable subtle and vital meanings. So, for example, as we struggle to deconstruct the theory of power/knowledge, we are also seeking to show how knowledge is organized and how it reflects power structures within society, and the extent to which our identities are as much political constructs as reflections of the truth.

In the first of five essays featured in this issue, Phillip Richards discusses Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*, focusing on the one hand on Ellison's concern with the folkloric work of the South, and on the other on his emphasis on the development of the individual as an autonomous social and cultural being. Ron Goodwin details the paradoxical roles of slave and master—"the servile estate," in the terminology of the late John Willis—in which confined people are the major victims of displaced paternalism. Daniel Hernandez explores the ways that humanity have employed language to define, dominate and exploit others for their own means, and constructs an explanatory framework to help us understand how language can also liberate the individual. Alston Thoms provides a richly descriptive account of the Civil War-era Camp Ford prison camp located near Tyler, Texas, with particular emphasis on the lives of the enslaved African Americans who labored there. The final essay investigates the issue of pedagogy and diversity in architecture. It examines the extent to which conventional architectural pedagogy embodies Eurocentric attitudes while ignoring other important social and cultural forces that also shape aesthetics.

The essays in this volume represent a novel contribution to scholarship. We look forward to expanding the modes of research in the next issue while continuing to promote intellectual competence and rigor. Finally, we

would like to thank the Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston for their generous support, which has made possible the publication of this issue of the *JHC*.

ELLISON'S *JUNETEENTH*

PHILLIP M. RICHARDS

Ralph Ellison's *Juneteenth*—like one of the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum—is only the highly suggestive torso of a more fully elaborated work. After Ellison's death in 1984, his widow, Fanny Ellison, asked John Callahan to assemble the works in the estate. In the last few years, he has gathered not only Ralph Ellison's short stories, but also a version of *Juneteenth*, culled from the voluminous notes and manuscripts that Ellison wrote for the novel. As a result of this activity, much of Ellison's literary activity is now easily accessible for inspection. The novel, *Juneteenth*, as we now have it, is incomplete: elements of the manuscript have been cut and rearranged in order to create a consistent fictional whole. The book has been taken from a two-thousand typed-page manuscript, which may have included the substance of three novels. However, Callahan argues that the material in the published novel is central to the overall design of the sprawling manuscript. In his words, *Juneteenth's* story of Reverend Hickman and Senator Sunraider, "was the true center of Ellison's great, unfinished house of fiction. And although he did not complete the wings of the edifice, their absence does not significantly mar the organic unity of the book we do have, *Juneteenth*." The text before us—despite its superlatively high level of writing—has nonetheless the air of a work in progress.

The still transitory state of the manuscript appears in the notes quite properly included by Callahan at the end of the novel's text. These guide posts for the novelist's progress in theme and structure illuminate Ellison's enterprise as a whole. Echoing the works and examples of Twain, Emerson, Abraham Lincoln, and African American folk tradition, these brief messages from the author to himself read at times like a running commentary to the remarkable literary essays—some of which are contemporaneous with the novel's composition—in *Shadow and Act*. Along with the broad allusiveness of *Juneteenth*, Ellison's notes remind us that in his fiction no less than in his literary criticism, he was self-consciously engaged in an ambitious rewriting of American literary tradition. In many ways, the very structure of *Juneteenth* is a response to Ellison's lifelong embrace of American literature—particularly the high tradition that extends from the American Renaissance of Melville, Hawthorne, and Emerson to Twain and finally to such immediate ancestors as William Faulkner.

Juneteenth is the story of the racist Senator Sunraider, who shortly after the book's beginning is shot as he delivers a speech on the Senate floor. Prior to this a group of black church people led by the large Reverend

Alonzo Hickman have attempted unsuccessfully to reach Sunraider and speak to him in his Senate office. After the shooting, the stricken Senator invites Hickman into his hospital room. The meeting between the two men serves as a frame for alternating monologues, monologues which eventually tell the story of Sunraider's youth in the black community. In the course of these biographical narratives, we learn that Sunraider—raised as a black—is the child of a white mother and an unknown father.

In and of itself the narrative evokes a number of themes from African and African American literature. The relationship between Sunraider and Hickman evokes—as Ellison observes in his notes—the friendship between Huckleberry Finn and the slave Jim. The inter-racial mentoring of *Juneteenth* also alludes to the relationship between Isaac McCaslin and the older black figure of Sam Fathers in Faulkner's short story, "The Bear." In the essay, "Twentieth-Century Fiction and The Black Mask of Humanity" in *Shadow and Act*, Ellison observes, "Significantly, the mentor of the young hero of this story, a man of great moral stature, is socially a Negro."¹ The Reverend Hickman is in the tradition of Sam Fathers and Jim as black moral mentors to young white boys and the embodiments of wisdom. Unlike Isaac McCaslin, Sunraider turns on the tradition and the community of his mentor; however, Ellison's account of Hickman's relationships to Sunraider is, in some sense, a rewriting of *Huckleberry Finn* and "The Bear."

The evocation of characters such as Jim and Sam Fathers point to what Ellison saw as a moral symbol of value in the high tradition of nineteenth-century American literature.² For Ellison, the emergence of the black as an important symbol of moral value was particularly important in periods of crisis such as the post-Korean War period and the onset of the Civil Rights Movement. Ellison's *Juneteenth* is set in the period of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the period immediately before the Civil Rights Movement. Implicitly, Hickman—a representative of the Old South—represents an amalgamation of folk motherwit, millenarian Christian hope, tragic acceptance, and faith in human brotherhood, all values which he has held out to Sunraider in the boy's youth. And in the truncated account of Sunraider's accession to political power and his acceptance of racist views, Ellison creates a striking image of a radical individualist who on the one hand has turned against the truths of his own youth in order to satisfy his desire for glory. However, in this sense too, Sunraider represents an important tension within American culture and within Ellison himself.

To a large extent, the conflict between Hickman and Sunraider represents an unresolved conflict within the racial and cultural thought of Ellison. On the one hand, Ellison has always been concerned with the folkloric work of the South; on the other, he has stressed the development of the individual as an autonomous social and cultural being. It is perhaps for this reason that Ellison was so continually drawn to the figure of Huckleberry

Finn in both his essays and his fiction. Importantly, Finn makes an important appearance in one of the notes that Ellison wrote on the subject of the novel: “Hickman is ‘Jim’ and Bliss is ‘Huck’ who cut out for the territory.”³ However, if Sunraider is the radical individualist (who has partaken of the communal world of Black folklore) then he nevertheless has the potential of being drawn to a racism that attacks the Southern black folkloric community. Individualism, however central to Ellison’s conception of himself as an artist—and the American culture—was all the same a volatile wildcard that might have unforeseen consequences in the progress of history.

Significantly, both *Invisible Man* and *Juneteenth* are stories of individuals confronting a critical historical moment. *Invisible Man*, significantly, looks ahead to the making of the self in the worlds of the Black Belt, the small Southern black college, Harlem, the Communist Party, and contacts with Black Nationalism. This historical experience shapes a personality whose final place in the social world—the world of hibernation—is indefinite in its implications for the future. Here the artifacts of black culture and the sounds of black music might be studied within the leisure of the underground world. However, the final political and social action that will eventuate from this self in future history is indefinite. There is, in Jack-the-Bear’s hibernation, the hint of a tragic acceptance of inaction. We see the possibility that the knowledge and wisdom accumulated in the earlier world of history might never be completely realized in the world of autonomous moral action. There is the possibility that the invisible man will never escape the self-defeating actions of Dostoevsky’s underground man.

Significantly, Ellison’s ambivalence toward the world of the individual is stated more frankly in *Juneteenth*. The world of the black folk is here not simply a body of archetypal experience, shaping the mind of a young black intellectual. Instead black folklore is used to articulate the communal religious world of black community. *Juneteenth*’s sphere of the black folk is, moreover, an earlier Southern segregated world with its own distinctive folkways of church, the ministry, boyhood friendship, the vernacular culture of the Blues, and freewheeling male-female relationships. Sunraider’s break to racism is an even more profound expression of the Ellisonian impulses of anarchic individualism. Sunraider—even as a racist Senator who has sought power for his own glory—is still haunted by the earlier religious communal world of the South in his oratory. Indeed, the novel shows the way in which even the Southern culture of racism has ironically absorbed the energies of black folklore. Within the allegorical framework of the book, Sunraider exemplifies an American racism, which betrays the nation’s birth in a racially amalgamated culture. For this reason, the lack of a specific motivation for Sunraider’s turn to racism is a particularly significant narrative gap. It is clear that Sunraider has at some point in his life, abandoned the teaching of Hickman. However, the dramatic explanation of this betrayal is not fully set forth in the action of the book. As a work of art, *Juneteenth* explicitly raises but fails to resolve what is perhaps the deepest ambiguity and tension

in Ellison's thought: the way in which the pressures of American individualism may lead to a radical betrayal as well as a fulfillment of black folk tradition. This tension is exacerbated by the fact that *Juneteenth* looks back to an older world of segregation, the world of the Old Negro. In this world the cultural truth of a racially amalgamated American culture is paradoxically more available than it would be in a later Black Nationalist era of the sixties and seventies. Despite the terrors of lynching, Hickman lives in a place and time in which the black church ladies may have frank personal knowledge of the sexual background of a wealthy white woman. And it is a world, in which the imaginations of young black men are partially shaped by the travelling circus and the world of the frontier as it appears in movie Westerns.

Ellison was perhaps American culture's most articulate celebrant of its multicultural roots. Indeed, as some critics have already noted, *Juneteenth* is flawed by a sometimes, programmatic celebration of the author's myth of cultural explanation. At the heart of Ellison's dilemma was the way in which the truth of a racially mixed culture might be conveyed from generation to generation in a fluid highly individualistic culture. It was those deep impulses toward autonomous personhood—impulses that drove Ellison's highly eclectic, cosmopolitan, and wide-ranging art—that found themselves stymied in the life of what he himself celebrated as American literary tradition.

This great writer's moral struggle was in many ways the struggle of American literature with the question of race. In this sense, Ellison may be seen as a distinctively brilliant ethical consciousness in the tradition of Twain, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner—the tradition to which he so often alluded. To the writerly excellence of Hemingway and Fitzgerald in particular, Ellison brought the spiritual and existential truths of the African American experience. Reading him, we see the ways in which African American writing may be read within as well as against the American grain.

E N D N O T E S

1. Ralph Ellison, "Twentieth-Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity," *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1964) 43.
2. *Ibid.* 32-33.
3. Ralph Ellison, *Juneteenth* (New York: Random House, 1999) 362.

CONTROL AFTER DARK

Slave Owners and Their Control of Slaves' Intimate Relationships, or "Who's Your Daddy?"

RON GOODWIN

Abstract

Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by black slaves involved the cohesiveness of the slave familial unit. Slaves routinely lived with the possibility of the separation of one or more family members at the whim of the slave owner. However, the separation of family members is but one aspect of control exerted over black slaves. Arguably the most horrific exercise of the slave owners control occurred after dark and involved slaves' intimate relationships. This paper uses the Slave Narratives of the 1930s in examining Texas slave owners' use of forced marriages, illicit sexual behaviors, and the breeding of slaves to disrupt any attempt by slaves to create and maintain familial and community stability and cohesiveness. While many plantation records have been preserved, the focus is strictly from the perspective of those who suffered under the cruelties of the "peculiar institution."

The evolutionary development of a distinctive black slave culture in the aftermath of slavery was wholly dependent upon the development of stable black marriages, which led to stable families, and ultimately stable communities. Such a development is astonishing given the history of slavery and the atrocities committed against the black family in this country. Beginning with the arrival of the first slave ships, blacks have struggled to maintain their dignity in a system designed to totally obliterate it.

This system began in the United States with the initial arrival of black African captives. Coming from various geographical areas of Africa, these captives spoke different dialects and practiced a variety of religious and social customs. Even though they found themselves in forced contact with one another, the initial generation of captured Africans nonetheless identified themselves with particular tribes or clans from their native land. However different those tribes may have been, over time they found their blackness to be the common denominator unifying them within the barbarity of slavery.¹

Naturally, slaves were limited in their ability to shape their own lives and culture. Slavery gave slave owners the legal authority to control every aspect of the slaves' lives. This control extended beyond the labor of slaves and into their intimate relationships after dark. This paper examines the methods used by Texas' slave owners in controlling those intimate relationships through forced familial separations and involuntary relationships (for example, forced marriages, illicit sexual contact, and slave breeding) to disrupt any effort by slaves to create and maintain familial and community stability. These methods are viewed from the perspectives of the slaves as presented in the oral records of the *Slave Narratives* project. Even though there have been, and will most likely

continue to be, numerous and consistent criticisms of slave narratives as factual primary sources, they nonetheless represent the best evidence of slavery from the viewpoints of those whose very lives could end on the effectual whim of another.

Still, historians must acknowledge that former slaves had been trained to misrepresent the truth. “They suppress the truth rather than take the consequences of telling it,” said abolitionist Frederick Douglass, “and in doing so prove themselves a part of the human family.”² However, a careful review of the *Slave Narratives* illustrates similar experiences throughout. Even if ex-slaves hesitated in telling the truth, as Douglass remembered, the commonality of experiences should be confirmation enough that the *Slave Narratives* are valid as primary sources.

In Texas, evidence suggests that the institution of marriage was a constant source of frustration for the black family during slavery.³ Since slave marriages were not legally recognized, the master was free to sell any slave he owned as well as separate family members in any manner he desired. Nearly twenty percent of slave marriages were destroyed through the sale of a spouse. As a result, black female slaves formed intense attachments to their children and prepared for the inevitable day when they would be left to raise them alone. Nonetheless, the selling of children from parents was also commonplace, as much for the economic benefit as for the measure of control it allowed the master to exert over his chattel.⁴

It was also not uncommon for married slaves to live on separate plantations, even though many owners preferred their slaves to marry on the same plantation.⁵ In Texas, former slave Lucinda Elder told her WPA interviewer that her father lived on a plantation adjacent to that of her and her mother. Still, he was a frequent visitor to their plantation, as she recalled that he, “come to see mama on Wednesday and Sat’d day nights.” In regards to marriages, Elder also commented that slave marriages were often informal when compared to the Depression-era definition of marriage. She said, “Dem days dey don’t marry by no license. Dey takes a slave man and woman from de same plantation and outs ‘em together, or sometime a man from ‘nother plantation, like mama and papa. Mama say Marse John give ‘em a big supper in de big house and read out de Bible ‘bout obeyin’ and workin’ and den dey am married. Course, de nigger jes a slave and have to do what de white folks say, so dat way of marryin’ ‘bout good as any.”⁶

If the slave family unit did belong to the same owner, it still did not prevent them from being sold as a unit, individually, or in a manner similar to the selling of livestock.⁷ Former slave Anna Miller said her family was sold as a unit from Kentucky to Missouri.⁸ However, former slave Josephine Howard remembered how her mother’s owner decided to relocate from Alabama to Texas, which resulted in the permanent separation of her parents (her father had a different master). Howard said, “One mornin’ we is all herded up and mammy cryin’ and say dey gwine to Texas, but can’t take papa. He don’t ‘long to dem. Dat de lastes’ time we ever seen papa. Us and de

woman am put in wagons but de men slaves am chained together as has to walk.”⁹

Likewise, former Texas slave Thomas Johns indicated that his mother and older half-sister were separated from her mother’s first husband when they were sold from Virginia to Alabama.¹⁰ Former slave Hagar Lewis was also separated from her family when she was given to her owner’s daughter as a wedding present.¹¹ Former slaves John Barker and Toby Jones both indicated observing slaves being sold like animals. Barker said, “I seed slaves sold and they was yoked like steers and sold by pairs sometimes.”¹² Jones commented about the slave auctions when he said, “I seed slaves sold, and they’d make them clean up good and grease their hands and face, so they’d look real fat, and sell them off. Of course, most the niggers didn’t know their parents or what chillen was theirs. The white folks didn’t want them to git ‘tached to each other.”¹³ Lastly, former slave Jenny Proctor agreed with the statement that many slaves had little knowledge of family members. She didn’t know her father nor did she have any knowledge of siblings, because they were sold away while she was still too young to remember them.¹⁴

Even with the rampant occurrences of familial separations in Antebellum Texas, historians Peter Kolchin and Lerone Bennett found the black community generally succeeded in creating a distinctive culture within the confines of the plantation, “behind the veil.” Lerone Bennett said, “Within this internal veil, the slaves created a community with its own values and orientation. It was this community that sustained them as they struggled, day in and day out, to maintain a sense of humanity and expectancy in a white-dominated world bounded by fields and fences and the seasons of the year.”¹⁵

It was also in this community that tradition often tells of the brazen attitudes of the antebellum master with regards to his sexual desires and competition for the black female slave, regardless if she was married or not. Even though these traditions are not always based on scientific data or verifiable evidence, the belief that the master could have sex with whomever and whenever is nonetheless very real in the consciousness of today’s twenty-first century black community.¹⁶

The reality encased in this community’s consciousness not only sheds light on the fact that white men often desired black females, but also illuminated the fact that black male slaves frequently found themselves unable to protect their mothers, wives, and daughters from the unwanted sexual advances of white males.¹⁷ This inability to fulfill the role of familial protector literally destroyed the self-image of manhood and masculinity of black males during slavery (and arguably up to the 1930s). This left black males in the emasculated role in the plantation hierarchy while the master held the position of power/manhood.¹⁸

For example, former Texas slave Josiah Henson told the story of how his father fought an overseer who attempted to rape his mother. However, because he physically attacked a white man the punishment was severe. “One-hundred lashes on the bare back,” recalled Henson, “and to have the right ear nailed to the whipping-post,

and then severed from the body.”¹⁹ Such penalties reinforced the hopelessness felt by antebellum black males. Furthermore, for black female slaves it established the dynamic that the desires of the master superseded the desires of the slave husband.

