The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: The Textile Industry in New England

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THE SIGNIFICANCE of the slave trade and slavery-related commerce—what I will call the slave(ry) trade—in contributing to the development of colonial America and the United States has been a persistent theme in the work of Afro-American scholars. Two scholars in particular should be cited in this regard. W. E. B. DuBois (1896: 27) pointed out that slave labor was not widely utilized because the climate and geography of New England precluded the extensive development of agriculture: "The significance of New England in the African slave-trade does not therefore lie in the fact that she early discountenanced the system of slavery and stopped importation; but rather in the fact that her citizens, being the traders of the New World, early took part in the carrying slave trade and furnished slaves to the other colonies." DuBois's account of the role of Massachusetts and of Rhode Island, which later became "the clearing house for the slave trade of other colonies," was similar to what was popularized as the "triangular trade" thesis. Geometric analogies were used in an

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attempt to convey the complex economic and geographical scope of the trade, especially its impact in facilitating the expansion of commerce.

> This trade formed a perfect circle. Owners of slavers carried slaves to South Carolina, and brought home naval stores for their ship-building; or to the West Indies, and brought home molasses; or to other colonies, and brought home hogsheads. The molasses was made into the highly prized New England rum, and shipped in those hogsheads to Africa for more slaves. Thus, the rum-distilling industry indicates to some extent the activity of New England in the slave-trade. [Ibid.: 28–29][1]

The general development of commerce and industry in the United States has similarly been viewed as closely intertwined with the slave trade and slavery. Lorenzo Greene's (1942: 68–69) classic but largely unheralded study, *The Negro in Colonial New England*, boldly asserted that

> the effects of this slave trade were manifold. On the eve of the American Revolution it formed the very basis of the economic life of New England; about it revolved, and on it depended, most of her industries. The vast sugar, molasses and rum trade, shipbuilding, the distilleries, a great many of the fisheries, the employment of artisans and seamen, even agriculture—all were dependent on the slave traffic.[2]

Professor Greene's list could be extended, I will argue, to include commerce beyond the colonial period and the all-important textile industry, generally acknowledged as the pivotal enterprise in the industrial revolution in the United States (as it had been in England).[3]

The logical extension of the work of DuBois, Greene, and others provides the thesis of this article: that the commercial and industrial activity related to the slave(ry) trade were essential ingredients in the process of industrialization in the United States, particularly in textiles. Moreover, beyond the era of the slave trade, slave-produced cotton played a pivotal role in the expansion of interregional trade. This division of labor among regions laid the basis for a national economy that emerged between 1815 and 1865.

Three factors need to be considered as background to the slave(ry) trade's role in the rise of industrial capitalism in the U.S.: the fact that Africa supplied the majority of the population and the bulk of the workers during the European expansion into the Americas; the involvement of New England merchants in the slave trade; and the critical dependence of New England on trade revolving around the slavery-based economies of the West Indies.

The main subject of this article is the growth and development of the cotton textile industry in New England between 1790 and 1860. It is argued that the industry's development during the period was strongly connected, through various routes, to the slave trade and the slave-based Atlantic economic system. This is demonstrated in stages. First, we show the dependence of the Atlantic economic system on African slave labor from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Second, the significance of the direct involvement of New England's merchants in the slave trade is established. Third, evidence is produced to show the dependence of New England's maritime trade and shipping in general on the slave-based economies of the Atlantic. Fourth, it is shown that the early industries in New England—shipbuilding, rum manufacturing, and the production of spermaceti candles (as three examples)—were all derived from maritime activities dependent on the slave-based Atlantic economic system. Fifth, we show how slave-grown southern cotton stimulated a tripartite regional specialization which created a large domestic market for New England's cotton textile industry. To illustrate all these linkages and show that the initial capital for the cotton textile industry in New England came from sources directly and indirectly connected to the slave trade and the slave-based Atlantic economic system, we present detailed case studies of two entrepreneurial groups in the cotton textile industry. The evidence provided by these case studies enables us to draw a firm conclusion on the subject.[4]

THE AFRICANIZATION OF THE AMERICAS

While much debate has centered on the numbers of slaves imported to the New World, this has obscured a more central issue.[5] Far more important than the number of Africans taken from their homeland and sold into slavery are the labor of African peoples

Table 1 Cumulative net migration into and populations of selected American regions, c. 1820

	Net migration		Population	
	African	European	Black and free colored	White
United States	550,000	651,000	1,771,656	7,866,797
British West Indies	1,600,000	210,000	839,000	57,000
French, Danish, and Dutch West Indies	2,235,000	254,000	814,600	73,600
Brazil	2,942,000	500,000	2,660,000	920,000
Spanish America, excluding Peru	1,072,000	750,000	5,150,000	3,429,000
Totals	8,399,000	2,365,000	11,235,256	12,346,397

Source: Eltis 1983: 278.
Note: The totals were not included in the original table. See additional explanatory notes in Eltis 1983.

and the profitability of their products in the various sites where they were enslaved and exploited.

More African peoples than Europeans entered the Americas during the period under discussion (Table 1). Up to 1820, among those people who were transported across the Atlantic, Africans outnumbered Europeans by a ratio of over three to one: almost 8.4 million Africans and 2.4 million Europeans. Between 1820 and 1840, the number of Africans imported as slaves totaled 1,165,900, while the number of free migrants totaled only 824,500 (Eltis 1983), continuing the pattern of African numerical dominance for another 40 years. Eltis (ibid.: 255) is quite clear on the point, linking the phenomenon of African population dominance in the New World to industrialization in Europe:

> Indeed, in every year from about the mid-sixteenth century to 1831, more Africans than Europeans quite likely came to the

> Americas, and not until the second wave of mass migration began in the 1880s did the sum of net European immigration start to match and then exceed the cumulative influx from Africa. . . . In terms of immigration alone, then, America was an extension of Africa rather than Europe until late in the nineteenth century.[6]

The centrality of the African population to the population dynamics of the Americas is thus established. The islands of the British West Indies, for example, were about 90% African! When we discuss such matters as the dynamics of the Atlantic economy, the role of the slave trade or slavery, the significance of slavery-based economies such as that of the West Indies, the impact of slave-produced commodities like sugar and its derivatives, and cotton, we are likewise discussing the central role and contributions of "those valuable people, the Africans" and their descendants in the Americas.[7]

NEW ENGLAND MERCHANTS AND THE SLAVE TRADE

The enslavement of Africans in New England occurred first in what was to become the state of Massachusetts, sometime between 1624 and 1638. "Combined with Negro slavery in New England were the several kinds of unfree labor current in that day; white, Negro and Indian indentured servitude, Indian slavery and, in occasional instances, the slavery of white people" (Greene 1942: 18–19). Although relatively small in numbers, African slaves were connected to almost every aspect of the New England economy, working as house servants, in agricultural production, and in industry. In short, slavery was as viable and as often utilized in relieving the general shortage of labor in New England as it was in other British American colonies and the rest of the New World. Lorenzo Greene (ibid.: 123) is right in concluding that, "despite frequent assertions to the contrary, the Negroes were a valuable and essential part of New England's labor supply and . . . unquestionably played a role in the commercial and industrial development of that section." Greene's Appendix 2 contains a list of 162 leading slave-holding families of colonial New England.

In addition to the direct employment of African slave labor, New England's merchants were very much involved in the transatlantic slave trade, which supplied African slaves to New England itself but more heavily to the West Indies and the southern colonies. In fact, Massachusetts was the first British North American colony to enter the slave trade, in 1638. Rhode Island subsequently came to dominate the trade.

Coughtry's (1981) exhaustive work on Rhode Island reveals much about New England's involvement in the slave trade. A total of 523 Rhode Island slaving ships (from a total of 934) were identified by destination or slave market. These ships carried slaves to more than 40 New World ports, but nearly two-thirds of the slaves were sold in the West Indies and 31% in various mainland North American markets. Coughtry's work enables us to put one matter to rest and contributes to the resolution of another. Regarding the triangular trade, labeled by some a myth, Coughtry (ibid.: 6–7) is definitive:[8]

> Most Rhode Island slaving voyages originated at one of two principal ports [Newport and Bristol] and conformed to the triangular pattern long associated with both the English and the American slave trade. . . . The trade assumed its classic three-point configuration almost from the outset. . . . A second leg or "middle passage" was probably added to the itinerary in the 1730s, if not sooner. Most of these so-called "middle passages" terminated in the Caribbean, where the slaves were exchanged for specie, bills, and return cargoes of sugar or molasses. The standard textbook diagram featuring a triangular trade in rum, slaves, and molasses is therefore substantially correct.

