

White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century Virginia

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In the following essay, Dell Upton explores a basic, though often ignored, historical question: can we describe the living, experiential encounters between people and the landscapes they create? If so, how? With the exception of objects in museum installations, we seldom if ever confront artifacts in isolation. Instead, fields, fences, buildings, and household furniture form a structured totality, which we perceive differently as we move through it. Our perception of a building is conditioned by who we are, where we have already been, what we have already seen, and where we believe we are headed. In leading us into the carefully contrived landscapes of white and black Virginians in the eighteenth century, Upton argues that if architecture structured daily experience on plantations, then it also served as a subtle and effective means of manipulating time and consciousness. The landscape, then, was an extension of ideological process.

We can break the landscape of eighteenth-century Virginia into two contingent segments. The world of the great white planters consisted of contrived collections of buildings and spaces ordered by sequences of social barriers: rows of trees, terraces, dependencies, the kitchen. Finally, the house itself confronted the white visitor with more barriers: portico, doorway, grand stair hall, chambers for waiting, chambers for formal talking, chambers for formal dining. The whole was a carefully orchestrated exercise in the definition of status; every barrier successfully passed was a mark of preference. Each great house was a vortex of local power sustained through its centrality in commerce, education, rituals of hospitality, and politics. And this highly structured but fluid white domestic landscape was metaphorically reenacted in ecclesiastical life (in churches), judicial affairs (in courthouses), and popular entertainments (in horse-racing and cockfighting).

In contrast to the dominant white landscape, spaces structured by blacks (and poor whites) were sparsely furnished, one- or two-room houses segre-

gated in Quarters distant from the big house. The domain of blacks extended from these flimsy cottages into adjacent work areas—fields, shops, and gardens. Despite the barriers the main house offered to white visitors, blacks could pass into its back entries directly, invisibly. As Upton points out, this informal access allowed slaves a meaningful, if limited, opportunity to undercut the contrived quality of white planter society. Living in a world that offered them little real authority, blacks and poor whites viewed the landscape from a different perspective. Rather than living in a dynamic environment whose aesthetic power was rooted in movement—perhaps the white planters' interest in defending rigid social hierarchy forwarded "movement" as a disguise for maintaining the status quo—slaves conceived of the landscape as a series of fixed points between which movement often seemed indeterminate at best. As much as the great planters and their impressive houses seemed to dominate the landscape, their hegemony was never total. The white and black landscapes of eighteenth-century Virginia merge into a single polyvocal text whose divergent messages compete for our close attention.

FOR me, one of the most engaging problems in architectural history is to understand the social experience of architecture.¹ To the extent that such an effort is possible, it requires us to account for the entire range of spatial divisions from the scale of furnishings to that of settlement patterns. An individual's perception of a landscape changes with the experience of moving through it. It is less obvious but equally true that an apparently unified landscape may actually be composed of several fragmentary ones, some sharing common elements of the larger assemblage. Indeed, this may be the only way to make sense of certain historical landscapes, such as

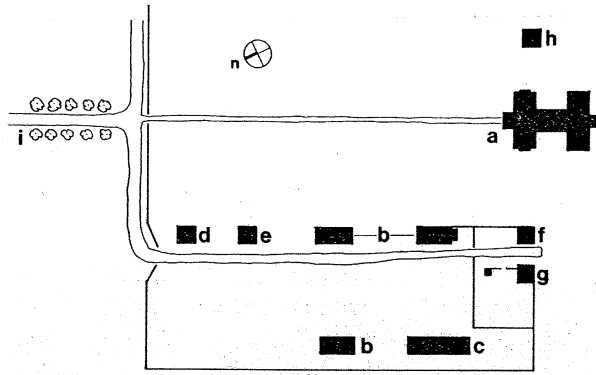


Fig. 1. Tuckahoe plantation, Goochland County, Virginia; site plan showing the main house (a), slave houses (b), a slave house converted to a stable (c), storehouse (d), smokehouse (e), office or dairy (f), kitchen (g), schoolhouse (h), and cedar lane (i). Buildings a, b (except the northwest slave house), e, f, and h date from the eighteenth century; the rest of the structures were built in the nineteenth century. (Drawing by Dell Upton.)

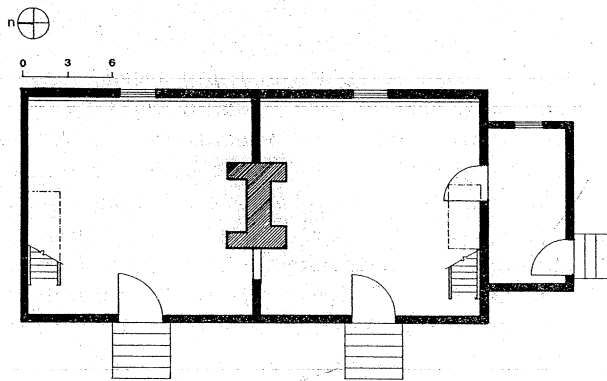


Fig. 2. Plan of slave house at Tuckahoe, Goochland County, Virginia, built in eighteenth century. (Drawing by Carol Silverman.)

that of pre-Revolutionary Virginia, with its racially and socially stratified population.

The twentieth-century obsession with time as experienced by individuals, time as evanescent states of consciousness linked by memory, has roots in the eighteenth century. The modern concept of history is a product of that century, and the attempt to represent and manipulate time and consciousness in architecture also originated then.² Virginians shared in that effort. The elite builders of the great eighteenth-century mansions that are familiar from traditional

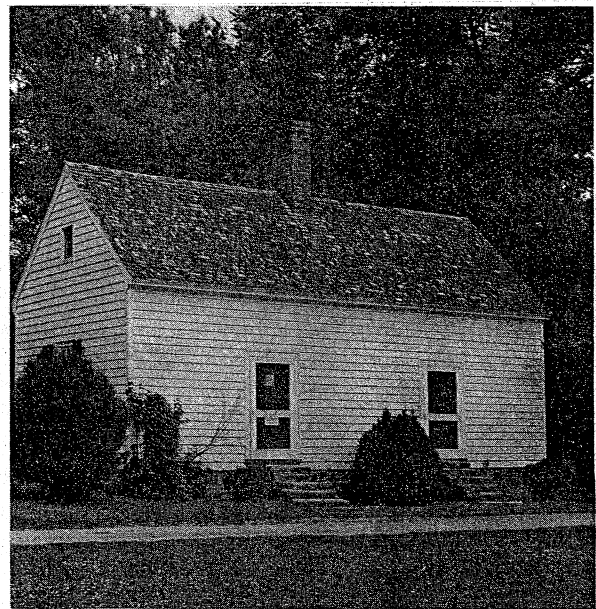


Fig. 3. Slave house at Tuckahoe. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

architectural history worked to create a landscape meant to be experienced dynamically, one that depended on memory and the rapid dissolution and reformulation of individual experiences to establish its meanings.³ Though similar methods and similar visual forms were used in Europe, what is distinctive about Virginia is the way that they were adapted to a particular, extant, social setting.