Nonetheless, evidence still suggests that many white males in antebellum Texas took sexual liberties with black female slaves without fear of repercussions. In Texas, former slave Rosa Maddox remembered that it was not uncommon for white men to be involved in illicit sexual affairs with female slaves. She recalled, “White man laid a nigger gal when he wanted her. Some them white men had a plumb cravin’ for the other color. But Master (Dr. Andrews) was a good man and I never heard of him botherin’ any nigger women. But they was some red-headed neighbors what had a whole crop of red-headed nigger slaves.”²⁰

Former slave Mary Reynolds also told a story involving her former owner and black female slaves. She said, “The niggers knew that Dr. Kilpatrick took a black woman as quick as he did white and he took any on his place and he took them often.” There was one instance on the plantation where Kilpatrick’s slave children got into a confrontation with his white children. The argument, Reynolds said, ended when his wife threatened to go back home to Mississippi. From that point on, Reynolds said Kilpatrick made sure his slave children kept a safe distance from the main house away from his legitimate children and family.²¹

The fact that Reynolds intentionally tried to keep his illegitimate black children separate from his legitimate white children suggests that some slave owners were not so brazen after all, and may have even exercised some degree of discretion in their sexual liaisons with black slave women. Why would someone who legally enjoyed total control over everything and everyone on his property exercise discretion? To prevent the potential wrath of their wives!²²

The illicit sexual activities of the masters, not to mention the numbers of illegitimate children, caused severe pain and conflict within the slave *and* white communities. Of particular significance was the pain felt by white wives. Sources indicate that many plantation wives were often well aware of their husbands’ dalliances, but oftentimes found themselves powerless to do anything about it. Not surprisingly, they blamed the powerless black females for being promiscuous seductresses, rather than blame their husbands.²³ As a result, white women often resented young black female slaves who caught the attention of their husbands and young sons. Moreover, they kept a very suspicious eye on their husbands who paid far too much attention to female house slaves, fearing that such attention might ultimately affect their position within the plantation hierarchy.²⁴

An example of this is found in the narrative of former Texas slave Jack Maddox who recalled how his master, a man he called Judge Maddox, brought home a “purty mulatto gal, real bright and long black hair what was purty straight.” Maddox remembered that the Judge told his wife he bought this slave to help her do “needlework.”

The wife immediately noticed the attention Maddox gave this black female slave, especially the attention he showed her hair. One day, when her husband was away from the plantation, Maddox said the Judge's wife cut the hair of the black female slave "to the skull." Maddox concluded by saying that he believed his master purchased this particular female slave specifically for his own sexual pleasure, and further commented, "I do know white men got plenty chillen by the nigger women. They didn't ask 'em. They jes' took 'em."²⁵

Such narratives generally support the position of many historians that black female slaves were almost always incapable of resisting the sexual advances of their masters, or any white man in general.²⁶ However, is it possible that black female slaves had more power than initially believed? Maybe. Apparently, some black female slaves not only recognized the power inherent in their sexuality, but also used it to their definite advantage. For example, former Texas slave Harriet Jacobs implied during her WPA interview that she used her sexuality to manipulate intimate relationships with white males. Jacobs indicated that she was able to defy her master's sexual advances by consummating a sexual relationship with another white man; a white man with whom she eventually bore a son.²⁷

Even though Jacobs may have succeeded in resisting her master's sexual overtures, she also contributed to one of the troubling developments during Texas' Antebellum era—the rising prevalence of black slave children fathered by white masters. Unfortunately, there appears little documentation accurately indicating how many of these children may have existed, even though many Texas historians still argue that Texas slave owners generally considered slaves extensions of their immediate family.²⁸ This reference, however, was usually reserved for house slaves and not the field hands. Therefore, the question must be asked: did masters treat some slaves as family because of their own benevolence, as nineteenth-century slave apologists argued, or because some slaves were, in fact, family?

An example of slaves being treated as family can be found in the interview of former Texas slaves Cato Carter and Ben Kinchlow. Carter indicated that he received preferential treatment on the plantation because his father was also his master. This relationship allowed him unchallenged access to the "big house," where he worked and had his own room. As a result, Carter clearly enjoyed privileges other slaves did not. In describing his treatment at the hands of his owner/father, Carter said, "They was allus good to me, 'cause I's one of their blood. They never hit me a lick or slapped me once, and told me they'd never sell me away from them."²⁹

Ben Kinchlow reported in his WPA interview that he was also the product of a black slave woman and a white male, even though he did not reveal the name of his father. He also did not explicitly identify his father as his master, but did indicate that he was "a white man of that same county." Furthermore, Kinchlow's mother obviously held some kind of position of favor, because he said a year after he was born, his mother's slave owner gave his

mother and her children their freedom and sent them to live in Mexico for twelve years.³⁰

While some children of these black female–white male unions enjoyed benefits uncommon for most antebellum slaves, some slave owners made the decision to sell their illegitimate children away from their black mothers—and themselves—as soon as possible.³¹ In recounting his life as a slave, abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass commented, “As cruel as the deed may strike anyone to be, for a man to sell his own children to human flesh-mongers, it is often the dictate of humanity for him to do so: for unless he does this, he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see the white son tie up his brother, of but a few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back.”³² In Texas, former slave Mother Anne Clark’s experiences were similar to those of Douglass. She remembered that her former owner, Captain Clark, sold his children borne to her mother, a black female slave. Clark declared, “My mama had two white chillen by marster and they were sold as slaves.”³³

Clark’s narrative raised the question of whether or not the offspring of such unions were intentional or accidental. Even though some of these children indicated that they enjoyed the paternalism of their fathers/masters, the Antebellum histories of sexual experiences of many black female slaves were more often than not, horrifying. Evidence indicates that black female slaves were often placed in sexual relationships with men not of their choosing with the intention of producing children, as one might breed domesticated animals for profit.

However, the ideas of slave breeding and the forcing of one slave to marry another without their consent are perhaps two of the most contentious subjects in slave historiography. Historians Robert William Fogel and John Boles, for example, vehemently argued that there was no such thing as slave breeding in any form. Fogel used economic models to disprove the existence of breeding, believing instead in the natural reproduction of blacks.³⁴ Boles sounded the same argument nine years earlier, stating that the concept of slave breeding was nothing more than a tool of nineteenth century abolitionists to condemn the institution of slavery. Boles said, “There is no reliable evidence that slave owners as a general practice interfered with the sex lives of slaves so as to maximize reproduction. There is no evidence of gross sexual imbalance as one would expect had slave stud farms existed.” Rather than focusing on the possibility of breeding as a cause of black demographic changes, Boles instead challenges historians to examine other factors. “Shifting labor needs and the desires of slave marriage partners, not calculating slave breeders, chiefly determined black population increase and indirectly its gradual relocation southwestward.”³⁵

However salient Fogel’s and Boles’ arguments are, there have been numerous historians that have presented and supported a contrary position with regards to breeding of slaves. Such historians have argued that the practice of breeding humans as one would breed animals (to produce a desired offspring) did exist and the practice had the

most detrimental effect upon the slave community. For example, Paul Escott found that breeding was often used as a mechanism to control not only the slave population, but also as a way of creating a *new* breed of slave. In *Slavery Remembered*, Escott said, “In a variety of ways masters interfered with the sexual activities of their slaves. At one end of the spectrum, virtually all masters recognized the value of a high reproductive rate and encouraged their slaves to have large families. Fertile females, sometimes called breed women by the former slaves, often received special treatment.” Escott commented that “special treatment” included light work duty and an extended period for convalescence after a successful birth. Those black male slaves used as breeders were known as “stockmen,” “travelin’ niggers,” or “breedin’ niggers.” Furthermore, Escott quoted a former slave who said, “A man (slave owner) would rent the stockman and put him in a room with some young woman he wanted to raise children from.” Like their female counterparts, these “breedin’ niggers” received extra privileges that included money, multiple wives, or both.³⁶

Historian Frank Tannenbaum even found that some slave states considered themselves “breeding states.” In these states, breeding was a necessary system based purely on the economic resources generated. Tannenbaum found that breeding reduced the black female in stature to that of a breeding animal whose only value was in the number of healthy children she could produce.³⁷

Further proof of the widespread belief in breeding as a detriment to the black community can be found in the words of the infamous slave owner Willie Lynch. Lynch enjoined his audience to try several techniques that would maintain blacks in a permanent underclass position. He said:

Breed two nigger males with two nigger females. Then we take the nigger male away from them and keep them moving and working. Say one nigger female bears a nigger female and the other bears a nigger male. Both nigger females being without influence of the nigger male image, frozen with a independent psychology, will raise their offspring into reverse positions. The one with the female offspring will teach her to be like herself, independent and negotiable (we negotiate with her, through her, by her, negotiates her at will). The one with the nigger male offspring, she being frozen by subconscious fear for his life, will raise him to be mentally dependent and weak, but physically strong, in other words, body over mind. Now in a few years when these two offspring’s become fertile for early reproduction we will mate and breed them and continue the cycle. That is good, sound, and long range comprehensive planning.³⁸

In his examination of slavery, historian Herbert Gutman found that even though the North Carolina legislation forbade the legal recognition of slave marriages, many slaves, nonetheless, created stable family units

with or without legal recognition. Sometimes these unions were by choice, but other times the master forced a union between two slaves as a means of control or for slave breeding.³⁹

Lastly, historian Lerone Bennett acknowledged that many slavery apologists deny the existence of breeding, but he believes they ignore the evidence from the slave owners themselves. He pointed to the numerous advertisements that listed black females for sale as “stock and breeding Negroes.” Additionally, Bennett commented that most advertisements used terms that left little doubt as to the intended purpose of some black females. These included the following: “She is a number one girl,” “This is truly a number one woman,” “Breeding slaves,” “child-bearing women,” and “breeding period.”⁴⁰

In Texas, there is existing evidence indicating examples of slave breeding and forced marriages. Former slaves Josephine Howard and Silvia King definitely remembered forced unions with the desired object of producing children. Howard said her master *put* her parents together resulting in six children. Likewise, King indicated that after her abduction from Africa and purchase in New Orleans by a man she called “Marse Jones,” she was given to another slave with the intention of producing offspring. King told her interviewer that she had a husband and children back in Africa, but was still given to another man. She said, “After ‘while, Marse Jones say to me, ‘Silvia, am you married?’ I tells him I got a man and three chilluns back in the old country, but he don’t understand my talk and I has a man give to me. I don’t bother with dat nigger’s name much, he jes’ Bob to me.”⁴¹

Likewise, former slave Sam Jones Washington also commented that his mother and father were placed into a forced union much like the parents of Josephine Howard. In fact, Washington said he did not even know his father. “I don’t know my pappy.” Washington remembered, “Him am what dey calls de travelin’ nigger. Dey have him come for service and when dey gits what dey wants, he go back to his massa. De women on Massa Young place not married.”⁴²

Unfortunately, the psychological damage caused when slave women were forced into involuntary relationships potentially lasted a lifetime. When she was interviewed in Fort Worth, Texas, in the 1930s, former slave Rose Williams still exhibited the mental scars of slavery and the lack of control of her sexual being, decades after emancipation. She related to her interviewer how her owner, whom she referred to as “Massa Hawkins,” gave her to another slave. Williams remembered being placed on the auction block and purchased at a mere 15-years of age. She remembered being described as a “portly, strong, young wench. She’s never been ‘bused and will make de good breeder.” Furthermore, Williams said, “Dere am one thing Massa Hawkins does to me what I can’t shunt from my mind. I knows he don’t do it for meanness, but I allus holds it ‘gainst him. What he done am force me to live with dat nigger Rufus ‘gainst my wants.” After initially refusing Rufus’ sexual advances, Williams recalled Hawkins telling her, “Woman, I’s pay big money for you and I’s done that for de cause I wants you to raise me chillens. I’s put

you to live with Rufus for dat purpose. Now, if you doesn't want whippin' at de stake, yous do what I wants." After conceding to her fate, Williams continued her story and said, "So I 'cides to do as de massa wish and so I yields." Rufus eventually fathered Williams' two children. Still, she continued living with the anger and disappointment of being in a relationship with a man she did not love.⁴³

Lastly, former slave Sarah Ford commented that her mother told her that there were slave owners that would not allow their slaves to marry because it might reduce their productivity. She said, "She (her mother) say de white folks don't let de slaves what works in de field marry none, dey jus' puts a man and breedin' woman together like mules. Iffen the women don't like the man it don't make no difference, she better go or dey gives her a hidin'."⁴⁴

Historians argue that perhaps the slaves' best survival mechanism for enduring conditions that continually reminded them of their subservient position was the development of family units.⁴⁵ Additionally, evidence suggests that some marriages in the Antebellum black community were resilient and voluntary institutions. The marriage ceremonies, when they did occur, often consisted of a few passages from the Bible and the act of "jumping the broom."⁴⁶

Historians Joe Gray Taylor and Herbert Gutman found examples of the importance of slave marriages in their respective studies. In Taylor's study of Louisiana's slave community he found evidence of the importance of the marriage unit in the development of a stable Antebellum slave community.⁴⁷ Gutman's study illustrated that some slave communities were not only stable; they often established their own guidelines for what they considered acceptable behavior to be followed before and after marriage. As a result, it was the community, and not necessarily any external pressures from whites, that led to family stability. Gutman found that once young black women became members of the local church they often ceased their premarital sexual lifestyles. He also discussed evidence that adultery and overt fornication were often frowned upon, and said, "For at least a quarter century prior to the Civil War, the Beaufort Baptist Church, most if not all of its members South Carolina slaves, punished people guilty of adultery and fornication. To commit adultery meant suspension from the church for three months."⁴⁸

Such studies indicate that some slaves did live in patriarchal family units where fathers were respected in the community and mothers shared common duties that included child rearing and cooking. Even though premarital sex was common, the black community expected these relationships to eventually progress towards marriage where monogamy was demanded by group norms.⁴⁹ Sadly, there also exists evidence that the slave marriage unit was little more than a mirage. Tannenbaum argued that few slaves could reasonably expect to have a stable plantation marriage since the law did not recognize such relationships.⁵⁰ The possibility of finding a mate was

almost always impacted by the plantation's size, familial relationships within the slave community, and the master's view of slave relationships.⁵¹

The only uniformity concerning antebellum slave marriages and communities was that the slave owner enjoyed total control, even of the slaves' behavior after dark. By law, in Texas as throughout the South, slave owners were empowered to manage their property in any manner they saw fit and profitable. By controlling the intimate relationships of slaves, particularly female slaves, the master was not only able to satisfy his own sexual desires, but also manage the number *and* variety of slaves. As a result, Texas slave owners exerted control over the Antebellum slave community by purposefully influencing intimate relationships through forced familial separations and involuntary relationships such as forced marriages, illicit sexual relationships, and finally, slave breeding.



Rosa Maddox

Image courtesy of The Library of Congress



Ben Kinchlow

Image courtesy of The Library of Congress



Silvia King

Image courtesy of The Library of Congress

E N D N O T E S

1. John Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983) 39-41.
2. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 62.
3. I. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1940) 57.
4. Robert Liston, *Slavery in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970) 86-87; Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946) 77; Sally McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South*, (Arlington Heights, IL, Harlan Davidson, Inc, 1992) 12, 31-35; Steven Mintz, *African American Voices*, third edition (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 2004), 124; Rupert Richardson, et al, *Texas: the Lone Star State*, eighth edition (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005), 187; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984) 61. The auction block was not the only form of separation that disrupted the slave community. In many instances slaves were transferred as gifts to family members. Other times slaves were transferred after the death of an owner. In both instances the disruption was experienced differently by men and women: women would loose their husband while the husband had to endure the loss of his spouse and children, since many slave owners did not separate the mother from her children.
5. Mintz, *African American Voices* 116; F. N. Boney, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and the escape of John Brown, A Fugitive Slave*, (Savannah, GA.: A Beehive Press Book, 1991) 6. Also see the narratives of Will Adams and Charlotte Beverly, *Slave Narratives*, Box 4H359, University of Texas, Center for American History (Hereinafter cited as CAH-UT Austin).
6. Lucinda Elder, CAH-UT Austin.
7. Mintz, *African American Voices* 107; Timothy Dwight Weld, *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968) 56.
8. Anna Miller, CAH-UT Austin.
9. Josephine Howard, *Ibid.*
10. Thomas Johns, *Ibid.*
11. Hagar Lewis, *Ibid.*
12. John Barker, *Ibid.*
13. Toby Jones, *Ibid.*; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2003) 131-32.
14. Jenny Proctor, CAH-UT Austin. Also see narratives by Walter Rimm Tom Holland, Harry Johnson, Silvia King, and Anna Miller.
15. Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993) 133; Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America*, sixth edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) 107.
16. Steven Brown, "Sexuality and the Slave Community," *Phylon* 42 (1st quarter 1981), 2-5, 8-10 (1-10); McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* 21-22; Alton V. Moody, "Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations," *Diss. U. of Michigan*, 1924, 95. Joe Gray Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (Louisiana Historical Association, 1963) 19-20, 232. It is entirely possible that the word "competed" is not applicable in the plantation sense, because female slaves were typically unable to refuse the advances of any white males. McMillan emphasized the notion that many whites males believed slavery meant ownership, which implied they owned every aspect of the slave, even their sexuality. Taylor found in his examination of slaves in Louisiana that it was not uncommon for white males to buy female slaves purely as concubines. Lastly, Brown found that many black women complied with the unwanted advances because they understood that any who consistently rejected such attention were likely to be beaten, sold, or both.
17. McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* 23; Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) 396-99. Gutman found that during slavery and after emancipation black men found themselves typically unable to protect their wives and daughters from the unwanted sexual attentions of white men. He also found that white men often went unpunished for raping black women, even in those instances where the victim could identify her assailants.
18. Liston, *Slavery in America* 93-94.
19. Mintz, *African American Voices* 121.
20. Jack and Rosa Maddox, CAH-UT Austin
21. Mary Reynolds, *Ibid.* Reynolds also told a tragic story of her Aunt Cheyney who tried to escape from the plantation soon after giving birth to escape further unwanted sexual attention. Reynolds said she was "just out of bed with a sucklin' baby" when she tried to run. However, the overseer tracked her down and encouraged the dogs to attack her. Reynolds said the dogs "tore her naked and et the breasts plumb off'n her body. She got well and lived to be an old woman, but...she ain't got no sign of breasts no more." Also see the narratives of Adeline Marshal, Betty Powers and Chris Franklin.
22. Mary Helen Washington, *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860-1960* (New York: Doubleday, 1987) 21-26; McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* 24.

