

Discussion of slaves' politics almost always focuses on slave men, because in war it was the men whom state officials saw as a threat. But that was not how it looked to planters. None of the Manigaults ever made the mistake of underestimating the Gowrie women. Nor did they show any reluctance to deal with them roughly. Those who proved hard to break were sent to the workhouse or jail, where they were subjected to courses of professional whipping, just like the men. In 1863 William Capers found himself in a brutal struggle with Rose, the slave nurse of Louis's child, who not only resisted a whipping, she fought him, he said, "until she had not a rag of clothes on." "Before she is turned loose," Capers wrote his boss, "she will know she is a negro." Like planters all over the South, the men who managed Gowrie developed a distinct view of slave women's capacity for resistance and struggled throughout the war with the evidence of their betrayal and leadership in revolt.⁵⁰

The plantation was a school of political instruction during the Civil War, although it was the masters who struggled to learn the lessons slaves were teaching. Jack Savage did his part. Only weeks out of a stint in the workhouse and under constant surveillance, he made a successful break in February 1862, the very night he was to be removed to Silk Hope with his wife, Amey. Savage managed to stay out for "upwards of a year . . . in the dense Carolina swamp near the McPherson plantation in company with 'Charles Lucas' [another Gowrie slave] and other runaway Negroes." In this, obviously, he had help. Jack Savage emerged from the swamp after a year, half starved, his owner said. But he stayed only a month before he threatened to run again, saying "he had not come home to be killed up with work." Manigault, whose family had owned Savage since 1839, finally sold him in the fall of 1863, allegedly to a man in Columbus, Georgia, for the hefty sum of \$1,800. Rumors persisted that Savage had foiled the sale and was still in the area.⁵¹ On Gowrie, marronage was an antislavery strategy used especially by slaves—men and women alike.

In the epic struggle of Louis Manigault and Jack Savage, sale was not

the final chapter. More than two years after the Savannah River plantations fell to Sherman's troops, Louis Manigault was still exiled from Gowrie, reduced to scrounging for river news from "negroes" he bumped into in the Savannah rice mills. He did not get back to Gowrie until March 1867. But when he arrived, who was there to receive him but Jack Savage, "the last one I should have dreamt of," as he put it, advancing to meet him, hand extended in greeting.⁵² "We Southerners knew nothing of the Negro character," the exiled master finally acknowledged on his one brief return to the home place. In the struggle for Gowrie, Jack Savage outlasted the master.

Like countless other planters in the eye of the Confederate storm, the Manigaults could not escape the recognition of their slaves' oppositional politics. Nor could they confine its significance to the plantation, although that was the primary terrain of struggle. After Louis moved the first ten dangerous men and women to Silk Hope in November 1861, his brother Gabriel hastened up there, worried that "if not rigidly watched" they were "likely to be talking sedition to the others." Something had indeed gone seriously awry with "the Government of our Negroes."⁵³ In the Civil War on the Manigault plantation, "the people" were in rebellion against the masters' state, and the masters knew it.

Almost everywhere after Lincoln's election, slaves' willingness to fight their masters increased. The plantation quickly emerged as a crucial site of local politics across the Civil War South: crucial because there "the people" taught the masters some hard lessons about the relevance of their own politics in the war; crucial also because the intensely local politics of masters and slaves shaped and bedeviled Confederate military policy from the outset of war down to its radical modification in 1864 and 1865.