Coughtry's data also contribute to a clarification of the factors which shaped New England's involvement in the slave trade. A part of my earlier research (Bailey 1979) was an effort to understand the pattern of U.S. involvement and to explore the view that the high moral standards found in the colonies mitigated against extensive participation in that "notorious traffic." Drawing on the Naval Office lists available through the British Public Record Office, I analyzed 4,747 ships which entered Boston and South Carolina between 1718 and 1764, including 122 slave carriers.[9] I found that the British carried 58% of 630 slaves in 30% of all slave ships entering these ports in 1718, 82% of the 799 slaves in

58% of the ships in 1724, and 80% of 4,417 slaves in 41% of the ships in 1764.

Using these data and data in Donnan 1930–35 and Coughtry 1981, I analyzed ports in South Carolina, Massachusetts, Virginia, and Georgia and voyages for Rhode Island merchants. Another complementary pattern was discovered. Into Savannah, for example, North American merchants played a leading role as slave traders, importing 38.9% of the slaves in 45.8% of the ships between 1755 and 1767 (British merchants imported only 29.1% of the slaves). North American merchants had a much smaller carrying capacity: 15.1 slaves per ship as compared to the 116.0 slaves per ship of British merchants. British merchants averaged 173.9 slaves per ship on the 46 ships which brought 8,001 slaves from Africa to South Carolina during the period, almost twice the 90.9-slave capacity of all ships which imported slaves into that state.

In short, using total shipping tonnage and average ship size (tons) as measures, the data reveal that the pattern of New England involvement—its subordinate role when compared to Britain—was a result of colonial domination rather than of morality. British merchants dominated the more lucrative routes direct from Africa to large ports like those in South Carolina. Colonial merchants, especially New England merchants, were the leading traders on less lucrative long-distance routes, like those between Africa and Savannah and the shuttle traffic between the West Indies and the southern colonies. Thus, the distinguished president of the American Antiquarian Society, Charles Deane (1886), was not entirely correct when he asserted "that the work of transporting Negroes from Africa to the mainland and islands of this continent was almost exclusively done by Englishmen and in English ships." To accept this view should not lead one to conclude, however, that direct participation in the slave trade did not form an important part of New England's overseas trade.

Apart from the overall quantitative importance of the slave trade in New England's maritime commerce, its concentration among a few merchant capitalists made it an important source of capital for industrial investment in subsequent decades.

> In these [New England] towns there grew up a privileged class of slave-trading merchants whose wealth was drawn largely from the Negro traffic. They enjoyed the highest

> social position and held public offices of the greatest trust and responsibility. The Belchers, Waldos, Fanueils, and Cabots of Boston; the Royalls of Charlestown; the Pepperells of Kittery; and the Crowninshields of Salem, Massachusetts, were but a few of the leading slave merchants of the Bay Colony. Equally representative were the Malbones, Gardners, Ellerys, and Champlins of Newport; the Browns of Providence, the DeWolfs of Bristol, and the Robinsons of Narragansett, Rhode Island. [Greene 1942: 28–31]

These same families provided the foundation for social and political leadership as well.

THE WEST INDIAN CONNECTION

"I don't know why we should blush to confess that molasses was an essential ingredient in American independence," said John Quincy Adams. The significance of this statement lies in the role played by New England in the Atlantic-wide division of labor imposed through colonial domination by the countries of western Europe. Economically, this division of labor rested on African slave labor. What distinguished New England from most of the New World colonies is that its lack of easily exploited natural resources both allowed and compelled it to squeeze (de facto and de jure) from British mercantilism some part of the functions usually limited to the colonial mother country—maritime commerce and shipping. Ultimately, this worked to the mutual benefit of New England and Britain, as it enabled the former to obtain the income with which to pay for imported British manufactures. Thus, New England, as it struggled to offset the debt it incurred by importing British goods, was able to supply valuable goods and services to the West Indies and to other colonies. This made the entire British "realm" more productive, which was the main goal of mercantilism.[10]

Molasses and rum became "the customary currency" (Hedges 1952: 24) by which the colonists could obtain a variety of goods both domestic and foreign to ship to the West Indies or other colonies. Between 1768 and 1772, Massachusetts alone imported some 8.3 million gallons of molasses—8.2 million gallons from non-British colonies in the West Indies. Adding to this the 2.3 million gallons imported by Rhode Island during this period, these

Table 2 Destinations and average annual value (£) of commodity exports from New England, 1768–72

Commodity	Great Britain	Ireland	Southern Europe	West Indies	Africa	Total
Fish	206	—	57,195	94,754	—	152,155
Livestock, beef, pork	374	—	461	89,118	—	89,953
Wood products	5,983	167	1,352	57,769	—	65,271
Whale products	40,443	—	804	20,416	440	62,103
Potash	22,390	9	—	—	—	22,399
Grains, grain products	117	23	3,998	15,764	—	19,902
Rum	471	44	1,497	—	16,754	18,766
Other	6,991	1,018	296	247	—	8,552
Total	76,975	1,261	65,603	278,068	17,194	439,101

Source: McCusker and Menard 1985: 108.

two colonies alone accounted for almost three-fifths of the 18 million gallons imported into the mainland colonies (Ostrander 1948: 78). "It is this quantity of molasses which serves as an engine in the hands of the Merchant to effect the great purpose of paying for British manufactures" (Hedges 1952: 22).[11]

There were other key commodities which reflected the close relationship between New England and the West Indies (Price 1984: 27). Nine commodities made up more than 75% of the value of all British North American goods exported in 1770, shown here with the percentage of the colonial total exported to the West Indies and Africa in parentheses: tobacco (0.2); bread and flour (51.3); fish (35.0); rice (27.1); wheat, oats, and maize (31.4); pine, oak, and cedar boards (84.0); staves and headings (54.1); horses and livestock (100); and beef and pork (98.5). Most of these represented exports to the West Indies from the New England colonies (see Table 2).

The West Indies also imported substantial quantities of other New England goods; these quantities, though lower in value, nevertheless represented a significant percentage of the total quantities of these goods produced and exported by particular colonies. This included over 85% of the quantities of the following commodities: spermaceti and tallow candles, peas and beans, meal, potatoes, butter, cheese, soap, shoes, onions, framed houses, hoops, shook hogsheads, poultry, tallow, and lard. Clearly, New England's economic prosperity was intertwined and dependent on the West India connection. Between 1768 and 1772, 63% of New England's exports were destined for the West Indies (Table 2).

The preponderance of foodstuffs in this list is noteworthy. The West Indies were so deeply engaged in producing and exporting sugar to serve the British that they relied heavily on the mainland colonies to supply their food, even fish—astounding for islands so richly endowed with seafood. This can be explained only through colonial domination and the distorted patterns of economic relationships founded on exploitation of the people of the colonies. For colonies struggling for independence from Britain, the contribution of slave labor and the slave(ry) trade became all the more important.

Finally, the evidence shows that the West Indies were not just an important source of imports into the U.S. and an important market for New England goods. New England shipping houses were also greatly involved in carrying goods between the mainland colonies and the West Indies. Colonial shipping, which New England dominated, accounted for the bulk of the shipping between the British (and foreign) West Indies and various regions of the U.S. between 1768 and 1772. In studying tonnage flows, Walton (1968: 365) concludes: "By far the most important route to shippers and traders in New England was the route to the West Indies. This route accounted for slightly less than half the New England clears and enters." For ownership proportions, except for imports into the lower South, colonial shipping houses clearly dominated shipping with the West Indies (shipbuilding also benefited).

As early as 1679, Boston could be labeled "the mart town of the West Indies."

> In the 6 months from March 25 to September 29, 1688, out of 141 ships clearing from Boston, 84 were in the

> West Indies traffic. Nearly all these were Boston-owned and Massachusetts-built. Of the more than 140 arrivals during the same 6 months, 89 came with cargoes from the West Indies, 37 others from other American colonies and 21 from England. One of the impulses for the establishment of the famous New England mint in 1652 was the need for coining and recording the bullion and currency which poured in from the southern islands. [Writers Project 1941]

This pattern continued until the American Revolution, as indicated by the 2,443 ships in the sample I studied. While the West Indies remained an important partner, the major change was the expansion of the domestic market. In 1752, 1762, and 1764, for example, 444, or 21.8%, of all the ships came from the West Indies, 335 ships came from North Carolina, 254 from Philadelphia, and 176 from Maryland. Only 100 came from London. This growth of domestic trade—of the home market—was the foundation upon which industrial capitalism in the U.S. could effectively fasten.

Thus, overseas shipping was an important source of profits and capital for New England. Shepherd and Walton estimate that New England's merchants earned an average of £427,000 per year from the sale of freight and commercial services between 1768 and 1772. Lord Sheffield estimated that mainland merchants collected freight charges of £245,000 from the West Indian markets in 1770. For a region with chronic deficits, such sums were of some considerable importance (McCusker and Menard 1985: 110, 157).

In discussing the significance of the West Indies, Jacob Price (1984: 36) has raised several counterfactual questions:[12]

> If there had been no West Indies, how much trade would New England and the Middle Colonies have had? How many people then would have been content to emigrate to or reside in those areas? If there had been no slavery, would there have been any West Indies trade? What about Virginia, Maryland and the Carolinas? I detect a certain impatience with counterfactual propositions in much recent critical literature. These nevertheless are not unreasonable questions, even though we may never obtain answers to them that will give general satisfaction.

