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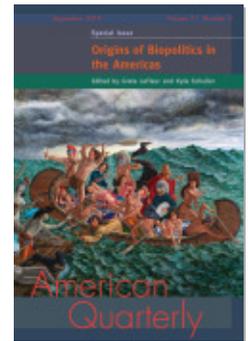
## Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation

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# Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation

*Nathaniel Windon*

The “hand” system, one of the standards of productivity that emerged from the scientific management of chattel slavery, measured enslaved laborers against the maximum amount of work that could be expected from an ideal individual, or “prime hand,” and proceeded by denominating their value in quarter fractions.<sup>1</sup> Once the value of enslaved persons fell below a quarter-hand, they were labeled *no value* or, equivalently, *superannuated*.<sup>2</sup> If one way to understand age is as the manifestation of time in the body, then the hand system inaugurated an alternative method for determining age. Rather than a fixed number measured chronologically since birth, the age of an individual was dictated by the amount of labor remaining before death. In an economic system predicated on withdrawing as much value as possible from human bodies, to be superannuated was to occupy an especially precarious position. Motivated by the drive to maximally exploit labor and curbed by the instinct to prolong life so as to extort it more, slavery’s capitalistic calculus exercised its cruel tendencies on the elderly. In her autobiography, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Harriet Jacobs describes a “very old slave,” who “hobbled up to get his bit of meat” and was told by the young mistress of the Flint plantation that “he was too old to have any allowance; that when niggers were too old to work, they ought to be fed on grass.”<sup>3</sup> Should he wish to eat, the mistress implies, the old man ought to become younger, that is, capable of working more.

It is crucial to recognize how all enslaved people endured what Orlando Patterson calls “social death.”<sup>4</sup> However, social death can render the lived condition of enslavement as seemingly homogeneous and uniform, from the point of natal alienation to the point of actual death. It is also important, then, to recognize that within the state of social death the lives of enslaved persons fluctuated as the perception of their shifting value initiated new managerial strategies that, in turn, recalibrated the perception of their value. As the plantation mistress whom Jacobs records makes evident, work could be made a prerequisite for subsistence in order to rejuvenate elderly laborers. Superannuation, far from a

static label, indicates a dynamic process of biopolitical management that occurs in response to the condition of human mortality when the cost required to sustain individuals threatened to exceed their perceived worth. Superannuation designates the insatiable interplay between the prolongation of life and the exploitation of labor. Attending to it therefore challenges the fundamental distinction in biopolitical theory between what might be called “positive” and “negative” biopolitics, which presumes that longevity, on the one hand, and premature death, on the other, are fates allotted to discrete populations.<sup>5</sup> The aging enslaved population in the antebellum United States shows how the supposedly separate strategies of biopolitical management can be deployed simultaneously and indistinguishably.

Contrary to the scene Jacobs recalls, many slavery apologists claimed that the elderly were cared for with familial affection. Paternalism—the belief that the sympathetic impulse of plantation owners could be trusted to temper greed when it came to determining the treatment of the laborers they enslaved—promised that the vulnerable were safeguarded within the peculiar institution of slavery, especially in their later years. Old age made the tension between slavery’s cruelty and its alleged beneficence evident. “Nowhere,” the historian Leslie J. Pollard observes, “did the capitalist and paternalist notions of slaveholders collide more dramatically than in the arenas of old age and superannuation.”<sup>6</sup> Yet recent work that illuminates the continuity between slavery and capitalism demonstrates that paternalism was inseparable from profit seeking. As Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman argue, “Pretenses of paternalism went hand in hand with practices of profit maximization and an unrivaled investment in the sanctity of private property rights, making it increasingly fruitless now to saddle slaveholders with labels like *pre-*, *proto-*, or *quasi-*capitalist.”<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Saidiya Hartman argues, “benevolent correctives,” such as the care for aging enslaved persons that paternalism promised, “intensified the brutal exercise of power upon the captive body rather than ameliorating the chattel condition.”<sup>8</sup> Though instances of paternalism and capitalism can be cited to bolster opposite assessments of slavery—to either endorse or decry its existence—they can also be complementary. Seen in this way, the threat of starvation and the prospect of leisure in later life are merely different managerial strategies with the shared intent of prolonging exploitation.

By exploring superannuation on the antebellum plantation, this essay builds on Cedric Robinson’s analysis of racial capitalism, which identifies how racialism preceded, and thus inevitably permeated, the emergence of capitalism.<sup>9</sup> The foundational work of Robinson—alongside that of W. E. B. Du Bois, Eric Williams, and Angela Davis<sup>10</sup>—has enabled many to explore the pervasive

nature of racial capitalism and the intrinsic continuity between slavery and capitalism that it foregrounds.<sup>11</sup> This essay builds on the scholarship of racial capitalism and in doing so extends Robinson's critique of Karl Marx, whom he indicted with the failure to recognize the practical and epistemological importance of race and slave labor to the modern world economy.<sup>12</sup> The same tendency of biopolitical theory to concentrate on premature death is shared by Marx. In a rare moment in which he acknowledges the equivalency of slavery and capitalism in "The Working Day" chapter of *Capital*, Marx observes how the voracious appetite for surplus-labor brings about the premature old age of both white and black workers.<sup>13</sup> However, the exploitation of labor is never unrestrainedly expedited from birth until death. The tension of superannuation is always at play in the consumption of labor. What is gained by thinking outward from the history of slavery to an overarching idea of racial capitalism, in this case, is an understanding of longevity as prolonged exploitation.