23. Paul Escott, *Slavery Remembered* (Chapel Hill, NC: the University of North Carolina Press, 1979) 46. Escott quoted Mary Boykin Chestnut who described the plantation as a brothel because of the frequent occurrences of sexual promiscuity between masters and slaves. Even though Chestnut blamed the situation on white males, she nonetheless somehow believed black females were culpable. However, studies and the slave narratives indicate that black females were often unable to refuse the sexual advances of their master or any white male on the plantation. Under such circumstances it would be easy for a disgruntled wife to assume the husband found a willing sexual partner when in fact black females became adept at developing ways to minimize the physical and mental humiliation of forced copulation.
24. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* 63.
25. Jack and Rosa Maddox, CAH-UT Austin.
26. Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* 123-24.
27. Washington, *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860-1960* 36-37; McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* 23-24.
28. Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) 195-98.
29. Cato Carter, CAH-UT Austin.
30. Ben Kinchlow, *Ibid.*
31. Washington, *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860-1960* 36.
32. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* 49-50.
33. Mother Anne Clark, CAH-UT Austin. Clark also commented that she had two children, even though she never married.
34. Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992) 455-72.
35. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* 69-70.
36. Paul Escott, *Slavery Remembered* (Chapel Hill, NC: the University of North Carolina Press, 1979) 43-45.
37. Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* 80-82.
38. Willie Lynch, "Lynch Manifesto," (23 March, 2008) <<http://thetalkingdrum.com/wil.html>>.
39. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* 52.
40. Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* 105. Also see: Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* 105; Weld, *American Slavery As It Is* 142.
41. Josephine Howard and Silvia King, CAH-UT Austin.
42. Sam Jones Washington, *Ibid.*
43. Rose Williams, *Ibid.*
44. Sarah Ford, *Ibid.*
45. Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* 139-40.
46. Richardson, et al, *Texas: the Lone Star State* 187; Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* 57-58. Coleman found that the act of "jumping the broomstick" came from old European marriage ceremonies handed down with many variations from white immigrants. He said, "When no colored preacher was available, the master simply read a few passages of scripture, had the couple go through the ceremony of jumping over the broomstick, and then pronounced them man and wife."
47. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* 123.
48. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom* 70.
49. Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower* 105-07; Moody, "Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations" 94.
50. Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* 76; Weld, *American Slavery As It Is* 58.
51. McMillen, *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South* 13.

OBSCURED IN THE MIDST OF THE CIVIL WAR

Enslaved African Americans at Camp Ford

ALSTON V. THOMS

ABSTRACT

Historical documents and local histories attest to the role of enslaved African Americans in the construction of the stockade and trenches at the Civil War-era Camp Ford prison camp located in Smith County, Texas. Captured African American prisoners-of-war were sentenced by the Confederacy to labor at nearby military-industrial facilities and worked alongside locally owned slaves who had been officially pressed into service at these facilities, while thousands more slaves continued in their pre-war tasks working the agricultural fields and salt mines in the region. In addition to regular militia patrols, such terror tactics as whippings and public executions were employed to maintain the docility of this enslaved labor force. Evidence of commonplace resort to such extreme tactics reflects a widely held fear of slave insurrection and suggests that the enslaved people of Smith County were actively engaged in seeking their own emancipation.

The wooded east-Texas terrain near Tyler, which is the geographic focus of this article, has been home to many diverse cultures and been the locus of much in the way of human history. The era of America's Civil War saw the establishment of the Camp Ford prisoner-of-war (POW) compound, built largely by enslaved African Americans, a few miles northeast of Tyler (*Figure 1*). Camp Ford's military history is well documented, as is the Civil War era history of Tyler and Smith County.¹ With the notable exceptions of articles by Betts² and Gilbert³, the roles of enslaved African Americans at Camp Ford are not well represented in the twentieth-century historical literature. Articles published during the Civil War by *The New York Times*⁴ and *Harper's Weekly*⁵ that reported on the history of and living conditions at Camp Ford make no mention of African Americans.

An historical marker placed at Camp Ford in January 1963 by the Texas Historical Survey Committee⁶ included a lengthy account of the history of the POW camp. It included a lengthy historical account about the POW camp, with comments about soldiers, sailors, guards, Union sympathizers, spies, and Confederate deserters; but nothing about African Americans.⁷ Historically documented roles of enslaved African Americans were ignored altogether in the historical novel *Camp Ford*, and replaced therein by three entirely fictionalized black POWs who were portrayed as unusually talented baseball players.⁸ As discussed in this article, there is no historical evidence to date that black POWs were ever held in the Camp Ford compound.

The present article is a synthesis of historical information pertaining to the roles of enslaved African Americans who, in addition to their routine labor elsewhere in the area, built the stockade walls at Camp Ford. Those

same individuals, their families, fellow slaves, and enslaved black POWs also labored at other military-industrial facilities, farmed most of the region's agricultural fields, and husbanded much of its livestock. So too, they resisted enslavement, were feared and terrorized by the local citizens for doing so, assisted in numerous prison escapes, and probably provided intelligence to Union forces, as was common in other parts of the South.⁹

The remainder of this article represents a revision to the chapter "Historical Contexts and Synthesis of African American Roles at Camp Ford and Vicinity"¹⁰ which first appeared in the 2001 monograph *Uncovering Camp Ford: Archaeological Interpretations of a Civil War Prisoners-of-War Camp in East Texas*.¹¹ That monograph reported results of excavations and historical research conducted in the mid 1990s by the Center for Ecological Archaeology at Texas A&M University.

Background

By the early years of the American Civil War, Smith County and East Texas were dominated economically and politically by Anglo Americans. Enslaved African Americans constituted almost 40 percent of the Smith County population.¹² With the conscription of white males into military service, African Americans dominated the urban and rural labor force in the region and throughout most of east Texas. It was a few miles northeast of Tyler that the Camp Ford story unfolded.

Initially established as a recruitment camp in the early days of the Civil War, Camp Ford was converted to a POW compound where some 6,000 Union Army and Navy prisoners were held together with a few Union sympathizers, between 1863 and 1865.¹³ They were confined within a log stockade, the product of the forced labor of hundreds of enslaved African Americans from the surrounding countryside.¹⁴ Prior to, during, and after the War these same slaves grew most of the agricultural crops and raised a majority of the livestock that fed prisoners, guards, civilians, and themselves.¹⁵

Historical accounts attest to the destruction of Camp Ford in July 1865 by members of the 48th Ohio Volunteer Infantry,¹⁶ who reportedly set fire to the prison, as happened at other Confederate POW camps.¹⁷ Archaeological investigations at Camp Ford, however, failed to reveal material evidence that the stockade or any of the living quarters were burned, which suggests that most of the logs and other things that remained useful were salvaged by resourceful locals.¹⁸ With the physical demise of Camp Ford, the barren tract was converted to agricultural fields and farmed for nearly 70 years thereafter. In the early 1940s, the eroded hillside was terraced and planted with pines that presently cover much of the site (*Figures 2 and 3*).¹⁹

The only well-preserved, above-ground evidence of the prison compound at present is an earthen berm, several feet high, along an outside section of the south wall. It likely served as an observation deck for the guards.²⁰

Below-ground archaeological evidence is remarkably widespread and well-preserved. It includes hundreds of yards of slave-dug trenches that once held the log walls in place, together with dozens of prisoner-dug refuse pits and house floors.²¹

Archaeological remains and historical records pertaining to Camp Ford identify Tyler and Smith County as a headquarters for the Confederate States of America's (C.S.A.) Trans-Mississippi military-industrial complex.²² Many documents attest to the utilization of African American laborers at the ordinance and transportation departments, the armory, and at Camp Ford.²³ Much less is known about the incarceration of African American POWs at Camp Ford. It is clear, however, that much of the debate concerning the exchange of prisoners in general centered on the status of African American troops and their white officers.²⁴ Moreover, Camp Ford played a key role in the development and implementation of military policies regarding the treatment of black POWs.²⁵ To better understand the experience of African Americans at Camp Ford, it is useful to establish an historical context for the use of slave labor during the Civil War and relate it to East Texas, and insofar as possible, to Smith County.

Slave Labor During the Civil War

The Civil War resulted in the official liberation of some 4,000,000 enslaved African Americans.²⁶ As a labor force, enslaved African Americans represented a major economic strength of the C.S.A. After Lincoln's preliminary (September 1862) and final (January 1863) Emancipation Proclamations, freed African Americans also became an important labor force for the U.S.A. As the Union Army advanced through the South, several hundred-thousand ex-slaves, or contrabands, as they were called at the time, were conscripted to serve as contract wage-laborers. These laborers worked on cotton plantations owned or leased by white planters loyal to the Union,²⁷ on public and military work projects, and as servants for Union officers.²⁸ As elsewhere in the South, slave labor was fundamental to the economic foundation of Texas.²⁹

With the onset of the Civil War, Confederate "field commanders began 'borrowing' slaves from neighboring plantations, because the slaves would effectively release troops for front-line duty by performing construction and service tasks otherwise carried out by soldiers."³⁰ In March 1863, the Confederate Congress passed legislation that authorized military authorities to impress private property, including slaves, for the wartime benefit of the Confederacy.³¹

Throughout the South, tens of thousands of African Americans were pressed into service by the Confederacy to work in military encampments and build fortifications (*Figure 4*).³² They were also "hired out" by slave owners to work in ordinance factories, armories, hospitals, and on military transports. Some owners preferred to "refugee" their slaves to locales well removed from areas of military operations, rather than hire them out to the military.³³

Early in the war, planters called upon to provide slaves to the Confederate army seldom did so willingly, but by the mid-war period, commanders in the Trans-Mississippi Department were able to obtain slave labor without significant resistance from slave owners.³⁴

Writing on July 3, 1863, to Major-General Magruder from his headquarters in Houston, Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith stated:

In reference to the impressment of slave labor and the hiring of negroes [sic] to take the places of soldiers detailed as teamsters, I have the honor to state that I had in a measure anticipated your views by sending agents through the county to hire them. I have also appointed Captain [H.B.] Andrews, of an unattached cavalry company, chief of the bureau of labor, and he is now using every exertion to secure negroes [sic] both for work on the fortifications and as teamsters. I shall, however, in obedience to your instructions, not resort to impressment until after the gubernatorial election.³⁵

On September 5, 1863, General Smith wrote from Shreveport, Louisiana to his commanders, Generals Magruder, Price, and Taylor, about the “necessity of employing negro [sic] labor,” and that

the temper of the people is now favorable for such a step; there is a feeling of distrust in the loyalty of their slaves, and an anxiety to have the able-bodied males in the service of the Government; especially is this the case in the exposed portions of the country, and I think there large numbers could be obtained without difficulty. Estimates should be made of the wants of the several departments, including the hospital and cotton bureau, and immediate steps be taken for procuring, by impressment, if necessary, the requisite negro [sic] force.³⁶

Nonetheless, there continued to be resistance to impressment, especially in response to Magruder’s suggestion that he might need 60,000 slaves to fortify the Texas Gulf Coast. There was also widespread concern over passage of a C.S.A. bill in February 1864 authorizing impressment of up to 20,000 slaves by the commanding general of the Trans-Mississippi Department. Still more authority was given to military personnel in early 1865 when the C.S.A. Congress authorized them to “hire or impress as many Negroes as it needed.”³⁷

In 1860, the 4,982 enslaved African Americans who resided in Smith County made up about 37 percent of the county’s population and far outnumbered the 1,024 citizens living in its largest city, Tyler.³⁸ In late 1864, after Union victories in Louisiana and Arkansas, General Magruder, commander of the Texas portion of the C.S.A.’s Trans-Mississippi Department, estimated that some 150,000 slaves had been refugeed to Texas.³⁹ With the absence of many white males and the immigration of “refugeed” slaves, African Americans likely represented at least half

of Smith County's population. Certainly they constituted a significant labor force, as was the case throughout the C.S.A.

The marked influx of slaves into and through Tyler was witnessed by civilians, POWs, and prison guards. The family of planter Kate Stone, along with 130 enslaved African Americans, moved to Texas from Louisiana in mid-1863. By the fall of that year, Kate had settled with her mother in Tyler where they soon began to hire out their slaves to a "succession of callers" from the local community who "are all eager to hire Negroes. There is a furor for them."⁴⁰ In mid-December 1863, when Sergeant William Williston Heartsill was on his way through west Louisiana to begin guard-duty tour at Camp Ford, he wrote that "we find the road crouded [sic] with reffugees [sic], bound for Texas; with hundreds, and I might truthfully say, thousands of Negroes."⁴¹ Of his arrival at Camp Ford in February 1864, POW Colonel Augustine Joseph Hickey Duganne wrote:

... at the time a caravan of wagons—forty-five in number—filled with negro [sic] families, was passing by the stockade, while its migrating owners, on horseback and in coaches, led their chattels into exile. I had encountered many other corteges and coffles on the road [from Camp Groce, near modern-day Hempstead]; for this lone star state has become a general refuge for the rebels now⁴²

Reliance upon enslaved African Americans as an agricultural labor force was quite lucrative for planters who rented out their own slaves.⁴³ Presumably it would have been more profitable for owners of industrial facilities to own rather than "rent" slaves. Nonetheless, local as well as refugee planters, including Kate Stone's family, often secured much of their income by hiring out slaves. Among the frequent visitors to the Stone's home in Tyler were commandants and officers from various military facilities, and local businessmen.⁴⁴

The rate paid to the owner for hired-out slaves was \$2.50 per day,⁴⁵ or \$50 to \$75 per month, depending on the number of days a slave worked during a month. Impressed slaves were significantly less profitable because military commanders were authorized to compensate owners at a rate of only \$15 per month and for no more than 60 days.⁴⁶ With passage of impressment legislation in 1863, the official reimbursement rate for impressed slaves increased to \$30 per slave per month, but politicians and citizens continued to complain about impressments.⁴⁷

The Tyler ordinance plant had over 200 workers, including at least 57 slaves acquired through the Labor Bureau either at departmental headquarters in Shreveport, Louisiana or at sub-district headquarters in Bonham, Texas.⁴⁸ The two armory sites in Tyler relied on labor from 85 slaves. At the time of maximum production, the labor force at the Bureau of Transportation included 106 slaves engaged in the manufacture of wagons, harnesses, caissons, and saddles.⁴⁹ Available records indicate that enslaved African Americans were conscripted and distributed as laborers wherever they were needed.

Louisiana planters, who had refuged to Texas along with their slaves, argued that they should be exempted from impressments until they were well settled in Texas. General Magruder was not convinced and impressments continued without regard to refugee status.⁵⁰ The need for slave labor in the private sector was also reported in Tyler newspapers. One advertisement was for “groups of 100 slaves—men, women, and children” to work in a local salt factory.⁵¹ Betts concluded that enslaved African Americans in Smith County “willingly or unwillingly greatly aided the Confederate cause by making ammunition, guns, wagons, salt, and even the Camp Ford stockade.”⁵²

Slave narratives compiled as part of the Federal Writers Project also attest to impressments for labor at military facilities. Phyllis Thomas, born in Brazoria County, reported that her father was sent to Galveston by the Confederate Army to build breastworks and died in an accident while there.⁵³ Another enslaved African American, Allen Price, stated that his father was under Union fire when he helped build breastworks at Sabine Pass, and after the battle prepared bandages for the wounded.⁵⁴ L.B. Barner, born on a plantation several miles north of Palestine, Texas, also told an interviewer that slaves left their plantations to build breastworks, but he did not specify where they were sent.⁵⁸ Initial reviews of these narratives failed to identify an account specific to Camp Ford, but given that so many enslaved African Americans were forced to labor there and at other military-industrial facilities in the area, further archival research may yet reveal their voices.

Slave Labor at Camp Ford

Second Lieutenant John W. Greene of the 26th Indiana Volunteer Infantry was among the first prisoners at Camp Ford in October 1863 when the POWs were merely encircled by Confederate guards. In November of that year, just after the guards had learned of a planned escape, he wrote:

... the officers of the guard went at once to Tyler, four-miles distant and called a meeting of the citizens. They told of the *awful* things the “Yanks” might do, in case of an insurrection. Then the people became alarmed, and called upon the planters with their slaves, to assist in building a stockade. In about ten days their work was completed, and we were encircled by a wall of logs which were spilt in half, set deep in the ground and close together, with a height of eighteen feet. Watchful sentinels paced their beats around the enclosure, and with the *unarmed* prisoners now securely confined, the people of Tyler were relieved of their fear.⁵⁶

Greene’s account indicates that the original stockade (*Figure 5*) was not erected by military order, but rather through civilian-sponsored efforts in response to fear that the prisoners would escape and sack Tyler.⁵⁷ Additional information about construction of the first stockade is contained in a letter from a local citizen, Mrs. Sarah Carter,

to her son serving in Tennessee; she noted that 75-percent of the militia had been “called out” and a stockade was being built around the heretofore-open POW camp:

They are now trying to enclose what we have with a picket wall 20 to 30 feet high. There has been one half of the negro [sic] men between 16 and 50 years of age called for. Your Pa carried 4 of ours to Tyler, but they took three there. The other will be sent to some other place.⁵⁸

Gilbert estimated that within two days, about 600 slaves were called to Tyler as part of an official levy or slave-owner tax to build the stockade wall, a task requiring more than 1,000 logs. Given the pervasive concern for citizen safety and considering ever-present requirements for slave labor elsewhere in the area, it seems likely that the ability to call upon such a large labor force from so many slave owners and to use this labor force for more than a week “is indicative of some official act as well as voluntary urging.”⁵⁹

It has been suggested that Magruder’s Labor Bureau took the lead in implementing the impressment policy at Camp Ford and that construction of the original stockade was only a small part of General Smith’s overall effort to impress slaves “for any purpose necessary to the Confederacy’s military effort.”⁶⁰ Wooster also concluded that construction of the first stockade wall at Camp Ford was but one element of the “extensive use” of Magruder’s authority to impress slaves.⁶¹ Enslaved African Americans were also used to construct fortifications at Sabine Pass, Fort Griffin in the Beaumont region, along the San Bernard River and Caney Creek in the central coast region of Texas, and at other locations in the state.⁶² Former Texas governor Francis Lubbock, who served as an assistant adjutant general on General Magruder’s staff beginning sometime during the 1863-1864 winter, reported that strong defensive works at San Antonio and Austin already had been constructed by impressed slaves.⁶³

In mid-April 1864, the stockade at Camp Ford was expanded to the north and east to cover an area at least 10 acres or larger in size.⁶⁴ Based on measurements supplied by ex-POW Swanger, the enlarged stockade may have covered as much as 16 acres.⁶⁵ Only six days elapsed between the defeat and capture of several thousand Union soldiers in central Louisiana on April 9, the completion of the new stockade on April 15, and the subsequent confinement of new POWs at Camp Ford.