Price suggests that slavery was not necessary for tobacco production in the Chesapeake and North Carolina but is less sure whether nonslave economies were conceivable in South Carolina, Georgia, and the West Indies. He concludes: "These are some of the questions we must at least consider before we attempt to pass on the absolute indispensability of slavery. However, since such questions are uncongenial to most professional historians, most analysis will prefer to start with slavery and the slave trade as givens" (ibid.: 36).

It is not so much "impatience with counterfactual propositions" as distaste for hypothetical history, especially when the historical record is so abundantly clear about what actually happened. And the claim for indispensability is not one I am making yet. The fact is that the economy of New England and colonial commerce were bound to a West Indies economy dependent on slavery and the slave trade. Had there been no slavery, the West Indies trade would not have been as substantial. And had there been no substantial West Indies trade, there would have been much less trade for New England and the mainland colonies. The result would have been a much narrower field and a markedly slowed pace for the economic movement of the colonies toward political independence and industrial capitalism in a developing United States.[13]

EARLY INDUSTRIES BASED ON MARITIME COMMERCE

Shipbuilding

In constructing an index of industrial output for New England in the early nineteenth century, Zevin (1975: 1–3) suggests that seven sectors (cotton textiles, woolen textiles, cotton textile machinery, pig iron, cast iron, rolled and slit iron and products, and shipbuilding) probably accounted for roughly one-half to three-quarters of the manufacturing value-added and "between 30% and 40% of employment in the sector." "Before 1816 shipbuilding is predominant among the index industries. In 1810 it accounts for 78% of the total index. . . . Shipbuilding declines to 29% of the total in 1820 and 6% in 1831."

In my sample of 4,747 ships, 49% of the slaves imported into Virginia and 67% of the tonnage consisted of ships "made in

America." Klein (1978: 133–34) has confirmed this, concluding that "most of the ships involved in the trade were built in America," and makes an additional point of importance.

> American-built ships not only dominated the West Indian and Coastwise trades, where they accounted respectively for 96 percent and 93 percent of the ships, but were even important in the shipping coming directly from Africa. On this route, they accounted for 44 percent of the ships, with English-built ships making up the rest. . . .
>
> In a comparison of construction with ownership, the dominance of American-built shipping is again impressive. Fully 100 percent of the ships owned by Southern and West Indian merchants, and 93 percent of the Northern and Middle Atlantic colonial-owned ships, were colonial-built. Of the shipping owned by English merchants, 40 percent were American-made.

Price (1976: 722) estimates that between 1763 and 1775, "shipbuilding in the Thirteen Colonies totalled about 40,000 measured tons annually and was worth about £300,000 sterling, of which at least 18,600 tons worth £140,000 were sold abroad." He concludes that "American colonial shipbuilding, a neglected industry, does appear to have made a significant contribution to late colonial export earnings."

Rum Manufacturing

One of the factors which encouraged the commercial relationship between New England and the West Indies was the trade in West Indian molasses needed in New England for the production of rum for export. For his profits the sugar planter depended upon getting rid of the rum and molasses left over from sugar production; sugar alone was not profitable (Pitman 1917: 415). New England merchants were quite willing to import molasses and rum. That rum making was a natural consequence of such large importations of molasses could be anticipated.

Rum was distilled and exported from New England as early as 1708. In 1770, over 6.5 million gallons of molasses were imported. Some 140 distilleries, 30 in Rhode Island and 63 in Massachusetts, turned out 5 million gallons of rum. In fact, "the best known of this type of colonial manufacture was the North American distillation of West Indian molasses" (McCusker and Menard 1985: 290).

Spermaceti Candles

Spermaceti candles were made from the head matter of whales, that is, from a good grade of oil that burned cleanly. The oil was also used to burn in streetlights and in home lanterns. New England exports of spermaceti candles to the West Indies between 1768 and 1772 averaged 271,168 pounds, at an annual value of £18,255, over 6% of the total of all goods shipped from New England to the West Indies (Shepherd 1970: 38–40). This was not an insignificant trade. "Spermaceti candles were a part of the cargo of virtually every ship the Browns [a prominent Rhode Island family of merchants] sent to the Caribbean area during the score of years preceding the outbreak of the War for Independence" (Hedges 1952: 90). In addition, many slave ships took consignments of these candles to Africa. For example, the Browns supplied such well-known slave traders as the Wantons and Malbones of Newport and Simeon Potter and the DeWolfs of Bristol (Greene 1942). The editors of a volume of papers illustrating the commerce of Rhode Island made a special mention in the introduction: "Two branches deserve mention, the purchase and manufacture of spermaceti, which were controlled by agreement among the large manufacturers in New England as closely as by any trust agreement of later times; and the African slave trade, of the greatest importance to Newport" (Massachusetts Historical Society 1914–15, 1: 69, vi).[14]

These early industries provided the foundation and part of the initial capital for the industrialization of New England. They were all closely tied to the slave(ry) trade. In the section that follows, an attempt is made to demonstrate the role of slave-grown southern cotton in the emergence of a national economy in the United States between 1790 and 1860. It becomes evident that the size of the market for the products of New England's cotton textile industry during the period was a function of interregional specialization, which was due largely to the growth of the slave-based cotton economy of the southern states. The growth of the market, in turn, made the production of cotton textile machinery economical.

SLAVE-PRODUCED COTTON AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NATIONAL ECONOMY

One of the great travesties in the study of U.S. history is the suggestion that only the South benefited directly and substantially from slavery. The benefits from what we are calling the slave(ry) trade to the North and to the U.S. as a whole were far from indirect.[15] It is quite easy to argue that the growth of the U.S. national economy directly depended on the fruits of the labor of slaves.

For many years, the staple crop produced and sold widely was sugar. But in the nineteenth century, it was cotton, "the fabric of civilization," which could be "sold in the markets of the world." And it was the common perception that "cotton and slavery were so complementary as to seem to be made for each other" (Nettels 1962: 188). Nettels argues that slavery and cotton were the key to the South's development. Douglass North (1961: 166–67) explains why:

> By all odds, the most important influence [on American manufacturing development before the Civil War] was the growth in the size of the domestic market. . . . The growing localization of industry, specialization of function, and increasing size of firm were all basically related to the growth in the market, which stemmed from the regional specialization and growth of interregional trade beginning after 1815, but was *really* accelerated with the surge of expansion in the 1830's. The markets for textiles, clothing, boots and shoes, and other consumer goods were national in scope, reflecting the decline of self-sufficiency and the growth of specialization and division of labor. Derived demand for machinery and products of iron expanded in response to the consumer goods industries. The cotton trade was the immediate impetus for this regional specialization, and the growth of cotton income in the 1830's was the most important proximate influence upon the spurt of manufacturing growth of that decade.

North (ibid.: 181) later pinpoints the expanding cotton economy as the main impetus for the development of the West, since "the extension of cotton cultivation into the new South meant a growing market for flour, cornmeal, livestock products, and whiskey."

In 1790, the U.S. produced approximately 1.5 million pounds of cotton. By 1800, owing to the success of the cotton gin, which had been invented in 1791, and the new life it breathed into the institution of slavery, this amount had risen to 35 million pounds, a remarkable increase of over 2,200%. By 1820, 160 million pounds were produced by the U.S., and by 1860 this amount had grown to 2.3 billion pounds (Hammond 1897). This places the U.S. share of total world production at 9% in 1801, almost 29% in 1821, and 66% in 1860 (Bruchey 1967: 7).

Cotton became central to the U.S. economy. On the export side, cotton constituted the largest share of exports from the U.S. to Great Britain. In 1816, unmanufactured cotton accounted for almost 40% of the U.S. exports, increasing to 54% in 1856. Raw tobacco, wheat, and flour declined relatively over this same period as the importance of domestic manufactures increased. Cotton also made up the bulk of the value of all U.S. exports from 1815 on, reaching 57.5% in 1860. This gave the U.S. substantial foreign exchange to purchase overseas goods and services.

In 1800, the proportion of the total U.S. cotton crop exported to Great Britain was already over 45%; it still averaged more than 50% in the two decades preceding the Civil War. Similarly, from providing 29% of Britain's cotton imports in 1800, the U.S. became its leading supplier, furnishing over 50% of its imports from 1820 to 1860, 88.5% in 1860 (ibid.: 9–17).

As the South increasingly concentrated its resources on the production of raw cotton for export to Britain, it had to purchase services from New England and foodstuffs from the West. These interregional purchases expanded as income from raw cotton exports to Europe grew. New England's shipping houses transported southern cotton to Europe and brought European manufactures for southern consumers. New England's merchants and financiers also found expanding markets for their business in the South. In turn, the growing commercial cities of New England became major food markets for western farmers, who in turn purchased services from New England and, later, manufactured goods. This interregional specialization, based initially on southern slave-grown cotton and facilitated by improvements in internal water transportation, provided a large domestic market for the products of New England's cotton textile industry, a market securely protected by the nation's tariff laws.