Against the plantation houses and their surroundings, we can set the houses of slaves. While a relatively large number of planters' mansions have survived to be studied, and while contemporary descriptions of them are available, slave houses are less well documented. Native whites rarely mentioned them, although comments on slave life were an obligatory element in travelers' accounts in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. These and the few surviving slave houses suggest a variety of conditions of slave life, centering around readily described norms. Slaves lived in houses of many sizes and equally varied quality. The extant structures misrepresent the norm in both their size and quality but can serve to illustrate those norms.

A group of four slave houses at Tuckahoe, Goochland County, includes three that were probably built in the second half of the eighteenth century. All are

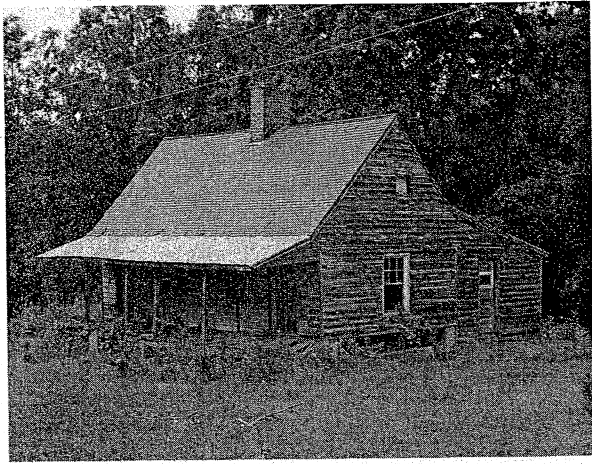


Fig. 4. Slave house at Howard's Neck plantation, Goochland County, Virginia, built in the mid-nineteenth century. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

one-story frame buildings with two rooms, each with an exterior door, and separated by a central chimney (figs. 1, 2). In the best-preserved structure, the interior opening between the rooms is a nineteenth-century alteration. Thus, while the building appears relatively large, it really consists of two separate one-room units, one with access to a loft, the other without. A single room and possibly a loft above, shared by six to twenty-four people, was the standard slave dwelling in eighteenth-century Virginia, though a favored slave like Landon Carter's Johnny or Joseph Ball's Jo might have a one- or even a two-room dwelling to himself.⁴ The rooms in the Tuckahoe quarter illustrated here are relatively large by eighteenth-century standards. According to such documentary evidence as newspaper advertisements, building contracts, and court records, slave houses might be as little as twelve by eight feet in size. Dwellings larger than sixteen by twenty feet were divided, as the Tuckahoe houses were, into two units.

Quality varied as much as size. Again, the surviving structures are misleading. The houses at Tuckahoe were upgraded in the nineteenth century and are now well-finished framed buildings with glazed windows, plastered interiors, and painted exteriors (fig. 3). Other eighteenth-century slave houses were built of brick. Most, though, were less well constructed. From the third quarter of the eighteenth century, log was the dominant material for the houses of a

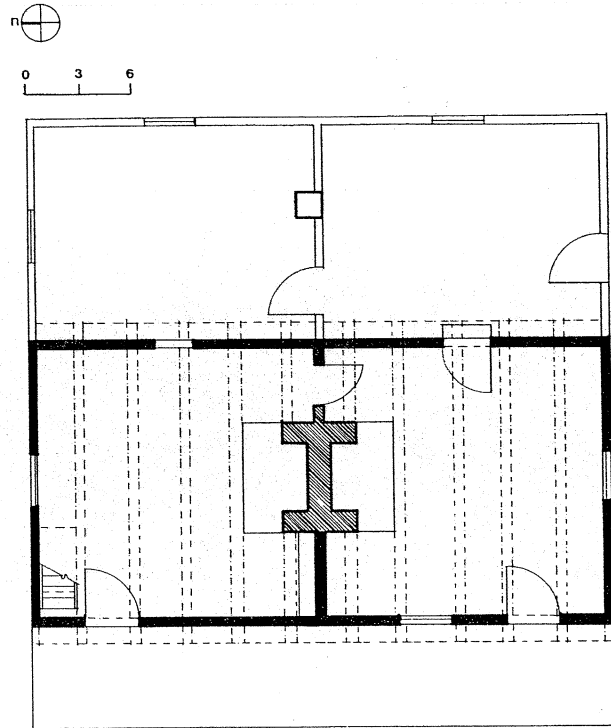


Fig. 5. Plan of slave house at Howard's Neck. (Drawing by Carol Silverman.)

large proportion of Virginia's slaves. Two of three nineteenth-century quarters at Howard's Neck, Goochland County, are well-preserved examples of better-quality log slave houses of a sort that were common in the eighteenth century (fig. 4). None survives from that period. They are V-notched hewn-log structures that stand on brick piers about a foot from the ground at the east and three feet at the west. The central building is the best preserved, though all were originally identical in form and the two log buildings in detail as well. As usual, each room in plan has a front door, and an original interior door connects the two rooms of the house. A brick chimney and a log partition that stops a foot from the ceiling separate the two rooms (fig. 5). A ladder stair, its foot almost against the wall, gives access to an unfinished loft from the southwest corner of the western room. The ceiling joists are round logs about seven inches in diameter, which pass through the walls and form eaves about a foot deep on the front and the rear (fig. 6). All original windows except one on the rear wall of the west room are gone. The opening on the rear wall is a