To explore the treatment of old age within chattel slavery is to begin to address a conspicuous absence in studies focused on old age in the United States. While scholars like Kyla Tompkins, Anna Mae Duane, Robin Bernstein, and Nazera Wright have illuminated the relationship between race and childhood, existing scholarship on old age, despite its recent resurgence, has failed to do the same.<sup>14</sup> Age studies has a rich history of engagement with capitalism: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Coming of Age* explores how "society turns away from the aged worker as though he belonged to another species," and the political economic theorist Chris Phillipson similarly argues that "the logic of capitalism as a productive and social system is irreconcilable with meeting the needs of elderly people."<sup>15</sup> However, these critiques remain detached from the longer history of racial capitalism, leaving the historical position of superannuation largely unconsidered in histories of old age in the United States. This essay seeks to address this conspicuous absence by exploring superannuation as the origin of old age and bringing together the critical discourses of age, race, biopolitics, and economics.<sup>16</sup>

In the designation of aging enslaved laborers as superannuated, this essay identifies a key point of emergence in the biopolitical management of longevity as well as a distinct and often-overlooked phase in the history of old age in the United States. While other notions of the human life course, in general, and old age, in particular, have existed and have changed over time, superannuation exposes the imbrication of old age and racial capitalism, which implanted a way to assess age that did not remain confined to the plantation but instead permeated American culture due to the fundamental continuity that racial capitalism draws between slavery and capitalism. In what follows, I analyze

three different instantiations of superannuation in antebellum America. I begin by reading Charles Chesnutt's "The Goophered Grapevine" in relation to historical practices of age manipulation and hair dying, in which I identify the malleability of age and how rejuvenation enhances the perception of age, that is, the labor remaining in the body. Then I turn to Joice Heth, the aging woman who P. T. Barnum claimed was 161 years old and the nurse of George Washington. Reversing the logic of the slave auction, Barnum makes Heth seem older in order to make his fraud easier to sell. Finally, I discuss Frederick Douglass's grandmother, Betsy Bailey, whom he describes as being abandoned to die in a little hut in her old age. Douglass's representation of her fate helps demonstrate how paternalism, or the alleged sympathy for the elderly, conspires to use the aging enslaved laborer to efface a lifetime of labor.

### The Goophered Hairline

Observers of antebellum slavery often confessed contradictory impressions about the age of enslaved laborers. The abolitionist James Redpath "often noticed that colored people looked much younger than they are."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the Charleston physician Lionel Chalmers describes how "the bald or hoary and wrinkled appearances of old age, often shew themselves at the age of thirty years."<sup>18</sup> The contradictory observations of preternatural youth and premature old age by Redpath and Chalmers point to the instability of age as a chronological marker on the antebellum American plantation. Compounding this instability was the uncertainty of enslaved laborers regarding their own age. Notoriously, slaveholders withheld their age from them. Douglass admitted that he did not know his age and that "by far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant."<sup>19</sup> Planters kept enslaved laborers ignorant of their age because the relative slack that existed between different perceptions of the same individual's age could be exploited.

Chesnutt's short story "The Goophered Grapevine" illustrates the malleability of age and how it could be manipulated to yield extraordinary profits. First published in the *Atlantic* in 1887 and later included in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), a collection of short stories that subversively rewrites Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus tales, "The Goophered Grapevine" tells the story of Henry, an enslaved man, and a goopher—a conjure, or spell—placed on him.<sup>20</sup> The goopher magically ties Henry's life to the grapevines he harvests, making him grow young and strong in the spring and old and weak in the winter. His hair changes, too, as his hairline ebbs and flows with the seasons.

Henry's owner, Mars Dugal' McAdoo, exploits this potential to enrich himself over five years by strategically selling Henry to a series of plantation owners for fifteen hundred dollars when he seems virile and young, and then buying him back for five hundred when he seems decrepit and old. Eventually, McAdoo makes enough money to purchase a second plantation on Beaver Creek. "The Goophered Grapevine" expands in two ways on the cruel treatment of the elderly man that Jacobs describes. First, it reveals biopolitical management practices that grew considerably more subtle and insidious than the threat of starvation. Second—to use classical Marxist terms—Chesnutt's story shows how the manipulation of age could be used not only to increase the use-value of an aging individual but also to generate surplus-value from the variable rates of exchange-value. That is, planters could profit simply by strategically altering the perception of the age of the enslaved laborers they bought and sold.

The description of Henry upon his arrival on the plantation suggests that the newness and oldness that McAdoo comes to exploit is already inherent in his appearance well before Aunt Peggy casts her fateful goopher that links Henry's hair, age, and life to the seasonal cycle of the grapevines. McAdoo brings the "noo nigger home wid 'im. He wuz er ole nigger" and, despite being bald "ez a hoss-apple on der top er his head," he was "a peart ole nigger, do', en could do a big day's wuk."<sup>21</sup> As the "noo . . . ole nigger" whose baldness suggests the ability of a partial hand, but whose capability is that of a prime hand, Henry is immediately introduced in terms of age as labor potential rather than age as chronology. The duplicity, that is, the two-facedness, of McAdoo subjects Henry to an endless cycle of "noo marster[s]" and "ole marster[s]" by which he is doubly exploited, performing the labor that devalues and ages his body, only to be refreshed and resold to begin again. John Brown, whose *Slave Life in Georgia* (1854) provides one of the most detailed accounts of antebellum slave trading, identifies the practice of manipulating age to fool an unsuspecting buyer.

There are "nigger jockeys" as well as horse jockeys, and as many tricks are played off to sell a bad or an unsound "nigger," as there are to palm off a diseased horse; and the man who succeeds in "shoving off a used up nigger," as one sound in wind and limb, takes as much pride in boasting of it, as the horse dealer does who has taken in a green-horn with a wall-eyed pony.<sup>22</sup>

Like the traders whom Brown describes, McAdoo takes considerable pleasure in duping those to whom he sells Henry. He "did a' see no casion fer ter tell" the man who first bought Henry about the goopher, and when he runs into him

later, anticipating that Henry would have begun to show signs of age, he asks the new owner, “sorter keerless, like es ef he des thought of it,” how Henry was doing. After hearing that Henry’s health was failing, McAdoo pauses, smokes a while, seemingly luxuriating in the deception, then eventually offers to buy Henry back, since “you en me is good fren’s, en I doan wan’ ter see you lose all de money you paid.”<sup>23</sup> Before McAdoo sells Henry to another “friend,” he rejuvenates him in order to replay the same trick.