NEW ENGLAND MERCHANTS AND THE U.S. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN TEXTILES

Industrial activity prior to the development of the textile industry in the early nineteenth century was very low. The census of 1810 indicates that agriculture was the dominant form of economic activity. Of the 2.3 million people estimated to be in the labor force, almost 2 million worked in agriculture (Sobel and Sicilia 1986: 92). Few people wanted to risk financial loss from investment in an untested arena like manufacturing. The Navigation Acts, which prohibited the export of some manufactured goods or confined it to British needs, were another fetter on colonial development (Harper 1939).

The textile industry was central to the industrial revolution in the U.S. In 1816, large-scale manufacturing enterprises in New England employed about 5,000 people, or slightly more than 1% of the regional labor force. By 1840, this number had grown to about 100,000 people, about one-seventh of the New England labor force, with 20 to 30 factories employing up to 1,500 employees each. As Zevin (1971: 123) puts it:

> This remarkable explosion of industrial activity was dominated in every sense by the expansion of the cotton textile component of manufacturing. The cotton industry was the only major New England industry to expand steadily in the very earliest years of the period from 1816 to the early 1820's. In the late 1830's cotton textiles accounted for two-thirds of the value added in all large scale New England manufacturing.

Cotton textiles had accounted for only 10% of manufacturing in 1810, and its growth influenced other important industries (e.g., iron). By 1860, cotton manufacturing became the leading industry in the U.S. as measured by the amount of capital and labor it employed and the net value of the product. Industrial use of raw cotton increased from 5 million pounds in 1790 to 433 million in 1860, over eight times as rapidly as the U.S. population. The production of cotton machinery provided an additional boost to the U.S. economy.[16]

In the following section, I shall point to some evidence linking the slave(ry) trade and two specific entrepreneurial families considered critical to the development of textile manufacturing: the Brown family–Slater group of Rhode Island and Francis Cabot Lowell and the Boston Associates.[17] These two groups correspond to the two stages of the industrialization of textiles: the emergence of water-powered spinning of yarn in Rhode Island and that of the power loom and large mill in Massachusetts.

Moses Brown, Samuel Slater, and Machine Spinning

Moses Brown was a member of one of the leading families of merchants in the United States. Its commercial, manufacturing, agricultural, and financial dealings included shipping and maritime trade to the East Indies, South America, Europe, Africa, and the West Indies; importing molasses and distilling rum; a virtual monopoly in the manufacture of spermaceti candles; cod fishing; and, later, profitable undertakings in banking and insurance; turnpike, bridge, and canal building; and land speculation in the western territories.

Members of the Brown family were also slave-trading merchants. While Newport slavers were active early in the trade in 1700, the patriarch of the Brown family, Captain James Brown, was the first Providence merchant "to enter this hazardous traffic" in 1736. Upon his early death, a brother, Obadiah, and four sons, "John, Josey, Nickey, and Mosey," were left to carry on the slave trade and the rest of the family's business dealings. The details of their activity show, first, that they got involved without hesitation in "that unrighteous traffic," as Moses Brown called it, but more importantly, that the slave trade was a vehicle through which the Browns sought to realize other aims—selling at a profit the goods which they produced themselves or acquired in their far-flung commercial undertakings, all to finance new ventures. James Brown fitted out the sloop *Mary*, the first "Guinea man" to sail from Providence Plantations; his son Obadiah served as supercargo. Hedges (1952: 71–72) reports that "the first Guinea voyage of the Brown family was not a failure; on the other hand, it was not a conspicuous success."

The voyage of their brig *Sally*, under the guidance of Captain Esek Hopkins, is illustrative. The cargo consisted of "159 hogsheads and 6 tierces of rum, amounting to 17,274 gallons, 25 casks of rice, 30 boxes of spermaceti candles, 10 hogsheads of tobacco, 6 barrels of tar, 40 barrels of flour, a quantity of loaf sugar, 2 tierces of brown sugar, 96 pounds of coffee, and 1800 bunches of onions." Also on board was "a small arsenal," including guns and pistols, 40 "hand Cufs" and 40 "Shakels," 3 "Chanes," 13 "Cutleshes," and a dozen "padlocks" (ibid.: 75–76). The products of the Browns' rum-making business and the goods obtained from trading with various colonies thus were being disposed of. In addition, the venture provided an outlet for the products of an iron-making business; witness the arsenal, handcuffs, shackles, and other items.

But it was also the *Sally* which probably helped to discourage at least three of the Brown brothers from engaging more extensively in the slave trade. First, an inordinate amount of time, rum, and other resources was expended in gathering a cargo of slaves because of stiff competition from other slave-trading vessels in the "Road," as the coast of Africa was called. After nine months, Hopkins secured 196 slaves. Second, 21 slaves died between 21 April and 21 August. But the worst was yet to come. On 28 August, Hopkins wrote that when the "Slaves Rose on us was obliged to fire on them and Destroyed 8 and Several more wounded badly 1 Thye & ones Ribs broke." Over the next few weeks, slaves died almost daily, and when Hopkins reached Antigua, he reported that the brutal suppression of the revolts left many Africans "so disperited" that "some drowned themselves, some starved and other sickened and died." Almost 90 slaves were dead, and those who were left were "very sickly and disordered [in] manner" (ibid.: 79–80). Twenty-four were sold for £417:4:3. A total of 109 slaves died, and 38 remained unaccounted for. Hedges (ibid.: 80) remarks that "*Sally* had traded her cargo of rum for tragedy, disease and death." The loss on the voyage was estimated at $12,000.

While this voyage shows that not every slaving venture ended in profits, the general expectations of the business community indicate that profits were far more frequent than losses. In fact, the expectations of the Browns reveal how large Africa and the West Indies loomed in launching industrial enterprises in the U.S. Prior to 1765, Hedges (ibid.) reports, the Browns sent ships to the Caribbean to make money to expand their candle-making business. But the main objective in 1765 was to make money with which to enter the iron-making business.

> Three of their vessels were to rendezvous at Surinam. One of them was later to go to Barbados to meet Captain Esek Hopkins, fresh from his slave-trading voyage to the Guinea coast in *Sally*. Another carried an especially valuable cargo, including "the best parcel [of horses] shipped out of this place, several of which were too superior to be used in the sugar mills and were, therefore, to be sold as riding horses. From the sale of this and the other two cargoes at Surinam, plus the anticipated profits from the sale of Esek Hopkins' slaves in the British Islands, Nicholas Brown and Company hoped to realize handsomely." The profits were to pay part of the initial costs of their new experiment in iron. [Ibid.: 123]

Many such voyages and plans were undertaken, with similar results in mind. We have no direct evidence of the returns from these slaving ventures. One can only infer from the general view of contemporaries that they met the expectations of their owners. It was with good reason that these contemporary observers regarded the slave trade and the West Indian trade as yielding a "golden harvest" (Peterson 1853: 104). In the words of Duignan and Clendenen (1963: 5): "It was probably no exaggeration to say that the slave trade was the lubricating oil that kept the colonial economy moving smoothly. For this reason, the trade was as vital to New England as to the South."

John Brown remained in the slave trade to the very end. As a U.S. congressman, he fought in the early 1800s to reopen the slave trade. "That John Brown was one of the foremost champions of the African slave trade in his day there can be no doubt" (Hedges 1952: 84). Moses Brown, on the other hand, was active in the slave trade only for a short period and later became an ardent abolitionist, a "paradox" that continues to perplex historians. No doubt it has something to do with the fact that Moses was converted and became a Quaker in the 1770s.[18] But the roots of the paradox are to be found in the broader economic context. The few slave-trading ventures in which Moses Brown participated had not been as profitable as those of other merchants. He found greater success in other lines, notably iron works and candle making, which in part depended on the slave trade, and textile manufacturing.

The postrevolutionary crisis after the late 1770s had disrupted overseas commerce, and Brown "was greatly concerned over the deteriorating economic situation of the state, particularly as it affected the Quakers." According to his biographer, the moral code of the Quakers prevented their participation in certain industries, and many Quakers were worried over the debt that increasing English imports were piling up. He became convinced that "Americans must develop their own manufacturing as a means of lessening their economic dependence on England. To Moses, it seemed that cotton manufacturing would, at one and the same time, improve the lot of the Friends and contribute to the greater economic independence of his country" (Hedges 1968: 160–61).

