"Cash to Corinna": Domestic Labor and Sexual Economy in the "Fancy Trade"

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From 1856, the year she learned to write, until 1867, Corinna Hinton signed her name Mrs. Corinna Omohundro. Though she claimed the title for herself, the law did not recognize her as Mrs. Omohundro. She was never legally married to the father of her children, the Richmond slave trader Silas Omohundro. In fact, under Virginia law, Corinna Hinton could not even enter into marriage. Corinna Hinton was enslaved.[1]

The man who owned Corinna was also the man she claimed as her husband, Silas Omohundro. From the time she was around fourteen years old until Silas's death in 1864, Corinna was simultaneously the mother of his children and his enslaved property. Like many slave traders, Omohundro throughout his life selected concubines from among the young enslaved women he purchased. He relied on these women, particularly Corinna, for domestic and reproductive labor. Omohundro profited from Corinna not through commodifying her sexuality on the auction block, but by exploiting her domestic and sexual labor within his own household, boardinghouse, and slave jail (a place where slave owners and traders could board their slaves for a fee). As an enslaved woman assisting in the management of a slave jail, Corinna was both victim of and contributor to the mass sale of enslaved men, women, and children from the upper South to the lower South, a trade that would force the movement of 200,000 slaves, on average, each decade between 1820 and 1860.[2]

Corinna was far from the only woman whose domestic, sexual, and reproductive labor benefitted the slave traders to whom they were tied. Hidden in plain sight, women performed the day-to-day labor necessary to the slave trade and thus to the spread of slavery to the lower South, the expansion of cotton production, and the profits accompanying both. Much important and illuminating work has been done on the slave trade and its

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[1] Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866 (Lancaster County Historical Society, Lancaster, Pa.). I use the terms *enslaved* and *enslaver* rather than *slave* and *slave owner* to stress the ongoing violence of slavery. As Calvin Schermerhorn has noted, "despite laws that conferred slave status to babies born of enslaved mothers, slaves were made, not born." I thus employ *enslaved* to reference the resistance and humanity of the people held in bondage. Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815–1860* (New Haven, 2015), 9.

[2] Michael Tadman estimates that an averge of 200,000 enslaved people were sold from the upper South to the lower South each decade between 1820 and 1860. Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, 1989), 5.

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connections to global financial markets based on cotton and plantation slavery. In delineating the connections between southern slaveholders, British manufacturers, bankers, and other factors in Britain and the United States, however, historians have missed a critical link in the Atlantic chain: the work of women in the American South. In the slave market, the "product" of women's labor—clean, healthy, and well-dressed bodies—were put up for sale in horrifying ways. In their crude, dehumanizing monetization of laborers, buyers and sellers of enslaved people cast a harsh light on the value of work traditionally performed by women.[3]

Historians such as Stephen Deyle, Walter Johnson, and Michael Tadman have shown that the size and scope of the antebellum trade was much larger than previous scholarship had acknowledged. Their works illustrate the importance of the domestic slave trade to the economic, agricultural, and political development of the antebellum United States. Scholars including Edward Baptist, Richard Kilbourne, Bonnie Martin, and Scott Nelson have illustrated how the commodification and collateralization of human beings allowed for the development of both the American Southwest and global capitalist markets, showing in detail the role of enslaved property in antebellum credit relations domestically and internationally.[4]

This valuable work, however, says little to nothing about the economic role of women, enslaved or free, and makes few connections to the historiography of women's household labor. Yet women are just as much a part of the slave market—and not only as human commodities to be sold—as the men who wrote bills of exchange or speculated on the price of cotton. As the economist Julia A. Nelson has noted, women continue to be overlooked in considerations of the economy—an exclusion "justified by the argument that they are unimportant, or intellectually uninteresting, or [their work] natural." That women, many of them enslaved, performed this work should not be seen as natural or given but as the product of particular discourses about race and gender.[5]

[3] On connections between slavery and global financial markets, see Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York, 2014); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York, 2014); and Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism*.

[4] Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York, 2005); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); Michael Tadman, "The Hidden History of Slave Trading in Antebellum South Carolina: John Springs III and Other 'Gentlemen Dealing in Slaves,'" *South Carolina Historical Magazine,* 97 (Jan. 1996), 6–29; Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told;* Edward E. Baptist, "Toxic Debt, Liar Loans, and Securitized Human Beings: The Panic of 1837 and the Fate of Slavery," *Common-Place,* 10 (April 2010), http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-10/no-03/baptist/; Richard Holcombe Kilbourne Jr., *Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825–1885* (Tuscaloosa, 1995); Bonnie M. Martin, "Slavery's Invisible Engine: Mortgaging Human Property," *Journal of Southern History,* 76 (Nov. 2010), 817–66; Scott Reynolds Nelson, *A Nation of Deadbeats: An Uncommon History of America's Financial Disasters* (New York, 2012); Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (Baltimore, 1931). Other works on the antebellum slave trade include Robert H. Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge, 2003); Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (Chicago, 2011); Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism;* and Kari J. Winter, *The American Dreams of John B. Prentis, Slave Trader* (Athens, Ga., 2011).

[5] Julia A. Nelson, "Feminism and Economics," *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 9 (Spring 1995), 136. Studies of domestic and reproductive labor include Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York, 1990); Mary Inman, *The Two Forms of Production under Capitalism* (Long Beach, 1964); Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia, 2009); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to Present* (New York, 1986); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia, 2004); Stephanie Jones-Rogers, *Mistresses of the Market: White Women and the Economy of American Slavery* (New Haven, forthcoming); Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," in *Toward a New Anthropology of Women,* ed. Rayna Reiter (New York, 1975), 157–210; Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Age of Slave Emancipation* (New York, 1998); and The Women's Work Study, "Loom,

Without the labor of women, enslaved and free, which directly added value to the sale of human beings, slave traders could not have sold enslaved humans for such a high profit. Within the slave market, labor force and capital were one and the same, and both were human, requiring the material necessities of life, including food, housing, clothing, and medical care. Women's labor was vital in multiple ways to the marketing of enslaved laborers: enslaved women, both inside the slave market and without, reproduced the labor force and created capital both biologically and socially, giving birth to and raising enslaved children who would be valued both for their labor power and their ability to possess liquid wealth. Enslaved and free women cooked food and sewed clothing for enslaved people who were to be sold as well as for the traders who were selling them. Within slave pens and along the overland slave-trading route from the upper to the lower South, enslaved and free women provided socially reproductive labor, maintaining the labor force before sale through cooking, sewing, and medical care.

The domestic, reproductive, and sexual labor of the slave trade is most visible when considering the enslaved concubines of slave traders. Many, if not most, slave traders sexually abused the women they enslaved. The slave market rested on sexual violence and exploitation. Enslaved peoples' accounts of slave traders frequently reference the sexual violence they committed and the enslaved women they forced to live in concubinage. Moses Roper, for example, reported that traders "often sleep with the best looking female slaves among them, and they will often have many children in the year, which are said to be slave holder's children, by which means, through his villainy, he will make an immense profit of this intercourse, by selling the babe with its mother." In many cases slave traders, as Roper suggested, sold the women they raped. Some traders kept certain enslaved women with them for years, or even for their lifetime, relying on these women for domestic and reproductive labor.[6]

Examining the lives of women such as Corinna Hinton Omohundro is one way to denaturalize women's economic function in the slave market. By considering her position at the nexus of the slave trade's financial, domestic, and sexual economies, we can break down artificial divisions between the study of the economy, the family, and sexuality. Hinton Omohundro could not easily separate the market from the household or her family and sexuality from the market. All of these pieces of her life intersected in ways that allow us to see ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality, and the economic function of each, at work in a particular time and place. While Hinton Omohundro is only one example of the many women who ran boardinghouses, sewed clothes, and prepared meals in urban slave markets throughout the South, her story is unusually well documented and can shed light on this fraught entanglement.[7]

Broom, and Womb: Producers, Maintainers, and Reproducers," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies,* 1 (Autumn 1975), 1–41. For works that connect the U.S. slave economy to global capital, see Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told;* Beckert, *Empire of Cotton;* and Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism.*

[6] Moses Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery* (London, 1838), 61–62.

