

WHAT IS PATERNALISM?

Alex Wong
Professor James Holstun
Department of English Literature
University at Buffalo (SUNY), Buffalo, NY 14260

SOUTHERN WHITE PATERNALISM

The word paternalism encompasses a large variety of intuitions from governmental to social, but when asking the question of what is Paternalism the focus will be specifically on Southern White Paternalism during the Antebellum period; the period between 1781 and 1860. Essentially it is the time between the end of the Revolutionary War and the beginning of the Civil War.

IMPLICIT VS. EXPLICIT

Every word has an implicit and a explicit meaning. Southern White Paternalism in this case is...

EXPLICITLY a relationship between a parent figure and a child figure: Slave Holder as a parent to a slave child.

IMPLICITLY it is either a **SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE** or a way of defining **BUSINESS ETHICS**. Both are a justification for the enslavement of African Americans.

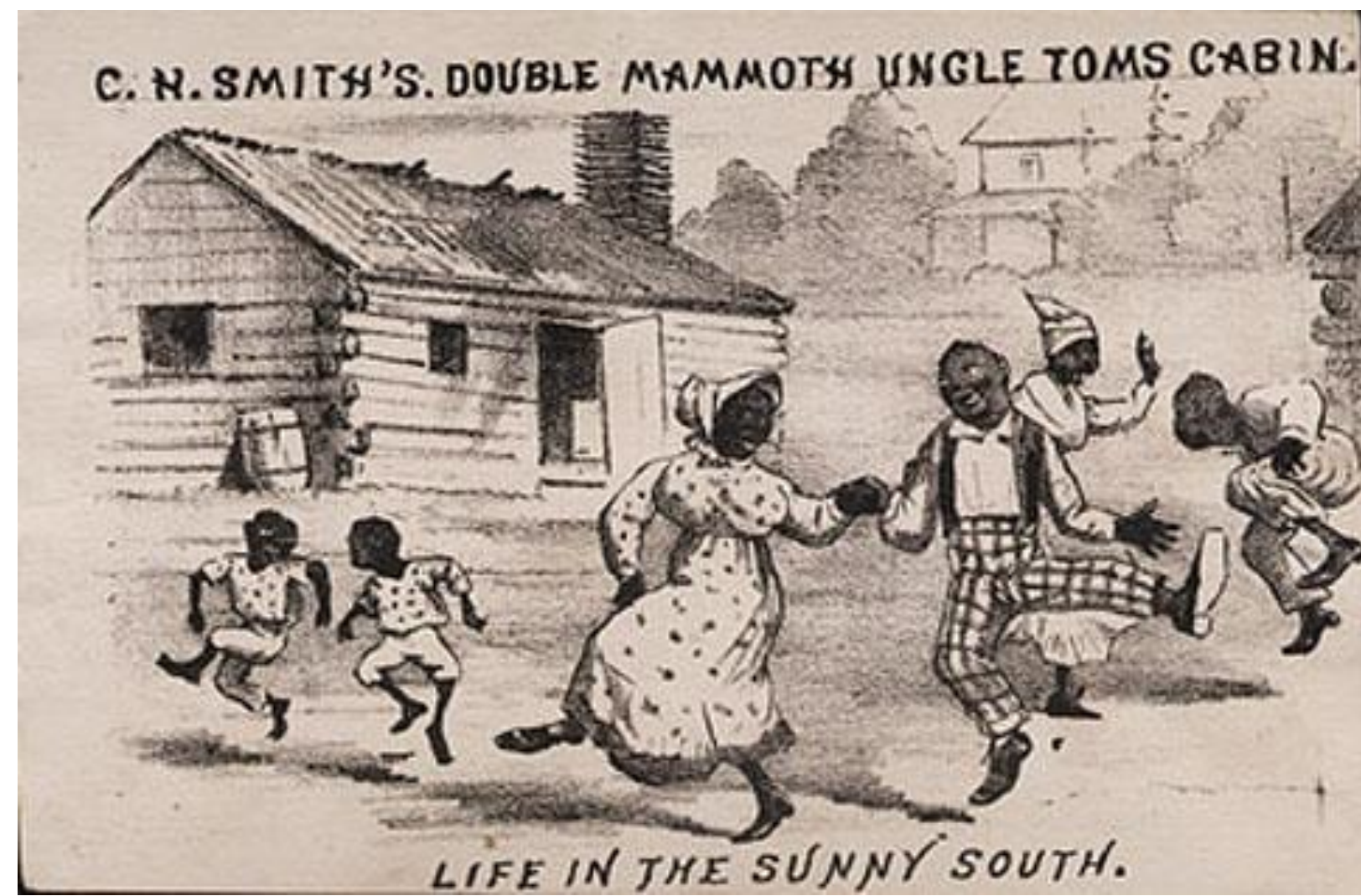
SENTIMENTALISM

While Paternalism can be viewed as either a **SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE** or **BUSINESS ETHICS**, Southern White Paternalism is most certainly an attempt at **SENTIMENTALISM**. Many Anti-Tom novels often portrayed slaves as happy parts of the family. Something or someone from the North is usually portrayed as either learner of Southern life or a harbinger of abolitionism to destroy these southern families unjustifiably.

The purpose of the sentimental argument is to deprive the reader of their reasoning. What the literature lacks in reasoning it tries to make up for with sympathy.

SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE VS. BUSINESS ETHICS

- ▶ The southern way of life **PREYS ON THE EXPLICIT MEANING OF PATERNALISM**, a healthy relationship between the parents of the plantation and all their children.
- ▶ **THE RELATIONSHIP WAS ALSO BACKED UP WITH RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE**, which justified the relationship between the slave owner and the slave.
- ▶ Paternalist writers **OFTEN DEPICTED HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SLAVES AND SLAVE OWNERS**, but with a condescending attitude towards the intelligence of slaves.



One of many illustrations that depict a happy African American slave family.

- ▶ **AUNT PHILLIS'S CABIN**
 - ▶ Concentrated on the role of whites rather than the slaves
 - ▶ Tried to idealize southern white men because they were...
 - ▶ Well Born
 - ▶ Devout Christian
 - ▶ Slave Owners (Aristocrat)
 - ▶ Were fair in their treatment of slaves