McAdoo is neither friends with the slaveholders he tricks nor possessed of any real feelings of compassion toward Henry, whom he sells. Like any good capitalist, profit is the only thing to which McAdoo is loyal. When Henry returns, McAdoo rewards him. He gives Henry, “w’isky ter rub his rheumatiz, en terbacker ter smoke, en all he want ter eat.”<sup>24</sup> McAdoo uses the incentive of whiskey, tobacco, and food to entice Henry to remain complicit in his repeated scams. Other writers recount how the threat of punishment served the same purpose. In *Clotel*, William Wells Brown describes how an enslaved man is told, “You is only thirty years old; dat is what marsers says you is to be,” though the man knows he “is more den dat.”<sup>25</sup> However, the now-thirty-year-old follows orders to avoid punishment for disobeying. A savvy potential buyer, anticipating the practices of jockeying, confuses the man with a dizzying variety of questions and leads him to confess something closer to his actual age. Likewise, John Brown writes, “a nigger never knows when he was born, for though he may be quite certain of the year, and might swear to it blindfold, he must say he is just as old as his master chooses to bid him do, or he will have to take the consequences.”<sup>26</sup> Though the obfuscation of age that William Wells Brown and John Brown describe is dependent on impending punishment and negative consequences, Henry masks his age in much the same way. “Henry nebbor say nuffin ’bout de goopher ter his noo marsters, ’care he know he gwine ter be tuk good keer uv de nex’ winter w’en Mars Dugal buy him back.”<sup>27</sup> Whether through threats or incentives, those who were being sold became manipulated into redefining their own age.

Recent work on “The Goophered Grapevine” attends to the materiality of the goopher and considers how preserving credulity in its actual existence changes traditional readings of the story.<sup>28</sup> However, I argue it is McAdoo’s biopolitical management and the way in which it engages Henry in a cycle of generating newness and oldness for McAdoo’s benefit that makes the goopher real. By changing the conditions in which Henry’s age is perceived, McAdoo changes Henry’s age itself. When Henry arrives on the plantation, his potential to be recognized alternately as new and old is already inherent in his appearance as a bald, but strong, man. His appearance is exacerbated by the labor cycle

to which McAdoo subjects him. While it could be the goopher that makes Henry seem older, then younger, it could also be that when Henry is hired out, the brutal fieldwork he is made to do exhausts his body, and the rest and recovery that McAdoo allows him to have in the winter restores his health. McAdoo's vacillating treatment of Henry creates the conditions by which his age is perceived. Moreover, the actual economic transactions make Henry's age real. If age is the measurement of perceived labor-value, then McAdoo's successful deceptions make each one of Henry's varying ages, in effect, real.

Without the explanatory power of the goopher, the changes to Henry's hair seem difficult to understand. However, the attention "The Goophered Grapevine" pays to Henry's hair as the predominant signifier of his age accesses a particular archive of age manipulation based on the alteration of hair.<sup>29</sup> Published in 1769, Dr. Gallandat's short treatise on ways to reduce mortality rates on slave ships indicates that manipulating hair to suggest health had long been a feature of the African slave trade.

There is not a coquette back home who spends as much time on her hair as African traders spend trying to make their old slaves look smart and attractive when they want to sell them. They are washed and scrubbed, oiled and shaved; grey hairs are dyed or removed both from the beard and the head.<sup>30</sup>

William Wells Brown and John Brown both describe how the practice of making enslaved people seem younger before slave auctions by plucking and dyeing their hair had hardly changed over fifty years later. William Wells Brown describes in his *Narrative* that as a barber, he had to prepare the older slaves for the market in New Orleans:

He was ordered to shave off the old men's whiskers, and to pluck out the grey hairs where they were not too numerous; where they were, he coloured them with a preparation of blacking with a blacking brush. After having gone through the blacking process, they looked ten or fifteen years younger.<sup>31</sup>

John Brown corroborates this account, describing that shortly before the auction, "there was a general washing, and combing, and shaving, pulling out of grey hairs, and dyeing the hair of those who were too grey to be plucked without making them bald."<sup>32</sup> The logic is as simple as the practice of blackening the hair: the darker the hair, the younger the person, and the younger the person, the more years of labor there are remaining.

Henry's hair, and the exploitation of his age more generally in "The Goophered Grapevine," testifies to how the strategies of biopolitical management on

the plantation exceeded the threat of physical violence. Chesnutt shows through Henry's seasonal rejuvenation and the suggestive archive of hair manipulation that balancing the prolongation of life with the exploitation of labor became increasingly subtle and insidious, particularly for those deemed superannuated. What "The Goophered Grapevine" demonstrates, then, is how racial capitalism on the antebellum plantation is considerably more sophisticated than simply making someone work. By altering the appearance, and therefore the reality, of age, a new market is opened in which additional profit can be created. McAdoo in "The Goophered Grapevine" essentially prefigures the by now traditional maneuvers of the savvy capitalist on the stock market, with the short selling of Henry to unsuspecting slaveholders and the investment McAdoo makes in Henry's prospective return, creating new ways to turn old age for profit.

### Joice Heth's Teeth

In 1835, for the first act of his career as America's greatest showman, P. T. Barnum toured Joice Heth, an aging black woman, throughout the country, promising—for a small fee—that audiences could see "The Greatest Natural & National Curiosity in the World," the 161-year-old nurse to George Washington. For the paying public to believe that they were speaking with someone who had cradled the first president, Heth needed to appear as advertised, that is, 161 years old. Barnum believed that she could. In his 1855 autobiography, recollecting the first time he met Heth, in July 1835, Barnum wrote, "I was favorably struck with the appearance of the old woman. So far as outward indications were concerned, she might almost as well have been called a thousand years old as any other age."<sup>33</sup> Benjamin Reiss writes, "The marks of her decrepitude became the chief attraction for Barnum, who correctly surmised that they would also become authenticating marks as powerful as any documents attesting to her longevity."<sup>34</sup> Like McAdoo in "The Goophered Grapevine," Barnum invents new ways to produce profit by manipulating Heth's age.