[7] Examples of women sewing, cooking, and offering boarding to slave traders come from places throughout the South, including Alexandria, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; Columbus, Georgia; Fayetteville, North Carolina; Lexington, Kentucky; Montgomery, Alabama; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Natchez, Mississippi. For example, see Isaac Jarratt Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); *Junius Amis v. Bank of Kentucky,* 1849, case 1794, Orleans Parish Fourth District Court Records (City Archives, New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, La.); *Michael Hughs's Admin. v. Salem Downing,* 1854, Fayette County Kentucky Circuit Court (Kentucky Division of Libraries and Archives, Lexington); McGee & Charles Family Papers

Even though we have more evidence of Hinton's experiences than we do of most enslaved women, she still only appears in documentary records prior to 1864 through the words of others, particularly Silas Omohundro. Corinna's voice does not emerge from the archives until after Silas's death, and even then, information on her life is scarce. She stated she was born enslaved in Virginia around 1835, but between her birth and the birth of her first child with Omohundro, no evidence speaks to her childhood, her parents, or when her sale to Omohundro forcibly separated her from them. No records indicate when Omohundro purchased Hinton, but the sale took place by at least 1849.[8]

In contrast, the life of Silas Omohundro, a successful slave trader, is well documented. The son of a moderately well off planter, he was born December 11, 1807, in Albemarle County, Virginia. He entered the world of business in the 1830s as the owner of a ferry across the James River in Fluvanna County. He found that trading in enslaved people was more profitable, and, after increasing his involvement in the trade, moved to Richmond to dedicate all his interests to the slave trade. At twenty-five, he found employment as an agent of the well-known slave trader Rice Ballard. Ballard was a member of the most successful slave-trading firm of the 1830s, Franklin & Armfield of Alexandria, Virginia. As the company's contacts in Richmond, Ballard and his agents roamed the Virginia countryside looking for enslaved people to purchase and then send to James Franklin in New Orleans or Isaac Franklin in Natchez, Mississippi. Many of the next decade's prominent slave traders got their start in the business working for Franklin & Armfield. Omohundro earned a ten-dollar commission from Ballard on each individual purchased. As early as 1846, Silas was ready to keep more of the profits for himself, and he obtained a license to keep a "private house of entertainment" in the slave-trading district of Richmond, which he operated in conjunction with his jail.[9]

Due to his location in Richmond, a transshipment center for the domestic slave trade, Omohundro often jailed enslaved men, women, and children on their way from purchase in the upper South to sale in the lower South. Slave traders paid Omohundro to keep their human property secure while they completed buying or selling that season's coffle of slaves. Bondpeople could also be sent to the jail for punishment, as one formerly enslaved man vividly remembered of his time in Robert Lumpkin's Richmond jail. The jailers put him "in a place known as the whipping room, and on the floor of that room were the rings, and a great big man would stand over him and flog him." In an account of his escape and capture, fugitive slave Anthony Burns, also jailed by Lumpkin, remembered similarly horrifying experiences. At one point Burns observed "a slave woman stark naked in the presence of two men. One of them was an overseer, and the other a person who had come to purchase a slave. The overseer had compelled the woman to disrobe in order that the purchaser might see for himself whether she was well formed and sound in body."[10]

(South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia); and Tyre Glen Papers (Rubenstein Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.).

[8] *Omohundro's Executor v. Omohundro,* 1866, case file 494, Richmond City Court Records (John Marshall Court House, Richmond, Va.). Corinna Omohundro's own testimony in a court case appears first in this case.

[9] Malvern Hill Omohundro, *The Omohundro Genealogical Record: The Omohundros and Allied Families in America* (Staunton, 1951), 472; Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism,* 144; Entry for Aug. 10, 1846, Richmond City Hustings Court Order Book, vol. 16, p. 540 (Library of Virginia, Richmond). The traders Robert Lumpkin and Betts & Edmundson received licenses at the same time as Silas Omohundro. Former Franklin & Armfield agents who later entered the slave trade in their own right included George Kephart, T. M. Jones, Silas Omohundro, J. M. Saunders, and Bacon Tait.

[10] A. M. Newman, "Reminiscences," *Baptist Home Mission Monthly,* 10 (Nov. 1888), 295–96, esp. 295; Charles Emery Stevens, *Anthony Burns: A History* (Boston, 1856), 191.

In this sexualized market in human bodies, Omohundro made his fortune. He accumulated property in Richmond, a farm in neighboring Henrico County, and over $33,000 worth of real estate in Pennsylvania. He filled his home with paintings, books, and mirrors; he dined with expensive silver and glassware; slaves dressed him in fine suits; he wore gold pocket watches. Outside of the enslaved individuals he regularly sold, Omohundro held in slavery seventeen men and women who waited on him and helped him operate his jail. Though not included in his estate inventory, he also owned seven more slaves: Corinna and his children, property who he preferred to classify as family. They, too, helped him run his business.[11]

Corinna was not the first enslaved woman with whom Omohundro had children. While working for Franklin & Armfield, Omohundro had earlier purchased a light-skinned enslaved woman who he made his concubine. Her name was Louisa Tandy and, like Corinna, she was about fourteen years old when she bore her first child with Omohundro in 1838. Over the next dozen years—including during the time Omohundro had children with Corinna—she gave birth to four more of his children. Some of these children were born in Ohio because, around 1846, Omohundro moved Tandy and their children to Cincinnati. He paid for the children's education and sent Louisa $12,000 annually, but he spent more time with his children with Corinna, most of whom lived in Richmond.[12]

Corinna was between fourteen and seventeen years old when her first child with Omohundro was born. Omohundro was forty-two, and, under the legal system of Virginia, her legal owner. Raping Corinna was not against the law. Rather, it was part and parcel of legal ownership. Enslavers had full use of those they enslaved. It is within this context that we must consider Corinna's life. In 1849 she was the enslaved mother of an infant son, with little possibility of escape. Perhaps Corinna recognized the freedoms Silas possessed and the legal and social disadvantages she faced as an enslaved woman. Corinna's "core experiences," as Marisa Fuentes writes, were "shaped by sexual violence and impossible choices, [and] are not fully elucidated by progressive notions of agency." While allying herself with Silas gained Corinna material comfort and a greater possibility of achieving freedom for herself and her children, such potential benefits came at a cost.[13]

Corinna called herself Omohundro's wife, but this does not necessarily mean that she loved Silas or viewed their relationship as a consensual, affectionate union. While it is important not to homogenize enslaved women's experiences by assuming every instance of sex between a white man and an enslaved women was coercive, it is equally crucial to

[11] "A List of Real and Personal Estate of Silas Omohundro, dec'd . . .," 1864, Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866.

[12] *Littleton J. Omohundro v. Omohundro's Executor,* 1873, Records of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, Law Records 1866–1911, RG 21 (Philadelphia Federal Records Center, Philadelphia, Pa.); 1840 U.S. Census, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio, s.v. "Louisa Tandy," available at Ancestry.com; 1850 U.S. Census, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio, s.v. "Louisa Tandy," *ibid.*; 1860 U.S. Census, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio, s.v. "Sidney Omohundro," *ibid.*; 1870 U.S. Census, Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio, s.v. "Littleton Omohundro," *ibid.* Louisa Tandy may have been the mother of all of the Tandy-Omohundro children, or her sister Martha may have been the mother of the eldest sons.

[13] 1860 U.S. Census, Richmond, Va., s.v. "Corina Hinton," available at Ancestry.com; Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, 2016), 69. Though legally possible, prosecution of a master for raping an enslaved woman was practically unheard of. In her study of rape in early America, Sharon Block asserts that "no rape conviction against a white man, let alone a victim's owner, for raping an enslaved woman has been found between at least 1700 and the Civil War." Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 65.

consider the legal and social constraints within which Corinna operated. In *Scenes of Subjection* Saidiya V. Hartman wonders,

> What does sexuality designate when rape is a normative mode of deployment? What set of effects does it produce? How can rape be differentiated from sexuality when "consent" is intelligible only as submission? . . . Does the regularity of violation transform it into an arrangement or liaison from which the captive female can extract herself, if she chooses . . .? Do four years and two children later imply submission, resignation, complicity, desire, or the extremity of constraint?

Do the Omohundros' six children, or the affection Silas evidently felt for their offspring, lessen the violence of their relationship, or show how few choices Corinna had? Is it possible to understand their relationship in the absence of legal consent? Without testimony from Corinna, there are endless ways to interpret her relationship with Silas. While lack of evidence should not forbid contemplation, it is also important to "respect what we cannot know."[14]

Omohundro certainly profited in multiple ways from living as husband and wife with Corinna. In Corinna he found a capable household manager who performed the productive and reproductive labor necessary to the functioning of his home and business. Yet because Corinna was not his legal wife, he gained all of this without the corresponding economic responsibility a legal marriage to a white woman entailed. At least some antebellum men were aware of the economic advantages of concubinage. As a young Louisianan reported to Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1850s, keeping a concubine was "much cheaper than living in hotels and boarding-houses" for men financially unprepared for marriage. The man told Olmsted, "it was cheaper for him to *placer* than to live in any other way which could be expected of him in New Orleans." Unlike a legal wife, the man claimed, "his *placée* did not, except occasionally, require a servant; she did the marketing, and performed all the duties of housekeeping herself; she took care of his clothes, and in every way was economical and saving in her habits." This man ostensibly spoke of a free woman of color with whom he had a relationship; slave traders had even greater power, control, and economic advantages when taking enslaved women as concubines.[15]

[14] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1997), 85; Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism,* 12 (June 2008), 1–14, esp. 3. For interrogations of sex between enslavers and enslaved in the antebellum period, see Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York, 2008); and Brenda E. Stevenson, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South," *Journal of African American History,* 98 (Winter 2013), 99–125. For more on the emotional dynamics of the Omohundro household, as well as similar households in Richmond, see Phillip Troutman, "'Black' Concubines, 'Yellow' Wives, 'White' Children: Race and Domestic Space in the Slave Trading Households of Robert & Mary Lumpkin and Silas & Corinna Omohundro," paper delivered at the Southern Association of Women Historians Sixth Conference on Women's History, Athens, Ga., June 5, 2003 (in Alexandra Finley's possession); and Joshua D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787–1861* (Chapel Hill, 2003), 130–32.