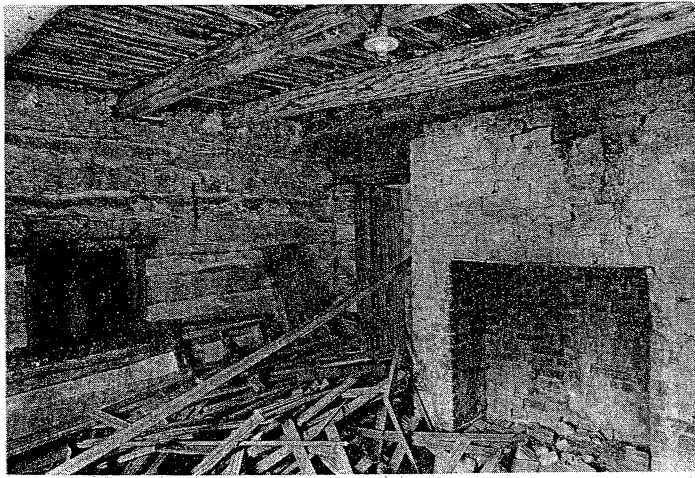


Fig. 6. Interior of slave house at Howard's Neck, showing whitewashed finish, round-log joists in ceiling, fireplace, and original window opening with shutter track. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

two-foot-square hole set two feet from the floor and closed by a single wooden shutter that slid from side to side in a track. A scar shows that the door leading from the east room to the rear lean-to replaces a similar rear window there. If there were any windows on the end walls of the house, they were similar to the surviving opening. There were no windows in the front wall until the twentieth century.

The addition of sheds to the rear of the quarter protects the original exterior treatment there, which consisted of whitewash applied directly to the logs (fig. 7). The inside was decorated in the same way with whitewash on log. Other interior treatment includes holes drilled in the front wall between the window and the partition in the west room. These one-inch-diameter piercings were intended to hold sticks that supported shelves or served as hooks. Alterations made after slavery to adapt all the houses are telling: the buildings were covered with weatherboards, kitchen-bedroom sheds were added, finished floors and glazed windows were installed, and porches were built along the front.

The Howard's Neck quarters illustrate the lack of built-in furniture and storage space that characterized eighteenth- and nineteenth-century quarters. The slave occupants of the houses probably installed many fittings and furnishings privately. These might

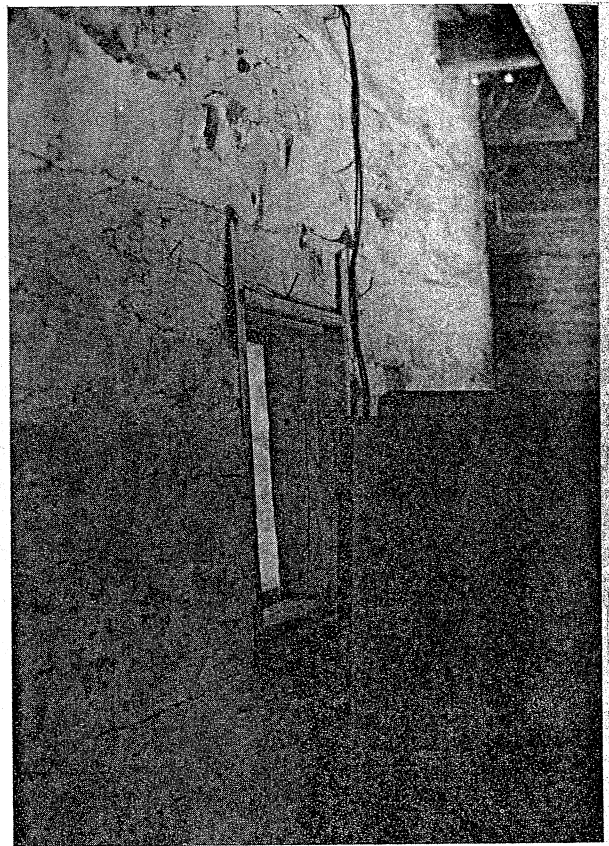


Fig. 7. Back wall of slave house at Howard's Neck, showing log construction and original exterior treatment. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

include shelves, either fixed in a niche next to the fireplace or of a movable variety supported on round sticks set into holes drilled into the wall, like those at Howard's Neck. Similarly, spikes might be driven into the rafters for drying herbs and other plants, a common practice in Virginia houses of all sizes. Less evident but probably equally common were cubby holes and root cellars, which are small holes, about three feet in every direction, similar to one described in Booker T. Washington's nineteenth-century boyhood home in Franklin County, Virginia: "In the center of the earthen floor [was] a large, deep opening covered with boards, which was used as a place in which to store sweet potatoes during the winter."⁵

The amenity mentioned most often was a bed, which might be the only comfort provided. A French visitor to the Shenandoah Valley found a house with

"a box-like frame made of boards hardly roughed down, upheld by stakes [and] some wheat straw and cornstalks, on which was spread a very short-napped woolen blanket that was burned in several places."⁶ Aside from these items, few owners provided much beyond an iron pot for cooking. To augment them slaves occasionally appropriated to themselves small things from the plantation stock and purchased or made other personal possessions. The most conspicuous of these in travelers' accounts were the musical instruments, particularly fiddles and banjos, that many slaves could play.⁷

One can think of the quarters as standing for the houses of all black and white people who were not great planters, for in many respects the physical characteristics of the quarters—small, flimsy, and sparsely furnished—merely reflected the slaves' status as poor people in Virginia. Their houses were indistinguishable in size, elaboration, and quality from those of white "common planters." But where poor whites' spartan conditions reflected their lack of economic success, the poverty of slaves on large plantations was the result of the appropriation of their labor to the enrichment of the planter and his decision not to return much of it to the slaves in the form of either material goods or time to produce them. But what of the landscape?

The quarter extended beyond its walls. The space around the building was as important as the building itself. At Howard's Neck, for example, the three surviving quarters are set in a line at precisely one-hundred-foot intervals, allowing for ample development of the surroundings (fig. 8). Here slaves socialized. Their chickens and dogs lived here. More important, here were the gardens where slaves grew produce to supplement their diets and to give them something to barter with or to give away in return for services. All eighteenth-century observers agreed on the importance of these "little Spots allow'd them [to] cultivate, at Vacant times."⁸

Slave quarters were parts of two intersecting landscapes. They fit into a white landscape centered on the main house in one way and into a black landscape centered on the quarters in another. From the master's point of view, slave quarters were part of a working landscape that dictated to some degree their siting and location. Quarters for house slaves were often close to the main house on large plantations, and they were carefully ordered in rows or "streets."

