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REVIEW ARTICLES

MORE ON THE PECULIAR INSTITUTION¹

Testing the chains: resistance to slavery in the British West Indies.
MICHAEL CRATON. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press,
1982. 389 pp. (Cloth US\$ 29.50)

Slavery and social death: a comparative study. ORLANDO PATTERSON.
Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1982.
xv + 511 pp. (Cloth US\$ 30.00)

To say born and raised in Cuba is to mean I was born and raised among slaves. My parents owned some, though only a few, and I inherited them. Hence I am speaking of something here that I know about not only from the books I have read but also from my personal experience.

To write this work I have pursued the most remote antecedents of some peoples; I have looked at sculptures and inscriptions that still endure on the walls of the most ancient of the world's monuments; I've searched the annals of more than fifty centuries; in all of them, in the Old World as in the New, I have always found humans enslaved by others. Barbarous nations and civilized ones, large and small, powerful and weak, peaceful and warlike, under the most varied forms of government, professing the most different sorts of religion and without regard to climate or epoch, all have carried in their breasts the poison that is slavery. Did there ever exist a people where slavery did not appear under one of the forms I identified? Could there be somewhere in the record of humanity a period, however short, in which slavery had disappeared from the globe?

José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud* (1936 [1883] I: 5-6)

Since José Antonio Saco wrote those words, the study of the peculiar institution has gone through many phases, while slavery

itself, at least in the form with which Saco was familiar, has disappeared. Modern scholarship on slavery can aspire to a quality and thoroughness previously unattainable, since the accumulation of new knowledge, particularly in the last quarter of a century, has been without precedent. Here are two new works of different character and scale, by two of the most prolific writers on slavery of their generation. Though these are books with divergent intentions, they share one general feature: both authors are lumpers instead of splitters. Craton recounts many individual instances of slaves revolting in a search for the catalyst of active resistance; Patterson wants to explain to us what slavery is, and examines scores of cases to isolate its germ. Both authors seek to wash into view the nugget in the sand. Such laudable ambitions, of course, are not without risks.

Craton aims to disentangle the history of the reactions of slaves in the British West Indies to their condition from the onset of slavery in those colonies until the last revolts before Emancipation. The book is divided into five parts: (I) the plantation world and slave resistance short of rebellion; (II) maroon resistance, 1600–1775; (III) African slaves; (IV) slave resistance in the Age of Revolution, 1775–1885; and (V) slave rebellions and Emancipation, 1816–1832. Each part is divided into chapters; each initial chapter considers in general terms the themes to follow. In Parts II–V, these consist mainly of particular descriptions, such as Cudjoe's War (Part II, Chapter 7), or Bussa's Rebellion (Part V, Chapter 20). Though Craton makes clear that the book is selective, he attributes this not so much to acknowledged gaps in research and data, as to his desire to deal with representative cases.

The analytical position Craton assumes, however, is curious. The book is dedicated to the martyred Guyanese historian, Walter Rodney, and begins with citations from C. L. R. James, the author of *The Black Jacobins*, and Herbert Aptheker, the author of *American Negro Slave Revolts*. But Craton rejects "the pioneer populists' pure Marxism" (p. 11), proclaiming that he does not suffer from "Marxist optimism" (p. 17). Thereafter the references to Marxism, though quite numerous, seem designed to keep the reader interested in what the author thinks about that

point of view — as if this were not really deducible from the interpretations. On page 334, one trying to make sense of the book's final sentence would still be wondering — if, indeed, the subject were any longer of interest. This somewhat sophomoric Marx-gets-Craton, Marx-loses-Craton scenario could have been safely omitted in its entirety. Unfortunately, it is linked to Craton's position on the relevant issues.

Seeking to catalogue slave resistance, the author set up a tripartite sequential division: 1) "maroon-type" revolts; 2) revolts led by unassimilated Africans; and 3) late slave rebellions led by "creole (colony born) members of the slave elite" (p. 13). At the outset, Craton tells us, he surmised that resistance "might flare into revolt" under four conditions: where there was extreme repression; where unassimilable elements were found in the subject population; where the forces of control were weakened; or where slave expectations became frustrated. The author believes these divisions continued to serve his purposes during his research, their principal advantage inhering in the stress they put upon endogenous forces. (Craton resists strongly the idea that external political events may have deeply affected the will or readiness of the slaves to resist; but he does not satisfactorily explain — at least to this reader — why this would have been the case, or why he feels so strongly about it.)