[15] Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States,* vol. 1 (New York, 1861), 306. See also Kimberly Snyder Manganelli, *Transatlantic Spectacles of Race: The Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse* (New Brunswick, 2012), 37–64. White men's preference for the forced, economically advantageous domestic and sexual labor of enslaved women in the role of household manager was not confined to the antebellum U.S. South. For example, European merchants and slave traders in Saint-Louis, Senegal, frequently relied on *signares* to manage their homes and business interests during their absence. Similarly, in nineteenth-century Suriname many plantation managers "were financially unable to maintain a family in a 'decent' (*burgerlijke*) way," so they turned to enslaved concubines to run their households. "Plantation owners and their agents or administrators often objected to women 'from outside' (lawful spouses or otherwise) living on estates. Such women were a financial burden, and, moreover, owners and agents recognized that there were advantages in the creation of closer ties between managers and female slaves." See Rosemarijn Hoefte and Jean Jacques Vrij, "Free Black and Colored Women in Early-Nineteenth-Century Paramaribo, Suriname," in *Beyond Bondage: Free Women*

Considering the long history and the economics of concubinage, it is perhaps unsurprising that many slave traders had enslaved concubines. Omohundro could demand domestic and sexual labor from Corinna, as he could a legal wife, but no laws required him to provide for her and their six children together; nor did Corinna have legal protection from abuse. Omohundro could sell her and her children if he pleased. As an enslaved woman, Corinna had no recourse against mistreatment; she depended on Omohundro's goodwill for her and her children's safety and support to an even greater extent than would a legally married white woman. Due to Corinna's skin tone, Silas could even, among strangers, introduce her as his legal wife while actually having complete legal control over her as her enslaver.

Despite, or perhaps because of, her tenuous position in Omohundro's life, Corinna dedicated herself to his success as his household manager. Antebellum authors placed the responsibility of prudent home management on women, emphasizing the importance of domestic economy in the financial success of a family. A contributor to the *Southern Watchman and General Intelligencer* even asserted that, in the household, a woman "may do as much towards making a fortune as [her husband] can do in the counting room or the workshop." As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese notes, southerners did not completely accept the "notion of the separation of home and work." For many, ideal households "contained within themselves relations of production as well as those of reproduction." According to the era's domestic advice literature, as Omohundro's wife, Corinna took charge of his well-being in the broadest sense, caring for their children, providing food for him and his dependents, clothing the family, overseeing the work of enslaved laborers, maintaining the cleanliness of the household, and managing the money necessary to perform such tasks.[16]

Corinna began her involvement in Omohundro's business in his household, caring for him and their six children, who were born between 1849 and 1863. Silas Jr., Alice Morton, Colon, Riley Crosby, George Nelson, and William Rainey grew up in or next to their father's boardinghouse. Though his offspring were legally enslaved, Omohundro treated them quite differently than the children in his jail. He educated all of his children, as well as Corinna, recording purchases of schoolbooks and paying for private tutors. He sent the eldest two, Silas Jr. and Alice, to Pennsylvania to receive an education. The younger children stayed in Richmond under Corinna's care.[17]

of Color in the Americas, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Urbana, 2004), 145–68, esp. 149. The relationship between Corinna and Silas Omohundro, as well as many other slave traders and enslaved women, is evocative of the enslaved *ménagère* described in Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill, 2013). Hoefte and Vrij, "Free Black and Colored Women in Early-Nineteenth-Century Paramaribo, Suriname," 145–68; and James F. Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700–1860* (New York, 1993), 96. See also Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, 2004); Pernille Ipsen, *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast* (Philadelphia, 2015); Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington, 2012); Lucille Mathurin Mair, *A Historical Study of Women in Jamaica: 1655–1844* (Kingston, 2006); and Karen Y. Morrison, "Slave Mothers and White Fathers: Defining Family and Status in Late Colonial Cuba," *Slavery and Abolition,* 31 (March 2010), 29–55.

[16] "Economy in a Family," *Southern Watchman and General Intelligencer,* 28 (April 1837), quoted in Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700–1835* (Ithaca, 1998), 218; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 80.

[17] For examples of Silas Omohundro purchasing school supplies and paying tuition, see Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, March 29, 1856, Dec. 28, 1859, Silas Omohundro Business Records (Library of Virginia). On the land Silas Omohundro purchased in Pennsylvania, see "Administrator's Account . . . ," 1869, Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866. Silas Omohundro's counterparts in the Richmond slave market apparently did not purchase the amount of real estate in free states that he did. Hector Da-

However, like many white southern women, Corinna had the help of other enslaved women in raising her children and running the household, illustrating the large number of domestic laborers required to run a slave jail and boardinghouse. A woman named Patsy Clark seems to have served as Corinna's full-time assistant. That Corinna could delegate tasks to other enslaved women highlights her intermediary and contradictory position, enslaved by Silas but in charge of his other slaves. It is difficult to discern the dynamics of Corinna's relationship with Clark and the other enslaved women or how she viewed her status in relation to theirs. Only indirect clues remain, and these suggest Corinna may not have closely identified with the other men, women, and children Omohundro enslaved. Corinna had very light skin, as evidenced by how often census takers classified her as white. She "passed" many times in her life; given her skin tone, economic status, associates, and deportment, strangers generally assumed she was white. To use a famous example, perhaps Corinna felt similarly to some members of the Hemings family of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, who "saw themselves as a caste apart."[18]

Corinna assigned less desirable work to the women Omohundro enslaved, or she paid others for certain domestic tasks. At least in 1862 and 1863 Omohundro paid a woman to do Corinna's washing. By the nineteenth century, laundry work was closely associated with black female labor. Washing was one of the few markets where free black women could find employment—it was a laborious task that few women wanted to perform and one of the first chores women paid others to complete. The types of labor that women performed reflected their class and showed what work, if any, they could afford to pay others to perform. When another woman completed Corinna's washing chores, Corinna further distanced herself from work associated with enslavement and lower-class status and moved closer to fully achieving the role of domestic manager rather than domestic servant.[19]

In addition to providing reproductive labor within her family, Corinna contributed to the daily business of Omohundro's work in the slave market. From the framed kitchen

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vis, for example, sent his enslaved concubine Ann Banks and his children to live in Philadelphia, but at his death he owned no property there. See *Crouch et al. v. Davis's Ex'or* (1866), Richmond City Chancery Court (John Marshall Court House). Under a 1780 abolition act, the slaves of visitors to Pennsylvania became free after 6 months, while the slaves of permanent residents (which presumably included Silas Omohundro as a land owner) immediately gained freedom. His children in Pennsylvania could have thus reasonably argued that they were free. See Thomas D. Morris, *Free Men All: The Personal Liberty Laws of the North, 1780–1861* (Baltimore, 1974). Multiple parties in the cited orphan's court case refer to Eliza Cheatham, a free black woman who helped care for the Omohundro children in Pennsylvania, as Corinna's sister or Silas's sister-in-law. In the 1860 Census Cheatham was living in Richmond with two adult women and one young boy. The census taker considered all of them "mulatto." One of the women worked in a hotel, but Cheatham had no employment listed. She owned, however, $4,000 worth of personal property and $1,000 in real estate. Perhaps part of this money Silas Omohundro paid to her in exchange for caring for his children. In 1865 Cheatham was living in the former jail and boarding house with Corinna. It is unclear how she became free. Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866. 1850 U.S. Census, Richmond, Virginia, s.v. "Eliza Cheatham," available at Ancestry.com.

[18] Though not legally free, Patsy Clark was included in the 1860 Census with no race indicated as the head of a household that included Hinton and her children, living nextdoor to Omohundro. 1860 U.S. Census, Richmond, Virginia, s.v. "Patsy Clark," available at Ancestry.com. When Clark died, Omohundro spent over $100 on her burial, much more than on any of the other people he enslaved. Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Dec. 1, 1860. In the 1870 and 1880 Census Corinna was listed as white. 1870 U.S. Census, Richmond City, Virginia, s.v. "Nathaniel Davidson," available at Ancestry.com; 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, D.C., s.v. "Nathaniel Davidson," *ibid.;* Gordon-Reed, *Hemingses of Monticello,* 55. For more on "passing," see Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014); and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes towards the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill, 2012), 176–78.

