

“To Get Quit of Negroes”: George Washington and Slavery

PHILIP D. MORGAN

George Washington died much as he lived, stoic, dignified, controlled to the very end. True to form, his last moments, much like his life, saw him surrounded by slaves. At daybreak on the day he died – Saturday, 14 December 1799 – Caroline, a housemaid, bustled into his room to make a fire. Three other slaves fetched the physicians, who ministered to the dying General. Washington’s body servant, twenty-four-year-old Christopher, otherwise known as Christopher Sheels, attended his master throughout the long day of his last illness. Indeed, in the afternoon Washington motioned Christopher to take a seat by his bedside as he had been standing throughout his vigil. At the moment of death, blacks outnumbered whites in the room. Caroline, Charlotte, a seamstress, and Molly, a domestic, were all standing near the door, and Christopher was by the bed, while only three whites – Dr. James Craik, his primary physician and old friend; Tobias Lear, his secretary; and Martha Washington, his wife – were present. At Martha’s behest, Christopher aroused Lear from his grief by asking him to take care of the General’s keys and other personal items which the body servant had taken out of the dead man’s pockets. On the day after Washington’s death, Frank

Philip Morgan is Sidney and Ruth Lapidus Professor in the American Revolutionary Era at Princeton University. This article, in a slightly different form, was presented as the *Journal of American Studies* lecture at the British Association for American Studies Annual Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, in April 2004. The author is grateful for the invitation and the good feedback. In October 2003 he also presented it to a lively Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Seminar at Mount Vernon, organized by Joseph Ellis. He acknowledges the helpful comments of Philander Chase, editor of the Washington Papers, of Joseph Ellis of Mount Holyoke College, and especially of Mary V. Thompson of Mount Vernon’s research staff, who is a treasure trove of information on Washington’s slaves. Patricia Brady, Scott Casper, Cathy Helier, Peter Henriques, Don Higginbotham, Dennis Pogue, Eva Sheppard Wolf, and Rosemarie Zagari also provided valuable help at key points. Henry Wiencek kindly sent me an advance copy of his book, with which I disagree at several key points, although it is certainly the most comprehensive study of Washington and slavery to date. I hope to write a companion piece to this essay, exploring Washington’s slaves in more depth. My primary debt is, of course, to the modern edition of the Washington Papers, the indispensable mother lode of information on which this essay rests.

Lee, the family's mulatto butler, Christopher, and Marcus, another house servant, received new shoes so that they would look presentable at the funeral. Christopher probably washed and prepared the body. The funeral occurred on Wednesday, 18 December. Cyrus and fifteen-year-old Wilson, the grooms, led Washington's horse in the funeral procession from the mansion to the tomb. Of the eight named slaves mentioned at Washington's death and funeral, only one – Frank Lee – belonged to Washington outright; all the others were dower slaves, the property of his wife held in trust for the Custis heirs.¹

This distinction between those slaves he owned and those belonging to his wife assumed critical force when George Washington drafted his last will. At about four o'clock in the afternoon on the day he died, he asked his wife to retrieve the two wills in his desk. Looking them over, he told her to burn one. The operative will bore the date 9 July 1799 and was, as Washington earlier noted, the work of many "leisure hours" during that summer. The most notable – and longest – of the twenty-nine-page will's provisions concerned his slaves. He freed all the slaves he held in his own right (123 in number) after his wife's death. He did not free them during her lifetime, he explained, because many were married to dower slaves (of whom there were then 153), who would feel "the most painful sensations, if not disagreeable consequences" from seeing their family members freed. He provided for those slaves too elderly or too young to support themselves. Young children, bound as apprentices until the age of twenty-five, were to be educated. Washington expressly prohibited the sale or transportation of his slaves out of Virginia. He gave "his Mulatto man William (calling himself William Lee)," perhaps then the most famous slave in America, immediate freedom and an annuity of thirty dollars during his lifetime. He also freed in graduated fashion thirty-three slaves belonging to the estate of Bartholomew

¹ Tobias Lear's Narrative Accounts of the Death of George Washington, 14–15 Dec. 1799, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington: Retirement Series* (hereafter *PGW: Retirement*) 4 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998–99), 4, 542–55; Peter R. Henriques, *The Death of George Washington: He Died as He Lived* (Mount Vernon, VA: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2000), esp. 27–58. Mrs. Eleanor Forbes, the housekeeper, was frequently in the room during the day and evening, but apparently was not there at death; George Rawlins, the overseer at Union Farm, who first bled Washington, presumably left once the doctors were on the scene; and Drs. Gustavus Richard Brown and Elisa Cullen Dick were not in the room at death. Washington was also surrounded by slaves after death, as it were: for the story of Joice Heth, supposedly Washington's nurse, and for other nineteenth-century African Americans trading on connections (often flimsy or spurious) to the former President, see Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and The Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 219–20 and passim.

Dandridge (his wife's brother) who had become his property in 1788 in return for a debt. In short, Washington set free well over 160 slaves (since the thirty-three slaves had almost certainly increased in number since 1788), although he was unable to manumit the 153 dower slaves or the forty slaves he rented from Mrs. Penelope French.²

According to a letter attributed to his wife, Washington's decision to write his new will in the summer of 1799 was influenced by a "troubling dream," which foretold his imminent death. But this letter was a forgery, and even if it were not, Washington was not the type to be influenced by dreams. He experienced no epiphany about the immorality of slavery. Rather, his thinking evolved gradually – one is tempted to say, glacially – painstakingly, piecemeal, and sometimes contradictorily over decades. Washington was no utopian dreamer; he was, as Joseph Ellis puts it, a "rock-ribbed realist" and he came to his decision to free his slaves after years of deep, conflicted reflection.³

This article's aim is to demonstrate how Washington arrived at his decision in his will. First, I want to show how Washington's life was inextricably entwined with slavery. As Washington grew up he took slavery for granted, as every white Virginian did in the 1730s and 1740s. Over time he became further and further immersed in the system, and he and his slaves became ever more entangled with one another. Second, Washington shared with some of his peers a growing realization that slavery was a tragically flawed institution. This realization is momentous because, for the first time in world history, slavery came under principled attack. My aim here, then, is to try to explain how and why Washington tried to extricate himself from the institution's embrace, and I will single out four crucial turning points in Washington's thinking. Finally, this step-by-step approach leads to the most

² George Washington's Last Will and Testament, 9 July 1799, *PGW: Retirement*, 4, 480–81, 484–85. See also John P. Riley, "Written with My Own Hand: George Washington's Last Will and Testament," *Virginia Cavalcade*, 48 (Autumn 1999), 168–77. To date, I have been able to unearth little about the fate of the thirty-three (or more) former Dandridge slaves Washington freed (they lived in New Kent County, and the records of that county no longer exist for this period). To my knowledge, no previous historian has paid them any attention; as a result, the number of slaves Washington freed is routinely undercounted.

³ Martha Washington to unknown recipient, 18 Sept. 1799, in Joseph E. Fields, ed., "*Worthy Partner*": *The Papers of Martha Washington* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 321; taken from the notoriously unreliable Benson J. Lossing, *Mary and Martha: The Mother and Wife of George Washington* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1886), 324–26. Henry Wienczek, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 3–4, 354, begins and ends with this dream. For the dream's implausibility see Henriques, 77. Joseph J. Ellis, "The Farewell: Washington's Wisdom at the End," in Don Higginbotham, ed., *George Washington Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 222.

critical question of all. If, as is the case, Washington claimed to recognize that slavery was a violation of the principles on which the Revolution was based, and claimed as early as 1778 (for different reasons) to want to “get clear of” or “to get quit of Negroes,” why did he act on neither in his lifetime?⁴ Given his rather impressive record in delivering on his promises, why the failure? Does Washington, even more than Jefferson, reveal and expose the near-intractability of the problem? Or should he be held partly responsible for the failure to put slavery onto the road to extinction in early national Virginia and the larger nation?

Readers may doubt whether another article on George Washington and slavery is necessary. In 2000 this journal published a study on that very topic. The following year an essay by Dorothy Twohig – undoubtedly the best short statement on the issue – appeared. In 2003 Henry Wiencek wrote an intriguing full-length book on the subject. The following year Joseph Ellis produced the finest one-volume biography of Washington to date, one which takes seriously the issue of slavery. What can this article add? Its major claim to notice is its rigorous attention to chronology, its concern for the evolution in Washington’s thinking, its identification of a number of key watersheds in his views of slavery, and its assiduous reliance on that lodestar of information about Washington, the modern edition of his papers, which is now nearing completion. Whereas Kenneth Morgan cites 1783 as a critical year in Washington’s thinking about slavery, Henry Wiencek 1769, and Joseph Ellis 1794 (although, like me, Ellis notes “that there were no dramatic epiphanies, but rather a gradual and always contested thought process”), I see no single year as pivotal, and instead offer a number of turning points. Within the confines of a short article I also attempt to locate George Washington in both a local and a broader setting – a task to which I cannot do justice but which most other interpretations do poorly. Whether these differences merit yet another study of Washington and slavery is for the readers to decide.⁵

⁴ George Washington (hereafter GW) to Lund Washington (hereafter LW), 15 Aug. 1778, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799* (hereafter *WW*), 39 vols. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1931–44), 12, 327–28.