Classifications of this kind must be used cautiously, lest a "superhistorical" position result in insufficient concern with the historical particulars in each case. If Craton is aware of the difficulty, he does not allow it to get in the way of his imagination. Nor, for that matter, is he much discouraged by factual lacunae. Two examples may suffice. The first has to do with the general subject of language. There is a good deal of talk about language and languages in this book, and most of it is ill-informed or evasive. On page 47, the cultural importance of the African past is weighed, and Douglas Taylor, the late Caribbean linguist, is invoked by Craton, in support of the following observation:

But because folklore and proverbs identical with African originals, along with songs, dances, games, recipes, and some 10 percent of African words in the different creole languages, are still current in the British West Indies 140 years after the end of slavery (quite apart from the legacies in black religion), the

African influences in the slave quarters must have been extremely strong, even after the African-born became a minority.

Craton's reference, however, is to the first half of Taylor's book, that concerned with indigenous Caribbean languages; while the second half, on creole languages, contains nothing I could find that was related in any way to Craton's assertions about the strength of the African past.² Craton goes on:

Plantation owners deliberately avoided placing large groups of the same ethnicity on a plantation, and nothing melds and submerges minority languages more quickly than the need to communicate. Yet African languages were sustained by the will to retain a private mode of communication and must have continued in use as long as two people who spoke the same tongue were close enough to each other to keep in practice. The existence of a special language different from that of the master class itself was a tradition in parts of Africa; such a language was even found among the descendants of Arawaks subjugated by the Caribs (handed down by the women). To the consternation of the whites, the mainly illiterate slaves long retained the African art of communicating by drums, sending complex secret messages very rapidly over long distances [p. 47].

One would be hard put to come up with a paragraph on the subject of language misleading in more regards than this; but the citation which precedes it, on African influences, comes close. If the author has read seriously on the nature of Afro-American cultural or linguistic change or retention, he has managed successfully to repress all of his insights while crafting these passages.

The problem persists in nearly every discussion of language in the book. In explaining the thwarted 1683 revolt in Barbados, for instance, Craton writes: "... the fact that the slaves communicated in English, rather than indicating a degree of acculturation, is evidence that the African ethnicities needed a lingua franca" (p. 110). Though he tries to explain further what he means, this assertion is confusing at best. Again, to handle the claim that the "Coromantees" among the Jamaican maroons spoke some putatively African language, Craton hypothesizes that "this particular tongue may have been a syncretic form, purposely developed and handed down by the captains and obeahmen who led the band" (p. 78). The author is fond of the word "syncretic," but it is not clear what he means by it, other than "mixed" or

“blended.” Thus uncertainty is displayed anew in the odd way that the languages of Afro-Americans are dealt with generally here: “. . . in the creation of creole languages, English was the basic instrument but with an enriched vocabulary, a subtly changed inner structure, and an intonation so ‘African’ that if the resident whites could understand it, Europeans could not” (p. 48). In fact, the “basic instrument” was not so basic and changes of the “inner structure” were not so subtle; Craton is detained by these matters because he does not know whether the language in question was really English; but he also does not know how to ask that very question. Not surprisingly, terminological and definitional difficulties pursue him. Thus, for instance, a “patois” on page 147 becomes a “French patois” on page 185, changes into a “French creole” on page 201, and finally becomes a “creole patois” on page 235.

A second example of the insouciant use of concepts unfamiliar to the author comes with the specification of human social groups. On page 21, we learn of “tribes,” on page 22 of “the Carib nation,” on pages 26 and 78 of a “warrior caste,” on page 165 of “warlike traditional cultures,” on pages 110, 175, and 223 of “ethnicities,” and on page 178 of “Ashanti-like warrior polities”; finally, on page 207, we learn that the Black Carib “are today the nearest approximation to a truly Afro-American *nation* in the Caribbean region.” Words such as “caste” and “nation” really do have meanings, though; and while “ethnicity” certainly can be used to stand for some kind of group (*ethnos*), it seems to turn up here whenever the author knows too little about some group to be able to label it. Surely he should have studied more carefully Barbara Kopytoff’s analysis, which he praises warmly (p. 62).

