EMOTION IN ABOLITIONIST LITERATURE DURING THE BRITISH SLAVERY DEBATE, 1770-1833

BY

NICOLA JADE WESTWOOD

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Department of English

School of English, Drama and Creative Studies.

College of Arts and Law

The University of Birmingham

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ABSTRACT

Emotive rhetoric was a significant element of British abolitionist literature in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Abolitionists argued that Black and White people experienced the same emotions, though differences emerged in the way that those emotions were expressed, which was somewhat dictated by contemporary social norms. The argument of emotional equality aimed to encourage the British public to sympathise with the emotional – rather than just the physical – suffering endured by enslaved individuals, in the hope that this would inspire abolitionist action. In this thesis, I argue that emotive rhetoric was used not only to portray the humanity of enslaved individuals, but also to encourage British readers to demonstrate their own humanity, emotional sensibility, and morality by campaigning to abolish first the slave trade and then slavery. Existing scholarship on the use of emotions in British abolitionist literature tends to explore each emotion separately, particularly sorrow. This study expands upon such scholarship by exploring the relationships between the different emotions that feature in abolitionist literature: specifically joy, happiness, sorrow, anger, fear, shame and guilt. It also explores White and Black writers alongside one another, as well as males and females from different class and religious backgrounds, in order to reflect the diversity of the abolitionist movement in line with recent debates about 'Black Romanticism' and 'transatlantic romanticisms'. The diverse nature of the abolitionist movement meant that a number of different approaches to emotive rhetoric emerged. Whilst most abolitionists advocated emotional equality between different races, they did not all believe that this racial equality extended to intellectual capabilities. This thesis shall consider these complex nuances within the abolitionist movement, and explore the extent to which abolitionist literature challenged – or upheld – the racial hierarchy of

White supremacy. Despite these differences, abolition was predominantly depicted as an act of national self-interest, rather than just an act of benevolent philanthropy. This thesis shall therefore argue that abolitionists used emotive rhetoric to argue that abolition would benefit not only the enslaved, but also their enslavers, and the entire British nation, as abolition would allow Britain and its citizens to redeem themselves from the sins of slavery, and thereby re-establish its sense of morality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCA – Black Cultural Archive

BHM – Black History Month

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

ISM – International Slavery Museum

KS1 (Key Stage 1, students aged 5-7 years old at primary school)

KS2 (Key Stage 2, students aged 7-11 years old at primary school)

KS3 (Key Stage 3, students aged 11-14 years old at secondary school)

KS4 (Key Stage 4, students aged 14-16 years old at secondary school)

KS5 (Key Stage 5, students aged 16-18 years old at sixth form or college)

ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

SEAST – Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (also known as the London Committee), founded in 1787

TBC – The Black Curriculum

USI – Understanding Slavery Initiative

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1. Josiah Wedgwood, ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother’, 1787, *Official Emblem for the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade*.

Fig. 2. Mary Birkett, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade, Addressed to Her Own Sex,* (Dublin: J. Jones, 1792)*,* lines 175-188.

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Fig. 4. Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant,* (New York: Samuel Wood, 1807) p. 68*.*

INTRODUCTION

Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit nature's claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

[…]

By our blood in Afric wasted
Ere our necks received the chain;
By the miseries that we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;
By our sufferings, since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart,
All sustained by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart

(William Cowper, *The Negro's Complaint,* 1788)[1]

The formation of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST) in London in 1787 can be seen as the beginning of Britain's national abolitionist movement. As the name indicates, SEAST focused primarily on abolishing the slave trade, because it was considered a more manageable goal than targeting slavery itself. William Cowper's poem *The Negro's Complaint* (1788) was commissioned by SEAST to gain support for the abolitionist movement and to encourage readers to take abolitionist action in the form of donations, petitions, and letters to parliament. *The Negro's Complaint* – analysed in more detail in Chapter Five of this thesis – epitomises the common abolitionist tactic of portraying the emotional capabilities of

[1] William Cowper, *The Negro's Complaint*, in *A Subject for Conversation and Reflection at the Tea Table* (London, 1788). All future references are to this edition.

enslaved Africans, which intended to discredit notions of African inferiority to various extents. Cowper argues that 'Skins may differ, but affection / Dwells in white and black the same', and depicts the 'miseries' and 'sufferings' endured by enslaved Africans to persuade his readers that Black people experienced the same emotions as White people (Cowper, *The Negro's Complaint*). The concept of emotional equality, regardless of race, became prevalent in British abolitionist literature in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and was used in attacks against both the slave trade and slavery itself. This thesis explores how a range of abolitionist literature (both verse and prose) employed different emotions to encourage readers to alleviate the suffering endured by enslaved Africans. It argues that emotive rhetoric was used to promote the abolition of the slave trade (and in some instances slavery itself) as not only an act of benevolent philanthropy, but also as an act aligned with Britain's national interests.

An analysis of the emotions depicted in abolitionist literature indicates that a narrative of self-interest emerged, which can be separated into two inter-connected arguments: abolishing the slave trade and slavery would improve the welfare of enslaved individuals and improve the welfare of the entire British nation. The first component is the most obvious and prolific abolitionist argument, which involved using emotional rhetoric to argue that enslaved individuals would benefit from abolitionist action. This argument has already been extensively explored in existing scholarship, with scholars such as Markman Ellis, Brycchan Carey, Lynn Festa and Ramesh Mallipeddi focusing on how abolitionists depicted the sorrow of enslaved individuals to gain the readers' sympathy, hoping that this would encourage them to

support the abolitionist movement.[2] Whilst abolitionist portrayals of sorrow have been thoroughly examined, depictions of the anger, happiness, and joy expressed by enslaved individuals has received significantly less attention.[3] When I write about sorrow in this thesis it is with a specific focus on familial separation, which is an aspect of enslaved experience that has not previously been explored in depth. In addition to focusing on existing accounts more clearly, I also extend the range of emotions under consideration. I explore how abolitionist writers employed expressions of anger, happiness, and joy when making their arguments that abolition was in the best interests of enslaved individuals, as abolition would alleviate their anger and increase their happiness. In offering this account, my work responds to Dannelle Gutarra Cordero's recent study, which considers how eighteenth-century social norms concerning theories of emotion led to a practice of 'emotional policing' of enslaved individuals, whereby the enslaved were criticised for expressing both too much and too little emotion.[4] Happiness and anger represent either end of the scale: anger aligned with emotional excess, and happiness aligned with docility and emotional deficiency. This thesis shall explore how portrayals of the happiness, anger and sorrow expressed by enslaved Africans both contributed to, and complicated, the abolitionist narrative of self-interest.

[2] Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006); Ramesh Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).
[3] For existing scholarship on the role of anger in the slavery debates, see: Franca Dellarosa, *Talking Revolutions: Edward Rushton's Rebellious Poetics, 1782-1814* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014); Paul Youngquist, 'Black Romanticism: A Manifesto', in *Studies in Romanticism,* 56.1 (2017) pp. 3-14.
[4] Dannelle Gutarra Cordero, *She Is Weeping: An Intellectual History of Racialized Slavery and Emotions in the Atlantic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) pp. 1, 5. See also: Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

The second component of the self-interested narrative reveals that abolitionist emotive rhetoric was not confined to explorations of the emotions of enslaved individuals, as it extended to the emotions of enslavers and the British reader, particularly in portrayals of fear, shame and guilt. Abolitionists employed these emotions to argue that slavery was an immoral sin, corrupting not only the individuals directly responsible for enslaving people, but also the British nation to which they belonged. Srividhya Swaminathan argues that abolitionists presented 'the institution of slavery as one that tainted the high ideals of the nation and corrupted the character of the Briton', and so 'slavery, more specifically the slave trade, was a *national* problem that demanded a solution from the people of the nation'.[5] The self-imposed image of Britain as a virtuous and powerful nation was particularly scrutinised following its defeat in the American War of Independence.[6] The defeat 'reconfigured how the British public understood and valued the concept of liberty', 'jostled the metropolitan public from its complacent belief in British superiority', and 'contributed new arguments to the growing climate of change.'[7] Abolitionists argued that eradicating the slave trade (and subsequently slavery) would re-establish Britain as a nation that granted liberty and equality to all its citizens, an increasingly important component of national identity as the eighteenth century progressed.

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[5] Srividhya Swaminathan*, Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759–1815* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009) pp. 4-5. See also: Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006); Nicholas Hudson, '"Britons never will be slaves": National Myth, Conservatism, and the Beginnings of British Antislavery', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2001) pp. 559–76.
[6] H. M. Scott, 'Britain as a European Great Power in the Age of the American Revolution', in *Britain and the American Revolution*, ed. by H. T. Dickinson (Oxon: Routledge, 2014) pp. 180-204; Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence; America's Violent Birth* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2017).
[7] Swaminathan*, Debating the Slave Trade,* pp. 25, 27.

Whereas emotions are not the primary focus of Swaminathan's study, this thesis explores the intersection of portrayals of emotions, national identity, and Christian conformity, and argues that these portrayals aimed to persuade readers that abolition would benefit the entire British nation. Abolitionists engaged with fear, guilt and shame persuade their readers that they should be ashamed of their country's involvement in slavery, thereby inspiring a sense of collective responsibility. My work draws on John Coffey's analysis of the ways that emotive rhetoric aimed 'to restore Britain's ruptured relationship with Heaven', as abolitionists argued that slavery damaged Britain's reputation as a Christian nation, and threatened the notion that Protestantism was a superior branch of Christianity.[8] Enslavers were often criticised for their religious hypocrisy, as abolitionists argued that their barbaric treatment of enslaved individuals went against Christian doctrines. Irish Quaker Mary Birkett Card exemplifies this in *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (1792) – explored in more detail in Chapter Five – where she describes slavery as a 'scandal to the Christian name' and argues that the British public should take abolitionist action to alleviate their nation's guilt and shame.[9] Ottobah Cugoano, an emancipated Black writer, further argues that 'the inhabitants of Great Britain' are also 'guilty of the oppression' of enslaved individuals, which incited him to encourage Britain to abolish

[8] John Coffey, '"Tremble, Britannia!": Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807', *The English Historical Review,* 127.527 (2012) pp. 844-881 (p. 847). See also: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Anthony Page, 'Rational Dissent, Enlightenment, and Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *The Historical Journal*, 54.3 (2011) pp. 741-772; Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
[9] Mary Birkett Card, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade, Addressed to Her Own Sex, Part I and Part II* (Dublin: J. Jones, 1792).

the slave trade and slavery 'for their own good and safety, as well as for our benefit and deliverance'.[10] Abolitionists employed shame, fear and guilt to claim that slavery was detrimental to Britain's morality, and thus abolition was promoted as the only way for Britain to seek redemption, re-establish its morality, and uphold its commitment to liberty.[11] In doing so, abolitionists tried to dictate their reader's emotional expressions, advising them to use their emotions as a driving force for abolitionist action. Exploring these emotional portrayals reveals that White people were also subjected to emotional policing, though to a lesser extent than Black people, which is an element that Cordero does not explore.[12] The materials examined in this thesis reveal the different types of affective creation within abolitionist literature, exposing the parallel between the presentation of the self-interested narrative and the policing of emotions based on eighteenth-century emotional standards.

Opponents of the British slave trade (hereafter referred to as abolitionists) engaged with contemporary social norms regarding the appropriate expression of emotions, which applied both to enslaved individuals and the British public. They took a universalist approach to emotional discourse, arguing that emotions are universal, anthropological, constants that everyone experiences, and so only the expression of emotion differs spatially and temporally.[13] Eighteenth-century

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[10] Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 110.
[11] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[12] Cordero, *She is Weeping.*
[13] Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Susan J. Matt, and Peter N. Stearns, 'Introduction', in *Doing Emotions History,* ed. by Susan J. Matt, and Peter N. Stearns (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2014) pp. 1-16 (p. 9).

‘emotionology’ (the term that academics researching the history of emotions have since used to refer to social norms concerned with emotion) dictated that individuals should demonstrate sensitivity towards emotions (termed sensibility), without allowing these emotions to become excessive.[14] These social norms shall be explored throughout this thesis to analyse how abolitionists aimed to strike a balance between presentations of emotional deficiency and emotional incontinence. The ability to respond to emotional stimuli was considered to be an important part of human nature, as shown by an article in the *Universal Magazine* (1778) asserting that sentiment dictates morality through sympathy ‘by diffusing an universal benevolence’ that ‘teaches men to feel for others as for themselves’.[15] Abolitionists such as Cowper promoted this idea of universal benevolence to urge readers to sympathise with the ‘miseries’, ‘sufferings’, and ‘broken heart(s)’ of enslaved Africans, and to act on that sympathy by offering their allegiance to the abolitionist cause (Cowper, *The Negro’s Complaint*). Literature thus became a medium through which abolitionists could argue that enslaved individuals could experience emotions, and express them appropriately, whilst also suggesting that the reader’s morality should inspire a particular emotional response to slavery that should be directed into abolitionist action.

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[14] Paul R. Kleinginna Jr, and Anne M. Kleinginna, ‘A Categorized List of Emotion Definitions, with Suggestions for a Consensual Definition,’ *Motivation and Emotion*, 5.4 (1981) pp. 345-79; Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, ‘Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards’, *The American Historical Review,* 90.4 (1985) pp. 813-836 (p. 813). See also: Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction,* (London: Mathuen, 1986); John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); John Brewer, ‘Sentiment and Sensibility’, in *The Ends of Enlightenment,* ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp. 19-44.

[15] ‘On Delicacy of Sentiment’, *The Universal Magazine* (April 1778) pp. 172-74 (p. 173).

The emotive arguments conveyed in abolitionist literature formed part of an ancient rhetorical strategy that dated back to Aristotle. John Holmes' *The Art of Rhetoric Made Easy* (1739) clearly defines rhetoric as 'the art of speaking or writing well and ornamentally on any subject. Its principle end is to instruct, persuade, and please.'[16] Holmes' work may have influenced Samuel Johnson and Adam Smith's conceptions of rhetoric, which then influenced the style of rhetoric used in abolitionist debates.[17] Scholars such as Jamie Dow argue that 'Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is the […] most influential treatise on rhetoric in Western civilization', and its influence on abolitionist literature is no exception.[18] Abolitionist literature was informed by Aristotle's three categories of rhetoric: forensic, epideictic, and deliberative.[19] Forensic rhetoric (also called judicial rhetoric) establishes innocence or guilt, and is particularly prominent in legal discourse during trials for past crimes – or in the case of abolitionist literature, during trials for the crimes of slavery in the court of public opinion.[20] Epideictic rhetoric judges whether an individual's present character is honourable or dishonourable, deserving praise or condemnation respectively, whilst deliberative rhetoric considers which future action is most advantageous for the

[16] John Holmes, *The Art of Rhetoric Made Easy; or, the Elements of Oratory Briefly Stated, and Fitted for the Practise of the Studious Youths of Great-Britain and Ireland* (London: A. Parker, A. Bettesworth, and C. Hitch, 1739) p. 1.
[17] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1755). Johnson writes that rhetoric is 'the act of speaking not merely with propriety, but with art and elegance' and 'the power of persuasion; oratory'. See: Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 22.
[18] Jamie Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 2.
[19] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* trans. by George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). See: Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'Structuring Rhetoric', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (London: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 1-33; Dorothea Frede, 'Mixed Feelings in Aristotle's *Rhetoric'* in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (London: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 258-285; Bernard Yack, 'Rhetoric and Public Reasoning: An Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation', *Political Theory*, 34.4 (2006) pp. 417-438; Daniel N. Robinson, 'Rhetoric and Character in Aristotle', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 60.1 (2006) pp. 3-15; Eugene Garver, 'Aristotle on the Kinds of Rhetoric', *Rhetorica*, 27.1 (2009) pp. 1-18; Dow, *Passions and Persuasion.*
[20] Yack, 'Rhetoric and Public Reasoning', p. 421. See also: Carey, *British Abolitionism,* pp. 173-185.

common good of society.[21] Both epideictic and deliberative rhetoric were used to promote abolition as the most advantageous and honourable course of action, forming a dichotomy between praiseworthy abolitionist action and condemnable contributions towards slavery.

Aristotle also identified three types of persuasive appeals: *ethos* (depicting yourself as a creditable character); *logos* (using logic and reason); and *pathos* (using emotion to evoke sympathy).[22] For Michel Meyer, 'rhetoric is nothing other than the negotiation of the distance between individuals (*ethos* related to *pathos*) on a given question (given in *logos*).'[23] In the context of abolitionist literature, writers attempted to establish the credibility of enslaved individuals' emotional experiences to evoke the reader's sympathy and persuade them that abolishing slavery was logically the best course of action for everyone. Abolitionists drew on these Aristotelian notions of rhetoric, though as Brycchan Carey states, 'the discipline of rhetoric was being systematically reconceptualised' in the late 1700s.[24] Aristotle regarded *pathos* as something that involved all of the emotions, though Carey establishes that a 'narrower definition' emerged in the seventeenth century, as *pathos* came to specifically mean 'an expression or utterance that evokes sadness or sympathy' (*OED*), which became the 'dominant [definition] in the eighteenth century'.[25] Although *pathos* was mostly associated with sorrow, abolitionists still drew on Aristotle's notion that sharing different emotions – including anger and shame – helps to shape people's opinions and decisions, particularly when accompanied by *ethos* and *logos*

[21] Yack, 'Rhetoric and Public Reasoning', p. 421.
[22] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric.*
[23] Michel Meyer, 'Aristotle's Rhetoric', *Topoi*, 31.2 (2012) pp. 249-252 (p. 250).
[24] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 1.
[25] *OED,* n. 1.; Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 37.

appeals.[26] The use of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* was not limited to abolitionists, and so my research examines how and why these persuasive appeals were used by writers on both sides of the slavery debate, though it primarily focuses on the use of emotional rhetoric in abolitionist literature.[27]

In the process of exploring the range of emotional rhetoric that was used to encourage abolitionist action, this thesis aims to reflect the diversity of British abolitionist writers in terms of race, gender, and socio-economic background. Black and White writers are both included in this thesis because, in the words of historian James Walvin, the literature produced by Black abolitionists 'formed a small but influential contribution to public understanding of the principle that blacks were […] no different from whites: that they too could be people of sensibility, religious conviction and material accomplishment when freed from slavery.'[28] The term 'Black Romanticism' has been proposed for the field exploring Black resistance, as opposed to White humanitarianism, considering revolution as the counter-history to traditional accounts of social and cultural change by reform.[29] This thesis credits Black agency by exploring slave narratives and portrayals of Black resistance against slavery. In doing so, it draws on Joel Pace's argument that the term 'Romanticism' should be replaced with 'transatlantic romanticisms', to acknowledge 'the pluralism of the period's literary and cultural productions', including concerns of race, reform,

[26] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*.
[27] Swaminathan*, Debating the Slave Trade*.
[28] James Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery* (London: Penguin, 2007) p. 201.
[29] Paul Youngquist, 'Black Romanticism: A Manifesto', in *Studies in Romanticism,* 56.1 (2017) pp. 3-14 (p. 6).

revolution, and human rights.[30] The diversity and plurality of 'transatlantic romanticisms' is demonstrated by comparing how emotive rhetoric was used both by Black abolitionists (such as Olaudah Equiano), and by White abolitionists (such as Hannah More and William Cowper). Although they all seem to argue in favour of emotional equality, it is clear that significant differences emerged.

The vast diversity of the abolitionist movement produced several approaches to the self-interested narrative. Disagreements emerged regarding whether the best course of action involved amelioration, abolition, or emancipation (both gradual and immediate). Philanthropists did not always promote the abolition of slavery alongside the abolition of the slave trade, as demonstrated by the fact that SEAST focused on abolishing the slave trade first, so that slavery itself was not abolished until nearly three decades later. There were many reasons behind this strategy, though it was largely a response to concerns about how emancipation would affect the British economy.[31] Furthermore, not everyone who disapproved of the treatment of enslaved individuals campaigned for their emancipation, instead favouring amelioration of the conditions of slavery. This distinction warrants differentiation between terminologies: I refer to individuals seeking to improve the treatment of enslaved individuals whilst still condoning slavery itself as 'ameliorators'; those advocating the abolition of the slave trade alone as 'abolitionists'; and those seeking to lawfully abolish the institution of slavery itself as 'emancipationists'. Since this thesis primarily concerns

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[30] Joel Pace, 'Journeys of the Imagination in Wheatley and Coleridge', in *Transatlantic Literary Studies, 1660-1830,* ed. by Susan Manning and Eve Tavor Bannet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 238-53 (p. 238).

[31] Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition, Second Edition,* 2 editions (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

the efforts of groups and individuals working towards the abolition of the slave trade specifically, they are predominantly referred to collectively as ‘abolitionists’.

It is also important to clarify that emancipated Black individuals in the British Caribbean colonies were not entirely ‘free’. When slavery was eventually abolished it was temporarily replaced with apprenticeships intending to phase out enforced labour. However, many people considered this as slavery by another name because the apprentice workers’ freedom was still restricted.[32] Even Black individuals who were ‘free’ from slavery (and the subsequent apprenticeships) were not ‘free’ from racial discrimination and prejudice, as demonstrated in the British slave narratives explored in this thesis, and so they were not immediately treated as equals after their emancipation. Many of those promoting abolition also supported missionary expeditions to Africa ‘that led to land grab and imposition of Western values’ on African peoples as a supposedly ‘civilising’ process.[33] These colonial exploits imposed Christian and European values on African people based on the supposition that other cultures should be dominated because they were considered inferior. In this way, imperialist ideology served to uphold both a racial and cultural hierarchy by promoting British superiority, exposing the limitations to abolitionist ideology concerning racial equality.

[32] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988) p. 459.
[33] Jakub Urbaniak, and Mooketsi Motsisi, ‘Between Apologetics, Emancipation and Imperial Paternalism Mapping a Proto-liberation Theology behind the British Abolitionist Movement?’, *Journal of Reformed Theology,* 14.1-2 (2020) pp. 100-127 (p. 115).

The lack of homogeneity within the abolitionist movement created a number of different stances regarding the degree of equality between different races, as some abolitionists argued that Britons remained superior to Africans in certain ways. Although most abolitionists believed in the emotional equality of all races, not all advocated intellectual equality, as some claimed that Black people were naturally less intelligent and rational than White people. Hannah More exemplifies this in *Slavery: A Poem* (1788) – explored further in Chapter Two – by arguing that 'tho' few can reason, all mankind can feel'.[34] The argument that Black people were intellectually inferior was used to suggest that African cultural practices were primitive, and thus colonisation – or even slavery – was part of a civilising process. This paternalistic outlook later came to be considered as the 'White saviour narrative', though it was not recognised as such at the time.[35] The White saviour narrative suggested that Black people were dependent on White people because they were incapable of liberating themselves, reinforcing the contemporary notion that White people were superior to Black people.

Nevertheless, many people advocated intellectual equality, despite racial difference. In 1784 Reverend James Ramsay argued that 'there is no difference between the intellects of whites and blacks, but such as circumstances and education naturally produce'.[36] By this logic, Black and White people had the same

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[34] Hannah More, *Slavery: A Poem* (London: T. Cadell, 1788). All subsequent references are to this edition. See also: Brycchan Carey, 'A Stronger Muse: Classical Influences on Eighteenth-Century Abolitionist Poetry', in *Ancient Slavery and Abolition: From Hobbes to Hollywood*, ed. by Edith Hall, Richard Alston, and Justine McConnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp. 125-152 (p. 136).
[35] Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 2015) p. xiii
[36] Reverend James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: James Phillips, 1784) p. 203.

emotional and intellectual capabilities, and so it was merely the social norms concerning the expression of emotions that varied in different cultural contexts. The idea that social norms concerning appropriate emotional expression could be taught, and learned, suggests that any perceived indicators of intellectual inequality could easily be overcome by providing Africans with a Western education that underlined Enlightenment values. However, promoting Western education as the solution to overcoming differences in intellectual abilities also contributed towards a hierarchy by suggesting that certain cultures provided a more valuable education than others. The extent to which abolitionist literature upheld/challenged this hierarchy is thus a complicated issue. The abolitionist campaign was not homogeneous, as there was no consensus regarding the degree to which racial equality should be conceded. On the one hand, Hannah More argues that Black individuals are intellectually inferior, and on the other hand Olaudah Equiano argues (and seeks to demonstrate by his own example) that Black individuals are also equal in terms of intellectual ability. Such complexities are at the heart of this thesis, which aims to show that many writers did not easily fit into the dichotomy of proslavery against anti-slavery, or clearly advocate either equality or inferiority, as many of their viewpoints fell somewhere between the two extremes. Each chapter of this thesis shall explore how far emotive rhetoric was used to undermine the notion of Black inferiority in relation to each different text and its approach to abolitionist discourse. Despite the various approaches to emotive rhetoric, abolitionists collectively used emotion to stress similarity, rather than difference, to help their readers to understand the experiences of slavery. Abolitionists hoped that emotional engagement would encourage readers to take action to relieve the suffering of enslaved individuals, though they were also

conscious that emotions do not always drive people to enact social and political change.

The next section of this introduction explores eighteenth-century theories of emotion, in order to analyse their impact on how emotion was portrayed in abolitionist literature. This is followed by a close reading of an extract from *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), which exemplifies how abolitionist discourse was shaped by contemporary theories of emotion. These theories influenced how Equiano presented himself as the modern man of feeling, sympathy, morality, and self-control in a way that would demonstrate both his emotional and intellectual capabilities as a Black individual. Equiano's autobiographical account of his enslavement, and subsequent emancipation, is an important example of abolitionist literature striking a careful balance between rational discourse and emotive rhetoric, and is explored in this introduction to illustrate the important literary contributions of Black abolitionists. The introduction then considers the genres used by abolitionists, the presentation of cultural hybridity, and the terminology and methodology used in this thesis. It finally concludes by providing an overview of each chapter that explains how they contribute towards the overall argument of this thesis: that emotive rhetoric was used to argue that the abolition of the slave trade and slavery was beneficial not only for enslaved individuals, but also for their enslavers, and the entire British nation.

Theories of Emotion in the Eighteenth Century

Eighteenth-century theories of emotion provide a useful context for exploring the ways that emotive rhetoric was used in abolitionist literature. These theories of emotion concerned appropriate forms of emotional expression, the prerequisites to sympathetic identification, and the role of reason as a regulator of emotion. Philosophical discussions on these issues informed arguments presented by both sides of the slavery debate. Some defenders of slavery drew on contemporary theories of emotion to argue that Africans were an inferior race because they deviated from European social norms of emotional expression. Abolitionists countered these arguments by explaining the horrors of slavery that had caused such emotional expressions, and by portraying enslavers as the deviants because they were seemingly insensible to the emotional pleas of the enslaved. For this reason, I shall now briefly explore how proslavery arguments engaged with emotions to reveal the arguments to which abolitionists were retaliating. This proslavery context, in addition to discussions of sympathy, inform how – and why – emotion was portrayed in abolitionist literature.

Proslavery Arguments: Race and the Extremity of Emotion

There was no clear or stable definition of 'race' in the eighteenth century: it was often used interchangeably with ‘species’, ‘nation’, ‘lineage’ and ‘human varieties’, and was not always associated with complexion.[37] Although there was no ‘widely shared

[37] Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) pp. 288–302; Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human: Fictions of Anomaly, Race, and Gender in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Snait B. Gissis, ‘Visualizing “Race” in the Eighteenth Century’, *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences,* 41.1 (2011) pp. 41–103 (p. 42); Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, 1st edn.(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 34; Aaron Garrett and Silvia Sebastiani, ‘David Hume on Race’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. by Naomi Zack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) pp. 31-43 (p. 34).

concept of race' at the very beginning of the abolitionist movement, George Boulukos argues that 'a philosophical consensus on racial difference arose' in the 1780s, which specified 'that blacks, while sharing in human emotions, are less rational and more emotional than whites.'[38] Boulukos found that discussions of racial difference became more prominent after the 1772 Somerset case [see Appendix 1], as it prompted enslavers to defend the racial oppression of slavery.[39] As Ramesh Mallipeddi observes, 'historically, slavery has existed without racism and vice versa'; however, 'racism and [transatlantic] slavery mutually reinforced each other.'[40] As a result, 'the concept of meaningful differences between races' became increasingly familiar, including the theory that 'distinct racialized categories feel differently'.[41]

Two contradictory premises emerged in the eighteenth century concerning the intersection of race and emotions, both of which positioned Africans as inferior in an attempt to justify their enslavement. The first argument is known as the polygenesis theory, which proposes that Africans are a different species to Europeans, and are therefore unable to feel emotions in the same way.[42] Polygenesis supporters were rare in the eighteenth century because polygenism countered the Biblical origin tale of Adam and Eve, although it was sometimes argued that the Bible presented Adam and Eve exclusively as the ancestors of Europeans.[43] Edward Long, Lord Kames,

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[38] George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 32, 141-2. See also: Gissis, 'Visualizing "Race" in the Eighteenth Century', p. 91.
[39] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* pp. 141-2.
[40] Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering,* p. 118.
[41] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* p. 142; Cordero, *She Is Weeping,* pp. 5, 1.
[42] Peter Kitson, '"Candid Reflections": The Idea of Race in the Debate over the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century', in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838,* ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sara Salih (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) pp. 11-25 (p. 13).
[43] Kendra Asher, 'Was David Hume a racist? Interpreting Hume's infamous footnote (Part I)', *Economic Affairs*, 42.2 (2022) pp. 225-239 (p. 236); Michael Banton, 'The Idiom of Race: A Critique of

and Samuel Estwick advocated polygenism, though they were the exception, rather than the rule, as very few people believed that there were separate species within humanity.[44] Polygenism later gained popularity in America, where it was advocated by individuals such as Josiah Nott (1854).[45] Although polygenism was less prevalent in eighteenth-century Britain, it allowed certain individuals to claim that Africans are inferior because of their emotional and intellectual limitations.

The second argument is the monogenesis theory, which proposes that Africans and Europeans belong to the same species, with the same origin. Monogenism aligned with the Biblical creation story, but did not guarantee racial equality.[46] The degeneracy hypothesis proposes that Africans are human, but are inferior because they have not advanced as far along the evolutionary process as Europeans because of environmental and climatic pressures, which Dannelle Gutarra Cordero terms 'geographical determinism'.[47] Cordero also considers how the monogenist theory of 'historical determinism' has 'conceptualized diverse "races" in dissimilar stages of emotional development, or collective progress toward civilized emotions'.[48] The degeneracy hypothesis allowed enslavers such as William Beckford

Presentism', in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader, 2nd Edition,* ed. by Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2009) pp. 55-67 (p. 57).

[44] See: Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Sketches of Man,* 2nd edn (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1778) p. 64; Robert Bernasconi, 'Who Invented the Concept of Race?', in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader, 2nd Edition,* ed. by Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2009) pp. 83-103; Andrew Wells, 'Race Fixing: Improvement and Race in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *History of European Ideas,* 36.1, (2010) pp. 134-138; Gissis, 'Visualizing "Race" in the Eighteenth Century'.

[45] Josiah C. Nott, *Types of Mankind* (Charleston: James, Williams and Gitsinger, 1854) p. 397. See also: Seymour Drescher, 'The Ending of the Slave Trade and the Evolution of European Scientific Racism', *Social Science History,* 14.3 (1990) pp. 415-450; Terence D. Keel, 'Religion, polygenism and the early science of human origins', *History of the Human Sciences*, 26.2 (2013) pp. 3-32.

[46] Nussbaum, *The Limits of the Human,* p. 12.

[47] Cordero, *She Is Weeping,* p. 50; John Immerwahr, 'Hume's Revised Racism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53.3 (1992) pp. 481-486 (p. 482); Kitson, '"Candid Reflections"', p. 13; Ryan Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing, c. 1770-1830,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) p. 6.

[48] Cordero, *She Is Weeping,* p. 50.

to argue that Africans are able to feel the same emotions as Europeans, but are unable to exert reason to control their emotional responses. Beckford profited from the enslaved individuals who worked on the many Jamaican sugar plantations that he owned, and so he employed the degeneracy hypothesis in an attempt to defend slavery.[49] In 1788, Beckford claimed that 'a slave has no feeling beyond the present hour, no anticipation of what may come, no dejection at what may ensue: these privileges of feeling are reserved for the enlightened.'[50] Beckford alleges that enslaved Africans lacked the rationality to consider the consequences of their emotional outbursts, contrasted against Europeans such as himself who were more 'enlightened', in an attempt to uphold the notion of African inferiority.

Historian and philosopher, Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, explains that anatomical studies had found that Africans are a 'particular species of men' whose 'passions […] of fear and love are carried to excess' to the detriment of their 'intellectual faculties', which renders the necessity of their enslavement.[51] The claim of emotional incontinence was used to argue that enslaved Africans were dangerous, and so their enslavement was considered necessary due to their apparent lack of self-restraint. Raynal, an abolitionist forerunner, disputed the conclusions of these studies and argued that 'there is no reason of state that can authorise slavery'.[52] It is

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[49] Richard B. Sheridan, 'William Beckford', *ODNB*, (3rd January 2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1903#odnb-9780198614128-e-1903 [Accessed 18/10/2021].
[50] William Beckford, *Remarks on the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica* (London: T. and J. Egerton, 1788) p. 84.
[51] Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *A Philosophy and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies,* III, trans. by J. Justamond (Dublin: John Exshaw, 1776) pp. 119-20.
[52] Ibid., p. 165. For more on Raynal, see: Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western*; Cecil Courtney and Jenny Mander (eds.), *Raynal's Histoire des deux Indes: colonialism, networks and global exchange* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2015); Júnia Ferreira Furtado and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, 'The Different Brazils in Abbé Raynal's Histoire des Deux Indes', *Varia Historia, Belo Horizonte*, 32.60

difficult to ascertain the particular anatomical studies that Raynal refers to, though they align with contemporary scientific theories that 'characterised Blackness as emotionally distinct in both deficiency and excess, a contrast with the emotional benevolence accorded to Whiteness'.[53] These two extremities made it difficult to portray enslaved individuals expressing emotion in a socially acceptable manner, as too much emotion could make them seem dangerous and erratic, whilst too little emotional expression could make them seem unfeeling and uncivilised.

However, Peter Kitson argues that race was largely absent from proslavery arguments, which were instead mostly comprised of economic justifications for slavery.[54] Although these claims of racial inferiority may have been rare, particularly claims that referred to Black people's emotional deficiency or emotional incontinence, abolitionists still considered them significant enough to warrant a counter-argument that established the humanity and emotional equality of Black individuals. In fact, Roxann Wheeler claims that 'the anti-slave trade position relied more heavily on appeals to racial similarity than slavery advocates relied on appeals to racial difference'.[55] Yet abolitionists such as Granville Sharp argued that Black individuals were treated as inferiors during their enslavement, and were considered as property

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(2016) pp. 731-777; Ann Thomson, 'Colonialism, race and slavery in Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes'*, *Global Intellectual History*, 2.3 (2017) pp. 251-267; Damien Tricoire, 'Raynal's and Diderot's Patriotic History of the Two Indies, or The Problem of Anti-Colonialism in the Eighteenth Century', *The Eighteenth Century*, 59.4 (2018) pp. 429-448; Junia Ferreira Furtado and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, 'Raynal and the defence of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil', *Análise social,* 54.230 (2019) pp. 4-33.