⁵ Kenneth Morgan, “George Washington and the Problem of Slavery,” *Journal of American Studies*, 34 (2000), 279–1 (esp. 291 for 1783); Dorothy Twohig, “‘That Species of Property’: Washington’s Role in the Controversy over Slavery,” in Higginbotham, ed., 114–38; Wiencek, 135, 185, 188 (for 1769); Joseph J. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York: Alfred A. Knop, 2004), 257 (for 1794), 311 n.22 (quote). Ellis’s account is the most subtle, and Twohig wisely avoids settling on any single year as vital. For a still insightful and succinct analysis, see Marcus Cunliffe’s *George Washington: Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1958), although slavery rates few mentions.

Washington became a slave-owner at a young age. In 1743, eleven years old, he inherited ten slaves from his recently deceased father, although he seems not to have gained personal control of them until 1750 when he became eighteen and purchased his first lands in Frederick County. Perhaps needing labor for his new lands, he received eleven slaves in the division of his father's slaves in that year. He would inherit another six slaves four years later from the estate of his elder brother Lawrence, and five more in 1762 from Lawrence's deceased widow. In 1754, in the defeat at Fort Necessity, Washington mentioned the loss of "a valuable Servant (who died a few days after of his Wounds)," who almost certainly was his slave and presumably his personal body servant, but whose identity is unknown.⁶

In 1754, after his half brother Lawrence's untimely death, George Washington leased Mount Vernon, with eighteen resident slaves, and transferred his own slaves there. He had already begun buying slaves. Before the year of his marriage he had purchased sixteen. In 1759 he hit the jackpot when his marriage to Martha Dandridge Custis, the richest widow then in Virginia, brought a further eighty-four, the so-called dower, slaves under his control. He would be responsible for these slaves, and their offspring, until he died. Now he assumed direct supervision of his farms and Mount Vernon truly became his home. His slave-buying increased in scale. In the year of his marriage he bought thirteen slaves and, from 1761 to 1773, another forty-two. Yet his and the dower slaves increased even faster by natural increase than by purchase. As a result, Mount Vernon's slave population grew rapidly, numbering perhaps about 150 or more by the time of the Revolution.⁷

⁶ Fields, ed., 126; division of Capt. Augustine Washington's slaves, 31 Oct. 1750, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington: Colonial Series* (hereafter *PGW: Colonial*), 10 vols. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1983–95), 7, 173 n (GW acquired 11: Fortune, George, Long Joe, Winna, Bellindar, Jenny, Adam, Natt, London, Milly, and Frank); division of Lawrence Washington's slaves, 10 Dec. 1754 in *ibid.*, 1, 231 (GW received 6: Peter, Jenny, Phebe, Tom, Lett's Lucy, and Jenny's Tom); division of Ann Lee's slaves, Dec. 1762, *ibid.*, 7, 172 (GW acquired 5: Kate and her 2 unnamed children, George, and Maria); GW to Carter Burwell, 20 April 1755, and GW to John Robinson, 20 April 1755, *ibid.*, I, 252, 257 (the loss of his slave). The loss of his personal body servant in 1754 led GW to employ a white servant in 1755 on the Braddock campaign.

⁷ It is not possible to calculate GW's purchase of slaves exactly, because in some cases he just notes price paid and not number of slaves. His first purchase was 7 Aug. 1752 when he bought perhaps two slaves of Col. Champs (my estimate, based on price paid): Ledger A, f.8, Mount Vernon. His largest purchases were: 9 slaves bought of Colonel William Churchill of Middlesex County in 1759, 7 (my estimate) slaves bought of Charles Graham, William Fitzhugh, and Benjamin Fendall of Maryland in 1761, and another 7 of Lee Massey of King George County in 1762. On three occasions (in 1764, 1768, and 1772) he bought four slaves at a time. In all, between 1752 and 1773 Washington bought at least seventy-one slaves, half of whom were in groups of four or more. Worthington Chauncey Ford,

His earliest contacts with slaves, revealing a mix of business-like priorities, harsh treatment, and patriarchal largesse, are prescient of the kinds of relations the master of Mount Vernon would have with his charges throughout his life. In 1750 one of Washington's slave men murdered another at Ferry Farm, the plantation he was to inherit. He received compensation for the executed slave, but violence among slaves reflected poorly on their masters, underscoring the importance of maintaining discipline and control. Washington learned his lesson well. After buying a black woman, Cleo, in 1755, he told his manager to employ her "leisure hour's" in making clothes. From the first, then, Washington expected his slaves to work unremittingly for him, even in their spare time. When his overseer at Mount Vernon reported that he whipped the carpenters when he saw a fault, Washington made no comment, presumably because such actions met with his approval. Yet Washington was not just stern task-master, but also played patriarch, buying some of his slaves' produce from their gardens or, when visiting other Virginia planters, handsomely tipping their slaves.⁸

The youthful Washington revealed prejudices toward blacks, quite natural for the day. At mid-century, when referring to his frontier experiences, amid "a parcel of Barbarians and an uncouth set of People," he described never taking off his clothes, sleeping in them "like a Negro." In other words, blackness, in his mind, was synonymous with uncivilized behavior. His seven-week sojourn on the island of Barbados in 1751, the only time he left mainland North America on a trip taken in the hopes of restoring his half brother to health, is also revealing. Landing in the heart of a fully fledged slave society, Washington hardly mentions the blacks all around him; they are seemingly invisible. He showed no empathy for their plight as they toiled

Washington as an Employer and Importer of Labor (Brooklyn, NY: privately printed, 1889), 8–9 seriously underestimates (and misunderstands some of) the numbers. In 1767 GW reported "losses enough in Negroes" that required replacement, GW to Carlyle and Adam, 14 Feb. 1767, *PGW: Colonial*, 7, 484, and described Negroes as "hazardous & perishable Articles ... swept of by innumerable distempers & subject to many accidents & misfortunes," GW to John Posey, 24 June 1767, *ibid.*, 8, 3. In 1774 he listed 119 black tithables in Fairfax County, perhaps giving him 150 or more slaves in all: Memorandum, List of Tithables, c. July 1774, *ibid.*, 10, 137.

⁸ King George County Order Book 2, 670, King George Courthouse, Virginia, as cited in Jack D. Warren, Jr., "The Significance of George Washington's Journey to Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XLVII (Nov. 2001), 18; GW to John Augustine Washington, 14 June 1755, *PGW: Colonial*, 1, 312–13 (Cleo); Humphrey Knight to GW, 2 Sept. 1758, *ibid.*, 5, 447 (whipping); Ledger A, 21 Dec. 1756, xxii; 10 Oct. 1757, f. 36; and Jan. 1758, xxii (for other such payments, see 12 Jan., 3, 10 Feb. 1757 on xxvi and 6 March and Nov. 1758, on xxii), Mount Vernon Library. For gratuities to servants, see "Cash Accounts" in respective volumes of Washington Papers, e.g. *PGW: Colonial*, 6, 182, 321, 339, 365, 379, 405–6, 443, 465–66, 474.

in the sugar fields. Apart from mentioning that “Gunia corn” was the chief support of Barbadian “negros,” his only other comment is derogatory, for he described the island’s ladies as generally “very agreeable, but by ill custom . . . affect the Negro style,” meaning that they spoke like their slaves and adopted some of their traits. Washington disapproved of this departure from Euro-American norms. Washington almost always referred to individual slaves by their diminutive names; if they took surnames he noted the fact in parentheses, usually saying that it was their term. By implication he did not recognize the full name.⁹

Yet early on Washington also reveals that his prejudices were not hard and fixed. When in 1755 his senior captain in the Virginia Regiment informed him that, contrary to rules, his company included “2 Negos & 2 Mullatoes,” the latter in particular “really Usefull as well as Likely,” Washington advised him to retain all four “and employ them as Pioneers or Hatchet-Men.” Similarly, three years later, at Fort Loudoun in Frederick County, Virginia, when Washington described a French deserter from Fort DuQuesne as a “shrewd Sensible Fellow” who may be useful to the cause because he was “very well acquainted with the Ohio, and its de[pendent] parts,” nothing seems out of the ordinary, except that the Colonel also described the man as a “French Negro.” In Washington’s opinion, then, black men could be highly useful, even astute and intelligent (the black Frenchman would later claim his freedom as Frank). Jeremy, a personal servant, who belonged to George’s brother John Augustine Washington and claimed to have been on the Braddock campaign, recalled the General as “amighty of a man,” a fine horseman, “hard as a bull,” and a generous master, who once gave him a large gratuity of many pounds.¹⁰

⁹ GW to Richard, 1749–50, *PGW: Colonial*, 1, 44 (Martha Washington once described one of her nephews as looking “as yellow as a mulatto,” indicating that racial similes came naturally: Fields, ed., 232); Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., *The Diaries of George Washington*, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976–79), 1, 89, 90–91; and see also Warren, 1–34; even in his will, as noted, GW referred to his “Mulatto man William,” only mentioning in parentheses that he called himself William Lee, but most slaves had names such as Bett or Betty, Ben, Bill or Billy, Davy, Doll or Dolly, Jack, Jenny, Joe, Lucy, Moll or Molly, Suck or Sucky, Tom, and Will.