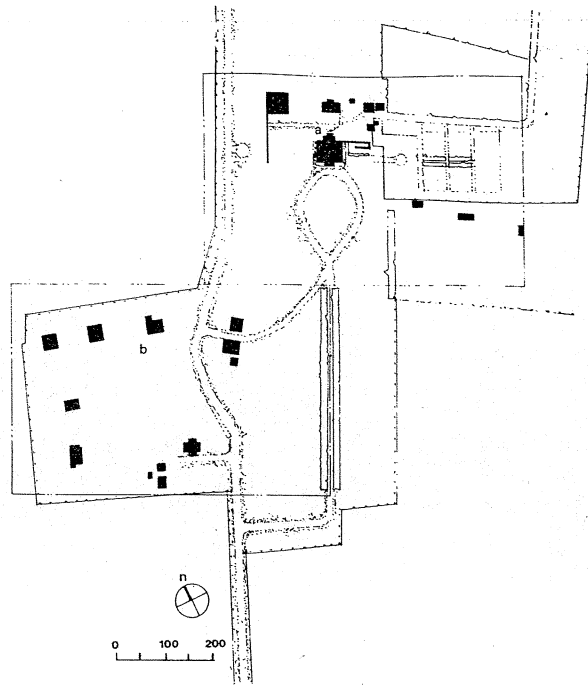


Fig. 8. Howard's Neck plantation, Goochland County, Virginia; site plan showing main house area (a) and slave quarter area (b), based on fieldwork by Dell Upton and by the Agricultural Buildings Project, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. (Drawing by Carol Silverman.)

If they were visible from the house, they were arranged on the site and treated on their exteriors with an eye to the visual effect from the main house. Other planters hid them from the eye, and in those cases they were usually plainer but were nevertheless carefully sited and arranged. The Howard's Neck quarters are part of this sort of arrangement. Howard's Neck is an extensive complex on the north side of the James River. The domestic buildings, which were occupied in 1825, include a large brick house, a brick kitchen, and an orangerie, along with several other frame structures. This group sits on a knoll at the top of a rise that falls away irregularly to the south and west toward the river. Southwest of the house at the edge of the lawn are some frame workshops and stables, and behind these stretches the quarter complex.⁹

William Hugh Grove saw similar plantation groups as he sailed up the York River in 1732. Like many other travelers in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries, he likened them to villages. The river, he wrote, "has pleasant Seats on the Bank which Shew Like little villages, for having Kitchins, Dayry houses, Barns, Stables, Store houses, and some of them 2 or 3 Negro Quarters all Seperate from Each other but near the mansions houses which make a shew to the river of 7 or 8 distinct Tenements, tho all belong to one family."¹⁰

The outsider's image of the village is important in understanding the white and black landscapes of the slave society, for it provides a means with which to grasp the different views that the two groups held of it and the different roles each performed in it. From the first years of settlement, white Virginians expressed concern over the failure to create a city- and village-based society with a hierarchical institutional structure. While some historians have pointed out that the public institutions that towns provided were present in Virginia in dispersed locations before the mid-eighteenth century, it is more useful for our purposes to concentrate on the village metaphor. The private plantation usurped in many respects the functions of the town, and the planter appropriated to himself the prerogatives and the good of the community. In effect, the plantation was a village, with the planter's house as its town hall. But the economic activities of this village were intended to enrich a single individual, so far as it was in his power to control them, and the economic health of the community was judged by the planter's profits.¹¹

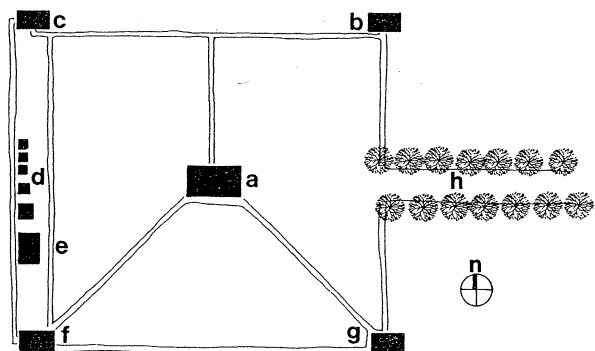
The plantation complex was a commercial center, where the goods of the common planter were gathered and shipped with those of the great planter to Europe. Here the common planter could purchase imported goods. The plantation was an educational center. The planter often kept a school at which his own and other children were tutored. More important, the plantation was a social center, at which formal entertainments—balls and house parties—were held, friends invited to dine and to stay, and strangers given the benefit of the planter's hospitality. Most of all, the plantation complex was a kind of governmental center of the plantation's residents. In this respect the plantation's resemblance to a village went beyond mere appearance. On large holdings like those of the Northern Neck planters Landon and Robert Carter, John Tayloe, or George Washington, where there were many outlying Quarters, the plantation was a kind of county seat, an administrative center

that affected the lives even of those slaves farming the Quarters, who might come to the home house only rarely.¹²

The great planter intended that his landscape would be hierarchical, leading to himself at the center. His house was raised above the other buildings and was often set off from the surrounding countryside by a series of barriers or boundaries—fences and terraces. It was tied to the public landscape by carefully conceived roads and drives. Thomas Amburey, a traveler, noted that planters felt free to alter the public road courses for their convenience. Where the planter was particularly dominant, as Robert "King" Carter of Corotoman in Lancaster County was, his house might be connected to an important public institution like the church by a similar drive. Corotoman and Christ Church stood as equal termini of a two-way drive, with Carter as the leading figure at each end. Similar formal paths at other plantations might link the outbuildings with the main house. The schoolhouse where the tutor John Harrower lived and taught was "a neat little house at the upper end of an Avenue of planting at 500 yds. from the Main house." Philip Fithian, a more famous tutor, left an account of Nomini Hall that presents a vivid picture of this formal, hierarchical kind of landscape (fig. 9). The main house was

large, & stands on a high piece of Land [and] it may be seen a considerable distance; I have seen it at the Distance of six Miles—At equal Distances

Fig. 9. Nomini Hall plantation, Westmoreland County, Virginia, ca. 1750–75; site plan reconstructed from Philip Fithian's description, showing main house (a), schoolhouse (b), stable (c), dairy, bakehouse, and other domestic outbuildings (d), kitchen (e), coach house (f), work or wash house (g), and poplar lane to main road (h). (Drawing by Dell Upton.)