On April 13, the commandant at Camp Ford ... was ordered to prepare for the reception of 3,000 or 4,000 new charges. On the 15th, while hundreds of Negroes toiled to enlarge the Tyler compound, the first contingent of 1,000 bluecoats straggled in from Mansfield. On the 17th, 18th, and 20th, 600 more shuffled in; on May 15th more than 1,200 were brought down from Arkansas; on May 19, another 490; on the 27th, 540; on June 16, 162; and on July 6, 180. There also arrived, on June 19, “a pack of Negro dogs

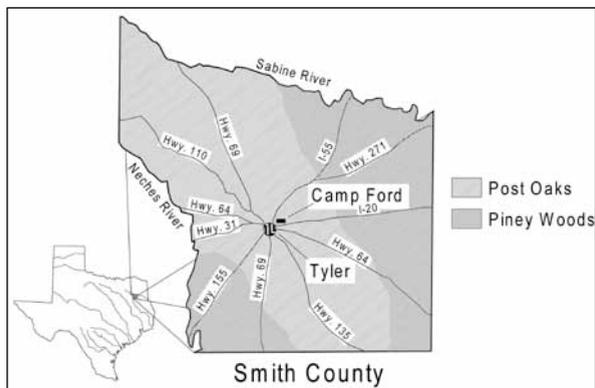


Figure 1. Map illustrating the location of Camp Ford in Smith County Texas (Thoms 2001b:2, Figure 1)



Figure 2. Camp Ford as it appeared in 1997; looking southeast across U.S. Highway 271 toward the site's historical markers and what would have been the front gate of POW compound in 1864; the pine trees in the background were planted in 1942 (Thoms 2001b:8, Figure 2).



Figure 3. A reconstructed POW cabin at Camp Ford Heritage Park as it appeared during a 2006 reenactment.

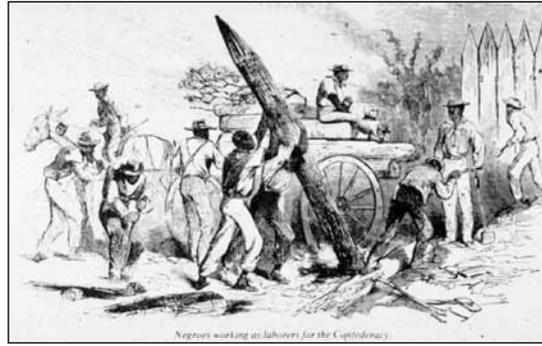


Figure 4. Civil War-era sketch of enslaved African Americans constructing a stockade very similar to the one at Camp Ford (original on file at the Library of Congress; this figure adapted from reprint in Wesley and Romero 1969:37) (Thoms 2001b:41, Figure 21)

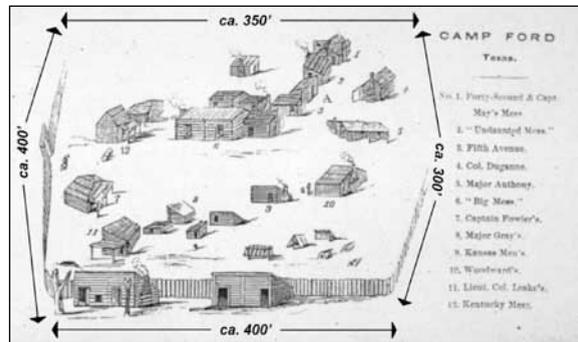


Figure 5. Colonel Duganne's sketch of the original stockade at Camp Ford built in mid-November 1863; approximate size [ca. 3 acres] and dimensions based on archaeological data presented in Thoms et al. 2001; original sketch in Duganne 1865:378-379 (Thoms 2001b:44, Figure 23)

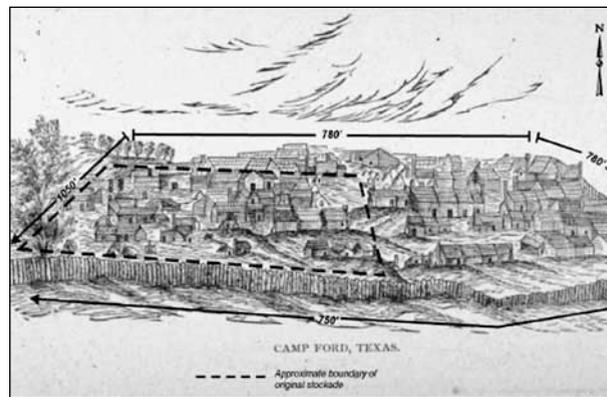


Figure 6. Sketch of the expanded stockade (adapted from McCulloch 1887:63) showing the dimensions reported by Swanger (1897) and the general location of the original stockade based on archaeological and historical data presented in Thoms et al. 2001(Thoms 2001b:46, Figure 24).

[i.e., hounds used to hunt escaped slaves], which are to be kept here to catch escaped prisoners.”⁶⁶

That the expansion of the stockade was accomplished by an official impressment order is attested to by Sergeant Heartsill, a noncommissioned officer with W.P. Lane’s ranger unit charged with guarding Camp Ford. His journal entry for April 13, 1864, included the statement that “details of our victory [at Mansfield] still comes GOOD ... Col. Allen receives orders to prepare for three or four thousand prisoners. Snediker returned. L.J. Keener, E.L. Jarrott, T.J. Pounds and J.W. Shepherd are detailed to go into the country and impress Negroes to build a larger stockade.” On the 15th he wrote that “a large number of Negroes are at work enlarging the stockade.”⁶⁷

Compared to the original construction project, the expansion effort must have required an even greater input of slave labor within a shorter period of time. The second construction project entailed: (1) removal and halving of logs from the original east and north walls; (2) “docking” the upper half of logs along the west and south walls; (3) clearing 15 to 20 acres of forested landscape within and around the expanded stockade; (4) cutting, trimming, transporting, and splitting hundreds of new logs for the stockade; and (5) excavation of more than 2,500 feet of new footing-trenches and raising the new stockade (*Figure 6*). Surely several hundred slaves were required for these tasks, such that when added to the estimated 600 individuals used in the first project, it seems likely that at least 1,000 African Americans ultimately participated in erecting the POW stockade at Camp Ford.

Enslaved African Americans were also responsible for other activities at Camp Ford. Corporal David G. MacLean of the 83rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry wrote that he paid an old man 10 cents to help him transport 72 rails he had cut to construct his new cabin at the POW camp. Apparently the man was making a routine trip to supply Camp Ford with wood (firewood?). MacLean said he carried the rails to the roadside “where he knew the old Negro man and oxen team would pass along to the prison with wood. When he came along, I made him stop until I loaded them on top of his load.”⁶⁸ In another account, a young slave drove a wagonload of food to Camp Ford that was destined to be sold to POWs.⁶⁹

African Americans in Military Roles

The U.S. Congress authorized employment of African Americans in constructing entrenchments and performing camp services in July 1862, and in May 1863, the War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops.⁷⁰ Ultimately, approximately 180,000 African Americans were inducted, about 150,000 were ex-slaves and more than 30,000 were freedmen from the North.⁷¹ Hummel argued that the total figure was nearly 200,000 and that “over half were recruited right off plantations along the Mississippi River or the southern coast—a few even drafted at gun point.”⁷² In addition to their roles in armed conflicts, African Americans in the Union services

guarded Confederate prisoners, built canals, and worked on other construction projects. They also searched for their still-enslaved brethren and drew them into the advancing Union Army.⁷³

Frank Smyrl reported that 47 African Americans from Texas found service in the Union Army, along with 2,132 white Texans.⁷⁴ In a more recent history of black troops in the Civil War, Noah Trudeau also used the figure of 47 Texas blacks being recruited into the U.S. Army,⁷⁵ but it seems likely that the number of escaped Texas slaves who served may have been significantly larger. Southern states where the Union Army came to hold substantial tracts of territory were among those that provided the most black recruits. As such, escaped Texas slaves may well have been among the 24,052 individuals who joined the Union army in Louisiana or the 5,526 men who joined in Arkansas.⁷⁶ Certainly, C.S.A. military authorities were worried about hundreds of slaves being recruited by the Union. When the Union Army took the southern Rio Grande Valley, regrouping Confederate troops were directed to

... drive all livestock herds, especially beef cattle and horses suitable for cavalry service, north of the Nueces River. And the troops were instructed to leave no Negro men within riding distance of a Union recruiting officer. If owners refused to evacuate their able-bodied male slaves, the rebels were ordered to “take forcible possession of them, or in the last alternative, shooting them, for they will become willing or unwilling soldiers against us”.⁷⁷

Indeed, Union recruiting officers in Brownsville soon set up shop and invited African Americans along with white Texans to volunteer to fill eight new regiments.⁷⁸ Jacob Branch, an ex-slave who lived in southeast Texas and participated in the Federal Writers Project, confirmed General Smith’s concerns with his statement that after the war started, “lots of slaves runned off to git to de Yankees. All dem in dis part heads for de Rio Grande river.”⁷⁹ Martin Jackson, a Texas slave who was with his owner and the Confederate Army at the Battle of Mansfield, stated that “lots of colored boys did escape and joined the Union Army, and there are plenty of them drawing pensions today.”⁸⁰

African American troops in the Union army participated in hundreds of skirmishes and 39 major battles, including the last battle of the Civil War, fought on May 12-13, 1865, in south Texas near the mouth of the Rio Grande River.⁸¹ Known as the Palmito Ranch Battle, it was fought in part by 250 troops from the 62nd U.S. Colored Infantry along with several hundred white troops. They confronted and were eventually defeated by several hundred Confederate troops, including 300 cavalry men under the command of Colonel John “Rip” Ford,⁸² the man for whom Camp Ford was named.⁸³

African Americans also briefly served in the Confederate Army. In Louisiana, this occurred as early as 1861.⁸⁴ The Virginia legislature authorized the conscription of free and enslaved African Americans in March 1865, but only a few companies were formed, one of which served as a local defense unit in Richmond.⁸⁵ More commonly, Confederate officers brought enslaved men and boys with them to the front to serve as personal attendants. There are numerous accounts about good relationships between owners and their enslaved servants, but after the Emancipation Proclamations in 1862 and 1863, there was a marked increase in “disloyalty and dissatisfaction.”⁸⁶ Nonetheless, by late 1864 and in light of worsening conditions on all fronts, General Robert E. Lee argued in favor of the immediate conscription of African American soldiers. On March 13, 1865, a bill passed both C.S.A. houses authorizing the recruitment of 300,000 able-bodied men, “irrespective of color,” and regulations were issued for the organization of “Negro regiments commanded by white officers.” However, the war ended before the new legislation could be implemented.⁸⁷

Nelson Denson, a 16-year-old slave, served as a bodyguard for his owner at the Battle of Mansfield where many Union soldiers were captured and subsequently sent to Camp Ford. He stated: “The Yanks sang the ‘Battle Cry of Freedom’ when they charged us. They came on and on, Lord, how they fought! I stayed close to Marse Grundy, and the rebels won and took about a thousand Yanks.”⁸⁸ Martin Jackson reported accompanying his owner to Mansfield where, during the battle, he manned a “kind of first-aid station” about three miles from the front.⁸⁹

Allen Price, an ex-slave born in Texas, reported on the wartime exploits of his father, a bodyguard for his owner in various campaigns under General Magruder’s command:

When they [Unionists] blockaded Galveston, our old master took my pappy for bodyguard and volunteered to help. Finally Gen. Magruder took Galveston from the Yankees with two old cotton steamers which had cotton bales on the decks for breastworks.

The last battle Master Price and pappy were in was the Battle of Sabine Pass, and the Yankee General, Banks, sent about five-thousand troops on transports with gunboats to force a landing. Captain Dick Dowling had seven men to defend the pass, and my pappy helped build breastworks when those Yankees were firing. Captain Dowling ran them Yankees off and took the steamer *Clinton* [*Clifton?*] and about three-hundred and fifty prisoners My pappy helped at the hospital after that battle.⁹⁰

The white sailors captured during the Battle of Sabine Pass were subsequently incarcerated at Camp Ford.

Kate Stone also wrote about two enslaved African Americans who accompanied members of her family to war while she and her mother remained in Tyler; she commented that these men are “most independent and

consequential” and that “they speak very learnedly of their furloughs and have wordy debates on the subject of rank.”⁹¹

African Americans POWs

Much has been written about the treatment of African American POWs during the Civil War but details are sparse and readily available records are notoriously incomplete. We know that some statements issued by the C.S.A. civilian government and military authorities recommended that no quarter be given to black troops or their white officers, and that some C.S.A. units flew “black flags” into battle against black troops to signal their intent to give no quarter.⁹² Atrocities were committed, including the killing of troops who had surrendered, but it seems likely that the value of able-bodied black men as a labor force would have curtailed full-scale implementation of “no quarter” policies.

At Fort Pillow, Tennessee, an infamous massacre of black soldiers triggered a loud outcry from the Union. It was often reported that all the African American soldiers there were killed,⁹³ but official correspondence shows that this was not the case.⁹⁴ In a letter dated May 20, 1864, written by Major General Maury in Mobile to Inspector General Cooper, it was stated that “Some negroes [sic] captured by General Forrest at Fort Pillow sent here. Put them to work on fortifications. Chief engineer will keep records of the time in order to remunerate their owners. Is my action approved?”⁹⁵

A partisan summary of the conduct of African American soldiers in service to the Union and their treatment as POWs included an 1869 report by the 40th Congress partially entitled “Treatment of Prisoners of War, by the Rebel Authorities during the War of the Rebellion.” In part it reads:

The government of the United States gave him liberty, and recognized him as a citizen, mustered him into the service, and accepted his aid against the enemy. ... A nation owes to all its defenders its care and protection, but to a citizen soldier fighting her battles, her care and protection are demanded by the call of humanity, honor, and justice.

It was in this spirit that the government of the United States insisted, under the terms of the cartel [POW exchange program] and on all occasions, that the colored soldiers should be recognized as under the protection of the laws of war, and as a subject of exchange. ... These troops entered the service, and bore arms for the Union, with the knowledge that the cold-blooded and infamous orders of Jefferson Davis consigned them to death or slavery when captured, and that for them as soldiers, there was to be no quarter in the field, camp, or prison; that their rights of prisoners of war were to

be denied and ignored, and they, if captured, sacrificed to the fell spirit of slavery. A reference to the instructions of Seddon, rebel secretary of war to General Beauregard, 30th November, 1862, in which he states that the colored troops captured in arms were subject to death ... will fully substantiate this statement.⁹⁶

More than 20 years after that report, Sergeant Henry B. Furness of the 24th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry wrote an account of prison life and prisons in the South:

There is one other phase of the treatment of prisoners of war still to be mentioned. There were repeated orders to commanders in the field to make no capture of colored soldiers. These orders were obeyed in the first instance; but the president of the Confederacy afterward modified them by directing that they should be returned to their masters, or, failing to be reclaimed, that they should be sold as property of the Confederacy. There is a noticeably small number of colored prisoners upon the records of the captured rebel archives. Of the 178,895 colored troops enlisted in the United States service during the War of the Rebellion, 737 are reported as captured by the rebels, exclusive of officers, 78 of whom died in the hands of their captors. This is about 10 ³/₅ per cent, a ratio of mortality about one-half that of the white prisoners. The whole number of white enlisted men was 2,073,112, of whom 178,354 were captured. The captured from the white troops numbered 86 in every 1,000 men; from the colored troops, 4½ in every 1,000 men. The colored troops, however, did not serve during the entire war, but became a part of the army after January 1, 1863. Making the very liberal allowance of one-half of the number per thousand, as the ratio for the last two years, during which time colored men were in the service, it is found that about ten times as many white as colored troops were made prisoners. The cause of this is to be found in the determination to take no colored prisoners. Had there been the same ratio of captures among the colored troops as among the whites, reckoned upon the above basis, the whole number should have been 7,654. As seen above, 737 are admitted to have been captured, leaving 6,917 unaccounted for, except upon the theory that the orders above alluded to were executed.⁹⁷

Treatment of African American POWs was summarized more recently as follows:

Black soldiers did not benefit much from the prisoner exchange program. Right up to the end, the Confederates found it too difficult to recognize them as prisoners of war. Most of them remained in prison, or escaped, . . . or died there—as did thousands of

white soldiers on both sides. Many, however, were assigned to work on fortifications, sometimes being subjected to Union artillery fire, or on other Confederate work projects. Some were returned to slave owners, who had access to newspapers in most large southern cities, which listed by name those former slaves who had been captured.⁹³

As the U.S. military expanded its control of Louisiana in 1863 and more and more enslaved African Americans joined the Union Army, C.S.A. General Smith sought to curb the Union's recruitment of slaves in the Trans-Mississippi Department.⁹⁹ When General Taylor's men brought in African American POWs from their skirmishes in central Louisiana, "neither the rebel military nor the local civil authorities were inclined to show these 'fugitives' any mercy."¹⁰⁰ General Smith advised Taylor to give no quarter to armed African Americans, "whether they wore the Union uniform or not, they were to be treated not as enemy soldiers but rather as slave insurrectionaries, and should be hanged."¹⁰¹ By August 1863, however, C.S.A. Secretary of War Seddon issued different instructions regarding captured "negro [sic] troops," stating that they should be shown mercy and "encouraged to submit and return to their masters."¹⁰² However, on June 6, 1864, Secretary of War Seddon and Major General Howell Cobb exchanged letters, with Cobb writing that, "We cannot consent to regard our slaves as prisoners of war when captured in the enemy's army." Seddon responded, ". . . I agree with you entirely. I doubt, however, whether the exchange of negroes [sic] at all for our soldiers would be tolerated. As to the white officers serving with negro [sic] troops, we ought never to be inconvenienced with such prisoners."¹⁰³

During the summer of 1863, Texas troops in the Confederate Army captured hundreds of black soldiers in northeast Louisiana during skirmishes at Mound Plantation, and at least some African Americans appear to have ended up in a Texas stockade. Although it is not clear just where this particular prison was located, it seems likely that further research will reveal the location:

When the men at last arrived at the POW pens set up near Delhi, some were put to work digging fortifications, while others became cooks, and at least one was appropriated as a body servant for a Texas officer. The captured black soldiers, treated not as military prisoners but rather as runaway slaves, were scattered throughout the Trans-Mississippi, with some being sent to Shreveport, others to Little Rock, and the unluckiest among them to Texas. Those sent to prison compounds instead of labor camps suffered neglect and maltreatment. According to Private Charles Fremont, a number of his comrades froze to death in a Texas stockade in early 1864; both of Fremont's feet were severely frostbitten. William H.H. Freeman, another private, attested to the fact the diarrhea prevalent in the camp was responsible for additional deaths.¹⁰⁴

At Camp Ford there were important differences between the *de jure* and *de facto* treatment of African American POWs, just as there were at the national level. From the available information, it does not seem likely that black POWs were ever imprisoned at Camp Ford, although several men may have been imprisoned in the Huntsville state prison.¹⁰⁵ While most Union POWs were held at the Huntsville prison for a few months, a “small number of black prisoners captured from Union forces were held there as “prison labor” through June 1865.”¹⁰⁶ In any event, Camp Ford played a role in controversies surrounding the treatment of African American POWs.