¹⁰ Peter Hog to GW, 29 Nov. 1755, *PGW: Colonial*, 2, 188–89; GW to Peter Hog, 27 Dec. 1755, *ibid.*, 2, 236; GW to John St. Clair, 14 June 1758, *ibid.*, 5, 213. Jeremy, or Jeremy Prophet, aka Jerry, claimed that, as a fifteen- or sixteen-year old and “big enough to be gemman’s servant,” he accompanied John Augustine Washington on the disastrous Braddock expedition; see James Kirke Paulding, ed., *Letters from the South*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), 2, 191–205. Cathy Helier of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, who is researching Jerry’s life, doubts this claim, but his other recollections of the Bushrod, Ball, Custis, and Washington families show just how much blacks knew about whites.

In the 1760s, as Washington became a hands-on plantation owner, his relations with slaves deepened and his frustrations mounted. February 1760 saw him undertaking a time-and-motion study of his four slave carpenters, reckoning how much timber they could hew and how much plank they could saw. He was setting benchmarks that he expected them to follow. Symbolic of his new concerns, in 1761 he paid 7s 6d for a whip, the ubiquitous instrument of a master's authority. Work was always a source of tension, as Washington drove his slaves hard and they in turn tried to resist his demands. His early agreements with overseers mixed humanitarian concern with disciplinary action, stressing that they should "take all necessary and proper care of the Negroes, ... using them with proper humanity and discretion," or that they should treat "them with humanity and tenderness when Sick," but at the same time should prevent the slaves "from running about and visiting without his consent; as also to forbid strange Negroes frequenting their Quarters without lawful excuses for so doing." Strictness and compassion seemingly went side by side.¹¹

An indication of Washington's pragmatism was his recognition of black skills. From 1766 onward Washington employed slaves as overseers; at one point three of his five farms were under black supervision. Washington would say of Davy, one of his slaves, that he performed "as well as the white Overseers, and with more quietness than any of them." In addition to black overseers, Washington used black doctors to minister to the health of his slaves, although he also resorted to white doctors. One of the earliest payments in Washington's cash ledger, dated 1757, involved a sum of fifteen shillings given to "a Negro Doctor for services done Carpenter James." Six years later he made two payments of ten shillings each to a "Negroe Doctr." Blacks, in short, could earn his respect.¹²

¹¹ *Diaries*, 1, 232–34 (carpenters); Cash Accounts, 15 July 1761, *PGW: Colonial*, 7, 1 (whip); I don't think this is a riding whip, because in 1764 he notes the purchase of a "postilion whip," which costs him 2s: *ibid.*, 7, 280; and he also notes the purchase of whip thongs, *ibid.*, 7, 105 and 276, and a hunting whip, *ibid.*, 7, 292, 404, 420; for another purchase of a whip see *ibid.*, 10, 370. Agreement with Edward Violet, 5 Aug. 1762 and with Nelson Kelly, 1 Sept. 1762, *ibid.*, 7, 143, 148.

¹² For black overseers, see LW to GW, 17 Aug. 1767, *PGW: Colonial*, 8, 18 (Morris); Cash Accounts, 24 Dec. 1767, *ibid.*, 8, 60 (50s to Morris); Cash Accounts, 25 Dec. 1768, *ibid.*, 8, 143 (30s); Cash Accounts, 7 Jan. 1770, *ibid.*, 8, 290 (40s); Cash Accounts, 9 April 1771, *ibid.*, 8, 441 (50s); Cash Accounts, 25 Dec. 1771, *ibid.*, 8, 557 (18s and also first payment to Davy 12s). In 1775 Morris made 442 barrels of corn and Davy 191: LW to GW, 17 Jan. 1776, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series* (hereafter, *PGW: Revolutionary*), 13 vols. to date (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985–2003), 3, 129. For more on Morris see LW to GW, 24 Dec. 1777, *ibid.*, 12, 698, 700. For Davy see George Augustine Washington (hereafter GAW) to GW, 26 March 1790 in

Washington employed blacks as doctors but he also knew that slaves could use their herbal powers for less benign purposes. In 1764 his manager in York County, Joseph Valentine, was convinced that one of Washington's slaves had been poisoned, by another slave. Valentine noted that "I have had a negro doctor to Look at him and am agoing to try what he Can do for him." A week later the slave seemed well on the way to recovery, perhaps because of the antidote the black doctor had provided. Three years later, some slaves belonging to Washington's friend, George Mason, allegedly conspired to poison their overseers. Four slaves were executed, after which their heads were cut off and fixed on the chimneys of the Fairfax County Court House. Characteristically, Washington made no comment, but the actions of these slaves must have made an impression.¹³

In 1760 Washington experienced his first known slave runaway when he paid for his recapture. Between 1760 and his death, at least forty-seven of his and his wife's slaves, perhaps 7 percent of the slaves he owned and managed over his lifetime, became fugitives. He constantly dealt with the problem. In 1761 a group of four Africans fled his Dogue Run farm, and Washington carefully described their features, down to their scarifications and filed teeth. He always took slave flight seriously, and he usually adopted harsh actions to curtail it. One of his most decisive acts occurred in 1766, when, only two weeks after capturing Tom, he dispatched him to the island of St. Christopher in the West Indies. Although a gang foreman at his River Farm and "exceeding healthy, strong, and good at the Hoe," Tom was, in his master's estimation, "both a Rogue & Runaway (tho. he was by no means remarkable for the former, and never practiced the latter till of late)." Watchful to the last, Washington advised the schooner captain who transported Tom to the islands to "keep him handcuffed till you get to sea" lest he attempt his escape. Faced with an experienced and inveterate fugitive, Washington resolved to export the problem. He did the same five years later,

W. W. Abbot et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series* (hereafter *PGW: Presidential*), 11 vols. to date (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987–2002), 5, 281, and GW to William Pearce, 18 Dec. 1793, in *WW*, 33, 194. On doctors see Ledger A, 4 Feb. 1757, xxvi, and Cash Accounts, 4 May, 3 Oct. 1759, 13 Nov., 8 Dec. 1763, 1 Aug. 1766, 4 Feb. 1769, 23 Dec. 1773, *PGW: Colonial*, 6, 313, 365; 7, 268, 276, 458; 8, 169; 9, 396 and 398.

¹³ Joseph Valentine to GW, 29 July, 6 Aug. 1764, *ibid.*, 7, 318 and 320; GW to John Posey, 11 June 1769, *ibid.*, 8, 215 (this 1767 poisoning case surfaces only in far-off newspapers). GW also paid 12s to Harry Piper's Charles for playing the fiddle at a tavern on election night: Cash Accounts, 19 Dec. 1771, *PGW: Colonial*, 8, 556.

when he shipped the thirty-year-old, six-foot, Virginia-born Will Shag to Port-au-Prince in St. Domingue.¹⁴

It is difficult to pinpoint when Washington began to have his doubts about slavery, but the process was tortuously gradual. Henry Wiencek suggests that Williamsburg was a crucial place for understanding Washington's "difficult private struggle with slavery." According to the author, Washington "shrank in repugnance from the memory of what he had seen and what he himself had done there – an act so morally corrupt and of such stupefying cruelty that he vowed never to repeat it." The act occurred in December 1769 and involved Washington as one of seven managers of a lottery of slaves, in which fifty-five people were divided into thirty-nine lots. Some families were kept together, but most were separated. Washington experienced a change of heart regarding slavery, Wiencek contends, as he revealed a new-found reluctance to break up families by sale. He began to see that the business of slaveholding required "transactions so foul that he could no longer stomach them."¹⁵

Unfortunately, there is no evidence that Washington had this change of heart. Just a couple of months before the lottery took place, Washington bemoaned the behavior of a planter who owed him money for not getting his slaves into the best shape to sell. It is "a fact very well known that his Negroes & stock never can be disposed of at a more favourable juncture than in the Fall," Washington callously stated, "when they are fat and lusty and must soon fall of[f] unless well fed." These were hardly the ruminations of a man on the cusp of questioning slavery. In proposing to buy slaves in 1772, he was all business, specifying two-thirds male, one-third female, all young, "strait Limb'd, & in every respect strong & likely, with good Teeth & good Countenances." He might have been buying livestock. Three years later, in settlement for a debt, he bought a slave who resisted being separated from his family; only then did Washington agree to resell the slave. But this decision was no more than the conventional piety of large Virginia planters who usually said they did not want to break up slave families – and often did it anyway. We must be extremely wary of projecting twenty-first-century

¹⁴ Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slave Flight: Mount Vernon, Virginia, and the Wider Atlantic World," in Tamara Harvey and Greg O'Brien, eds., *George Washington's South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 197–222.