Another rather curious difficulty with this book, having to do with the use of sources, will distract the specialist reader more than the reader in search of broad enlightenment. Craton is widely read in historical and social-scientific literature on the Caribbean, and particularly the anglophone West Indies. Each chapter in this book is amply footnoted, and authorities are cited. Yet many of the basic concepts employed in the interpretive and theoretical arguments, concepts developed and legitimized by other scholars whose works are well known, are not cited at the point where they

are first used, if at all. On page 54, for instance, Craton writes: "[Slave] drivers were measured on a scale of reputations; they were therefore not as attracted as other elite slaves by the canons of respectability." Any reader steeped in Caribbean literature will immediately recognize those terms and their specific use here as coming from Peter Wilson's *Crab Antics*, an anthropological monograph concerned with the contemporary Caribbean, and developing an argument about the complementary notions of reputation and respectability. But having used the terms as if they were his own, why does Craton wait until page 248 to cite Wilson? Were this an isolated case, it would matter little. But if it was Craton's intention to clarify where he got the concepts useful to him in developing his arguments for this book, then he has failed resoundingly.

What of the book itself? When put in the context of Craton's earlier works, such as *A Jamaican plantation* (co-authored with James Walvin), this is a keen disappointment. Here, substance and theory are unconvincingly combined, largely because the interpretations do not grow out of the data, but are derived instead, higgledy-piggledy, from the works of others. Information on individual instances of collective resistance, many abortive, is summarized; the putative wellsprings of such resistance are discussed; and the panorama of "slave-life" is briefly displayed. But things do not hang together; and an eleven-page epilogue fails entirely to improve matters. What mournful one-upsmanship we have here! For those "progressive historians" for whom "there is no doubt; true revolution will surely emerge, sooner rather than later, if not as a result, then as an ideal expression and fit conclusion of the people's struggle," Craton offers dire enlightenment:

The people's perennial struggle against their oppressors does not require an external program. It is not necessarily progressive . . . slaves always resisted slavery and the plantation system, rebelling where they could or had to. Their aim was freedom to make, or to recreate, a life of their own in the circumstances in which they found themselves — an aim that placed them alongside all unfree people throughout history their own descendants. The circumstances gradually changed, of course, but subject chiefly to an intrinsic, not extrinsic logic. As this book has argued, the first African slaves brought with them to the Caribbean age-tested techniques of combating slavery, indigenous fighting traditions, and memories of political systems that kept their homeland free from a general European takeover until the end of the nineteenth century. In the New World they assimilated, or unconsciously

replicated, Amerindian techniques of resistance, subtle as well as open . . . We do not aim to glamorize the struggling masses. Ordinary people are rarely heroic, often confused, and almost invariably selfish. Their ideology, though definable, is rarely conscious. When they revolt, they are likely to be as savage and as revengeful as their opponents. Yet the time has surely come for history to be written from the perspective of the majority rather than from that of more eloquent elites — be they the original bourgeois master class, their independentist successors, or even an intellectual Socialist vanguard.

A Socialist revolution may indeed be just around the corner for the British Caribbean. But if the message of this book rings true, the people will resist oppression by a totalitarian communism just as vigorously as any other form of slave regime. What characterizes, defines, the common people is the way in which they will always test the chains of their oppression. If we accept in its fullest sense Herbert Aptheker's dictum that resistance, not acquiescence, is the core of history (and there must be some doubt that Aptheker himself, as a good Marxist, meant it quite that way), then resistance, surely, cannot have a stop [pages 330–334, *passim*].

Though these are selected passages from the epilogue, they display the lines of an argument Craton carries on in his book with opponents (several of them now dead) whose positions he has undertaken to outline and to criticize. As I suggested earlier, such fiddling about with what Craton has chosen to define as “socialist” or “Marxist” detracts from the book, for the historical substance itself seems neither to support such a position (as Craton has defined it), nor to vitiate it. One is left puzzled at best. If the book is dedicated (as it is) to a convinced Socialist or Marxist, as Walter Rodney was, one might ask whom we are honoring, and whom we are one-upping, by noting that the regime in Guyana responsible for his death calls itself a “Co-operative Socialist Republic”? Who is to write history from the perspective of the majority? Is Craton really so sure of his Marxism that when Aptheker says resistance is the core of history, Craton can claim that he is *not* being a good Marxist? What, after all, is this sanctimonious “and-you’re-another” all about?

Patterson's *Slavery and social death* poses wholly different challenges to the reader. In 1900, when Herman Jeremias Nieboer, a Dutch comparative sociologist, published his *Slavery as an industrial system*, he was attempting to enumerate “the conditions necessary for the success of slavery as an industrial system, and the inverse conditions under which slave labour must give way to free labour” (1900:xx1). Patterson points out that his own work in contrast, is

“a global analysis of the institution of slavery” (p. xi), the first since Nieboer and — if we accept the above distinction — perhaps the first ever.