Unionists demanded that exchange of Camp Ford POWs be conducted “without regard to corps” (i.e., regardless of color), and that white officers of African American troops not be withheld from exchanges, as the Confederates sought to do.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless, an exchange from Camp Ford of three white officers of African American troops eventually occurred, such that “the issue of white officers of Negro units was tacitly ignored by both sides.”¹⁰⁸ When the Union Army officially began to accept African Americans, including escaped slaves, as soldiers in 1863, the Confederates refused to recognize their legitimacy as soldiers. However, they eventually agreed that free blacks serving in the U.S. Army would be treated the same as white sailors for purposes of exchange. In spite of the latter agreement, however, free African American seamen captured with white seamen were “held as laborers in Tyler” rather than being imprisoned as POWs at Camp Ford, as was the case for their white counterparts.¹⁰⁹

Robert Denney’s comprehensive compilation and interpretation of official Civil War prison records, entitled *Civil War Prisons and Escapes: A Day-by-Day Chronicle*, contains numerous entries about Camp Ford that were compiled from the “Official Records” of the War of the Rebellion.¹¹⁰ Of particular interest is U.S. Navy Lieutenant Frederick Crocker’s formal protest to the C.S.A. authorities on February 27, 1865 about African American sailors who were held separately from the white sailors at Camp Ford. After referencing a letter from General Lee to General Grant that agreed to the treatment of “free Negroes” (as opposed to “contrabands” or escaped slaves) in the Union services as legitimate POWs, Crocker added,

I therefore respectfully request that the necessary steps may be taken to furnish him [Col. Szymanski, a C.S.A. officer involved in working out exchanges] the official copy [of Lee’s letter to Grant] he requests in order that the free negroes [sic] captured on the Clifton, Sachem, Morning Light, and Ram Queen of the West, and now held to labor, may be treated as prisoners of war. I furnish herewith a partial list of free negroes [sic] captured on the above vessels, and have reason to believe that there are still more, besides contrabands whose names I have been unable to learn.¹¹¹

What Crocker seems to have said is that in addition to the “free” black sailors he personally knew, there were still other African American sailors being held to labor along with black POWs who had joined the Union military

services after they escaped slavery (i.e., contrabands). The circumstances of the men with whom Crocker was concerned have been the subject of considerable discussion.¹¹²

A potentially relevant, albeit not very specific, statement in the diary of a Camp Ford POW, Private Alexander Hobbs (*ca.* 1865), relates to the capture of Galveston and to the “sale of Negroes.”¹¹³ This hints that African American Union soldiers, as opposed to sailors, who were captured at Galveston, may have been enslaved before their fellow white soldiers were sent to Camp Ford. Evidence for the treatment of black sailors also comes from Bosson’s regimental history of the 42nd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry,¹¹⁴ wherein it is noted that African Americans from gunboats were sent to the Texas Penitentiary.¹¹⁵ Still other African American POWs were placed in service to Confederate officers and incorporated into municipal slave-labor forces.

On June 8, 1864, less than a year before the war would end, the Mayor of Houston wrote General Magruder to reiterate his complaint about African American POWs working in the city. Mayor Anders wrote, at the request of the board of alderman, that

... the negroes [sic] and persons of color, some thirty in number, captured by forces under your command from the enemy and considered as prisoners of war are going at large within the city of Houston, mixing and associating with our slave population, contrary to the laws of the State of Texas and to the laws of the Confederate States; ... [I] request that these persons be removed from our midst to work on the fortifications, or that they be turned over to the civil authorities and sent to the penitentiary under the State Law. ... Numerous complaints of our best citizens have been made to the authorities, and it seems that the whole community is alarmed. The most evil influence is exerted by these negroes [sic], who, most of them, are intelligent, shrewd, and able to read and write, and try to obtain a mastery over our slave population. It is true that a portion of these negroes [sic] are employed by the city and are guarded, but they are not under the exclusive control of the city. They are frequently sent for by officers to do special work, and the city cannot be responsible for conduct. Most of them, however, are employed as body servants to different officers, and thus enjoy the very best opportunity to obtain information and communicating the same to our negroes [sic] ... [We] desire them placed in such positions as the law provides and where they can exert no influence injurious to the best interests of this community.¹¹⁶

Some of the men held in Houston may well have been among the 27 African American sailors later sent to Tyler and held to labor at the Transportation Bureau (i.e., Kirbyville) for various tasks, possibly including excavation of

deep trenches within the compound walls to prevent or intercept escape tunnels at Camp Ford.¹¹⁷ Two African American soldiers from a prominent Massachusetts family who were captured in Galveston were sold at a Houston slave market.¹¹⁸ We know even less about whether African Americans were captured along with white soldiers in Louisiana and Arkansas. From what is known, however, it seems likely that black POWs would have been dealt with, in one fashion or another, in the vicinity of their capture. In other words, we probably need to look beyond Camp Ford itself to address relevant issues about African American POWs. Potential data sources for identifying captured, but officially undocumented, POWs might be found in the enlistment, mustering-out, and pension records for regiments and navy units held at Camp Ford. Buried in these records may well be the details of what happened to African Americans serving in units whose white soldiers were imprisoned at Camp Ford.

Daniel Lisarelli's study of POW's held at Camp Groce revealed that African American sailors, about 50 in all, were on board most Union gunboats and other vessels captured along the Texas coast and on the Red River in Louisiana. His study concludes that African American POWs were not held at Camp Ford or Camp Groce. Most black sailors were either confined at state-run prisons or incorporated into slave-labor forces managed through Magruder's Negro Labor Bureau office in Houston or directly by municipalities.¹¹⁹

Slaves as an Insurrection Force in the Trans-Mississippi Region

Throughout the Confederacy, enslaved African Americans played an active role in aiding the escape of POWs, a role that was praised in one Congressional report: "Whatever may be in store for them, they will be known and remembered hereafter as the friend of the Union prisoner."¹²⁰ Unionists who escaped from Camp Ford, including John Greene, were among those assisted by enslaved African Americans.¹²¹ One POW estimated that nearly 150 prisoners escaped, at least temporarily, by hiding in a horse-drawn cart driven by a slave and used to remove garbage each day from the compound.¹²² African Americans provided room and board for escapees and valuable intelligence information to the Union army.¹²³ As ever more enslaved people escaped, there were significant increases in "security costs" for the Confederacy and private slave owners. This situation was exacerbated by renewed calls for white males to enter military service. As oversight was necessarily relaxed, discipline of the enslaved population became more of a problem.¹²⁴

Slaves worked less than before, as they escalated their traditional resort to passive resistance, with insolence and intransigence becoming widespread In the final analysis, it was not military conquest but the fugitive slaves who brought down the South's peculiar institution. Liberation, so often presented as something the Union did for blacks, was as much something they did for themselves.¹²⁵

In some cases, C.S.A. fighting forces were diverted to capture runaway slaves. Widespread citizen opposition to impressment was also a significant destabilizing force.¹²⁶

In Texas and elsewhere in the Trans-Mississippi region, there were widespread fears of slave uprisings, even several decades prior to the Civil War.¹²⁷ By the early 1860s, concerns heightened that Union sympathizers, abolitionists, and their “black allies” were conspiring to bring about the downfall of the economic foundation of Southern lifeways.¹²⁸ Historian Randolph Campbell reported that the citizens of Tyler were especially concerned about rumors of a statewide slave insurrection. In response to citizen discoveries of a local plan the day before its scheduled implementation, “four Negroes were whipped ‘very severely,’ and one died as a result.”¹²⁹ It has been argued that this particular insurrection panic “came as fulfillment of the direst apprehensions of Smith County residents, and was accepted by most at face value ... Vigilance groups formed and at least seven persons died as a result of the groups’ actions just in the counties immediately surrounding Smith.”¹³⁰

In March 1862, again representing an effort to thwart an expected insurrection in the Tyler area, one slave was executed and 40 to 50 were imprisoned. By May of that year and with war-related increases in slave escapes, four patrols totaling 25 men were operating in Tyler. A local newspaper reported concerns that escaped slaves were “going to the Yankees.”¹³¹ Regional military authorities were also concerned, as evidenced by General Smith’s letter of September 5, 1863, wherein he noted that among the planters “there is a feeling of distrust in the loyalty of their slaves, and an anxiety to have the able-bodied males in the service of the Government.”¹³² Another incident in Tyler, reported by local and regional newspapers during the fall of 1863, points to what has been called a breakdown in “ordinary modes of subjection” and the “embattled whites’ terrified response.” In this instance, an enslaved African American accused of killing his owner was subsequently apprehended and burned at the stake by citizens.¹³³

Historian Noah Trudeau attested to the two-edged sword of terrorism in his history of black troops in the war:

Ironically, the “power of fear” used by Southern whites now turned against them. The nightmare image of armed black men began to dominate their thoughts and the way they viewed their once-secure world. An observer writing from Selma, Alabama, in July 1863 noted that the notion of “the ‘faithful slave’ is about played out. They are the most treacherous, brutal, and ungrateful race on the globe.”¹³⁴

Kate Stone, who prior to leaving her family’s plantation in Louisiana had been confronted by African American soldiers in the Union Army and by armed slaves, knew full well the dangers of insurrection.¹³⁵ In September 1864, she briefly departed her new home in Tyler to visit the old family plantation where she penned the following comments:

The Yankees know they make it ten times worse for us by sending Negroes to commit

these atrocities. The Paternal Government at Washington has done all in its power to incite general insurrection throughout the South, in hopes of thus getting rid of the women and children in one grand holocaust. We would be practically helpless should the Negroes rise, since there are so few men left at home. It is only because the Negroes do not want to kill us that we are still alive. The Negroes have behaved well, far better than anyone anticipated. They have not shown themselves to be revengeful, have been most biddable, and in many cases have been the only mainstay of their owners.¹³⁶

Hummel attributes the relative paucity of armed violence by the enslaved population to the fact that “running away was a less dangerous route to liberty.”¹³⁷

There can be little doubt that fears and apprehensions permeated all areas of society in Tyler, especially during the later years of the war. In the summer and fall of 1863 when Camp Ford was still an “open” POW camp, concerns about Union prisoners who might escape and “unite with slaves to plunder the county” reportedly alarmed women whose soldier husbands were not at home.¹³⁸ As stated in a comprehensive history of Smith County: “Rumors held that the prisoners had tried to hatch a plot to escape and had intended to lead a local slave rebellion.”¹³⁹ Mittie Marsh wrote to her soldier husband on November 12, 1863, after hearing about the escape plot by Camp Ford POWs: “They were going to take the negroes [sic] and all leave but fortunately their plan was discovered the evening before hand.”¹⁴⁰

A letter by Sarah Carter to her son also revealed that local, pro-Union citizens were allegedly involved in the plot.¹⁴¹ This, too, must have added considerably to the citizen concerns about insurrection. Colonel Duganne, in writing about what he had heard of Tyler’s “Match Plot” to burn the town in November 1863, noted the alleged involvement of “two merchants from Northern States,” and that, “The usual senseless hue and cry followed; the traders were thrown into prison; and hundreds of hapless blacks were arrested and tortured—in order to get evidence of the ‘Yankee Conspiracy.’”¹⁴²

The enslaved African Americans who labored at Camp Ford and elsewhere in Tyler and Smith County were perceived by many to be threats to the stability of the local citizenry and its government. The reports of harsh discipline, capital punishment, and vigilante terrorism provide evidence that slaves actively pursued their own freedom. Arguably, these enslaved peoples, along with white Union sympathizers, contributed significantly to the citizens’ fear of what POW Greene called the “awful things the ‘Yanks’ might do, in case of insurrection,”¹⁴³ a fear that led directly to construction of the stockade around Camp Ford.

Concluding Comments

During the course of our studies at Camp Ford, we were visited by or corresponded with individuals who trace their ancestry to: (1) POWs from several Northern states who were imprisoned at Camp Ford, including one Native American; (2) a Union “sympathizer” who was also an inmate; (3) Confederate guards who served at Camp Ford; and (4) a local civilian who sold vegetables to the POWs. While we never visited with anyone purporting to be a descendant of an enslaved African American who helped build the stockade or who was otherwise involved with Camp Ford, such descendants surely exist. Among them may be individuals who could contribute significantly to Camp Ford’s history. Further documentation of Camp Ford’s ethnic diversity should include: (1) members of local African American communities and organizations who may be knowledgeable about slave labor at Camp Ford and nearby military-industrial facilities; (2) Civil War enthusiasts and interested citizens in the Tyler area and elsewhere who have access to pertinent archival information or artifacts previously recovered from Camp Ford; and (3) older Americans from around the nation who represent our last direct links to Camp Ford insofar as they may recall stories they heard from their grandparents, great uncles and aunts, and elderly family friends who had lived and worked in the region.

A well-preserved archaeological record, together with ample historical documentation are richly illustrative of the socioeconomic links that existed among the prisoners-of-war, Confederate troops, enslaved African American and Anglo American citizens that inhabited Smith County, Texas during the era of the Civil War. To the extent that Camp Ford represents a microcosm of that epic period in American history, it stands as an invaluable historical and cultural resource.

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“WHITE” AND “COLORED” VOCES DE AMERICA

Race, Power and the Rhetoric of Dominance

DANIEL HERNANDEZ

Abstract

In Texas and the American southwest--as in America generally--from Supreme Court opinions to renowned works of history, the power of language has been used to create and maintain a social order, which favors a predominantly Anglo-American ruling class at the expense of people of color. The contending voices of the oppressor and the oppressed are rendered in the form of the epic and the novel respectively. Critical analysis and modern spirituality are two means by which the oppressed can transcend the limits which have been imposed upon them through the dominants' control of the standard language--the former by allowing language to be reclaimed and turned to liberating ends, the latter by allowing the direct apprehension of the ontological structure of reality which language serves to obscure.

Introduction

Miguel Hernández was born May 3, 1902 in Hondo, Texas, the fourth child of a single mother, predestined for a life on the margins of society. His was to be an anonymous life of labor in the fields among the “others;” a life lived thousands of times over by men and women who, in pursuit of the American Dream, have contributed immensely to the development of this nation, yet remain invisible to history. The ‘story’ of Miguel Hernández was scripted upon his birth by the dominant Euro-Protestant elite of Texas society and given narrative structure by the jurists, historians and others among the vanguard of this hegemonic faction. With only a third-grade education, few technical skills and limited English proficiency, life was indeed difficult for Miguel. Miguel had already been married three times and fathered three children by the time he met Isabel, whom he would marry and with whom he would raise ten children. For a time, Miguel dutifully followed his script, playing the role of a voiceless sharecropper, a role that made perfect sense, even to Miguel, given the logic of the world as it had been presented to him since birth. After thirty-three years of role-playing, however, a chance meeting led Miguel to attend a church function; this meeting occasioned a transformation that led him to see the world in a new light, and to resist the hegemonic cultural order and to refute the “official” narrative that had circumscribed his life to that point. We will return to Miguel’s transformation after an examination of the means by which the dominant elements within American and Texas society have defined and scripted the roles of “others.”

The Power of Language

The inherent order of God's creation is inscrutable to man. He must impose his own order on creation before it becomes comprehensible. This is illustrated in the Judeo-Christian tradition in the second of two creation stories presented in Genesis.¹ God gives life to Adam, but observes that he is alone and in need of suitable companionship. And so, "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature that was its name."² Finding no suitable companion for Adam among the beasts, God casts a deep sleep on the man and takes out one of his ribs from which He fashions a woman, whom He also brings before Adam to be named. Language provides man a logical framework for ordering the world, and for conferring meaning and intelligibility on existence. Man imposes order on creation and achieves dominion over it by naming that which he encounters within it. That which is named is objectified, labeled, and categorized. As a corollary to this, that which has no name is transparent in man's worldview. God created the world, but through his capacity for language and in the act of naming, man recreates (and debases) God's creation.³ There are thus multiplicities of reality equal to the multiplicity of languages. This power of language to shape reality is succinctly expressed by the aphorism, "I may not be able to change your mind, but if I change your language you will change your mind."