Certainly inspired by the industrial successes in Europe and facing a mounting economic crisis at home, Moses Brown himself conducted detailed investigations of the existing state of cotton manufacturing in the United States and engaged in a brief period of scientific experimentation.[19] He purchased all of the technology then available in Rhode Island but failed because of "inadequate machines and unskilled mechanics" (ibid.). Soon, however, he received unexpected help. In 1789, Samuel Slater, a management trainee in the textile mill of Jedidiah Strutt, a partner of the famous Richard Arkwright,[20] violated the British laws forbidding the emigration of skilled textile mechanics and came to America, disguised as a farm laborer. Within a few months, Slater was in touch with Brown, who agreed to finance him in "perfecting the first water-mill in America" (ibid.: 163). Slater was taken on as a full partner and, as Hedges (ibid.: 164–65) states, "on December 20, 1790 . . . set in motion the power-driven machinery he had made. . . . Thus was born cotton manufacturing in America, which marked the entrance of the young country into the first stage of the Industrial Revolution."

Francis Cabot Lowell, the Boston Associates, the Power Loom, and Large-Scale Factory Production

It is at another stage of the commercial crisis after the 1808 embargo and the War of 1812 that we find Francis Cabot Lowell and the Boston Associates and explore another prime example of the relationship between the slave(ry) trade and the rise of industrial capitalism in the U.S.

The Slater mill financed by the Brown family in the 1790s marked a tremendous advance over hand methods of spinning raw cotton into yarn and thread. But it still relied on the putting-out method of manufacturing finished products like cloth; that is, the yarn was turned over to individuals for home production. In 1810, "only 2 per cent of the cloth made in America was produced in factories" (Wright 1941: 275). The Embargo Act and the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain disrupted the New England economy, and many small firms, like that of the Browns and Slater, were unable to sustain themselves through the hard times (Ware 1931: 39–59).

Both the embargo and the war must be viewed as a further installment in the continuing political struggle that had already led to the American Revolution. The newly independent bourgeoisie in the United States was still struggling to consolidate its control over its new economy and political state. Great Britain and France actively attempted to restrict American commerce, seized United States ships, and allegedly encouraged warfare between Native Americans and the United States on the U.S.-Canadian border (there was ample reason for warfare without British encouragement). The U.S. declaration of war against Great Britain in 1812 was a response to this. Cotton manufacture in the U.S. expanded during the war, mainly because British goods were kept out of the U.S. market. But the war's end resulted in the dumping of even more British commodities, including cheaper cotton cloth, on the American market.

It was during this period that Francis Cabot Lowell introduced the first power loom and a new form of business into the American textile industry. "It was . . . the prototype of the big modern corporation, organized for mass production and integrating all processes from the raw materials through the finished product under one management and, as far as possible, in one plant" (ibid.: 60). This development signaled a new stage of capitalism in the United States: a shift from small-scale manufacturing and home production to that of large-scale machine industry. The importance of this development can be seen from the estimate that the compound annual growth rate of cotton cloth production between 1815 and 1833 was 29%. Adjusting for the shift of production from home to factory, the growth rate of output was still 15.4%, while the introduction of the power loom accounted for about 5% of this growth rate. Thus these two components account for about two-thirds of the overall growth in cloth output (Zevin 1971: 146).

Francis Cabot Lowell was a wealthy merchant and brilliant mathematician. After graduating from Harvard, he entered commerce with an uncle, William Cabot, and made a fortune. He eventually joined in the construction of India Wharf, the second largest commercial wharf in Boston. While in Scotland and England, ostensibly recuperating from an illness, he used his considerable connections to secure visits to textile mills.

If Lowell really was ill, it was possibly because of the financial losses and general crises Boston merchants suffered from the disruption of commerce by the embargo and the War of 1812. But his industrial espionage almost certainly was planned. His illness was propitious, and some ruse would have been necessary, because England had forbidden any detailed study of textile technology by foreigners.[21] Moreover, Lowell had intimate knowledge of the current state of textile experimentation in the U.S., since his uncle and others had launched the unsuccessful Beverly Mill in 1786 (this effort was one of the earliest experiments in the U.S. textile industry). His letters to his partner Patrick Tracy Jackson chronicle his interest in the industry, and Nathan Appleton, another partner, actually visited Lowell in Scotland, where they "had frequent conversation on the matter of Cotton Manufacture" and discussed Lowell's plan "before his return to America, to visit Manchester, for the purpose of obtaining all possible information on the subject, with a view to the introduction of the improved manufacture in the United States" (Appleton 1858: 7).

On his visits to numerous mills, Lowell memorized all the details regarding the use of power looms in the British cotton textile industry. Returning to the U.S., he joined with Appleton, Jackson, Paul Moody, a mechanic, and others to charter a company and to build a factory and machines to make cotton fabrics. According to Chamberlain (1963: 56), "This was the beginning of the famous Boston Associates, a group that came to include most of the Lowell clan and their connections (Amorys, Cabots, Higginsons, Jacksons, Russels, Lees, and others of the old trading aristocracy), as well as the new merchant tribe of the Lawrences, who were eventually to intermarry with the Lowells."

The importance of this observation is that it correctly identifies the group of capitalists that put up the initial $100,000 to finance "the Waltham mill," as the Boston Manufacturing Company came to be called. Soon after its initial success, this same group "started buying shares with a madness all their own," enabling several other larger mills to be started. The initial success lay in providing the United States, after the embargo and the War of 1812 had stopped the importation of English textiles, with "some thirty miles of cotton cloth in a day and paying 10 to 20 per cent in dividends." Further, the impact of the shift from small-scale manufacture to the power loom and large-scale factory production can be clearly seen in the drastic reduction in the price of the cloth first manufactured by Lowell and his associates (Appleton 1858: 16): from 30 cents per yard in 1816 to 13 cents in 1826 to 6.5 cents in 1843.

In short, the power loom lowered the price of cotton cloth and increased the quantity produced. Combined with other factors—the growth of the population, lower transportation costs, rising per capita income, and changing consumer tastes—it "produced growth that was not merely rapid, but truly spectacular" (Davis et al. 1972: 419–27).

New England and the Slave(ry) Trade: A Summary

To summarize and reiterate some general points which demonstrate links between the textile revolution and slavery and the slave(ry) trade, the textile industry was financed by a relatively small group of wealthy merchants with capital derived especially from trade connected to the slave trade and slavery. This is clearly illustrated by the activities of the entrepreneurial groups we have been discussing.

In assessing the particular importance of the slave trade and slavery during this period, it is essential to keep in mind the general economic context. Rhode Island, for example, was a leading slave-trading center until 1808; merchants there had been among the most active slave traders since 1720. The expansion of the slave trade and that of general trade, which followed in its wake, ushered in the expansion of other activities from which entrepreneurial groups profited greatly. The Brown family, for example, who mainly supplied rum, candles, and other commodities, were closely connected to others more active as slave traders. A similar argument can be made for Massachusetts and its merchants. Thus, it is necessary to stress both the accumulation of capital derived from direct participation as slave traders and the accumulation of capital and expansion of commerce and manufacturing in economic sectors directly dependent on the slave(ry) trade.

The Brown family became a prime example of the important transformation of the U.S. economy from one based on merchant capital during the colonial period to one based on industrial capital during the post–Revolutionary War period. As Hedges (1952: xiii–xiv) summarizes:

> As colonial merchants the Browns were first concerned with sea-borne trade and, in a small way, with that important adjunct to the maritime commerce of the period, the distilling of rum. Gradually, in line with the pre-Revolutionary trend, they began to transfer their capital from sea to land. They became important manufacturers of spermaceti candles and of pig iron; by 1775 their mercantile and maritime interests had become ancillary to those of manufacture.
>
> The Browns . . . went into banking and insurance; they promoted the building of turnpikes and, later, of canals; and, most important, they introduced the cotton manufacture into this country. This last venture was financed originally by the transfer of funds acquired in maritime pursuits.

In this context, the importance of trade with the slave-based economies of the West Indies must be emphasized. "To the Browns, trade with the Caribbean region was of major importance. So closely were other features of their business integrated with this commerce that stoppage of it for any length of time would have thrown their whole way of life out of gear. Not content merely to traffic with British possessions, they constantly sent their ships to the foreign colonies in the area" (ibid.: 46). Clearly the slave(ry) trade was the soil that nourished the activities of the Brown family. The family was reported to own two distilleries, and several of the Browns were considered master distillers. There is clear evidence that they used considerable amounts of molasses and rum (ibid.: 42).

The families of several of the Boston Associates were also involved directly in the slave(ry) trade. In addition, their general mercantile activities were closely intertwined with the slave(ry) trade. Porter (1937: 79–80) makes this observation about four of the families:

> The highly speculative African trade was a different matter and the triangular trade in molasses from the West Indies, rum from the West Coast, and slaves to the West Indies, etc., came nearer than any other to producing a group of pre-Revolutionary specialized merchants, but it was a Rhode Island rather than a Massachusetts specialty. Neither Jonathan Jackson, nor the Tracys, nor Joseph Lee, Sr., nor the Cabots, ever participated personally in the slave trade. They confined themselves to selling rum to those who did so participate, as in the early nineteenth century their descendants similarly supplied slavers with gaudy India cottons while expressing pious and probably sincere hopes for the slave trade's abolition.