¹⁵ Wiencek, 135, 178–88. For other accounts of Washington's concern with slavery see James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington: Anguish and Farewell (1793–1799)* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969), 112–25, 432–48; Morgan, "George Washington and the Problem of Slavery," 279–301; Twohig, "'That Species of Property,'" 114–38; Ellis, *His Excellency*, esp. 160–67, 256–64.

moral sensibilities back into the eighteenth century. In 1769 – and for many years thereafter – Washington, like any other Virginia planter, bought and sold slaves without a second thought.¹⁶

A more plausible source of Washington's embryonic questioning of slavery – the first crucial turning point – is his decision to abandon the cultivation of tobacco. His first doubts about slavery were pragmatic in origin. In 1763 he reduced the size of his tobacco crop and by 1766 he had stopped growing it altogether. From that point onward he was committed to becoming a farmer and no longer a planter. Mixed farming could be accomplished with slaves, but grains required much less labor than tobacco. From the mid-1760s, then, Washington had to grapple with a fundamental problem: he had too many slaves. Whatever opposition to slavery was emerging in Washington at this point was almost entirely economic. As early as 1769 he earnestly sought to expand his land at Mount Vernon, "there being too many [Hands] to distribute among my other Quarters," as he put it. He also had to employ them in a much greater range of tasks than tobacco had ever required. He began experimenting with various grasses as forage for his growing number of livestock; his cattle herds increased and slaves had to be given more responsibility in looking after them; his slaves began growing flax and hemp, some engaged in spinning and weaving, others blacksmithing, and yet others carpentry as Mount Vernon turned to self-sufficiency; and they cultivated a full range of grains (primarily wheat, but oats, rye, barley) and vegetables, such as peas, potatoes, and turnips. The shift from hoe to plow culture wrought a fundamental transformation in the work patterns of Washington's slaves: they had a much wider range of tasks, many of them requiring more skills. As the slaves became ever more adept, they increasingly chafed at the restrictions that slavery imposed.¹⁷

Possibly Washington had doubts about slavery on other grounds, although there is precious little evidence. In 1765 George Mason of Gunston Hall, a neighboring planter and friend, sent Washington his indictment of slavery. His charges itemized what slavery had done to Virginia (half the best

¹⁶ GW to Hector Ross, 9 Oct. 1769, *PGW: Colonial*, 8, 256; GW to Daniel Jenifer Adams, 20 July 1772, *ibid.*, 9, 70; Daniel Jenifer Adams to GW, 15 March 1775, *ibid.*, 10, 302–4, and Lund Washington to GW, 3 Dec. 1775, 17, 25 Jan. and 8 Feb. 1776, in *PGW: Revolutionary*, 2, 478, 570; 3, 126, 189, 270 (for purchase and resale of one slave).

¹⁷ Unfortunately, the full dimensions of this agricultural transformation cannot be recovered because Washington's diaries are particularly spotty in the mid-1760s. For the best study of Washington's agricultural practices, see Lorena S. Walsh, "Slavery and Agriculture at Mount Vernon," in Philip J. Schwarz, ed., *Slavery at the Home of George Washington* (Mount Vernon, VA: Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, 2001), 47–77. For the first recognition that he had too many slaves, see GW to John Posey, 11 June 1769, *PGW: Colonial*, 8, 213.

lands were unsettled, because free people were discouraged from immigrating) and to whites (the decay of “Morals & Manners of our People”) rather than expressing any sympathy for the system’s victims. Still, Mason’s view that “the primary Cause of the Destruction of the most flourishing Government that ever existed was the Introduction of great Numbers of Slaves – an Evil very pathetically described by the Roman Historians” was likely to resonate with a man who in his youth gave allegiance to the ideals of Cato the Younger and modeled his life on classical exemplars.¹⁸

If the first tremors of change in Washington’s thinking about slavery were largely practical, economic, and self-interested – and pre-dated the American Revolution – the glimmerings of an ideological opposition to slavery had to wait until the Revolutionary War, which serves as his second watershed regarding slavery. Even then, what is most impressive is not Washington’s moral altruism, or his intellectual questioning of slavery, but rather his hard-headed realism. When he arrived in Massachusetts he held the conventional slave-owner’s conviction that slaves should never be armed in large numbers. A council of war, held in the fall of 1775, presided over by Washington, rejected both slaves and free blacks as potential recruits for the Continental Army. What changed Washington’s thinking was Lord Dunmore’s proclamation of November 1775, which offered freedom to slaves (and servants) of patriot masters. Washington was duly alarmed, and hoped that Virginians would instantly crush Dunmore, otherwise, like a rolling snowball, his army would grow in size. He singled out the importance of slaves, for should Dunmore’s army become formidable, then “numbers of them will be tempted to join,” he predicted. Only a few days after making this prediction, Washington gave leave to recruiting officers to enlist free blacks who, he had

¹⁸ Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason, 1725–1792*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 1, 60–61; George Mason to GW, 23 Dec. 1765, *PGW: Colonial*, 7, 424–25; and for the youthful Washington’s admiration of Cato the Younger and the Stoics see Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Young Man Washington* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 17–21, 26, 30, 41–42; and Douglass Adair, *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 284. For more on the relationship see Peter R. Henriques, “An Uneven Friendship: The Relationship between George Washington and George Mason,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 97 (1989), 185–204, although he does not mention Mason’s *obiter dicta* on slavery. GW almost certainly read another attack on slavery, published two years after Mason’s and also resting on the baneful effects that it had on white society; see Richard K. MacMaster, “Arthur Lee’s ‘Address on Slavery’: An Aspect of Virginia’s Struggle to End the Slave Trade, 1765–1774,” *ibid.*, 80 (1972), 141–57. In typical Whig fashion, GW did write of the Ministry trying to fix “the Shackles of Slavery upon us” or of trying to reduce Americans to “tame and abject slaves as the blacks we rule over with such arbitrary sway,” but there is no sense that these comparisons pricked his conscience; GW to George William Fairfax, 10–15 June 1774, *PGW: Colonial*, X, 97 and Flexner, 114.

been informed, wanted to enlist. He promised to lay the matter before Congress, and expected to get their approval, which he did about two weeks later. Clearly Washington's reversal on black troops had much to do with his fears of what Dunmore might achieve. Henceforth Washington commanded a racially integrated force.¹⁹

The Revolution also broadened Washington's horizons about black people's capacities in matters non-military. In the fall of 1775 Phillis Wheatley, the twenty-two-year-old black poet, then living in Providence, Rhode Island, sent George Washington a poem, inspired, as she put it, by "the fame of your virtues." Her poem ended,

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

When Washington wrote her back (addressing her, incidentally, as Mrs. Phillis, which is consistent with Washington's lack of recognition of black surnames), he thanked her for her "polite notice" and "elegant Lines," spoke modestly of his undeserving her "encomium and panegyrick," and praised her for its "striking proof" of her "great poetical Talents." He invited her to visit him in Cambridge, and apparently she did. Washington's high praise for Wheatley stands in marked contrast to the dripping sarcasm of Thomas Jefferson, who thought her no poet and her compositions "below the dignity of criticism." Since Washington had long recognized black talent, as in the French black deserter during the Seven Years' War, and given his use of black doctors and his employment of black overseers, not to mention the loyalty he received from his personal body servant Will or Billy Lee, who was with Washington throughout the whole Revolutionary War, it is doubtful whether his encounter with Wheatley "might have jolted Washington into a deeper understanding of the humanity of black people," as Wiencek claims, but perhaps it sensitized him to black intellectual aspirations.²⁰

¹⁹ For the key documents see *PGW: Revolutionary*, 1, 90; 2, 125, 188, 199, 295, 355, 553, 611, 620, 623; 3, 178, 350, 474. Meanwhile back at Mount Vernon, in fall of 1775, LW spoke of hoping to find men "Black or White" who would make the British pay if they tried to burn the house; *ibid.*, 2, 258. After Dunmore's proclamation, he feared less the effect on the Mount Vernon slaves than on the indentured servants; *ibid.*, 2, 480. A few months later he had "no thoughts of any [white servants] Running off, & as to the Negroes I have not the least dread of them"; *ibid.*, 3, 129.