Patterson’s book is divided into three parts: (I) the internal relations of slavery, (II) slavery as an institutional process, and (III) the dialectics of slavery. Each part is composed of chapters (twelve in all) concentrated principally in Part II. But the introduction, on the constituent (a word enjoying an astounding vogue!) elements of slavery, precedes the parts. Patterson says of slavery that it is “... not ... a static entity, but ... a complex interactional process, one laden with tension and contradiction in the dynamics of each of its constituent elements” (p. 13). In his view, the slave state is a power relation, “one of the most extreme forms of the relation of the domination” (p. 1). This power relation has three facets: the use or threat of violence (physical); influence (psychological); and authority, which “lay in those ‘conventions’ which today we would call culture” (p. 2). Each facet of power, Patterson argues, has three sets of constituent features, which can be summarized as the threat of naked force, the slave’s natal alienation, and the “socio-psychological aspect” of powerlessness/dishonor. Patterson’s preliminary definition: slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natively alienating and generally dishonored persons (p. 13).

All this, mind you, before the book has really begun. If, then, one stops momentarily to wonder to what end Patterson sought to transcend time, place, and degree without exception, the pause may be worthwhile. Patterson’s aim was to write about all slavery — all *slaveries*. Accordingly, he went looking for what I can only think of describing as “the real thing,” the essence, of one kind of relation of dominance. Out of anthropologist G. P. Murdock’s 186 sample cultures, Patterson settled on sixty-six to study.³ But he did not stop there. Somewhat defensively, he writes that his statistical analysis was “always regarded as a *supplementary analytical device*” (p. 347). Moreover, the societies listed in other appendices — and they are long lists — “do not exhaust the number of cases studied” (*ibid.*)

This ambitious search has impressed many readers and specialists. But what Patterson can deliver that is both generally valid

and new, about an institution on which he has managed the aggregation of data from so many different societies, requires scrutiny. He concludes his initial discussion thus:

While the constituent elements of slavery are the same for all kinds of social orders, the fact remains that this specific configuration of elements will be *understood differently* in different socioeconomic systems. Any attempt to understand comparatively the nature of slavery, or any other social process, if it is to take account of such contextual variations, must remain of limited value [pp. 26–27, italics added].

Much later, he returns to this problem, but less cautiously, for now he is looking ahead to future developments:

... in the very process of defending the viability of our criteria for identifying slavery, we have already hinted at its limitation, which is its schematism. Such schematism has its place in any comparative science of history and society... It is the essential heavy plow that must first clear the ground, turn the rough soil, and demarcate the boundaries. An analysis becomes defective not by its use, but by its exclusive use, by failure to recognize what it reveals: that the ground underneath differs from the pebbles and rocks above [p. 332].

There is nothing here with which to quarrel, it seems to me; but one is entitled to ask whether the search for an immanent definition leaves us knowing more than we did before. We may conclude that Patterson's search is worthwhile, even if we differ with his findings or his methods at one point or another. Yet whether the findings are proportional in weight to the voluminous research on which they are based is not an easy question, and it may not be answered for some time — if ever. It depends in part on whether one believes such sweeping cross-cultural research can really provide important insights, disengaging as it must each cluster of "facts" about slavery from its historical, institutional, and cultural context.

The study of slavery by scholars in the Americas during the past century has been dominated by interest in what Philip Curtin long ago dubbed the South Atlantic system, which tied together the slave trade, the plantation system, and the commodity trade to both Europe and Africa. The associations between Africans and slavery, between slavery and agro-industrial production, and between capitalism and unfree (but "paraproletarian") slaves

have always been the substance of this system. To the extent that scholars of slavery have linked it unthinkingly only with this Hemisphere and with the South Atlantic system, they were treating as universal features what were in fact historically and spatially specific and limited. It is to Patterson's credit that he has worked hard to broaden that relatively narrow perspective, aided particularly in his comparative work by the breadth that study with classicist Moses Finley provided.

Patterson's wide-ranging comparisons convince him that not only can the slavery institution be universally defined — freed from its context in particular cases — but also that its component features, as they figure in his definition, can be nearly everywhere identified. One of those features is dishonor. He firmly concludes that being a slave is dishonorable. The slave *cannot* have honor; in societies with slaves and masters, the master's honor and the slave's dishonor are cognate and interdependent. Even where slaves are (or can become) politically powerful figures, they remain dishonored. This thread in Patterson's argument is eventually linked to yet another: the anomalous (and therefore mediative) status of socially marginal persons. The latter argument is advanced most powerfully in the discussion of the eunuch — as slave, agent of the monarch, mediator between social categories, and creature without honor.