[19] Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Sept. 1, 1862, Jan. 1, 1863; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy,* 45–46.

in the rear of Omohundro's jail complex, Corinna assisted in or oversaw the running of his kitchen, preparing meals, pickling fruit, and making preserves. She kept his kitchen stocked, deciding what supplies were necessary and informing Omohundro what she needed to purchase, whether it was chicken, brown sugar, or eggs. Besides preparing meals for Omohundro and their children, running his household also entailed providing food for the enslaved men and women in Omohundro's jail, where Corinna had presumably once been imprisoned. In this she had the assistance of other enslaved women whose domestic labor Omohundro exploited and whom he put to work in the system that perpetuated their enslavement. Corinna and women like her, both in the slave trade and in urban markets in general, "performed the hidden labor of capitalist economies: the work of social reproduction." In addition to rearing children, free and enslaved women "did the washing, feeding, sheltering, and provisioning necessary." In the case of the slave trade, it was the very capital on which the economy was built that needed the washing, feeding, and sheltering.[20]

Clothing enslaved people was an important step in preparation for a sale, and one that often involved women's labor. As Walter Johnson has shown, clothing was an important part of slave traders' efforts to commodify enslaved property. Similar or identical outfits "masked differences among the slaves; individual pasts and potential problems were covered over in uniform cloth" when they were "dressed as ideal slaves." While historians have noted the significance of garments in the slave trade, they have paid little attention to the people, in many cases women, who sewed or purchased these outfits. In Omohundro's slave-trading business, Corinna deployed this essential marketing tool of the slave sale. Besides providing clothing for herself and her children, whether by making it or paying others to create garments for her, Corinna supplied the enslaved individuals in Omohundro's jail with outfits.[21]

From 1856 until his death in 1864, Omohundro recorded in his account book semiannual or annual payments made to Corinna for "negro clothes." These payments ranged from two hundred to four hundred dollars, though the records do not indicate whether this money compensated Corinna for purchasing clothes or for purchasing fabric with which she personally made the garments. Either way, Corinna was in charge of the complicated task of dressing the hundreds of men, women, and children who passed through Omohundro's jail each year.[22]

Corinna was not alone among the female population of Richmond in being responsible for providing clothing for enslaved property. Many Richmond traders relied on women to sew or purchase outfits. Some, such as Silas Omohundro's neighbor and fellow slave jail owner Robert Lumpkin, also delegated sewing responsibilities to enslaved concubines. Robert Lumpkin's concubine, Mary Lumpkin, hired a young enslaved woman from one of Robert's business associates, William H. Betts. Perhaps it was while sewing for the Lumpkins that this young woman, Lucy Ann Cheatham, came into contact with John Hagan, the slave trader who would purchase her, take her to New Orleans, and make her his concubine.[23]

[20] Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book. Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2009), 101.

[21] Johnson, *Soul by Soul,* 121.

[22] For examples of yearly payments to Corinna, see Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Dec. 31, 1856, April 2, 1860.

[23] Succession of Lucy Ann Hagan, 1887, case 21696, Second District Court Records, Orleans Parish, Louisiana (City Archives, New Orleans Public Library).

Other traders, such as John B. Prentiss and Elias Ferguson, relied on a wife's uncompensated domestic labor or the forced labor of enslaved women; still others paid women outside the household economy, when such work became monetized. The money to be made by these women in such an endeavor was not insignificant. The trader Hector Davis spent anywhere from two hundred to five hundred dollars each month on clothing. Some of this money went to local dry goods stores, but a significant portion went to individual women, such as "Miss Patterson" and "Mrs. Solomon N. Davis," the wife of a business associate, who received regular sums for "sewing" and "making clothes."[24]

The woman who did the majority of Davis's sewing, however, was Virginia A. Isham, an enslaved woman who lived in Richmond and whose husband, William, Davis enslaved and relied on for assistance in his jail. While Davis did not enslave Virginia, he likely knew of her through William, her husband and his slave. By 1857 or earlier, Davis entered into a financial agreement with Virginia Isham, selling the clothes she made to traders or individual slave owners who used his auction room or jail. Like many enslaved Richmond residents whose enslavers allowed them to hire out their time, Virginia Isham thus made extra money for her family by sewing for Hector Davis. The more enslaved people Davis dressed and sold, the more money Virginia Isham made, and the closer she came to buying freedom for herself and her family. The labor of women such as Isham and Hinton complicate and trouble conceptions of slave agency and resistance. While working for their own freedom or to improve their family's condition under slavery, they were simultaneously complicit in the continued enslavement of others.[25]

From July 1857 to December 1860, Davis paid a total of $1,376.37 to Isham. By January 1863, with inflation caused by the war, this number had jumped to $2,980.56. He paid her for other tasks related to sewing, as well. His clerk did not usually record the exact reason Davis paid Isham, but when he did the entries ranged from "clothing negroes" to buying ready-made items such as stockings and supplies for her sewing, including scissors and calico. At times he made payments to her account, implying the clerk who kept Davis's books could give her book credit rather than always paying her in cash. This would have been a significant loss of autonomy for Isham, since it required her to go to Davis or his clerk each time she wanted ready money. She may have had other sources of income, however; at one point Davis even loaned her money.[26]

Other slave traders who did business with Davis also knew the Ishams. On several occasions, visiting traders paid Virginia Isham, through Davis, for midwifery. William Isham received payments for running errands and attending enslaved people who were ill. A handful of times, William assisted his wife, Virginia, with her clothing tasks, purchasing shoes and other ready-made items. The Ishams were thus a familiar sight around Davis's property, coming in and out of his office to receive payments and deliver supplies.

[24] Winter, *American Dreams of John B. Prentis,* 107; Elias Ferguson to John J. Toler, 1859, Elias Ferguson Papers (North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh). For examples of women sewing for Hector Davis, see Hector Davis Account Book, vol. I, Sept. 4, 1858, Hector Davis & Company Account Books (Chicago History Museum Archive, Chicago, Ill.).

[25] Davis Account Book, vol. I, June 3, 1859; *Crouch et al. v. Davis's Ex'or* (1866); Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens, Ga., 2000), 26–27, 64–66. See also Midori Takagi, *"Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction": Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782–1865* (Charlottesville, 1999); and John J. Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia* (Baton Rouge, 2012).

[26] Davis Account Book, vol. I, Feb. 27, 1858. For examples of Virginia Isham purchasing sewing supplies, see *ibid.*, April 7, 1858, Aug. 6, 1859. For Virginia Isham buying ready-made clothing, see Davis Account Book, vol. II, Feb. 15, 1862, March 29, 1862, Hector Davis & Co. Account Books. I compiled the payment amounts based on all records in the Davis Account Books.

Virginia could be seen about the jail, attending to pregnant enslaved women while William administered medicine to slaves who were sick.[27]

Though they were familiar with Davis and his business associates and received compensation for their work, Virginia and William were still enslaved and at a significant disadvantage. Davis, for example, punished William for an unknown offense in 1862, sending him to stay at Sidnum Grady's jail for several days. If William asserted too much autonomy or displeased Davis in his services, Davis could mete out physical punishment as he saw fit. Virginia had no power to intervene when her husband was locked away in a jail very similar to the one they both worked in every day.[28]

Virginia Isham, too, had little leverage in her financial arrangement with Davis, which favored him significantly. She received only one fourth of the profits Davis made by selling the products of her labor, and he paid a higher price for clothes sewn by white women such as Anna, the wife of his agent Solomon Davis. One week in December 1859, for instance, Hector Davis paid "Mrs. SN Davis" fifty dollars for sewing while Isham received ten. Anna Davis's going rate was forty cents per shirt and five dollars per suit of clothes. Isham does not appear to have had a set rate per piece. Hector Davis's clerk meticulously recorded how many items Anna Davis had sewn and at what price. Virginia Isham could not turn to the law or to an influential husband to assist her in achieving a better rate; Anna Davis could.[29]

Like Virginia, Corinna received significant sums of money for "negro clothes," but Omohundro also paid her for "dressing" specific enslaved women. While a young enslaved man might be dressed in a new shirt, pants, and shoes, many of the women Corinna dressed for Omohundro received more extravagant clothing and accessories. Women such as Maria Johnson, Jenny, Columbia, and Sally were labeled by Omohundro as "fancy" in his sales book. A "fancy girl" was a young enslaved woman, often but not always with light skin, sold for sexual purposes. Omohundro spent a great deal more on clothing "fancies" than he did on other men and women. Dressing "fancy girls" in earrings, expensive shoes, or fashionable gowns was a calculated business decision. Omohundro knew that these items signified an enslaved woman's status as "fancy" and raised her monetary value. In the sale of enslaved women for explicitly sexual purposes, the historian Adrienne Davis notes, "the market assigned economic value directly related to sexual attractiveness" and "sexual abuse and economic profits brutally collided." For this reason, Omohundro gave Corinna twenty-five dollars to dress Liza, and Charlotte and Jane were told to wear earrings when on the auction block.[30]

[27] For examples of William Isham buying medicine, see Davis Account Book, vol. I, April 21, 1858. For William Isham running errands and buying shoes, see *ibid.*, Aug. 31, 1859, Dec. 31, 1859. For Virginia Isham acting as midwife, see Davis Account Book, vol. II, Dec. 3, 1862.