²⁰ Phillis Wheatley to GW, 26 Oct. 1775, *ibid.*, 2, 242-44; GW to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Reed, 10 Feb. 1776, *ibid.*, 3, 290; and GW to Phillis Wheatley, 28 Feb. 1776, *ibid.*, 3, 387. The poem appeared in the *Pennsylvania Magazine: or, American Monthly Museum* in April 1776

More important than this single encounter, the exigencies of war drove Washington to consider a wider role for blacks. In 1777 Washington approved a plan to raise a battalion of Rhode Island blacks. Two years later John Laurens, one of the General's close aides, proposed arming 3,000 slaves in South Carolina, offering emancipation in return for service. Here was the most radical proposal yet – arming slaves in slavery's heartland and emancipating a limited but considerable number of them. Washington's response was cautious. If Americans armed slaves, the British would follow suit, and then it would be a matter of who could arm the fastest; freeing some slaves, he said, would “render Slavery more irksome to those who remain in it” and “be productive of much discontent in those who are held in servitude.” Washington knew that Laurens had little hope of convincing the South Carolina legislature of his plan, and indeed when they rejected it he interpreted it as a sign that selfishness reigned.²¹

During the war, even at its worst moments, Washington managed to find time to think about Mount Vernon, and slavery's economic problems increasingly weighed on his mind. Even as his much-reduced army barely escaped across the Delaware River in late 1776, Washington told his manager to avoid buying cloth for his slaves at the then exorbitant price as long as his “poor Negroes” would not suffer too much. He recognized their “just claim to their Victuals and cloaths,” but with the proviso, “if they make enough to purchase them,” which indicated his skepticism about how much they earned. As the war began to disrupt the economy, Washington seriously pondered selling slaves. In 1778 Washington emphasized that “I every day long more and more to get clear of [Negroes]” and he proposed an exchange of slaves for land he wished to purchase. To “be plain,” he emphasized, “I wish to get quit of Negroes.” The following year he gave a tortured account of his latest thinking. First, he was convinced of the advantages in

and in the *Virginia Gazette*, 30 March 1776. For more on her see Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin, 2001), esp. xxxiv–xxxvi, 88–90, and Wienczek, 208 (quote).

²¹ Brigadier General James Mitchell Varnum to GW, 2 Jan. 1778, *PGW: Revolutionary*, 13, 125 (and see Nicholas Cooke to GW, 23 Feb. 1778, *ibid.*, 13, 646); GW to Henry Laurens, 20 March 1779, *WW*, 14, 267, and GW to John Laurens, 22 March, 10 July 1782, *WW*, 24, 88, 421; and for the best study see Gregory D. Massey, *John Laurens and the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 93–97, 130–33, 141–42, 154–55, 163, 207–9. See an important letter from Brigadier General Thomas Nelson Jr. to GW, 21–22 Nov. 1777, *PGW: Revolutionary*, 12, 342, which may have set GW thinking hard about the necessity of freeing slaves who fought. For his continuing suspicions about the loyalty of slaves, see GW to Committee of Congress, 29 Jan. 1778, *ibid.*, 13, 402.

selling his slaves; second, he was reluctant to sell them at public vendue, although “if these poor wretches are to be held in a state of slavery, I do not see that a change of masters will render it more irksome, provided husband and wife, and Parents and children are not separated from each other, which is not my intention to do”; finally, the issue was how to time the sale when the tide of depreciation was at its lowest ebb. Washington clearly then had no compunction about selling slaves; optimum timing was the key issue. The best that can be said for him is that his unwillingness to separate families at least tugged at his desire to make profits. And in January 1779 Washington’s manager sold nine slaves.²²

As the war came to end, the disconnection between what Washington knew in his heart to be true (that the American Revolution required the abolition of slavery) and his own behavior (which was supportive of slavery) became starkly polarized. Thus, just before the end of the war, in February 1783, the Marquis de Lafayette proposed a plan “greatly beneficial to the black part of mankind.” He offered to join Washington in buying a small estate “where we may try the experiment to free the negroes, and use them only as tenants.” Washington’s example, he pointed out, “might render it a general practice.” If it is a “wild scheme,” Lafayette said, he would rather be thought mad by attempting to end slavery than be thought wise by supporting the institution. Washington replied that the scheme was “striking evidence” of Lafayette’s benevolence and he would be happy to join him “in so laudable a work,” although he deferred going into details. Washington was willing to embrace a visionary scheme in the abstract, perhaps because he knew it would never come to pass; he certainly made no moves to make it happen.²³

His public and private behavior at the end of the war was hardly anti-slavery in intent. Thus at Yorktown Washington was able to recover two of his seventeen slaves who had fled to the British in 1781 and he recovered several others at Philadelphia. During the British evacuation of New York Washington insisted on the return of all escaped slaves, although he thought

²² GW to LW, 10–17 Dec. 1776, *ibid.*, 7, 290; LW to GW, 8 April, 2 Sept. 1778, Washington Papers, and GW to LW, 15 Aug. 1778 and 24–26 Feb. 1779 in *WW*, 12, 327–28 and 14, 147–49; Ledger Book B, 156, as cited in Wiencek, 231.

²³ Lafayette to GW, 5 Feb. 1783 in Louis Gottschalk, ed., *The Letters of Lafayette to Washington 1777–1799* (New York: privately printed, 1944), 259–61; Stanley J. Idzerda et al., eds., *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution, Vol. 5: January 4, 1782–December 29, 1785* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 90–93; GW to Lafayette, 5 April 1783, *WW*, 26, 300. Washington was willing to investigate the claims of a “Negro boy” who claimed to have been sold as a slave when free; GW to Brigadier General Elias Dayton, 7 April 1783, *WW*, 26, 304.

the chances of restoring many were slim. One British description of Washington's conference with General Guy Carleton, who presided over the evacuation, is that Washington had demanded the return of the slaves "with all the Grossness and Ferocity of a Captain of Banditti." Washington could point to the Treaty of Paris provision that the British carry off no slaves, but Carleton's view was that the British had to keep faith with the blacks who came into their lines. Washington's insistence on recovering the slaves in person rather than accepting compensation for them was bound up in his experience as a slave-owner and his pursuit of fugitive slaves.²⁴

These conflicting impulses came to a head in the mid-1780s, a third crucial turning point. Lafayette visited Mount Vernon twice at this time and he no doubt inspired Washington to a more outspoken position on slavery. In 1784 a visitor to Mount Vernon reported a conversation between Washington and Lafayette: "You wish to get rid of all your Negroes," the visitor recalled, "& the Marquis wisht that an end might be put to the slavery of all of them." If these complementary goals could be achieved, they would "give the finishing stroke & polish to your political characters." Talk of emancipation was also abroad in the mid-1780s as the Virginia legislature debated the right of freed slaves to remain in the state. In 1785, when Francis Asbury, first bishop of the Methodist Church in America, visited Mount Vernon, Washington expressed "his opinion against slavery." In the same year Robert Pleasants, a Virginia Quaker who had recently freed seventy-eight of his own slaves and another twelve he co-owned with his brother, brought the matter home to Washington in no uncertain terms. Hitting Washington where it hurt most, Pleasants claimed that Washington's reputation would be forever tarnished if he did not free his slaves. A few months later, perhaps with Pleasants' lecture still ringing in his ear, Washington wrote a series of letters endorsing slavery's eventual end. In 1786 he said, "I can only say that

²⁴ GW to Theodorick Bland, 31 March 1783, *WW*, 26, 274; GW to Daniel Parker, 28 April 1783, *ibid.*, 26, 364–65; GW to Gov. Benjamin Harrison, 30 April, 6 May 1783, *ibid.*, 26, 369–70, 401–2; Substance of a Conference between General Washington and Sir Guy Carleton, 6 May 1783, *ibid.*, 26, 402–6; GW to LW, 6 May 1783, *ibid.*, 26, 406–7; GW to Sir Guy Carleton, 6 May 1783, *ibid.*, 26, 408–9; GW to President of Congress, 2, 3, June 1783, *ibid.*, 27, 27–28; Commissioners of Embarkation at New York to GW, 18 Jan. 1784, in W. W. Abbot, et al., eds. *The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series* (hereafter *PGW: Confederation*), 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992–97), I, 50–56; Wienczek, 251, 254–58. I do not think, *contra* Wienczek, that GW was thinking of the slaves' fertility when he attempted their recovery. For the legal niceties see Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 192–93.

there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for this abolition of [slavery] – but there is only one proper and effectual mode by which it can be accomplished, & that is by Legislative authority,” although his aim in this letter was to object against the Quakers’ “tamper[ing] with & seduc[ing]” slaves who “are happy & content to remain with their present masters.” Later that year he explained to a fellow planter that he could not accept slaves as payment for a debt since “I never mean (unless some particular circumstances should compel me to it) to possess another slave by purchase; it being among my first wishes to see some plan adopted, by the legislature by which slavery in the Country may be abolished by slow, sure, & imperceptible degrees.” At the very same time, he was negotiating to buy more slaves, albeit unenthusiastically. Whatever the inspiration – Lafayette’s example, Pleasants’ hectoring, moral doubts, concern for reputation, or a sense that slavery was an economic anachronism – Washington was now on record endorsing the abolition of slavery.²⁵

Allegedly, about this time – c.1785 – George Washington fathered a mulatto child, subsequently named West Ford, with a slave woman, Venus, belonging to his brother John Augustine Washington. This suggestion seems highly improbable for a variety of reasons, but without question interracial sex occurred at Mount Vernon, just as it did on many a Virginia plantation, and the multiple and many-layered connections by blood and marriage not only among whites and blacks but among dower, neighbors’, and Washington’s own slaves formed part of the complications that faced any master bent on manumission. The intractable problem