Attracted (seduced, almost) by certain arguments in so-called symbolic anthropology which deal with pollution, anomaly, and power, Patterson develops the argument that eunuchs were the choicest expression of royal status, yet they were persons (perhaps non-persons) to whom none of that power might adhere. His arguments are entertaining and imaginative. But I found it difficult to align usefully such examples of slavery systems with others, such as the U.S. South or Brazil, simply because the systems happen to share Patterson's constituent elements. That is because I believe that it is only if we really understand how some particular society in which the slaves lived and suffered was organized, can any "constitutive elements" reveal to us what the slaves were compelled to forgo. I would argue that if we want to understand what slavery is, in any particular instance, it is not enough to be guided by what Patterson has decided to consider its

lowest sociopsychological common denominator. Are we really to believe that all slaves, everywhere and always, were dishonored? That the masters's honor and the slave's dishonor everywhere and always were cognate and interdependent? That all slaves who became politically powerful figures, everywhere and always remained dishonored? This asks a good deal, I think, of even the complaisant reader.

By choosing his particular diagnostic traits, Patterson has helped to "universalize" his definition; but he has come close to psychologizing it as well. This is ironic, for at several points he proclaims piously that he is no psychologist, implying that this somehow makes his analysis more objective. Thus, for instance: "As always indicated, I am concerned with discussing the problem of honor relative to the *political psychology* of slavery, not with problems of *human personality* — on which I can offer neither theoretical expertise nor relevant data" (p. 367 n. 41, italics added). The distinction is doubtless entirely clear to Patterson, but it may be to all of his readers. How one can objectively analyze honor and dishonor as "external" aspects of the master-slave relationship — as "political psychology" ("The honoring of the master and the dishonoring of the slave were the outward product of their interaction" — p. 11), yet remain completely cavalier about any attempt to get inside the individual's view of him/herself, is not explained to the reader. To be sure, I am as pessimistic as Patterson about the latter possibility; but I am somewhat less sanguine than he about the former. I sense in Patterson's scientific optimism here a poorly-concealed impatience with historical particularism, masquerading partly as dislike for pop psychology. One can sympathize with the dislike without pardoning the impatience.

Though psychologizing won't do, apparently anthropologizing will. It is refreshing to find a sociologist who cites (and, clearly, reads) other anthropologists besides Clifford Geertz and Claude Lévi-Strauss. But an uncritical acceptance of such concepts as liminality, anomaly, pollution, and the notion of symbolic mediation can result in occasional excess, as well as sneaking in some psychologizing under a different name.⁴

If one were to offer a basic reservation about this book's

orientation (a reservation in no way invalidating its value but pondering the whole enterprise), I suggest that it might go something like the following. By defining an institution in a manner facilitating its study without reference to cultural boundaries, to historical particulars, or even to other social institutions within the same case, one runs the risk of amputating insight into the relationships between the goals of that institution, and those of any other with which it is allied. That risk is a real one. It does not diminish what we learn from Patterson's exercise; but it should make clear that exercise it is. Thus, for example, though there are a few references to women in *Slavery and social death*, they are not numerous or lengthy. (The index lists four citations by page; they are to Byzantium, China and the U.S. South.) Yet the relationship between the slavery institution and the status of women, both slave and free, is an immensely useful "litmus" of the institutional apparatus and of the values it embodies, in particular cases.⁵ Similarly useful, of course, are materials on age distinctions, and on other bases of social assortment; and while Patterson has certainly added something to our understanding of the links among such features, he is always pulled back by his overall design to his constitutive elements. That slavery oppressed is certain. But what did it oppress *with*; who else was oppressed, in this and in other ways; *what else* in the system oppressed, together with slavery? The nature of social institutions inheres in social relationships, as Patterson understood well; but is not the relationship among institutions essential to the complete understanding of any one of them, within a single system?