[53] Cordero, *She Is Weeping,* p. i.

[54] Kitson, '"Candid Reflections"'.

[55] Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race,* p. 237. See also: Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan, 1964) p. 27; Kitson, 'Candid Reflections'.

rather than as humans.[56] This is particularly exemplified in the 1783 *Zong* case trial, where enslavers who had deliberately thrown enslaved Africans overboard in 1781 attempted to make an insurance claim for loss of property. The solicitor representing the enslavers claimed that the enslaved individuals were 'chattel' and 'goods' because 'the Blacks were property'.[57] Abolitionists responded to this by portraying the emotional expressions of Black individuals in order to stress their humanity. They argued that Black people should not be subjected to such racial objectification; instead, they deserved to be treated as humans, which was not possible whilst they remained enslaved.

Although proslavery arguments of racial inferiority may not have been prevalent, the argument that Black individuals were either emotionally deficient or emotionally incontinent resonated with general theories of emotion proposed by Enlightenment philosophers. Jean-Jacques Rousseau prioritised logical reasoning over emotional indulgence because he feared that the co-existence of multiple passions risked overstimulation and thus loss of self-control.[58] These sentiments were echoed by an article in *The Universal Magazine* (1778), which argues that excessive indulgence in emotions should be avoided, and so 'reason must be called in to moderate'.[59] Whilst Rousseau promoted the dominance of reason, David Hume promoted the dominance of passion by arguing that 'reason is, and ought only to be

[56] Prince Hoare, *Memoirs of Granville Sharp Esq. Composed from his own Manuscripts* (London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1820). See also: Srividhya Swaminathan, 'Developing the West Indian Proslavery Position after the Somerset Decision', *Slavery and Abolition*, 24.3 (2003) pp. 40-60 (p. 45).
[57] Ibid., pp. 239-240.
[58] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Letter to d'Alembert [1758], in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Letter to d'Alembert, and Writings for the Theater*, X, trans. and ed. by Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth, and Christopher Kelly (New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 2004) pp. 251-352 (p. 265).
[59] 'On Delicacy of Sentiment', pp. 172, 173.

the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.'[60] Hume further argued that reason plays a less important role than passion because 'impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it', with reason serving to establish and assess the cause of the passion in order to determine the appropriate course of action to be undertaken, and so 'reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will.'[61] Despite the discrepancies regarding whether passion or reason should be given dominance, these Enlightenment philosophers agreed that some degree of rational thinking was required to determine when – and to what extent – it was appropriate to express and suppress emotions.

While an absence of emotional displays was considered to signify a lack of humanity, superfluous expressions of emotion were considered to signify a lack of self-control. Adam Smith summarises this paradox concerning emotional expression:

> We sometimes complain that a particular person shows too little spirit, and has too little sense of the injuries that have been done to him; and we are as ready to despise him for the defect, as to hate him for the excess of this passion.[62]

Although Smith is not talking specifically about racial issues here, this paradox was particularly problematic for abolitionists who wanted to show the humanity of enslaved individuals by presenting their ability to feel emotion, but without the danger that the emotional expressions would seem excessive and uncontrolled. Smith also

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[60] David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning Into Moral Subjects* [1740], (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009) https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/reader.action?docID=435863 [Accessed 08/12/2021] p. 636.
[61] Ibid., pp. 634, 633.
[62] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiment* [1759], ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 128.

argued that slavery was immoral, and uneconomical, and yet believed that 'it is indeed almost impossible that [slavery] should ever be totally or generally abolished'.[63] Abolitionists were aware of the many challenges that they faced, yet were determined to continue working towards their goal of abolition, believing that emotive rhetoric would help them to succeed. They had to strike a fine balance between the two emotional extremes, as the regulation of emotional expression was strongly aligned with discussions about the regulation of trade and people that encompassed abolitionist debates. It was important that abolitionists considered these emotional theories to ensure that their depictions of enslaved Africans' emotional expressions conformed to Western social norms. Although social norms are complex, varying dependent on temporal and geographical location, the emotionology contemporary to the British abolitionist movement overall encouraged the moderation of emotional expressions.

It is no coincidence that Smith uses the term 'passion' to refer to an excessive form of emotion, whilst Cowper uses the term 'affection' to refer to a more acceptable form of emotion. The distinctions between how the terms 'passions', 'affections', 'sentiments' and 'emotions' were used during the eighteenth century has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate.[64] Thomas Dixon insists that eighteenth-century

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[63] Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* [1763], edited by R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. Stein (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) p. 181. For more on Adam Smith and slavery, see: John Salter, 'Adam Smith on Slavery', *History of Economic Ideas,* 4 (1996) pp. 225-251; Robert W. Dimand and Spencer J. Pack, 'Slavery, Adam Smith's Economic Vision and the Invisible Hand', *History of Economic Ideas* (1996) pp. 253-269; Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor Versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford, University Press, 2002); Robbie Shilliam, 'The Past and Present of Abolition: Reassessing Adam Smith's "Liberal Reward of Labor"', *Review of International Political Economy*, 28.3 (2021) pp. 390-711.

[64] Robert Solomon, *The Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993); Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*

philosophers distinguished between ‘rational virtuous affections and vicious passions’.[65] The ‘affections’ and ‘moral sentiments’ are generally understood to be concerned with love, happiness, and goodwill; whereas ‘passions’ referred to feelings associated with violent impulses, such as anger, that potentially threatened morality because they were more difficult to control.[66] Amy Schmitter has explored how eighteenth-century philosophers (including Lord Shaftesbury, David Hume, and Adam Smith) occasionally distinguished ‘affections’ and ‘sentiments’ from ‘passions’, although she found that these terms were also used interchangeably, and that their meanings varied with each usage.[67] For example, Samuel Johnson’s dictionary defines affection as ‘a passion of any kind’, and emotion as a ‘vehemence of passion’.[68] The term ‘emotion’ did not become prevalent until the 1800s, and so Dixon disapproves of the term being used anachronistically as an umbrella term that collapses the differences between the other categories.[69] Yet Hume had already begun to use ‘emotion’ as an umbrella term for ‘passions’, ‘affections’, and ‘sentiments’ in the eighteenth century, which reduces the threat of anachronism, particularly considering the fact that these terms were often used synonymously.[70] For the purposes of this thesis I shall consider how affections and sentiments (such as happiness and sorrow) were portrayed differently from passions (such as anger) in abolitionist literature. However, since these terms did not have fixed meanings, I

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[65] Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions,* p. 47.
[66] A. Baier, ‘What emotions are about’, *Philosophical Perspectives*, 4 (1990) pp. 1-29 (p. 2); Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions,* p. 18; Thomas Dixon, ‘“Emotion”: The History of a Keyword in Crisis’, *Emotion Review,* 4 (2012) pp. 338–344 (p. 339).
[67] Amy M. Schmitter, ‘Passions, Affections, Sentiments: Taxonomy and Terminology’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by James A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) pp. 197-225.
[68] Johnson, *A Dictionary*.
[69] Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions,* p. 12.
[70] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* p. 883.

shall follow Hume's example by referring to them all collectively as 'emotions' for the sake of simplicity.

Using 'emotions' as an umbrella term in this way allows me to clearly articulate how abolitionists portrayed the movement between different feelings, and the movement of these feelings between people. This movement of feeling could be the reason for the disparity of definitions, categorisation, and appraisals. Emotions co-exist, transform, and emerge in different degrees and combinations, with different causes and manifestations, making them difficult to separate objectively. In 1794 Samuel Lowell insisted that to even mention the slave trade was to 'feel an unutterable combination of all the passions known to the human heart, painfully overwhelming the mind.'[71] By claiming that the emotional response to the mere thought of the slave trade was overwhelming enough, Lowell implies that experiencing slavery itself must be so painfully emotional that it is incredibly and unimaginably difficult to bear. While the British reader can choose to avoid this painful response, the enslaved must bear this emotional and physical suffering. Lowell claims that the response to slavery is so overwhelming because of the 'combination' of emotions that it evokes, which mirrors the wide range of emotions used in abolitionist literature. Abolitionists portrayed the sadness, anger, and joy of enslaved individuals to stress their humanity, and drew on the reader's fear, shame and guilt to encourage them to take action against slavery. They contrasted the emotional capabilities of enslaved individuals, and their ability to control their emotional expressions, against the sinful inhabitants of Britain who suppressed their

[71] Samuel Lowell, *The Mystery of Providence and Grace, and the Sins of Britain* (London: J. Johnson, 1794) pp. 47-50.

guilt rather than seeking atonement. In doing so, they provided a challenge to the existing racial hierarchy, as they presented enslaved individuals as more sensitive to emotions, yet more capable of directing their emotions into appropriate, moral, action than the sinners of Britain. Abolitionists encouraged the British public to seek redemption for their nation's sins by promoting the abolitionist message, petitioning parliament, and abstaining from goods produced by enslaved labour, in the hope that individual efforts would collectively contribute towards national reform in the form of abolition.

Paul Langford argues that the connection between sentiment and liberty particularly appealed to the English middle-class who sought a code of manners to establish their newly-established social position, and so they advocated sentimental displays as a way to establish themselves as sympathetic, and thus moral, individuals.[72] The bourgeoisie aimed to secure their newly established position in society by setting rules for those they considered their social inferiors, and weakening the positions of their social superiors (in this instance, the aristocratic enslavers). New moral standards of emotional moderation were introduced as a form of social control to influence behaviour to benefit the bourgeoisie and their economic interests. However, considering class aspects alone is reductionist as abolition supporters emerged from various backgrounds and social statuses, from working class poets such as Ann Yearsley, to wealthy politicians such as Member of

[72] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) p. 461. See also: Alan Lester, *Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) p. 8; Thomas L. Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1', *The American Historical Review,* 90.2 (1985) pp. 339-61 (p. 341).

Parliament William Wilberforce.[73] They all tried to comply with similar moral standards of behaviour and sentimental expression as a way to improve and maintain their moral reputations. Paul Goring argues that this 'language of politeness' had 'emerged as a form of social currency' through which to cement public identities.[74] Employing emotive rhetoric in support of the abolitionist movement thus served to simultaneously establish the enslaved and the philanthropist as moral and intellectual individuals, whereby the emotional transaction of sympathetic identification becomes mutually beneficial.

Theories of Sympathy

Emotional engagement was key to evoking the sympathetic identification with enslaved Africans that was used to encourage British citizens to actively campaign for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Therefore, abolitionist literature was influenced by eighteenth-century philosophical debates surrounding: the autonomy of emotions; the degree of cognition required for sympathy; and the proximity required for sympathy to be achieved. The first two points are connected, as cognition suggests freewill and autonomy over one's emotions. English philosophers Anthony Ashley Cooper (third earl of Shaftesbury) and David Hume both argue that emotions are contagious, concluding that sympathy is a natural process that individuals have no control over, although individuals could re-establish their agency by channelling this sympathy into philanthropic action.[75] In *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739)

[73] Haskell, 'Capitalism and the Origins of the Humanitarian Sensibility', p. 341.
[74] Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility,* p. 22.
[75] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm' [1707], in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* [1711], ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

Hume contended that ‘the passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce correspondent movements in all human breasts.’[76] Hume’s suggestion that the movement of feeling is unintentional echoes Shaftesbury’s notion that passions are ‘infectious’, as expressed in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711).[77] The theory that emotions are ‘contagious’ and ‘infectious’ suggests that the sympathetic transferral of emotions is as inadvertent as one catching a disease, and is just as easily spread. Despite these negative connotations of illness, Hume argues that ‘no quality of human nature is more remarkable […] than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to, our own.’[78] Hume suggests that sympathy can occur regardless of difference, which implies that sympathy should be readily extended to Africans (because emotions are universal), and become a driving force for abolitionist action.[79]

Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) provides an alternative argument to that offered by Shaftesbury and Hume, as he argues that it is harder to sympathise with those who are different if you cannot imagine their emotional experience.[80] Smith argues that imagination is an essential precursor to sympathy, as our senses ‘never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is

[76] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* p. 906.
[77] Shaftesbury, ‘A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm’, p. 10.
[78] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* p. 490.
[79] It is important to note that Hume’s racist views are not overlooked here; they will be discussed slightly later on in relation to his arguments that Africans were intellectually inferior, which further complicates the relationship between theories of race and theories of emotion.
[80] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 11.

by the imagination only that we can form any conception' of another's sensations.[81] He uses the collective first-person pronouns 'us', 'we', and 'our' when explaining his theory of how sympathy occurs in order to establish it as a universal process:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation […] It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his [the object of sympathy], which our imagination copy.[82]

Rather than simply imagining how another person is feeling, we must imagine how we would feel in their situation, involving a judgement carried out by an 'impartial spectator' to determine whether the potential object of sympathy's feelings are justified or not.[83] Smith concludes that sympathy 'does not arise so much from the view of the passion, as from that of the situation which excites it.'[84] Sympathy only occurs when the feelings of the potential object of sympathy align with what we imagine our own feelings would be in the same position, leading to a judgement that the emotional response is suitable to the situation. The sympathiser does not mirror or share the feelings of the emotional individual, but rather accepts the appropriateness of the emotional response.

However, Smith is at times self-contradictory, as he appears to acknowledge that emotions are spontaneous:

> Upon some occasions sympathy may seem to arise merely from the view of a certain emotion in another person. The passions, upon some occasions,

[81] Ibid., p. 11.
[82] Ibid., p. 11-2.
[83] Ibid., p. 129.
[84] Ibid., p. 15.

> may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously, and antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them in the person principally concerned.[85]

This observation is qualified by the phrase ‘upon some occasions’ and the repetition of ‘may seem’, which cast doubt on the validity of such claims as those made by Hume and Shaftesbury, reinforced when Smith goes on to say that this ‘does not hold universally, or with regard to every passion.’[86] Smith explains that while ‘grief and joy’, if strongly expressed, can be sympathised with immediately, this can only form a partial sympathy without knowing the cause.[87] He goes on to say that there are other passions, such as anger, which can ‘excite no sort of sympathy, but before we are acquainted with what gave occasion to them, serve rather to disgust and provoke us against them.’[88] Without knowing the cause of such anger we are unable to imagine our own reaction, and therefore cannot determine whether the emotional reaction is justified. Yet even the automatic sympathetic response to grief and joy can only be partial without knowing their cause. Abolitionist writers were aware that portraying enslaved Africans expressing emotional responses that were not considered to be socially acceptable could make it difficult for the reader to sympathise with them, which may make the reader reluctant to help support the abolitionist cause.

Learning the cause of such extreme emotional responses allows our impartial spectator to make a judgement, so that we can then adjust our sympathy

[85] Ibid., p. 13.
[86] Ibid., p. 13.
[87] Ibid., p. 13.
[88] Ibid., p. 13-14

accordingly. For this reason, abolitionist literature often described the experiences of enslaved Africans in great detail, to allow the reader to imagine the cause of their suffering and their subsequent emotional responses. The various philosophical theories of sympathy offered by Shaftesbury, Hume, and Smith are reflected in a variety of abolitionist discourse. The notion that sympathy is contagious and automatic through proximity was used to argue that those in direct contact with enslaved individuals should be sympathetic to their suffering. However, most enslaved people were situated in the colonies, and so their distance from the British public in the motherland meant that imagination and a cognitive judgement were often necessary precursors to sympathetic identification. Detailed descriptions, and first-hand accounts (slave narratives, for example), of slavery were therefore considered to be important for inspiring sympathetic identification with enslaved Africans, because personal accounts helped to familiarise the suffering that they experienced during their enslavement. At the height of the petition campaign in 1788, Joseph Woods compared the humanity of the British public to 'Tinder which has immediately caught fire from the spark of Information which has been struck upon it'.[89] Abolitionist literature intended to educate British readers about the barbarous truths of slavery as a way to inspire sympathy, and aid communication between those who were geographically and culturally distant. My chapters explore how these theories of sympathy intersect with the different types of emotive rhetoric used in abolitionist discourse, with the tension between proximity and distance particularly analysed in Chapter Two in relation to abolitionist portrayals of sorrow.

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[89] Joseph Woods to William Matthews, 28 January 1788, *Matthews MSS*, A1/5 (London: Friends House Library) in J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (London: Routledge, 2008) p. 7.

Contemporary theories of emotion debated not only the degree of cognition required to achieve sympathy, but also the degree of cognition required to act upon such feelings. Shaftesbury argues that all humans are born with a natural instinct for right and wrong, 'which nature teaches, exclusive of art, culture or discipline'.[90] This moral instinct does, however, require reason to direct emotion into the proper modes of expression: 'WORTH and VIRTUE depend on a knowledge of *Right* and *Wrong,* and on a use of Reason sufficient to secure a right application of the Affections.'[91] Shaftesbury stresses the regulatory function of reason when balancing private emotions against public expressions, as reason ensures that the consequential action taken will benefit the entire social community. Yet the emotional response itself cannot be controlled as it is a natural reaction. Hume presents a similar argument by contending that emotions are the motivating force behind our actions, though reason determines the way that these emotions are expressed. He argues:

> when we have the prospect of pain or pleasure from any object, we feel a consequent emotion of aversion or propensity, and are carry'd to avoid or embrace what will give us this uneasiness or satisfaction.[92]

Hume argues that reason then seeks to establish what has triggered the emotional response, involving a judgement of whether the effect is appropriate to the cause, which somewhat resonates with Smith's idea of the impartial spectator. Hume claims that the result of this cognitive assessment determines the course of action to be undertaken, and thus concludes that 'impulse arises not from reason, but is only directed by it'.[93] The perceived importance of cognition in directing emotions into

[90] Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men*, p. 325.
[91] Ibid., p. 175.
[92] Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature,* p. 634.
[93] Ibid., p. 634.

action led some abolitionists to advocate racial equality in terms of intellectual ability, as well as emotional capacity, so that they could argue that Africans had the cognitive ability to direct their emotions into appropriate forms of expression. Abolitionists thus argued that it was merely a matter of educating Africans on Western social norms regarding appropriate emotional expression.

These narratives of sympathy are complicated by prejudice, as enlightenment values are embedded with assumptions of racial superiority.[94] Despite Hume's seemingly egalitarian views, and claims to being above prejudice, he tends to reinforce racial difference. While he claims that the emotional experience, and the ability to sympathise, are both universal constants without boundaries, he nevertheless considers 'Negroes […] to be naturally inferior to the whites' in terms of their cognitive ability.[95] Some scholars have dismissed this as marginal, since it is merely a footnote added to the essay 'Of National Characters' between 1753 and 1754; however, its addition and continued presence in subsequent editions suggests that Hume considered it an important limitation to the application of his argument.[96] Hume speculated that:

> There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences […] Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made our original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are Negro slaves dispersed all over

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[94] Kehinde Andrews, *The New Age of Empire: How Racism and Colonialism Still Rule the World* (London: Penguin, 2021).

[95] David Hume, 'Of National Characters' [1753-4], in *The Philosophical Works,* III, ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882) p. 228.

[96] Emmanuel C. Eze, 'Hume, Race, and Human Nature', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 61.4 (2000) pp. 691-698, (p. 697).

> Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; tho' low [White] people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession.[97]

Hume argues that a racial hierarchy exists whereby Black people are naturally inferior to White people, and so no amount of education could allow nations that are populated by Black people to be considered as 'civilised'. He contends that this inferiority amongst Africans is the result of an innate cognitive deficiency, rather than the lack of education and opportunity to succeed. Whilst poor and uneducated White people could achieve social elevation by attaining a multitude of professions, Hume argues that the same could not be said for Africans and other non-White races. The fact that abolitionists and slavery apologists alike responded to this footnote – James Ramsay criticised the lack of 'any competent knowledge', and Gordon Turnbull deemed it a 'reasonable hypothesis' – demonstrates its importance to discussions of eighteenth-century conceptions of race, particularly in relation to slavery.[98]

Hume revised the note for a final edition that was published posthumously in 1777; however, the editors failed to include the revision, so it has often been overlooked.[99] Richard Popkin was one of the first to examine the note, accusing Hume of expressing a 'virulent strain' of racism, and an 'implicit' commitment to polygenesis.[100] John Immerwahr concurs that Hume is 'a proponent of philosophical

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[97] Hume, 'Of National Characters', p. 253.
[98] Ramsay, *An Essay,* p. 198; Gordon Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery*, *or The West-India Planters Vindicated from the charge of inhumanity. By the author of Letters to a Young Planter, 2nd edn.* (London: J. Stevenson, 1786) p. 34. For more information, see: C. L. Ten, 'Hume's Racism and Miracles', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 36.1 (2002) pp. 101-107.
[99] David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary* [1777], ed. by Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985) p. 629.
[100] Richard H. Popkin, 'Hume's Racism', in *The High Road to Pyrrhonism,* ed. by Richard A. Watson and James E. Force (San Diego: Austin Hill Press, 1980) pp. 251-66 (p. 266).

racism' who was willing to defend his racist views, but insists that 'Hume did not endorse polygenesis.'[101] The revision omitted the polygenetic language of 'all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds)', modified 'never' to 'scarcely ever', and directed the attack solely at Black people rather than anyone who was not 'White'.[102] The extent to which Hume believed in polygenesis and the extent of his racism have both been considerably debated.[103] Kendra Asher has added a new perspective to this debate by arguing that 'Hume's racism cannot be taken for granted'.[104] Asher proposes two new readings: the 'esoteric interpretation' suggests that Hume did not believe in racial difference, but included it to create 'a less emotionally charged conversation on the costs of slavery' in order to deter readers from supporting slavery; alternatively, the 'satirical interpretation' suggests that Hume was 'lampooning' enslavers rather than 'trying to endear himself' to them.[105] Asher offers an original, if unconvincing, interpretation of Hume's footnote, which encourages scholars to consider the difference between authorial intent and the author's internal beliefs. Hume's intentions regarding the footnote remain unclear, though most scholars concur that he intentionally promotes racial inequality, despite his abolitionist stance.[106]

Although the majority of abolitionists promoted emotional equality regardless of racial difference, not all of them believed in intellectual equality. Some abolitionists, such as Hannah More, shared Hume's view that Africans were intellectually inferior

[101] Immerwahr, 'Hume's Revised Racism', pp. 481, 485-6.
[102] Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary,* p. 629; Immerwahr, 'Hume's Revised Racism', p. 483.
[103] Aaron Garrett, 'Hume's Revised Racism Revisited', *Hume Studies,* 26.1 (2000) pp. 171-177 (p. 176); Garrett and Sebastiani, 'David Hume on Race', p. 40.
[104] Asher, 'Was David Hume a racist?', p. 229.
[105] Ibid., pp. 227-8.
[106] Robert Palter, 'Hume and Prejudice', *Hume Studies*, 21.1 (1995) pp. 3-23.

to Europeans. On the other hand, Black abolitionists, such as Olaudah Equiano, wanted to establish themselves as equal to White people in every respect, not just in terms of emotional expression. Therefore, this thesis considers the extent to which Black and White abolitionists differed in their claims of racial equality by exploring whether they advocated intellectual, rather than just emotional, equality.

Emotional and Intellectual Equality in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*

At this point it is worth exploring how Olaudah Equiano situates himself at the opposite end of the abolitionist spectrum to Hannah More. Whilst More limits racial equality to emotional capabilities, Equiano represents the opposite extremity by arguing that all races are equal in every respect, including intellectual – rather than just emotional – capabilities. Equiano's narrative engages with various emotions, and ways of expressing them, which is why it is explored in almost every chapter of this thesis (except for Chapter Four) alongside other abolitionist literature. I shall now provide a close reading of a particular extract from Equiano's *Narrative* that offers a counterargument to More's claim that Black people are intellectually inferior. Although the extract is not directly concerned with slavery, or indeed race, it stresses the universality of emotions, the transmissibility of sympathy, and the morality of Christian charity – all of which are important components of the British abolitionist message.

The combined use of rational and emotive discourse is exemplified in Equiano's recollection of two White men stealing two bags of fruit from him, and one bag from

an elderly enslaved individual. He considered this to be ‘an insupportable misfortune’ leading to ‘the greatest confusion and despair’ at being ‘deprived of every farthing I was worth’ (Equiano, p. 159). Equiano and his companion persevered and begged to have their fruits back, and eventually Equiano had both his bags returned to him, though the thieves kept the fruit belonging to the elderly man. He recalls:

> The poor old man, wringing his hands, cried bitterly for his loss; and, indeed, he then did look up to God on high, which so moved me with pity for him, that I gave him nearly one third of my fruits. We then proceeded to the markets to sell them; and Providence was more favourable to us than we could have expected, for we sold our fruits uncommonly well (Equiano, p. 161).

His own feelings of confusion, despair, and misfortune allowed Equiano to identify with his companion’s emotional reaction, which closely resonated with his own response to the unfortunate situation. Emotional expression, and the pity that is arouses, are attributed the power to influence another’s actions, operating in an ‘economy of feeling’ through the process of sympathetic identification that concerns the production, distribution, and exchange of emotions.[107] An emotional transaction of commercial value takes place, as the old man’s tears are commodified to serve as a currency by which his sorrow could be exchanged for the fruit that he receives. Equiano’s selfless deed is the quintessential example of pity successfully being transformed into philanthropic action, which allows Equiano to present himself as a morally conscientious individual as a way to combat claims of African inferiority. He essentially undertakes a cost-benefit analysis of the emotional costs (of the old man’s suffering and his own potential guilt) and the financial costs of sharing his fruit, demonstrating both his sensitivity to emotions and his analytical proficiency. The

[107] Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 49.

decision to suffer financially rather than emotionally indicates that Equiano valued emotional wellbeing over financial gain, thereby presenting a model of respectable behaviour. Equiano suggests that his readers can follow this example by prioritising the welfare of enslaved individuals over the financial benefits of slavery. He purposefully applies rhetoric associated with the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility in order to depict sympathy as an essential component to human sociability, as it creates a system of support motivated by the desire to alleviate the suffering of those in need of assistance. The narrative's emotive rhetoric effectively argues that sympathy can be extended to all races, and therefore White British readers could, and should, sympathise with Black enslaved individuals.

The passage also suggests that another type of exchange occurs concerning the Christian concept of divine providence. The old man prays 'to God on high', which is rewarded when Equiano's pity leads him to share his fruit, an act of benevolence which is in turn rewarded as 'Providence was more favourable to us than we could have expected'. The suggestion that this was divine intervention, as a reward for Equiano's charitable behaviour, is in line with the Christian doctrine of 'a man reaps what he sows' (Galatians 6:7). It thereby serves as a sentimental parable by showing that enslaved Africans could conform to sentimental ideals of benevolence, whilst presenting human suffering on an individual scale facilitates a more personal connection between the reader and the sufferer(s).[108] It also aligns Equiano as a Christian who receives confirmation of God's approval for his charitable act. Edmund Burke claimed that 'Our Creator has designed we should be united by

[108] For more on sentimental parables see: Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 39.

the bond of sympathy', so that we seek to eliminate the victim's pain in order to relieve our own sympathetic suffering.[109] Burke applied this notion to slavery – though he favoured a gradualist approach to abolition and manumission – and sought to relieve the suffering of enslaved individuals through ameliorative measures such as improving work conditions and encouraging religious conversion.[110] He believed that converting to Christianity would humanise enslaved individuals in the minds of their enslavers, and would 'by degrees habituate their masters, not to think them a sort of beasts, and without souls, as some of them do at present'.[111] Religious conversion would therefore benefit not only the enslaved, but also their enslavers, allowing White people to refine their own sensibilities and sympathies in line with Christian principles. Christian conversion was another way to unify mankind by reinforcing similarities to foster sympathetic identification towards enslaved individuals, whilst demonstrating that slavery was incompatible with Christianity. Equiano uses religious rhetoric in his narrative to position himself within the Christian community, portraying himself as a model Christian and a worthy subject of sympathy. Equiano's emotional and devotional performance conforms to Western ideals and social norms concerning religious piety in an effort to show his cultural assimilation, which aimed to discredit the notion of racial inferiority because of the similarities between Black and White people. The connection between religious and emotive rhetoric is explored throughout this thesis – particularly in Chapter Four – to

[109] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* 2nd edn (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1759) p. 74.
[110] Edmund Burke and Will Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America,* II (London: J. Dodsley, 1765); Edmund Burke, *Sketch of a Negro Code* [1780], in *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period,* II, ed. by P. Kitson (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999). For more on Burke's views on slavery see Gregory M. Collins, 'Edmund Burke on Slavery and the Slave Trade', *Slavery & Abolition*, 40.3 (2019) pp. 494-521.
[111] Burke and Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements,* p. 129.

show that emotive rhetoric was used to depict abolitionist action as a Christian responsibility.

Christine Levecq contends that by presenting this ‘simple act of fairness’ as the result of pity, Equiano ‘acknowledges a sentimental, and possibly racial, connection to him.’[112] Whilst racial identification is likely to have motivated Equiano’s actions to some extent, race is only indirectly addressed in recalling that ‘they now saw we were strangers as well as slaves’ (Equiano, p. 160). It is his age that is foregrounded, rather than his race, as Equiano hoped that age would be easier for the British public to sympathise with. Reinforcing familiarity, rather than difference, positioned emotions as a unifying principle of humanity, which intended to facilitate sympathy with the individual’s emotional suffering to encourage the British public to engage in the narrative’s anti-slavery discourse. Aging is a universal process, an inevitability for everyone regardless of race, class, or gender, which Equiano foregrounds in order to depict the universal application of sympathy. Race, on the other hand, accounted for deviations from Western cultural norms that were used to justify the subjugation of non-Europeans.[113] Although Equiano aimed to demonstrate his conformity to Western expectations regarding emotional expression, religious affiliation, and education, he was not willing to betray his African heritage. He was unable to change the colour of his skin, and so he refused to accept that complexion was a mark of emotional differentiation. Omitting references to skin colour was therefore an

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[112] Christine Levecq, ‘Sentiment and Cosmopolitanism in Olaudah Equiano’s Narrative’, *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 1.1 (2008) pp. 13–30 (p. 22).
[113] James Walvin and Peter Kitson argue that racism was the effect – rather than the cause – of slavery, because the abolitionist campaign in the late eighteenth century saw enslavers respond with racial defences as the most obvious signifier of difference. See: James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 84; Peter J. Kitson, *Romantic Literature, Race, and Colonial Encounter* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 8.

intentional dismissal of claims upheld by enslavers, Enlightenment philosophers such as Hume, and certain abolitionists such as More. Equiano demonstrates his emotional capabilities to situate himself as belonging to that which Markman Ellis termed a 'sentimental body politic' (a society of which all ranks and classes are bound by philanthropic feeling), whilst also showing that he was able to employ reason to rationalise his actions.[114] In doing so, Equiano establishes himself as an equal to the reader to demonstrate that race is a socially constructed barrier that should be eradicated.

Equiano's claims for racial equality are not limited to emotional capabilities, but are also extended to intellectual proficiency. The rational thinking that prompted Equiano's successful negotiation for both the return of the stolen goods and their subsequent sale, combined with the account of Equiano earning enough money to buy his own freedom, aimed to demonstrate Equiano's intellectual prowess, commercial awareness, and agency as a Black individual. Mary Wollstonecraft's review of the *Interesting Narrative* in 1789 claims: 'if these volumes do not exhibit extraordinary intellectual powers, sufficient to wipe off the stigma [of African inferiority], yet the activity and ingenuity, which conspicuously appear in the character of Gustavus, place him on a par with the general mass of men'.[115] Although Wollstonecraft has reservations about whether the 'activity and ingenuity' evidenced by Equiano can be generalised to all Africans to remove the 'stigma' of racial

[114] Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility,* p. 107.
[115] Mary Wollstonecraft, Review of Olaudah Equiano's Interesting Narrative, *Analytical Review,* May 1789, in Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2005) pp. 331-332.

inferiority, she does concede that he has earned the right to be considered as an equal to ‘the general mass’ of White Europeans.

Presentations of Equiano’s rational thinking are combined with his emotional responses in order to position him simultaneously as a man of reason and a man of feeling. Equiano establishes himself as the sentimental hero, which Brycchan Carey argues is ‘either a victim of someone else’s actions, or a benefactor who alleviates the suffering of others’.[116] The scene depicting the theft of the fruit bag exposes Equiano’s duality: he is both victim and benefactor; he is both a man of reason and a sentimental hero; and he is oppressed during his enslavement, yet determined to re-establish agency. Equiano presents his emotional, rational, and sympathetic capabilities to challenge the concept of a racial hierarchy and to advocate the universal application of emotions and sympathy. In doing so, he encourages the reader to follow his example by employing both sensibility, and rationality, when considering the slavery debate. Equiano thus presents one of the key messages of British abolitionist literature: individuals can establish their sensibility, morality, and (to some extent) rationality, by taking abolitionist action.

Throughout this thesis I shall demonstrate that Black individuals, like Equiano, were aware of the importance of moderation, and sought to demonstrate their ability to exert reason to control their emotional expressions. This premise was particularly

[116] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 41.

important for Equiano, as he became as much of a commodity as his book. As Ryan Hanley argues:

> Equiano was […] a living demonstration of the moral indefensibility of enslaving fellow human beings and an avatar of the wrongly enslaved. Readers could hear him speak in person, reach out and touch him, and in so doing become a part of the movement – and the art – he represented.[117]

For this reason, Equiano came to be considered as a valuable commodity that other abolitionists invested in to further their political campaign. Abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson and Josiah Wedgwood provided financial contributions to fund the publication of Equiano's *Narrative*, as did the future monarch, the Prince of Wales.[118] The narrative proved popular, going through several editions within Equiano's lifetime and beyond, which Catherine Innes considers to be evidence of the success of the 'appeal to the "better selves" of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers in Britain, in enlarging rather than merely reiterating concepts of self and community.'[119] Readers could purchase Equiano's narrative as a way to establish their own humanity, morality, and emotional sensitivity through performances of sympathy and abolitionist support.[120] In order for Equiano to profit from his celebrity, both in terms of financial gain and abolitionist action, he had to present himself as an equal to his audience in terms of both emotional and intellectual capabilities. He demonstrates his ability to exert reason to control his emotional expressions, presenting himself as refined, composed, and benevolent in order to show that Black individuals could conform to British social and cultural norms. Equiano therefore uses emotive and

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[117] Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition,* p. 63.
[118] 'List of Subscribers', Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789).
[119] Catherine Lynette Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 5.
[120] Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition,* p. 64.

rational discourse in his narrative so that he could advocate emotional and intellectual equality, regardless of racial difference.