²⁵ William Gordon to GW, 30 Aug. 1784, *PGW: Confederation*, 2, 65–66; Lafayette to GW, 14 July 1785, *ibid.*, 3, 121; Elmer T. Clarke et al., eds., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury* 3 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 1, 489; Robert Pleasants to GW, 11 Dec. 1785, *PWG: Confederation*, 3, 449–51; GW to Robert Morris, 12 April 1786, *ibid.*, 4, 15–16; GW to Lafayette, 10 May 1786, *ibid.*, 4, 43–4; GW to John Francis Mercer, 9 Sept. 1786, *ibid.*, 4, 243. For a good discussion of the 1786 letter to Morris, see Paul F. Boller, Jr., “Washington, the Quakers, and Slavery,” *Journal of Negro History*, 46 (April 1961), 83–88. For more on Pleasants see Kenneth L. Carroll, ed., “Robert Pleasants on Quakerism: ‘Some Account of the First Settlement of Friends in Virginia ...,’” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 86 (1978), 3–16 and James H. Kettner, “Persons or Property? The Pleasants Slaves in the Virginia Courts, 1792–1799,” in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Launching the “Extended Republic”: The Federalist Era* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 136–55. In 1786 GW initially seeks but ends up not buying six or more slaves, who must be healthy males and “none addicted to running away,” “three or four young fellows for Ditchers; and the like number of well grown lads for artificers”: GW to John Francis Mercer, 6, 24 Nov., 5, 19 Dec. 1786, 1 Feb. 1787, *PWG: Confederation*, 4, 336, 394, 442, 465–66; 5, 2.

was how to free the slaves without dismembering a thick web of familial connections.²⁶

About twenty mulattoes, or 6 percent of the slave population, lived at Mount Vernon. The two most famous were Will or Billy Lee and his brother Frank. Will married a free black woman from Philadelphia, and Frank the dower slave Lucy, the cook, with whom he had at least five children. The typical father of a mulatto at Mount Vernon seems to have been one of the white artisans employed on the estate, or perhaps a passing visitor. In 1784 an officer who stayed at Mount Vernon apparently was disappointed enough to exclaim, "Will you believe it, I have not humped a single mulatto since I am here." Betty Davis, a dower slave and spinner, and her brother Tom Davis, a bricklayer, were probably the children of Thomas Davis, a hired white weaver. Oney and Delphy Judge were mulatto sisters, probably the children of Andrew Judge, a hired tailor. Like other estates – such as Monticello where light-skinned Hemings family members were almost the only slaves a visitor saw in the house and immediate environs – many of the mulatto slaves at Mount Vernon lived and worked at Mansion House Farm.²⁷

²⁶ The two most explosive suggestions in Wienczek, 12, 84–86, 282–310 are, first, that GW might have fathered West Ford and, second, that Ann Dandridge, Martha's alleged mulatto half-sister, with whom Martha's son Jacky supposedly had a child (thereby constituting incest), lived at Mount Vernon from 1759 onwards. The case for GW's fathering West Ford is so circumstantial as to be fanciful. There is no evidence that GW ever met Venus (the slave woman belonging to his brother John Augustine Washington) who was West Ford's mother. If West Ford was conceived in 1783, as is possible, GW could not have been the father because he was still commanding the Continental Army. If it was a 1784 conception (also possible), two brief windows – late August and late November – are the only dates when members of John Augustine Washington's family (but not necessarily Venus) visited Mount Vernon. Apparently, GW did not visit Bushfield, John Augustine Washington's plantation, in these years. To put it generously, the likelihood of GW (who fathered no known child) conceiving a child with a slave woman, previously unknown to him, on a two- or three-day visit to Mount Vernon seems slim. Quite possibly, William Augustine Washington (1767–84), John Augustine Washington's youngest son who was killed in an accidental shooting, was West Ford's father. Significantly, West Ford named his eldest son William. Certainly Hannah Bushrod Washington, William's mother, went to some lengths to get Venus under her personal control, presumably because West Ford was her shadow grandchild. As for Ann Dandridge, it seems highly implausible that Martha Washington had a shadow sister living with her all those years at Mount Vernon, supposedly living among the circle of seamstresses, without anyone noticing or commenting. Despite all the visitors and despite all the papers generated by GW, one of the most compulsive record-keepers of all time, there is no mention of her. This omission stretches credulity.

²⁷ Lt Col. William North to Lt. Col. Benjamin Walker, 9 March 1784 in Fritz Hirschfield, ed., *George Washington and Slavery: A Documentary Portrayal* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 69. It is extremely difficult to know the precise number of mulattoes

Even more fundamentally, two-thirds of the ninety-six married slaves at Mount Vernon had spouses either among neighbors' slaves or across the Washington–Custis line. Were just the Washington slaves to be freed, most marriages would have been sundered. Consider, for example, Isaac, one of Washington's slaves and the head carpenter, who was married to Kitty or Kate, a dower slave and milkmaid. They were among the minority of couples fortunate enough to live together—in their case, at Mansion House Farm—but a manumission of the Washington slaves would separate not just this couple but their extended family. They had nine daughters, four of whom were married, one to a Washington slave (and thus another couple would have been separated). Since only Isaac (and Ben, his son-in-law) would have been manumitted, Isaac would have been separated not only from his wife, nine daughters, and three sons-in-law, but also from his three grandchildren.²⁸

Increasingly, then, Washington was trapped in a network of mutual dependency from which it was difficult to extricate himself. By the mid-1780s he and his slaves were enmeshed in a tangled web. Perhaps nothing better symbolizes this intimate relationship than teeth. As is well known, Washington suffered from bad teeth. The eminent French historian, Robert Darnton, who entitles his most recent collection of essays *George Washington's False Teeth*, notes that the Father of His Country battled toothache—and lost. No wonder the man looks “so grim in the portraits”; he “was in constant pain.” The famous Charles Willson Peale portrait of Washington, painted in 1779, shows a notable scar beneath his left cheekbone, the result of an abscessed tooth. Two years later Washington had some false teeth wired into his mouth; he was inaugurated with just one tooth in his mouth, a lower left

at Mount Vernon, because no precise tally exists, and usually the information derives in offhand ways. In addition to those mentioned, the mulattoes almost certainly were Marcus, Christopher Sheels, and George (Young) at Mansion House Farm; Forrester at the Mill; Tomison, Sarah, Bartley, and Matilda at Dogue Run; Davy, Alce, Letty, and Billy at Muddy Hole; Dennis and Polly at River Farm; and French's Lucy at Union Farm. This list draws heavily on Mary V. Thompson's research, for which I am deeply grateful. For descriptions of mulattoes at Mount Vernon see Louis-Philippe, *Diary of My Travels in America*, tr. Stephen Becker (New York, 1977), 32–35, as cited in Hirschfeld, ed., 56–57, and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797–1799, 1805 with Some Further Account of Life in New Jersey*, tr. and ed. Metchie J. E. Budka (Elizabeth, NJ: Grassman Publishing, 1965), 101.

²⁸ It is possible to look at families in depth only in 1799, when Washington's lists provide that information, so I am looking forward in time, although in 1786 Isaac and Kate had been married at least for fifteen years and then had at least seven children. For more on families, see Mary V. Thompson, “‘They Appear to Live Comfortable Together’: Private Lives of the Mount Vernon Slaves,” in Schwarz, ed., *Slavery*, 79–81.

bicuspid, and a Philadelphia dentist seems to have made his first complete set of dentures in 1789. By his death he had a large collection of false teeth, not made of wood as myth has it, but of everything from elephant ivory to walrus and hippopotamus tusk, and human teeth. As a result of Mary V. Thompson's assiduous research, we now know that in 1784 George Washington purchased nine teeth at thirteen shillings and sixpence apiece from several unnamed "Negroes." A French dentist, who specialized in tooth transplants and first treated Washington in 1783, advertised in newspapers for people to sell him teeth. Possibly, then, Washington bought his slaves' teeth to have them implanted in his mouth or to be used in his dentures. If listening to the eighteenth century is "to hear humanity ... in a constant struggle with pain," forever "grinding its teeth," as Darnton so aptly puts it, then, in Washington's case, it just might have been the President gnashing his own slaves' teeth.²⁹

To move from the mundane to the political, what further complicated matters for Washington was that any manumission he might devise necessarily had political ramifications. Washington's overriding priority was that the union of the states joined by the Constitution of 1787 not be jeopardized. Ever the realist, Washington was fully aware of slavery's potential to divide. Presiding over the Constitutional Convention must have impressed him with the sheer explosiveness of the issue. For Washington, as for many others, the subject engendered such raw emotions that public comments were best left unsaid. As Joseph Ellis puts it, "slavery was too important and controversial a subject to talk about publicly." For Washington, and later for Lincoln too, national unity took precedence over the abolition of slavery.³⁰

In the late 1780s Washington expressed resignation at his failure to free his slaves, but mixed with some optimism about the future. The famous statement, recorded in David Humphrey's notebook in late 1788 or early 1789, that "the unfortunate condition of the persons, whose labour in part I employed, has been the only unavoidable subject of regret," is instructive for its emphasis on the unavoidability of his position. This passage is a private

²⁹ Robert Darnton, *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), ix–x, xiv–xv, 23; Thompson, 95. One wonders if any use was made of this event: 31 Oct. 1771, "By drawing Wills [almost certainly Will or Billy Lee's] Tooth" 2s: Cash Accounts, *PGW: Colonial*, 8, 528. See also Wiencek, 112–13.