from each corner of this Building stand four other considerable Houses. . . . Due East of the Great House are two Rows of tall, flourishing, beautiful, Poplars, beginning on a Line drawn from the School to the Wash-House; these Rows are something wider than the House, & are about 300 yards Long, at the Easter[n]most end of which is the great Road leading through Westmorland to Richmond [County Court House]. These Rows of Poplars form an extremely pleasant avenue, & at the Road, through them, the House appears most romantic, at the same time that it does truly elegant—The Area of the Triangle made by the Wash-House, Stable, & School-House is perfectly level, & designed for a bowling-Green, laid out in rectangular Walks which are paved with Brick, & covered over with burnt Oyster-Shells—In the other Triangle, made by the Wash-House, Stable, & Coach House is the Kitchen, a well-built House, as large as the School-house, Bake-House, Dairy; Store-House & several other small Houses, all which stand due West, & at a small distance from the great House, & form a handsome Street. These Building[s] stand about a quarter of a Mile from a Fork of the River Nomini, one Branch of which runs on the East of us, on which are two Mills.¹³

The white landscape, or more precisely the great planter's landscape, was both articulated and processional. It was articulated in the sense that it consisted of a network of spaces—rooms in the house, the house itself, the outbuildings, the church with its interior pews and surrounding walled churchyard, the courthouse and its walled yard—that were linked by roads and that functioned as the settings for public interactions that had their own particular character but that worked together to embody the community as a whole.¹⁴

The formalized layout of a great plantation complex facilitated the operation of this landscape in one form. One set of meanings, that is, was derived from moving through this microlandscape that had the individual planter at its center. At Mount Airy, the Tayloe house in Richmond County, for example, the visitor's route to the house involves passing a series of physical barriers that are also social barriers (fig. 10). One approaches along a drive that skirts a sunken park (fig. 11). The informal park contrasts with the formal layout of the house on its terraces and serves

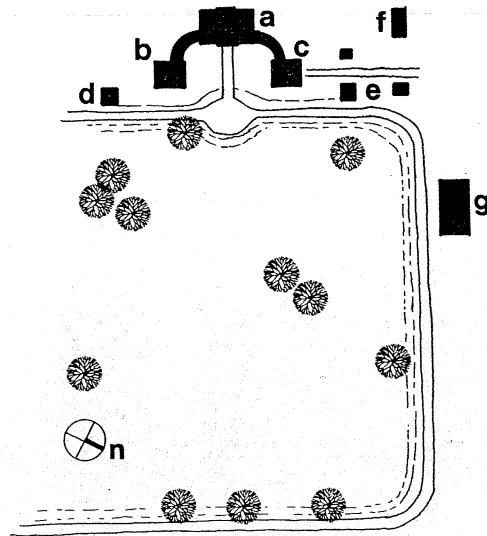


Fig. 10. Mount Airy plantation, Richmond County, Virginia, ca. 1760; site plan showing main house (a), family wing (b), kitchen and working wing (c), schoolhouse (d), eighteenth- and nineteenth-century domestic outbuildings (e) arranged along a street, orangerie (f), and early nineteenth-century stable (g). (Drawing by Dell Upton.)



Fig. 11. Mount Airy from the park. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

to make the terraces appear even higher than they are. The curved drive shows the visitor the house from a variety of tantalizing prospects and ends as he or she arrives on the lower of the two terraces. The upper terrace forms a forecourt that is defined by the two advance buildings. These were originally free-standing and were connected to the house sometime



Fig. 12. Mount Airy, north facade. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

later in the eighteenth century. The connection served to heighten the constriction of space that accompanied the passing of social barriers and the ascent of terraces and steps. Having climbed a few steps onto a terrace and then crossed it, a much higher flight of steps led one not to the main entry but to a recessed loggia (fig. 12). Then one entered a large living hall through the front door. More exclusive, but still public, rooms opened off this hall. If one came to visit the Tayloes, one would pass through a series of seven barriers before reaching one's goal, which might be the dining room table, the ritual center of Virginia hospitality. Each barrier served to reinforce the impression of John Tayloe's centrality, and each in addition affirmed the visitor's status as he or she passed through it.

The largest meanings of the articulated processional landscape, however, were perceived in the continual dissolutions and reformulations of social groups that occurred as many planters moved from one place to another within the public landscape of which the great plantation was a part. A planter moved from being the planter-among-his-family-and-slaves, for instance, to being the planter-among-his-peers doing business in the churchyard before Sunday service. The group dissolved again, and filed into the church, each to find his own pew, and thus regrouped as the planter-in-his-ranked-community (fig. 13). Or planters traveled to the courthouse village, gathered in the yard or the recessed loggia, and then went into

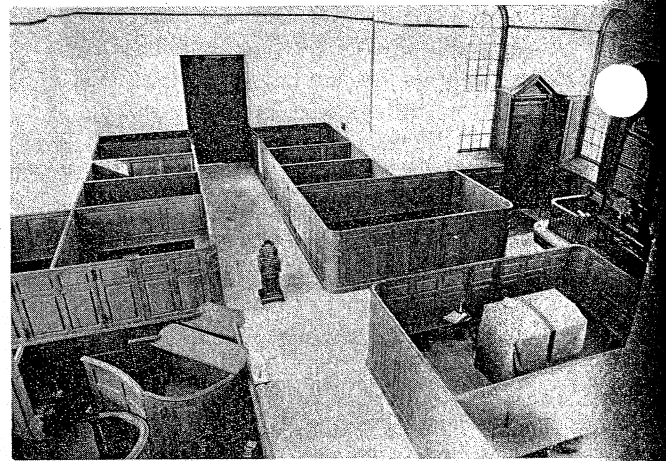


Fig. 13. Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia, ca. 1730–35. The largest pews, in the chancel, were reserved for the Carters, the dominant gentry family in Lancaster County. In general, the size of the pews and the elaboration of their paneling corresponds to the social standing of the parishioners assigned to them. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

court, where some were arrayed on the bench as the planter-among-his-fellow-magistrates (fig. 14; see the essay by A. G. Roeber elsewhere in this volume). Each social grouping had a specific character and a particular physical manifestation that was integrated within the articulated processional landscape. In the movement from one grouping to another, from one collective pose to another, the white landscape achieved its fullest meaning.

While the planter's landscape offered the image of an orderly society that focused on himself and linked him to his peers, the slave's landscape took a different form. No accounts by eighteenth-century slaves, and few by other people, give us a direct statement of their perceptions of their surroundings. Nevertheless it is possible to form a few impressions from the material evidence and to augment these with hints collected from the documents.