Genre

The diverse range of abolitionist writers, from various backgrounds, made use of a wide variety of genres to deliver their abolitionist messages. Whilst White writers used both verse and prose to put across their abolitionist sentiments, Black writers predominantly used prose in their slave narratives. Manu Chander's discussion of how colour inflects discussions of genre is pertinent, and may offer a possible explanation for the formal difference.[121] He argues that White writers could make their own poetic rules if they were popular and established within their literary careers, whereas non-White writers, such as the 'Brown Romantics', would have had to subject themselves to poetic traditions in order for their own poetry to be recognised and accepted.[122] However, this risked 'the charge of inauthenticity, mimicry, or fraud', creating a double bind whereby the non-White writer was excluded regardless of whether they wrote in prose or verse.[123] Although Chander is discussing 'Brown Romantics', a body of poets that are quite different from the enslaved or emancipated Black writers that are explored in this thesis, his argument also applies to Black eighteenth-century writers. For example, David Hume admitted that Francis Williams, the Jamaican-born poet with a Cambridge education who wrote verse in Latin, was an exception to his claim that Black people never

[121] Manu Samriti Chander, *Brown Romantics: Poetry and Nationalism in the Global Nineteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 2001).
[122] Ibid., p. 4.
[123] Ibid., p. 4.

demonstrated their intellectual abilities.[124] Nevertheless, he qualifies his praise by reducing these 'very slender accomplishments' to mere imitations, comparing Williams to 'a parrot who speaks a few words plainly'.[125] This charge of mimicry creates a double bind where Williams is praised for conforming to the literary traditions of the White oppressor, and yet is considered to be inauthentic because this required an element of cultural appropriation. Overall, Hume discredits the attempts of Black writers, accusing them of mimicry to further his argument that such an inferior quality of literature was the result of a natural intellectual inferiority, rather than the result of unequal opportunities and limited education. Hume was not alone in this view, as Edward Long (1744) claimed that the 'oran-outang' does not 'seem inferior in the intellectual facilitates to many of the Negro race'.[126] However, Reverend Robert Boucher Nikkolls indirectly responded to such claims in a private letter in 1788, arguing that Phillis Wheatley and Francis Williams are both examples of 'the literary merit or ability of two negroe writers', and that he had 'never heard of poems by a monkey, or of Latin odes by an oran-outang.'[127] The poetry of these Black writers was considered by some as evidence of racial intellectual equality, while others such as Hume favoured the contrary interpretation that it was inferior imitation. Black writers created a genre of their own that would somewhat free them from these accusations of imitation; thus emerged the slave narrative.

[124] Francis Williams (*c.* 1690–1762) was born in Jamaica, the son of Dorothy and John Williams. His father had been emancipated from slavery in the late 1690s. Francis inherited a large estate from his father, which was operated by enslaved individuals, though he still managed to pursue his passion for writing. For more, see: John Gilmore, 'Francis Williams', *ODNB* (8th January 2015) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-57050?rskey=zHKsca&result=4 [Accessed 26/10/21].
[125] Hume, *The Philosophical Works*, p. 253.
[126] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island: With Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government,* II (London: T. Lowndes, 1774) p. 370.
[127] Reverend Robert Boucher Nikkolls, *Letter to the Treasurer of the Society Instituted for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: James Phillips, 1788) p. 46.

Such criticism offers one explanation for why prose was the medium that Black writers predominantly chose to express their narratives, rather than attempting to conform to the formal restraints of poetry. Prose offered emancipated individuals a degree of formal freedom: free from the metrical restraints of poetry, and free from the expectation to conform to traditional expectations and Western standards. Although they may have conformed to social expectations concerning emotional expression and religious affiliation, Black writers refused to submit to the formal restraints of poetry. This is particularly significant since Equiano, Gronniosaw, Prince and Cugoano were all emancipated at the time of writing their respective narratives, so their refusal to submit to these formal restraints symbolises their resistance against slavery and their fight to defend their freedom. They therefore embraced a hybridity of prose styles to form a new genre – the slave narrative – to represent their new relative freedom. Scholars of Romanticism have previously proposed the anti-generic hypothesis (which argues that 'Romanticism was fundamentally hostile to genre, or interested in genres only for the purposes of dissolving or transcending them'), yet more recent scholarship has challenged this by arguing that the 'remarkable freedom' taken with genres has been misunderstood for a 'total liberation from them'.[128] The Romantics expanded, rather than narrowed, the genre-spectrum by adapting and adopting different formal elements as part of a generic experimentation.[129] The slave narrative is one product of such experimentation, as it blends aspects of autobiographies, travel narratives, sea adventures, political

[128] David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) pp. 207–8.
[129] Tilottama Rajan, and Julia M. Wright (eds.), *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Reforming Literature 1789-1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

commentary, and tales of spiritual conversion.[130] While poetry was supply-driven by authors who were funded by themselves or their patrons, novels were demand-led by purchasers, subscribers, and readers.[131] The generic flexibility of slave narratives contributed to their success by appealing to multiple readerships simultaneously. The fluidity of genre both warranted, and was fuelled by, intertextuality, such as the use of Biblical exegesis – which will be explored in Chapter Four – to appeal to a religious public by serving as evidence of the narrator's religious conversion. Conversion elements also increased the chances of publication to meet the demand from Evangelicals for propaganda that not only promoted abolition, but also helped to disseminate religious ideas, and so Evangelical groups were more willing to finance such narratives.[132] The slave narrative's transcendence of boundaries, and genre hybridity, therefore reflects both the demand on the literary marketplace (particularly in light of sales and subscription rates),[133] and the agency of Black writers who refused to conform to traditional formal restrictions.

Cultural Hybridity

[130] Audrey A. Fisch, 'Introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 1-8 (p. 4); Innes, *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain,* p. 3; Philip Gould, 'The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 11-27 (p. 13); Kerry Sinanan, 'The Slave Narrative and the Literature of Abolition', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 61-80 (p. 63).
[131] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 176.
[132] Gould, 'The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative', p. 14.
[133] The sales and profits of these slave narratives is not the primary focus of this thesis, so for information see: Gould, 'The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative', p. 21; Vincent Carretta, 'Olaudah Equiano: African British Abolitionist and Founder of the African American Slave Narrative', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 44-60 (p. 52); Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition,* p. 67.

The hybridity of genres reflects the cultural hybridity of enslaved Africans and the complexity of their transnational identities in consequence of enforced diaspora. Paul Gilroy rejects the idea of ethnic absolutism in favour of cultural hybridity, as national cultural identity is undermined 'when confronted by the intercultural and transnational formation' that he calls the 'Black Atlantic'.[134] The 'Black Atlantic' encompasses the multiple cultural aspects adopted by enslaved Africans who became cultural hybrids that transcended national boundaries. Equiano's *Narrative* is a quintessential example of this, as he called himself 'a citizen of the world'.[135] The frontispiece features his portrait, where his dual cultural identity is shown through the combination of European aristocratic clothing, demonstrating his wealth and social status, contrasted against his natural hair as a signifier of his African origins.[136] The absence of a wig reveals Equiano's unwillingness to hide his African heritage, and establishes him as a hybrid of both European and African cultures. Equiano became a 'transnational figure', whose cosmopolitanism developed a 'fluid and ever-changing' diasporic identity.[137] By embracing certain aspects of European culture, and establishing his career as a writer, Equiano shows that Black individuals could conform to British social and cultural norms, whether that be in regards to clothing, language, emotional expression, or any other matter. Equiano's ability to conform to his environment undermines the argument that Black people are naturally inferior, as skin colour becomes the only remaining difference.

[134] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993) p. ix.
[135] Vincent Carretta, 'Preface', *Equiano, the African,* p. xix.
[136] Equiano, 'Frontispiece' to *The Interesting Narrative.*
[137] Levecq, 'Sentiment and Cosmopolitanism', pp. 13, 18.

Notions of cultural hybridity complicated ideas of national identity, particularly in relation to abolitionist debates. A transnational focus to analysing abolitionist literature risks downplaying or overlooking national movements, particularly the importance of national identity in the British abolitionist campaign, such as the concept of national guilt (which will be explored in Chapter Five).[138] Distinguishing between a nation (an 'imagined community' that exists in the minds of its members) and a 'state' (defined by politically established geographical boundaries) helps to clarify that the 'nation' is a symbol that represents the collective perception of its members.[139] This raises the question: who were considered to be members of the nation? Srividhya Swaminathan argues that 'writers continuously revised the predominant characteristics of the "Briton" in response to audience and opposition', although a White, imperial, British identity largely dominated discussions on both sides of the slavery debate.[140] Abolitionists (both Black and White alike) sought to influence the collective perception of the nation by encouraging readers to consider the ways that slavery was negatively impacting Britain's national identity, as the enslavement of Africans posed a threat to Britain's reputation as a land of freedom and equality. Instead of abandoning the notion that Britain was a nation of liberty, Christopher Lee Brown argues that the British adjusted to 'make the facts conform more closely to the national myth' in order to preserve the nation's pride.[141]

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[138] John McLeod, 'Taking Shortcuts: Literary Perspectives of the "Black Atlantic"', in *New Perspectives on the Black Atlantic: Definitions, Readings, Practices, Dialogues*, ed. by Bénédicte Ledent and Pilar Cuder-Dominguez (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2012) pp. 135-153 (p. 139).
[139] Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*
[140] Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade,* p. 7; Edward B. Rugemer, review of Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815*, (2009), in *Literature & History,* 19.2 (2010) pp. 102-103. For more on the relationship between slavery and Britain's national identity, see: Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*; Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Stephen Conway, *War, State, and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[141] Brown, *Moral Capital,* p. 206.

Abolitionists drew on these tensions concerning national identity, whilst also contextualising slavery debates with religious discourse to promote a Christian duty to 'consider ourselves as *Citizens of the World*' in order to foster a sense of universal benevolence.[142] In an attempt to find a balance between these national and transnational identities, abolitionists argued that ending the slave trade, and slavery itself, would help to redeem Britain's international reputation.

Terminology

At this point it is worth including a brief discussion of terminology, to explain the rationale behind the vocabulary that will be used in these discussions of abolitionist literature. There is an issue with scholarship whose methodological approach sees subjected individuals and communities only as 'slaves', rather than as subjects with agencies, thoughts, and feelings of their own. Such scholarship risks dehumanising and objectifying these individuals by reducing them to the capacity of a 'slave', and ignoring the fact that they were also friends, lovers, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, pacifists, revolutionaries, enemies, entrepreneurs, and so on. Exploring the thoughts and feelings of enslaved individuals tackles this issue by demonstrating the driving forces behind their actions, and establishing their agency. The term 'African' is also in many ways reductionist, as it fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of different cultures, belief systems, languages, and lifestyles within Africa. These differences meant that the experience of cultural hybridity was unique to each enslaved individual, defying homogeneity and generalisation. Nevertheless, in light of

[142] Granville Sharp, *The Law of Retribution, Or, A Serious Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies, Founded on Unquestionable Examples of God's Temporal Vengeance against Tyrants, Slaveholders and Oppressors* (London: W. Richardson, 1776) p. 6.

scholarly discussions on 'Black Romanticism' and the 'Black Atlantic' this thesis will use the terms 'Africans' and 'Black people' to describe the 'enslaved' individuals as a collective group, as these terms acknowledge that race was a key aspect of British slavery debates.[143]

The terms 'Black' and 'White' are capitalised throughout this thesis, in line with recent discussions on how to write about race. Lori L. Tharps (2014) argues that 'black with a lower case "b" is a color', whereas:

> Black with a capital 'B' refers to a group of people whose ancestors were born in Africa, were brought to the United States against their will, spilled their blood, sweat and tears to build this nation into a world power and along the way managed to create glorious works of art, passionate music, scientific discoveries, a marvelous cuisine, and untold literary masterpieces.[144]

The capitalisation serves to distinguish the adjective (colour) from the noun (people/person), and so 'Black' is used to identify people of the African diaspora, and to recognise their struggle against racial discrimination.[145] More recently, Kwame Anthony Appiah (2020) has developed Tharps's argument by contending that the capitalisation of 'Black' can help to expose race as a social construct, as Appiah writes:

> A good reason to capitalize the racial designation 'black', then, is precisely that black, in this sense, is not a natural category but a social one—a collective identity—with a particular history. […] Conventions of capitalization can help signal that races aren't natural categories, to be

[143] Youngquist, 'Black Romanticism'; Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
[144] Lori L. Tharps, 'I Refuse to Remain in the Lower Case', *My American Melting Pot, A Multicultural Lifestyle Blog* (June 2014) https://myamericanmeltingpot.com/2014/06/02/i-refuse-to-remain-in-the-lower-case/ [Accessed 02/08/2021].
[145] Ibid.

> discovered in the world, but products of social forces. Giving *black* a big *B* could signal that it's not a generic term for some feature of humanity but a name for a particular human-made entity. […] Without the theory and practice of racism, there are neither blacks nor whites.[146]

Appiah argues that the capitalisation of 'Black' demonstrates one's political stance against racism, and serves to acknowledge that 'race' is a man-made form of categorisation that was introduced to oppress those whose physical appearance was different to what was seemingly established as the 'norm'. The arguments in favour of capitalising 'Black' when referring to the likes of Equiano, Gronniosaw, Cugoano, and Prince, is therefore a very convincing one.

The debate concerning whether to likewise capitalise 'White', however, is slightly more problematic. On the one hand, Anne Price (2019) is against capitalisation in this instance, as she argues that 'we cannot embrace equal treatment in our language' until 'we address the interactive effects of discrimination and subjugation on the lives of Black people', and so 'leaving white in lowercase represents a righting of a long-standing wrong and a demand for dignity and racial equity.'[147] Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton (2020), on the other hand, advocate capitalisation of both terms:

> To not name 'White' as a race is, in fact, an anti-Black act which frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard […] it is important to call attention to White as a race as a way to understand and give voice to how Whiteness functions in our social and political institutions and our

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[146] Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in Black', *The Atlantic* (18 June 2020) https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/ [Accessed 29/06/2021].

[147] Anne Price, 'Spell it with a Capital "B"', *Insight Center for Community Economic Development* (1 October 2019) https://insightcced.medium.com/spell-it-with-a-capital-b-9eab112d759a [Accessed 29/06/2021].

> communities. Moreover, the detachment of 'White' as a proper noun allows White people to sit out of conversations about race and removes accountability from White people's and White institutions' involvement in racism.[148]

Failing, or refusing, to capitalise 'White' in relation to racial categorisation makes it appear like the 'standard', or the 'norm', which implies that any other skin tone is a deviation from what is considered to be socially acceptable, and therefore risks fuelling narratives of racial inferiority. Capitalisation also allows for an investigation in the extent to which White people contributed towards the racial hierarchy and notions of racial difference. It acknowledges that the notion of racial supremacy is, like the notion of race itself, a social construct. For this reason, both 'Black' and 'White' shall be capitalised throughout this thesis. This proves to be a useful methodological tool in assessing the racial theories that abolitionists engaged with when they used emotive rhetoric to challenge the contemporary notion that Black people were inferior to Whites.

Methodology

In terms of research methodology, I will take the approach of a literary historian by framing close readings of primary texts within their historical contexts. Close readings will involve an analysis of the techniques of sentimental rhetoric that have been identified by Brycchan Carey: the sentimental argument; the rejection of false sensibility; the sentimental parable; the establishment of a sentimental hero;

[148] Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton, 'Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize "Black" and "White"', *Center for the Study of Social Policy* (23 March 2020) https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/ [Accessed 29/06/2021].

sentimental diversion; and the emotional subversion of the intellect.[149] The sentimental argument promoted ideas of common feeling and mutual sympathy, whereby 'the good act on their sympathies while the bad suppress them', and its presence in abolitionist literature has already been established earlier in this introduction.[150] The rejection of false sensibility criticises those feigning emotional expressions, particularly over trivial issues, and will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Two in relation to the sorrows of slavery.[151] The sentimental parable is a short moral story (such as Equiano's fruit bag incident, reminiscent of the Good Samaritan Biblical parable); whereas the sentimental hero is a character that is established as sincere, feeling, and morally astute.[152] Sentimental diversion describes the tactic of describing the (typically emotional) suffering of one group in order to divert attention away from the suffering of another, and the emotional subversion of the intellect involves altering the impact of a logical argument with an appeal to the emotions.[153] Carey investigates how these techniques were used in abolitionist portrayals of the sorrowful expressions of enslaved Africans, and so this thesis aims to expand on this approach by investigating how these techniques were used in other types of emotive rhetoric. It also considers Barbara Rosenwein's concept that multiple 'emotional communities' exist simultaneously (based on friendships, familial relationships, religious congregations, business associations and political affiliations), which overlap and often have conflicting expectations of appropriate emotional expression.[154] Therefore, close readings will be illuminated by

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[149] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 37.
[150] Ibid., p. 38.
[151] Ibid., p. 38.
[152] Ibid., p. 39-40.
[153] Ibid., p. 41-42.
[154] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

biographical, cultural, and historical information to contextualise the emotive rhetoric used in abolitionist discourse.

Investigating the historical and biographical contexts of abolitionist literature reveals overlapping spheres of influence as White and Black abolitionists campaigned together, forming 'contact zones' where colonial encounters took place between people who were once geographically separated.[155] The abolitionist network organised itself into a coherent national campaign with the formation of SEAST in 1787, which can be seen as the official beginning of the abolitionist movement. The time frame of this thesis extends slightly beyond that to consider the proslavery rhetoric of James Grainger's *The Sugar-Cane* in 1764, in addition to Gronniosaw's slave narrative that was published in 1770, whilst also considering the impact of the 1772 Somerset Case (particularly in Chapter Four) and the 1781 *Zong* massacre (see Appendix 1). Therefore the temporal parameters of this thesis range from the 1770s to the 1830s (with the exception of Grainger's 1764 poem) to factor in these early abolitionists contributions in the 1770s, and all other contributions that followed, culminating in the abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 1807. It will also briefly explore how Mary Prince used emotive rhetoric in order to promote the abolition of slavery itself, which was eventually enacted by the British parliament in 1833 (not forgetting the apprentice schemes that ran until 1838, see Appendix 1). For this reason, the temporal parameters indicated in the title of this thesis specify 1833 as

[155] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession,* 91 (1991) pp. 33–40. See also: Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) pp. 3, 48.

the cut-off point, though the main focus will be on the 1780s and 1790s because emotive abolitionist rhetoric was most prominent during this time frame.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter One explores literary portrayals of joy and happiness in the slavery debate. It begins by examining why James Grainger, physician and enslaver living in St Kitts, claimed that enslaved Africans were happy because they were well looked after.[156] Grainger argued that amelioration was mutually beneficial to both the enslaved and their enslavers as it improved the former's productivity (and the happiness of both parties), and so amelioration was a better alternative to emancipation. In some respects slave narratives appear to support this notion, with James Gronniosaw, Olaudah Equiano, and Mary Prince claiming to have been happy when they were treated well by their enslavers. However, closer investigation reveals subtle ironies that undermine this notion and show the intellectual capabilities of enslaved individuals who pretended to be happy as a form of positive reinforcement for good treatment. Slave narratives indicate that the enslaved individuals' emotional expressions of happiness and joy were used for their own benefit, to encourage their enslavers to teach them to read and write and/or to support their religious conversion, which contributed towards their independence and eventual emancipation. Although such joyful performances are portrayed as beneficial to both the enslaved and their enslavers, slave narratives reveal that the pursuit for happiness was inextricably linked to the pursuit for freedom.

[156] For more biographical information, see: Gordon Goodwin, 'James Grainger', *ODNB* (4th October 2007) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-11234?rskey=5T227G&result=1 [Accessed 26/10/2021].

Chapter Two argues that literary portrayals of sorrow intended to show that Africans had emotions, and were capable of expressing them, which reveals that happiness was not sustainable for Black individuals whilst they were enslaved. Abolitionists argued that Britain was immoral for causing such sorrow, although abolition would redeem Britain's moral reputation. Sorrowful expressions at familial separation in particular sought to familiarise the enslaved individuals to the reader and inspire sympathetic identification, with emotions represented as a unifying principle that defines humanity. Readers were encouraged to demonstrate their sensibility and morality by taking direct abolitionist action to relieve the suffering of enslaved individuals. Some abolitionists (such as Hannah More) advocated emotional, but not intellectual, equality. This served as a justification for colonialism to educate the unenlightened, and reinforced the existing racial hierarchy. Furthermore, sorrow made enslaved Africans seem passive, and dependent on the British public for their freedom, which many considered to be evidence of their natural inferiority. Therefore, this chapter argues that there were limitations to the extent to which sentimental rhetoric was used to advocate racial equality and abolitionist action.

Chapter Three examines how Edward Rushton and Olaudah Equiano depicted the anger of enslaved Africans – and their subsequent violent rebellions – as defensive retaliations to the oppressions of slavery. They explained the cruelties that caused such anger in order to encourage readers to feel sympathy towards the enslaved, and indignation towards their enslavers, whilst crediting Black agency.

However, these literary presentations of anger risked portraying enslaved Africans as dangerous, and without the cognitive ability required to exert self-restraint. Nevertheless, this danger fuelled self-interest narratives, as Rushton and Equiano warned Britain that abolition was the only way to prevent the damage caused by rebellions against slavery. I explore the similarities and differences between Rushton and Equiano's portrayals of anger, particularly in terms of justification and degree, and thereby demonstrate that they both used anger to warn their readers that further destruction and suffering would ensue unless slavery was abolished.

Chapter Four investigates how abolitionist writers used religious rhetoric to argue that Britain deserved to be punished with divine vengeance for engaging in slavery. They employed the theological notion of divine providentialism in order to draw on contemporary fears regarding Britain's moral and religious reputation. I argue that the threat of divine vengeance became an allegory for the threat to Britain's status, with abolitionists arguing that abolition, or even emancipation, was needed to redeem the reputation of both Christianity and the British nation. This chapter explores how different abolitionist fear tactics, including prayers for divine vengeance and the use of Biblical exegesis, were used to persuade readers to re-establish Christian values as a way to protect the supremacy of Britain, Christianity, and Protestantism.

Chapter Five argues that abolitionists portrayed slavery as a national sin in order to manipulate and manifest the reader's guilt and shame for allowing the continuation of slavery and the slave trade. Abolitionists sought to make readers feel

responsible for the enslavement of Africans so that they would take abolitionist action to alleviate their subsequent guilt. Therefore, guilt was attributed to indirect contributions to slavery, such as the consumption of goods that were produced by enslaved labour (including sugar and rum) in order to encourage readers to abstain from such produce. This was furthered by cannibalistic rhetoric, which claimed that sugar contained the blood and sweat of the enslaved Africans who produced it, rendering consumers guilty of cannibalism. I argue that cannibalistic rhetoric served three interconnected purposes: to inspire disgust towards sugar; to encourage the reader to consider the morality of their actions; and to reverse the racial cannibal stereotype. Overall, this chapter argues that abolitionist writers employed shame and guilt to persuade the reader to demonstrate their emotional sensitivity, and redeem Britain's moral reputation, by abolishing the slave trade and slavery.

This thesis then concludes with a pedagogical afterword that explores how research conducted on abolitionist literature can be used to diversify the national curriculum. It investigates recent campaigns for schools to teach students about Britain's role in transatlantic slavery, and argues that more information and resources are needed to support teachers so that they feel informed enough on this topic to teach it with confidence. I argue that the research presented in this thesis can be used to create teaching resources for a course that will credit the literary contributions of both Black and White individuals, which is one way to increase the racial diversity of writers within the English curriculum.

Although the chapters of this thesis attempt to distinguish between individual 'basic emotions', I also acknowledge that emotions are not mutually exclusive by demonstrating the intrinsic relationships between them. Emotion etymologically translates as (e) outward (motion) movement, which encapsulates the fluidity and multiplicity of emotions, and acknowledges that several emotions can be felt simultaneously.[157] In 1758, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote in a letter that 'all the passions are sisters and one alone suffices for arousing a thousand'.[158] The categorisation of distinct emotions can therefore be problematic, and so each chapter explores portrayals of individual emotions with a consideration of the wider emotional context. For example: tearful expressions of sorrow were frequently portrayed alongside depictions of happiness, anger, and fear; meanwhile national guilt was often presented alongside abolitionist fear tactics to persuade readers that they too deserved to be punished for their contributions to slavery. Analysing these relationships reveals that contemporary social norms placed a greater value on certain types of emotional expression, thus creating a hierarchy of emotions. I explore how these social norms shaped the ways that abolitionist literature portrayed the expression and suppression of various emotions within various individuals: male and female; Black and White; enslaved and 'free'. Throughout the thesis I argue that various abolitionist rhetorical strategies were used to advocate emotional equality regardless of race, although this was not always accompanied with support for intellectual equality. I also argue that emotive rhetoric was used to argue that

[157] Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) p. 481; Richard C. Sha, 'The Motions Behind Romantic Emotion; Towards a Chemistry and Physics of Feeling', in *Romanticism and the Emotions,* ed. by Joel Faflak and Richard C. Sha (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) pp. 19-47 (p. 19); Rob Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018) p. 26; Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) p. 19.
[158] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Letter to d'Alembert, p. 265.

abolition would be beneficial not only for the enslaved, but also for their enslavers and the entire British nation, as abolition was depicted as a way for Britain and its citizens to redeem their moral reputation.

CHAPTER ONE

JOY AND HAPPINESS IN THE SLAVERY DEBATE

Introduction

Joy and happiness are presented as synonymous emotions in Samuel Johnson's dictionary (1755), which defines joy as a form of 'happiness'.[1] Nevertheless, Johnson distinguishes between two definitions of happiness: one relating to 'felicity'; the other relating to 'good luck' and 'fortune'.[2] Although the former definition of 'happiness' had become dominant by the eighteenth century, both definitions were still in use, which signifies the potential causational relationship between good fortune and the subsequent emotional response.[3] British writers on both sides of the slavery debate depicted happiness and joy as emotional commodities that could be traded for mutual benefit between the enslaved, their enslavers, and the consumers of goods produced by enslaved labour. Both White enslavers (such as James Grainger) and Black emancipated individuals (such as Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoano, and Mary Prince) portrayed enslaved individuals expressing joy and happiness to various extents. Yet the motivations behind these literary portrayals of happiness were very

[1] Johnson defines joy as: 'the passion produced by any happy accident; gladness', or 'gaiety; merriment; festivity'; 'happiness; felicity'; or 'a term of fondness'. He then defines 'happiness' as 'felicity; a state in which the desires are satisfied'; 'good luck; good fortune'; or 'fortuitous elegance'. See: Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1755). For more on Johnson and happiness, see: Rudolf Freiburg, '"The Multiplicity of Agreeable Consciousness": Samuel Johnson's Sceptical Philosophy of Terrestrial Happiness', *English Literature*, 2.1 (2015) pp. 43-68.

[2] Johnson, *A Dictionary*.

[3] Darrin M. McMahon, 'Finding Joy in the History of Emotions', in *Doing Emotions History,* ed. by Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2014) pp. 103-119 (p. 109).

different. This chapter examines how these different motivations resulted in variances regarding the cause, and degree, of happiness that was experienced by enslaved individuals.

This chapter begins by analysing how and why enslaved individuals are depicted as happy in *The Sugar-Cane* (1764) by James Grainger, a British enslaver and physician who owned plantations in Saint Kitts.[4] Grainger portrays the happiness of enslaved individuals in an attempt to justify his involvement in slavery, and promote ameliorative measures as a way to make enslaved individuals work harder. The happiness of enslaved individuals is thus portrayed as an asset that enslavers should invest in as a way to improve productivity, as this would result in greater profits. *The Sugar-Cane* thus contributes towards the 'myth of the happy slave' (which Sara Ahmed defines as 'a myth that finds happiness in the violence of colonial subjection') as a way for Grainger to advocate amelioration, but not emancipation, in order to defend his own financial interests.[5]

An exploration of slave narratives reveals that enslaved individuals could also benefit from portrayals and performances of happiness and joy. Slave narratives taken at face value appear to endorse the 'myth of the happy slave' provided by the likes of Grainger, as the narratives of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1770),

[4] James Grainger, *The Sugar-Cane: A Poem, in Four Books,* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1764) Book IV, ll. 49-50. All subsequent references are to this edition. R. & J. Dodsley also published other poems on slavery, including Nathaniel Weekes, *Barbados: A Poem* (London: J. and J. Lewis for R and J. Dodsley, 1754), which also features contradictory lines such as 'There's not a Slave, / In spight of Slav'ry, but is pleas'd and gay', and 'I mourn their wretched Fate, / And share their ev'ry Woe!' For more information, see: Carl Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness: British and Caribbean Literatures of Sugar* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009) pp. 8-32. For more biographical information, see: Goodwin, 'James Grainger'.
[5] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (London: Duke University Press, 2010) pp. 257, 2.

Olaudah Equiano (1789), and Mary Prince (1831) all feature occasional accounts of joy and happiness experienced by the protagonists during their enslavement, and concur that they worked harder when treated well.[6] This initially seems counterproductive: portrayals of happiness contradicted the argument that slavery should be abolished because it was barbaric and inhumane. Nevertheless, I argue that enslaved individuals used performances of happiness to manipulate their enslavers into treating them more compassionately. Performances of happiness and gratitude in response to ameliorative measures served to flatter enslavers as a form of positive reinforcement for future improvements, such as religious conversion and literacy lessons. This chapter shows that the joy and happiness expressed when enslaved individuals converted to Christianity, and learnt to read and write, did not necessarily reflect that they were content with their enslavement. On the contrary, their happiness was stimulated by the hope that their literacy skills and religious conversion would help them to become independent enough to eventually be emancipated from slavery. Learning how to read, write, and observe Christian teachings allowed Black people to demonstrate their ability to conform to Western standards and social norms to try to overcome narratives of racial difference. Therefore, this chapter also explores the slave narratives of Gronniosaw, Equiano, and Prince in order to establish how and why performances of happiness benefitted enslaved individuals, and to argue that they presented the hope of emancipation as the real cause of their happiness.

[6] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789); James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1770); Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London: F. Westley & A. H. Davis, 1831). All subsequent references are to these editions.

The time difference between the publication dates of Gronniosaw, Equiano and Prince's narratives leads to variations regarding the extent to which each narrative supported, and discredited, the notion that enslaved individuals were happy and content with their enslavement. The formation of SEAST in 1787 occurred between the publication of *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw* (1770) and *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789). This meant that Equiano had a larger, more organised, abolitionist support network to draw on than Gronniosaw, which gave him the confidence to be more openly critical of slavery and the notion that enslaved individuals could be happy. Furthermore, the slave trade had been abolished by the time that *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) was published, and so campaigners had begun to focus their efforts on abolishing slavery itself. Many abolitionists, including Prince, argued that amelioration was not enough, and would not be satisfied until all enslaved individuals were emancipated. Over time, as the abolitionist campaign grew and achieved success, British slave narratives became more critical of slavery. It is therefore no coincidence that Gronniosaw seems to portray himself as the happiest of the three Black writers during his enslavement, whereas Prince appears to have had the fewest occasions for happiness, with Equiano somewhere in between. With this in mind, I argue that the biographical and publication contexts of these texts can illuminate how and why Gronniosaw, Equiano, and Prince depict their experiences of happiness and joy in their narratives.

These episodes of happiness can then be contextualised by analysing them alongside other emotional responses in the narratives, which reveals that Black individuals predominantly argued that their happiness was limited by their enslavement. Gronniosaw, Equiano, and Prince demonstrate that enslaved individuals conformed to their enslaver's expectations with performances of happiness and obedience in order to be rewarded with ameliorative measures. However, amelioration was only their short-term goal, as they hoped that ameliorative measures would contribute towards achieving their long-term goal of emancipation. The relative freedom that came with emancipation allowed them to criticise slavery more openly, and use other emotions (such as sorrow and anger) as part of a more long-term strategy to show that abolishing slavery was in the best interests of not only the enslaved, but also their enslavers, and by extension the entire British nation. Later chapters explore how these other emotions were used in the fight against slavery; this chapter focuses on how slave narratives reflect how the pursuit of happiness was linked to the pursuit for freedom.

Defences of Slavery - The 'Myth of the Happy Slave'

British enslavers frequently claimed that enslaved Africans were happy in an attempt to justify their oppressive enterprises, and to encourage consumers to purchase goods that had been produced by enslaved labour. Some enslavers even advocated amelioration to promote the happiness of the individuals that they enslaved, arguing this would make them work harder. James Grainger is one example, proposing that the amelioration of slavery would render emancipation an unnecessary inconvenience. Grainger's poem *The Sugar-Cane* – one of the earliest poetical works

on the slavery debate – is comprised of four books, the latter of which contributes to the ‘myth of the happy slave’ by claiming that enslaved Africans ‘boast a docile mind, / And happiness of features’ if they are treated well (Book IV, ll. 49-50).[7] This myth aligns with ‘the grateful slave trope’ (a term coined by George Boulukos), which describes ‘the ameliorative efforts of a sentimental planter’ to ‘end [the] brutal punishment of slaves’ so that ‘slaves become personally devoted to the reformer in gratitude for his kindness.’[8] Presenting enslaved Africans expressing gratitude towards their enslavers excludes them from one of the defining characteristics of British identity: the desire for liberty and independence.[9] Peter Kitson highlights that pro-slavery literature rarely features explicit references to racial difference.[10] However, contextualising *The Sugar-Cane* with Boulukos' assessment of the grateful slave trope reveals that Grainger implies racial difference by presenting Africans as ‘radically different’ to his British readers in terms of their ‘self-conception’, ‘expectations’, and ‘capacity to control emotions through reason’.[11] Grainger attempts to defend slavery by using this notion of racial difference to argue that enslaved Africans were dependent on their British enslavers. He suggests that ameliorated slavery could contribute towards the happiness of both the enslaved and their enslavers, with happiness becoming a commodity that allowed enslavers to trade

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[7] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of subjection: terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 48; Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, pp. 2, 257; Suzanne Cloud Tapper, *Views on Slavery in the Words of Enslaved Africans, Merchants, Owners, and Abolitionists* (New York: Enslow Publishing, 2017) p. 51.
[8] George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) pp. 2-3.
[9] Ibid., p. 22.
[10] Peter Kitson, '"Candid Reflections": The Idea of Race in the Debate over the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century', in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838,* ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sara Salih (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) pp. 11-25.
[11] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* p. 22.

amelioration for the gratitude and increased productivity of the individuals that they enslaved.