Heth had already been on tour with R. W. Lindsay beginning in January 1835, across Cincinnati, Kentucky, Virginia, and Philadelphia, which is where Barnum met Lindsay in July and agreed to purchase his exhibition, including Heth, for one thousand dollars.<sup>35</sup> With Barnum's greater gifts as a showman, the tour intensified as they traveled the antebellum itinerancy circuit through New York, Providence, Boston, and the greater New England area. Heth's initial appearance schedule—from eight o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock at night—entailed an unbelievable fifteen hours of work, during which a ceaseless stream of visitors wished to shake hands with someone who cradled Washing-

ton, or merely to poke and prod someone who allegedly had reached such an extraordinary age. When the schedule proved unsustainable, it was altered to eight or nine hours a day, six days a week, leaving hardly a day without travel or exhibition.<sup>36</sup> Her sheer endurance fueled speculation that she may have been a machine, not a human.<sup>37</sup> Barnum calculated Heth's fatigue to maximize his profit. On the one hand, the initial fifteen-hour workdays induced too much fatigue, making Heth's appearances unsustainable and Barnum's profits irregular. On the other hand, treating Heth to less taxing workdays, more reasonable travel, and more comfortable living arrangements would make her look healthier and younger. The rejuvenation that John Brown describes before auction was the opposite of what Barnum hoped to achieve. Navigating these extremes, Barnum cultivated a state of perpetual exhaustion for Heth, which allowed her to repeat her performances while also making her superannuated appearance more convincing.

Barnum not only enhanced the authenticating marks on the body of Heth by controlling her labor but also made marks of his own. While it is difficult to be sure due to his constant contradictions, there is reason to believe that Barnum extracted Heth's teeth.<sup>38</sup> Levi Lyman, Barnum's partner in crime, divulged the behind-the-scenes history of Barnum's acquisition of Heth to the editor James Gordon Bennett, who published the "Joice Heth Hoax" series in the *New York Herald* in 1836. In the story Lyman conveyed to Bennett, the "Yankee exhibitor" (Barnum) discovers "Aunt Joice" (Heth) and considers how he can "improve" her. He identifies her teeth, and the fact that she still has them, as one way. By sedating her with whiskey and promising to have a dentist give her a new set of teeth later, he pulls out the "three or four old stumps" and by removing them succeeds in making her appear even older.<sup>39</sup> Barnum corroborated this story in his first autobiographical writings published in the *New York Atlas* in 1841. Using the thinly veiled pseudonym, Barnaby Diddleum, Barnum retells how he "engaged an old superannuated negro woman, decrepit and infirm."<sup>40</sup> He admits that she "was a remarkably old looking animal . . . but I made her look a great deal older. I extracted her teeth, which caused her cheeks to sink in, and then I stated that she was the nurse of the immortal George Washington."<sup>41</sup>

By removing Heth's teeth, Barnum repurposed a common punishment implemented by slaveholders. "Another method of *marking* slaves," according to a compilation of punishments assembled by the American Anti-Slavery Society, "is by drawing out or breaking off one or two *front teeth*—commonly the upper ones, as the mark would be in that case the more obvious."<sup>42</sup> The mutilation of teeth in this context marks the enslaved person as noncompliant. Undoubtedly, the absence of teeth would have been noticed at auction where, as Solomon

Northrup records, customers “make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase.”<sup>43</sup> The spiteful and brutal extraction of teeth would make an enslaved person less valuable. However, for Barnum, the authenticating mark he made by extracting Heth’s teeth made the story about her relationship to Washington easier to sell. Barnum was perpetuating a fraud; Heth was neither 161 years old nor Washington’s nursemaid.<sup>44</sup> However, in his attempt to authenticate a hoax, Barnum extracted the teeth of the “superannuated negro woman” to engineer a better, which is to say older, which is to say more lucrative, body.

Through Heth’s connection to Washington, whom she claimed to have raised, Barnum not only capitalized on the American public’s nostalgia for revolutionary heroes but also contributed to the romanticization of slavery. Just as Henry’s fluctuating hair in “The Goophered Grapevine” points to the creation of additional value through the market, Heth’s teeth point toward the creation of another kind of profit, in this case, symbolic value, from the condition of superannuation. Heth was unlike Washington in every conceivable way. For this reason, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues that Heth is “the quintessential American freak.”<sup>45</sup> She is “the direct antithesis of the able-bodied, white, male figure upon which the developing notion of the American normate was predicated,” as a “black, old, toothless, blind, crippled slave woman.”<sup>46</sup> Yet toothlessness was one thing Heth and Washington had in common. Washington infamously had dental problems and his reliance on dentures is a common piece of historical trivia. What is less well known, however, is that his dentures were not wooden but human teeth, “yanked from the heads of his slaves and fitted into his dentures.”<sup>47</sup> Washington bought nine teeth in 1784 from certain nameless “Negroes,” which were either unsuccessfully implanted directly into his mouth by his dentist, Dr. Jean-Pierre Le Mayeur, or used in constructing a set of dentures.<sup>48</sup> A pair of Washington’s dentures that include human teeth remains a part of the collection at Mount Vernon.<sup>49</sup> Unwittingly, Washington anticipates Barnum and his willingness to manipulate the appearance of black bodies for his own benefit.