But there is evidence which contradicts Porter's claim about non-involvement in the slave trade. Francis Cabot Lowell is said to have "marched with the Independent Cadets under Major T. H. Perkins" while a student at Harvard. But his relationship to Perkins goes much farther than this. Samuel Cabot married Eliza Perkins, daughter of Thomas Handasyd Perkins, in 1812. "T. H. Perkins, like other merchants of his day, engaged in the slave trade, for there was not a merchant of any prominence who was not then directly or indirectly engaged in this trade" (Briggs 1927: 386). Perkins wrote in 1791 to a Haitian contact: "When the disturbances of Y'r Colony have passed, you will probably be in want of Cargoes for the Coast of Africa. Rum, Tobacco, and Coarse Cloths are always to be had here [at] low [prices], such as suits the Guinea Market." On 17 November 1792, Perkins wrote about slaves to the captain of *The Willing Quaker*: "He is to take care that they are *young & healthy without any defects* in their Limbs, Teeth & Eyes, & as few females as possible." On 1 December 1792, he informed his contacts that "this money you will appropriate to the purchase of the Slaves & other articles specifi'd. . . . If you cannot readily buy the slaves in the road [off the coast], we hope you will find some new negroes from on shore, who know nothing of the language" (ibid.).

In describing extracts of letters from various firms in which Perkins was a member, Briggs (ibid.: 469) had this to say:

> John and Andrew Cabot of Beverly and Samuel Cabot, Sr. were interested in many of the ventures of these firms. Until the uprising in St. Domingo, the Perkins and Cabot ships seem to have been engaged in the slave trade. Rum and molasses were also an important part of many of the cargoes. The "Guinea ships" spoken of in these letters were ships in the slave trade with the western coast of Africa.

Various letters from Perkins and his associates confirm the purchases and sales of a "Negro Wench" or a "Negro Man." Special orders were also placed: "If it should be in your power to purchase a few serviceable stout negroes, some Tradesmen (as Carpenters, Blacksmiths, & a Cooper) & others acquainted with the Culture of Tobacco, we sh'd be glad you would do it on our acct. & ship them here, one or two at a time, as opportunity offers." Reporting a few months later that "the Ports of St. Domingo, Caracas & Havanna are opend [*sic*] for the reception of Negroes in foreign bottoms, for the space of two years, free of duty," Perkins was enthusiastic about the prospects for profits: "There is a fine field opened for Guinea Speculations" (ibid.: 475, 476).

The quote from Porter also indicates another close connection to the slave trade: distilling and supplying rum. And it appears that this was a primary interest of Frances Cabot Lowell and his family: "As to the rum trade. There are literally hundreds of receipts in Salem and Beverly records of excised goods and almost invariably New England Rum is the principal item of export. As invariably, molasses is recorded among West Indian imports—evidently to make more rum! The following indicate only some of the activities of the Cabots in this line" (ibid.: 150f.).

Writing to a merchant in 1804, Perkins stated: "Mr. F C Lowell applied to know if we w'd guarantee you in the sale of some Rum he proposes to ship to yr. address. . . . As this gentleman is very extensively concerned in a Distillery it will be quite an object to secure his good will" (ibid.: 514).[22] In fact, rum making occupied the attention of the ancestors and associates of close relatives of Francis Cabot Lowell and Patrick Tracy Jackson of the Boston Associates and laid the basis for some of their fortune. Jonathan Jackson was the father of Patrick Tracy Jackson, and Francis Cabot Lowell first entered into the import-export business with William Cabot, the brother of John, Andrew, and George Cabot. "Joseph Lee and Co. distillers" was half owned by Joseph Lee, and William Bartlett, John and Andrew Cabot, and George Cabot each owned one-sixth. "For a time the manufacturer seemed to take precedence over the merchant. . . . Rum, naturally, became predominant among the goods in which he dealt" (Porter 1937: 393). Porter (ibid.: 20) also reports that "Jonathan Jackson and the Tracys, Joseph Lee and the Cabots, readily turned from the importation of British manufactures and molasses, the shipping of salt fish and flaxseed, and the distilling of rum, to the fitting out of privateers" in the era of the American Revolution.

Finally, the comment on "gaudy India cottons" suggests that the East India trade of the Browns and that of the Boston Associates must be investigated as another of the slave trade–related sources of industrial investment capital. The East India trade is generally portrayed as a replacement for the slave trade, but this quote suggests that the East India trade supported rather than replaced the slave trade.[23] In any case, it is another example of colonial labor contributing to the expansion of capital accumulation in Europe and in the United States.[24]

T. H. Perkins became the prime mover behind the development of the Lowell Manufacturing Company in 1823. Among the investors were members of the same investment group that had backed Francis Cabot Lowell: Patrick Tracy Jackson and his brothers, the Thorndikes, and others (Gibb 1950; Dalzell 1987). Perkins also served as vice president of the Massachusetts Hospital Life Insurance Company, a key vehicle for raising and controlling investment and personal funds for the Boston Associates. Many officers of the company were also members of the associates (ibid.).[25]

A study of capital mobility and American growth during this period further demonstrates the role of merchants in financing the early textile industry in Massachusetts:

> That the textile firms tended not to finance expansion through sale of equity is obvious. . . . The [stock] issues themselves were very narrowly held. A study of eleven of the largest mills showed that the original holders of equity totalled only slightly over 500 people, and even as late as 1859 three-quarters of the stock was still held by less than 750 persons . . . , almost all . . . concentrated in Massachusetts. Less than one half of one percent of the original stockholders lived outside the state and even in 1859 this percentage had risen to only slightly above three. Occupationally the owners were concentrated in mercantile enterprises. . . . In short, although it may appear that capital was mobilized through the sale of securities, the relevant area of mobilization was very small indeed, limited as it was to a relatively small group of Massachusetts merchants. [Davis 1971: 294–95]

CONCLUSION

The slave trade and the economic activities which depended upon it are an embarrassing chapter in U.S. history. Many of the most prominent families on the East Coast and especially in New England were involved. Such embarrassments, however, must not become the reason for important parts of the history of the U.S. and the world to be rendered invisible. W. E. B. DuBois (1935: 722) was absolutely correct when he said: "Somebody in each era must make clear the facts with utter disregard to his own wish and desire and belief. What we have got to know, so far as possible, are the things that actually happened in the world."

The significance of the contribution of the slave(ry) trade, I have argued, does not hinge mainly on proving that New England's merchants were active as slave traders, nor does it rest on showing that individual merchants made substantial profits in this business. Both are unquestionably true. As I have argued in the case of British capitalism, such a narrowing of the slave(ry) trade's contribution is a convenient strawman which can be easily knocked down.

I have argued in this article, as others have done, that New England's maritime trade and shipping laid the foundation for, raised the infrastructure of, and funded early industrial development. This was particularly the case for the cotton textile industry between 1815 and 1860. Maritime trade and shipping depended largely on the slave trade and on the slave-based Atlantic economic system of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The early industries, such as shipbuilding and rum distilling, were directly tied to the slave trade and to maritime activities in general. These helped pave the way for the establishment of the cotton textile industry, which, together with the production of cotton textile machinery, became the leading sector of U.S. industrialization in the nineteenth century. The linkage between the cotton textile industry, the slave trade, other maritime activities, and the early industries in New England has been demonstrated with evidence taken from detailed case studies of some entrepreneurial groups in this important industry.

Cotton textile production in New England was not directly dependent on maritime activities as such, although its initial capital was. It was an import substitution industry and the markets for its products were internal (Inikori 1989). However, these internal markets were created by the slave-based cotton economy of the southern states and the maritime activities of New England. The tripartite division of labor which developed among the southern states, New England, and the West was based on the staple economy of the South. Expanding incomes from the production of raw cotton for export to Europe, using African slave labor, fueled the whole process. New England graduated from shipping southern cotton to Europe and importing European manufactures (including cotton textiles) for distribution in the United States to manufacturing these goods for the domestic markets in the South and West. No firm figures for regional sales are available; however, one recent estimate shows that southern purchases of cotton goods from U.S. producers amounted to $27 million for the year ending 20 June 1860 (Huertas 1979: 91). This was about one-third of the total output of New England's cotton textile industry for the period and over one-quarter of the combined output for New England and the Middle Atlantic (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1862: 180–81). The rapid settlement of the West after 1816, which depended on the expanding markets for food in the South and New England, provided an additional, and fast-growing, market for the cotton textile industry in New England. The combination of these several factors—increasing incomes from raw cotton exports to Europe, expansion of commercial and manufacturing activities in

New England (with the attendant growth of urban populations), and rapid migration to and settlement of the West—gave rise to sustained growth in the domestic market for the products of New England's cotton textile industry for many decades. This prevented the usual stagnation encountered by import substitution industries after the initial stage of rapid growth. Thus, New England's cotton textile output grew continuously after the adoption of tariff protection (Zevin 1971: 123–25). With this sustained growth, New England became the most rapidly expanding market for southern cotton producers. In this way, southern dependency moved from Britain to New England, to the great advantage of the latter's commerce and industry, especially the cotton textile industry. The contribution of the slave trade and New World slavery to the entire process is hard to exaggerate.