³⁰ Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Random House, 2000), 84. As one small indication of how much union was on his mind in his later years, note this decision: "Let this plantation, henceforward be called 'Union Farm, or Plantation' instead of 'Ferry and French's'," which had been combined under the same overseer for several years, GW to A. Whiting, 27 Jan. 1793, *WW*, 32, 318.

expression of remorse, not the draft of a public statement in which Washington intended to announce that he had freed some of his slaves before taking office. Yet he had hopes for slavery's eventual demise, as he continues,

To make the Adults among them as easy & as comfortable in their circumstances as their actual state of ignorance and improvidence would admit; & to lay a foundation to prepare the rising generation for a destiny different from that in which they were born; afforded some satisfaction to my mind, & could not I hoped be displeasing to the justice of the Creator.

Here is an intimation of the emancipation clause in his will, with the reference to the care of the elderly and a new start with the young, suggesting optimistic, forward-looking thinking.³¹

The mid-1790s, when Washington was President, saw his last sustained attempts (before the drafting of his will) to extricate himself from the institution, and thus represent the final watershed in his thinking. One scheme was to lease four of his five farms to "four substantial farmers" who might then hire his freed slaves as laborers. One pipe dream he had was that his western lands could be sold so that the resulting funds would finance partly or wholly the freedom of some of his slaves. Another possibility he entertained was to hire out some slaves to farmers who settled on his western lands and from that income build up enough resources to free the slaves. Yet another scheme aimed at the emancipation of the Custis slaves by hiring them out on an Eastern Shore plantation. The income from that rental, he hoped, would pay for their emancipation. These various schemes foundered on his inability to rent or sell his western lands, the reluctance of the Custis

³¹ Rosemarie Zagarrri, ed., *David Humphreys' "Life of General Washington" with George Washington's "Remarks"* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 78; Wienczek, 272–73 (for the claim of a public declaration). These were, of course, Humphreys' words, even if he tried to offer them in GW's voice; Humphreys might have been influenced by his reading of Thomas Clarkson's *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade* (1788), a summary of which appears just before this passage (I am grateful to Rosemarie Zagarrri for help on this matter). Agreements with overseers in the late 1780s focused on taking care of the slaves, less on disciplinary aspects, mentioned earlier; see, for example, Articles of Agreement with William Garner, 10 Dec. 1788, in *PGW: Presidential*, 1, 171–72. Interestingly, when GW's manager (also his nephew) reported a slave's death in 1790, he was emphatic that he had not punished her beforehand. He concluded, "I value the opinion I hope you entertain of me to[o] highly to suppose You would think me capable of inhumanity," GAW to GW, 7 Dec. 1790, *ibid.*, 7, 41. See also GAW to GW, 28 Dec. 1790, *ibid.*, 7, 137. Washington noted on more than one occasion that most white overseers, he was "sorry to observe," viewed slaves or "these poor creatures in scarcely any other light than they do a draught horse or Ox": GW to Anthony Whitting (hereafter AW), 14 Oct. 1792: *ibid.*, 11, 229 and see also GW to AW, 28 Oct. 1792, *ibid.*, 275, and GW to William Pearce, 10 May 1795, *WW*, 34:193. Clearly GW thought himself incapable of such an attitude.

heirs to embrace his plans, and the intractable problem of how to minimize family separations among the slaves, if dower and Washington slaves could not be freed at about the same time.³²

Perhaps the most revealing insight into Washington's continually evolving thinking – perhaps worthy of a final turning point, though death cut short his chance to act on these proposals – resides in his thoughts after he had drafted his last will. He proposed a reduction of his workers on his Mount Vernon estate by a half and a transfer of the rest to his lands in the western part of the state. Such a wholesale migration would have disrupted many families, but Washington unquestionably had such a move in mind – even after he had committed to manumission in the latest draft of his will. A week before he died, he reiterated that he wanted to repossess some of his tenancies in Berkeley and Frederick Counties so that he could work about eight to ten hands on each. Halving his workers on the Mount Vernon farms “would yield more nett profit.” Therefore the change “may benefit myself and not render the [slaves] condition worse.” Indisputably, then, even on the eve of his death, Washington was far from giving up on slavery. To the last, he was committed to making profits, even at the expense of the disruptions such transfers would indisputably have wrought on his slaves.³³

³² GW to Arthur Young, 12 Dec. 1793, *WW*, 33:179–81; GW to Tobias Lear, 6 May 1794, *ibid.*, 33, 358; GW to Alexander Spotswood, 23 Nov. 1794, *ibid.*, 34, 47–48; GW to William Pearce, 27 Jan. 1796, in *ibid.*, 34, 427; GW to David Stuart, 7 Feb. 1796 in *ibid.*, 34, 452–53; and David Stuart to GW, 25 Feb. 1796, Washington Papers. See also Wienczek, 340–42. There is much more to be said about GW as slave-owner President – for example, his deceitfulness in moving his slaves out of Pennsylvania to avoid the state's abolition law; Tobias Lear's “fullest confidence” in spring of 1791 that GW would liberate his slaves (presumably based on conversations the two men had had); the issue of Spanish Florida and fugitive slaves which was an issue early in Washington's first administration; the explosive impact of the St. Domingue slave uprising, which GW described as “Lamentable! to see such a spirit of revolt among the Blacks” – GW to John Vaughan, 27 Dec. 1791, *PGW: Presidential*, 9, 339; his opposition to the decision of the South Carolina legislature to reopen the slave trade, and his mention of the “direful effects of Slavery”; GW to Charles Pinckney, 17 March 1792, *ibid.*, X, 129; his campaign to eradicate dog ownership among his slaves; and his strenuous efforts to retrieve Oney Judge and Hercules, who fled from Philadelphia.

³³ GW to Robert Lewis, 17 Aug. 1799 and 7 Dec. 1799, *PGW: Retirement*, 4, 256–58, 444. Few scholars have noted the significance of the dates of these two letters, i.e. post-will. There is also much more that can be said about GW in his final retirement, as he wrestled with what to do about slavery, receiving advice from a Quaker about how to emancipate his slaves; John Jones to GW, 20 Feb. 1798, *ibid.*, 2, 94–96; expressing fears that “Negroes are growing more & more insolent & difficult to govern”; GW to Alexander Spotswood, 14 Sept. 1798, II, 612–15; and attempting to reduce his workforce and get more work from them; GW to James Anderson, 1 Nov. 1798, *ibid.*, 3, 164–68, James Anderson to GW, 23 June 1799, *ibid.*, 4, 145–49; GW to Benjamin Dulany, 15 July 1799, *ibid.*, 4, 189–90; GW to James Anderson, 13 Dec. 1799, 4, 455–77.

Washington experienced no epiphanies, no last-minute revelations, no Road-to-Damascus-like conversions concerning slavery. There was no single turning point; he kept considering evidence and weighing options, and finally arrived at a decision, which represented the culmination of a long and hard-headed struggle. He constantly wrestled with the problem of slavery, and was still grappling with it in the days before his death. Just conceivably, if his plans to remove slaves to the west, which he was seriously contemplating at the very end of his life, had proved economically successful, perhaps he just might have changed his will yet again and retreated from emancipating his slaves. Possible, but in the end unlikely. What is most impressive about Washington is the way he kept returning to the possible ways of emancipating his slaves. His inner compass pointed him in the right direction. He came a remarkably long way from the boy who unthinkingly ruled over a slave, from the young master who unquestioningly accepted the laboring system of his birthplace, and from the mature owner who ruthlessly sold fugitives. Strains of his earlier behavior and thinking were present to the very end. Mastery was hard to relinquish. He never had a high opinion of blacks, but he does not seem to have thought them as inherently inferior. He believed that education and hard work could overcome slavery's deleterious effects, and thus ultimately he had a more optimistic view of a post-slavery future than did Jefferson. In an irony of ironies, the rock-solid realist of Mount Vernon was more visionary than the idealistic dreamer of Monticello.³⁴

Washington freed his slaves for three basic reasons: profit, principle, and posterity. It is impossible to underestimate what Edmund Morgan described as Washington's "constant, wary, and often cold eye on making a profit." The inefficiencies of slavery as a labor system were what first drove him to question the institution, and he became progressively more disillusioned with its failings. Toward the end of his life he argued that "nothing is more

³⁴ He said of one his slave overseers, in relation to how to get a plant bed in order for tobacco seed, that he "understands the management of it better than I do"; GW to James Bloxham, 1 Jan. 1789, *PGW: Presidential*, 1, 212. But most of the time GW considered slaves "clumsy," "ignorant," "idle," "lazy," and "deceitful"; in his mind, they committed "atrocious villainies" and while "capable of much labour," generally have "no ambition to establish a *good* name," and therefore "too regardless of a *bad* one." In his view, white overseers were not much better. Assumptions of mastery are well revealed when he reported on a fugitive slave who approached him about returning to his former estate; as GW insensitively put it, the man was "young & likely," but "it is to be feared that time & circumstances have alienated the property"; GW to David Stuart, 12 Dec. 1790, *ibid.*, 7, 59–60. He could have been referring to a horse. Occasionally, he notes that slaves could be quite masterly too: "it is astonish[ing] to see the command under which their [i.e. Negroes'] dogs are," GW to AW, 16 Dec. 1792, in *ibid.*, 11, 521.