As a mutually comprehensible media of communication language has the power to unite; conversely, by virtue of the meanings it conveys and the structures it erects, language also has the power to divide, to exclude, and to dehumanize. In the latter respect, language represents the most fundamental of means by which the dominant element of a society subjugates and exerts control over its environment and over the "others" that populate it. The author of a fictional work uses language to create, populate and order a reality of his own making, writing the history and scripting the lives, utterances, and actions of characters in such a way that their fates seem predestined and resolve to coherent and logical conclusions. Similarly, those who control the coercive power of the state retain the capacity, through the "official" language of the law, legal opinion, and executive directives to explicitly order civic reality and to bring about desired social and political outcomes. The power of language was exercised thusly by Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court Roger Brooke Taney, who, in 1856, wrote for the majority in *Dred Scott v. Sandford*:

The words "people of the United States" and "citizens" are synonymous terms and mean the same thing. The question before us is, whether the class of persons described in the plea in abatement compose a portion of this people, and are constituent members of this sovereignty? We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word "citizens" in the Constitution, and can therefore

claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures to citizens of the United States.⁴

Here, the category of “citizen” is clearly and narrowly construed: those of African descent are explicitly excluded, and a social order based on the subjugation of an excluded “class of persons” to a “dominant race” is affirmed and officially sanctioned.

In *Colored Men and Hombres Aquí*, Michael Olivas describes the way in which the dominant Euro-American faction scripted race relations in the New Mexico Territory in the 19th century.⁵ Olivas analyzes the tenuous relationship that existed between New Mexican leaders and the United States government in 1846 in the aftermath of federal military occupation. At issue was the disposition of the “60,000 ethnic Mexicans, 60,000 nomadic and semi-nomadic Indians (including members of the Navajo, Apache, Comanche, Ute, and Kiowa Tribes), 15,000 Pueblo Indians, and 1,000 Euro-Americans.”⁶ Olivas’ writes:

Beyond creating a sharp divide between Pueblos and other Indians, the Lucero court braided an additional strand into its racial narrative of the territory recently ceded from Mexico. In what was a preview of public efforts by Euro-Americans to create and enshrine a “Spanish” identity and heritage among New Mexico’s mestizo villagers in the late nineteenth-century, Chief Justice Watts signaled his admiration for “the true Spanish adventurers,” whom, he emphasized, had begun colonizing Mexico (and what would become the American Southwest) long before “our timid forefathers, who peeped out into the wilderness from their colony of Plymouth.”⁷

In the foregoing examples various racial categories are delineated and assigned a relative position in the social hierarchy. The intrinsic value of “whiteness” is affirmed, and all “others” are valued according to how closely they hew to the exalted white standard. Thus, the Mexicans, though they are regarded as inferior to Anglo-Americans, nevertheless, with their admixture of native and European (Spanish) blood, are deemed “better instructed and civilized” than the Native American Pueblo Indians and maintain a position above them in the hierarchy.⁸ The delineation of the various racial categories—“American,” “European,” “Mexican,” “Indian,” “Negro”—serves not only to affirm the hegemonic superiority of the white ruling class, but also to divide and manipulate the subaltern classes, that their threat to the hegemonic order might be attenuated.

In contradistinction to creative works of fiction, the language employed by the above cited justices is not employed in the service of art or craft, but in the service of ideology and politics, with far reaching effects for the lives of whole classes of real people. But in dealing with the freighted issues of race and power, even scholarly and ostensibly objective writers of non-fiction who purport to report the world as it is can not avoid some measure of subjectivity and ideological influence. Howard Zinn says of the historian’s craft:

It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.⁹

Thus, the renowned historian Walter Prescott Webb can write frankly that his seminal work, *The Great Plains*, published in 1931, “has been confined to facts which form themselves into what the writer sees as fairly definite patterns of truth.”¹⁰ It is telling, however, with regards to his undisclosed ideological interests, that Webb approvingly cites the late 19th-century American explorer John Wesley Powell in hailing the Anglo-American settlement of the Great Plains as “a new phase of Aryan civilization”¹¹—this at a time when National Socialism was coming into ascendancy in Germany with many sympathizers in the United States.

In Webb’s epic history of the American frontier, heroic white frontiersmen bring order and civilization to a hostile and unformed wilderness “infested by a fierce breed of Indians, mounted, ferocious, unconquerable, terrible in their mercilessness... .”¹² *The Great Plains* was hailed upon its publication as a great achievement and a momentous breakthrough in the interpretation of the history of the region. Nevertheless, it is deficient as a work of history precisely because of the epic tone Webb adopts. According to Mikhail Bakhtin

The important thing is not the factual sources of the epic, not the content of its historical events, nor the declarations of its authors—the important thing is ... its reliance on impersonal and sacrosanct tradition, on a commonly held evaluation and point of view—which excludes any possibility of another approach—and which therefore displays a profound piety toward the subject described and toward the language used to describe it, the language of tradition.¹³

The Great Plains and many other outsized histories of Texas and the American frontier are monochronic in their valorization of a particular period of American history, and monologic in that they give voice only to the white point of view while excluding the voices of the Native Americans, African Americans (enslaved and free), Asian Americans and Mexican-Americans who helped to shape the history of America. When Webb states that “[T]he purpose of this book is to show how [the Great Plains], with its three dominant characteristics, affected the various peoples, nations as well as individuals, who came to take and occupy it, and was affected by them,”¹⁴ he is referring exclusively to Anglo-America and to Spain and to the effects they wrought upon the land itself. Native Americans and Mexicans appear in Webb’s narrative only as implacable foes to be overcome and as barriers to progress. Indeed, Webb states plainly that it is “not the purpose here to consider in detail the culture of the Plains Indians.”¹⁵

Rather, the “Indians” are deemed significant by Webb only insofar as they “form the connecting link between the natural environment and the [Anglo-American] civilization that within the last century has been superimposed upon it.”¹⁶ Webb devotes an entire chapter to “The Spanish Approach to the Great Plains,” and a significant portion of the chapter on “The American Approach to the Great Plains” is given over to an analysis of “The Texas Approach to the Great Plains.” Scarce mention is made of Mexico or the Mexican people, however, except to compare them unfavorably with the Spaniards and Euro-Americans. With regards to Mexican attempts at settlement and holding territory against the Plains tribes, Webb states only that “The Mexicans were even less successful than the Spaniards had been.”¹⁷ Elsewhere, Webb compares the cruelty of the Mexicans to that of the Indians,¹⁸ and extols the virtues of the Texas Rangers who “scoured the border far and near in search of marauding Indians and pillaging Mexicans,”¹⁹ and of whom, Webb notes, “If there was anything they relished more than fighting Indians, it was fighting Mexicans, hatred of whom had been engendered by a long period of border strife.”²⁰

Webb is not the sole author of the discourse on race and power in America, but rather a participant in, and indeed a product of an ongoing discourse. As Webb states in the preface to *The Great Plains*, “This book is a part of all that I have been and known.”²¹ This statement, with which Webb introduces his acknowledgments, can be understood in an expansive sense (most likely the sense in which it was intended by Webb) to suggest that the work is the product not only of the experience and expertise of the author, but also of all those that have preceded him. Alternately, the statement can be understood in a limiting sense, as an acknowledgment that an author, as the sum of his experiences and knowledge, is incapable of producing a work other than the one he produces. Either way, constrained by the horizons of discourse, Webb is to some extent not fully culpable with regards to his demeaning portrayals of Native Americans and Mexicans, but neither is he fully blameless. Bearing as they do the authoritative stamp of “objective” scholarship and “expert” opinion, Webb’s statements, and the statements of other scholars like him, have the capacity to reset the parameters of the discourse within which they are uttered; which is to say, those who wield the power of language assume a substantial moral responsibility to ensure that they utilize language in its capacity to unite and not in its capacity to divide and exclude.

By 1896, forty years following the *Dred Scott* decision, the discourse on race relations in America had evolved such that Americans of African descent were no longer relegated to the category of “non-citizen.” Progress with regards to establishing more equitable relations of power among the races was only incremental at best, however, and the federal courts continued to abdicate their (moral) responsibility to ensure the full equality of the races. The passive affirmation of the status quo of white hegemonic domination is evident in Justice Henry Brown’s majority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, handed down in 1896. Brown writes:

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff’s argument to consist in the assumption

that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. . . . If the civil and political rights of both races be equal, one cannot be inferior to the other civilly or politically. If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.²²

Another forty-seven years after *Plessy*, the discourse regarding race relations was resumed on a regional level in Texas. Founded in 1943, The Texas Good Neighbor Commission was charged with seeking ways to improve Anglo-Hispanic social relations in the state and cement economic and political ties between Texas and Latin America, chiefly with an eye to countering growing German influence in the region. According to historian Nellie Kingrea,

The second resolution adopted by the Commission at the third meeting was that consideration be given to the motion made by Rafael de la Colina in regard to a law to enforce anti-discrimination practices. This was also one of the topics discussed by Manuel Tello with the Executive Secretary in Mexico City. At the meeting of the Commission, May 12, 1944, the advantages and disadvantages of this action were discussed. Briefly, the opinion of R. W. Fairchild, the legal consultant of the Commission, was that it was not the time to introduce such a law; that there was not sufficient favorable public opinion to enforce a law making discrimination against Latin Americans a legal offense even if it were passed.²³

Kingrea goes on to report Commissioner Fairchild's opinion on the matter, which is a clear echo of Justice Henry Brown's opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

The one thing which I fear more than anything else is that the agitation for legislation designed to protect Latin Americans as a class from discrimination will do far more harm than good. My reason for this is that at the present time, the feeling against the Negro race in Texas is more heated and stronger than it has been in a generation, solely because of repeated attempts to enforce, by passage of laws, certain adjustments between the white and Negro races.²⁴

Fairchild does not explicitly reference *Plessy*; but the influence of Brown's opinion—that the state lacks authority to legislate social equality—is clear. Equally clear is that in the context of the discourse on social relations among the races in the American Southwest, African Americans and Mexican Americans were still considered to be second-

class citizens, even if they were not explicitly categorized as such. Thus, it is not surprising that in the end, de la Colina's motion was not carried. Nor is it surprising that though the commission eventually recommended legislation prohibiting discrimination against Mexican Americans, the legislation was never passed by the state legislature.²⁵

Though the utterances in the discourse on race relations in America changed over the span of eighty-seven years from *Dred Scott* to the Texas Good Neighbor Commission, the underlying discourse did not change appreciably. We can look to language to understand why this is so. The loose definition of the term "equality" applied by Justice Brown in 1896 and by Commissioner Fairchild in 1944, is equivalent in its effect to the narrow definition of "citizenship" applied by Justice Taney in 1856. Taney, by his pronouncement, actively and officially enshrined the principle of race-based exclusion and oppression in 19th-century America. While Brown and Fairchild do not actively extend this principle, nevertheless, by their failure to recognize the social equality of all classes they passively consent to the principle of race-based oppression and thus reinforce and extend the hegemonic domination of the white ruling class in America and in Texas. Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed the passivity which abets injustice in his 1963 *Letter from Birmingham Jail*. King writes:

I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is ... the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice ... Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is more bewildering than outright rejection.²⁶

Forty-five years later, the "moderates" still hold sway. "Order" and "security," whether in regards to the threat of urban crime, illegal migrant laborers, or terrorism, are the primary devotions, the primary issues of "national-popular" significance upon which the current hegemonic bloc in the United States bases its appeal. This bloc has been abetted by the general population's passivity in the face of the abrogation of international treaty obligations and Constitutionally enshrined civil rights, which constitute direct challenges to justice.

Transforming the Rhetoric of Dominance

The political and civil rights of all classes of Americans are, in theory, recognized and protected by the state; but this does not constitute authentic liberation which cannot be given to the oppressed from above, nor won on their behalf, but must be won by the oppressed through their direct participation in the historical (temporal) process of humanization.²⁷ Critical dialogue and modern spirituality are two means by which authentic liberation

may be effected. In the former case, the condition of liberation is brought about through the transformation of the structures of oppression, and in the latter by bypassing the structures of oppression altogether through the direct apprehension of the ontological structure of creation.

Paulo Freire says of dialogue,

[it] is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur ... between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression.²⁸

Freire insists, as does Antonio Gramsci, that the oppressed must adopt and master the “standard,” or “national-popular,” language. For Gramsci this was a means of uniting a subaltern class divided by dialect; but Gramsci and Freire are in agreement that mastery of the standard language is critical if the oppressed are not to remain at the periphery of political life.²⁹ Few in America have mastered language, or understood its power to shape reality, like Martin Luther King, Jr. In *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* he writes:

Though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. ... Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth, and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation, and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.³⁰

By reclaiming the word that had been used to label him, King begins to effect, in part, the transformation of the structures of oppression. With the re-appropriation of language, history and the historical process—the present and future included—are also reclaimed. The old epic forms, however, bound as they are to the language of tradition, are not adequate for recording the history of a nation that espouses the principles of liberty and justice for all. In contrast to the epic, stands the novel. Bakhtin draws the contrast thusly: where the epic is monochronic and valorizing with respect to the past and its relations of power, the novel is indeterminate, providing for “a certain semantic open-endedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present).”³¹ The novel thus permits a confrontation with the past, which can then be mastered in the present and transformed for the future. Subjected to novelization, genres “become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extra literary heteroglossia and the ‘novelistic’ layers of literary language, they become dialogized”³² Bakhtin observes that “any single national language” is stratified “into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve

the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour”³³

In contrast to epic monologia and monoglossia, the form of the novel permits this “multiplicity of social voices” to be heard, makes known their “distinctive links and interrelationships,” and allows for the “movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization”³⁴ What is called for, then, is the novelization of history; not in the sense of its fictionalization—for our history is already fictionalized to a large degree—but in the sense of giving voice to those who heretofore have been rendered voiceless, and thus giving back humanity to those who have been dehumanized. Through the lens of novelization the ideological distortions that, according to Howard Zinn, are inevitably part of the historian’s craft can be brought back into focus.

Nellie Kingrea’s citation of Pauline Kibbe’s book, *Latin Americans in Texas* offers further insight as to the social status of and attitudes towards migrant laborers in Texas in the 1940’s:

Generally speaking the Latin American migratory worker going into West Texas is regarded as a necessary evil, nothing more or less than an unavoidable adjunct to the harvest season. Judging by the treatment that has been accorded him in that section of the state, one might assume that he is not a human being at all, but a species of farm implement that comes mysteriously and spontaneously into being coincident with the maturing of the cotton, that requires no upkeep or special consideration during the period of its usefulness, needs no protection from the elements, and when the crop has been harvested, vanishes into the limbo of forgotten things-until the next harvest season rolls around. He has no past, no future, only a brief and anonymous present.³⁵

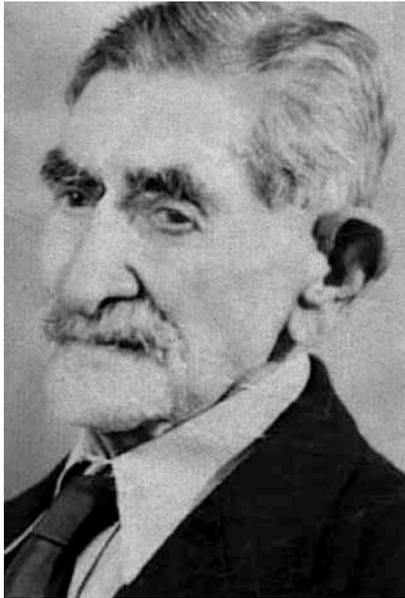
The foregoing paints a stark image of the social field which Miguel Hernández was forced to navigate. Understanding this field and understanding Miguel’s personal choices regarding his participation in and navigation of this field is of special interest to me, because Miguel Hernández and his family, myself included, were among the migrant workers who traveled between Bryan, Texas and the Lockettville cotton gin north of Lubbock during the 1950s. We repeated the round-trip journey for many years, living in abandoned rail cars along the way. And yet, this phase of Miguel’s life represented a hugely positive step for Miguel and his extended family. To understand how this is so, we must return to the story of Miguel’s life-altering transformation.

Where the secular approach to transformation breeches the hegemonic bulwark by bringing to bear the preponderant weight of critical analysis in a frontal assault on the hegemonic construct of reality, modern spirituality relieves the burdens of oppression by imparting strength through faith and by rendering comprehensible the formerly inscrutable order intrinsic to God’s creation. In both instances, oppression is no longer regarded as

an immutable fact, but is unveiled and rendered as an object of reflection subject to transformation, leading to a realization of liberation as the dialectical synthesis of a “limit-situation” and individual freedom.³⁶ As described earlier, a chance meeting in the fields led Miguel to attend a church function, where an ontological awareness dawned within him. He came to know the love of God, both as object and as subject. This experience of love imbued him with a will to power, not in the sense of a desire to dominate others; but in the sense of dynamic self-affirmation, even in the face of internal and external negation. Thus affirmed, Miguel was able to confidently assert his intrinsic claim to justice.³⁷ No longer would he be named by or defined in relation to the dominant, white, landowning class; but solely by his relationship with God.