NOTES

1 The term *triangular trade* has a long history as an accurate description of the deep involvement of European merchants in the slave trade. For example, Bean (1971: 65) points out that of the 218 ships entering the British West Indies from Africa in 1685–1778, 212, or 97%, originated in England (i.e., had English port registry) and would presumably return there. This is the triangular trade—a voyage from England to Africa, on to the West Indies, and then back to England. Unfortunately, as I discuss in note 8 below, many scholars have sought to deny the participation of European and U.S. merchants in the slave trade simply by showing the absence of triangular patterns. The concept includes the carrying of produce from the West Indies by slave ships, general trade in slave-produced commodities, and other activities dependent on such trade.

2 Professor Greene, who died in 1987, was most helpful in my efforts to develop this research. I will be forever indebted to him for our long walks and talks during the conventions of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and to his visit to Cornell in 1976 to discuss the research which led to *The Negro in Colonial New England*. The story of his work with Carter G. Woodson, the association, and the *Journal of Negro History* is particularly inspiring. This article is dedicated to his memory.

3 The long-standing conventional wisdom that the slave trade and slavery made a significant contribution to industrial capitalism was clearly stated by contemporary mercantilist theorists, of whom Malachi Postlethwayt (1745) is very representative. This view has been widely echoed over the centuries. Wilson E. Williams's *Africa and the Rise of Capitalism* (1936: 39f.) is one of the best statements in the twentieth century: "The African trade was a very important factor in the growth of the capitalist economy in England. . . . Without the Negro slave it is likely that neither the African trade nor

the West Indian economy could have played an important part in the development of English capitalism; and hence it is unlikely that without the slave trade, English capitalism could have shown the phenomenal growth it did."

Eric Williams, in *Capitalism and Slavery*, popularized this view of the development of capitalism in England. "By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution" (Williams 1944: 51–52). That the slave trade made important contributions to industrial development in England has been not only seriously challenged but, if we accept the words of the challengers, definitively repudiated. Focusing on *Capitalism and Slavery*, Stanley Engerman (1972: 441) provided the initial repudiation: "The aggregate contribution of slave trade profits to the financing of British capital formation in the eighteenth century could not be so large as to bear weight as *the*, or *a*, major contributing factor. Its role was . . . of a relatively minor magnitude." Scholars who have embraced this denial of the positive contribution of the slave trade, many of whom trace their objections to Engerman's initial critique, include Anstey (1975), Rawley (1981), Hughes (1983), Davis (1984), McCusker and Menard (1985), and Reynolds (1985). Patterson (1979, 1982) and Davis (1975, 1984) substantially revised earlier views to conform with Engerman.

Inikori, Darity, Solow, Bailey, and others have reiterated the conventional argument that the slave trade was significant. Solow and Engerman 1987 is a useful discussion of "the legacy of Eric Williams."

4 I have only summarized the discussion of capitalism and slavery in Europe, since that subject is more thoroughly covered by Joseph Inikori, and I have expanded the focus on New England. Professor Inikori has been particularly helpful in sharing his important work and inspiring and cajoling me to complete my manuscript. It was Stanley Engerman (1972) whom I credited with initiating the effort to overthrow the conventional wisdom that the slave trade was important to European industrialization (Bailey 1979, 1986). Since I have been rather harsh in my criticism of what I see as serious errors in his work, Professor Engerman's critiques and encouragement of my efforts sustain his widespread reputation for assisting other scholars. William Darity of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Patrick Manning of Northeastern University have also been particularly encouraging. A fuller picture of the 15-year history of research on this topic is covered in Bailey 1986, with other acknowledgments.

5 The controversy over how many Africans were taken as slaves has been intense. Curtin (1969, 1975) makes the initial statement which spurred additional research and commentary. Inikori (1976a, 1976b, 1982) makes important corrections to Curtin's estimates, and Lovejoy (1982) attempts a synthesis. The debate on the number of slaves is most important for the study of the historical demography of Africa. For the slave trade's contribution to the U.S., most commentaries have not emphasized that it is the quality and quantity of the African input into the New World labor pool

and not mainly the quantity of Africans taken as slaves in Africa that is the critical issue.

6 Given the magnitude of the African input into the American population, the argument of Bernard Bailyn's *Peopling of British North America* (1986) is questionable. He elaborates four propositions that "do not involve to any significant extent the movements of either of the two non-Caucasian peoples —the Native Americans and the Africans—whose histories are so vital a part of the story," arguing that "relatively little" is known about the histories of "both of these groups" (ibid.: 20). Ralph Davis (1973: 125–42), in presenting these matters in his chapter on the peopling of the Americas, notes, "Some six and a half million people migrated to the New World in the three centuries between its discovery by Columbus and the American Revolution of 1776; a million of them white, the remainder Africans, who came unwillingly to slavery."

7 *Those Valuable People, the Africans: An Afrocentric Interpretation of the Slave(ry) Trade and the Rise of Industrial Capitalism in Europe and the United States* is the working title of a book which I hope to complete soon. It is taken from a quote by one of the leading mercantilist theorists of the era, Malachi Postlethwayt (1745: 6): "But is it not notorious to the whole World, that the Business of Planting [plantations] in our British Colonies, as well as the French, is carried on by the labour of Negroes, imported thither from Africa? Are we not indebted to *those valuable People, the Africans,* for our Sugars, Tobaccoes, Rice, Rum and all other Plantation Produce? And the greater the number of Negroes imported into our Colonies, from Africa, will not the Exportation of British Manufactures among the Africans be in Proportion; they being paid for in such Commodities only?"

I have used the term *Afrocentric* with considerable hesitation. The term should denote an interpretation in which the vantage point of people of African descent—the main force of the slave trade—is utilized. But the concept of "Afrocentricity" is laden with the ideological baggage associated with the position known as "cultural nationalism," and some view Afrocentricity as they preach it as the most correct or only perspective to be had. The debate over a paradigm for Afro-American studies is a long and involved one, not to be recounted here. Suffice it to say that my use of the phrase *an Afrocentric interpretation* is to remind us that perspectives in the field are quite diverse. See, for example, Asante 1987 for an elaboration of "the Afrocentric idea." This paper is an application of an alternative paradigm for understanding the Afro-American experience which is elaborated in Alkalimat and Associates 1986.

8 Ostrander (1973: 641) has gone farther than any other scholar in branding the triangular trade a myth: "The history of world commerce affords innumerable examples of triangular patterns of trade, but every schoolboy knows that *the* triangular trade was the one in rum, slaves, and molasses between colonial New England, Africa, and the West Indies. Popularly believed to have been one of the mainstays of American colonial commerce, this famous triangular trade is, in fact, a myth, for no such pattern of trade

existed as a major factor in colonial commerce. It is also a myth in the sense of possessing mythic appeal, evidently requiring little in the way of evidence to establish itself as historical 'fact.' " McCusker (1970: 1–24) has a useful overview of the history of the concept, but his conclusion is equally flawed. He mentions that "after years of work in New England shipping records, Clifford Shipton [1963] could not recall having found a single example of a ship engaged in such a triangular trade" (McCusker 1970: 21).

Shepperson (1975: 102) makes a comment on the concept with which I fully agree: "I am, however, wondering just how useful this triangular trade concept is. This geometrical metaphor has, I think, been overworked by historians for far too long. The slave trade was, if we must employ geometrical images, often part of a quadrilateral trade across the Atlantic." Unfortunately, geometrical understanding has often been pursued at the expense of historical understanding; see note 1 above.

9 The Naval Office lists, designated Colonial Office (C.O.) 5 by the British Public Record Office, were prepared by colonial agents to facilitate the collection of tax revenue for the British government. The records cover the period from 1680 to 1784, though a complete series is not available for any port. The records I used initially were filmed—actually photographed—at the British Public Record Office in the 1930s by assistants working under the direction of Lawrence Harper of the University of California, Berkeley. Compilations from these data became the basis for the section on colonial statistics in the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1960). I am deeply grateful to Professor Harper for making his office and resources available to me during a 1976–77 dissertation fellowship at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and to the Center for Black Studies there for a productive year's stay and for financial support to travel to Berkeley.

10 The writings of the mercantilists such as Mun, Davenant, Gee, and Cary all elaborate a view of colonies as sources of raw materials, as outlets or "vents" for goods produced in the mother country, and as sources of supplies to other colonies within the realm. For discussion of this point and of mercantilism more generally, see the standard work Heckscher 1935. Dobb 1947 is also useful.