certain” than that the Chesapeake states would pass laws for the gradual abolition of slavery for one simple reason: the price of land was much higher in Pennsylvania than in Maryland or Virginia. For Washington, such evidence was compelling, and the difference, in his view, was in large measure due to the absence of slavery in the one state and its presence in the other two. Interest, for Washington, was always a primary spur to action. Profit was important in another sense: simply put, he had enough money to contemplate emancipation; he was not deeply in debt like many of his contemporaries. At the same time, Washington believed in principle, fairness, and morality. He was impressed by the youthful enthusiasms of the Marquis de Lafayette, John Laurens, and Alexander Hamilton (who, in 1779, thought black slaves had the potential to be better soldiers than free whites and that giving them “their freedom with their muskets” would secure their fidelity and “animate their courage”), by the capacities of some talented blacks, by the ideals of revolutionary rhetoric, and by the influence of northern colleagues. He came to understand the moral critique of slavery. Finally, Washington’s actions were always aimed at seeking fame. His thirst for public respect was insatiable; for him, honor, more than interest, impelled men’s actions. He was obsessed with posterity’s verdict, with guarding and protecting his reputation. He cared deeply about what people thought about him, and was notoriously thin-skinned. In a taunt that must have wounded a man so concerned with his legacy, one anti-slavery advocate asked what could induce Washington “to tarnish” his own “well earned celebrity and to impair the fair features of American liberty with so foul and indelible a blot” as slavery. Such attacks hurt to the quick. All three mainsprings, then – interest, morality, and honor – coincided and complemented one another. Washington, at the end, wanted to set an example, and his will was a forward-looking document, written in hope. It was, as Bill Abbot, editor emeritus of the Washington Papers, says, “written by a man filled not with forebodings of death but with thoughts of the future.” It was “a bid to shape things to come.”³⁵

³⁵ Edmund S. Morgan, “George Washington: The Aloof American,” in Higginbotham, ed., *George Washington Reconsidered*, 287–308, esp. 289; GW to Sir John Sinclair, 11 Dec. 1796, in WW, 35, 328; Hamilton to John Jay, 14 March 1779 in Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961–87), 2, 17–18; Edward Rushton to GW, July 1796, Washington Papers, later published as *Expostulatory Letter to George Washington on his continuing to be a Proprietor of Slaves* (Liverpool, 1797), as cited in Twohig, “That Species of Property,” 115; Washington’s Last Will, 9 July 1799, *PGW: Retirement*, 4, 478; W. W. Abbot, *George Washington in Retirement*, The Lowell Lecture Series (Lexington, Mass.: The Museum of Our National Heritage, 1999), 26. Also see W. W. Abbot, “An Uncommon Awareness of Self: The Papers of George Washington,” in,

Washington's will was unusual, particularly in its educational provisions and in its timing, but it was not an "astounding decision," as Wiencek claims, for two reasons: it was long in the making and it was part of a "manumission fever" that spread through the Upper South in the late eighteenth century. Even if no other Founding Father freed his slaves, many other Virginians, albeit few on Washington's scale, did so. The most notable manumitter in late eighteenth-century Virginia was another Northern Neck planter, Robert Carter of Nomini Hall, who in 1791 (thirteen years before his death) wrote "the largest recorded private emancipation in American history," when he freed on a graduated, annual basis more than five hundred slaves, a "stunning moral act" and one that seems to have originated in a profound detachment, a lack of sentimentality, a disengagement from the intimacies of slavery. Even earlier, Quakers such as Robert Pleasants or Daniel Mifflin (who freed about a hundred slaves in 1775) had manumitted large numbers of slaves. From 1782, when the manumission law was liberalized in Virginia, many small and middling slave-owners, inspired by Revolutionary democratic fervor, especially when allied to religious conviction, freed their slaves. A good example was John Cropper, Jr., a Revolutionary War hero, a Federalist delegate to the Virginia House of Delegates, and member of the Episcopalian vestry, who freed his sixteen slaves in 1794. He owned two pictures of George Washington, after whom he named his son John Washington Cropper; his deed of manumission expressed his belief that "all men by Nature are equally free and independent and that the Holding of Man in a State of Slavery is unjust and oppressive." From 1780 to 1800 the number of free blacks in Virginia increased from roughly 3,000 to more than 20,000, almost 5 percent of the black population of the state.³⁶

Nevertheless, the timing of Washington's manumission was unusual, because it came late in the day. By the late 1790s and early 1800s white

Higginbotham, ed., *George Washington Reconsidered*, 275–86, and Gordon S. Wood, "The Greatness of George Washington, in *ibid.*, 309–24.

³⁶ Wiencek, 4 (quote); Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: the Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Random House, 1974), 31; for more on Robert Carter, see Louis Morton, *Robert Carter of Nomini Hall: A Tobacco Plantation of the Eighteenth Century* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1941); John Randolph Barden, "'Flushed with Notions of Freedom': The Growth and Emancipation of a Virginia Slave Community, 1732–1812," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1993); and Andrew Levy, "The Anti-Jefferson: Why Robert Carter III Freed His Slaves (And Why We Couldn't Care Less)," *American Scholar*, 70, 2 (Spring 2001), 15–35; John Cropper, and other such Federalist manumitters are mentioned in Eva Sheppard, "The Question of Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to the Slavery Debate of 1832" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000), Chapter 2. Cropper is particularly interesting because when he died in 1821 he owned 27 slaves whom he did not free. Cropper had apparently changed his mind on slavery.

Virginians moved to contain the flow of emancipations and redefine a large free black population as a threat to the social order. As Virginians digested the news of disarray in France, the slave revolution in Haiti, and the ill effects, as they saw them, of the increasing number of free blacks in their midst, they began to turn their back on emancipation. By the mid-1790s manumissions had slowed in Virginia and increasingly became a way to reward one or two favorite slaves for good service rather than a way to end the institution. Offering freedom as an incentive to good behavior, manumission could reinforce, rather than subvert, the discipline of slavery. The 1780s and early 1790s, therefore, increasingly seemed a brief interlude during which voluntary emancipation had once appeared to be a real possibility. The question then becomes, why did Washington not free his slaves earlier, in his lifetime? The answer is twofold. First, there were his political obligations, as he saw them. His primary concern was for the tenuousness of the union, and he did not want to do anything to alienate a large group of southerners. As Washington said in 1785, "I can foresee no evil greater than disunion." Furthermore, for all his prestige and clout, he was limited in what he could do. His power was based on consistently adhering to the standards of republican virtue. He achieved power by seeming to refrain from it. As Gary Wills notes, "he was a virtuoso of resignations. He perfected the art of getting power by giving it away." He had no ability to abolish slavery, and even a private act that might have public implications – such as setting a precedent that the chief executive cannot hold slaves – had to be weighed for its divisive effects. Washington always insisted that emancipation had to be achieved legislatively. Second, he was also concerned about the impact of his manumission on his own family, both white and black, most notably the separations that were bound to follow. For that reason he avoided the effects in his lifetime, and he tried to avoid them in Martha's by putting off the manumission until after she died.³⁷

The tragedy was not that Washington failed to free his slaves in his lifetime but that the tide was already running in the opposite direction. Those who believe it was "a tragedy for the nation ... that Washington did not act upon his convictions during his lifetime" are engaging in wishful thinking. If Washington had freed his slaves in 1794 or in 1796, while in office, the effect would not have been profound. Rather, white southerners would have

³⁷ GW to James McHenry, 22 Aug. 1785, *PGW: Confederation*, 3, 198; Gary Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 3; the best studies of manumission in Virginia are Peter Joseph Albert, "The Protean Institution: The Geography, Economy, and Ideology of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1976) and Sheppard.

responded with resounding silence; they would have assigned the act the aura of a taboo, not to be mentioned in polite society. In private, they would have derided its effects – the release, as they saw it, of lazy, worthless blacks onto society – but in public they would have maintained silence. The fundamental obstacle on which manumission foundered in late eighteenth-century Virginia is that, as one historian has put it, “in those Chesapeake districts where most blacks lived, slavery was more deeply rooted when Jefferson stepped down from the presidency than when he composed the Declaration of Independence.” Slavery expanded rapidly in parts of Virginia in the late eighteenth century, and the opening up of the interior only buttressed it further, so that by the early nineteenth century the institution was fixed more securely than it had ever been before. Nothing and no one – not even George Washington – could halt that trend.³⁸

³⁸ Wienczek, 359; Gary B. Nash, *Race and Revolution* (Madison: Madison House, 1990), esp. 25–55; Richard S. Dunn, “Black Society in the Chesapeake, 1776–1810,” in Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 52.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.