The black landscape, or landscapes, had several aspects. Some were reflexive, that is, they consisted of the slaves' responses to the planter's landscape. In some respects slaves shared the position of the white common planter, but their status as slaves worked in other ways to alter and even to undercut the intended effects of the processional landscape. Within the confines of the plantation, for instance, the common planter would be subject to the full effect of the for-

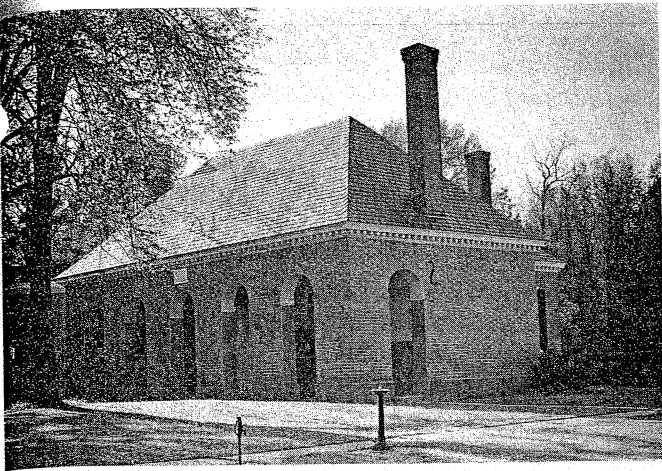
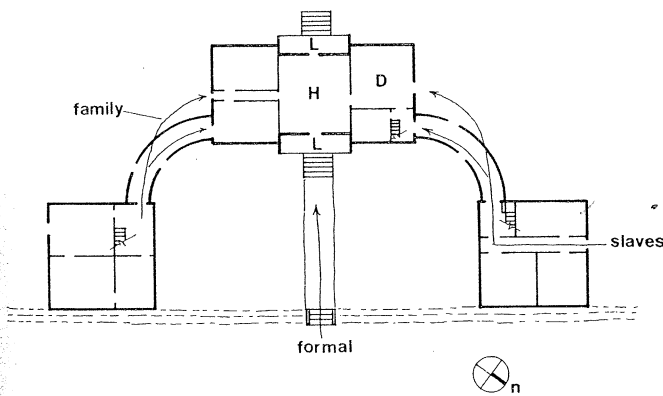


Fig. 14. King William County Courthouse, King William County, Virginia, ca. 1730. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

mal route through it, but it is unlikely that he could progress as far along the route as a Carter or a Tayloe could. The common white planter, that is, was part of the intended audience of the processional landscape, and it served to affirm his *lack* of standing in it. The slaves were not intentionally a part of the audience. Few white planters imagined that slaves were susceptible to the legitimating functions of white society; they recognized that the slave's lack of standing made force the only sure legitimizer. At Mount Airy the slave's route began in the street of outbuildings that lay outside the kitchen door, west of the

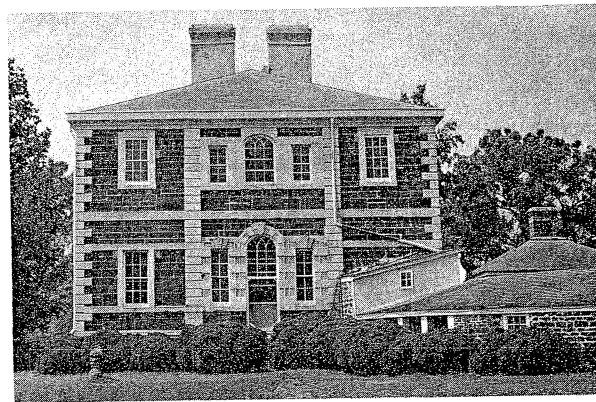
Fig. 15. Mount Airy, schematic plan showing formal, family, and slave entry and work routes. Key: H = hall; L = loggia; D = dining room. (Drawing by Dell Upton.)



house. It moved through the kitchen and, originally, from there through a small pedimented doorway on the west end of the house directly into the dining room (fig. 15). After the addition of the connecting quadrants, the route passed through them, into the stair hall, and then into the dining room. These routes mirrored the private routes that led family intimates from the rooms in the east wing into the secondary passage at the east end of the main block. The family entry was marked by a rusticated three-part opening (fig. 16) that was larger and more elaborate than the corresponding slave doorway at the opposite end of the house. Since the meaning of spaces depends as much on how we got there as it does on our being in them—on the shifting states of awareness as we pass one barrier after another—it is evident that in circumventing the formal barriers of the processional entrance, both the private and the slaves' route undercut the social statement made by the formal approach.

In this kind of landscape, blacks could pass almost at will, while whites from outside had to observe the formalities. The traveler Alexander Macaulay was annoyed to find this so when he visited Christiana Campbell's house in Williamsburg in 1783. The house had a "cold, poverty struck appearance; a large cold room on the left hand," the parlor, was occupied by several blacks. After inquiring for Mrs. Campbell, Macaulay was not shown into this private room, but left to stand in the entry; "But as I did not approve of waiting for her in the passage, I led Betsey into the cold parlour."¹⁶ This is not to say that there were no

Fig. 16. Family entrance, Mount Airy, east facade. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)



barriers to slaves at all. They generally stood in the passage when waiting on their masters and mistresses in the parlors and dining rooms. But it was a less mystified landscape than that planters created for their peers.

The slave also faced an absence of clear barriers in public, once he or she had passed the major one—permission to be off the master's property. At church, for instance, there was no definite seating arrangement for those few slaves who chose to attend or who were permitted to do so. The "slave gallery" of the nineteenth century was a rarity in the eighteenth. The colonial church gallery was usually reserved for private seating or, less often, for "the public"—those whites who did not have their own pews. Slaves might sit in or adjacent to their masters' pews, or they might share a section at the rear set aside for them.