The toothlessness of Heth and Washington illustrates how white owners extorted enslaved laborers for as much value as possible. It also shows how old age is instrumentalized to suppress the very history of that extortion. Heth’s lack of teeth substantiated her claim to having been Washington’s nursemaid. By virtue of her reputed age, however, she restored Washington in the minds of Barnum’s audience, who imagined the Founding Father as an innocent infant through Heth’s role as nursemaid, not as the aging man reliant on the teeth of others. In her disremembered affection for the young boy, Heth models what

Uri McMillan refers to as “mammy memory,” her performance providing “an embodied portal to an already distant past.”<sup>50</sup> Heth’s longevity, like the celebration of black longevity that Ellen Gruber Garvey observes in William Dorsey’s “Colored Centenarians” scrapbook, “asserted the African American presence in the nation” across time, making “African American significance in the national story inescapable.”<sup>51</sup> However, that selective presence served a national myth “that in the time of the Fathers, race was not a divisive issue and did not detract from national greatness.”<sup>52</sup> As Heth became superannuated, Washington became rejuvenated and with Washington’s rejuvenation came the erasure of his slaveholding and teeth pulling. The tickets that customers bought to see Heth also purchased a history in which the Founding Fathers could be symbolically reconciled with the fact of slavery.

Drawing Barnum, the northern capitalist, alongside McAdoo in “The Goo-phered Grapevine,” the paternalist planter, reveals the system of racial capitalism that binds them together in their exploitation of superannuation. Barnum styled himself as a capitalist who improved on the management techniques of the plantation to extract even more value from Heth’s superannuation. He falsely claimed at one point to have discovered “Aunt Joyce,” “a remarkably old negro woman,” while visiting a friend’s plantation. She is “picking my pockets by remaining, while I live, on the pension list,” confesses his friend, who stands in for an inept planter. With a smirk, Barnum remarks, “She might be turned to some account by being exhibited.”<sup>53</sup> Reiss’s reading of this scene captures how Barnum tries to show himself as “an even more shrewd exploiter of the slave’s body . . . because he understands that labor is not the only basis of value.”<sup>54</sup>

For his part, McAdoo, who could be called a paternalist in the sense that he maintains Henry’s health in his old age, considers himself superior to the Yankee capitalist who visits his plantation. Allowing the Yankee to implement some of his planting strategies causes McAdoo’s crops and his resale of Henry—for he, too, knows that labor is not the only basis of value—to fail. The Yankee’s heavy-handedness ruins the ecology McAdoo had subtly orchestrated. Outraged, McAdoo enlists to fight in the Civil War in hopes of finding the same man, or others like him. Ultimately, though, there is little difference between Barnum the capitalist and McAdoo the paternalist. They each see the other as witless insofar as they fail to realize how old age can be manipulated further. They use the same strategies of alternating between ruthless violence and feigned sympathy. They invent new ways to extract more value from those considered superannuated. The superficial differences between the capitalist and the paternalist dissolve in the face of their overwhelming similarities as participants in the system of racial capitalism.

## Bailey's Little Hut

According to Frederick Douglass in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), the single most damning aspect of slavery was the abandonment of his grandmother, Betsy Bailey, in her old age. "If any one thing in my experience, more than another," Douglass writes, "served to deepen my conviction of the infernal character of slavery, and to fill me with unutterable loathing of slaveholders, it was their base ingratitude to my poor old grandmother."<sup>55</sup> The long passage in which he expands on his grandmother's fate has been recognized for its heightened rhetorical effect. As William A. Cook has shown, Douglass appropriates the techniques he learned from a copy of Caleb Bingham's *The Columbian Orator*.<sup>56</sup> He also "manipulates eighteenth-century ideals of sentimental morality and nineteenth-century political romanticism" that often appeared in antebellum antislavery writing to protest the cruelty of slavery in order to invest this evocative passage with emotional resonance.<sup>57</sup> Yet Douglass's long description of his grandmother's fate serves two more-specific purposes. First, Douglass protests the deep injustice his grandmother experienced throughout her life, culminating in her abandonment in old age. Like Henry and Heth, Bailey endured a long life made longer by the unrelenting labor imposed on her, and Douglass exposes the sheer endlessness of her exploitation while enslaved. Second, Douglass creates what Dana Luciano refers to as a countermonument by repeatedly invoking her isolation in the little hut throughout his literary career. This countermonument stands in opposition not only to the treatment of his grandmother but to the entire state of superannuation generated by racial capitalism.

In an elegant passage, Douglass registers his resentment for what he perceives to be his grandmother's fate. He writes:

Her present owners finding she was of but little value, her frame already racked with the pains of old age, and complete helplessness fast stealing over her once active limbs, they took her to the woods, built her a little hut, put up a little mud-chimney, and then made her welcome to the privilege of supporting herself there in perfect loneliness; thus virtually turning her out to die! . . . at this time, this most needful time, the time for the exercise of that tenderness and affection which children only can exercise towards a declining parent—my poor old grandmother, the devoted mother of twelve children, is left all alone, in yonder little hut, before a few dim embers. She stands—she sits—she staggers—she falls—she groans—she dies—and there are none of her children or grandchildren present, to wipe from her wrinkled brow the cold sweat of death.<sup>58</sup>

What incensed Douglass was the absolute nature of slavery's economic exploitation that occurred through what Jennifer Morgan has identified as the twin pillars of female exploitation in slavery: reproduction and labor.<sup>59</sup>

Douglass highlights how Bailey "had peopled his plantation with slaves," and once she was no longer able to have biological children after producing twelve children of her own, she maintained, raised, and nursed generation after generation, becoming a "a great grandmother in his service."<sup>60</sup> Douglass undercuts the popular trope of the "mammy," and the white fantasy of contented labor that animated it, by showing the transactional nature of reproduction.<sup>61</sup> Though Bailey "peopled" the plantation, "her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren, [were] divided, like so many sheep."<sup>62</sup> The wealth and stability of the white family for whom she worked was achieved at the expense of her own family, which was fractured and sold for its benefit. Bailey had served her master faithfully from birth until his death, "she had rocked him infancy . . . and at his death wiped from his icy brow the cold death-sweat, and closed his eyes forever."<sup>63</sup> At her death, however, she was left with no one to care for her.