Finally, it may bear saying that one of the most interesting things about these books may not even have crossed the minds of their authors. It is the apparently unavoidable presence of Marxist thinking in the contemporary historiography of slavery, a presence which bedevils those who are hostile to it, quite as much as it inspires its protagonists. Neither Craton nor Patterson is anything but eclectic about this source of ideas and explanation; yet both seem to find its influence seductive. Craton is repelled, but as if it were Eve with the apple; Patterson's reactions are more complex and less ambivalent, but also less disingenuous. What does this

mean? Why should these serious scholars, one a historian and the other a sociologist (and neither, so far as I know, a Marxist), devote so much energy to one critical perspective?

I think this reflects the important contributions that Marxist thinking has made to the modern understanding of slavery, in all its many institutional implications. Though there has been in recent years a vogue for this perspective, in no other topic of interest to historians has the shift to the importance of Marxist reflection been quite as telling. Slavery had forcefully caught the attention of Marx himself, concerned as he was with forms of labor and their place in the evolution of economic systems. His comments on slavery and slave labor, particularly in the then-modern nineteenth-century world, are precious (even if sometimes demonstrably wrong or uncertain). Interest in the slavery institution, then, was initiated by the first Marxist (though he disliked the label) of them all. What is striking is that for the better part of a century, no one, neither Marxist nor anti-Marxist, took up the questions Marx himself had sketched out, to advance our knowledge or to test Marx's line of argument. The reason must surely have been that no one thought it was intellectually worthwhile.

NOTES

1. Many thanks to Jacqueline Mintz and Dr. Sally Price for important queries and criticisms.
2. Perhaps Craton meant to refer to Taylor's discussion of Voorhoeve's 1970 and 1973 papers comparing loanword derivations in Sranan, Saramaccan, and Djuka (based on Swadesh's 200-item wordlist), which Taylor reduced to percentages (Taylor 1977: 6). But those percentages are two, three, and five percent, not ten percent; and none of these languages is or was spoken in the British West Indies.
3. Though it is not relevant to Patterson's particular findings so much as to his methodology, it may be of passing interest that Professor Murdock, in a remarkable lecture before the Royal Anthropological Society, repudiated virtually everything in American anthropological theory based on the concepts of culture and social system — including his own work. See Murdock 1971.
4. One amusing example will do. Patterson is not as skeptical as he is zealous. Gripped by the realization that dirt and the sacred are locked in some inescapable psychological balance, he discovers that his anomalous, powerful-

but-dirty, sacred-but-dishonorable eunuchs were also supposedly incontinent, and notes the Chinese belief that they "reeked so of urine that one could smell them from 300 meters" (p. 321). He then rather insouciantly links this finding to a passing assertion of classicist René Guerdan concerning the nickname of a Constantine emperor. Citing Guerdan, he writes: "All Byzantine emperors had nicknames, most of them insulting. In view of the bed-wetting and smell of the eunuchs, and the identification of the emperor with his chief eunuch, the nickname by which one of the Constantines was known throughout his life becomes doubly significant: he was called 'Copronymus,' which means 'the pisser'" (p. 328). There is a marvelous howler concealed here. When I turned to Guerdan's original French text, however, it corroborated the English-language version Patterson had used: "*Un certain Constantin avait eu le malheur de souiller les fonts baptismaux: le voilà pour la vie, surnommé 'Copronyme' (le pisseur).*" Now, to begin with, the nickname reflected directly upon the emperor (who himself soiled the baptismal font), not via association with bed-wetting eunuchs. But this aside, the nickname itself is incorrectly translated. Why Guerdan, a Frenchman, decided to be so improbably delicate is unclear to me; but if the meaning of Copronymus is "pisser," then my name is — mud. And so a flight of imaginative association that needed urine for fuel has been grounded by a few feces. Patterson should not be cast down; this is not the first time in the annals of symbolic anthropology that a pretty young symbolic theory has been stabbed in the back by an ugly old etymological fact.

5. In 1803, Pierre-Edouard Lemontey wrote a satire on the Société des Observateurs de l'Homme, in which the Society offers a prize of a gold chain for the *worst* essay on the justification for enslaving women. The Society receives 468 entries; the prizewinning very worst is by a Jamaican planter by the name of Dominic Hangman. It begins with the following: "The slavery of women is justified by reasons as good as those for the slavery of Negroes." The winner, laying hold of his prize, tosses it to his poor wife, saying: "Here, Madame, I promised it to you, so certain was I of my victory" (Moore 1969: 49). Some acute students of slavery have looked at this question more seriously, among them John Stuart Mill (1977 [1869]). I would hazard the guess that the relationship between the position of female slaves and the position of free women is a vital key, in societies of a certain type, to understanding the nature of slavery in those societies.

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