[28] Davis Account Book, vol. II, Aug. 30, 1862, Nov. 8, 1862.

[29] Hector Davis specified that he paid Virginia Isham one-fourth of his profits. Davis Account Book, vol. I, June 3, 1859. For examples of payments to "Mrs. SN Davis," see *ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1859, Jan. 28, 1860.

[30] For examples of Omohundro listing enslaved women as "fancy," see Maria Johnson sold Feb. 18, 1859, Columbia sold March 12, 1859, Omohundro Slave Trade and Farm Accounts, 1857–1864, Mss 4122 (Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville); Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, June 20, 1856 (Liza), Jan. 8, 1858 (Jane), Nov. 12, 1858 (Charlotte); and Adrienne Davis, "'Don't Let Nobody Bother Yo' Principle': The Sexual Economy of American Slavery," in *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work,* ed. Sharon Harley and the Black Women and Work Collective (New Brunswick, 2002), 103–27, esp. 116. For more on the fancy trade, see Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States," *American Historical Review,* 106 (Dec. 2001), 1619–50; Sharony Green, "'Mr Ballard, I am compelled to write again': Beyond Bedrooms and Brothels, a Fancy Girl Speaks," *Black Women, Gender & Families,* 5 (Spring 2011), 17–40; Sharony Green, *Remember Me to Miss Louisa: Hidden Black-White Intimacies in Ante-*

While Lexington, Kentucky, New Orleans, and Richmond were most notorious for "fancy" sales, nearly all slave traders described some of their "stock" as "fancy." Those who did not specifically use the euphemism *fancy* still recognized the value that buyers placed on the sexual and reproductive labor of young enslaved women. Walter Johnson writes that enslavers "imagined who they could be by thinking about whom they could buy." When potential purchasers encountered a "fancy girl" in the slave market, they placed their own desires on enslaved women's bodies, fantasizing about sex, domination, and rakish challenges to social mores. To purchase a "fancy" was to make a personal statement in front of slave traders and the other white men and women present.[31]

Thus the abolitionist Calvin Fairbank recalled his 1842 purchase of Eliza, a fancy girl "only one sixty-fourth African," as a manly competition for mastery between himself and another bidder, a "short, thick-necked, black-eyed Frenchman from New Orleans." The two men attempted to outbid one another until the price reached $1,485. The auctioneer, in an attempt to drive prices up, exposed Eliza's breasts to the crowd and cried, "Here is a girl fit to be the mistress of a king!" Egging on the competition between the two men for his own financial gain, the auctioneer continued, "Ah! Gentleman, who is going to be the winner of this prize?" When the Frenchman lost the bidding war, Fairbank, imagining himself a hero, announced that rather than keep Eliza, he was going to free her. While Fairbank likely embellished the tale, including such tropes as a conniving white mistress jealous of Eliza's beauty and the oversexualized Frenchman, his emphasis on the bidding war with his antagonist is nonetheless indicative of the public performance of mastery during "fancy sales."[32]

Whether his tale was real or apocryphal, Fairbank captured slave traders' attitudes toward the sexuality of enslaved women. Confident they could profit from their customers' sexual fantasies and dreams of mastery, traders saw "fancies" as a solid investment. One trader, Philip Thomas, wistfully wrote his business partner, "I wish all we had were Eliza & Mariahs," referring to two "fancy" women he had purchased. Because Thomas was sure that "fancies" guaranteed high profits, he was incensed when his agent John Calhoun sold Eliza "low," writing, "Tell Calhoun I shall give him fits when I see him for selling Eliza as low as $1200 She was worth at least $2000." Richmond auctioneers D.M. Pulliam & Co. similarly tried to lure traders in by promising, "Fancy girls would sell exceedingly well just now." Pulliam followed this statement with an enticing, "Hoping we hear from you soon."[33]

Slave traders held just as many fantasies of domination as their customers and were notorious among the enslaved for their sexual violence against enslaved women. An escaped slave named John Brown recalled the "dreadful fate which awaits the young slave women who are sold away South, where the slave-pen is only another name for a brothel." In some cases, this was nearly the literal truth. Isaac Franklin, a onetime employer of

bellum America (DeKalb, 2015); and Walter Johnson, "The Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s," *Journal of American History,* 87 (June 2000), 13–38. On the relationship between the "fancy trade" and the literary figure of the quadroon, see Clark, *Strange History of the American Quadroon,* 161–68. My interpretation of the experiences of "fancy girls" differs from Eugene Genovese's presumption that "many of these fancy girls . . . often ended by falling in love with their men, and vice versa." Genovese's portrayal of fancy girls, in contrast to the crude language slave traders employed when referencing these women, is overly romanticized. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1976), 417.

[31] Johnson, *Soul by Soul,* 79, 111–13.

[32] Calvin Fairbank, *Rev. Calvin Fairbank During Slavery Times: How he "Fought the good Fight" to Prepare "the Way"* (Chicago, 1890), 26–32, esp. 26, 27, 29, 30.

[33] Philip Thomas to William A. J. Finney, Jan. 20, 1859, William A. J. Finney Papers (Rubenstein Library); D. M. Pulliam & Co. to Ferguson, April 3, 1858, Ferguson Papers.

Rice Ballard, speculated, "the old Lady and Susan [two enslaved women] could soon pay for themselves by keeping a whore house," though he was mainly concerned with his and his associates' pleasures. He suggested that the brothel be "located and established at your place, Alexandria, or Baltimore for the Exclusive benefit of the consern & [its] agents." The Lexington trader Lewis Robards also drew on images of a brothel to sell enslaved women. He kept two separate slave jails, with one dedicated entirely to the sale of forced sex workers. This jail he decorated as a brothel.[34]

For traders, female sexuality was a highly successful avenue for making money at auctions or in private sales. Sexual and reproductive labor could also be exploited in other ways, as Omohundro demonstrated. Traders who chose not to sell enslaved women could exact the women's labor to cut costs in their jails, boardinghouses, or personal homes. Traders could also sell the children they had with the enslaved women they raped, as the former slave Moses Roper remembered. William Wells Brown, while enslaved by a trader named Walker, knew a "quadroon . . . and one of the most beautiful women I ever saw," named Cynthia, whom Walker purchased "for the New Orleans market," which was infamous for its traders' brazen marketing of "fancies." On the way to New Orleans, Walker decided he wanted Cynthia to labor for him rather than for one of his customers, so he "took her back to St. Louis, established her as his mistress and housekeeper at his farm and before I left, he had two children with her." Significantly, Brown, when writing of Cynthia, used the term *housekeeper* three times and *mistress* only once. Housekeeper, more so than mistress, conveyed the nature of the labor Cynthia would perform. In addition to sexual labor, Cynthia managed Walker's household while he was away on trading trips, and she raised the four children she bore him. When Walker found a white housekeeper who could claim the title of legal wife, however, he sold Cynthia and her children back into the slave market.[35]

In addition to marketing enslaved women's sexuality, slave traders also highlighted the women's domestic skills. Hector Davis, for example, advertised an enslaved woman he was selling as a "first rate Cook, Washer, and Ironer," while Robert Lumpkin boasted in the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* that he had a "valuable seamstress for sale" who had been "raised by one of the best housewives in Virginia." In some cases, skill as a seamstress seemed to imply an enslaved woman's status as a fancy girl. An itinerant trader, John J. Toler, often conflated the two, in one case using "yellow wimmen" and "seamstress" interchangeably. Whether in private letters or public advertisements, traders tended to associate certain domestic skills, such as sewing and embroidery, with sexual availability.[36]

Corinna thus "dressed" other women to be commodified and sold in the same highly sexualized way she could have been. Perhaps she knew from experience what dresses and accessories would catch a potential buyer's fancy, or perhaps Omohundro instructed her in what outfits would match customers' image of a demure, attractive, middle-class

[34] John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave Now in England,* ed. F. N. Boney (Savannah, 1991), 96–98. Isaac Franklin quoted in Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told,* 119–20. J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill, 1940), 157–59.

[35] William Wells Brown, *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man: The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown,* ed. William L. Andrews (New York, 1993), 41–46, esp. 45–46.