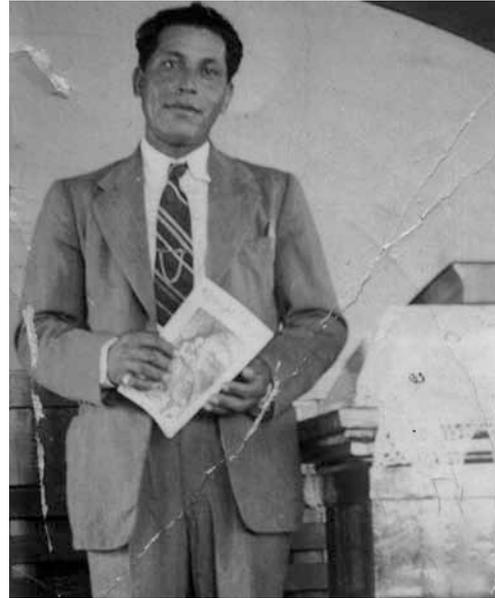
One soggy morning, in the wake of this spiritual transformation, Miguel asked Frank Seale, whose land he had worked for many years, if he would give his eldest daughter a ride to the local school, some two miles distant. A night of rain had turned the rural roads to muck, and since Seale was already driving his own daughter to school, Miguel thought he might be willing to give his daughter a ride as well. Seale, however, refused; and with this refusal the realization dawned on Miguel that while his view of the world and his place in it had been transformed, the world around him had not. This refusal of a simple favor proved to be the catalytic event that prompted Miguel to jettison once and for all the script he had followed since birth. Under threat of violence, Miguel left the farm of Frank Seale and set out with his family for Bryan, Texas. This was no small feat, for as Freire observes, many among the oppressed are held back by a fear of freedom. “Fear of freedom,” he writes, “of which its possessor is not necessarily aware, makes him see ghosts. Such an individual is actually taking refuge in an attempt to achieve security, which he or she prefers to the risks of liberty.”³⁸ Emboldened by his new found faith, Miguel must have felt as Martin Luther King, Jr. would come to feel: “If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.”³⁹ The move to Bryan was Miguel’s *hejira*, and it marked the dawn of a new era of hardship, but also of opportunity, for Miguel and his family.

Thomas Jefferson foresaw the dire consequences of a social system that did not offer equal opportunity and justice to all of its members. George Brown Tindall cites Jefferson, who wrote in his *Notes on Virginia*, “Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever.”⁴⁰ Tindall observes, “Jefferson, like many other white Southerners were riding the tiger and did not know how to dismount.”⁴¹ Today, it is our great challenge to facilitate a dismount from Tindall’s metaphorical tiger that we might bring an end to policies and attitudes that foment exclusion and oppression, and ensure that all people, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or national origin are able to participate fully in society, and that their stories are told. In meeting this challenge we must not let fear guide us—neither fear of the “other,” nor fear of freedom. I, for one, in light of the example set by my father, Miguel Hernández, am confident that fear will not prevail: “For God has not given us the



Pablo Hernandez, Circa 1933

Pablo's invitation to attend church, and his insistence that Miguel view himself as a "child of God" were instrumental in Miguel's transformation.



Miguel Hernandez, Circa 1936

Miguel standing at the pulpit, where he often preached and testified as to how God had changed his life.



Circa 1933

Miguel Hernandez (hat in hand) with members of the church in Wheelock, Texas



Circa 1936

Miguel, his wife Isabel, and their children stand in front of their North Parker Street residence in Bryan, Texas where they moved after leaving the farm in Wheelock. Children, from left to right: Magdalena, Andres, David, Isabel, and Miguel, Jr., the first of eight siblings to graduate from Texas A&M University.

“Spirit of Fear, But of Love, Power and Sound mind.”⁴²

1. See Genesis 2:5-23.
2. Genesis 2:19, in Charles Ryrie, ed. *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 10.
3. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993) 69.
4. Maurien Harrison and Steve Gilbert, *The Great Decisions of the Supreme Court* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003) 15.
5. Michael Olivas, *Colored Men and Hombres Aquí: Hernández v. Texas and the Emergence of Mexican American Lawyering* (Houston: Arte Publico, 2006).
6. *Ibid.* 4.
7. *Ibid.* 22.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States: 1492-Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003) 8.
10. Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Chicago: Ginn, 1931) 485.
11. *Ibid.* vi and 2.
12. *Ibid.* 141.
13. M.M. Bakhtin: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Michael Holquist, ed. (Austin: University of Texas, 1998) 16.
14. Webb 8.
15. *Ibid.* 52.
16. *Ibid.* 47.
17. *Ibid.* 160.
18. *Ibid.* 166.
19. *Ibid.* 167.
20. *Ibid.* 177.
21. *Ibid.* vii.
22. Harrison and Gilbert 15-16.
23. Nellie Kingrea, *History of the First Ten Years of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1954) 47.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.* 134.
26. Martin Luther King, Jr.: *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Carson Clayborne. (New York: Warner 1998) 195.
27. Freire stresses this point throughout in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
28. Freire 69.
29. Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action* (London: Zed, 1999).
30. King 198.
31. Bakhtin 7.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.* 262-63.
34. *Ibid.* 263.
35. Kingrea 20.
36. Freire discusses the process of liberation in these terms with particular reference to the critical, pedagogical approach.
37. For a discussion of the ontological dimensions of love, power and justice see Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (New York: Oxford, 1954).
38. Freire 18.
39. King 202.
40. George Brown Tindall, *America: A Narrative History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984) 236.
41. *Ibid.*
42. 2 Timothy 1:7, in Ryrie.

(RE)THINKING DIVERSITY: RESISTING ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE IN THE DESIGN STUDIO¹

AKEL ISMAIL KAHERA

Abstract

The systemic influence of postmodern pedagogy has resulted in a myriad of misplaced anxieties concerning the value of diversity in architectural education. My aim in this essay is to briefly discuss the value of culture and diversity which may in fact require us to adjust our design curricula to avoid oversimplified “-isms” and clichés. Culture, from the Latin cultura stemming from colere, meaning “to cultivate,” generally refers to patterns of human activity and the symbolic structures that give such activities significance and importance. Above all teaching diversity is a way to resist absolute design knowledge, by which I mean the emphasis on a Euro-centric canon. This is a contentious issue. While some educators have come to see diversity as a way to revive cultural value, lost meaning, and symbols, many others believe wholeheartedly in the established cannon constructed through digital technology.

(Re)Thinking Diversity

Diversity is a term that stands for a turning away from, an unlikeness, a difference. But as a solitary being, the weed in the rose garden is not diverse, nor is a radically deviant avant-garde work of art.²

By the mid-1980s, contemporaneous with the rise of postmodernism,³ architecture curricula in the United States had come to be characterized by a marked lack of cultural diversity. More recently, in 2004 the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) conference at Hampton University issued a call for diversity in architectural education under the title *Not White*. By implication the overwhelming response to *Not White* suggests that the discourse on diversity has been blurred by the culture of postmodernism, which produced a philosophical language that only a few might fathom. Academics who perceived the failure of postmodernism also recognized the ontological rupture that it caused; but it nevertheless has come to influence the way we teach. It is not naïve to suggest that postmodernism disrupted the cultural and social values and agenda of architectural praxis, and therefore detached architecture from the human condition (after all, the environmental crisis is a human crisis). How then, do we explore the value of teaching diversity in such a complex intellectual climate? And

how then, do we go beyond the inherent contradictions of history to construct a discourse and a pedagogy that has profound intellectual meaning?

For a long time the rich diversity of vernacular building traditions of Africa, Asia, and the Far East, have been neglected and displaced among the anomalies of architectural education and scholarship. In (re)thinking diversity, we need also to (re)evaluate vernacular building traditions, which may in fact require us to adjust our approach to design studio pedagogy and reduce our reliance on oversimplified “-isms” and clichés. For example, one possible approach encourages students to explore a genre of “primitive” forms: to extract simulacra and archetypes from cultural objects such as the African mask. In fact, the juxtapositions of simulacra and archetypes found in vernacular building traditions of Africa do not advocate for the separation of human reasoning from the “primitive,” but in fact help us to understand the privileged position of “primitivism” best described by Edward Said as “one powerful discursive system maintaining hegemony over another.”

In West Africa, the griot, or *jeli* (also *jali*) is the embodiment of collective memory. As a living repository of oral tradition, the griot stands at the forefront of the transmission of symbolism, iconography and myth. Through the evocative power of language, through his knowledge of history, and through his command of song and story the griot exposes facets of the various myths and symbols, which are embraced by the common folk. While there exist an appreciative capacity on the part of architectural curricula to escape from a narrow understanding and interpretation of oral history, sincere academic appreciation remains inherently rigid or absent. In other words, in exploring the relationship between oral traditions and spatial paradigms, the role of the griot could be particularly stimulating for students; however, this will invariably necessitate changes in the way we structure design pedagogy, as well as in our current conceptions of truth, beauty and aesthetics.

Apart from the songs, stories and poems of the griot, elements of culture in African societies are also articulated and transformed through the instrumental and aesthetic works of various artisans and crafts-people, weavers and blacksmiths among them. Members of the endogamous caste of weavers among the Mande people of West Africa spin yarn from locally grown cotton, which is then woven into strips which are pieced together to form blankets. The designs woven into the cloth are abstract or semi-abstract—including patterns of lozenges, triangles, chevrons and spots—and bear descriptive names such as “stream” (*wuwamyanko*), “cowrie” (*kolowi*), “Mali,” “twisted road” (*fini n’goloni sirakele*), “small drum” (*n’tamani*), “grasshopper neck” (*n’kerenkan*), and “sickle” (*woroso*). In the pattern known as “Samory’s griot standing in a stream,” (Samory Touré was the founder of the Wassoulou Empire, an Islamic military state that resisted French colonialism in West Africa in the late 19th-century) heavy lines represent the fortified walls (*tata*) of the capitol city of Sikasso, zigzagging lines represent the paths of Samory’s soldiers, and a circle with drums represents the griot standing in the middle of a stream urging

Samory to battle. Patterns such as these tell stories, which in turn preserve the collective memory with a *raison d'être* that avoids literal description, yet permits a glimpse of an unfamiliar abode—the cultural abode of the common folk who translate the story into both object and edifice.⁴

Though Mande blacksmiths share membership in the same class of specialized professionals as the weavers, they occupy a social space closer to the ideological core of Mande society. Patrick McNoughton comments on the confusing social space inhabited by the blacksmiths in sub-Saharan Africa, who seem to live in two conflicting dimensions, “at once glorified and shunned, feared and despised, afforded special privileges and bounded by special interdictions,”⁵ their dual status being a reflection of the great, even occultic, power the smiths are perceived to wield. McNoughton notes the degree to which the Mande blacksmiths in particular are involved in the articulation of social and spiritual space. More than mere metal workers, the Mande smiths are multi-talented craftsmen. In addition to the manufacture and repair of such utilitarian objects as farm implements, spears, and rifles, many smiths also perform circumcision rites, carve doors and door locks, craft sculptures of iron and wood, and create ritual masks. The smiths lead the secret societies that preserve and protect the masks and the rituals associated with them, and often don the masks and perform the ritual dances themselves. Owing to the smiths’ extensive and deep involvement in all matters of Mande society, their instrumental and aesthetic artifacts are useful models for interpreting a breadth of Mande social and spiritual activities. In this respect, says McNoughton, the smiths function as intermediaries not only between nature and culture, but also in the full range of social relations: “We can characterize them as coming between individuals, between individuals and situations, and between individuals and the forces at work in the Mande universe.”⁶

The smiths not only partake of the principles of Mande social form, but importantly, McNoughton observes, “they make form themselves. They are chartered by their culture to build, construct, fabricate, create, in a wide variety of materials across an equally broad spectrum of human situations. Part of their mandate is, in fact, to build social form anew with each succeeding generation and to help maintain that form with all of the other things they do and make.”⁷ If, as Cornel West suggests, “Architecture [embodies] the structures of freedom, domination, capitalism, democracy, and other institutions that have an effect on people,”⁸ then we can confidently assert that the Mande smiths are cognate with Western architects in the sense that both serve to “facilitate, articulate and translate across a broad spectrum of [social] concerns, from the aspirations of individuals to the smooth functioning of the whole society.”⁹ Further parallels between the aesthetic methods of the smiths and those of Western architects are evident in McNoughton’s description of the smiths’ approach to sculpture: “First, in sculpting [the smiths] reduce their subject to a collection of highly abstract elements Next, these elements are linked in dramatic but carefully controlled configurations through the acumen of the smiths, so that a vigorous new entity is created.”¹⁰

McNoughton says,

The importance of the blacksmiths' fortes, facilitating, transforming and articulating, becomes clearer when we view them as elements in the conceptual underpinnings of Mande ideology. They are, in fact, major elements, because few societies place greater emphasis on the act of becoming. ... The Mande interest in becoming constitutes an interest in movement, from what one is to what one ought to be.¹¹

Yet this ontological awareness and emphasis on "becoming" is no less a defining feature of modernity than of Mande ideology. For at least three reasons, then, the Mande smiths are of interest in an inquiry into diversity in architectural education. First, an understanding of their methods can be enlightening with regards to developing a deeper understanding of the creative process and introducing new modes of aesthetic reasoning. Second, analysis of the works of the smiths permits a glimpse of an unfamiliar and exotic culture which can potentially open students' minds to new "universes" and new possibilities of interpretation. Third, to the extent that the role of the smith in Mande society correlates to that of the architect in Western society, comprehending the role of the smiths and their milieu can be instructive in comprehending the role of architecture in contemporary Western society, in particular, the ethical dimensions of practice. It is not, however, specifically Mande culture that is of interest—in-depth inquiry into indigenous cultures elsewhere, as well as traditional cultures in Europe, would no doubt prove similarly rewarding.

Discussion

While profoundly enlightening, the status of non-Western space-making traditions remains indeterminate, displaced among the anomalies of architectural education, research and scholarship. It is my contention that this displacement originates from a Euro-centric worldview, which to a great extent shapes our aesthetic values and the way we teach design today. A seemingly inevitable shortcoming of this worldview is the failure to precisely define architecture, or to rely on the clichéd distinction between mere construction and noble craft. Le Corbusier draws the distinction thusly:

Architecture is a thing of art, a phenomenon of the emotions, lying outside questions of construction and beyond them. The purpose of construction is TO MAKE THINGS HOLD TOGETHER; of architecture TO MOVE US. Architectural emotion exists when the work rings within us in tune with a universe whose laws we obey, recognize and respect. When certain harmonies have been attained, the work captures us. Architecture is a matter of "harmonies," it is "a pure creation of the spirit."¹²

Reyner Banham, on the other hand, proffers a much less vague and more circumscribed definition of architecture, which he suggests amounts to “the exercise of an arcane and privileged aesthetic code”¹³ which is “distinguished from other building arts by fundamental modes of designing—not by what is done, but by how it is done.”¹⁴ Architecture, says Banham, is essentially “a set of rules of thumb derived from, and entirely proper to, the building arts of the Mediterranean basin alone, and whose master discipline, design, is simply *disegno*, a style of draughtsmanship once practised only in central Italy.”¹⁵ Yet through a process of “vulgar cultural imperialism,” the whole of the human enterprise of building and spatial manipulation across all space and time has been subsumed under the rubric of architecture,¹⁶ opening the architectural dogmatists to that most fatal of errors identified some four centuries ago by Francis Bacon which “occurs wherever argument or inference passes from one world experience to another.” With the acknowledgment of the limits of architecture, however, “We might,” according to Banham, “have a better view of the true value and splendours of the building arts and design methods of other cultures, avoiding ... sentimentality We might also be more securely placed to study the mysteries of our own building art ... ,”¹⁷ that is, architecture in the limited sense suggested by Banham.

The single most important marker in arguments of this type is the term “primitive,” which acquires a pejorative nuance in the teleological discourses of architecture history and criticism, with the result that the cultural artifacts and building traditions of Africa, Asia and the Far East have largely been marginalized. Alternatively, there is the danger of lapsing into reverential though superficial primitivism or misguided positivism, as when primitive building forms are cataloged and interpreted strictly as technical solutions to problems posed by climate and the availability of material resources. Such admiration is not without justification: as Claude Levi-Strauss observes, “A primitive people are not a backward or retarded people; indeed it may possess, in one realm or another, a genius for invention or action that leaves the achievement of civilized people far behind.”¹⁸ But while primitive people do not lack inventive genius, “Nor do [they] lack history, although its development often eludes us.”¹⁹ Enrico Guidoni stresses this point in rebutting the positivists: “While architecture reflects the environment, on the whole it tends to be only minimally affected by its restrictions. This is so because architecture is, in fact, more a historical than a geographical product...”²⁰

The term primitive is problematic—“non-pedigreed,” “vernacular,” “anonymous,” “spontaneous,” “indigenous,” and “rural” are alternatives suggested by Bernard Rudofsky²¹—because the whole idea of non-Western (non-architectural) spatial-appropriations embodies cultural nuances that demand careful explication in order that their meanings are understood. As Guidoni observes,

Architecture ... to be historically comprehensible must be considered in relation to the whole gamut of activities having to do with the comprehension and transformation of

space and their interpretation within the society in question; it must also be considered in relation to other kinds of activity: economic, ritual, and so forth. The contradiction between physical, architectonic, and material structure and cultural and interpretative superstructure, then, becomes a matter internal to the society, revealing itself as a contradiction between the real organization of space and construction and the system of interpretation inherent in it.²²

That said, perhaps as we examine our seminal role as educators—those of us who teach design—we will come to understand the extent to which we are compelled to connect landscape and habitat to language, culture and ritual. If we are to prepare students for a multicultural world we must take account of diversity and allow for multiple possibilities of interpretation with the understanding that no single interpretation can account for reality or for all that is related to spatial appropriations, race, gender and culture. Multiple interpretations provide a way to navigate a matrix of relationships that too often are ignored or forgotten, and likewise diminish the authority of primitivism. Indeed, there is implicit in Corbusier’s use of the indefinite article in his description of architecture as a matter of “harmonies”—he refers not to “*the* universe,” but “*a* universe whose laws we obey”—the possibility of multiple universes.