Bailey's labor was not confined strictly to reproduction, however. In her late life, as the historian Stacey Close explains, "Douglass's grandmother Betty was highly esteemed for her ability to construct fishing nets for catching shad and herring. Her nets were in great demand in neighboring villages. . . . The old woman's efforts were tireless and quite draining physically."<sup>64</sup> Bailey's life of labor was prolonged through her biologically and socially reproductive labor in addition to her production of fishing nets. Close describes this management strategy, which adapts to the shifting capabilities of individuals as they age, as an attempt "to extract the last remnants of physical and intellectual ability from old female slaves by having them serve in capacities that were equal to their physical stamina."<sup>65</sup> Though Bailey gave everything, she was given nothing in return. "She had been the source of all of his wealth," Douglass claims, yet she was deemed disposable, turned out, and sent to live her last days in the little hut that Douglass describes.<sup>66</sup>

When juxtaposed with the beating of Aunt Hester that also appears in the *Narrative*, the abandonment of Bailey illustrates a less common, but no less devastating, form of violence that antislavery advocates often overlooked. If, as Hartman claims, the beating of Aunt Hester serves as "an inaugural moment in the formation of the enslaved" because it "establishes the centrality of violence to the making of the slave," then the fate of Douglass's grandmother serves as a terminal stage that establishes the centrality of another kind of violence to the biopolitical management of the enslaved.<sup>67</sup> Unlike the brutal violence of

Aunt Hester's beating that is representative of what Michel Foucault calls the sovereign power "to take life or let live," the "slow violence" of Bailey's expulsion to the little hut is endemic of what Foucault calls "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die."<sup>68</sup> Where sovereign power functions directly and threatens to abbreviate life, biopolitical power acts indirectly and is calculated to prolong life. Unlike the most notorious images of violence from the antebellum plantation—the rending of children from their mother's breast or the brutal use of the whip—Douglass's account of his grandmother's abandonment calls attention to biopolitical power.

Bailey, however, was not abandoned to die alone in a little hut in the woods. Thomas Auld, Douglass's former master, took her into his household "and took care of her as long as she lived."<sup>69</sup> While Douglass became aware of this discrepancy as early as 1849, he reiterated his original description of Bailey's demise with only minimal edits or qualifications in all three of his subsequent autobiographical writings.<sup>70</sup> Why did Douglass continue to implicate Auld by repeating the description in his *Narrative* (1845)? He may have been "uncertain about Auld's beneficence," as the literary scholar Robert S. Levine suggests.<sup>71</sup> Or Douglass may have been certain about how paternalism—and the narrative that Auld supposedly rescued Bailey from the little hut in the woods—would add one more way in which her superannuation would serve white slaveholders.

Slavery apologists contended that paternalism, like Auld's alleged rescue of Bailey, was an inherent virtue of slavery. "There is no class of working people in the world better cared for than the Southern slave," one planter-physician wrote, and in "old age there is no difference shown" in the level of care.<sup>72</sup> The pro-slavery writer George Fitzhugh claimed that paternal sentiments were so powerful they enslaved the slaveholder: "The master is under an obligation, legally, theoretically and practically, to labor for [the superannuated, the infirm, and the infant slaves]. Therefore, the master of twenty slaves is always a slave himself."<sup>73</sup> Where Douglass describes the brutality of the isolated little hut to which Bailey was expelled, one plantation owner maintained his defense of paternalism by writing about the "small cottage" in which the enslaved person "knows that his wants will all be supplied to him" by the slaveholder.<sup>74</sup> The laws of many southern states prohibited the manumission of elderly slaves to protect "the state from having to provide funds to deal with old and indigent slaves," which made solitary structures built for the purpose of housing the superannuated common.<sup>75</sup>

The historian Eugene Genovese asserts that there was a spectrum of treatment that met the superannuated. "The behavior of the slaveholders toward

the superannuated ranged widely,” Genovese writes, “from full and kind concern through minimum attention to paternalist responsibilities to indifference and sheer barbarism.”<sup>76</sup> However, the available evidence in slave testimonies, plantation records, and southern slave hospital archives suggests paternalism was anomalous and treatment skewed toward the barbarous. Moses Grandy’s slave narrative indicates that the fate from which Bailey may have been saved was not unusual. Grandy describes how “aged and worn out slaves, whether men or women, are commonly so treated. No care is taken of them. . . . As far as the owner is concerned, they live or die as it happens; it is just the same thing as turning out an old horse.”<sup>77</sup> In his *Advice among Masters*, a collection of writing from plantation owners, James O. Breeden notes that the “shockingly small [archival] contents make clear that old age benefits did not command more than the incidental attention of the writers on slave management.”<sup>78</sup> Superannuated enslaved laborers “subjected slaveholder paternalism to some of its greatest strains,” and owners often succumbed to their baser instincts.<sup>79</sup> Insofar as the superannuated survived, they did so due to the community of improvised kin relations that surrounded them.<sup>80</sup>

There are two reasons why Douglass may have continued to implicate Auld by repeating Auld’s description of his grandmother’s expulsion to the little cabin despite its inaccuracy. First, Douglass knew Auld’s belated gesture was meant to conceal his culpability for the superannuation of Bailey and her life of prolonged labor preceding it. The only reason Auld took Bailey away from the little hut and into his home was because of Douglass’s provocative description of her fate in his *Narrative* (1845). “The fact is,” Douglass maintained, “that after writing my narrative describing the condition of my grandmother, Captain Auld’s attention being thus called to it, he rescued her from destitution.”<sup>81</sup> Yet, if Douglass credited Auld in later writings, the incident would be taken as evidence of paternalism and enlisted in defense of the institution of slavery, prolonging its existence. The second reason Douglass continued to implicate Auld is that while his account was not true of his own grandmother, it was true of many others who did not have grandsons writing on their behalf. Douglass seized the opportunity to expose the biopolitical violence that did undoubtedly occur on other plantations.