11 Blaut (1989: 285) has provided some additional insight into the world context for gauging the importance of sugar. In Brazil, sugar production produced a profit which doubled its productive capacity every two years. By 1600, sugar exports were valued at £2 million—"twice the annual value of England's *total* exports to *all* the world." This underscores the observations of the mercantilists comparing the relative value of British and colonial workers. Blaut's conclusion is thus as appropriate for the U.S. as it is for Europe: "These and other statistics tending in the same direction suggest that in 1600 and thereafter the sugar plantation system, with its attendant economic and geographic characteristics, including the slave trade, shipping, refining, etc., was the single most important protocapitalist industry of the period." Blaut's other main contribution is his reiteration that, fundamentally, "colonial enterprise was from the outset a matter of capital accumulation" (ibid.: 280), and that "colonialism involved massive

production, massive exchange, and massive capital accumulation" (ibid.: 282). There are several ways in which this capital was generated: gold and silver mining (and plunder); plantation agriculture, especially Brazil; trade, colonial production, and commerce; slaving; and piracy. Blaut stresses the role of labor in capital accumulation and compares the contributions of the labor provided in the colonized sectors with the labor contributed within the colonizing nation.

12 I have already presented my views on the distortions of the slave trade's role which appear to result from biases in the neoclassical paradigm as it is utilized by several of the "cliometricians" or new economic historians (Bailey 1986: 34–40). For other insights see Coats 1980, McClelland 1978, Redlich 1971, Union for Radical Political Economics 1971, and Sutch 1982. Nevertheless, Darity (1982a, 1982b) and Solow (1985) both use the tools of neoclassical economics to argue for a positive role for the slave trade.

13 In January 1987 Gavin Wright of Stanford University wrote me a long and encouraging letter responding to the paper I had delivered at the annual meeting of the American Economics Association/National Economics Association in New Orleans. "The important point, however, is that showing widespread involvement with the slave trade is entirely different from showing that the trade was pivotally important. . . . To show that slavery was 'pivotal' requires a more precise economic argument. . . . I think such an economic argument can be made, but I also think one has to be tentative about claiming either ultimate indispensability (whatever that might mean) or a gargantuan magnitude of a contribution."

14 In one of the most intriguing episodes of the candle business, the Brown family joined with other manufacturers to form one of the earliest-known monopolies in U.S. history. The United Company of Spermaceti Candlers, later called the Spermaceti Trust, was formed on 5 November 1761, with the leading producers from Newport, Boston, and Providence involved. The group effectively monopolized the technology, governed the price of raw materials and finished products, and generally colluded to make their enterprises more profitable (Hedges 1952: 86–122).

15 See, e.g., O'Connor 1968: 47: "After 1830 the industrial North had become wedded, not only to the South's production of cotton, but to the institution of slave labor which made such valuable production possible"; cf. Genovese 1971: 157: "Capitalism in the North did not depend for its growth and development on the forced labor of Blacks, although it indirectly profited from the slave trade and from Southern slave labor."

16 George S. Gibb (1950: 179) stressed, in addition to the importance of the manufacture of cotton textile products, the significant impact of industrial activity related to the cotton textile industry, particularly the manufacture of textile machinery: "From the textile mills and the textile-machine shops came the men who supplied most of the tools for the American Industrial Revolution. From these mills and shops sprang directly the machine tool and locomotive industries, together with a host of less basic metal-fabricating trades. The part played by the textile machinery industry in fostering American metal-working skills in the early nineteenth century was a crucial one."

17 Vera Shlakman, in *Economic History of a Factory Town* (1935), is reported by Dalzell (1987: 253n) to be the first historian to use the term *Boston Associates*. I assume that the usage stems from the "Articles of Agreement between the Associates of the Boston Manufacturing Company," signed on 4 September 1813 and later incorporated into the company's bylaws (ibid.: 27).

18 The slave ship *The Willing Quaker* is a clue as to the attitudes of Quakers to involvement in the slave trade. See Briggs 1927: 386.

19 The textile industry in Britain expanded rapidly in the first decades of the nineteenth century. "Cotton was the leading industry in the British industrial revolution"; "*circa* 1770, [cotton] contributed only about half a million pounds a year to British national income. By 1801–3, with a net value added of about £11 m., it accounted for nearly 5 per cent of total national income and was second only to the woolen industry. By 1811–13, it had outstripped wool and contributed about 7½ per cent of national income. Retained imports of raw cotton, a conservative indicator of the volume of output for the industry in this period, had increased by a factor of 19 in [the] space of about fifty years" (Deane and Cole 1967: 182, 163).

20 Arkwright had perfected the spinning frame and further revolutionized cotton manufacture, following such earlier inventions as the "spinning jenny" and the "mule," all making for greater efficiency in spinning cotton into yarn (Rivard 1974). It is no mere coincidence that some early textile technology in Britain was financed by profits from the slave(ry) trade. Eric Williams (1944: 70) described Samuel Touchet as a member of the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa and a member of a great textile-manufacturing house in Manchester who represented Liverpool on the governing body of the company: "He was concerned in the equipping of the expedition which captured Senegal in 1758 and tried hard to get the contract for victualling the troops. A patron of Paul's unsuccessful spinning machine intended to revolutionize the cotton industry, and accused openly of trying to monopolize the import of raw cotton, Touchet added to his many interests a partnership, with his brothers, in above twenty ships in the West Indian trade." Similar connections between slave traders, West Indian merchants, and cotton manufacturers can undoubtedly be found.

Though Williams says that Paul's invention was unsuccessful, other scholars see his efforts as "the first of a series of inventions which revolutionized cotton textile production in England" (Inikori 1989: 361; cf. Wadsworth and Mann 1931: 425, 427, 444–45).

21 I was delighted to read in late 1989 that Dalzell (1987: 10), author of the most detailed study of the Boston Associates, makes the same observation that I first made in 1975: "The evidence is that his [Lowell's] weakened health—the announced reason for his trip abroad—was the result of anxiety over business. More to the point, the same anxiety almost certainly explained Lowell's interest in textile manufacturing." The book opens: "As the story is usually told, the Waltham-Lowell system had its beginnings in a stunning act of industrial piracy. And so in a sense it did, though the individual responsible probably did not look like a man on such a mission" (ibid.: 5).

22 Greenslet (1946: 154) confirms the involvement with rum making: "While John Lowell was hurling hot verbal shot at Jefferson and his Embargo, the realistic mind of Francis had been casting about for opportune enterprises to take up the slack of the slump in commerce and distilling."

23 There are ample data on the export of India cottons to Africa as a commodity to trade for Africans destined for the slave trade. In 1751, 54,958 pieces of East India cotton goods were sent from England to West Africa; in 1792, this trade reached a high of 413,652 pieces. In fact, only in seven years between 1787 and 1807 did the value of English cotton pieces sent from England to West Africa exceed the value of East India cotton sent (Inikori 1989: Appendix 2). There is considerable evidence on the importance of East India cottons in the correspondence of the New England slave traders. See, for example, Porter's (1937) two-volume compilation of the correspondence of the Jacksons and the Lees. In fact, Francis Cabot Lowell's successful effort to have a duty levied on Indian cotton goods flooding the U.S. market in 1815 is a good illustration of the importance of these goods (O'Connor 1968: 19–27). Asia is vitally important in the history of cotton textiles. In 1791, India produced 130 million pounds of cotton and the rest of Asia 190 million pounds—almost 70% of the world's total. In 1821, though displaced from the leading position by slave-grown cotton from the U.S. South, Asia's combined production was still almost 50% of the total. The region was a victim of "the development of underdevelopment." "The East Indies had been . . . the traditional exporter of cotton goods, encouraged by the East India Company. But as the industrialist vested interest prevailed in Britain, the East India mercantile interests (not to mention the Indian ones) were pressed back. India was systematically deindustrialized and became in turn a market for Lancashire cottons: in 1820 the subcontinent took only 11 million yards; but by 1840 it already took 145 million yards" (Hobsbawm 1968: 53).

The connection of New England merchants to the opium trade, also extensively referenced in the correspondence, and its role in financing industrial investment, will be fully explored in a later essay.

24 There has been considerable debate over the relative importance of trade with the "metropolis"—the European nations—and trade with the "periphery"—the underdeveloped nations—in the economic development of Europe and the U.S. The issue is sometimes phrased as the significance of the role of the "home market" or of export-led development. See, for example, Goldin and Lewis 1980 and Crouzet 1980. Lenin 1899 is one of the best explications of the Marxist view on home markets and the development of capitalism. Blaut 1989 is a strong argument for the pivotal role of colonial labor. North 1961 remains one of the best discussions on this topic for the U.S.

25 Similarly, 7 of the first 11 directors of the Suffolk Bank were members of the Boston Associates. The Suffolk Bank, founded in 1818, was not the first, but it became the most important because of the aggressive role it played as a central bank (Dalzell 1987: 95f.). Lamoreaux (1986), focusing on the Brown and Ives group of Rhode Island and the Boston Associates, details how early banks in New England operated more like the financial

arms of extended kinship networks. These networks provided additional capital for industrial investment, stabilized the financial system for the smoother operation of New England industry, and are another link to the slave(ry) trade.

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