[36] "Slaves for Sale," *Richmond Daily Dispatch,* Jan. 20, 1858, p. 3; "Valuable Seamstress for Sale," *ibid.*, March 20, 1852, p. 4; Toler to Ferugson, June 22, 1858, Ferguson Papers. "Yellow women" was a description of light-skinned enslaved women that was often used as a euphemism for fancy girls. For more on traders' and other enslavers' valuation of enslaved women's domestic skills and reproductive capacity, see Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from the Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston, 2017).

woman, who, because of racial ideology and enslavement, was sexually available to white male bidders in a way that white women were not. Corinna dressed enslaved women to highlight their sexual attractiveness, helping raise their purchase price and increase profits for the man who enslaved her and fathered her children. In securing higher prices for these "fancies," Corinna contributed to the economic security of herself and her children. Perhaps Corinna believed the more money Omohundro made in the fancy trade, and in the slave market in general, the greater was the chance that she would live a comfortable life and that she and her children would be safe from sale. In the life of Corinna Hinton Omohundro, the neat divides between public and private, and sex, family, and money, disappeared. Economic forces brought Corinna to Omohundro in the most brutal of ways, and this uncomfortable mix of the intimate and the economic would continue to influence her life as long as she was enslaved.[37]

The sexual economy of slavery, and the convergence of family and financial interests, were ever-present forces for Corinna. She only needed to look nextdoor to the home of her neighbors and family friends, Hector Davis and Ann Davis, to see a situation stunningly similar to her own. While most strongly associated with New Orleans *placées,* concubinage was common as well in Richmond and many other slave markets. For instance, slave trader, auctioneer, financier, and bank president Hector Davis, likely the most influential slave trader in Richmond, lived as husband and wife with Ann Banks, a woman he enslaved. Like Corinna, Ann was probably a "fancy" whom Davis purchased and kept with him as a concubine. Ann and Hector had four children together, Audubon, Jennie, Matilda, and Victorine Davis, the oldest of whom was born when Ann was twenty years old. Also in the same area in Richmond was the jail complex of Robert Lumpkin, who lived with Mary, a woman he enslaved. Mary and Robert had six children together and may have legally married in 1866. After Lumpkin's death, Mary inherited his jail property, which she rented to Rev. Nathaniel Culver in 1868. Culver transformed the former "Devil's Half Acre," as the enslaved men and women imprisoned there called it, into a school for the city's freed people.[38]

The previous owner of the "Devil's Half Acre," a man named Bacon Tait, also had an enslaved mistress and family. Like Omohundro, Tait had once been an agent of Rice Ballard, and the two men may have worked for Ballard at the same time. In an 1839 letter to Ballard, Tait wrote that he "had not [sat] at table in a private house with [white] Ladies for more than twenty years," implying a domestic and sexual familiarity with enslaved women. By the late 1840s, Tait was sharing his dining table primarily with one enslaved woman, Courtney Fountain. Like Davis, Tait was a respected man in Richmond, as voters elected him to serve as city councilman and commissioner of the streets for Jefferson

[37] Johnson, "Slave Trader, the White Slave, and the Politics of Racial Determination in the 1850s," 16. Walter Johnson describes slave traders' marketing of "fancy girls" as a distinct category. Slave traders were "not only marketing race but also making it." *Ibid.*

[38] *Crouch et al. v. Davis's Ex'or* (1866); Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom: Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore, 2011); Robert Lumpkin Will, proved Nov. 6, 1866, Richmond City Hustings Wills, vol. 24, pp. 419–22 (Library of Virginia); Charles H. Corey, *A History of the Richmond Theological Seminary, with Reminiscences of Thirty Years' Work among the Colored People of the South* (Richmond, 1895), 77. For more on the image of the *placée* in New Orleans, see Clark, *Strange History of the American Quadroon*. I describe the Omohundro and Davis families as friends due to the intimacy implied by Omohundro's accounts as well as the way each man treated his enslaved family. Omohundro recorded several gifts given to Ann Davis and her children with Hector, including expensive items such as silver teaspoons. Omohundro and Hector Davis occasionally did business together, and both men sent their children to Pennsylvania to be educated. See, for example, Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Oct. 1859, Dec. 1859.

Ward. Around 1860 Tait moved his enslaved family to Salem, Massachusetts, where they passed as white.[39]

Another of Omohundro's associates, William Goodwin, the man who jailed Solomon Northup in Richmond, sent his enslaved mistress, Betsy Barbour, to Detroit, Michigan. By the time of Goodwin's death, he had enslaved children and grandchildren residing in Detroit. He purchased a home for them there and instructed his executors to pay Barbour $150 annually, a significantly smaller sum than that paid to Goodwin's cousins and siblings, though these latter payments were made primarily in coupon bonds to the Virginia Central Railroad Company.[40]

Beyond the mistresses of Omohundro's business associates, Corinna daily confronted the realities of the sexual abuse inherent in the slave trade in the women she dressed and likely in the jokes and comments of the slave traders and potential buyers who came to Omohundro's home and jail. If the men's letters are any indication, they made frequent, crude references to sexual exploitation and its marketability. A frequent visitor to the Richmond market, G. W. Eustler, assured his friend and sometimes trading partner, Elias Ferguson, that an enslaved woman named Sal, whom he had sold to the trader and auctioneer R. H. Dickinson, was still available as a sexual commodity. Dickinson, Eustler explained, told him that Ferguson "might have it Once a day any time you called for it as long as she was there." Another business associate of Ferguson's reported excitedly, "Mr H D [Hector Davis] sold a brown skin fancy to day for $1600." For these men, making large profits from the commodification of enslaved women's sexuality was something to boast about.[41]

Corinna was very familiar with the tight-knit Richmond trading community, given the boardinghouse next-door to the jail and residence. The boardinghouse catered to men, such as Eustler and Ferguson, whose permanent residences were elsewhere but who spent a significant amount of time in Richmond buying, selling, and watching the market. The house provided a central location for traders while they waited on enslaved property to sell or negotiated a purchase. Traders could socialize, form or solidify business relationships, evaluate one another's trustworthiness, and exchange market information.[42]

Yet the boardinghouse was not strictly a homosocial space. Besides Corinna and other enslaved women there, traders could bring their wives or enslaved mistresses to stay at Omohundro's. For instance, the trader A. Wilson brought "Miss Emily" to board with him off and on in 1851, while C. S. Skidmore brought "Miss Susan" to supper with him. The presence of these women was recorded in a very different manner from the enslaved women who stayed in Omohundro's jail, who he entered into his record book as simply "Girl Mary" or "Negro woman." Other Richmond slave traders also offered special accommodations to the concubines of their business associates. When Lucy Ann Cheatham Hagan visited Richmond, for instance, she lodged with Robert Lumpkin and Mary

[39] Bacon Tait to Rice Ballard, Aug. 13, 1839, Rice Ballard Papers (Southern Historical Collection), quoted in Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told,* 241; William L. Montague, *Montague's Richmond Directory and Business Advertiser for 1850–1851 containing the names of the business men of the city of Richmond, their occupations and places of business* (Richmond, 1851), 31, 104; 1850 U.S. Census, Richmond, Va., s.v. "Bacon Tait," available at Ancestry.com; 1860 U.S. Census, Essex County, Mass., s.v. "Bacon Tait," *ibid.*; Will of Bacon Tait, executed June 20, 1871, Richmond City Chancery Court Wills (microfilm: reel 846 no. 1) (Library of Virginia).

[40] Will of William Goodwin, executed May 4, 1864, Richmond City Circuit Court Will Book (microfilm: reel 76 no. 2) (Library of Virginia). On Solomon Northup being held in William Goodwin's jail, see Schermerhorn, *Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism,* 179.

[41] G. W. Eustler to Ferguson, Aug. 16, 1856, Ferguson Papers; Toler to Ferguson, Feb. 26, 1859, *ibid.*

[42] "Money Paid Out and Received, No. 1, 1851–1877," Omohundro Business Records.

Lumpkin. Cheatham Hagan and her children visited the city seven or eight times in the 1850s, both with John Hagan and without. Mary Lumpkin recalled that Cheatham Hagan stayed "always with me, she never slept out of my house at anytime when she visited Richmond," not even at her mother's. Mary Lumpkin didn't "suppose her mother could accommodate her so well" as the Lumpkins could.[43]

At times, enslaved woman and their children, rather than staying in the jail or boardinghouse, were sent to the home of Maria Southall. Southall was a free black woman who lived in Richmond and who made additional income through opening her household to enslaved boarders. Like Corinna, she took her domestic skills to the marketplace. In the spring of 1853, Omohundro sent an enslaved woman and her two children to Southall's for fifteen days. The woman's enslavers, J. B. Copeland and S. M. Copeland, paid Omohundro twenty-three dollars, a portion of which he ostensibly gave to Southall. Hector Davis, too, outsourced some domestic labor to other Richmond women, such as the "old woman" who "boarded" an enslaved person in 1859, or Lucinda Cole, whom Davis paid for taking care of an enslaved child in 1861.[44]

Omohundro paid for the boardinghouse license and the building rent, but Corinna handled most of the day-to-day responsibilities, allowing Omohundro to focus on the jail and selling enslaved people. He labeled some of the boarding bills in his general account book as "Mrs. Omohundro's bill," but it appears that he settled most of the boarding accounts himself. How much profit she kept for herself from the boardinghouse is unclear, but she likely claimed some, particularly for extra labor that went beyond the boarding bill. Having boarders gave Corinna an opportunity to market her sewing and cooking skills for additional fees and thus to gain extra funds of her own. Sometimes, rather than giving her money, Omohundro loaned sums to her, ranging anywhere from fifty to six hundred dollars. These loans imply that Corinna had income with which to repay him, plus interest. Some of this money may have come from the sale of produce at one of the city's markets.[45]