In the preface to *The Sugar-Cane*, Grainger writes that 'instructing the reader' is the poem's main purpose, with his ameliorative recommendations described as 'the children of Truth […]; the result of Experience, not the productions of Fancy' in order to promote himself as an authoritative figure.[12] This aligns with the poem's Georgic form, which Grainger uses to glorify agricultural enslaved labour, and provide medical instructions that he believes 'deserve to be universally known' since a healthy labour force is more productive.[13] Grainger depicts himself as a paternalistic figure by expressing the desire to be 'understood as a physician, and not a poet', and further reinforcing the notion of African inferiority by suggesting that Europeans need to care for Africans.[14] Steven Thomas considers the importance of medical care to be a metaphor for ensuring the health and prosperity of the political body: the British Empire.[15] As Shaun Irlam argues, Grainger attempts to demonstrate 'the pre-eminence of Britain as a nation and as a rising imperial power', and imagines his reader to be 'surveying with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment a nicely furnished landscape' – or, in Grainger's words, the 'happy soil' with 'beauteous prospects' (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book I, ll. 60, 535) – 'to which they all feel themselves to hold some form of proprietary claim.'[16] Grainger stresses that a healthy labour

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[12] Grainger, 'Preface', *The Sugar-Cane,* p. v.
[13] Ibid., p. vii; Steven W. Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology: James Grainger's "The Sugar Cane" and the Bodies of Empire', *Early American Studies,* 4.1 (2006) pp. 78-111 (p. 88); Shaun Irlam, '"Wish You Were Here": Exporting England in James Grainger's "The Sugar-Cane"', *EHL*, 68.2 (2001) pp. 377-396.
[14] Grainger, 'Preface', *The Sugar-Cane,* p. vii; Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology', p. 98.
[15] Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology', p. 80.
[16] Irlam, '"Wish You Were Here"', pp. 379, 382.

force would help Britain to make the most of these prospects, encouraging enslavers to invest in the health and happiness of enslaved people to improve productivity and profit. He claims that amelioration is 'most momentous to my Country's weal!' (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book I, l. 17), drawing a parallel between notions of personal and national self-interest to suggest that emancipation would have a detrimental impact on Britain's economy.[17] Grainger employs the 'myth of the happy slave' not only to present the inferiority of Africans, but also to present the superiority of the British nation and her subjects, with amelioration promoted as a way to protect Britain's economic interests.

While Grainger is clear about the economic benefits of amelioration, the moral benefits are more obscure. He celebrates the plantation system, and yet also includes an unsustained attack on slavery, even advocating emancipation to some extent by expressing the desire:

> To quell tyrannic sway; knock off the chains
> Of heart-debasing slavery; give to man,
> Of every colour and of every clime,
> Freedom, which stamps his image of his God.
> (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 235-8)

Grainger seems to support emancipation for those 'of every colour and of every clime', and even claims that every human was made in the 'image of […] God'. Although this suggests Grainger's belief in racial equality, he could not envision emancipated Black people being treated as equals to their former enslavers. Grainger suggests that as 'Servants, not slaves; of choice, and not compell'd; / The

[17] Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness*, p. 11.

Blacks should cultivate the Cane-land isles' (*The Sugar-Cane*, IV, ll. 241-43), continuing the pre-existing hierarchy by establishing the superiority of the plantocracy over labourers. Grainger's proposal effectively predicts the apprenticeship scheme that would later facilitate the gradual abolition of slavery in 1833. Yet Grainger does not specify the logistics of this transition from enslaved labourer to servant, instead abandoning the topic of emancipation in favour of a digression on medical advice, which highlights Grainger's struggle to conceive of emancipation becoming a reality.

Describing slavery as 'heart-debasing' creates an ambiguity surrounding whether the verb refers to the moral deterioration of the enslavers or the enslaved – or perhaps both. The reference to tyranny in the previous line suggests that it is the enslavers who are morally corrupt, though the ambiguity serves as a reminder that enslaved Africans were willing to compromise their morality in an attempt to obtain their freedom through insurrection. This is evident from Tacky's Rebellion in Jamaica (1760), which took place while Grainger himself was working on plantations where enslaved individuals worked, and occurred only a few years before the poem was composed. It is evident that Grainger was aware of the threat of revolt, as his poem acknowledges that enslaved individuals are often 'fir'd with vengeance' and driven to violently attack their enslavers (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 85-6). This is one of the 'fatal consequences of indulged passion and revenge' that he mentions earlier in the poem, and so Grainger encourages 'planters' to be 'on their guard' so that they can prevent these passions from becoming 'independently powerful' (*The Sugar-Cane,* Book III, footnote to l. 168). He suggests that enslaved Africans are incapable of exerting emotional self-control, requiring enslavers to intervene as emotional regulators. The happiness of enslaved Africans is seemingly vital for preventing such

emotional outbursts and revolts, though Grainger recommends that this can be achieved by the amelioration of slavery, rather than emancipation.

One such recommendation proposes that ‘when their work is done; / Permit thy slaves to lead the choral dance’, as this results in their ‘intemperate joy’, (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 582-3, 588), though ‘intemperate’ denotes a lack of self-control which leads to an excessive emotional indulgence. This aligns with Boulukos’ grateful slave trope, which ‘begins with a nod to human similarity’ (as all humans can seemingly experience the same emotions), ‘but ends with the suggestion of meaningful difference’ (as the enslaved individuals are overwhelmed by their emotions) that rendered enslaved individuals reliant on the paternalistic benevolence of their enslavers.[18] Grainger claims that enslavers need to moderate this ‘intemperate joy’ in case it inspires ‘acts of blood, and vengeance’, suggesting that enslaved Africans needed to be governed not only in their labour, but also in their pleasure due to their lack of emotional self-control (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, l. 605). Enslavers are advised to control the emotional responses of enslaved individuals by inspiring episodic ‘joy’ in moderation, rather than seeking their enduring happiness. This is based on the logic that enslaved individuals that are ‘Well-fed, [and] well-cloath’d, [are] all emulous to gain / Their master’s smile, who treated them like men’ (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book I, ll. 611-12). According to the *OED,* ‘emulous’ describes those who are desirous of rivalling, imitating, or obtaining something or someone.[19] The definition suggests that the enslaved are seeking to obtain a smile as an external signifier of their enslaver’s pleasure in return for

[18] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* pp. 4, 139.
[19] *OED*, adj. 1a.

bestowing their own. The desire to obtain the smile connotes ownership, furthered by the accompanying desire to 'gain', suggesting the value attributed to the smile, and thus the emotional response that it signifies, which thereby becomes a commodity.

The use of 'emulous' also creates a sense of rivalry that is at odds with the supposedly harmonious relationship implied by Grainger, which suggests that things may not be as pleasant as they initially appear. The rivalry is not necessarily between the enslaved and their enslaver though, as rivalry amongst enslaved individuals competing for rewards would theoretically increase productivity, with profits causing their enslaver to smile. And yet the connotation of imitation also suggests an awareness of the possibility that enslaved people's smiles were superficial, ironic performances rather than genuine reflections of happiness. Smiles could operate as a currency for the exchange of amelioration for productivity. The ambiguous nature of 'emulous' demonstrates that while Grainger explicitly contends the happiness of enslaved individuals, he implicitly acknowledges the rivalry between them and their enslavers, since both compete for emotional dominance.

The Sugar-Cane situates emancipationist views between ameliorative arguments, alternating between paradoxical portrayals of conflict and harmony. These contradictions have led critics in both the twenty-first and eighteenth centuries to debate the extent to which the poem takes an emancipationist stance, with the *Monthly Review* (1764) praising Grainger for advocating 'the liberties of mankind'.[20]

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[20] *Monthly Review* (August 1764) p. 116. See also: John Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Grainger's The Sugar Cane* (London: Athlone Press, 2000); Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology', p. 88.

Meanwhile the *Critical Review* (1764) criticised him for discussing ‘this ungenerous commerce without the least appearance of detestation’ and for approaching the subject of slavery with ‘indifference’, which is believed to have been written by Grainger’s abolitionist friend Samuel Johnson.[21] These opposing views reflect the Georgic’s paradoxical nature. As Steven Thomas argues, ‘the poem’s Georgic form presented the reader with the ideological contradictions of commerce and the slave trade’ as it ‘paradoxically both celebrated the national character of the virtuous farmer and his plantation and implied a critique of slavery, or at least, a Utopian desire to reform the plantation complex.’[22] The conflict between Grainger’s desire for emancipation and amelioration is unresolved, creating an ambiguity surrounding whether Grainger intended for the poem to be ‘imperial propaganda’ or ‘imperial critique’.[23]

Over the past few decades, a range of scholarship has explored this ambiguity, with critics generally concluding that Grainger’s poem is ‘pro-slavery’, with an ‘apologetic’ tone.[24] Anna Foy explored the contradictions both within the poem itself, and between the poem and Grainger’s manuscript annotations, and found that Grainger was responding to George Wallace’s *A System of the Principles of the Law*

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[21] *Critical Review* (October 1764) p. 277.
[22] Thomas, ‘Doctoring Ideology’, p. 82.
[23] Ibid., p. 88.
[24] Gilmore*, The Poetics of Empire*; Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 67; Irlam, ‘“Wish You Were Here”’; Markman Ellis, ‘“Incessant Labour”: Georgic Poetry and the Problem of Slavery’, in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838*, ed. Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sarah Salih (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004) pp. 45-62; Thomas, ‘Doctoring Ideology’; Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness*; Cristobal Silva, ‘Georgic Fantasies: James Grainger and the Poetry of Colonial Dislocation’, *ELH*, 83.1 (2016) pp. 127-156; Anna M. Foy, ‘George Wallace, Population, and the Problem of Slavery in *The Sugar-Cane*’, *Modern Philology*, 117.3 (2020) pp. 393-421.

of Scotland (1760), which (unusually for the time) called for emancipation.[25] Wallace wrote that 'a nation may be more populous, more wealthy, more virtuous, and *more happy* without than with an extensive foreign trade' (emphasis mine).[26] Grainger's manuscript annotations reveal that he echoes Wallace's phrasing in his counter-argument by writing: 'Britain […] could not be so populous, so powerful, so wealthy, as she is without an foreign trade'.[27] Grainger challenges the argument that Britain would be 'more populous [and] wealthy' without slavery, and yet he does not counter Wallace's arguments concerning happiness and virtue, instead substituting them with a reference to power. This substitution reveals that Grainger was primarily concerned with the economic impact of emancipation, and suggests that he recognised that slavery was not virtuous, and that enslaved individuals were not as happy as *The Sugar-Cane* states. Foy argues that Grainger's commentary was anti-abolitionist, though that should not be seen as a reflection of *The Sugar-Cane*'s tone because the commentary was not published; therefore, she concludes that Grainger's anti-slavery sentiments were conquered by his fear that emancipation would severely damage the British economy.[28] Overall, the ameliorative discourse dominates the poem, which both contradicts and undermines the brief emancipationist argument.

Biographical context offers an explanation for Grainger's paradoxical views. Grainger was connected to slavery by both familial ties and financial dependency, as his wife's relatives employed him as a doctor to care for the enslaved individuals on their sugar plantations in St Kitts.[29] He expresses his financial concerns in an

[25] Foy, 'George Wallace', p. 393; Wallace, *A System of the Principles of the Law*.
[26] Wallace, *A System of the Principles of the Law,* p. 96.
[27] James Grainger's manuscript annotations, quoted in: Foy, 'George Wallace', p. 403.
[28] Ibid., p. 413.
[29] Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire,* p. 14.

undated letter to Thomas Percy, where he writes: 'What my brother left me is not sufficient to maintain my family without business', and yet he 'never can expect to make an independent fortune by physic.'[30] These financial concerns would have considerably increased if Grainger had lost the income that he earned as a physician to enslaved individuals. Explicitly criticising slavery – and those who enslaved individuals to work on their plantations – would have involved criticising his employers, and so Grainger was reluctant to directly advocate the abolition of slavery out of fear of losing the income required to provide for his family. The more perplexing issue is Grainger's desire to 'knock off the chains' of the enslaved, despite the fact that he kept enslaved individuals himself. In 1765 Grainger wrote another letter to Thomas Percy, writing: 'I have got a good number of fine young negroes', which he hired out to plantations in an effort towards 'leaving behind me of a little fortune of four or five hundred a-year to my family', with the hope of eventually accumulating enough money to purchase a plantation of his own.[31] Grainger shifts the blame to monarchs who 'possess the power' to abolish slavery and yet fail to do so, a hypocritical reproach since he could have freed the individuals that he personally enslaved. Such hypocrisy renders Grainger's contradictory argument difficult to resolve.

Additional biographical information may explain Grainger's desire to 'knock off the chains' of enslaved individuals. Grainger was born in Scotland (a nation that had been defeated by the English during the 1745 Jacobite rebellion), which leads John

[30] James Grainger to Thomas Percy [undated but marked by Percy 'Feb. 29. 1766' (sic, not a leap year)], in John Nichols, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, Consisting of Authentic Memoirs and Original Letters of Eminent Persons*, VII (London: J. B. Nichols and Son, 1848) pp. 292-293 (p. 293).
[31] Ibid., p. 291.

Gilmore to argue that Grainger's home country was to an extent a 'victim of an English cultural imperialism in the same way as the sugar colonies in the Caribbean.'[32] Gilmore suggests that Grainger's Scottish roots made him more sympathetic to the plight of enslaved individuals, though this parallel is somewhat reductionist because it overlooks the significant differences between England's relationships with Scotland and the Caribbean. A more convincing explanation for his abolitionist sympathies is provided by the fact that Grainger targeted his poem not only at enslavers, but also at his abolitionist friends, as he sent copies of *The Sugar-Cane* to Samuel Johnson and William Goldsmith.[33] The emancipationist stance is probably included for their benefit, whilst ameliorative suggestions aimed to show that enslavers could be humane and capable of moral sentiment. As Keith Sandiford argues, Grainger's 'critical challenge' was to create a poem 'acceptable to all parties in his audience', both enslavers and abolitionists alike.[34] The opposing views of the members of his target audience contributed towards Grainger's internal conflict regarding the slavery debate, and explains the contradictory nature of the poem. Grainger appears to sympathise with enslaved people's desire for freedom, and yet fails to grant emancipation to those that he keeps enslaved because he is financially dependent on the income that they provide. David Shields articulates this as an internal conflict 'between the man of science and man of feeling', seeking moral improvement but unable to economically sustain it.[35] Grainger judges that it is not within his power to grant emancipation any time soon, and so in the meantime he

[32] Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire,* p. 33.
[33] Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology', p. 100; Foy, 'George Wallace', p. 419.
[34] Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 73.
[35] David S. Shields, *Oracles of Empire: Poetry, Politics and Commerce in British America 1690-1750* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) pp. 72-8 (p. 73).

advocates amelioration by advising enslavers to treat enslaved individuals with kindness.

For this reason, Grainger attempts to justify slavery by deflecting the reader's attention to miners, arguing their working conditions were worse than those faced by enslaved Africans. In a direct address the enslaved are instructed not to feel discontent:

> Nor, Negroe, at thy destiny repine,
> Tho' doom'd to toil from dawn to setting sun.
> How far more pleasant is thy rural task,
> Than theirs who sweat, sequester'd from the day,
> In dark Tartarean caves (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 165-9)

Grainger imposes European emotional standards and social norms onto enslaved Africans by instructing them to supress negative feelings. The references to 'destiny' and 'doom' suggest that slavery is fated and inevitable, as though freedom was not an option. And yet the 'rural task' is deemed 'far more pleasant' than that of miners, who are 'sequester'd' underground in hellish conditions without ever seeing daylight. The dangers of mining are highlighted by describing the dangerous gases and 'sulphurous flames' that cause a 'dire explosion', an 'intense severity of pain', and even 'death' (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 170-7). The stanza ends with the exclamation: 'Yet white men these!' (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 182), as though their suffering is rendered worse by the supposition that their White skin makes them superior to enslaved Black people, and yet their working conditions are more severe. Raymund Harris presented a similar argument in *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade* (1788), where he wrote that 'it is notorious our Slaves in general […] enjoy more easy, comfortable, and happy lives, than multitudes of the

labourers in Great-Britain.'[36] Both Harris and Grainger present defences of slavery that exemplify what Brycchan Carey terms as sentimental diversion, whereby 'the sufferings of one person or group of people (British labourers) are invoked in order to divert attention away from the sufferings of another (enslaved individuals).'[37] The implication is that happiness is relative, since Harris considers enslaved individuals to be 'more […] happy' than British labourers, although he does not account for the comparison made between the relative happiness of the enslaved and their enslavers. Prioritising the happiness of British citizens over enslaved Africans reinforces the notion of racial difference, and attempts to persuade the reader that efforts towards improving Britain's moral reputation would be better directed at resolving domestic issues.

The address to enslaved individuals in *The Sugar-Cane* continues: 'How far more happy ye, than those poor slaves' who are 'dragg'd in chains, / By proud insulting tyrants, to the mines' (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 183, 187-8). Grainger refers to Scottish miners being tied to a specific mine by hereditary bondage, and yet Caribbean slavery was also hereditary, and so Grainger needed to specify the differences between the two types of bondage.[38] Medical arguments are thus evoked, with anaphora used to highlight the rapid deterioration of the miners' health:

> How hard they toil! How soon their youthful limbs
> Feel the decrepitude of age! How soon
> Their teeth desert their sockets!

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[36] Raymund Harris, *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-trade, Shewing its Conformity with the Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, Delineated in the Sacred Writings of the Word of God* (London: John Stockdale, 1788) p. xi.
[37] Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p. 41.
[38] Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire,* p. 60.

[…] With these compar'd, ye sons of Afric, say,
How far more happy is your lot? (*The Sugar-Cane*, Book IV, ll. 191-4, 199-200)

Cristobel Silva argues that although this appears to be an apostrophe to the enslaved individuals, the 'comparative geographical representations' were actually intended to persuade the British reader that slavery is morally justifiable by depicting 'the West Indies […] as a rural paradise'.[39] The rhetorical question does not ask whether the enslaved individuals are happy, but rather 'how far more happy' they are, thereby assuming that their happiness is indisputable so that the question becomes a matter of degree. The transition from the use of 'joy' in the quotations mentioned above, to the use of 'happy' in this instance may signify that Grainger uses 'happy' to mean fortunate, rather than content. The lack of external indicators of the enslaved individuals' happiness, such as smiles, within the poem lends support to this interpretation, particularly since Book II is dedicated to William Shenstone. In his 'Elegy XX' Shenstone wrote of enslaved individuals that: 'No radiant smile his dying peace restores, / Nor love, nor friendship heals his wound.'[40] To dedicate part of *The Sugar-Cane* to Shenstone and then contradict him is seemingly too paradoxical even for Grainger, which suggests that Grainger was aware of the limitations of portraying the happiness of the enslaved.

Abolitionists criticised defences of slavery that were based on such arguments of sentimental diversion. In his discussion of *The Sugar-Cane* in the *Critical Review,* Samuel Johnson countered that 'it is but a small alleviation to our own misery to find

[39] Silva, 'Georgic Fantasies', p. 147.
[40] William Shenstone, 'Elegy XX', in *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* (London, 1744).

conditions in life still more miserable than our own.'[41] This suggests that happiness is a personal evaluation of one's own satisfaction, independent of relativity. The concept that enslaved individuals were happier than the English working class was discredited in Captain Marjoribanks' *Slavery: An Essay in Verse* (1792).[42] Marjoribanks satirically quotes the 'impious' proslavery forces who argue that 'Briton's peasants [are not] half so blest as' the enslaved Africans who are provided with 'food', 'raiment' and shelter.[43] This is accompanied by a footnote which states that 'this and every other argument I have put into their mouths, I have frequently heard the planters use' to reinforce that such arguments were not fabricated by himself.[44] He immediately ridicules such arguments by highlighting that the British peasant is 'healthy, bold and *free*!', and wondering how they 'Dare […] compare' the peasant's 'happiness' to the 'anguish' of 'the most accurs'd' enslaved individuals.[45] Here the sentimental diversion is reversed, with colonial troubles prioritised over domestic problems. In parliamentary debates, William Wilberforce also ridiculed proslavery diversionary arguments for searching out 'every recess of misery and vice in their own country' and for claiming that both domestic and colonial evils can only be abolished all together.[46] The existence of one evil did not justify the continuation of another, though many enslavers contested the charge that slavery was a sin by stressing their happiness. These criticisms of diversionary tactics position colonial struggles as an extension of domestic problems, affirming a political responsibility to counteract evils enacted abroad, as well as at home.

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[41] *Critical Review* (October 1764) p. 277.
[42] Captain Marjoribanks, *Slavery: An Essay in Verse* (Edinburgh: J. Robertson, 1792).
[43] Ibid., p. 9.
[44] Ibid., p. 8.
[45] Ibid., p. 8.
[46] William Wilberforce, 'Slave Trade Abolition Bill' [23 February 1807], in *The Parliamentary History of England,* VIII, ed. by William Cobbett (London: T. C. Hansard, 1812) pp. 939-1053 (pp. 993-4); *The Morning Herald* (24 February 1807).

Although Grainger seems to agree with abolitionists that slavery is immoral, he did not have the financial stability required to disengage himself from slavery, and so used sentimental diversion as a defensive tactic. He offered amelioration as a compromise because he believed that emancipation was economically unsustainable. Many abolitionists also promoted the amelioration of slavery, hoping that it would eventually lead to emancipation. Accounts in British slave narratives reveal that enslaved individuals expressed happiness in response to ameliorative measures that improved their welfare and alleviated some, if not all, of their suffering. Conversely, eighteenth-century thinkers, such as Edmund Burke, maintained that a simple dichotomy between happiness and sadness does not exist, and that the alleviation of pain does not necessarily bring happiness and pleasure (and vice versa).[47] Although he does believe that pain and pleasure can, at times, be dependent on one another, he also believes that they can operate independently, with a middle stage of 'indifference' existing between the two extremities.[48] Burke distinguishes between 'positive pleasure' (which is independent of pain) and 'relative pleasure' (which is the result of a cessation of pain).[49] Freedom from slavery, and the pain and oppression that went with it, aligns with this idea of 'relative pleasure', whereas the freedom to read, write, convert to Christianity, and earn an income all align with the notion of 'positive pleasure'. However, the distinction between these two concepts of pleasure is not as straightforward in slave narratives, as they often depict the ability to read, write, and practice Christianity as tools that allowed

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[47] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* 2nd edn (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1759) pp. 44, 47.
[48] Ibid., p. 44.
[49] Ibid., p. 54.

enslaved individuals to obtain their freedom from slavery and the pain and suffering that it caused.

Presentations of enslaved individuals expressing happiness in slave narratives somewhat supports Grainger's argument that amelioration could be mutually beneficial to both enslavers and enslaved. However, they disagreed over the extent of these improvements, as enslaved individuals ultimately sought emancipation, whereas the likes of Grainger did not see this as economically viable. This disagreement is caused by a clash of self-interest, as one person's pursuit for happiness (e.g. an enslaved individual seeking freedom) was offset by another's (e.g. an enslaver profiting from the goods produced by enslaved individuals). Nevertheless, the eighteenth-century shift towards the belief that God intended for humans to live happily on Earth, rather than just in heaven, also inspired moral philanthropy that sought to promote the happiness of others as a way to create a happier society.[50] For example, Burke advocates promoting the 'happiness of the human race', and David Hume considers it of paramount moral importance 'to promote the interests of our species, and bestow happiness on human society'.[51] Each individual's happiness was considered to contribute towards society's overall happiness, though the happiness of certain individuals was prioritised above the happiness of others. In discussions of slavery, the difficulty lay in deciding whether or

[50] Darrin McMahon, *The Pursuit of Happiness: A History from the Greeks to the Present* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2007) pp. 199-200; Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1998). For more on conceptions of happiness in the eighteenth century, see: Abigail Williams, '"Nothing Better than Mirth and Hilarity": Happiness, Unhappiness, Jest and Sociability in the Eighteenth Century', *English Literature*, 2.1 (2015) pp. 123-144; Freiburg, '"The Multiplicity of Agreeable Consciousness"'; Adam Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

[51] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry,* p. 130; David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751) p. 31.

not the happiness, joy, and pleasure of enslavers mattered more than that of the enslaved.

The Relativity of Happiness in Slave Narratives

The slave narratives of Gronniosaw, Equiano, and Prince all feature sporadic accounts of happiness and joy in response to the conduct of their enslavers, and so they ostensibly appear to validate the 'myth of the happy slave'. However, this section argues that each protagonist's happiness was relative to the pain and suffering that they may otherwise have experienced: Gronniosaw is happy to be enslaved, rather than dead; Equiano is happy to be treated relatively well by his enslaver, in comparison to the floggings received by other enslaved individuals; and Prince is happy in her childhood ignorance, compared to the pain and suffering that she would later be subjected to as an enslaved adult. Gronniosaw, Equiano, and Prince are all aware that their experiences of slavery could be worse, though they could also be happier if they were emancipated. Therefore, their slave narratives show that their experiences of happiness and joy were ultimately limited by their enslavement.

The earliest of these slave narratives is Gronniosaw's *Narrative,* where he recalls the series of events that led to his enslavement. His own grandfather, the king, ordered for Gronniosaw to be beheaded because he was suspected of being a spy for his father. Upon hearing this, Gronniosaw 'suffered misery that cannot be described', suggesting that these negative emotions were too intense and complex to enable expression (Gronniosaw, p. 14). Divine intervention is attributed as the cause

of his salvation, as ‘it pleased God to melt the heart of the King’, so that Gronniosaw’s execution was replaced with enslavement (Gronniosaw, p. 15). His grandfather sold him into slavery, and Gronniosaw knew that he would be killed if nobody bought him. This prompted Gronniosaw to plead with a Dutch Captain, and so he ‘endeavoured to convince him, by every action, that my only pleasure was to serve him well’ (Gronniosaw, p. 16). Choosing enslavement over death is antithetical to the abolitionist trope of enslaved individuals taking their own lives to escape enslavement, which became popular later on in the anti-slavery campaign.[52] While this contrast could be used to reinforce defences of slavery that claimed that enslaved individuals were docile, especially since Gronniosaw alleges his ‘pleasure’ to serve, it nevertheless demonstrates the desperate lengths that one would go to in order to survive. The alleged pleasure becomes ironic when accompanied by the hyperbolic use of ‘only’, suggesting an insincere performance retrospectively related to satirically criticise the Captain by exposing the egocentric motives behind his superficial altruism. Pleasure is used as a currency whereby Gronniosaw’s servitude is exchanged for his survival, with the transaction benefitting both parties in the short term.

Gronniosaw later contends that during his enslavement ‘I never murmured, nor was I ever discontented’, and yet the litotes is at odds with the previous

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[52] See: William D. Piersen, ‘White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among New Slaves’, *The Journal of Negro History,* 62.2 (1977) pp. 147-159; Richard Bell, ‘Slave Suicide, Abolition and the Problem of Resistance’, *Slavery & Abolition,* 33.4 (2012) pp. 525-549; Deanna P. Koretsky, ‘Habeus Corpus and the Politics of Freedom: Slavery and Romantic Suicide’, *Essays in Romanticism*, 22.1 (2015) pp. 21-33; Terry L. Synder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); George C. Grinnell, ‘Equiano’s Refusal: Slavery, Suicide Bombing, and Negation’, *European Romantic Review*, 27.3 (2019) pp. 365-373; Terri L. Snyder, ‘Suicide, Slavery, and Epidemics: A Perspective From Early Modern British America’, in *The Shapes of Epidemics and Global Disease***,** ed. by Andrea Patterson and Ian Read (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020) pp. 42-63.

overstated reference to pleasure (Gronniosaw, p. 37). It is more restrained that the positive alternative 'I am content', with the focus on the negative emotions implying that the expression of such negative emotions was restricted by social norms imposed by his enslaver. This is implicit in the use of 'discontented' (expressing displeasure) rather than 'discontent' (the feeling of displeasure itself), hence the reference to never having 'murmured', as he was unable to communicate his discontent, drawing a distinction between external expression and internal experience.[53] Gronniosaw's reluctance to explicitly criticise slavery can be attributed to the narrative being composed before the anti-slavery movement had become a coherent campaign with the formation of SEAST in 1787. Without the support of a coherent abolitionist network, Gronniosaw would have been wary of the potentially negative repercussions that a Black emancipated individual could face as a result of publicly attacking the slave trade and slavery. The narrative is therefore a product of its time, which limits the extent to which it can be considered as abolitionist literature. Nevertheless, the implication that Gronniosaw was too afraid to express any other emotion than joy, pleasure, or happiness is in itself a subtle indication of the oppressive and repressive nature of slavery. Although Gronniosaw never 'murmured' or expressed displeasure, his phrasing subtly suggests that he was at times discontent, and so his happiness was limited by his enslavement.

Equiano also claims to have been happy at certain times during his enslavement. His enslaver, Captain Doran, told Equiano that he had sold him to Mr

[53] The *OED* reveals that although 'discontented' could also be used to refer to the feeling of displeasure itself, on the contrary 'discontent' is not defined in relation to emotional expression, but only the emotion itself, and so 'discontented' is distinguished by its association with expression. See: *OED,* 'discontented', adj. 1; 'discontent', adj. 1.

King, who would make the 'very best master […] with whom I should be […] happy', rather than selling him to his brother-in-law 'for a great deal more money' (Equiano, pp. 133-4). Captain Doran supposedly values Equiano's happiness more than his monetary value, and so emotions are transformed into the preferred choice of currency. Since this is told from Equiano's perspective there may have been other motives behind the transaction that he knew nothing about, and yet it reveals Equiano's self-perception of his value to humanity over his value as a commodity. Furthermore, the conditional 'should' in relation to Equiano's happiness serves a dual purpose: it qualifies the statement by restricting the potential happiness through uncertainty, and acts as a directive to once again enforce emotional standards onto enslaved individuals. This qualification may have been retrospectively added by Equiano, adapting his enslaver's words in an interesting inversion of the enslaver typically speaking on behalf of the enslaved. The role reversal allows Equiano to manipulate his former enslaver's voice, constructing a reversal of power whereby Doran becomes a puppet controlled by Equiano within the narrative. Nonetheless, Doran's prophecy was seemingly realised, as Equiano writes of his 'great joy' when King repeatedly refused to re-sell him, and consequentially 'I used to double my diligence' to further incentivise King to keep him (Equiano, p. 140). The cyclical nature of incentivisation suggests that enslaved individuals were more inclined to work harder when treated kindly, with the resulting increase in productivity making their enslavers more inclined to treat them well. Equiano's performances of joy and gratitude are both rewards for, and rewarded by, his enslaver's kindness, thereby demonstrating that amelioration could be mutually beneficial to both enslavers and the enslaved.

Equiano praises enslavers who give enslaved individuals time to rest, and 'many other indulgencies and comforts', which 'keeps them healthy, and as happy as the condition of slavery can admit' (Equiano, p. 143). He mentions his own experience of having 'managed an estate, where, by those attentions, the negroes were uncommonly cheerful and healthy, and did more work by half than by the common mode of treatment they usually do' (Equiano, p. 143). At first this seems to support Grainger's argument in favour of amelioration, as enslaved individuals who are well treated appear more 'cheerful', and yet Equiano qualifies this by explaining that they are 'as happy as the condition of slavery can admit', and 'uncommonly cheerful and healthy' compared to those treated less favourably. Despite his aversion to slavery, Equiano was aware that abolishing the slave trade alone was a mammoth task, let alone the abolition of slavery itself. So until slavery could be abolished and all enslaved individuals could be emancipated, he acknowledges that ameliorative measures could be implemented to lessen the oppressions, though slavery would not allow enslaved individuals to experience unrestrained happiness. He implies that if all enslaved individuals were treated well, there would be no need for the '20,000 new negroes annually to fill up the vacant places of the dead' (Equiano, p. 143). This is based on the logic that poor treatment led to deaths from beatings and suicides, which reflects the fact that Equiano's narrative was written at a time when the anti-slavery movement's focus was predominantly on abolishing the slave trade, rather than slavery itself. Equiano suggests that investing in the happiness of individuals who were currently enslaved would yield greater economic benefits in the long term, as it would remove the cost of transporting newly enslaved individuals from Africa.

Even the much later narrative of Mary Prince depicts happiness in response to being treated well by her first enslaver. She describes the time spent working for Mrs Williams as ‘the happiest period of my life’ as she was allowed to play with Miss Betsey, her enslaver’s granddaughter (Prince, p. 1). However, this retrospective assessment of happiness is merely proportionate to the suffering that she later experienced. Her obedience to Mrs Williams was ‘cheerfully given; it sprung solely from the affection I felt for her, and not from fear of the power which the white people’s law had given her over me’, which demonstrates that positive reinforcement was more effective than negative reinforcement (Prince, pp. 1-2). Prince concedes that this happiness was largely derived from the fact that ‘I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave, and too thoughtless and full of spirits to look forward to the days of toil and sorrow’ (Prince, p. 1). Her happiness was the result of her childhood ignorance towards her enslavement, though Prince reflects that ‘this happy state was not to last long. Those days were too pleasant to last’ (Prince, p. 2). Her childhood happiness was temporary, threatened by the fact that she could be resold at the whim of her enslaver, and thus her happiness was constantly determined by the actions of others.

In 1788 Joseph Priestley argued that ‘Under humane masters, slaves may, no doubt, enjoy a certain degree of happiness; but still they are slaves, subject to the wills […] of others.’[54] While Priestley to an extent supports the argument that enslaved individuals were happy if treated well, he acknowledges that this is only to

[54] Joseph Priestley, ‘Preface’, *A Sermon On the Subject of the Slave Trade* (Birmingham: Pearson & Rollason, 1788) p. xi.

‘a certain degree’, limited by the power others had over them. Prince expresses similar sentiments:

> I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free. They believe the foreign people, who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? (Prince, p. 22)

The combination of vexation and sorrow form an emotional response in stark contrast to the happiness being imposed upon the enslaved, which is further aggravated by the ignorance of the English who believe the deceptions of enslavers. Prince continues, ‘I have been a slave myself – I know what slaves feel – I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me’ (Prince, p. 23). Although Prince dictated the narrative, rather than writing it herself, the punctuation (added by the amanuensis or the editor) reflects the vehemence behind her words, and the insistence that only enslaved individuals can accurately judge their own feelings, as emphasised by the repetition of the first-person pronoun at the start of each clause. The first-person perspective overrides the second-hand suppositions of enslavers, and thus Prince concludes that ‘The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery – that they don’t want to be free – that man is either ignorant or […] lying’ (Prince, p. 23). The confidence to make such a bold statement likely came from the fact that the slave trade had, by this point, already been abolished, and so efforts were focused on abolishing slavery itself. Even though emancipated individuals acknowledge that they have previously experienced happiness at the hands of relatively kind enslavers, they stress the limitations of the extent to which happiness can be felt without liberty, and thus true unbridled joy could only be obtained through emancipation.