In fact, “the principal movements of modern art—Fauvism, Cubism, German Expressionism, Surrealism, Futurism—all were directly affected by African art.”²³ None other than Pablo Picasso confirmed the African mask as a great source of aesthetic power when he wrote, “The whole Renaissance tradition is antipathetic to me... I have such a liking for primitive art ... Negro [African] masks in particular opened a new horizon to me because they allowed me to make contact with instinctive things, with direct manifestations which were in opposition to the false traditions that I abhorred.”²⁴ Le Corbusier expressed a similar admiration for “Negro” culture when he said in reference to a performance by Josephine Baker, “There is in this American Negro music a lyrical ‘contemporary’ mass so invincible that I could see the foundation of a new sentiment of music capable of being the expression of the new epoch and also capable of classifying its European origins as stone-age ...”²⁵ Though he characterizes Le Corbusier’s attitude as still “highly problematic” with regards to acknowledging cultural politics and the role of difference, Cornel West nonetheless credits Corbusier with “grappling with difference in such a way that something does occur,” as evidenced in the *Unité* and *Ronchamp*.²⁶

The late architect, educator and long-time Dean of the Chanin School of Architecture at The Cooper Union, John Hejduk, was profoundly inspired by the Cubists and by Le Corbusier. Thus, it would seem promising with respect to diversity when Hejduk tasked his students to “do a building in the intention of [Cubist painter] Juan Gris.”²⁷ Yet Hejduk’s work stands at a far remove from the original “primitive” source material that inspired



Figures 1 and 2

Fulani Blanket from Mali: Although collected by the author in Saudi Arabia, (circa 1983) this cloth pattern, technique and textile was made by the Fulani pastoralists who live along the Niger River Bend (Mali). The weaver of this cloth masterfully arranged white areas, colored stripes, and checkerboard patterns to create the bold by symmetrical overall design.

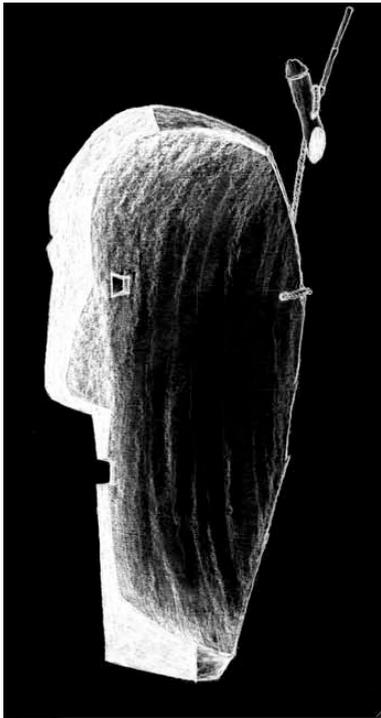


Figure 3
Drawing of an African Mask, by
Adam Long fourth Year Design
Studio *School of Architecture, Prairie
View A&M University 2005,*

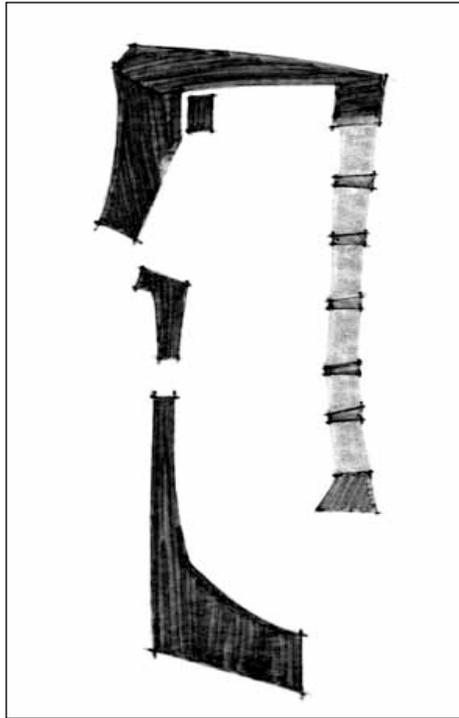


Figure 4
Profile/Section of an African Mask.

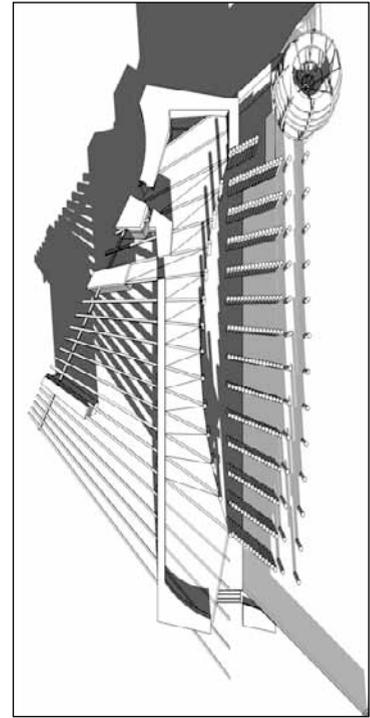


Figure 5
Development of a plan derived
from a mask.

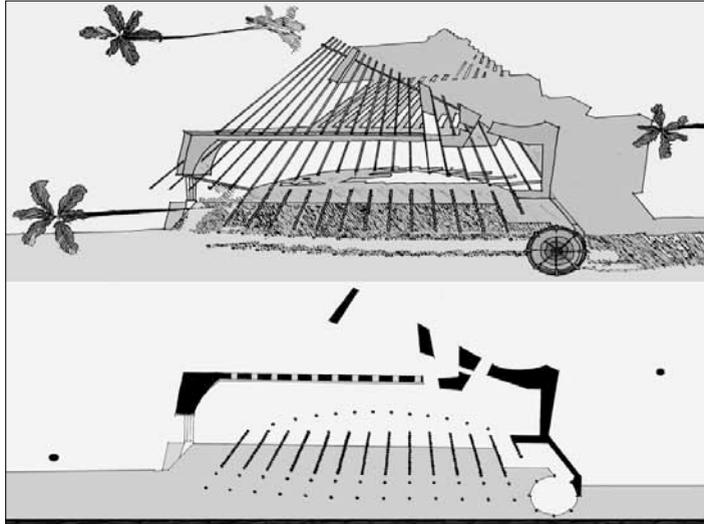


Figure 6
Development of a plan derived from a mask.

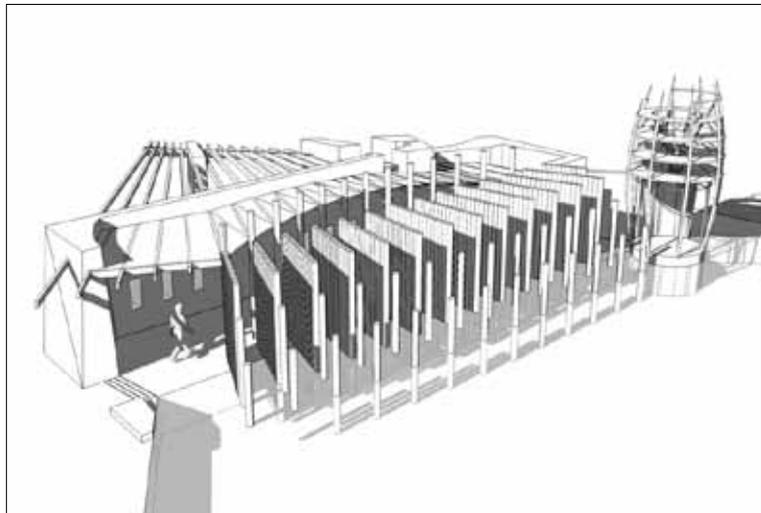


Figure7
Development of a design concept/structure derived from a mask.

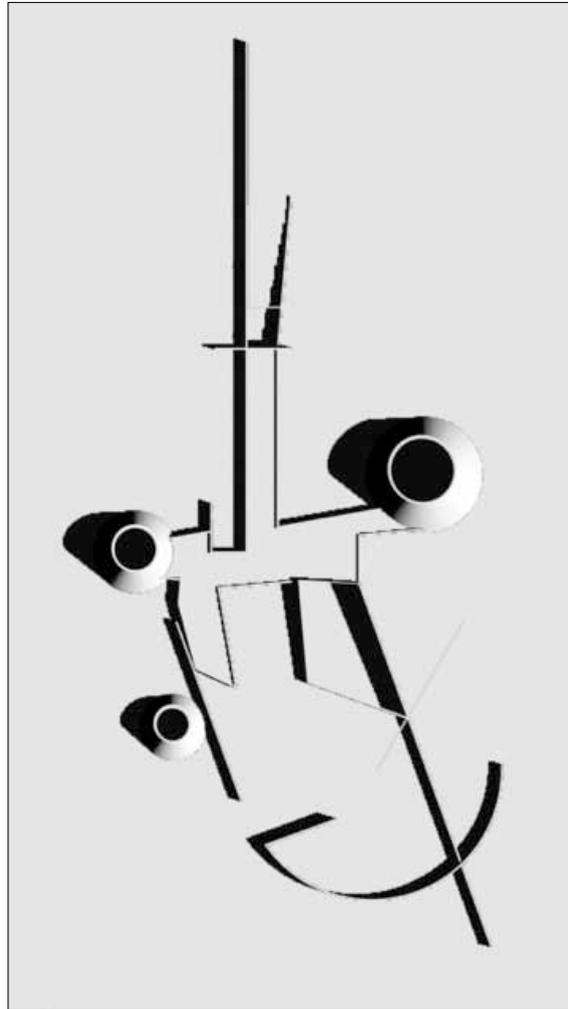


Figure 8

Development of a design concept derived from a mask,
by Sean Bolden, fourthYear Design Studio, School of
Architecture, Prairie View A&M University

Gris and the Cubists, as Hejduk drew from the visual discoveries and compositional ideas of Cubism to create a hermetic architecture of pure geometric abstraction devoid of any cultural reference.²⁸

In contradistinction to Picasso's veneration of the African mask, it is telling that Hejduk appropriated another mask with African origins—the mask of Medusa. Daniel Liebskind²⁹ and Wim van den Bergh³⁰ fawningly liken Hejduk to Perseus, who in Greek mythology slew the monstrous, serpent-headed Gorgon, Medusa. In fact, Medusa's origins lie in Libya and pre-date Hellenic culture by millenia. Her monstrous visage was a creation of the Hellenes and her death at the hands of Perseus is commonly understood to represent the establishment of a patriarchal hegemony and the triumph of reason over nature. Thus, we can interpret Hejduk's identification with Perseus and the supplanting of the African mask with the mask of Medusa as a rejection of age-old, communal and matriarchal wisdom in favor of the modern imagination and narrative fictions of a solitary genius. Lily Chi, however, challenges the role of architect as writer—that is as the sole author and creator of the public realm—and asserts that “public space ... cannot ultimately be created by one, but by many.”³¹ So while Hejduk emblazoned the leaf of the chronicle of his oeuvre with the visage of the slain Gorgon, ostensibly to “[warn] the curious ... against examining the mysteries hidden in architecture,”³² perhaps it was really to dissuade the curious from discovering that, as Banham posits, “there may be nothing at all inside the black box [of architecture] except a mystery for its own sake.”³³

As Shannon Chance, AIA points out, *Not White* is a means to understanding theories and paradigms of diversity, defined as a “practice that includes a wide range of people in learning-conducive environments and that explore a full spectrum of architectural ideas.”³⁴ While the *Not White* symposium represented both symbolically and literally a reaction against the conventions of a unidirectional process of studio pedagogy, it also embodied a (re)cognition of the links between culture and the built environment that have been severely disrupted by postmodernity. A number of papers presented recognized that it is critical to maintain exchanges between different teaching styles. For instance, Armstrong and Jackson's “Space (un)Veiled: Techne as a Means of Manifesting Invisible Cultures in the Beginning Design Studio” deals with the idea of the “primitive hut” in a studio project entitled “Sethe's Hut.” They point out that “the primary learning objective is for the students to be able to use the design of a diminutive building to explore issues of invisibility connected with an icon from the theory of architecture—‘the primitive hut’.”³⁵

Learning the language of a landscape is a focal point for an exercise that I now give students in my design studio. What they find in studying the traditions of the African mask is a way to examine and study the multifarious relationships that exists among a people, their culture, their landscape, their building traditions and their belief system. In teaching students about African aesthetics, I try to strike a balance between place and culture

that reflects a heavy emphasis on the cosmology and epistemic conditions that inform Dogon architecture. The dialectic between cosmology and the sense of place is intended to connect the student with an unfamiliar world-view. Among the Dogon, hermeneutic spatial relationships point to a reality above and beyond “conventional” explanations. And so I propose a design problem related to the mask, the pedagogic purpose of which is to learn from the rich dimensions of form, space, and language of “primitive” aesthetic expression.

But the mask assignment also points to a broader aim: improvisation. Musician Howie Smith relates the response of jazz legend Charlie “Bird” Parker to a query from an aspiring saxophonist who asked Bird what he had to do to play like he did. Bird said, “Master the instrument, master the music, forget all that—just play.”³⁶ At first the student struggles to clarify the meaning of the mask, looking for aesthetic satisfaction. The student is forced to make aesthetic judgments about the mask, which nonetheless do not change the mask’s symbolic or cultural value. This stage is like learning the instrument. Secondly, the student must make a more rigorous justification for the composition and for the subjective, expressive, and representative forms that evolve from the previous exercise. This is like learning the music. Finally, the student must take the aesthetic realism of the mask seriously, and through a process of improvisation and discovery selectively accept or discard specific aesthetic principles leaving only tonal variations of the mask. There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from the study of the mask, all of which enhance the student’s knowledge of design principles; but the larger debate which this exercise seeks to address centers around a re-evaluation of the modes of aesthetic reasoning that are applied or taught in the design studio.

The reasons that sincere academic interpretation of indigenous aesthetic expression remains inherently rigid or altogether absent from the design studio are related to the perceived threat such a pursuit poses to our understanding of “truth,” and the fear of corrupting what we already know. Of course, there are larger ironies surrounding the question of non-Western culture. As Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulation* suggests, “[i]t is thus very naïve to look for ethnology in the Savages or in some Third World—it is here, everywhere, in the metropolises, in the white community, in a world completely cataloged and analyzed, then artificially resurrected under the auspices of the real, in a world of simulation . . . ”³⁷

So perhaps we can think of diversity another way. As it becomes less plausible to continue along the path of absolute knowledge we need to consider specific ways that teaching diversity can counteract the mobile and disenchanting vocabularies and the uncertainties and popular prejudices that threaten the erosion of cultural value. Diversity can empower a student in at least three ways: to resist absolute knowledge; to confront the Eurocentric fixation; and to advocate for the legitimate valuation of ethnic-geographies. This imaginative shift will have profound consequences for the individual students who may inhabit a completely different mental universe

or world-view (*Weltanschauung*). By means of analogy the inclusion of diversity in studio pedagogy allows for the understanding of disparate genres of order, culture, ritual and landscape, and by inverting the standards that are used to teach design, the mask exercise for example, with its emphasis on tonality, proclaims a new standard of beauty. Interpretive techniques and theoretical stances help us understand works of art and architecture in all their subjective and objective ambiguity. It is to this end that I have appropriated the term *tonality*. The *tonality* of a particular work is enriched through the folding and unfolding of aesthetic investigation, which exposes the reasoning behind the work. Importantly, *tonality* serves as a descriptive marker, which can be used to dislocate the normative tropes of aesthetic discussion when we attempt to explain beauty.

Postmodernism, in its architectural manifestation, stands as a dubious reaction to a society on the verge of ideological and social change and mistrustful of the social role of architecture. As a result, the social role of architecture in its various manifestations has been defused in the academic discourse, and discussion of the foundations of architectural history and theory has retreated from social depth to a hyper-rational system of theories. I repeat Cornel West's assertion that "Architecture is the embodiment, the concretization of the structures of freedom, domination, capitalism, democracy and other institutions that have an effect on people." To the extent that West is correct, we must acknowledge Rayner Banham's observation that "architecture's proud but unadmitted acceptance of this parochial [Euro-centric] rulebook can only seem a crippling limitation on building's power to serve humanity."³⁹ In general, however, in teaching diversity a new spatial conception, essentially non-Classical and non-canonical, may succeed in expressing a new language, namely, the language of the people and their culture. This type of spatial quality is a unique combination of forms, which most clearly will have a significant impact in the classroom and beyond.

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ENDNOTES

1. I dedicate this essay to my mentor, the late John Ralph Willis, Professor Emeritus, Princeton University (d.2007).
2. David Goldblatt, "The Frequency of Architectural Acts: Diversity and Quantity in Architecture," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 46, no. 1, Autumn 1987: 61-66.

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24. Ibid. 24
25. Charles Jencks, *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973) 102.
26. See note 8.
27. Ullrich Franzen, et al., eds., *Education of an Architect: A Point of View, The Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture* (New York: Monacelli, 1999[1971]) 193.
28. Heinrich Klotz, *The History of Postmodern Architecture*, trans. Radka Donnell (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1988) 319-322.
29. See Daniel Liebskind's 1984 introduction in John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, ed. Kim Shkapich (New York: Rizzoli, 1985) 9-14.
30. See Wim van den Bergh, "Icarus' Amazement, or the Matrix of Crossed Destinies," in John Hejduk, *The Lancaster/Hanover Masque*, (London: Architectural Association, 1992) 81-102.
31. Lily Chi, "'The Problem of the Architect as Writer ...': Time and Narrative in the Work of Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk," *Architecture, Ethics, and Technology*, eds. Louise Pelletier and Alberto Pérez-Gómez (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) 221.
32. Ibid.
33. Banham 299.
34. Shannon Chance, AIA, Preface to the Proceedings *20th National Conference on the Beginning Design Student Proceedings*, Association of Collegiate

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35. Donald E. Armstrong and Carla Jackson, "Space (Un)veiled: Techne as a Means of Manifesting Invisible Cultures in the Beginning Design Studio," *20th National Conference on the Beginning Design Student Proceedings*, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2008: 9-14.
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38. Banham 298.

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The Texas Black History Preservation Project (TBPP) is documenting the comprehensive history of African Americans in Texas through a series of books and interactive DVDs. This is a landmark project in that no one has ever attempted a project of this magnitude and scope in regard to Black history in Texas. While there have been numerous works about various segments of the Black community in Texas, there is nothing that ties those stories together, nothing that brings those stories together in a central location.

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