Bailey’s hut, as rendered by Douglass, is best understood in terms of Dana Luciano’s usage of countermonumental. Using Douglass’s famous speech, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852), Luciano argues that the countermonumental rearranges time: “The subject of the countermonumental is less the truth content of a given event than the formal arrangement of time

around the event; in response to the sacralizing appeal of the monumental, the deliberately untimely countermonument marks out spaces in which damaged time becomes visible.”<sup>82</sup> In much the same way as his “Fourth of July” speech, Douglass’s account of Bailey’s cabin unsettles the past with less attention to “the truth content of a given event” and more to the way in which “damaged time becomes visible.” Damaged time, in this case, looks like the aging body of an enslaved laborer. Douglass’s grief for his grandmother and superannuated others like her causes him to linger over the consequence of racial capitalism’s unrelenting prolongation of exploitation. In this way, chronobiopolitics—that is, the way that feelings of grief, according to Luciano, can alter time—yields insight into the biopolitics of superannuation.<sup>83</sup> Though it is feeble in the face of a seemingly indomitable force, Douglass nevertheless raises the countermonument of Bailey’s little hut in opposition.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of superannuation because the central economic tension animated by it—prolonging life and exploiting labor—serves as the basis of the modern racial capitalist assessment of old age, if not also life itself. The creation of fundamental categories like superannuation on the plantation is so extreme in its violence that it ruptures the very fabric of social reproduction, or in the case of old age that I am describing, the very nature of human mortality and our expectations and considerations of it. The particular iteration of old age within chattel slavery fundamentally reconstructs our understanding of old age. Later in the nineteenth century, superannuation would take on another meaning as it became closely associated with early pension programs and later with retirement. Yet its underlying presumption—that old age is valueless—would remain the same; the problems inherent to superannuation would recur in the transition from chattel slavery to wage slavery. Isaac Rubinow, a social reformer in the early twentieth century who advocated for universal old age pensions, was right that capitalism exposed every individual to “the industrial scrap-heap.” He was wrong, however, that it was “specifically a problem of modern society.”<sup>84</sup>

The slight technical differences between slavery and capitalism have obscured the compatibility of the two economic systems. Examining the state of superannuation in antebellum America through Chesnut’s “The Goophered Grapevine” and Barnum’s display of Heth illuminates just how similar slavery and capitalism are. McAdoo and Barnum make Henry, as he moves from plantation to plantation, and Heth, as she moves from show to show, labor ceaselessly. Their manipulation of age is not limited simply to labor, however. Both invent new ways to extract additional value from superannuation, even,

counterintuitively, by making enslaved laborers appear older. For McAdoo, that entails profiting through exchange in the market. For Barnum, that entails tapping into the nostalgic desire for a nonexistent time in which revolution and slavery were reconciled. Insofar as Douglass articulates a countermonument in the description of Bailey's little hut, it is in opposition to McAdoo and Barnum, and the confluence of slavery and capitalism that they represent.

Racial capitalism does not allow everyone to grow old. Longevity is foreclosed from many. However, through the framework of superannuation, it becomes possible to see how biopolitical strategies often understood as discrete—the exploitation of life and the prolongation of life—are capable of being exercised in unison. Even in the event of premature death, these strategies exist in some combination. The dynamic tension between these disciplinary practices is especially evident in old age because it is where those strategies are most strained. The diminishment of physical capacity in agedness exposes how the desire to glean more value through more labor is never-ending. While Patterson's thesis of social death remains critical to understanding the condition of enslavement, superannuation is a reminder that the fluctuation of life across time requires more nuanced treatment. Moreover, the continuity of racial capitalism as an economic system that encapsulates both slavery and capitalism challenges us to relate the biopolitical realities of the plantation to life after slavery's supposed end while nevertheless preserving the real differences between enslaved labor and labor whose freedom is severely circumscribed. Superannuation, in some form, survives. For many, the unrelenting desire for more labor makes staying young more work and makes for more work when old.

## Notes

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3. Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 142.
4. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982). On the limitations of Patterson's thesis, see Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114.5 (2009): 1231–49.
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6. Leslie J. Pollard, *Complaint to the Lord: Historical Perspectives on the African American Elderly* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 32.
7. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman, introduction to *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, ed. Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 14.
8. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 5.
9. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
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13. Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 376–77. See also Stephanie Smallwood, "To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice," *Boston Review*, February 21, 2018, [bostonreview.net/forum/remake-world-slavery-racial-capitalism-and-justice/stephanie-smallwood-what-slavery-tells-us](http://bostonreview.net/forum/remake-world-slavery-racial-capitalism-and-justice/stephanie-smallwood-what-slavery-tells-us).
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16. This essay is indebted to work that interrogates the way in which racialization inflects embodiment, particularly disability, which is perhaps the only other line of inquiry that deals with this combination of emphases. See Christopher M. Bell, ed., *Blackness and Disability: Critical Examinations and Cultural Interventions* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011); Dea H. Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property, and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800–1860* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Todd Carmody, "In Spite of Handicaps: The Disability of Racial Uplift," *American Literary History* 27.1 (2015): 56–78; Stephen Knadler, "Narrating Slow Violence: Post-Reconstruction's Necropolitics and Speculating beyond Liberal Antirace Fiction," *J19* 5.1 (2017): 21–50.
17. James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859), 116.
18. Lionel Chalmers, *An Account of the Weather and Diseases of South-Carolina* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1776), 38.
19. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2003), 41.

20. Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Goophered Grapevine," in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*, ed. Richard H. Broadhead (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993): 31–43.
21. Chesnutt, 37.
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23. Chesnutt, "Goophered Grapevine," 40.
24. Chesnutt, 41.
25. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. William Edward Farrison (New York: Carol, 1969), 87–88.
26. Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 116.
27. Chesnutt, "Goophered Grapevine," 41.
28. Matthew A. Taylor, "Hoodoo You Think You Are? Self-Conjuration in Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman*," in *Universes without Us: Posthuman Cosmologies in American Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 113–38; Don James McLaughlin, "Inventing Queer: Portals, Haunting, and Other Fantastic Tricks in the Collected Folklore of Joel Chandler Harris and Charles Chesnutt," *American Literature* 89.1 (2017): 1–28; Knadler, "Narrating Slow Violence."
29. Charles Chesnutt noted in "Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem" that "The Goophered Grapevine" is the only story in *The Conjure Woman* that had some folk precedent ("Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem," in *Charles Chesnutt: Stories, Novels, and Essays* [New York: Library of America, 2002], 907). For those precedents, see Robert Hemenway, "The Functions of Folklore in Charles Chesnutt's 'The Conjure Women,'" *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 13.3 (1976): 283–309.
30. Quoted in P. C. Emmer, *The Dutch Slave Trade, 1500–1850*, trans. Chris Emery (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 72.
31. Brown, *Clotel*, 20–21.
32. Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 112.
33. Phineas Taylor Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum* (New York: Redfield, 1855), 148.
34. Benjamin Reiss, *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 20.
35. Reiss, 23.
36. Reiss, 106.
37. Her sheer endurance no doubt contributed to speculation that she may have been a machine, not a human. See Louis Chude-Sokei, "The Uncanny History of Minstrels and Machines, 1835–1923," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 104–32; McMillan, *Embodied Avatars*, 47–57; Reiss, *Showman and the Slave*, 106–25.
38. At the very least, his willingness to confirm the story indicates a disturbing degree of comfort with the idea. James W. Cook notes, "Barnum probably concocted the tooth extraction as a brutal allegory of the 'puffing system' (in which antebellum managers regularly fabricated new names, images, and biographies for their performers). But it is hard to be certain. After all, he did sell tickets to Heth's autopsy." See Phineas Taylor Barnum, *The Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe*, ed. James W. Cook (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 244n24.
39. Quoted in Reiss, *Showman and the Slave*, 163–64.
40. Barnum, *Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, 16.
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42. American Anti-Slavery Society, *Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade in the United States of North America* (London: Thomas Ward, 1841), 117.
43. Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup* (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1853), 80.
44. In the aftermath of Heth's death in 1836 and her public dissection, Dr. Rogers announced that "Joice Heth could not have been more than *seventy-five*, or, at the utmost eighty years of age!" See "Dissection of Joice Heth.—Precious Humbug Exposed," *New York Sun*, February 26, 1836. On the scandal that ensued, and how Barnum profited from Heth even after her death, see Reiss, *Showman and the Slave*, 143–207.
45. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 59.

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47. Henry Wienczeck, *An Imperfect God: George Washington, His Slaves, and the Creation of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 112–13.
48. Ron Chernow, *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin, 2010), 438–39.
49. Kathryn Gehred, “Did George Washington’s False Teeth Come from His Slaves? A Look at the Evidence, the Responses to That Evidence, and the Limitations of History,” *Washington’s Quill*, October 19, 2016, [gwpapers.virginia.edu/george-washingtons-false-teeth-come-slaves-look-evidence-responses-evidence-limitations-history/](http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/george-washingtons-false-teeth-come-slaves-look-evidence-responses-evidence-limitations-history/).
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53. Barnum, *Colossal P. T. Barnum Reader*, 21.
54. Reiss, *Showman and the Slave*, 167.
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56. William A. Cook, “Writing in the Spaces Left,” *College Composition and Communication* 44.1 (1993): 9–25.
57. Gregory S. Jay, “American Literature and the New Historicism: The Example of Frederick Douglass,” *boundary 2* 17.1 (1990): 233–34. See also Michael A. Chaney, introduction to *Where Is All My Relation? The Poetics of Dave the Potter*, ed. Michael A. Chaney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 9–11.
58. Douglass, *Narrative*, 73.
59. Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). See also Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1999); Gregory D. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2012); Jenifer L. Barclay, “Mothering the ‘Useless’: Black Motherhood, Disability, and Slavery,” *Women, Gender, and Families of Color* 2.2 (2014): 115–40.
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64. Stacey Close, *Elderly Slaves of the Plantation South* (New York: Garland, 1997), 65.
65. Close, 79. See also Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 131–41; Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 63–64.
66. Douglass, *Narrative*, 73.
67. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3. See also Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1–24.
68. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 241. On “slow violence,” see Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). On the intersection of Nixon’s “slow violence” and biopolitics, see Knadler, “Narrating Slow Violence.”
69. According to Douglass’s recollection of an 1877 conversation, Thomas Auld swore “I brought her down here and took care of her as long as she lived.” See Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written By Himself* (Hartford, CT: Park, 1881), 537.
70. Douglass acknowledges that his account of Bailey is no longer accurate in his second open letter to Auld, in which he writes, “I have been told by a person intimately acquainted with your affairs, and upon whose word I can rely . . . that you have taken [my poor old grandmother] from the desolate hut in which she formerly lived, into your own kitchen, and are providing for her in a manner becoming a man and a Christian.” See Frederick Douglass, “To Captain Thomas Auld, Formerly My Master,” *North Star*, September 7, 1849.

71. Robert S. Levine, *The Lives of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 282. See also Jay, "American Literature and the New Historicism," 234–35.
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75. Close, *Elderly Slaves*, 58–59, 88. See also Leslie J. Pollard, *Complaint to the Lord: Historical Perspectives on the African American Elderly* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 44–46; Jeff Forret, "'Deaf & Dumb, Blind, Insane, or Idiotic': The Census, Slaves, and Disability in the Late Antebellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 82.3 (2016): 533; Todd L. Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 203.
76. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 520–21. See also Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon, 2017), 129–47.
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79. Forret, "'Deaf & Dumb,'" 503–4. See also Todd L. Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery*, 201–7; Stephen C. Kenny, "'A Dictate of Both Interest and Mercy'? Slave Hospitals in the Antebellum South," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 65.1 (2010): 1–47.
80. Close, *Elderly Slaves*, 47, 101.
81. Douglass, *Life and Times*, 449.
82. Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 170.
83. Luciano, 2, 9–12, 16.
84. I. M. Rubinow, *Social Insurance* (New York: Henry Holt, 1913), 302.