Subverting the Proslavery Myth – The Dual Pursuit for Freedom and Happiness

Although formerly enslaved individuals (such as Equiano) suggest that the amelioration of slavery was a good short-term solution to improving their happiness and welfare, emancipation remained their long-term goal. Slave narratives connect the pursuit of freedom with the pursuit of happiness, and thus suggest that their happiness would not be sustainable unless they were emancipated. The meaning of the phrase 'the pursuit of happiness' has received much critical attention, particularly in relation to its use in the *Declaration of Independence* (1776) regarding the contradiction between the right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' and the existence of slavery in America.[55] For the purposes of this chapter 'the pursuit of happiness' is defined as the endeavour to make oneself happy, or the effort to increase one's emotional state of happiness.

The occasional moments of happiness that feature in slave narratives can be sorted into two categories. The first category is the happiness that the protagonist experienced during their childhood freedom in Africa, and after their emancipation from slavery, with both instances of happiness forming a contrast to the sorrow

[55] Arthur M. Schlesinger, 'The Lost Meaning of "The Pursuit of Happiness"', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 21.3 (1964) pp. 325-327; William B. Scott, *In Pursuit of Happiness: American Conceptions of Property from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century* (1977) pp. 41-42; Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (1978); Jan Lewis, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Family and Values in Jefferson's Virginia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (2001); Carlin Conklin, 'The Origins of the Pursuit of Happiness', *Washington University Jurisprudence Review*, 7.2 (2015) pp. 195-262.

experienced during their enslavement. The second category is the happiness that the protagonist experienced in response to converting to Christianity, and learning to read and write, as they hoped that these ameliorative measures would contribute towards their emancipation. Exploring the presentations of happiness that fall within these two categories will demonstrate that the happiness expressed by enslaved individuals was a response to the hope of their future emancipation, rather than an indication that they were content with their present enslavement.

The first mention of happiness and pleasure in the *Interesting Narrative* occurs when Equiano discusses his former childhood happiness in Africa as a contrast against the sorrow that he later experiences during his enslavement. He recalls the 'manners and customs of my country', and writes: 'I still look back with pleasure on the first scenes of my life' (Equiano, p. 48). However, he claims that 'that pleasure has been for the most part mingled with sorrow', because at the age of eleven 'an end was put to my happiness' when he was enslaved, and so his childhood memories become bitter-sweet when positive and negative emotions are 'mingled' in hindsight (Equiano, p. 49). He recalls being separated from his entire family, though he was temporarily reunited with his sister (who had also been enslaved), and so 'for a while we forgot our misfortunes in the joy of being together', demonstrating the healing power of joy (Equiano, p. 56).

However, this joy was ephemeral, as 'even this small comfort was soon to have an end' when they were separated once again, rendering Equiano 'now more miserable, if possible, than before' (Equiano, pp. 56-7). He continues:

> The small relief which her presence gave me from pain was gone, and the wretchedness of my situation was redoubled […] thou dear partner of all my childish sports! thou sharer of my joys and sorrows! happy should I have ever esteemed myself to encounter every misery for you, and to procure your freedom by the sacrifice of my own. (Equiano, p. 57)

Equiano's 'joy' arose from the 'small relief from pain', suggesting that this positive emotion was the result of the cessation of pain, and thus both joy and pain were caused, in part, by his love for his sister. The subsequent removal of the source of his happiness had a disproportionate increase on Equiano's sadness as his misery 'redoubled'. The juxtaposition of 'joys', 'sorrows', and feeling 'happy' demonstrates the quick succession of responses to emotional stimuli. Claiming that he would have been 'happy' to suffer 'every misery' for his sister evokes the dual meaning of 'happy': the cessation of her pain would cause him happiness despite it being accompanied by his own misery, and thus he would consider himself fortunate in securing her freedom. Equiano professing to have 'esteemed' himself happy suggests that self-evaluation was required. This aligns with contemporary philosophical notions that happiness is relative to the experience of others, though in this instance the potential satisfaction paradoxically arises from Equiano concluding that he suffers more than his loved ones.[56] As the 'sharer' of his joy and sorrow, his sister's feelings are seemingly his own, suggesting a familial sympathetic bond. The relationship between fortune and happiness is further explored when Equiano writes that 'at the very moment I dreamed of the greatest happiness, I found myself most miserable; and it seemed as if fortune wished to give me this taste of joy, only to render the reverse more poignant' (Equiano, p. 59). Fortune is granted the agency to

[56] See: Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness*; Russell Hardin, *David Hume: Moral and Political Theorist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) pp. 178-9; Adam Potkay, 'Narrative Possibilities of Happiness, Joy, and Unhappiness', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts,* 33.2 (2011) pp. 111-125 (p. 111).
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determine his happiness, choosing to provide this ‘taste of joy’ so that the reversal of fortune makes the sorrow more drastic by contrast. Equiano demonstrates that the desire to seek pleasure and avoid pain occur simultaneously, though they are often overruled by bonds of sympathy based on the overriding desire to protect others.

Gronniosaw’s depiction of his childhood in Africa is strikingly different to Equiano’s. Gronniosaw depicts his unhappy childhood as a contrast to his apparent later happiness during his enslavement and his Christian conversion. In Africa he was teased by his siblings, and claims ‘Twas certain that I was, at times, very unhappy in myself’ (Gronniosaw, p. 7). The addition of ‘at times’ subtly moderates the definitive use of the descriptors ‘very’ and ‘certain’. The embedded clause implies that the frequency and duration of his unhappiness were dependent variables that fluctuated over time. This suggests that he was not always unhappy in Africa, and yet he repeatedly recalls growing ‘more and more uneasy every day’, so that he ‘wept sadly’ and ‘grew very unhappy’ (Gronniosaw, pp. 8-10).

Gronniosaw attributes his childhood unhappiness to ‘it being strongly impressed on my mind that there was some GREAT MAN of power which resided above the sun, moon and stars, the objects of our worship’ (Gronniosaw, p. 8). On the surface this seems to suggest that Gronniosaw’s unhappiness was caused by his childhood ignorance of Christianity, particularly considering his accounts of ‘the joy and comfort’ later experienced upon learning about the Christian God (Gronniosaw, p. 25). Gronniosaw’s intuition regarding God’s existence supports the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, as he is predisposed to worship ‘some GREAT MAN of

power' over the seemingly pagan practices of his countrymen who worship the 'sun, moon and stars'. Further support for predestination is found when Gronniosaw recalls that a merchant came and 'took great notice of my unhappy situation' and offered to take him to the Gold Coast (Gronniosaw, p. 11). This 'highly pleased' Gronniosaw who was 'very desirous of going' because 'I seemed sensible of a secret impulse upon my mind, which I could not resist, that seemed to tell me I must go' (Gronniosaw, p. 11). The supposition that he 'could not resist' suggests that his journey was fated – a part of God's plan to save his soul through Christian conversion – and that Gronniosaw lacked agency over his own actions. When his enslaver later taught him about the Christian God, Gronniosaw claims to have been 'delighted' and 'exceedingly pleased with this information […] because it corresponded so well with my own opinion,' which ostensibly seems to perpetuate the myth that enslaved individuals were happy (Gronniosaw, pp. 19-20).

The publication context of Gronniosaw's narrative helps to explain these accounts of happiness, which comply with the publication team's desire to circulate a narrative that simultaneously promoted Calvinist ideology and defended slavery. Gronniosaw's patron, Selina Hastings, was a Calvinist who owned a Georgia plantation with over one hundred enslaved individuals.[57] Hastings funded the narrative's publication to justify the fact that she herself was responsible for enslaving Africans, which rendered Gronniosaw financially dependent on individuals who sought to use Calvinist doctrine to promote slavery. Therefore, the lack of abolitionist

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[57] Boyd Stanley Schlenther, 'Selina Hastings [*née* Shirley], countess of Huntingdon], *ODNB* (3rd January 2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12582?rskey=lpGJZm&result=2 [Accessed 08/11/2021].

rhetoric in the narrative is likely due to Gronniosaw's reluctance to criticise slavery for fear of losing his source of income. Furthermore, Gronniosaw's inability to write in English meant that any censorship of unfavourable comments regarding slavery or Calvinism could have been carried out by his amanuensis, editor, or patron, without his notice.[58] For this reason, the credibility of the expressions of joy and happiness within the narrative warrant scrutiny.

The primary function of Gronniosaw's narrative appears to be the promotion of Calvinism over other rival sects, such as the Armenian Methodists. In a subsequent edition the title was changed to *Wonderous Grace Display'd in the Life and Conversion of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw* (1790), which emphasises that it was primarily intended as a religious conversion narrative, and so its contribution to the slavery debate was secondary to that purpose.[59] Calvinist minister Walter Shirley edited the narrative, and in its preface he framed the narrative around the Calvinist notion of predestination by writing: 'I trust the Christian reader will easily discern an all-wise and omnipotent appointment and direction in these movements.'[60] Calvinists believed that salvation was still possible for enslaved individuals, and even contended that slavery was beneficial to convert Africans and ensure their

[58] For more on Gronniosaw and Calvinism, see: Ryan Hanley, 'Calvinism, Proslavery and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw', *Slavery & Abolition*, 36.2 (2015) pp. 360-381.
[59] James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *Wonderous Grace Display'd in the Life and Conversion of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince,* 3rd edn (Leeds: W. Nicholson, ca. 1790) http://find.gale.com.ezproxye.bham.ac.uk/ecco/retrieve.do?inPS=true&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=bham_uk&tabID=T001&bookId=0415600400&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSet=ECCOArticles&showLOI=&docId=CW3312335335&docLevel=FASCIMILE&workId=CW112335335&relevancePageBatch=CW112335335&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&callistoContentSet=ECLL&docPage=article&hilite=y [Accessed 18/05/20].
[60] Walter Shirley, 'Preface', to James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1770) p. v.

salvation.[61] Meanwhile, Methodists professed that spiritual emancipation could only occur alongside corporeal emancipation, as enslavement restricted one's ability to embrace Christianity.[62] In order to promote Calvinism, over Methodism, Shirley contends that 'God has put a singular honor upon him [Gronniosaw] in the exercise of his faith and patience', positioning Gronniosaw's enslavement as a series of 'trails and calamities' to test his faith.[63] Gronniosaw is thereby transformed into a Job-like character in an attempt to justify slavery as a 'fortunate fall' that was necessary to ensure his salvation.[64] The trope of the fortunate fall not only suggests that God condoned the enslavement of Africans, but also portrays slavery as a divine concept. Shirley and Hasting's involvement in the publication of the narrative allowed them to influence the presentation of Gronniosaw's enslavement so that it could be used as Calvinist propaganda.

Further analysis of the narrative reveals underlying rhetorical strategies that resist censorship efforts, and undermine the Calvinist ideology that the publishers sought to promote. Gronniosaw grew up in the predominantly Muslim state of Borno in Nigeria, and as a member of the elite his family would have practiced Islam.[65] Yet Islam is not explicitly mentioned in the narrative, as it would have contradicted the portrayal of Gronniosaw rejecting paganism that was used as evidence of Calvinist predetermination. Jennifer Harris points out that the reference to worshipping the

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[61] Hanley, 'Calvinism', p. 362.
[62] Ibid., p. 362.
[63] Shirley, 'Preface', p. v.
[64] Vincent Carretta, 'Introduction', *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth-Century,* ed. by Vincent Carretta (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996) p. 2.
[65] Paul Lovejoy, *Ecology and Ethnography of Muslim Trade in West Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005), pp. 39–87; Hanley, 'Calvinism', p. 364.

‘sun, moon and stars’ superficially implies paganism to subtly conceal its inclusion as an underlying symbol of Islamic worshipping practices, which neither the amanuensis not editor were likely to have recognised.[66] Referencing another monotheistic religion undermined the concept of predestination, as Gronniosaw’s supposed predisposition to worship ‘some GREAT MAN of power’ becomes more fittingly attributed to Allah than the Christian God. Predestination was also a subject of debate for Islam, with Muslims divided by their views on predestination: *Jabarites* believe in predetermination; *Mu’tazilites* believe in free will; and *Ash’arites* fall between these two extremities.[67] The knowledge of Gronniosaw’s Muslim upbringing re-contextualises his claim to have been ‘delighted’ when told of Christian beliefs that ‘corresponded so well with my own opinion’. The hidden irony of this comment is revealed, as Gronniosaw highlights the similarities between the two monotheistic religions – Islam and Christianity – in a way that was too subtle for the publishing network to discern. The satirical commentary on the homogeneity of religions discredits conceptions of European superiority, and allows Gronniosaw to establish his agency in an act that simultaneously undermines predestination and exerts his free will. By subtly drawing parallels between Islam and Christianity, Gronniosaw suggests that his religious conversion, and subsequent happiness, is merely an insincere performance of Christian devotion that allows him to earn an income. Gronniosaw’s expressions of happiness thus become a commodity that he trades with his patron, editor, and readers in exchange for financial gain.

[66] Jennifer Harris, ‘Seeing the Light: Re-Reading James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw’, *English Language Notes,* 42.4 (2004) pp. 43–57 (p. 44).
[67] Ismail Mohamed, ‘Concept of Predestination in Islam and Christianity: Special Reference to Averroes and Aquinas’, *Islamic Quarterly,* 44.2 (2000) pp. 393-413 (p. 394).

The ironic performance of positive emotions continues in Gronniosaw's response to hearing his enslaver read prayers aloud. He recalls hearing his enslaver read for the first time in what Henry Louis Gates terms the 'talking book' trope.[68]

> I was never so surprised in my life, as when I saw the book talk to my master […] I followed him to the place where he put the book, being mightily delighted with it, and when nobody saw me, I opened it and put my ear down close upon it, in great hopes that it would say something to me; but was very sorry, and greatly disappointed when I found it would not speak. (Gronniosaw, pp. 16-17)

The act of reading is defamiliarized, conforming to Western expectations of Africans as uncivilised individuals with no concept of literacy. Gronniosaw's initial surprise, hope and delight at the prospect of being able to 'read prayers' like his enslaver is quickly replaced with disappointment, with the negative emotions arising at the reminder of his difference as he attributes his exclusion to the fact that 'every body and every thing despised me because I was black' (Gronniosaw, pp. 16-17). Gates questioned why Gronniosaw interpreted the cause to be his skin colour over the more 'natural' explanation of the language barrier, with Gates aligning the text's silence with the curse of Ham.[69] The Biblical tale sees Ham punished with a curse on his descendants, and was used by Christians as justification for slavery based on the belief that Black skin signified these cursed descendants, and thus their inferiority, despite there being no reference to skin colour in the Bible. To a Calvinist audience the book's silence demonstrated that the Christian God was not accessible to non-

[68] Henry Louis Gates, 'James Gronniosaw and the Trope of the Talking Book', *The Southern Review* 22.2 (1986) pp. 252-272; Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also: Dwight Conquergood, 'Rethinking elocution: The trope of the talking book and other figures of speech', *Text and Performance Quarterly,* 20.4 (2000) pp. 325-341; Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Leon Jackson, 'The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print—The State of the Discipline', *Book History,* 13 (2010) pp. 251-308.
[69] Gates, *The Signifying Monkey,* p. 137.

Christian Africans, and symbolised the racial inferiority that was used to justify the exclusion of Black individuals from Western culture, and particularly literary traditions.[70] The talking book trope becomes an ironic personification of an inanimate object, in stark contrast to the objectification of a human through their enslavement. The emotional performance of this scene served to satisfy the publishing party's aim of promoting Calvinism and defending slavery, though Gronniosaw added subtly concealed challenges to this pro-Calvinist, proslavery message.

In his discussions of literacy, Gronniosaw manipulates assumptions of Western superiority over supposedly uncivilised Africans. Harris challenges the authenticity of Gronniosaw's account by claiming that he would have been able to read Arabic since Muslims valued literacy as a tool for disseminating the Islamic faith.[71] The talking book scene ironically highlights the audience's ignorance, mocking them for underestimating African culture, as claiming to be illiterate presents his own achievements as more remarkable for having 'learnt to read' (Gronniosaw, p. 20). The fact that the religious text does not 'speak' to Gronniosaw becomes a metaphor for his inability to identify with Christianity; he could not esteem a religion that perpetuated his enslavement, which suggests that he retained his Muslim beliefs. Gronniosaw engaged in 'the economics of race' by providing his patrons with a racialized religious conversion narrative that superficially supported Calvinist ideology in exchange for financial support.[72] He established his agency in this market of exchange by mocking and manipulating the Eurocentric viewpoint through an

[70] Hanley, 'Calvinism', p. 366.
[71] Harris, 'Seeing the Light', p. 48.
[72] Ibid., p. 47.

ironic emotional performance that acted as a form of resistance. Gronniosaw felt that Christian texts did not speak to Black individuals who were excluded from Western traditions, and so he decided to create his own text. In doing so, he established a new tradition, as the trope of the talking book was included in later slave narratives, such as those by John Marrant (1785), Ottobah Cugoano (1787), Olaudah Equiano (1789), and John Jea (c.1816).[73] Gronniosaw's account clearly had a significant impact on the creation of a tangential Black canon that challenged Eurocentric ideology. The talking book trope allowed Black writers to portray their exclusion from Westernised culture as a negative for the Western world – rather than for themselves – by subtly mocking the audience's ignorance of African culture, whilst demonstrating their own knowledge of cross-cultural similarities.

Gronniosaw also benefitted from his performances of happiness by using them to manipulate his enslaver into granting his emancipation in exchange for converting to Christianity. The circumstances surrounding Gronniosaw's alleged religious conversion reveal that his joy was not so much a response to being informed about the Christian God, but rather that it was a response to the hope that conforming to Christianity would lead to his emancipation. He claims that the 'joy and comfort' that he felt 'cannot be expressed', as 'joy unspeakable took possession of my soul' with a 'peace and serenity' that 'cannot be told' (Gronniosaw, p. 25). His inability to express these positive emotions initially seems to be because they were

[73] John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful dealings with John Marrant* (London: R. Hawes, 1785); Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*; John Jea, *The Life, History and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, The African Preacher* (Portsea: John Williams, c.1816).

too overwhelming to articulate, and is considered to mark his complete conversion to Christianity. Yet his Muslim beliefs reveal that Gronniosaw's emotional performances were insincere, and so these positive emotions 'cannot be expressed' because they were not genuinely experienced in response to learning about Christianity. This conversion scene is immediately followed by the death of Frelinghuysen, Gronniosaw's enslaver, which Gronniosaw contends made him 'unhappy' and 'distressed me greatly', despite Frelinghuysen's will granting him 'ten pounds' and his 'freedom' (Gronniosaw, pp. 26-7). It is unclear whether these negative emotions are genuine, as he may truly have been grieving for Frelinghuysen, and felt it inappropriate to celebrate his emancipation when he should be mourning, and he may also have been distressed about the uncertainty of his future. However, the close proximity of the conversion scene and the death of his enslaver suggests that converting to Christianity was part of a deathbed deal with Frelinghuysen.[74] The performance of joy becomes a currency that enables Gronniosaw to exchange his Christian conversion for emancipation. Gronniosaw's performances of happiness and joy intended to manipulate his enslavers, patron, editor, and readers for his own personal benefit, in the form of both emancipation and financial gain.

Furthermore, Gronniosaw was not baptised until after he was emancipated, and even then it served a political purpose. He was threatened with re-enslavement for incurring a debt, which took several years to pay before was able to travel to England.[75] At the time of Gronniosaw's baptism it was commonly believed amongst British society that emancipated individuals could not be compelled to return to

[74] Harris, 'Seeing the Light', p. 52.
[75] Hanley, 'Calvinism', p. 368.

slavery after being baptised, and so many Black people were encouraged to take this preventative measure.[76] From this it can be inferred that Gronniosaw decided to be baptised in the hope that this would protect him from re-enslavement, rather than because of a genuine religious conversion. Moreover, it was only after his daughter died – and was refused burial 'because she had never been baptised' (Gronniosaw, p. 45) – that he decided to have his remaining children baptised in 1771, with the eldest Mary Albert aged six.[77] If Gronniosaw's religious conversion was genuine then he would surely have baptised his children before this situation arose. Baptising his children served to integrate the family into the local community, and ensure their right to a burial, rather than serving as a reflection of their religious beliefs, which is not dissimilar to the political motivation behind Gronniosaw's own baptism. Gronniosaw demonstrates the problems faced by Black individuals even after they were emancipated, as his family were met with 'a great deal of ill treatment', and lived in extreme poverty (Gronniosaw, p. 45). His narrative thus demonstrates that more needed to be done to combat racial inequality and discrimination, as happiness was not immediately granted upon emancipation.

Equiano also claims that converting to Christianity brought him happiness, and suggests that his feeling of 'great joy' at his baptism (Equiano, p. 99) was derived from the hope that this religious conversion would lead to his emancipation. The connection between Christian conversion and emancipation is more explicit in Equiano's narrative than in Gronniosaw's, as Equiano expresses the belief that 'I have been baptized; and by the laws of the land no man has a right to sell me'

[76] Ibid., p. 371.
[77] Ibid., p. 372.

(Equiano, pp. 123-4). Equiano initially believes that his Christian affiliation grants him certain rights that protect him against slavery, though he soon realises the fallacy of this claim when his enslaver Michael Henry Pascal, a naval officer in the British Royal Navy, sells him to Captain Doran. Equiano wrote that Pascal had 'always treated me with the greatest kindness, […] so that, from all this tenderness, I had never once supposed, in all my dreams of freedom, that he would think of detaining me any longer than I wished' (Equiano, p. 121-122). This echoes his earlier claim that he was 'warmly attached' to Pascal, and so he 'told him, if he left me behind it would break my heart' (Equiano, p. 89), which foreshadows the feeling that his 'heart was ready to burst with sorrow and anguish' that Equiano experiences when Pascal sells him to Doran (Equiano, p. 125). Equiano depicts this as a betrayal of his trust and affection, which forms a contrast to his portrayal of Doran considering his happiness when selling him to King, as Pascal does not seem to take Equiano's emotional welfare into consideration.[78] The contrast allows Equiano to show that amelioration only brings temporary joy, and is not guaranteed to benefit everybody, as not all enslavers treated enslaved individuals with the same level of kindness. Although Christian conversion was a valued form of amelioration, it was not enough to ensure the happiness of enslaved individuals as it was not guaranteed to lead to their emancipation.

The realisation that baptism did not automatically guarantee emancipation led Equiano to expose the limitations of Christian conversion. Equiano writes:

[78] Ramesh Mallipeddi, 'Filiation to Affiliation: Kinship and Sentiment in Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*', *EHL,* 81.3 (2014) pp. 923-954 (p. 939).

> I thought that if it were God's will I ever should be freed it would be so […]; but, as I could not help myself, he must do as he pleased; I could only hope and trust to the God of Heaven; and at that instant my mind was big with inventions and full of schemes to escape. (Equiano, p. 172)

He claims to 'trust' in God, and yet within the same sentence, representing the same thought process, he begins to concoct 'schemes to escape'. Equiano refuses to relinquish his autonomy, and allow his freedom to become subject to 'God's will'. The performance of Christian obedience becomes a commercial ploy to appeal to a Christian readership, with Equiano's joyful response to his baptism promoting Christian conversion in exchange for profits from sales of the narrative. Equiano suggests that faith in God alone was insufficient to ensure his emancipation, although he remained hopeful that he could orchestrate his own plan to escape slavery as part of his pursuit for happiness.

Equiano's claim that his baptism made him happy while he was enslaved initially seems to support Grainger's argument that emancipation was unnecessary if enslaved individuals were treated well. Nevertheless, Equiano's experience undermines arguments that slavery could increase the happiness of Africans by introducing them to Christianity. Enslavers defended their interests by presenting slavery as a fortunate fall that saved the souls of African pagans, thereby forming part of a civilising process that intended to improve the happiness and morality of the Africans that they enslaved.[79] The notion of the fortunate fall is expressed in *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1801), where politician and enslaver Bryan Edwards wrote that 'it is the duty and policy of

[79] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* p. 182.

good government […] to direct the weaknesses of our fellow creatures to the promotion of their happiness', and argued that Christianity is 'the best system of religion calculated for the attainment of that end'.[80] This teleological argument assumes a racial hierarchy where Black people are conceived to be weaker than White people, which leads Edwards to conclude that the former needed to be enslaved as a way to ensure their Christian conversion and subsequent happiness. However, the connection that Equiano makes between religious conversion and emancipation reveals the major flaw within such proslavery logic: if the purpose of slavery was to achieve religious conversion, then slavery was no longer necessary once that goal had been achieved – and yet Equiano was not immediately emancipated after his baptism. Such a paradox exposed the contradictions inherent within proslavery discourse concerning the happiness of enslaved individuals. Equiano suggests that emancipation was the only way to resolve this paradox and guarantee the happiness of enslaved individuals.

Although Equiano was not immediately emancipated after his baptism, he appears to have drawn comfort and joy from his faith. As Boulukos argues, Equiano is careful 'not [to] allow the conflation of gratitude to God for [his] conversion with gratitude to [his] enslavers'; instead, he presents himself as a true Christian, in comparison to his hypocritical enslavers, with the aim of showing that Black people could conform to Western social norms.[81] This conformity meant that Black people such as Equiano were able to integrate themselves in Western civilisation,

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[80] Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies,* 3rd edn, I (London: John Stockdale, 1801) pp. 536-7.
[81] Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave,* pp. 182-183.

particularly if they were literate. The frontispiece of the narrative features a portrait of Equiano holding an open Bible, which unifies religion and literacy from the outset. The Bible is opened at Acts 4:12, which states: ‘Neither is there salvation in any other [than Jesus], for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved’. This not only aligns Equiano as a Christian, but suggests that his Christian identity supersedes all other signifiers, as racial and cultural identities are seemingly insignificant in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Equiano’s performances of Christian devotion during his enslavement helped him to further his education: his passion for Biblical studies was accompanied by his desire to read and write, with Equiano hoping that such knowledge would contribute towards obtaining his emancipation. An article in the *Monthly Review* proclaimed that Equiano ‘appears to be a very sensible man; and he is, surely, not the less worthy of credit from being a convert to Christianity.’[82] His intelligence, emotional sensitivity, and religious conversion all contributed towards the argument for racial equality that is implicit within the narrative. Thus, Equiano’s ‘great joy’ (Equiano, p. 99) at being baptised was partially a response to overcoming an element of cultural difference that was used by proslavery forces to create a racial hierarchy.

Religion, reading, writing, and arithmetic were all sources of happiness for Equiano because he used them as tools to integrate himself within Western civilisation. His literary proficiency challenged notions of African inferiority by reducing differences between Black and White individuals in the hope of discrediting racial justifications for slavery. Within the narrative itself, Equiano explains that he felt

[82] *Monthly Review* (June 1789) p. 552.

himself to be ‘almost an Englishman’, as he ‘could now speak English tolerably well’, yet the qualifying ‘almost’ demonstrates that there were still barriers to him claiming this identity (Equiano, p. 98). He continues:

> I now […] relished their [European] society and manners. I no longer looked upon them as spirits, but as men superior to us; and therefore I had the stronger desire to resemble them; to imbibe their spirit, and imitate their manners; I therefore embraced every occasion of improvement.
> (Equiano, p. 98)

Equiano references Europeans as ‘superior’ to himself, though this seems to have more to do with their actions than their race, thus inspiring a desire to emulate their manners. This desire for self-improvement meant that he ‘had long wished to read and write’ and was ‘uneasy’ that he had not yet been baptised (Equiano, p. 99). His ‘anxiety’ is presented as a response to being told that ‘I could not go to Heaven unless I was baptized’ (Equiano, p. 99) so that the narrative would conform to the requirements of a spiritual conversion tale. However, Equiano’s reference to having ‘some faint idea of a future state’ (Equiano, p. 99) is deliberately ambiguous to conceal his desire for emancipation, which he believed would be more readily granted if he could imitate European manners – including their Christian devotion. The use of ‘imitate’ and ‘resemble’ (Equiano, p. 98) suggests that this mimicry intended to challenge notions of racial difference, rather than reflect genuine conversion. Religious conversion and literacy were thus sources of happiness for Equiano because they allowed him to advocate racial equality, which undermined racial justifications for slavery.

Equiano's awareness of the value of literacy leads him to claim that he was 'very happy' at being able 'to improve myself in reading and writing' during his enslavement (Equiano, p. 109). He recalls his 'joy' at returning to London, as:

> I thought now of nothing but being freed, and working for myself, and thereby getting money to enable me to get a good education; for I always had a great desire to be able at least to read and write; and […] endeavoured to improve myself in both. […] the captain's clerk taught me to write, and gave me a smattering of arithmetic (Equiano, p. 120)

Equiano associates reading, writing and arithmetic with his desire for freedom, presenting them as intrinsically linked. The concept of freedom for a Black individual was comprised of two main components: 'freedom from' slavery, oppression, and discrimination; and 'freedom to' gain an education, independence, and autonomy.[83] Equiano's future happiness depended on his ability to use these skills not only to obtain his freedom, but also to protect it, as his literacy, numeracy, and Christian conversion all allowed him to earn an income and experience the freedoms that came with financial independence. Equiano sought to exemplify that equal access to 'a good education' would lead to intellectual equality despite racial difference, and so Black individuals would be more beneficial to society without the restrictions imposed by their enslavement.

Literary proved to be an important asset after his emancipation, as it allowed Equiano to establish a much greater degree of financial independence in comparison to Gronniosaw. Equiano published his narrative at the height of the abolitionist campaign's popularity, and so he was able to gain financial support from members of

[83] For more on the terms 'freedom to' and 'freedom from' see: Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941).

the abolitionist society. Equiano commodified his freedom and subsequent happiness by attributing them both a monetary value when he purchased his manumission, and also through the income that he gained from the subsequent publication of his narrative. He marketed the *Interesting Narrative* through subscription, allowing him to obtain money in advance of publication to prove to the publisher that there was a market demand to be met, and that the financial risks were significantly decreased by the prior guarantee of an audience and sales.[84] The *Interesting Narrative* proved to be popular, going through thirteen editions in the first five years.[85] Equiano kept the copyright to the *Interesting Narrative,* as selling it would have meant forfeiting royalties from future sales and the power to revise subsequent editions, relinquishing the authority to choose which illustrations or supplementary materials were included in the published book.[86] Retaining the copyright meant retaining control over his narrative, as Equiano had invested too much into his identity to let someone else manipulate it.[87] Having obtained his freedom from slavery, he refused to allow his future to be controlled by anyone else ever again. Equiano's narrative marks his transition 'from property to person': the transition from being perceived as a commodity, to the producer and consumer of commodities.[88] In light of this, Equiano's expressions of happiness at learning to read and write do not necessarily indicate that he was content with his enslavement, but rather serve as a retrospective

[84] Philip Gould, 'The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 11-27 (p. 21); 'List of Subscribers', Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative.*
[85] Gould, 'The Rise, Development, and Circulation of the Slave Narrative', p. 21.
[86] Vincent Carretta, 'Olaudah Equiano: African British Abolitionist and Founder of the African American Slave Narrative', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 44-60 (p. 53).
[87] Ibid., p. 53.
[88] Mallipeddi, 'Filiation to Affiliation', p. 926.

evaluation of the happiness that his literacy skills have granted him since his emancipation.

Although Equiano's literacy skills and Christian conversion helped him to establish his independence and intellectual capabilities, it was ultimately commerce that granted Equiano's emancipation. The ability to earn his own money was key to establishing his independence, and so he is later 'very happy' to become a sailor 'for I immediately thought I might in time stand some chance by being on board to get a little money, or possibly make my escape if I should be used ill' (Equiano, p. 157). Equiano prioritised freedom by commerce over the limited freedom of a runaway, as he was aware of the importance of manumission papers to secure his emancipation in the long-term. His resistance ironically involved conforming to Westernised cultural norms regarding trading in the hope that this would allow him to purchase his emancipation. He recalls being filled with 'the fullest joy' when he received money to contribute towards that goal (Equiano, p. 174). This was in response to simultaneously being granted the 'freedom to' trade and establish a degree of financial independence, while also helping to achieve 'freedom from' oppression by contributing towards his ability to purchase his own emancipation.

His plan succeeds, as the title of chapter seven indicates that Equiano is able to purchase his emancipation, and is granted manumission 'to his great joy' (Equiano, p. 183). Positive emotions are used in abundance in this chapter, where Equiano describes his 'unutterable bliss', 'gratitude', 'joy', and being 'unable to express my feelings, but by the overflowing of my eyes'(Equiano, p. 190). These positive

emotions were too powerful to be articulated at the time, and so could only be expressed by a bodily signifier in the form of tears, as the emotions are so great that they physically overpower Equiano, with his eyes offering an outlet for the excessive emotion. Since tears are typically associated with sadness, this symbolises the expulsion of negative emotions because the predominant cause of misery has now been removed with the termination of his enslavement. The tears represent the positive emotions in response to manumission replacing, and expelling, the negative emotions associated with his enslavement. A short while later Equiano is able to articulate his feelings: ‘Every one I met I told of my happiness’, and he even calls this ‘the happiest day I had ever experienced’ (Equiano, pp. 191-2). The transition from using ‘joy’ as the overpowering initial response to emancipation, to the use of ‘happiness’ as a reflective evaluation of his emotions, demonstrates that these positive emotions were both short- and long-term. Equiano’s happiness arose from the knowledge that his emancipation was secured by the lawful authority behind his manumission, and that he had accumulated the skills necessary to obtain an unusual level of independence for a Black individual. Although there were many obstacles still faced by Black individuals, Equiano portrayed his happiness as an emancipated Black man to counteract the ‘myth of the happy slave’ as testament to what Black individuals could achieve if they too were freed from slavery.

Nevertheless, the happiness of Black individuals was limited, as was their freedom, even after their emancipation. They were constantly threatened with the possibility of re-enslavement, a point of particular concern for Mary Prince, whose happiness was denied by the fact that she could not return to Antigua to visit her

husband without risking a return to slavery. Ironically, when slavery was abolished two years later in 1833, Antigua was one of the few British territories that rejected the apprenticeship system (intending to gradually phase out slavery so that all involved could acclimatise to free labour) in favour of immediate manumission.[89] This perhaps explains why very little is known of Prince after the publication of her narrative and the subsequent legal trial, as she may have decided to return to Antigua when it became safe to do so. However, at the point of writing she had no notion of when slavery would be abolished, and was filled with uncertainty regarding what the future would hold. References to such fears in slave narratives expose the limitations of the freedom and happiness of emancipated Black individuals, and serves as a political reminder that happiness could not be guaranteed or sustained while slavery continued to exist.