 - ▶ Withheld a nostalgia for more traditional ways

- ▶ **ROLL, JORDAN, ROLL** by Eugene Genovese made a differentiation between the two types of treatment.
 - ▶ Material Treatment – Treatment of slaves as an object with value that depreciates over time.
 - ▶ Moral Treatment – Treatment of slaves as individuals and as people.
- ▶ Business men and economists **ARGUED THAT POOR TREATMENT OF SLAVES DISALLOWED PROFITABLE MARGINS TO BE REACHED**. Fair treatment of slaves was considered imperative to the success of a plantation owner; however, **THE REQUIREMENTS OF FAIR TREATMENT REMAIN AMBIGUOUS**.
- ▶ **AMERICAN NEGRO SLAVERY** by historian Ulrich Phillips, takes special note of slave owners as business men.

- ▶ Phillips notes the advice of slave owner James H. Hamond, "A good crop means one is good taking into consideration everything, negroes, land, mules, stock, fences, ditches, farming utensils, etc. etc., all of which must be kept up and improved in value. But as much as can be made without interrupting the steady increase in value of the rest of the property... There should be an increase in the number and improvement in condition of negroes." (Phillips, 263)

CONCLUSION

The lack of a unified definition on the subject of Paternalism shows the exploitation of the term and is metaphorically representative of the duality of the slaves as both humans and property under Southern White Paternalism.

CITED SOURCES

Delany, Martin Robison. *Blake; Or, The Huts of America, a Novel*. Boston: Beacon, 1970. Print.

Eastman, Mary H. *Aunt Phillis's Cabin; Or, Southern Life as It Is*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Gregg, 1968. Print.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll; the World the Slaves Made*. New York: Pantheon, 1974. Print.

Hentz, Caroline Lee, and Rhoda Coleman Ellison. *The Planter's Northern Bride*. Print.


Phillips, Ulrich Bonnell, and Eugene D. Genovese. *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1966. Print.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, and Ann Douglas. *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Or, Life among the Lowly*. New York, NY: Penguin, 1981. Print.

Thorpe, Thomas Bangs. *The Master's House a Tale of Southern Life*. New York: T.L. McElrath, 1854. Print.

Gossett, Thomas F. *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*. Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist UP, 1985. Print.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

 Professor James Holstun
Dr. Susan Ott
Heather Hagenbuch
UB Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program