If the master's landscape was a network that implied connection and movement, the landscape of the slave was a static one of discrete places. A comparison of landscape descriptions by elite and black Virginians is instructive. The elements of movement and commanding position built into such complexes as Mount Airy were objects of explicit admiration among the upper classes. Philip Fithian was able to capture their qualities to convey the feelings that they aroused. He caught sight of ladies riding, their red cloaks streaming, their hair protected by white kerchiefs. His description of his young pupils' dancing was based on the same perceptions of time and evanescent consciousness that the built landscape of the gentry embodied. He found it "beautiful to admiration, to see such a number of young persons, set off by dress to the best Advantage, moving easily, to the sound of well performed Music, and with perfect regularity, tho' apparently in the utmost Disorder." On another occasion, he noted his fondness for walking on the high hills near Nomini Hall, "where I can have a long View of many Miles & see on the Summits of the Hills Clusters of Savin Trees, through these often a little Farm-House, or Quarter for Negroes."¹⁸ To be above it all, to see and not to be seen, were values increasingly cherished by the gentry. In church, they moved from their pews in the chancel, the most conspicuous part of the church, to galleries, private galleries, and hanging pews, above the heads of their fellow parishioners. Whereas Mount Airy could see and be seen, by 1770 Monticello

was set to command a view of the landscape for miles around—most visitors noted this—but could not be seen until one was quite close to the house.¹⁹ Both qualities—of movement through the landscape, and of dominating large tracts—were alien to the conception of the landscape embodied in the slaves' directions.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe twice got directions from slaves who used as landmarks discrete, static barriers to be passed in moving from one point to another. The sense of a larger articulated network was missing. Indeed there was no acknowledgment that the barriers existed in any relation to other features not currently of interest. Thus Latrobe found it necessary "to make minute enquiry after all the byeroads and turnings which I am to avoid. By this mode of enquiry I in general astonish my directors by discoveries of difficulties they never thought of before. This was the case with my old negroe." In this kind of landscape, all points are related to one's own customary location rather than to the current position of the observer. The slaves' landscape was described from the point of view of someone surrounded by other people's power, and its landmarks were plantation houses and fields differentiated by ownership. It was not a way of thinking of the landscape that was necessarily confined to slaves but perhaps characterized all those who had nowhere to go themselves. Similar directions to those that Latrobe got from slaves in the 1790s were given by white farmers to Thomas Anburey in 1779. The local, Anburey wrote, "tells you to keep the right hand path, then you'll come to an old field, you are to cross that, and then you'll come to the fence of such a one's plantation, then keep that fence, and you'll come to a road that has three forks . . . then you'll come to a creek, after you cross that creek, you must turn to the left, and then you'll come to a tobacco house . . . and then you'll come to Mr. such a one's ordinary." If similar descriptions have been produced in other times and places, it remains true that the gentry perception of the landscape stands in striking and illuminating contrast to those of the slave and the common planter and that the failure to conceive of the landscape dynamically and systematically was a trait that elite observers found exasperating and characteristic of their social inferiors.²⁰

In addition to the master's world of work and possession in which slaves operated they had another,

private, landscape of personal life and prerogative. The slave house itself was the center of this life, and though many slaves had few possessions, some nevertheless had locks on their doors that they could use to lock out their fellow slaves and even their masters. Landon Carter was prevented from punishing his slave William when "he rushed in, bolted his door, and as the people were breaking in to him he broke out of the window and run off."²¹ William's action showed a strong sense of territorial and personal rights that many visitors noticed in eighteenth-century Virginia quarters. Isaac Weld, for example, noted that while slaves on large plantations had to work certain hours, they had "ample time to attend to their own concerns," and that this time was devoted to their own gardens and poultry and to furnishing their houses and making them comfortable in minor ways, even if the masters' allocation of labor and materials rarely allowed for significant improvements to the buildings.²²

Slave landscapes went beyond the immediate vicinity of the quarters. They included the woods and fields, where some measure of seclusion and secrecy was available. Landon Carter's slaves went to the woods when they wished to quit their master for awhile. By moving back and forth from the woods to the quarter, some of Carter's slaves were able to elude him for weeks or even months without actually leaving Sabine Hall's grounds. Nineteenth-century accounts mention religious meetings held in the woods, and Frederick Law Olmsted encountered casual groups of blacks who were gathered in woodland clearings during their leisure time.²³

Slaves and masters shared traditional Anglo-American attitudes about workers' rights in their jobs and workplaces. From this point of view, all work areas other than the main house were the slaves' domain, a division of space made clear by the frequent juxtaposition of work buildings and slave houses, as at Tuckahoe, an eighteenth-century complex in Goochland County (fig. 17). Philip Fithian attended slaves' cockfights at the stables. He clearly thought of the shops and stables as black areas and recorded with disapproval his pupil Harry Carter's fondness for spending time "either in the Kitchen, or at the Blacksmiths, or Carpenters Shop." The slaves enforced this division of space and work rights. Thus Fithian was obliged to pay a forfeit of seven and one-half pence to the baker for an unspecified trespass on



Fig. 17. Slavehouses and smokehouse at Tuckahoe. (Photograph by Dell Upton.)

the prerogatives of his trade and another to Natt the plowman for touching the plowlines.²⁴

Finally, the slaves' private landscape extended to other Quarters and plantations by means of unofficial ties with friends, relatives, spouses, and lovers. The increase in the size of many Quarters after the mid-eighteenth century helped to stabilize slave life and to promote a distinctive group existence as larger groups of slaves increasingly lived away from direct white control. Their separation from much white control allowed slaves to form communities that were held together by their mastery of the slave landscape of woods, fields, and waterways. Slaves formed neighborhoods, black landscapes that combined elements of the white landscape and of the quarters in a way that was peculiar to them and that existed outside the official articulated processional landscape of the great planter and his lesser neighbors.²⁵

Much of the architectural historiography of early Virginia revolves around the gentry style. Its elements have been cataloged, its sources probed, its dominance assumed. Yet these approaches miss the dynamic quality of gentry self-presentation that was the style's greatest strength and greatest weakness. Elements of movement through the landscape were built into its forms, and architectural details were disposed along it in a carefully planned sequence. Experienced as intended, it could be a powerful and intense ideological statement. But the duties and per-

sonal experience of slaves circumvented this experience. Blacks were not drawn into the social posturing of gentry society, and whites did not expect them to be. Raw power replaced ideological persuasion. With this realization we are spurred on to see the physical landscape in a new light. It must be read as a whole; it was neither uniform nor entirely dominated by the gentry. The meaning of the landscape can be read in more than one way.

Notes

1. This paper draws on continuing work on pre-Revolutionary Virginia architecture for its data and, in particular, on Dell Upton, "Slave Housing in Eighteenth-Century Virginia: A Report to the Department of Social Cultural History, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution" (MS, Smithsonian Institution, 1982 [contract no. SF2040940000]), and Upton, *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia* (New York and Cambridge, Mass., 1986). In addition, I am grateful to Karen Kevorkian, John Vlach, and Edward Chappell for assistance with the fieldwork and to Edward Chappell and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for additional site drawings of Mount Airy and Howard's Neck.