Prince's illiteracy also proved an obstacle to her potential happiness, as it limited her freedom and independence. In order to produce her narrative Prince had to rely on Susanna Strickland to act as an amanuensis, whilst her employer Thomas Pringle (secretary for the Anti-Slavery Society, formed in 1823) acted as editor. In the preface, Pringle writes that the narrative 'was taken down from Mary's own lips, […] with all the narrator's repetitions and prolixities, and afterwards pruned into its present shape; retaining, as far as was practicable, Mary's exact expressions and peculiar phraseology […] and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added'.[90] The narrative's authenticity is stressed, particularly in relation to the

[89] Natasha Lightfoot, *Troubling Freedom: Antigua and the Aftermath of British Emancipation* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015) p. 87.
[90] Thomas Pringle, 'Preface' to Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London: F. Westley & A. H. Davis, 1831) p. iii.

sentiments expressed within it, so that it can be considered as a reliable source of evidence concerning the physical and emotional suffering experienced by enslaved individuals. The efforts of Strickland and Pringle served to facilitate communication between Prince and the British public, with Strickland going uncredited in the publication to reinforce that the narrative was composed of Prince's own words in order to foreground her literacy agency. Although the editing process made Prince's West Indian dialect more accessible for English readers, it can still be considered as a form of cultural appropriation whereby the dominant English culture displaces the culture of enslaved individuals in the Caribbean, as in light of Western social norms the latter was considered to be inferior. The notion that White people needed to correct Black people reinforced the racial hierarchy, and so these perceptions of racial inequality continued to limit the happiness of emancipated Black individuals.

The fact that Prince was illiterate also reflects the limited progress made by the abolitionist movement, particularly in comparison to Equiano demonstrating his literacy skills in his own narrative that was published nearly fifty years earlier. The different levels of education experienced by these two individuals may in part be accounted by social norms regarding gender roles; women were commonly responsible for domestic tasks within the household, and literacy was not considered important for undertaking domestic labour. As a result, Prince does not experience the happiness that Equiano feels at the hope that learning to read and write would lead to emancipation. Furthermore, since Prince had been born into slavery (unlike Gronniosaw and Equiano, according to their narratives) she did not need to undergo religious conversion, as she had been raised as a Christian from birth. For this

reason, she does not share Gronniosaw and Equiano's hope that religious conversion would lead to her emancipation. Prince's narrative, and the circumstances of its production, highlights that not all enslaved individuals were treated equally, and that the abolition of the slave trade had done little to improve the experiences of enslaved individuals. Her narrative therefore reinforced the need for further progression, with the abolition of slavery being the next step in the pursuit of happiness for Black Britons.

Sympathetic abolitionists were reluctant to celebrate the limited happiness of the few individuals who were released from slavery while so many continued to suffer. As Equiano said in an address to the Houses of Lords and Commons:

> May the God of heaven inspire your hearts with peculiar benevolence on that important day when the question of Abolition is to be discussed, when thousands, in consequence of your Determination, are to look for Happiness or Misery! (Equiano, p. 7)

Equiano appeals to the Christian benevolence of those in positions of political power who were able to determine the fate of thousands of individuals, using sentimental rhetoric to equate the choice between enabling the enslavement and trade of individuals, and abolishing it, as a choice between an individual's misery and happiness respectively. The debate becomes more concerned with morality than rationality, and highlights the human impact of political decisions. Although amelioration was a step in the right direction, it was impossible to ensure that it was legally enforced at all times, and so the happiness that Equiano refers to was only possible if parliament were to pass an act to legally abolish slavery throughout the British Empire. The social and moral happiness of the nation would also be curtailed

until freedom was granted not merely to a handful of enslaved individuals, but to them all.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SORROWS OF SLAVERY AND THE ABOLITIONIST TROPE OF FAMILIAL SEPARATION

(Fig. 1. Josiah Wedgwood's 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother' medallion (1787), inspired by the official SEAST emblem created by William Hackwood)[1]

[1] Josiah Wedgwood's 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother' medallion (1787). Image courtesy of the British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/419342001 [Accessed 12/07/2022].

Introduction

The sorrows of slavery has been extensively explored by scholars such as Markman Ellis, Brycchan Carey, Lynn Festa and Ramesh Mallipeddi, who all investigate the ways that abolitionist writers sought to evoke the reader's sympathy by depicting the sorrow expressed by enslaved individuals.[2] This chapter will focus on the sorrows of slavery specifically caused by familial separation, which is a significant abolitionist trope that has not yet been thoroughly explored. The motto adopted by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST) features the rhetorical question 'Am I not a man and a brother?' (see fig. 1), which encouraged Britons to imagine a relationship between themselves and the enslaved, linked together as part of a colonial family.[3] Despite the motto's masculine focus, the abolitionist movement drew both on notions of feminine sensibility, and conceptions of 'The Man of Feeling', which to an extent created a sense of unity in terms of not only race, but also gender. Addressing fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and sisters and brothers aimed to appeal to the sympathies of as many different readers as possible in the abolitionist effort to unite British citizens in the fight against slavery.

Family relationships became an integral part of the rhetoric of sensibility that was used in British abolitionist literature: Hannah More, Ann Yearsley, William

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[2] Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006); Ramesh Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

[3] David Bindman, 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother? British Art and Slavery in the Eighteenth Century', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 26 (1994) pp. 68-82; John M. G. Barclay, '"Am I not a Man and a Brother?" The Bible and the British Anti-Slavery Campaign', *The Expository Times*, 119.1 (2007) pp. 3-14.

Roscoe, Olaudah Equiano and Mary Prince all portray the emotional suffering that enslaved Africans experienced when they were forcibly separated from their loved ones.[4] Moral philosophers considered sentimental displays to be evidence of cultural refinement, with sensitivity towards the emotional experiences of others considered to be an innate guide to morality that epitomised humanity.[5] Abolitionists depicted the sorrow caused by familial separation to show that Africans experienced the same emotions as Europeans, which reinforced the notion of a shared humanity whereby emotional relationships of love and compassion transcend cultural difference.

The trope of familial separation relied on portraying the enslaved as harmless victims of oppression whose emancipation would prove no threat to their former enslavers, yet this also implies that the enslaved are docile, and reliant on British humanitarians to grant their freedom. Depicting the enslaved as too weak and passive to defend themselves risks supporting notions of African inferiority, and ignores the efforts that many enslaved individuals went to in order to free themselves (exemplified by rebelling, escaping, and buying their own freedom). Most abolitionists

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[4] Hannah More, *Slavery: A Poem* (London: T. Cadell, 1788); Ann Yearsley, *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade, Humbly Inscribed to the Right Honourable and Right Reverend Frederick, Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, &c. &c.* (London: G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1788); William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa* (London: R. Faulder, 1787); Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London: F. Westley & A. H. Davis, 1831). All subsequent references are to these editions. For more information on the ways that enslavers disregarded kinship, and prioritised financial gain over familial relationships, see: Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

[5] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 'A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm' [1707], in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* [1711], ed. by Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* [1739], (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009) https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/reader.action?docID=435863 [Accessed 14/06/2019]; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also: Carey, *British Abolitionism*; Peter J. Kitson, '"Bales of Living Anguish": Representations of Race and the Slave in Romantic Writing', *ELH,* 67.2 (2000) pp. 515-537; Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

believed in emotional equality regardless of race, although some abolitionists (such as Hannah More) argued that Africans were intellectually inferior to Europeans. The argument that Black people were emotionally, but not intellectually, equal to White people intended to justify colonial intervention as a form of enlightenment education, and contributed towards the imperialist goal of enforcing Western culture on colonial subjects to displace 'inferior' cultures. The trope of familial separation promoted Christian family values as evidence of the supremacy of Western cultural norms. Nevertheless, the representation of Christian familial relationships helped to familiarise enslaved individuals by focusing on similarities, rather than racial differences, to encourage the British public to sympathise with their emotional suffering and encourage a sense of kinship. In their narratives, Equiano and Prince depict their sorrows to establish that enslaved individuals were not docile, but rather that their agency was limited by the restrictions imposed upon them during their enslavement. They demonstrate both their emotional and intellectual capabilities as emancipated Black individuals by exerting their reason and expressing their emotions in ways that were considered appropriate to polite society. In doing so, they suggest that Black and White individuals should be considered – and treated – as equals, though this would not be possible until slavery was abolished.

These tensions highlight the limitations of sympathy and sentimental rhetoric. Many Britons found it difficult to sympathise with enslaved Africans because of the cultural and geographical distance between them. Earlier in the eighteenth century, Shaftesbury and Hume had theorised that sympathy requires close proximity, whilst philosophical thought at the latter end of the century increasingly favoured the idea

that benevolent sympathy could transcend local proximity to be extended globally.[6] These long-standing debates continued to develop alongside the abolitionist movement, though many still found it difficult to extend their sympathy to someone whose situation they were largely unfamiliar with, rendering it difficult to imagine themselves experiencing a lifestyle so different from their own. Therefore, the geographical and cultural distance between the British public and the enslaved individuals in the colonies was particularly problematic for the abolitionist campaign, as many Britons were largely unaware of the full extent of the cruelties of slavery until the surge of abolitionist propaganda fronted by SEAST in 1787. Abolitionist literature became a vehicle for sympathy that aimed to bridge the gap between British readers and enslaved people. Yet even when the British public became aware of the emotional suffering inflicted upon enslaved individuals, there still remained the difficulty of inspiring active – rather than passive – sympathy within the reader. These problems are explored in Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Epistle to William Wilberforce Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (1791), which concludes that sentimental rhetoric was ineffective as it did not inspire abolitionist action.[7] This chapter explores Barbauld's poem, and demonstrates that she was not the only abolitionist poet aware of the limitations of both sympathy and sentimental rhetoric. I shall examine these limitations, which include the voyeuristic objectification and dehumanisation of enslaved individuals, to consider the ways that abolitionist literature at times reinforced the racial hierarchy.

[6] See: Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men*; Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*; Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (London: T. Cadell, 1789); Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution* (London: J. S. Jordan, 1791).
[7] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London: J. Johnson, 1791). All subsequent references are to this edition.

The abolitionist writers explored in this chapter were chosen because of their strong relationships to the national abolitionist campaign, which was centralised by the formation of SEAST in 1787. Equiano worked closely with several members of the society throughout his writing career, with many members listed as subscribers to his *Interesting Narrative* (1789) because they had paid for a copy in advance of its publication.[8] SEAST's financial contributions towards the production of certain abolitionist texts (such as Equiano's narrative) were partially funded by the sales of other abolitionist literature. For example, Roscoe's *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787) was produced to raise funds for the society shortly after it was established, with the profits used to finance the production and distribution of additional abolitionist literature.[9] His poem highlights the cruelties and sufferings of slavery, but does not directly advocate abolitionist action; partly because the national abolitionist effort had only just begun, and partly because of Roscoe's career. As a lawyer in Liverpool many of Roscoe's clients benefitted from the slave trade, and so he would have been wary of explicitly advocating abolition for fear of provocation if he opposed those whom he depended upon for an income.[10] Nevertheless, his Christian morality drove him to stand for parliament as an independent candidate for Liverpool at the 1806 election, and following a successful campaign he was able to vote in favour of abolishing the slave trade in 1807. Fellow Member of Parliament William Wilberforce called Roscoe 'a man who by strength of character has risen above the deep-seated prejudices of his townspeople and eventually won their respect', allowing him to directly contribute

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[8] See 'List of Subscribers', Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789).
[9] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 92.
[10] Donald A. Macnaughton, *Roscoe of Liverpool: His Life, Writings and Treasures, 1753-1831* (Birkenhead: Countryvise, 1996) p. 28.

towards the abolition of the slave trade while controversially representing a city built around one of Britain's main slaving ports.[11]

The abolitionist society in London connected several abolitionists across the country, from Roscoe in Liverpool, to Hannah More in Bristol. It even influenced abolitionists such as Ann Yearsley, also from Bristol, who had no direct connections to the society. The presence of enslaved individuals in cities with slaving ports, such as Liverpool, Bristol and London, meant that their suffering could be witnessed first-hand by the inhabitants of those cities.[12] Increased awareness of the suffering experienced by enslaved individuals provoked a rise in anti-slavery sentiments, creating communities of feeling that were sympathetic to the abolitionist campaign. One such community was the Clapham Sect, a group of Evangelical and Anglican social reformers who supported abolition, including Member of Parliament William Wilberforce, former enslaver John Newton, and poet Hannah More. The Clapham Sect collaborated with SEAST to produce and distribute abolitionist literature, such as More's *Slavery: A Poem* (1788), which was composed at SEAST's request in support of Wilberforce's parliamentary campaign.[13] More's *Slavery* and Yearsley's *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade* (1788) were published within short succession of one another with the intention of rallying support for the Dolben Bill. The Bill sought to limit the number of Africans that could be transported per slave ship in an effort to decrease mortality rates, driven by both economic and

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[11] F. E. Sanderson, 'The Liverpool abolitionists', *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, ed. by R. Anstey and P. E. H. Hair (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976) pp. 196–238 (p. 223).
[12] Ramesh Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).
[13] Kitson, '"Bales of Living Anguish"', p. 525.

humanitarian motivations, and was passed through parliament later that year.[14] In 1788 More discussed her poem with her sister, writing: ‘good or bad, if it does not come out at the particular moment when the discussion comes on in Parliament, it will not be worth a straw.’[15]

Anna Laetitia Barbauld similarly wrote her *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1791) to support Wilberforce and his parliamentary campaign. It was a response to the failure of the first parliamentary bill proposing the abolition of the slave trade that same year, and offers a criticism of sentimental rhetoric. Barbauld’s abolitionist views were likely influenced by her friendships with fellow dissenters Joseph Priestley and Josiah Wedgwood, both of whom had produced abolitionist material by the time that Barbauld’s poem was published.[16] Barbauld also sent a copy of her *Epistle* to Hannah More, who responded ‘I thank you for writing so well, for writing on a subject so near my heart, and addressing it to one so every way worthy of your highest esteem’.[17] In contrast to More and Yearsley, Barbauld represents a more radical approach to abolition by claiming that sentimental rhetoric alone was insufficient for achieving abolition.

[14] Stephen D. Behrendt, ‘Crew Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Eighteenth Century’, in *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity and Morality in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, ed. by David Eltis and David Richardson (London: Routledge, 2006) p. 63.
[15] Hannah More, Letter to her sister [1788], in *The Life of Hannah More: With Selections from her Correspondence* (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1862) pp. 128-130 (p. 129).
[16] Josiah Wedgwood produced the image ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother’ (1787) as the official emblem for the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (SEAST); see also Joseph Priestley, *A Sermon On the Subject of the Slave Trade* (Birmingham: Pearson & Rollason, 1788).
[17] Anna Letitia Le Breton, *Memoir of Mrs. Barbauld: including Letters and Notices of her Family and Friends by her great niece* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1874) pp. 67-8.

By the time that Mary Prince published her narrative in 1831 the slave trade was abolished, and so Prince represented her own sorrows in order to argue that slavery itself should also be eradicated. However, the limited progress of the abolitionist movement led Prince to concur that there were significant limitations to sentimental rhetoric and sympathetic identification, as they had not yet succeeded in abolishing slavery. The first section of this chapter explores how abolitionists exposed Britain's immorality for causing such sorrow to the enslaved – particularly through portrayals of familial separation – in order to argue that abolition would re-establish Britain's moral superiority. The second section then explores the extent to which White readers were subjected to emotional policing, which is followed by an examination of sentimental rhetoric's limitations in light of Britain's failure to act on its sympathetic feelings towards enslaved Africans.

Portrayals of Sorrow and Familial Separation in Abolitionist Discourse

The sorrowful expressions of enslaved Africans were portrayed in abolitionist literature to disprove the happy slave myth discussed in the previous chapter, and show that abolitionist efforts should be undertaken to prevent their suffering. The trope of familial separation intended to inform readers of the emotional suffering that was experienced as a result of husbands, wives, and children being separated at the whim of their enslavers, often never to see each other again. The trope was shaped by Biblical accounts of men selling various members of their family into slavery

(Exodus 21:2-11; Leviticus 25:39-46; Nehemiah 5:5).[18] The most notable application of the trope to early modern slavery is found in Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko* (1688), later adapted into a play by Thomas Southerne (1695), which explores how slavery repeatedly threatened to separate Oroonoko from his wife Imoinda and their unborn child.[19] Although Behn's position on slavery is widely debated, *Oroonoko* undeniably had a substantial influence on British abolitionist literature.[20] *Oroonoko* promotes the reader's sympathy towards the enslaved characters who suffer from familial separation, which is a literary strategy that subsequently became a prominent feature of British abolitionist literature.[21]

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[18] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009); Thomas Schirrmacher, 'Slavery in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and History', Evangelical Review of Theology, 42.3 (2018) pp. 225-238.

[19] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: Or, The Royal Slave, A True History* (London: Will Canning, 1688); Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko: A Tragedy* [1695], ed. by Maximillian E. Novak and David Stuart Rodes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976); Laura Brown, 'The Romance of Empire: *Oroonoko* and the Trade in Slaves', *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature,* ed. by Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987) pp. 41-61; Margaret W. Ferguson, 'Juggling the Categories of Race, Class, and Gender: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko'*, *Women's Studies*, 19 (1991) pp. 159-81; Moira Ferguson, 'Oroonoko: Birth of a Paradigm', *New Literary History*, 23.2, (1992), pp. 339-359; Laura J. Rosenthal, 'Owning Oroonoko: Behn, Southerne, and the Contingencies of Property', *Renaissance Drama*, Vol. 23 (1992), pp. 25-58; Charlotte Sussman, 'The Other Problem with Women: Reproduction and Slave Culture in Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko', Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism,* ed. by Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville: Virginia, 1993) pp. 212-233; Jenifer B. Elmore, '"The Fair Imoinda": Domestic Ideology and Anti-Slavery on the Eighteenth-Century Stage', in *Troping Oroonoko from Behn to Bandele,* ed. by Susan B. Iwanisziw (London: Routledge, 2004) pp. 35-58; Basuli Deb, 'Transnational Complications: Reimagining *Oroonoko* and Women's Collective Politics in the Empire', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies,* 36.1 (2015), pp. 33-56.

[20] Brown, 'The Romance of Empire'; G. A. Starr, 'Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling', *Modern Philology*, 87 (1990) pp. 362-72; Jacqueline Pearson, 'Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn', *Review of English Studies*, 42 (1991) pp. 40-56; Ferguson, 'Juggling the Categories'; Elizabeth Landford, 'Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko:* Abolitionist or Sympathist Text?', in *Legacies of Slavery: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Maria Suzette Fernandes Dias (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) pp. 195-209.

[21] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); Mallipeddi, *Spectacular Suffering*.

Portraying the sorrow that was caused by familial separation intended to inspire the reader to take action to help enslaved individuals. As Thomas Clarkson summarises in *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (1808):

> If one, by suffering his heart to become hardened, oppresses a fellow-creature, the tear of sympathy starts up in the eye of another, and the latter instantly feels a desire, involuntarily generated, of flying to his relief.[22]

Clarkson offers a clear divide between good and evil, as represented by the sympathetic and the hard-hearted respectively. He argues that this sympathetic identification is instant and involuntary, and implies that there is no cognitive process involved in the emotional response and the subsequent action. Stressing the familial bonds of enslaved Africans intended to make it easier for the British public to understand their sorrow, enabling the sympathetic transferal of emotion to be channelled into abolitionist action to relieve their suffering.

Familiarising the suffering of familial separation aimed to highlight the similarities between the British public and the enslaved individuals in order to underline that the fundamental difference is the latter's lack of freedom. Focusing on similarities rather than differences intended to resolve the problem of geographical and cultural distance proving an obstacle to inspiring sympathy within the British public. This concern was addressed by Edmund Burke (1783) in his 'Speech on Fox's India Bill' in relation to the colonial governance of India:

[22] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* [1808], I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 4.

> We are so little acquainted with Indian details; the instruments of oppression under which the people suffer are so hard to be understood; and even the very names of the sufferers are so uncouth and strange to our ears, that it is very difficult for our sympathy to fix upon these objects.[23]

The same logic applied to enslaved individuals in the colonies, whose customs and manners were different to those accepted as Western social norms. Sympathising with the enslaved often proved difficult for British citizens unless such 'instruments of oppression' were explained so as to be easily understood by people from all social backgrounds.

The solution involved informing the British public of the suffering, both physical and emotional, that resulted from the oppressions of slavery. One method used by Clarkson involved purchasing shackles, ankle restraints, and instruments of torture such as the thumb screw and the *speculum oris* (a device that forcibly opened the mouth for feeding, which was used to prevent death by starvation as a result of hunger strikes). These were presented as evidence of the barbaric nature of slavery, with diagrams of these instruments distributed because paper copies were easier to circulate nationwide, ensuring that this information reached as many people as possible. Clarkson expressed the belief that the 'print seemed to make an instantaneous impression of horror upon all who saw it, and was therefore instrumental, in consequence of the wide circulation given it, in serving the cause of the injured Africans'.[24] Abolitionist literature added to this horror by providing a more

[23] Edmund Burke, 'Speech on Fox's India Bill' [1783], in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, II (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2008) pp. 431-536 (p. 465).
[24] Clarkson, *The History,* p. 111.

in-depth exploration of the suffering that was caused by slavery, particularly through descriptions of the emotional anguish of familial separation.

The cultural distance between Europeans and Africans is diminished by maintaining that the emotional relationships between family members, based on love and compassion, originated from universally instinctive bonds that transcended cultural difference. Although different cultures may uphold different social norms regarding the appropriate expression of these familial bonds, abolitionists argued that the core emotional relationships are experienced the same throughout all of humanity, thereby refuting claims of racial superiority based on emotional capabilities. Roscoe's poem *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787) is one such example, as it familiarises the familial bonds of enslaved Africans, and encourages the reader to sympathise with the suffering that results from enslaved individuals being separated from their loved ones.

> loudly rose the voice
> Of anguish, whilst the mother for her child
> Struggled with frantic violence, And dar'd
> Th'extreme of danger; whilst the lover clasp'd
> The mistress of his choice, and rais'd his breast
> To meet the threatn'd blow; (Roscoe, *Wrongs*)

The 'frantic' emotion of the enslaved individuals is intensified at the prospect of being separated from their loved ones, as a 'mother for her child / Struggled' and a 'lover clasp'd / The mistress of his choice'. The use of 'choice' reminds the reader that one of the few choices available to enslaved individuals concerned who would become their lover, and with whom they would have children, although even this limited autonomy was restricted by the fact that they were constantly 'threatn'd' with physical

violence, sexual assault, and enforced separation if loved ones were sold to other enslavers. Roscoe creates a gendered hierarchy of dependence whereby females are dependent on males, as the presumably male ‘lover’ protects his female ‘mistress’, while the female is responsible for protecting ‘her child’. In his attempt to highlight the similarities between enslaved Africans and British citizens through portrayals of familial relationships, Roscoe reinforces the gender stereotype of child-rearing as a feminine role. Although Roscoe refutes the racial hierarchy, thus discrediting notions of cultural difference, in doing so he upholds the patriarchy.

Diminishing notions of cultural difference based on emotional similarities allowed abolitionists to argue that geographical distance could just as easily be overcome. Roscoe’s *The Wrongs of Africa* refutes the notion that distance was a barrier to sympathising with the plight of the enslaved:

> Come then, ye generous few, whose hearts can feel
> For stranger sorrows; who can hear the voice
> Of misery breathe across th’Atlantic main,
> Diminish’d not by distance! (Roscoe, *Wrongs*)

The call to action is directly addressed to those who can sympathise with strangers, with the caesura distinguishing these ‘generous few’ as a superior minority due to their increased sensibility. The sorrows of the enslaved become pervasive through the personification of misery, who is given a voice and breath that is ‘diminish’d not by distance’, reinforced by the alliteration extending the sounds of the suffering through time and space. The circulation of sentimental abolitionist literature amplified the voices of the enslaved so that they could be heard from across the Atlantic, so that both sound and sympathy were able to permeate through national borders.

Debates regarding national distinctions, rights, and independence became increasingly prominent in the latter half of the eighteenth century, fuelled by the revolutions of America, France and Haiti. Yet there was also a hope that philanthropy could encompass a global humanity without the limitations of geographical barriers. Abolitionists often used personification to advocate universal benevolence, since it typically 'assign[s] agency to abstract social forces' to create a sense of unity.[25] However, in this particular instance the 'voice of misery' speaking on behalf of the enslaved is an example of 'humanizing […] the already human', which Lynn Festa terms 'redundant personification'.[26] It denies enslaved individuals the agency required to have their own voice and to speak for themselves. The personification aligns enslaved individuals with inanimate objects lacking humanity, and thus inadvertently dehumanises the very people that Roscoe sought to humanise.

Ann Yearsley's *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade* (1788), published a year after *The Wrongs of Africa*, echoes Roscoe's insistence that neither cultural nor geographical distance presented a barrier for inspiring sympathy for the enslaved. Yet Yearsley differs slightly by arguing that geographical distance was not an issue in Bristol because of the close proximity to enslaved individuals in the city's slaving port. Her poem opens with a direct address to the population of Bristol, and criticises the city's involvement in the slave trade. The opening line 'Bristol, thine heart hath throbb'd to glory' situates Bristol as a living entity composed of each of its

[25] Tobias Menely, 'Acts of Sympathy: Abolitionist Poetry and Transatlantic Identification', *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830,* ed. by Stephen Ahern (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 45-67 (p. 63).

[26] Festa, *Sentimental Figures,* pp. 8, 12. See also: Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996) pp. 18, 45, 46.

citizens to form a single, harmonious body that worked together. Bristol's involvement in the slave trade meant that enslaved individuals living within the city also formed part of the community, joined together by a single heartbeat, which suggests a shared emotional experienced that linked all citizens (both free and enslaved) within a community of feeling. The metaphor of Bristol's heart having 'throbb'd to glory' connotes a rapid pulse caused by emotional distress and physical pain, reminding the reader that Bristol's prominence and wealth were accumulated at the expense of the suffering endured by enslaved Africans. Since the enslaved formed part of the metaphorical social body, this suggests that all Bristolians shared the suffering of the enslaved individuals within the city, with sympathetic engagement arising from close proximity.

Nevertheless, Yearsley does not consider sympathy to be restricted by proximity, as she pleads: 'Bristol, list! nor deem Lactilla's soul / Lessen'd by distance' (Yearsley, *A Poem*). Yearsley's sentimental rhetoric is alternately addressed to politicians, enslavers, and the people of Bristol, so that the reader is simultaneously regarded as a participant in the oppressions of slavery and as a sympathetic abolitionist. These contrasting stances are brought into close proximity to reflect that everyone is responsible for the continuation of slavery.[27] The structure of the poem reflects this, as it opens with an address to Bristol, before exploring the suffering of an enslaved individual, and then closes with a final plea for social love to help Bristolians to 'make a fellow-creature's woe / His own by heart-felt sympathy' as a way to redeem 'Bristol's soul'. Referencing Bristol's heart in the first line and its soul

[27] Menely, 'Acts of Sympathy', p. 63.

in the final line creates a thematic symmetry within the poem, with the suffering of the enslaved Luco at its centre. These three structural components mirror the triangular route of the slave trade, as both start and end in Bristol and deal with slavery along the way, thus demonstrating the connections between domestic and colonial life, despite the geographical distance.

The poem also exposes the limitations of British justice, which appears unable to cover the geographical distance to grant enslaved Africans in the colonies the same freedom and rights that were bestowed on British citizens. Yearsley raises the question:

> does Law
> Bid Justice an eternal distance keep
> From England's great tribunal, when the slave
> Calls loud on Justice only? (Yearsley, *A Poem*)

The enslaved are given their own voice with which to demand justice, avoiding the dehumanisation of the redundant personification found in Roscoe's poem. England's laws of freedom are not extended across the distance to the Caribbean colonies, making them seem weaker than the voices of the enslaved that can travel the distance that English laws cannot. This political argument exposing the limitations of English justice is interwoven with sentimental rhetoric to achieve the emotional subversion of the intellect, which makes the reader more susceptible to political arguments through previous exposure to emotive rhetoric.[28] Yearsley reveals her motivations for using emotive language in the lines: 'My Song / Shall teach sad Philomel a louder note, / When Nature swells her woe' (Yearsley, *A Poem*). Despite

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[28] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 42.

having her tongue mutilated, Philomela eventually found a way to share her story, unlike the majority of enslaved individuals who were denied the opportunity to articulate their suffering. Although the enslaved initially ‘calls loudly on Justice’, they are ultimately silenced by their oppressors to prevent justice from prevailing, as reinforced later in the poem when Luco’s ‘parch’d tongue is ever mute’ as he has been tortured to death (Yearsley, *A Poem*). Yearsley intends for her poem to give a voice to marginalised individuals who had suffered at the hands of slavery, in an attempt to seek justice on their behalf.

In order to persuade readers that English laws concerning justice and liberty should be extended to enslaved individuals in the colonies, Yearsley used sentimental rhetoric to stress the similarities between domestic and colonial subjects. As Lord Kames (1767) summarised, ‘it is remarkable in human nature, that though we always sympathize with our relations, and with those under our eye, the distress of persons remote and unknown affects us very little’.[29] Yet Yearsley was adamant that familiarising the oppressions faced by enslaved individuals would create an increased understanding of their suffering, thus enabling sympathetic identification to overcome the barrier of geographical and cultural distance. This is why her poem takes a more personalised approach by focusing on one enslaved individual, named Luco, and the emotional repercussions of being separated from his family. Yearsley describes Luco’s ‘mourning father, and his Incilanda’, ‘his fond mother’ and how his ‘little brothers weep’, though these tears seem to be ineffectual unless White people – such as Yearsley – look upon them with a ‘tearful eye’ (Yearsley, *A Poem*).

[29] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Principles of Equity* (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1767) p. 17.

Witnessing the sorrow of Luco's family leads Yearsley to likewise shed a tear, which appears 'like pearly dew / Upon the blossom of the morn' (Yearsley, *A Poem*). The simile indicates that Yearsley believes her own tears to be as natural as dew, and as valuable as pearls, as such expressions of sympathy can be turned into abolitionist action. The reference to morning represents the start of a new day, which symbolises the beginning of the official abolitionist movement marked by the formation of SEAST in 1787. The suggestion that Yearsley's tears are more valuable than those of Luco's family (because they are more likely to lead to action that will abolish the slave trade and slavery) somewhat reinforces the racial hierarchy by promoting British superiority and overlooking examples of Black resistance. Nevertheless, highlighting the familial bonds of enslaved individuals allowed White readers to conceptualise the repercussions of slavery in a more identifiable manner. Yearsley guides the reader to conclude that since enslaved individuals experience the same emotions as themselves, this signifies a shared humanity that serves as a unifying principle regardless of race.

Despite the fact that More was Yearsley's former patron, and the fact that they were both from Bristol, it appears that Roscoe had a greater influence on Yearsley's poem. Yearsley had previously depended on More's patronage to help her to earn an income so that she could support her destitute family, and through More's connections she developed an interest in the abolitionist cause. However, the relationship between the two poets had disintegrated by the time that their abolitionist poems were published in 1788 (because of an argument about More's control over Yearsley's finances), and so it is no surprise that Yearsley looked for inspiration

elsewhere. Roscoe was amongst the few British poets who used blank verse to convey the abolitionist message, as most abolitionists – including More – used rhyming couplets.[30] Yearsley used blank verse to align herself with Roscoe, whilst simultaneously distancing herself from the influence of More. Blank verse offered Roscoe and Yearsley a degree of freedom from formal restraint due to the lack of rhyme scheme, though its regular meter situated it between 'more formally rhymed verse and prose', which offered poets a greater freedom of expression than heroic couplets.[31] John Milton had previously argued in his 'Note on the Verse' for *Paradise Lost* that blank verse offered a formal 'Liberty […] from the troublesome and modern Bondage of Riming'.[32] The argument presented in Milton's 'Note' inspired many Romantic writers to consider how they could free English verse from the 'bondage' of regular rhyme, and how this poetic liberty was tied to notions of political freedom.[33] Abolitionists such as Roscoe and Yearsley employed blank verse as an act of defiance against bondage, whereby the freedom from rhyme symbolises their support for the freedom of enslaved individuals. Nevertheless, the formal confinement of iambic pentameter represents the restrictions of slavery that many Africans were subjected to, which reminds the reader of the necessity of abolitionist action. On the other hand, More's verse is restrained by both a regular meter and rhyme scheme, and can be seen to reflect her support for the restrictions imposed by British colonialism, despite her abolitionist stance. The use of traditional heroic

[30] Brycchan Carey, 'The Poetics of Radical Abolitionism: Ann Yearsley's Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 34 (2015) pp. 85–105 (p. 96).
[31] Henry Weinfield, *The Blank-Verse Tradition from Milton to Stevens: Freethinking and the Crisis of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 2.
[32] John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 210. For more on Milton's use of blank verse and its relation to liberty, and its Romantic legacy, see: Weinfield, *The Blank-Verse Tradition.*
[33] Oliver Clarkson, and Andrew Hodgson, 'Romantic Rhyme and the Airs that Stray', *Romanticism*, 23.2 (2017) pp. 111-122 (p. 111).

couplets represents her conservatism, and her desire for Africans to conform to British social norms through an Enlightenment education and Christian conversion.

The relationship between Roscoe and Yearsley is further illuminated by the rhetorical parallels between their poems. Yearsley's 'nor […] lessen'd by distance' mirrors Roscoe's 'dimish'd not by distance' in an effort to situate herself within the wider abolitionist movement, and to establish her independence from More by aligning with Roscoe. Another parallel is found in Yearsley's appeal for parliament to 'Defend the honour of a land so fall'n' by implementing social reform so that Britain can 'Boast your laws' (Yearsley, *A Poem*). This mirrors Roscoe's ironic address to the nation in the lines 'Blush ye not / To boast your equal laws' whilst these 'laws', 'rights', and 'liberties' are not extended to the Africans that they enslaved (Roscoe, *Wrongs*). Both poems featuring the phrase 'boast your laws' (although Yearsley omits 'equal') provides additional evidence that Yearsley was inspired by Roscoe's abolitionist discourse, and that she sought to further expose the shameful inconsistencies of British ideology so that such contradictions could be rectified. As Kerri Andrews highlights, 'More speaks respectfully to the MPs' and implores them to implement social reforms, whilst conversely 'Yearsley excoriates them, her mocking tone delivering a bitterly ironic challenge' as her faith in government is limited, which is why she places more emphasis on localised campaigning within Bristol.[34] Although More and Yearsley both advocated abolition, it is clear that Yearsley wished to set herself apart from her former patron and align herself with Roscoe instead.

[34] Kerri Andrews, *Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, Patronage and Poetry: The Story of a Literary Relationship* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013) pp. 92-3.