While men typically managed hotels, women dominated the boardinghouse industry. A woman with a few extra rooms in her home and the funds to purchase or hire out enslaved domestics could start a boardinghouse, while hotels required more capital and were generally more luxurious and exclusive than their smaller counterparts. In Richmond mostly older, single white women ran boardinghouses, which were concentrated in the commercial districts along Broad Street and the docks on the James River. Evidence suggests, however, that free and enslaved black women also operated boardinghouses, particularly in the late antebellum period, as "demand increased dramatically for household services because of the growing number of . . . male households that lacked both the facilities and the instruments to cook or wash."[46]

[43] On "Miss Emily," see *ibid.*, April 30, 1851, p. 30. On "Miss Susan," see *ibid.*, Dec. 5, 1859, p. 104. Mentions of "Girl Mary" and "Negro woman" are made throughout that record. "Testimony of Mary Lumpkin," Succession of Lucy Ann Hagan, 1887, case 21696. Frederic Bancroft noted that a New Orleans trading firm kept a boarding house for traders who desired to stay with the women they enslaved. Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South,* 325.

[44] "Money Paid out and Received," 68; Davis Account Book, vol. II, April 6, 1861.

[45] See, for example, Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Nov. 11, 1857, Dec. 19, 1863, May 12, 1863.

[46] Wendy Gamber, "Tarnished Labor: The Home, the Market, and the Boardinghouse in Antebellum America," *Journal of the Early Republic,* 22 (Summer 2002), 177–204; Leni Ashmore Sorensen, "Absconded: Fugitive Slaves in the 'Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, 1834–1844'" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2005), 44–46; Takagi, *"Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction,"* 93; Kirsten E. Wood, "Making a Home in Public:

According to Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, accounts from businesses such as Corinna's provide "some of the clearest testimony about how women's work was segmented and valued." Services such as caring for sick boarders, sewing new garments, lending money, and laundering were ones that could be billed as extra charges above and beyond the meals and mending included in the general boarding fee. For Corinna, providing meals and mending were basic services, while supplying goods such as shoes, blankets, and excessive amounts of alcohol were not. In 1862, for example, two boarders paid extra for fifteen weeks of laundry, a gallon of brandy, and a handful of personal items Corinna had purchased for them. Intriguingly, the bill also includes the line "to cash lent 10.00." Corinna evidently let customers borrow her money on occasion; it is unclear whether the amount included interest.[47]

In many ways staying at Mrs. Omohundro's boardinghouse was like staying at one's own home. Silas Omohundro and his guests expected Corinna to perform tasks typical for a wife or female relative. She ran errands for boarders, purchasing forgotten or ruined items such as carpetbags and hats, made meals, and served brandy. Yet Corinna performed these services not out of the domestic devotion attributed to wives and daughters but for cash. Corinna monetized domestic labor for visiting slave traders in potentially unsettling ways, all the more so because she was enslaved.[48]

Corinna's finances, like her life with Omohundro, were an uncertain mix of tenuous independence and ultimate dependence. The money that Corinna received from Omohundro, whether for clothing enslaved individuals or for managing the boardinghouse, or in the form of a loan or gift, afforded her a degree of autonomy. But these funds were entirely dependent on her relationship with the man who owned her. Any additional money that she made from boarders increased her income and opportunities for self-reliance, but Omohundro, if he so desired, could legally claim any wages she made.

Since he does not appear to have done so, Corinna managed her own income. Some of her money was likely reinvested in her economic ventures and used for purchasing supplies. What she did with the remainder is unclear. Perhaps she invested it in moveable items that retained value, such as silverware or fine jewelry. She could have followed the lead of other early nineteenth-century women and invested in financial instruments, purchasing stocks or bonds. Or maybe she saved it, keeping her money someplace secret and secure where it could be used in times of emergency, in case she or her children were in danger of being sold.[49]

The majority of money that Corinna received from Omohundro was in the form of paper money, likely because it was the easiest form of payment in the local economy of which Corinna was a part. Omohundro most often specified in his account book that he gave "Cash to Corinna"; only rarely did he record "Gave to Corinna in gold." In the ante-

Domesticity, Authority, and Family in the Old South's Public Houses," in *Family Values in the Old South,* ed. Craig Thompson Friend and Anya Jabour (Gainesville, 2010), 158–85. For the quotation, see Takagi, *"Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction,"* 93.

[47] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy,* 42–43; "Board bill for PE Dobbs and Ferguson & Elder," Dec. 7, 1862–May 12, 1863, Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book.

[48] For examples, see "Money Paid out and Received"; and Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Sept. 11, 1862, Nov. 11, 1863.

[49] After the Civil War, Corinna secured several loans with jewelry and silverware. Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866. Dividend books of antebellum banks include the names of many female investors. See, for example, Planters and Mechanics Bank of Charleston Account Book, 1858–1864 (South Caroliniana Library); Bank of the Commonwealth Records, 1859–1865 (Virginia Historical Society); and Bank of Cape Fear Records, vol. 6 (Southern Historical Collection).

bellum South, the term *cash* signified "ready money." A nineteenth-century dictionary of commercial terms instructed aspiring clerks that, in practice, "ready money" was "further understood to mean checks, bills, or other readily realizable securities." A variety of forms of credit, manifested in ink and paper, thus circulated in the market as currency and could have reached Corinna's hands.[50]

The most likely form of "readily recognizable security" she would have encountered, a promissory note, was a legally binding promise to pay a debt that collected interest. Corinna could have held onto a promissory note made out to her until it was due, or, because it was assignable, she could have used it to pay her own debts. Corinna could have been paid with a promissory note that was circulating like currency. Due bills operated similarly to promissory notes, while checks, or drafts, were orders, generally to a bank, to pay a third party. Bank notes, too, were essentially forms of credit. Each note that the bank issued was a "small, interest-free loan by note holders to the bank." Bank notes were exchangeable for specie, but a bank could not redeem for specie at one time all of the notes it had in circulation. However, banks were able to inspire enough confidence within a given region that their notes passed from person to person as payment, representing the promise of payment in specie.[51]

"Cash to Corinna," despite its potential for autonomy, ultimately tied her back to the financial economy of the slave trade. Promissory notes and checks from her slave trader customers or de facto husband depended on the solvency of their issuers, which was grounded in the success of the slave market and profits from the men, women, and children she fed and clothed before they were sold. Corinna's finances and creditworthiness, no less than Omohundro's, rested on the backs of enslaved human beings and the shackles and bills of sale that held them in bondage.

Through her business association with a slave trader, Corinna gained access to money that allowed her "to appropriate [symbols] of leisure and femininity" through the purchase of fashionable accessories. She was not the only enslaved woman to do so. Richmond residents frequently commented on crossing paths with enslaved men and women dressed in "Northern and European finery" who "challenged the prevailing codes of deference simply through their sense of fashion." As Stephanie Camp has shown, "when women adorned themselves in fancy dress of their own creation, they distanced themselves from what it felt like to wear slaves' low-status clothing." Making her way through the city with kid gloves, breast pins, and diamond rings, Corinna dressed above her legal status and made a bid for independence and respectability through her strategic deployment of material goods. Her light skin tone and ability to pass as white could have only heightened the anxieties of Richmond residents who knew her and were already uneasy about slave hiring and racial order.[52]

[50] "Dictionary of Commercial Terms," *Bankers' Magazine and Statistical Register,* 10 (Jan. 1861), 545–69, esp. 551. For examples of cash payments to Corinna, see Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, Sept. 22, 1855, March 2, 1856, April 24, 1857.

[51] "Dictionary of Commercial Terms," 551; Nelson, *Nation of Deadbeats,* xv, 15–16; Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy,* 80–81; George D. Green, *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804–1861* (Stanford, 1972), xi–xiii. Jessica M. Lepler, *The Many Panics of 1837: People, Politics, and the Creation of a Transatlantic Financial Crisis* (New York, 2013), esp. 15.

[52] Kimball, *American City, Southern Place,* 108; Stephanie M. H. Camp, "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830–1861," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery,* ed. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie M. H. Camp (Athens, Ga., 2006), 87–126, esp. 109, 107. For examples of Corinna's dress, see Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, April 5, 1856, July 3, 1858, March 30, 1858.