2. The origins of historical consciousness and its implications for architecture are discussed in Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (Montreal, 1967).

3. The standard account of Virginia's upper-class houses is Thomas T. Waterman, *The Mansions of Virginia, 1706–1776* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944).

4. Landon Carter, *The Diary of Colonel Landon Carter of Sabine Hall, 1757–1778*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Charlottesville, Va., 1965), 291; entry of Feb. 8, 1743, Joseph Ball Letter Book, MS, Library of Congress (I am indebted to John Vlach for the references to the Ball Letter Book); for the occupancy of slave houses, see Upton, "Slave Housing," 26–28.

5. Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York, 1955), 2–3.

6. Ferdinand-Marie Bayard, *Travels of a Frenchman in Maryland and Virginia*, trans. and ed. Ben C. McCary (Williamsburg, Va., 1950), 13.

7. Philip Fithian, *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion*, ed. Hunter Dickinson Farish (Charlottesville, Va., 1957), 96; John Harrower, *The Journal of John Harrower, An Indentured Servant in the Colony of Virginia, 1773–1776*, ed. Edward Miles Riley (Williamsburg, Va., 1963), 89.

8. Edward Kimber, "Observations in Several Voyages and Travels in America in 1746," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 15 (1907): 148; Isaac Weld, Jr., *Travels through the United States of North America* (London, 1799), 85; Fithian, *Journal*, 96, 140.

9. Quarter groupings on outlying subsidiary farms appear to have been less formally arranged. Little evidence for their layout remains, but the quarters illustrated in the eighteenth-century map of York County reproduced by Rhys Isaac, for instance, are not so rigidly arranged as those of Howard's Neck (Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790* [Chapel Hill, N.C., 1982], 54–55, but see p. 41). In this paper I have used *quarter* to designate the individual slave house, and *Quarter* to refer to the outlying farm. I am indebted to Robert L. Alexander, Edward Chappell, and Richard Cote for information about the history and site of Howard's Neck that supplements my own field examination.

10. William Hugh Grove, "Virginia in 1732: The Travel Journal of William Hugh Grove," ed. Gregory A. Stiverson and Patrick H. Butler III, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 85 (1977): 26.

11. Dell Upton, "Early Vernacular Architecture in Southeastern Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1980), chap. 1; Upton, "The Origins of Chesapeake Architecture," in *Three Centuries of Maryland Architecture* (Annapolis, Md., 1982), 44–57; Upton, "Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Virginia," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17 (1982): 102; Joseph A. Ernst and H. Roy Merrens, "'Camden's Turrets Pierce the Skies!': The Urban Process in the Southern Colonies during the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 30 (1973): 554, 568–73; John C. Rainbolt, "The Absence of Towns in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *Journal of Social History* 35 (1969): 343–60; Carville Earle and Ronald Hoffman, "Staple Crops and Urban Development in the Eighteenth-Century South," *Perspectives in American History* 10 (1976): 7–78.

12. Aubrey C. Land, "Economic Base and Social Structure: The Northern Chesapeake in the Eighteenth Century," in *Shaping Southern Society*, ed. T. H. Breen (New York, 1976), 238–40; Edmund S. Morgan, *Virginians at Home: Family Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Williamsburg, Va., 1952), chaps. 1, 4; Harrower, *Journal*, 83; Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 70–79. Decisions about working and transferring slaves on the outlying Quarters were made at the plantation center. In addition, the Quarter frequently served as a kind of colony or service center for the main plantation. Charles Carter's Edge-Wood plantation in Hanover County, for instance, supplied meat to his other properties, including his seat at Shirley, Charles City County (Richard S. Dunn, "A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life at Mesopotamia in Jamaica and Mount Airy in Virginia, 1799 to 1828," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 34 [1977]: 44–45; Carter Berkeley, Edge-Wood, Hanover County, to Charles Carter, Shirley, Charles City County, Oct. 19, 1802 [MS, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond]).

13. Thomas Anburey, *Travels through the Interior Parts of America*, 2 vols. (1789, reprint ed., Boston, 1923), 2:196; Harrower, *Journal*, 41; Fithian, *Journal*, 80–82. For a conjectural reconstruction drawing of Nomini Hall, which burned in the mid-nineteenth century, see Waterman, *Mansions*, 137.

14. For more on the concept of the articulated proces-

sional landscape, see Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 214, 227, and chap. 9, *passim*.

15. Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 58–63; Rhys Isaac, "Religion and Authority: Problems of the Anglican Establishment in Virginia in the Era of the Great Awakening and the Parsons' Cause," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 30 (1973): 3–36; Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*, 179–80, 187–94, 204–6, 214, 220; A. G. Roeber, "Authority, Law, and Custom: The Rituals of Court Day in Tidewater Virginia, 1720–1750," later in this volume.

16. "Journal of Alexander Macaulay," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st ser., 11 (1903): 187.

17. Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1980), 43.

18. Fithian, *Journal*, 29, 33, 178.

19. See the descriptions of the views from Monticello and Mount Vernon in Luigi Castiglioni, *Luigi Castiglioni's Viaggio: Travels in the United States of North America, 1785–87*, trans. and ed. Antonio Pace (Syracuse, N.Y., 1983), 112, 185–86.

20. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *The Virginia Journals of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, 1795–1798*, ed. Edward C. Carter II and Angeline Polites (New Haven, Conn., 1977), 137–41; Anburey, *Travels*, 2:196–97; Fithian, *Journal*, 178. For a perceptive discussion of social landscapes, see Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 52–57.

21. Joseph Ball Letter Book, Feb. 18, 1743, Nov. 4, 1746, April 1754; Carter, *Diary*, 845.

22. Weld, *Travels*, 85.

23. Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 328–36; Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips, eds., *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (Charlottesville, Va., 1976), 124; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1856), 89.

24. Fithian, *Journal*, 37, 88, 201.

25. Dunn, "Tale of Two Plantations," 38–39, 42, 44–45; Allan Kulikoff, "The Origins of Afro-American Society in Tidewater Maryland and Virginia, 1700 to 1790," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 35 (1978): 248; Sarah Shaver Hughes, "Slaves for Hire: The Allocation of Black Labor in Elizabeth City County, Virginia, 1782 to 1810," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 35 (1978): 263–73; Kimber, "Observations," 217.