Despite their differences, both More and Yearsley saw the value of using the trope of familial separation to advocate emotional equality between different races. More's *Slavery: A Poem* was praised in the *Monthly Review* for its 'pathetic appeal to our feelings, on behalf of our sable fellow-creatures.'[35] It appealed for sympathetic compassion for the enslaved by focusing on the suffering caused to their families:

> See the dire victim torn from social life,
> The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!
> She, wretch forlorn! is dragg'd by hostile hands,
> To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands!
> Transmitted miseries, and successive chains,
> The sole sad heritage her child obtains!
> Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,
> To weep together, or together die.
> By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,
> See the fond links of feeling nature broke!
> The fibres twisting round a parent's heart,
> Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part (More, *Slavery*)

More positions herself as an eye-witness to the suffering husband torn from 'agonizing wife' and 'shrieking babe' who is 'torn from their [parents'] grasp'. The alliteration, repetition, and rhyming couplets within the passage all create a sense of unity that represents family bonds. The rhyme is split between two lines to represent the destruction of these relationships, reinforced by the caesura that separates the repetition of 'distant' to replicate the extended space between loved ones who are separated by 'hostile hands'. The separation seemingly causes physical pain, so that 'bleeding' occurs when the 'fibres twisting round a parent's heart' are torn, and natural 'links of feeling' break. This becomes worse when they are denied the 'boon' (gift) of weeping together as a social activity to ameliorate the pain.

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[35] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery,* p. 33.

The first-person pronouns focalise the narrative around the narrator's own experience as a witness to the familial separation, with More acting as a model of sympathy for the reader to follow. The line 'I see, by more than Fancy's mirror' positions the poem as a factual reflection of both the sorrows of slavery, and the similarities between the reader and the enslaved. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith argues that mirrors symbolise the way that society and its norms allow an individual to judge the propriety of their passions and actions, with the 'impartial spectator' representing the internalised self-evaluation of one's morality.[36] More's mirror allows the reader to reflect on how their actions can contribute to either the continuation or cessation of another's suffering, in the hope that they will share the 'guilt' that More experiences. Yet More's sensibility to this guilt ironically intends to signal her virtue as one 'properly schooled in feeling response as a result of superior breeding.'[37] The spectator offers sympathy in exchange for reaffirmation of their own moral superiority. As Annie Persons argues, White writers 'capitalized on the rhetoric and tropes of enslavement to popularize and profit from their texts, making the literary marketplace itself a site of human commodification.'[38] Consequentially, descriptions of enslaved individuals became subject to voyeurism, 'veering into a distasteful savouring of the spectacle of the body in pain' as evidenced with More's 'I turn my eyes' and 'I see'.[39] This exploitation of suffering being made publicly available, without the consent of the enslaved subjects, is

[36] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 129.
[37] Stephen Ahern, 'Introduction', *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830*, ed. by Stephen Ahern (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 1-22 (p. 3).
[38] Annie Persons, 'Ann Yearsley, Hannah More, and Human Commodification in the Literary Marketplace', *Women's Writing*, 27.2 (2020) pp. 217-233 (pp. 218-19).
[39] Ahern, 'Introduction', p. 1.

another form of dehumanisation that transforms them into exhibitions and removes their agency.

More's claim for racial equality was limited to emotional capabilities, and did not extend to intellectual capabilities. She advocates the universality of emotions, but in the same line claims that Africans are intellectually inferior to their European counterparts: 'Tho' few can reason, all mankind can feel' (More, *Slavery*). This is expanded upon with the footnote: 'Nothing is more frequent than this cruel and stupid argument, that they do not feel the miseries inflicted on them as Europeans would do' (More, *Slavery*). More distinguishes between emotional and intellectual equality so that her sympathy simultaneously upholds similarity and difference, which Moira Ferguson argues 'casts slaves into a mode of radical alterity'.[40] More positions the enslaved African as a 'victim torn from social life' (More, *Slavery*), seemingly arguing that Africans formed a civilised society. However, this is undermined when they are later described as 'dark and savage, ignorant and blind', and so 'social' here refers to the familial bonds that arise due to the universality of feeling, rather than intellectual prowess.

Although Yearsley claims that Luco and his family are 'unenlightened' without a 'ray / Of *forc'd* philosophy' (Yearsley, *A Poem*), she does not necessarily consider this as evidence of their inferiority. In fact, she reverses the racial hierarchy with the claim that 'the savage tribes / Are angels when compared to brutes like' the 'vile race

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[40] Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (London: Routledge, 1992).

of Christians', exposing the hypocrisy of Christian and Enlightenment ideology.[41] Yearsley's 'double "alterity" as a woman of the labouring class' allows her to sympathise with enslaved individuals, which motivates her to campaign against oppression based on gender, class, and racial discrimination.[42] While both More and Yearsley uphold the universality of emotions, More differs by contending that Africans lack the philosophy and reason to exert control over their emotional expression. More claims that the 'ignorant' and 'untutored' Africans (More, *Slavery*) need to be enlightened regarding European philosophy to compensate for their natural inferiority, which diminishes the value of African culture by suggesting that it needs to be superseded by European social norms.

Claiming that Africans need to be educated added support for British imperialism and Evangelical missionary aims by using paternalistic humanitarianism as an excuse for colonial exploits. More believed that it was necessary to spread both liberty and Western Enlightenment around the world to achieve global advancement, using light imagery to put across this ideology:

> IF heaven has into being deign'd to call
> Thy light, O LIBERTY! to shine on all;
> Bright intellectual Sun! why does thy ray
> To earth distribute only partial day? […]
> Why are thy genial beams to parts confin'd?
> While the chill North with thy bright ray is blest,
> Why should fell darkness half the South invest?
> Was it decreed, fair Freedom! at thy birth,
> That thou shou'd'st ne'er irradiate *all* the earth?

[41] Persons, 'Ann Yearsley, Hannah More', p. 224.
[42] Alan Richardson, 'Darkness Visible: Race and Representation in Bristol Abolitionist Poetry, 1770-1810', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 27.2 (1996) pp. 67-72 (p. 70).

While Britain basks in thy full blaze of light,
Why lies sad Afric quench'd in total night? (More, *Slavery*)

Light symbolises both liberty and intellectual enlightenment, with More proposing that Britain should 'distribute' them simultaneously to Africans. As an enlightened nation Britain 'basks' in the light of liberty, whose source is the personified 'intellectual sun', and therefore intellect is Britain's liberator. Meanwhile Africa lies in darkness, linking skin colour with a lack of intelligence to justify treating Africans as inferior. Yet intelligence is seemingly judged based on conformity to Western cultural norms. More questions the reasons behind such limitations to Enlightenment when there are 'No obstacles by Nature's hand impress' (More, *Slavery*). If they were not the result of Nature, then these obstacles must be man-made, and so further human intervention is needed to counteract such unnatural barriers. The cyclical nature of time means that day follows 'night', suggesting that Africans had the potential to become enlightened in the future if they received a European (i.e. colonial) education. Emancipation was not necessarily advocated so that enslaved individuals could act freely, but so that they could conform to British Enlightenment ideals – essentially replacing African slavery with colonial rule ahead of the age of 'New Imperialism'.[43]

However, the poem is full of contradictions that undermine this imperialistic outlook.[44] More contradicts her claim that 'Afric [is] quench'd in total night' by arguing that 'Th' unconquer'd Savage laughs at pain and toil, / Basking in Freedom's beams which gild his native soil' (More, *Slavery*). Assuming that 'Freedom' and 'Liberty'

[43] David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History* (London: Macmillan, 2016) p. 400.
[44] For more on the contractions within the poem see: Anthony John Harding, 'Commerce, Sentiment, and Free Air: Contradictions of Abolitionist Rhetoric', *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830,* ed. by Stephen Ahern (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 71-88 (p. 85).

shed the same 'beams' since they are synonymous, the poem contradicts itself and undermines the need for philanthropic intervention; after all, how could Britain 'bestow' them with 'the liberty she loves' if they are already 'basking' in freedom? This undermines the need for colonial intervention, and reveals that imperialism was driven by national, and personal, self-interest rather than philanthropy. For More, and many of her contemporaries, colonisation was driven by the desire to strengthen Britain's international power, and to establish the religious supremacy of Christianity (with More specifically concerned with promoting Evangelicalism). Colonisation intended to benefit the colonising nation, rather than the colonial citizens, and promoted the superiority of White European nations such as Britain.

Olaudah Equiano sought to challenge conceptions of racial inferiority that were upheld by defenders of slavery and certain abolitionists such as More. Equiano recounts the emotional distress of his own experiences of familial separation to not only establish his emotional equality, but also to imply that he was superior to the British enslavers who heartlessly disregarded the familial bonds that he valued. In his *Narrative*, Equiano describes how he 'cried and grieved continually' when he was separated from his sister (Equiano, p. 51). The tears of both Equiano and his sister signal their humanity and their ability to feel the same emotions as White Europeans. Equiano's weeping situates himself as a sentimental hero, a character archetype that was popularised in late-eighteenth-century novels such as Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771).[45] Such sentimental literature contributed towards a 'culture of tears', as contemporary readers not only valued weeping, but also considered tears

[45] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (London: T. Cadell, 1771).

to be 'more or less compulsory attributes and signifiers of a feeling heart and unquestionable morality.'[46] By aligning himself with the Man of Feeling, the moral exemplar of sentimentality in contemporary British culture, Equiano demonstrates that his emotional capabilities are at least equal to those of White Europeans, thus providing a challenge to the racial hierarchy based on emotions.

Equiano's narrative even goes as far as subtly implying that Africans had more respect for social bonds than Europeans, which situates the former as a more caring, and more morally intuitive group of people. This was too radical a claim to be made explicit, but is implied when Equiano explains African judicial customs:

> Adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or death; a punishment, which I believe is inflicted on it throughout most of the nations of Africa:* so sacred among them is the honour of the marriage-bed. (Equiano, p. 27)

Equiano performs to the expectations of a White, Christian audience by claiming that Africans also valued 'the honour of the marriage-bed'. This passage is accompanied with a footnote reference to American Quaker Anthony Benezet's *Some Historical Account Of Guinea* (1771), which countered proslavery arguments that Benin's severe punishment for adultery is evidence of barbarity by demonstrating that on the contrary it is evidence of the value that African culture placed on marriage and family.[47] Benezet goes on to contrast this to the ways that enslaved Africans were treated by Europeans, as 'their masters think so lightly of their marriage

[46] Ildiko Csengei, '"I will not weep": Reading through the Tears of Henry Mackenzie's "Man of Feeling"', *The Modern Language Review,* 103.4 (2008) pp. 952-968 (p. 952).
[47] Equiano's footnote [1] reads 'See Benezet's "Account of Guinea" used throughout', *Interesting Narrative,* p. 345. It refers to: Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account Of Guinea, Its Situation, Produce And The General Disposition Of Its Inhabitants* (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1771). For more on the intertextuality between Equiano and Benezet see: Geraldine Murphy, 'Olaudah Equiano, Accidental Tourist', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 27.4 (1994) pp. 551-568.

engagements, that, when it suits their interests, they will separate man from wife, and children from both, to be sold into different and even distant parts, without regard to their (sometimes) grievous lamentations'.[48] This intertextuality aligns Equiano's own emotional suffering with the 'grievous lamentations' of his fellow enslaved Africans who deemed marriage as a 'sacred […] honour'. Such emotional engagement from the enslaved Africans stands in stark contrast to the unfeeling enslavers who disregard the sacred familial bonds, thereby suggesting that Africans cared more for family than their European counterparts. The intertextual relationship is particularly significant since Equiano claimed to have been born in Benin, and so the footnote simultaneously validates the accounts of each abolitionist text, and adds authority to the implicit suggestion that Africans had stronger emotional ties to their families. Equiano draws on the common association between morality and emotional susceptibility to suggest that Africans are more emotionally and morally astute than Europeans who could allow, endorse, or even enforce the separation of enslaved families. Equiano not only demonstrates that enslaved individuals could experience emotions, but also reverses the racial hierarchy by portraying the superior emotional capabilities of Africans in comparison to the emotional deficiency of Europeans.

Sentimental literature emphasises the harmony of the family, and that domestic relations are beneficial to the whole community as they provide a support network.[49] The need for assistance is signalled by tears, with help provided by sympathetic family members, creating a foundation of social stability. However, enslaved individuals who were separated from their families lacked this vital support system,

[48] Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, pp. 31-32.
[49] Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986) p. 16.

as shown when Equiano recalls the enslavement of himself and his sister, and their subsequent separation.

> the only comfort we had was in being in one another's arms all that night, and bathing each other with our tears. But alas! we were soon deprived of even the small comfort of weeping together. The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated […]. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat any thing but what they forced into my mouth. (Equiano, p. 51)

Whilst they are together their tears are cathartic embodiments of their sorrow, which draws a 'small comfort' through the sympathy that transforms their weeping into a social activity. Adam Smith argued that although tears are expressions of distress, an individual can take pleasure in weeping as they are 'sensibly relieved by it, because the sweetness of the bystander's sympathy more than compensates the bitterness of their sorrow.'[50] Sympathy makes their grief more bearable, with the siblings 'bathing each other with […] tears', which suggests that the sentimental expression was a cleansing ritual to wash away the other's sorrow, while signifying their close relationship through reference to the domesticated, personal act of bathing. However, when they were separated the next day this resulted in 'greater sorrow', more tears, and continuous grieving, which demonstrates that sorrow is intensified when there is nobody there to sympathise. When paired with the succeeding clause, claiming that Equiano tried to starve himself, his grief portrays slavery as a 'social death', whereby the individual no longer considers themself part of a community, and

[50] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 19.

is denied a social identity outside of their enslavement.[51] Equiano no longer has any social ties to his family, his identity is removed when he is renamed Gustavus Vassa, and he is left with nothing but continuous suffering. Equiano welcomes the emptiness that results from purging his tears and refusing to eat, and the death that he hopes will accompany it.

The lack of support offered to enslaved individuals, partly due to enforced separation from their loved ones, meant that many British philanthropists felt the need to step in and offer their support and sympathy by campaigning for abolition. SEAST's 'Am I not a man and a brother' motto fashioned substitute ties with the enslaved by positioning themselves as an adopted family. However, this paternalistic outlook reinforced the racial hierarchy as it positioned enslaved individuals as vulnerable children unable to look after their own interests or defend themselves, and in need of sympathy, help and protection from benevolent British philanthropists who would act on their behalf. Nevertheless, Equiano played to this because he needed the support of White males to not only secure his own freedom, but also to secure the emancipation of every other enslaved individual.

Equiano directly appeals to this support network in his Address 'To the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons of the Parliament of Great Britain', which precedes the narrative:

> My Lords and Gentlemen, Permit me, with the greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your august assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade has entailed on my unfortunate

[51] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) p. 38.

> countrymen. By the horrors of that trade was I first torn away from all the tender connections that were naturally dear to my heart; but these, through the mysterious ways of Providence, I ought to regard as infinitely more than compensated by the introduction I have thence obtained to the knowledge of the Christian religion, and of a nation which, by its liberal sentiments, its humanity, the glorious freedom of its government […] has exalted the dignity of human nature.[52]

He seeks 'compassion for the miseries' of the enslaved, and contends that he 'ought to regard [himself] as infinitely more than compensated' for his own suffering by his Christian conversion and affiliation with a nation of 'liberal sentiments, […] humanity' and 'glorious freedom' (Equiano, p. 6). Susan Marren argues that Equiano flatters British notions of cultural superiority as a rhetorical gesture to position enslaved Africans as anglicized through their cultural appropriation; and since Britons valued freedom this should be extended to the anglicized Africans through their emancipation.[53] However, Marren also contends that the more anglicized Equiano becomes, the further he moves away from his African identity, which threatens his identity as a representative of all enslaved Africans by giving the impression that he is the exception rather than the rule.[54] The fact that Equiano identifies himself as 'An African' in the narrative's title reduces this threat, and reminds the reader that he is a hybrid of two cultures because he is an African who is somewhat anglicised. Equiano's narrative foregrounds his cultural hybridity to demonstrate that Africans could conform to European social norms, as this challenged notions of racial/cultural difference that were used to justify slavery. Equiano's cultural appropriation allows him to suggest that Britain's self-proclaimed reputation as a nation of 'liberal

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[52] Olaudah Equiano, 'Address to Lords and Commons of Parliament', in *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789) p. 6.
[53] Susan M. Marren, 'Between Slavery and Freedom: The Transgressive Self in Olaudah Equiano's Autobiography', *PMLA*, 108.1 (1993) pp. 94-105 (p. 95).
[54] Ibid., p. 95.

sentiments', 'humanity', and 'freedom' was contradicted by its involvement in slavery and the slave trade. The 'miseries' and 'horrors' that Britons inflicted upon Equiano and his 'countrymen' thus undermined notions that White people were more civilised than Black people. Although Equiano claims that he was compensated for these 'miseries', the addition of 'I ought' qualifies this claim, and suggests that his own estimation of British culture is detached from the alleged superiority of Western civilisation.

Although Equiano's Address to Parliament initially seems to be merely an appeal for the British public to act as a surrogate family, which reinforces the paternalistic racial hierarchy through bonds of dependency, the focus on being 'torn away from all the tender connections that were naturally dear to my heart' draws the reader's attention to family separation from the offset. This frames the narrative around the natural social bonds that were destroyed by the unnatural oppressions of slavery, and can be used as a filter through which the significance of the narrative's intertextuality with Benezet's *Account of Guinea* becomes clearer. Equiano's challenge to the supposition of Western superiority, and his ostensible high regard for elements of British culture, are reinforced through references to Benezet's claims of Christian hypocrisy. Benezet highlights that although the enslaved were encouraged to convert to Christianity, they nevertheless were 'forced, so flagrantly to infringe one of the principle injunctions of our holy religion [marriage]' when they were unwillingly separated from their spouses by their enslavers.[55] He exposes the limitations of Enlightenment thinking, since 'those Christian laws which prohibit

[55] Benezet, *Some Historical Account Of Guinea,* p. 37.

fornication and adultery, are in none of the English governments extended' to enslaved individuals.[56] Benezet also highlights the hypocrisy of Christians who disregard the marriage vows that the Bible claims to be sacred, which furthers the argument that slavery was against God's will since it was 'inconsistent […] with every divine and moral law'.[57] Equiano references Benezet for two reasons: to situate his narrative in conversation with both the British and the international abolitionist campaigns; and to enable him to undermine notions of Western superiority by suggesting that Africans (such as himself) were superior to the emotionally and morally deficient Europeans.[58] In doing so, Equiano reverses the racial hierarchy in terms of emotional capabilities, morality, and conformity to Christian values.

Like Equiano, Mary Prince sought to establish her emotional equality to White Europeans by narrating her experience of familial separation. Despite the physical and emotional suffering that she experienced as a result of her enslavement, Prince demonstrates self-control in her narrative to show that she was capable of the intellectual judgement required to suppress strong emotions. The previous chapter explored Prince's account of her initial happiness with her first enslavers, Mrs Williams and her granddaughter Miss Betsey, because of her childhood ignorance of her enslavement. The reader soon learns that 'this happy state was not to last long' (Prince, p. 2) as she was forced to leave her first home, working for several other

[56] Ibid., p. 37.
[57] Ibid., p. 37.
[58] For more on Britain's role in the American campaign against slavery, see: Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution* (London: Vintage Books, 2009); Olusoga, *Black and British*.

enslavers throughout her lifetime. Prince recalls this moment of separation in her narrative:

> Oh dear! I cannot bear to think of that day,—it is too much.—It recalls the great grief that filled my heart, and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind, whilst listening to the pitiful words of my poor mother, weeping for the loss of her children. I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered. The great God above alone knows the thought of the poor slave's heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separations as these. All that we love taken away from us— Oh, it is sad, sad! and sore to be borne!—I got no sleep that night for thinking of the morrow; and dear Miss Betsey was scarcely less distressed. She could not bear to part with her old playmates, and she cried sore and would not be pacified.
> (Prince, p. 2).

Although the initial happiness with Miss Betsey and the subsequent sadness at their separation can be considered to demonstrate the value of ameliorative slavery, the predominant cause of Prince's sorrow is the separation from her family. She claims that she 'cannot bear to think of that day', and writes 'I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered', and yet she is able to briefly refer to her sleepless night, and the emotional responses of her mother and Miss Betsey. Her apparent inability to articulate her emotional experiences may be mistakenly interpreted as being due to a limited intellectual capacity to express her emotions. The fact that she is able to recall the emotional experiences of others, such as 'my poor mother, weeping' and Miss Betsey who 'cried sore and would not be pacified', suggests that her own sorrow was so keenly felt that there is no language to give justice to the extremity of her suffering. As Barbara Baumgartner argues, Prince's sensibility in this passage 'serves to combat the image of the slave as brute beast, incapable of

experiencing or expressing such emotions'.[59] Although Prince describes her sorrow as 'too much' to bear thinking about in retrospect, at the time 'woeful thoughts […] passed to and fro through my mind', signalling a movement of emotion from a sensation that 'filled my heart', to a conscious thought whereby the mind repeatedly deliberated the appropriate way to express, or repress, this excessive emotion. Her reluctance to discuss her own sentiments, and the absence of any reference to her own tears being added to those of her mother and Miss Betsey, suggests that Prince is also aware of cultural norms regarding the appropriate expression of emotion, and is demonstrating the ability to exert reason to determine how best to channel her emotions. She shows that she is capable of repressing her emotions, with the severity of her sorrow demonstrating the extensive control she had over her emotional expressions.

Furthermore, Prince hints at the limitations of sympathy in her narrative. She claims that her suffering was known to none other than the omniscient 'great God above', suggesting that she is beyond the sympathetic identification of anyone who has not personally experienced enslavement since her sorrow was beyond anything imaginable. The enslaved are united by the change in personal pronouns from the individual 'I' to the collective 'we' and 'us', which shows that her experiences were not exceptional, but were part of a group experience shared by the entire enslaved community. Despite her own suffering, Prince is able to recognise that her mother's words were 'pitiful', which simultaneously positions her mother as both a compassionate parent and an object of pity. The movement of emotion that had

[59] Barbara Baumgartner, 'The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in The History of Mary Prince', *Callaloo,* 24.1 (2001) pp. 253-275 (p. 255).

previously been passed 'to and fro' in Prince's mind has grown in strength and momentum to allow for the movement not only within herself, but also to exceed the physical boundaries of her body to move between herself and her mother in the form of sympathetic identification. Their familial ties demonstrate that enslaved individuals can both be sympathised with because of their suffering, and also sympathetic with the emotions of others, situating themselves firmly within the culture of sensibility. However, there is an element of ambiguity surrounding whether the use of 'we' in this passage includes Miss Betsey, whose is 'scarcely less distressed' than the enslaved individuals who were her former 'playmates'. This ambiguity, combined with the reference to Miss Betsey sharing this collective emotional experience, demonstrates that slavery often had a negative impact on both the enslaved and their enslavers, ultimately ending in the suffering of both parties.

The limitations of sentimental rhetoric are further exposed when Prince changes the focus from emotional to physical suffering. The word 'sore' in the passage above refers to her emotional distress, whereas later in the narrative it is used to describe her physical pain as 'my body and limbs were so stiff and sore' from intensive labour (Prince, p. 13).[60] Baumgartner convincingly argues that this marks a shift in the narrative whereby the sentimental is replaced with the literal, so that suffering is focalized around accounts of bodily pain.[61] The move towards literalism gives the impression that Prince is giving a more factual, and less embellished, account of her enslavement. Her ability to work is shown to be hindered by medical problems in an attempt to counter claims that enslaved individuals were often

[60] Ibid., p. 256.
[61] Ibid., pp. 253-275.

unproductive as they were indolent. Prince initially demonstrates her ability to feel, but also wants to prove that she was able to control her emotions, though she was unable to control the physical suffering that she experienced as a result of the intensive labour she was subjected to during her enslavement. Physical ailments were often considered as a better justification than emotional suffering for not being able to work, as sores on the body were visible and tangible evidence of the negative repercussions of enslaved labour.

The slave narratives of Equiano and Prince serve as personal testimony for both the physical and emotional pain that enslaved individuals suffered, in an effort to demonstrate that the slave trade and slavery were barbaric and therefore needed to be abolished. Equiano had worked with SEAST to abolish the slave trade; this had already been accomplished by the time *The History of Mary Prince* was published, and so efforts instead focused on abolishing slavery itself. In the *History's* preface, Thomas Pringle wrote that Prince wanted to share her story, so 'that good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered'.[62] Enslaved individuals, such as Prince, were still experiencing both physical and emotional suffering as a direct result of their enslavement, which fuelled arguments that the abolition of the slave trade was not enough, particularly since it had not led to sufficient amelioration. Prince and Equiano showed their ability to conform to Western cultural norms regarding the appropriate expression and suppression of emotions as the result of a cognitive judgement, thereby depicting themselves as both emotionally and intellectually equal to White Europeans. Their first-hand

[62] Thomas Pringle, 'Preface' to Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London: F. Westley & A. H. Davis, 1831) p. 1.

experiences of familial separation bridged the spatial and cultural gap between Britons and enslaved individuals, showing the similarities between the emotional bonds of Africans and those of Europeans. As Adam Smith argues, 'it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of [another's] sensations', thus some form of identification is required by familiarising an alienated subject.[63] Although Smith refers to Africa as a 'savage nation' – and its inhabitants as 'naked savages' – he does not mention racial exclusions to his principle of sympathetic identification, other than the suggestion that cultural differences may make it more difficult to sympathise with these 'savages'.[64] Personal accounts of slavery familiarised the reader with both the physical and emotional suffering experienced by enslaved Africans, and so were essential in engaging the British public's 'imagination' to inspire sympathetic identification despite the distance.

The abolitionist focus on the familial bonds of enslaved Africans simultaneously familiarised the enslaved and defamiliarized their enslavers. It encouraged readers to form a parallel between themselves and the suffering experienced by enslaved individuals, which intended to inspire sympathy towards the enslaved, and disgust towards enslavers for causing such suffering by breaking the natural bonds of affection. However, sentimental rhetoric often dehumanised enslaved individuals and reinforced the racial hierarchy. In their attempt to demonstrate the similarities between different races, abolitionists often ignored elements of African culture that did not fit in with European cultural norms. They diminished these differences to bring African family structures in line with the

[63] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 11.
[64] Ibid., p. 2.

Christian ideal of the nuclear family in an effort to make their abolitionist argument more palatable to the British reader. Re-writing African culture to meet an abolitionist agenda creates a cultural hierarchy whereby European social norms are considered to be superior to African customs. As a result, British abolitionist literature often suggested that Western culture should dominate and replace elements of the seemingly inferior African culture, thereby supporting the notion of a racial hierarchy. Prince's narrative reveals an awareness of sentimental rhetoric's limitations in terms of its contribution to the abolition of slavery. For this reason, she decided to briefly establish her emotional capabilities, showing that she had the self-restraint needed to control her emotional expressions, before turning to focus on the tangibility of her physical suffering. The next sections of this chapter explore how Roscoe, More, Yearsley, and Barbauld engage with the complications and limitations of sympathy in their abolitionist literature.

The Emotional Policing of Sympathy

The sentimental rhetoric employed in abolitionist literature intended to inspire active sympathy in the form of political campaigning, but the reality was that such philanthropic action did not always transpire. Abolitionists were aware of this limitation, and so 'the rejection of false sensibility' became an important rhetorical feature in abolitionist writing.[66] False sensibility refers to the disingenuous emotional expressions of people who feigned tears in order to appear as models of sympathetic identification. This false sensibility seemingly led to passive sympathy, with the movement of emotion ending in a cathartic purge of emotional expression. Such

[66] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 39.

performances were criticised by abolitionists not so much because of their dishonesty, but because they were unlikely to lead to abolitionist action. Active sympathy, on the other hand, was more productive because it allowed the movement of emotion to be directed into abolitionist campaigning. Therefore, abolitionists were keen to advocate active over passive sympathy. Abolitionists scrutinised the emotional expressions of their White audience, subjecting them to emotional policing – though to a lesser extent than enslaved Black people – by insisting that their expressions of sorrow were directed into active sympathy.

William Roscoe distinguishes between active and passive sympathy in *The Wrongs of Africa* by beseeching the reader:

> Come thou, and weep with me substantial ills;
> And execrate the wrongs, that Afric's sons,
> Torn from their natal shore, and doom'd to bear
> The yoke of servitude in western climes,
> Sustain. Nor vainly let our sorrows flow,
> Nor let the strong emotion rise in vain,
> But may the kind contagion widely spread,
> Till in its flame the unrelenting heart
> Of Avarice, melt in softest sympathy (Roscoe, *Wrongs*)

The collective 'with me' positions crying as a social activity that is meant to inspire active sympathy to benefit society, and thus Roscoe commands the reader to 'execrate the wrongs' against 'Afric's sons' by abolishing the slave trade. Tears become a currency for a mutually beneficial trade of charitable donations in return for gratitude and a philanthropic reputation, which Thomas Dixon terms 'wet

transactions'.[67] Despite the charitable intentions, this created a hierarchy by allowing those of wealth and authority to demonstrate their superiority over those less fortunate than themselves. Situating Europeans as philanthropic caregivers to African dependents created a paternalistic outlook that reinforced notions of Black inferiority.

Nevertheless, Roscoe focuses on the benefits of genuine sensibility; its 'kind contagion' should be encouraged to ensure that its 'flame' can 'melt' the hearts of others. It provides the 'bright blaze of universal love' that enlightens the sympathising audience to realise the need to take philanthropic action in order for them to achieve salvation to rise 'up to heaven'. This extended metaphor demonstrates that sentiment is similar to fire in the sense that action needs to be taken to ensure that it does not expire or become dangerously out of control, with action needed to ensure that the 'strong emotion' does not rise 'in vain'. It also eludes to the 'flame of liberty' mentioned in Barbauld's poem 'Corsica' (1773), which advocates Corsica's liberation and right to national self-determination, and encourages Britons to 'feel' for Corsica, to 'catch / The warm contagion of heroic ardour, / And kindle at a fire so like their own'.[68] The flame of liberty is thus intertwined with the flame of feeling, both of which should be spread throughout the world in a warm and kind 'contagion'. Since the likes of Roscoe claimed that all of humanity had the ability to feel, regardless of race, then it follows that liberty should also be extended to all of humanity, rendering slavery abhorrent.

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[67] Thomas Dixon, *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 101.
[68] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'Corsica', in *Poems* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1773) pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

The repetition of ‘in vain’ is a rhetorical technique that features in the poems of both More and Roscoe, amongst other abolitionist texts.[69] More denounces false sensibility as ‘Art wou'd weave her gayest flow'rs in vain’ (More, *Slavery*). She claims to depict ‘no fictitious ills’ because she believes that factual accounts of ‘living anguish and substantial woe’ are more likely to inspire active sympathy. However, even factual accounts were often ineffective, as Roscoe states that when Africans were enslaved their ‘tear/ Of supplicating age was pour’d in vain’ (Roscoe, *Wrongs*), since they had no effect on their unfeeling enslavers. Equiano later echoed this in the aforementioned quotation regarding the enforced separation from his sister: ‘It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me’ (Equiano, p. 51). Equiano employs this abolitionist rhetoric to situate himself within an extended network alongside White humanitarians. In this instance, tears were shed ‘in vain’ because enslavers were unsympathetic and unfeeling, which implies that if the reader also fails to be affected by enslaved individuals’ tears then they are just as unfeeling as enslavers. Whilst the restrictions imposed on the enslaved meant that their efforts were almost inevitably ‘in vain’, the freedom afforded to the British public gave them the choice of whether to act in response to these tears; therefore, they had no excuse to let them continue to be shed ‘in vain’.

Roscoe encourages self-reflection, and pleads: ‘Nor vainly let our sorrows flow, / Nor let the strong emotion rise in vain’ (Roscoe, *Wrongs*). The juxtaposition of ‘vainly’ and ‘in vain’ in these two lines draws on the dual meaning of ‘vain’, which can

[69] See: ‘Remarks on the Slavery of the Negroes’, *London Magazine* (May 1775) p. 262; Maria and Harriet Falconar, *Slavery, A Poem* (London: Mr J. Johnson, 1788); and Barbauld’s *Epistle*.

refer to both a lack of purpose/value and egotistical vanity. Roscoe combines both definitions in these lines to imply that sorrow and other strong emotions are worthless unless they amalgamate into purposeful action, and that passive sensibility only serves the purpose of inflating one's vanity by appearing to be sympathetic. Although conduct books for young ladies upheld humility and modesty, whilst pride and vanity were once considered to be deadly sins, eighteenth-century philosophers theorised that vanity could be beneficial to society if appropriately directed.[70] Hume argued that vanity is 'closely allied with virtue', and that the pursuit to establish our moral reputation, to gain the approval of others, 'keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for *themselves* as well as for others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue'.[71] That which Hume calls the 'habit of surveying ourselves' aligns with Smith's 'impartial spectator', both of which involve a form of self-reflection where one's vanity fuels the desire for self-improvement in order to receive the admiration of others.[72] However, as Smith acknowledges, education was needed to 'direct vanity' into appropriate channels to benefit the whole community rather than just the self. The interplay of 'vanity' and 'in vain' reveals Roscoe's plea for the reader to ally their vanity with virtue by campaigning for abolition. Abolitionists sought to use the reader's vanity as motivation for philanthropic action, often using flattery – such as More's address to the 'enlightened few' (More, *Slavery*) – as positive reinforcement for transforming sensibility into active sympathy.

[70] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* pp. 61, 304.
[71] David Hume, *The Philosophical Works of David Hume,* III, ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1882) p. 156; David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751) p. 183.
[72] Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals,* p. 80; Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 129.

Ann Yearsley criticises passive sympathy and false sensibility by comparing the 'sighs and tears' expressed in church to those of 'the guileful crocodile's' (Yearsley, *Slavery*), criticising the artificial performances that intended to maintain the appearance of religious piety. She presents these emotional expressions as examples of useless passivity, as they 'oft fall', failing to reach their destination and therefore amounting to nothing. This draws on the Protestant concept that tears cannot influence God's plans, as tears are instead reliant on familial and social ties to inspire sympathy so that we can act for ourselves rather than relying on divine intervention.[73] Yearsley critiques these emotional displays as an excuse not to take action, shifting the responsibility from themselves to the divine. As Joanne Tong explains, 'the expression of pity becomes in its worse form a strategy for absolving oneself of having to effect change by substituting affective for activist work.'[74] Yearsley reminds the reader that this passivity came at the 'cost of human bliss'; without active campaigning the enslaved would not be emancipated, and so inaction deprived them of their happiness and freedom.

More and Yearsley both aimed to foster active sympathy, which they hoped would alleviate the suffering of enslaved Africans. More's 'Sensibility: a Poetical Epistle to the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen' (1782) argues that 'one genuine deed' of charity, such as financial donations or petitioning for parliamentary reform, was 'More dear

[73] Dixon, *Weeping Britannia,* p. 50.
[74] Joanne Tong, '"Pity for the Poor Africans": William Cowper and the Limits of the Abolitionist Affect', *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830,* ed. by Stephen Ahern (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 129-150 (p. 138).