Buying expensive accessories, personally discharging a debt, or making decisions about how to run the household gave Corinna some freedom of choice and a modicum of independence, but the money came from, and linked her to, Omohundro. Particularly when she shopped at stores where she used book debt, her ability to make purchases depended on his financial reputation. Family was a crucial determinant of whether an individual was worthy of credit, and Corinna was no exception. If "rank . . . mattered more in placing individuals within the wealth structure of the city than did gender," then the bookkeepers of Richmond's fashionable Chile & Cheney's clothing store, who often extended her credit, must have seen her not as an individual enslaved woman but as either Omohundro's enslaved woman or, given her manner of dress and her light skin tone, his wife. Purchasing on credit, rather than enhancing her autonomy, bound Corinna once more to the slave trade.[53]

Corinna's financial ties to Omohundro lasted beyond his death, since his estate was contested in court into the early twentieth century. He died in Richmond in 1864, as the institution that had made his fortune fell apart around him amid civil war. In his will, witnessed by Richmond mayor Joseph Mayo, Omohundro was more explicit than many men who had families with enslaved women, acknowledging Corinna's children as his own. In this public document, however, he never called Corinna his wife. Instead, he referred to her as "my woman," which clearly conveyed his sense of ownership of her, and as "a kind, faithful, and dutiful woman to me and an affectionate mother." This description could have applied to the qualities he valued in Corinna as wife or as slave.[54]

The dispersal of Omohundro's estate highlights the complex legal and social identities of Corinna and enslaved concubines like her. Along with receiving her freedom in the will, Corinna inherited the entirety of Omohundro's personal estate, as well as her choice of real estate in Philadelphia or Richmond. She decided to remain in Richmond. The will directed the executor, Richard Cooper, to then sell the Philadelphia property and any personal items Corinna did not want, with the proceeds invested and payments made to Corinna semiannually. From Omohundro's estate Corinna purchased three women, Lavenia, Polly, and Mariah, and one boy, Tom, for over $16,000. While many enslaved Richmond residents purchased family to keep them safe, no evidence suggests that Corinna was related to any of these individuals. She may have feared that the three women and Tom would be sold in the division of Omohundro's estate and hoped to protect them through the purchase. Again, Corinna's actions leave no easy answers to questions of identity, resistance, and community.[55]

At Omohundro's death, Corinna thus appeared poised to inherit a significant sum of money. The appraisers of Omohundro's estate, fellow slave traders N. M. Lee, Robert Lumpkin, and N. B. Hill, valued his Richmond property at $84,060. This included the

[53] Hartigan-O'Connor, *Ties That Buy,* 101; Silas Omohundro General Market & Account Book, March 20, 1861, May 7, 1862.

[54] Silas Omohundro, "Will of Silas Omohundro," executed July 8, 1864, Richmond City Circuit Court Will Books, vol. 2, pp. 228–30 (Library of Virginia).

[55] *Omohundro's Executor v. Omohundro,* 1866. Corinna seems to have gotten an initial payment from the executor as well as an advance (which she secured with silver tableware) before the litigation over the estate began. There is no evidence that Corinna shared biological ties with any of these individuals, though they may have had emotional bonds from shared experiences. The prices were highly elevated due to wartime inflation. For more on the complex politics of formerly enslaved women owning slaves, see Marisa J. Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive," *Gender & History,* 22 (Nov. 2010), 564–84. Omohundro, "Will of Silas Omohundro"; *Cooper v. Omohundro,* 86 U.S. 65 (1873); *Omohundro's Ex'or v. Crump,* 59 Va. 703 (1868); *Omohundro's Estate,* 66 Pa. 113 (1870).

value of his house and jail, the people he enslaved, and his household furniture. To this the appraisers added $60,650 worth of real estate and farm equipment in Henrico County and, later, $26,000 from the sale of Omohundro's two homes in Pennsylvania. Most of this large sum, however, was soon tied up in litigation over debts paid in Confederate currency, the executor's management of funds, and Corinna and her children's relationship to the estate.[56]

During these legal battles over the legality of her relationship with the father of her children, Corinna Hinton stopped signing her name Corinna Omohundro because, in 1867, she became Corinna Davidson. Her second partner, Nathaniel Davidson, was a white Union veteran from New England who had resigned his army commission to report on the war for the *New York Herald.* Perhaps the background of Corinna's second partner, the man she selected when she had a choice in the matter, points to a desire to distance herself from the institution of slavery and her years with Omohundro, as well as an inclination to assume a white racial identity. Corinna and Nathaniel, who knew of his wife's previous enslavement, combined their business interests after his work as a war correspondent was done, opening adjoining shops in Richmond's Jefferson Ward. Nathaniel sold coal and wood, while Corinna took her domestic skills into the market once more, operating a bakery and confectionary. She also continued to take on boarders. The Davidsons likely needed the extra income; in the end, not much materialized for Corinna from Omohundro's will.[57]

A job offer in 1874 gave Nathaniel and Corinna a chance to start over in a new city. Davidson began working for the *Washington National Republican,* a newspaper in Washington, D.C., of which he became managing editor in 1877. In the nation's capital, where most everyone was a stranger, Corinna could reinvent herself again, completely leaving behind her status as an enslaved concubine. To those who knew her in Washington, outside of her husband and her children, Corinna was the wealthy white wife of a successful newspaper editor and then appointee in the quartermaster general's office. She was also the mother of, by Victorian standards, six extremely accomplished children. The surviving male children all secured well-paying business jobs in major northern cities, working in law, journalism, and medicine. Corinna's only daughter, Alice, married Pennsylvania native and industrial executive Edward C. Street. Alice, like all of her siblings, was taken for white by census takers and married a white spouse. Her husband, Edward Street, was eager to collect his share of Alice's inheritance and thus knew of his wife's past in slavery, but the wives of the Omohundro sons may never have known their true family history.[58]

Corinna Hinton Omoundro Davidson died in 1887, a year after Nathaniel Davidson. Her youngest son, George, became the executor of her estate. George had been barely two years old when Silas died; Nathaniel had been more of a father to him than had Silas. Did George remember Richmond? Did he remember the slave jails and the Devil's Half

[56] Omohundro, "Will of Silas Omohundro"; Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866; *Omohundro's Estate,* 66 Pa. 113.

[57] "Death of Nathaniel Davidson," *Washington Critic,* April 29, 1886, p. 1; 1870 U.S. Census, Richmond City, Virginia, s.v. "Nathaniel Davidson," available at Ancestry.com; *Richmond City Directory for 1870* (microfilm: reel 1A, frame 93), Library of Virginia; *Richmond City Directory 1871–1872* (microfilm: reel 1A, frame 69), *ibid.*

[58] *Omohundro's Executor v. Omohundro,* 1866; Nathaniel Davidson, "Virginia Duplicity," *Washington National Republican,* Aug. 31, 1876, p. 1; "War Department Changes," *Washington Evening Star,* Feb. 2, 1883, p. 1. For more on the Omohundro children, see Estate of Silas Omohundro in the Lancaster County Orphan's Court, 1866; 1880 U.S. Census, Philadelphia, Pa., s.v. "Edward C. Street," available at Ancestry.com; 1880 U.S. Census, Washington, District of Columbia, s.v. "Colon Omohundro," *ibid.*; and 1900 U.S. Census, Hyde Park, Chicago, Ill., s.v. "William R. Omohundro," *ibid.*

Acre? When he laid his mother to rest, what did he truly know of her life? What did he tell his children about their grandmother and grandfather? That they were enslaver and fancy girl or loving husband and wife? What did Corinna's daughter, Alice, tell her own daughter Corinna about her grandmother? Could Corinna's children even imagine the teenage girl that a middle-aged Virginia slave trader bought with bank notes and promises thirty-some years ago? Could they reconcile the father who brought them candy and apples with the father who tore so many other children from their fathers?[59]

The internal dynamics of the Omohundro family, a complicated tangle of sex, money, and slavery, while foreign and distasteful to modern sensibilities, were an inherent part of the antebellum slave system. After all, as Friedrich Engels noted, "the word *familia* did not originally . . . refer to the married couple and their children, but to the slaves alone. *Famulus* means a household slave and *familia* signifies the totality of slaves belonging to one individual." Likewise, the origin of the word "economy," *oikonomia,* meant household management in Greek. Corinna's position as mother, slave, de facto wife, domestic manager, and human capital, put her in charge of the *family economy* in every sense. She entered the slave market as an object of exchange and navigated a complex existence at the intersection of the slave trade's financial, domestic, and sexual economies. Potential buyers assigned her monetary value based on her sexuality, her ability to reproduce and labor in the household, and the liquid wealth that holding her bill of sale signified. Her eventual purchaser, Silas Omohundro, valued her for all of these things as both a slave and a wife. Through involvement in his business, Corinna reentered the slave market not as object but as facilitator. She took the domestic and reproductive labor for which she was valued and attempted to use it to her own economic advantage, in turn contributing to the success of the institution—and the man—who enslaved her. Her life story adds one more link to the extensive chain of credit tying cotton producers in the U.S. South to bankers in New York City and beyond: the reproductive labor of free and enslaved women.[60]

[59] "District of Columbia, Deaths and Burials, 1840–1964," Genealogical Society of Utah (Salt Lake City, 2008), s.v. "Corinna Davidson," available at FamilySearch.org.

[60] Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884; Moscow, 1968), 57–58.