[…] Than all the periods Feeling e'er can turn'.[75] In other words, emotion is only valued if it leads to direct action. In Yearsley's preface to *A Poem*, addressed to her new patron the Earl of Bristol Frederick Hervey, she writes: 'My Intention is not to cause that Anguish in your Bosom which powerless Compassion ever gives: yet, my Vanity is flattered, when I but fancy that Your Lordship feels as I do' (Yearsley, *A Poem*). She does not seek to inspire the reader's 'powerless compassion' of passive sympathy, but rather to inspire action, particularly from an Earl who had the power to influence others, aligning his sentiments with her own to argue that sympathy transcended class distinctions. Yet compassion alone was not enough; in order for it to be proved to be genuine, it had to result in positive change.

Britain's Failure: The Limitations of Sentimental Rhetoric

Although the Dolben Bill was successfully passed in 1788, the 1791 Bill to abolish the slave trade was defeated, and so Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (1791) reflects on the limitations of sentimental rhetoric in terms of achieving abolitionist change. The poem marks a shift in Barbauld's attitude towards the abolitionist campaign, which she had previously praised. In a letter in 1789 she admired 'the noble efforts' of abolitionists, claiming that 'Nothing, I think, for centuries past, has done the nation so much honour; because it must have proceeded from the most liberal motives,—the purest love of humanity and justice. The voice of the Negroes

[75] Hannah More, 'Sensibility: a Poetical Epistle to the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen', in *Sacred Dramas; Chiefly Intended for Young Persons* (London: T. Cadell, 1782) pp. 269–90.

could not have made itself heard but by the ear of pity'.[76] Her appraisal of the nation's reputation turns from honour to shame, as demonstrated in the ironic plea of the poem's opening lines:

> CEASE, Wilberforce, to urge thy generous aim!
> Thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame!
> The Preacher, Poet, Senator in vain
> Has rattled in her sight the Negro's chain;
> With his deep groans assail'd her startled ear,
> And rent the veil that hid his constant tear;
> Forc'd her averted eyes his stripes to scan,
> Beneath the bloody scourge laid bare the man,
> Claimed Pity's tear, urged Conscience's strong controul,
> And flash'd conviction on her shrinking soul. (Barbauld, *Epistle*)

Barbauld does not really want Wilberforce's efforts to cease, but merely wishes that they were more fruitful, and not carried out 'in vain'. The rhetorical phrase 'in vain' is repeated five times within this poem; the last instance closes the poem by telling Wilberforce that history will record 'how you strove, and that you strove in vain', creating a sense of finality to his efforts. Britain's senses have been awakened through an appeal for 'her sight' and 'her startled ear' to notice the 'Negro's chain', 'his stripes', and 'his constant tear'. The gendered distinction between the feminine personification of Britannia expressing sympathetic tears and the masculine enslaved African who continues to bleed reinforces the polarity between the two parties despite the sympathetic sharing of transported emotion. It also signifies that the reader's tears alone would not stop their suffering any more than crying over a wound would heal it unless other action was taken, later supported by the claim that

[76] Anna Letitia Barbauld, Letter to Mrs. Beecroft, in *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, with A Memoir by Lucy Aikin,* II (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown & Green, 1825) pp. 80-81 (p. 81).

‘A Nation's eloquence, combined, must fail’ unless sentimental rhetoric and sympathetic displays were accompanied with action.

Whilst More and Yearsley lay the blame on enslavers, Barbauld extends the responsibility to the entire British nation. She focuses on the sinful perpetrators of slavery, rather than the suffering of its victims, since abolitionists had already provided abundant information to lift the ‘veil’ of innocence and ignorance that once obscured the horrors of slavery. Barbauld tells the reader that ‘thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame’, with this sibilance extended through to Britain’s ‘shrinking soul’, a sign of the nation’s ever-increasing immorality. At the end of the poem Barbauld addresses Wilberforce once again, distinguishing between personal and collective guilt:

> Your merit stands, no greater and no less,
> Without, or with the varnish of success;
> But seek no more to break a Nation's fall,
> For ye have sav'd yourselves—and that is all. (Barbauld, *Epistle*)

Abolitionists achieve their own personal salvation, but the Nation is still doomed to ‘fall’, and so in failing to achieve abolition the British public have also failed to collectively obtain national redemption. Such appeals to national identity amplified existing fears regarding Britain’s global status following defeat in the American War of Independence, and the subsequent concerns regarding Britain’s colonial reputation. The transatlantic slave trade imported moral corruption into British homes, as ‘By foreign wealth are British morals changed, / And Afric’s sons, and India’s, smile avenged’. This challenges justifications of slavery based on paternalistic outlooks that position British colonialism as the philanthropic education

of uncivilised territories, as greed supersedes ethics. Reversing the direction of trade, from philanthropic exports to corrupting imports, changes the balance of power to credit the sons of Africa and India. It reveals Britain's financial dependence on 'foreign' countries, thus making her incapable of self-sufficiency, which renders the 'Nation's fall' inevitable in both moral and economic terms.

Barbauld focuses on the sins of the enslavers to show how they are transferred to the British public by association. The moral depravity of the enslavers manifests in physical deterioration, where they are 'of body delicate, infirm of mind' as a result of 'inflicting wounds' upon the enslaved (Barbauld, *Epistle*). The enslavers are left 'sickly', contributing to a semantic field of disease that forms a metaphor for greed's corrupting influence that acts like the 'plague' and 'leprosy', which 'infects' and 'sickens at the heart'. Positioning enslavers as physically, mentally, and emotionally weakened by their involvement with slavery implies that it is unsustainable, and suggests that enslavers could be easily overthrown if the British public took action to confront them with an assault against slavery. Otherwise, the 'sins' that corrupted enslavers could spread to the British public as easily as a contagious disease. The parlour becomes symbolic of the relationship between the British public and the enslaved, as the home stands as a microcosm for the British nation and the domestic sphere of polite sociability whose consumption habits fuelled the demand for goods produced by enslaved labour.[77] The association between the enslaved producers, the British consumers, and the enslavers who oversee

[77] Mary A. Waters, 'Sympathy, Nerve Physiology, and National Degeneration in Anna Letitia Barbauld's *Epistle to William Wilberforce*', *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770–1830,* ed. by Stephen Ahern (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 89-106 (p. 90).

production and commercial exchange demonstrates how the moral decay can spread by ‘sure contagion’ through such contact. Debbie Lee and Alan Bewell investigate the impact of imperialism on not only the colonised, but also the colonisers, and how ‘colonial disease’ became a metaphor for moral corruption and the subsequent guilt.[78] Africans seemed immune to yellow fever, while Europeans were particularly susceptible to the disease upon visiting Africa and the Caribbean, and so it was considered to be a punishment for slavery and a symbol of the coloniser’s moral deterioration.[79]

Barbauld fears that Britain is becoming emotionally desensitised to the sorrows of slavery, and therefore lacks the emotional response needed to prevent the moral corruption of slavery from spreading through Britain. The body of the female enslaver symbolises the social body of Britain, personified as female:

> She knows and she persists—Still Afric bleeds,
> Uncheck'd, the human traffic still proceeds;
> She stamps her infamy to future time,
> And on her harden'd forehead seals the crime. (Barbauld, *Epistle*)

Britain collectively fails to respond to the knowledge of the human traffic, though Barbauld claims that it is because Britain’s ‘forehead’ has become ‘harden’d’. As Waters recognises, the ‘metonymy locates the failure of response in the brain, the receptor organ for nerve vibrations in […] sensational psychology.’[80] The British public have become desensitised to the sufferings of the enslaved, and instead the

[78] Debbie Lee, ‘Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade: Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”’, *ELH,* 65.3 (1998) pp. 675-700; Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).
[79] Lee, ‘Yellow Fever and the Slave Trade’, p. 675.
[80] Waters, ‘Sympathy, Nerve Physiology, and National Degeneration’, p. 96.

rational logic of ‘thriving industry’ and the ‘seasoned tools of Avarice prevail’ (Barbauld, *Epistle*) so that reason dominates emotion. Barbauld critiques the over-exertion of reason to the detriment of emotion by demonstrating that guilt is a signifier of sin, and to be insensible of guilt is therefore also to be insensible of one’s morality, posing the threat of national depravity that leads to Britain’s ‘fall’. Failure to act is considered as sinful as direct involvement in slavery, creating a sense of collective responsibility and guilt that will ‘swell th' account of vengeance yet to come’ (Barbauld, *Epistle*) in the form of divine punishment. In order to avoid this, the ‘soft contagion’ (More, *Slavery*) and ‘kind contagion’ (Roscoe, *Wrongs*) of sympathy should replace the ‘unseen contagion’ of ‘the foul plague’ of avarice and immorality resulting from engagement in, and perpetuation of, slavery and the slave trade (Roscoe, *Wrongs*). The implication is that since disease does not discriminate based on race, then neither should sympathy.

Abolitionists aimed to foster sympathetic identification between British readers and enslaved Africans by depicting humanity as a global family. They scrutinised the emotional expressions of both Black and White people, though to different extents and purposes. Abolitionists argued that Black people experienced the same sorrow and familial love as White people to establish a certain degree of racial equality. Meanwhile, they encouraged White people to respond sympathetically to the sorrow expressed by enslaved individuals who had been separated from their families. Abolitionists endeavoured to channel this sympathy into direct abolitionist action that would alleviate the suffering of enslaved individuals.

CHAPTER THREE

REVOLTS, REVENGE AND THE RACIAL POLITICS OF ANGER

Introduction

Enslaved Africans were not always the passive victims of oppression, as many found ways to fight back against their enslavers. This is exemplified in rebellions against slavery, from Tacky's unsuccessful revolt in Jamaica (1760), to the triumphant Haitian Revolution in Saint Domingue (1791-1804). In order to reflect this, abolitionist discourse included representations of how anger manifested into violence as a desperate attempt for enslaved individuals to re-establish their rights, liberty, and agency. In its extremity, this anger often culminated in the desire for vengeance as retribution for the injustices that they had faced during their enslavement. Several abolitionist writers have explored the themes of anger and vengeance, including Ann Yearsley, Thomas Chatterton, and Hugh Mulligan. However, as Grégory Pierrot argues, Edward Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* (1787) 'stands out for its comparatively direct treatment of the topic of slave revenge', with Rushton providing one of the most radical presentations of anger expressed by an enslaved individual.[1] Olaudah Equiano's presentation of his own anger in his autobiographical *Interesting Narrative* (1789) represents the opposite end of the spectrum, as he takes a more cautious approach to anger by ensuring to justify his emotional response, whilst

[1] Grégory Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur,* Slavery, and Nation in the Poetry of Edward Rushton', in *Studies in Romanticism,* 56.1 (2017) pp. 15-36 (p. 15); Edward Rushton, *West Indian Eclogues* (London: W. Lowndes, J. Philips, 1787). All subsequent references are to this edition.

aiming to demonstrate his emotional self-control.[2] The different extremities of the anger expressed in the literary portrayals of Equiano and Rushton warrants comparison, particularly since both writers were inspired by their own personal experiences with slavery. Therefore, this chapter explores how and why the anger experienced, and expressed, by enslaved Africans was presented as a defensive retaliation to the oppressions of slavery in Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* and Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*. These two texts sought to justify the anger that was felt by enslaved individuals as a way to inspire the reader's sympathy towards the enslaved, and indignation towards their enslavers, in the hope that this would lead to abolitionist action.

However, the violent nature of vengeance risked portraying enraged protagonists as dangerous and lacking self-control. Depicting the anger expressed by enslaved Africans was particularly problematic, as it could be used to argue that Africans were inferior because they were unable to control their emotional expressions. In 1776, historian and philosopher Guillaume-Thomas Raynal argued that 'there is no reason of state that can authorise slavery', and yet he acknowledged that anatomical studies had concluded that Africans are a 'particular species of men' whose 'passions […] are carried to excess […] and this is the reason why they are more effeminate, more indolent, more weak, and unhappily more fit for slavery'.[3] In the eighteenth century 'passions' were somewhat distinguished from 'affections': affections were considered to be benign, benevolent, and thus socially acceptable;

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[2] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789). All subsequent references are to this edition.
[3] Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *A Philosophy and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies,* III, trans. by J. Justamond (Dublin: John Exshaw, 1776) pp. 165, 119-20.

whereas passions were more violent, excessive, and thus more difficult to control.[4] Amy M. Schmitter has demonstrated that these distinctions were unstable because these terms were often used interchangeably, with inconsistencies concerning their usage.[5] Nevertheless, anger was typically considered to be a passion, since it would often manifest into violence when carried to excess.[6] As Raynal highlights, the argument that Black individuals were 'too weak' to control their passions was concerning for those who opposed slavery, particularly because displays of anger culminating in violent rebellion could be used as evidence that Africans needed to be enslaved. Abolitionists were wary of fuelling such arguments, and wanted to avoid portraying enslaved Africans as dangerous, as this would make it difficult to inspire the reader to sympathise with enslaved individuals and feel indignation on their behalf.

The fear that Black people would be considered dangerous if they expressed their anger explains why anger is rarely mentioned in slave narratives. Most slave narratives omit any reference to personal anger, as is the case with Mary Prince and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw.[7] Gronniosaw avoided radical anti-slavery

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[4] Thomas Dixon, '"Emotion": The history of a keyword in crisis', *Emotion Review,* 4 (2012) pp. 338–344 (p. 339). See also: Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004). A slightly more extensive exploration of these terms is also included in the introduction to this thesis.

[5] Amy M. Schmitter, 'Passions, Affections, Sentiments: Taxonomy and Terminology', in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by James A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) pp. 197-225.

[6] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 45; David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects* [1740], (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009) p. 566 https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bham/reader.action?docID=435863 [Accessed 08/12/2021].

[7] Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (London: F. Westley & A. H. Davis, 1831); James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1770).

rhetoric, including references to anger and rebellion, because he feared losing the financial aid provided by his patron and enslaver Selina Hastings.[8] Prince was also wary of portraying herself as dangerous considering that a petition to parliament to formally grant her emancipation in 1829 was unsuccessful, creating enough uncertainty about her future without also promoting vengeance and rebellion.[9] These Black individuals were still subjected to racial discrimination even after they were emancipated, as arguments of emotional incontinence made them seem dangerous and irrational – arguments that they sought to refute, rather than strengthen. Overall, slave narratives seem to favour the outlook shared by the emancipated Ignatius Sancho, who stated that it is better to 'be above revenge'.[10] As Pierrot argues, 'though slavery was undeniably a moral blight, the rejection of vengeance on moral grounds was ultimately a more telling way of differentiating civilised people from the savage.'[11] It showed that Africans were capable of self-restraint, and so deserved to be integrated into society as free individuals.

Nevertheless, Rushton and Equiano both depict the anger of enslaved individuals, though to different extremities. Rushton takes a more radical approach to anger by having one of his enslaved protagonists go as far as taking revenge, whereas Equiano takes a more reserved and cautious approach by showing that violence should be avoided if possible, thereby demonstrating control of his

[8] Ryan Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing, c. 1770-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) p. 8.
[9] Moira Ferguson, 'Mary Prince', *ODNB* (23rd September 2004) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-54341?rskey=Hbyohd&result=2 [Accessed 18/02/21].
[10] Ignatius Sancho, 'Letter XIII to Mr. S---e', 11 October 1772, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African, In Two Volumes* (London: J. Nichols, 1782) p. 43.
[11] Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur'*, p. 18.

passions. Equiano narrates his own experiences as an enslaved individual to challenge the notion that Black people experienced emotional incontinency, showing his ability to exert reason to control his anger. Ryan Hanley argues that by the end of 1788, 'Equiano had established himself as one of the leading abolitionist intellectuals in Britain' owing to the multiple book reviews, letters and essays that he had published on slavery, which saw him lionised in the *Morning Chronicle* with the claim that he had 'an irreproachable moral character', although he was also satirically mocked in the *Times.*[12] Hanley concludes that 'Equiano was very conscious that he had a public image to maintain', which 'profoundly influenced how Equiano wrote, published and promoted himself'.[13] Equiano's success depended upon his reception, and perceptions of him as dangerous jeopardised his reputation as an educated, sophisticated African demonstrating the capabilities of a formerly enslaved individual. As a Black man, Equiano had experienced racial discrimination, both during his enslavement and after his manumission. Therefore, it was important for him to demonstrate self-restraint where possible, and to show that he only acted on his anger when it was necessary to defend himself.

Rushton, on the other hand, demonstrates that enslaved Africans often played an active role in obtaining their own freedom, although this agency could be perceived as evidence of their dangerous lack of self-control. His more radical depiction of anger reflects his privileged position as a White male who had not personally been subjected to racial discrimination and the racial politics associated with emotional incontinence. Yet his son reveals that Rushton was still attacked for

[12] Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition,* p. 62; *Morning Chronicle,* 1st July 1788; *Times*, 5th July 1788.
[13] Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition,* pp. 60, 54.

his antislavery literature, both verbally and physically, despite it initially being published anonymously:

> At this time politics ran very high in Liverpool, my father had published several of his pieces, all in favour of the rights of mankind. He became a noted character, was marked, and by some illiberal villain shot at.[14]

Rushton managed to escape relatively unharmed, but this incident reveals that even Rushton's privileged position as a White male was not enough to protect him from the hostile response of defenders of slavery. Rushton and Equiano were both threatened with violence for their abolitionist efforts, though for different reasons and to different degrees. Yet they were not deterred from their abolitionist goals, as they were both aware that the threat of violence towards enslaved individuals was much more significant than the threat towards themselves.

Rushton and Equiano both present emancipation as the only way for Britain to protect itself from the anger, violence, and desire for vengeance that was a defensive retaliation to the oppressions of slavery. The *Eclogues* and the *Narrative* operate as cautionary tales that warn enslavers – and the British public – that if they failed to end slavery, then they must suffer the subsequent damage of the inevitable revolts. Depicting the anger of enslaved individuals as a defensive retaliation to slavery indicates a failure of British imperialism, and so this anger threatens the status, reputation, and stability of the British nation. Rushton introduces slavery as 'Britain's foulest stain' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the first') to make it clear to the British reader that the barbarities of slavery, and the retaliatory violent revolts, were their

[14] Edward Rushton Jr, 'Biographical Sketch of Edward Rushton', *The Belfast Monthly Magazine*, 13.77 (1814) pp. 474-485 (p. 476).

responsibility.[15] Rushton and Equiano both present abolition as a defensive strategy to protect Britain from harm, as emancipation was the only way to prevent rebellions and their subsequent destruction. In doing so, they encourage readers to act in favour of Britain's self-interests, rather than merely relying on narratives of altruism and morality.

Equiano shows that anger-driven rebellions undermined the profitability of slavery, thereby demonstrating that economic gain and morality are not always antithetical. He explores this notion through a discussion on labour productivity, asking: 'Are slaves more useful by being thus humbled to the condition of brutes, than they would be if they suffered to enjoy the privileges of men?' (Equiano, p. 153). Equiano suggests that enslavers have a choice between treating enslaved Africans as 'brutes' or 'men', and that the choice would have repercussions for both parties. It would determine whether the enslavers would likewise be treated as 'brutes' in the event that the enslaved rebelled, or as 'men' if they chose the humanitarian option of emancipation. Equiano suggests that the freedom successfully enjoyed throughout Britain naturally leads one to conclude that the answer to his question is 'No' (Equiano, p. 153). He advises enslavers that 'by changing your conduct, and treating your slaves as men, every cause of fear would be banished' (Equiano, p. 153), and so he encourages enslavers to grant Africans the 'privileges of men' because free labour is more 'useful' than enslaved labour. This mirrors Adam Smith's argument in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that the monetary positive incentive offered by free

[15] Brycchan Carey, 'A Stronger Muse: Classical Influences on Eighteenth-Century Abolitionist Poetry', in *Ancient Slavery and Abolition: From Hobbes to Hollywood*, ed. by Edith Hall, Richard Alston and Justine McConnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp. 125-152 (p. 149).

labour was a stronger motivator than the violent negative incentives of slavery, and so the former was more efficient as positive incentives increased productivity.[16] The money earned by the labourers could be used to purchase the goods that they produced, increasing demand and thereby fuelling the 'consumer revolution'.[17] Equiano establishes his intellectual abilities by engaging in such economic debates in his narrative, along with his emotive discourse. He demonstrates that the violent rebellions carried out by enslaved Africans were not driven purely by uncontrolled emotion, but were evidence of emotion being purposefully channelled into action that intended to obliterate slavery.

Anger fuelled these economic arguments by driving enslaved individuals to revolt, leading to the destruction of both life and property in an attempt to obtain their freedom. Even when these revolts were unsuccessful, the human and financial cost undermined slavery by decreasing the profitability of maintaining enslaved labour. The anger featured in abolitionist literature attempted to show that rebellions could not be prevented by implementing tighter restrictions on the enslaved individuals, as there was a positive correlation between the severity of oppression and the feeling of anger that led to acts of revenge and rebellion. Equiano suggests that productivity would increase if the positive incentives of liberation and equality replaced the negative incentives of slavery, because emancipation would eliminate the desire for rebellion that inspired 'fear' within enslavers (Equiano, p. 153). Emancipation is presented as being beneficial to both the enslavers and the enslaved alike, as it

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[16] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations, Volume II,* 2nd edn (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1778) p. 9.
[17] Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 27.

would improve the physical and emotional welfare of both parties, whilst also achieving greater profits. Combining emotional and economic arguments subverts the emotional intellect to show that the only way to prevent rebellions was to eliminate their cause – by abolishing slavery.

This chapter begins by outlining the challenges associated with portraying the anger of enslaved individuals. It then analyses how Rushton and Equiano tried to overcome these challenges by presenting such anger as a defensive retaliation to the oppressions of slavery. Equiano and Rushton both draw on their own personal encounters with slavery to provide evidence that enslaved Africans not only had the ability to feel emotions such as anger, but were also sufficiently able to exert reason to judge the most appropriate way to express it. They sought to show that violent expressions of anger were not the result of a lack of self-control, but rather a last resort for enslaved individuals who had no other way to defend themselves. They portrayed the oppressions of slavery to illuminate the cause of anger that led to rebellions, hoping that the reader would sympathise with the enslaved, and feel indignation towards their enslavers. Presenting enslaved individuals as the objects of White sympathy, and as victims in need of White liberation, somewhat objectified Black people by making them appear weak and helpless. Yet depicting the anger that led enslaved individuals to revolt aimed to credit Black agency, and to some extent transforms them from object to subject. As Franca Dellarosa argues, the 'irreducibility of Rushton's enslaved Africans to the stock model of the kneeling slave' clashed with the rhetoric of sensibility and its notions of Black passivity.[18] Although

[18] Franca Dellarosa, *Talking Revolutions: Edward Rushton's Rebellious Poetics, 1782-1814* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014) p. 169.

the reader is still encouraged to sympathise with enslaved Africans, and act on their behalf, the presentation of anger and revolts suggests that Black and White individuals should work together in order to abolish slavery. This collective abolitionist effort would benefit everyone involved, as emancipation would protect Britain, enslavers, and the enslaved from the harmful consequences of anger manifesting in rebellion.

The Challenges of Portraying Anger

Endeavours to encourage readers to sympathise with the anger experienced by enslaved individuals was an even more difficult task than inspiring sympathy through portrayals of sorrow. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith claimed that expressions of anger often inspired fear or repulsion, rather than sympathy:

> The hoarse, boisterous, and discordant voice of anger, when heard at a distance, inspires us either with fear or aversion. We do not fly towards it, as to one who cries out with pain or agony. […] It […] never excites, never prepares, and often disturbs our sympathy […] While we are ignorant of their cause, [anger will] disgust and detach us.[19]

Smith proposes that several factors render it difficult to sympathise with anger: the absence of sorrow; the distance between the enraged subject and the potential sympathiser; and the resulting ignorance of the cause of anger. Knowing what caused the anger allows individuals to imagine themselves in a similar position, so that the impartial spectator can determine whether they would have the same emotional reaction. If the impartial spectator deems it an appropriate emotional response, similar to what they themselves would have experienced, then the anger is

[19] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 45.

endorsed; but if it is considered to be different from their own perceived response then it is likely to be treated with disgust. Smith adds: ‘When we see one man oppressed or injured by another […] We are […] ready to assist him whenever he exerts himself for defence, or even for vengeance within a certain degree’, as this inspires our ‘sympathetic indignation’ whereby we share both his anger and his desire for punishment.[20] Demonstrating enslaved people’s oppressions, pains, and sorrows illuminated the cause of their anger, which aimed to foster the British public’s sympathy by persuading them that anger was a justifiable emotional reaction to enslavement.

Abolitionists used Smith’s concept of combining portrayals of sorrow and anger to form a two-pronged attack against slavery. A review of Equiano’s narrative in *The General Magazine and Impartial Review* (1789) explains that anger was depicted as a response to the cruelties of slavery so that ‘the oppressed and the oppressors will equally excite pity and indignation’.[21] Thomas Clarkson later echoed these sentiments in 1808 when he wrote that ‘while the miseries endured by the unfortunate Africans excite our pity on the one hand, the vices, which are connected with them, provoke our indignation and abhorrence on the other.’[22] Whilst there is a clear distinction made between pity and indignation, it is also clear that abolitionists believed that they could be evoked simultaneously. As the previous chapter established, abolitionists were aware that sympathy alone was not enough to inspire

[20] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 82, p. 89.
[21] *The General Magazine and Impartial Review* (July 1789), in Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting* Narrative of the *Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, ed. by Angelo Costanzo (Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2001) p. 261.
[22] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* [1808], I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) pp. 17–18.

abolitionist action. Michael Woods argues that 'outraged abolitionists understood that sympathy and pity for Africans could be co-opted by proslavery apologists, but indignation against slavers and their allies could not.'[23] Proslavery forces could divert sympathy away from the enslaved and onto themselves (at their loss of income to support their families) or onto various groups suffering within Britain (such as the poor), which is known as sentimental diversion.[24] Indignation, on the other hand, was aroused to ensure that justice was carried out, and so was considered more likely to be channelled into abolitionist action.

However, Henry Redhead demonstrates that indignation could also be co-opted by proslavery forces, and directed against the enslaved. Redhead was born in Barbuda to a Black mother who had formerly been enslaved, and was raised in England by a White father who owned a sugar plantation, which perhaps explains the inconsistencies in Redhead's attitudes towards slavery.[25] In 1792 he argued:

> If the outrages committed in the fertile and unhappy colony of St. Domingo; if rage, insolence, ingratitude, barbarity on the one side; meekness, suffering, sorrow, innocence, on the other, can excite no indignation in the breasts of the abolitionists; if no compassion arise from a complication of forfeits and persecutions, then they have no humanity.[26]

The Haitian Revolution led Redhead to portray enslavers as sorrowful victims who deserved to be the objects of sympathy, whilst claiming that the enslaved rebels

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[23] Michael E. Woods, 'A Theory of Moral Outrage: Indignation and Eighteenth-Century British Abolitionism', *Slavery & Abolition,* 36.4 (2015) pp. 662-683 (p. 673).
[24] Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p. 41.
[25] Amanda Goodrich, *Henry Redhead Yorke, Colonial Radical: Politics and Identity in the Atlantic World, 1772-1813* (Oxon: Routledge, 2019) p. 2.
[26] Henry Redhead, *A Letter to Bache Heathcote, Esq. on the fatal consequences of abolishing the slave trade, both to England, and to her American Colonies* (London: John Stockdale, 1792) p. 77.

should ‘excite […] indignation in the breasts’ of anyone with any ‘compassion’ or ‘humanity’. Redhead suggests that abolitionists lacked either of these two traits, and therefore had a hidden ‘evil’ motivation for seeking to abolish the slave trade.[27] Although he does not speculate what this motive could be, his description presents enslavers as the sentimental heroes, whilst abolitionists (and the enslaved individuals that they supported) become the evil villains.[28] Later that year he wrote a refutation of these claims (but decided against publishing it), and even came to support the British abolitionist movement.[29] Regardless of this subsequent change of heart, Redhead exposes how the roles of victim and villain could be reassigned and used to argue that sympathy should be directed at enslavers, whilst indignation should be directed at the enslaved. He reveals that presentations of Black individuals expressing anger became increasingly problematic after the Haitian revolution, as there was a greater threat that they would be considered as dangerous. The Haitian Revolution’s success may explain why the anger of enslaved individuals was not used to support abolitionist aims after 1791, and particularly not after the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror began in 1793, as abolitionists were keen to distance themselves from the radicalism of revolutionaries. Nevertheless, the anger of enslaved individuals was portrayed in abolitionist literature prior to the 1790s to encourage the reader to sympathise with enslaved individuals enough to relieve their suffering, and to encourage indignation to be directed at their enslavers in the hope that they would eventually be punished for their sins.

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[27] Ibid., p. 77.
[28] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 189.
[29] J. G. Alger (revised by Peter Spence on 11th June 2020), ‘Henry Redhead Yorke’, *ODNB* (23rd September 2004) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30241?rskey=yClhtW&result=1 [Assessed 09/12/2021]. See also: Goodrich, *Henry Redhead Yorke*.

Familiarising the oppressions of slavery that had provoked enslaved people's anger helped to overcome the cultural and geographical 'distance' that Smith identified as a potential barrier to sympathy. As Woods argues, directing indignation against enslavers enabled abolitionists to bring 'the slave trade debate closer to home':

> The miseries of the slave ship, and thus the objects of humanitarian sympathy, might be distant, but the objects of abolitionist indignation included wrongdoers who breathed the free air of England.[30]

Emphasising the reader's proximity to the enslavers responsible for enslaved people's suffering intended to diminish the sense of separation between the British public and colonial slavery. Although Woods claims that the British public may find it difficult to sympathise with enslaved individuals because of the geographical distance between them, the personal testimonies of Equiano and Rushton aid the process of familiarisation by acting as mediators between the British public and enslaved individuals. Equiano brought the horrors of the slave ships to England through his physical presence, particularly with his national book tour, in order to bear witness against the slave trade. Rushton and Equiano had both worked on ships that transported enslaved Africans across the Middle Passage, before the final section of the triangular trade route returned them to England. Yet they had different roles – and thus different levels of freedom – as Rushton was a free White man who worked on these ships as a doctor, whereas Equiano was forced to work on these ships whilst he was enslaved. Despite this difference, they both formed a link between Britain and the colonies since they had both travelled between them across the

[30] Woods, 'A Theory of Moral Outrage', p. 672.

Atlantic Ocean, and so their personal engagements with slavery served to bridge the spatial and cultural 'distance' between Britons and enslaved Africans. Bridging this gap helped the British public to imagine themselves in the same position as enslaved individuals, encouraging them to conclude that anger was a justified retaliation to the oppressions of slavery.

In the *West Indian Eclogues* Rushton mixes the genres of eclogue and biography to create a space for his sympathetic performance. He uses his own experiences as an intermediary between his own sympathy towards the enslaved, and that which he hoped to inspire within the reader. The semi-autobiographical nature of the eclogues serves to bridge the geographical distance between the enslaved and the reader to allow for the sympathetic transferral of emotion. The *Eclogues'* 'Advertisement' highlights that 'the author has painted from actual observation' because he 'has resided several years in the West Indies'.[31] Rushton seeks to justify both his use of anger in the eclogues, and the angry vengeance of enslaved Africans, by demonstrating that vengeance was merely a reaction to the 'barbarities' that he had seen inflicted on them by their enslavers.[32] The eclogues interweave his personal observations as the empirical evidence so highly valued by enlightenment figures, with fictionalised, 'painted', details to create an emotional response. The use of anger to integrate fact and fiction aligns with the rhetorical strategy identified by Brycchan Carey as 'the emotional subversion of the intellect': an appeal to the reader's emotions in an effort to increase engagement with factual

[31] 'Advertisement', Edward Rushton, *West Indian Eclogues* (London: W. Lowndes, J. Philips, 1787).
[32] Ibid.

arguments.[33] The subsequent use of anger in the eclogues renders the reader more susceptible to the factual accounts of slavery, with Rushton using poetry as a vehicle for feeling to inspire sympathy for the enslaved.

One example of Rushton interweaving fact with fiction is found in the third eclogue, as one of the enslaved protagonists is named Quamina after an enslaved African whom Rushton had taught to read.[34] Following the wreck of their ship in 1773, Quamina sacrificed his own life to save Rushton from drowning by surrendering the cask that he was using to stay afloat so that Rushton could survive.[35] William Shepherd wrote that Rushton frequently spoke of the incident, 'never without dropping a grateful tear to the memory of Quamina'.[36] Rushton himself is portrayed as a performer of sympathy, becoming an exemplar for the reader to replicate. As tribute to the African who saved his life, Rushton immortalised Quamina through a fictionalised account of a blameless character. Rather than seeking revenge, Quamina merely narrates the fate of Jumba who was killed for his 'deep vengeance', ventriloquizing the real-life cruelty of slavery. Rushton directly references this in a footnote to the eclogues:

> Many instances might be adduced to shew, that some Negroes are capable of kind, nay even heroic, actions. [An example] can be given by the Author of these Eclogues; who was preserved from destruction by the humanity of a Negro slave. His deliverance, however, was purchased at a price which

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[33] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 42.
[34] Edward Rushton, *The Collected Writings of Edward Rushton (1756-1814),* ed. by Paul Baines (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014) Footnote 31, p. 239.
[35] Ibid., Footnote 31, p. 239.
[36] William Shepherd, 'The Life of Edward Rushton', in Edward Rushton, *Poems, and Other Writings by Edward Rushton,* ed. by William Shepherd (London: Effingham Wilson: 1824) p. xiii.

he must ever deplore. For, in saving his life, the brave, the generous, *African* lost his own![37]

Rushton reveals Quamina's 'humanity', as his selfless act transforms him from 'Negro slave' to the italicised 'African', suggesting that his bravery and generosity earned him his freedom. Yet he does not name his rescuer, which on the one hand reduces Quamina's identity to a possession, while on the other hand allows for generalisation, suggesting that other enslaved Africans were capable of similar acts of kindness. The kindness of the real-life Quamina is not tainted by the negative connotations of anger because the fictional character does not seek vengeance. This choice indicates that Rushton was aware that portraying the anger of enslaved individuals risked making them seem dangerous, which would have conflicted with his desire to show Quamina's humanity. Although there are 'many' examples of such selflessness, Rushton uses the qualifying 'some' to acknowledge that there are good and bad in all races. Rushton places this as a footnote to the fourth eclogue, despite Quamina featuring in the third, so that the work ends with Rushton's own personal testimony bridging the geographical and cultural gap between Britons and Africans, with his own existence serving to prove the humanity of enslaved individuals.

The cause of the anger was not the only factor in determining whether the emotion was justified, as the 'degree' of anger felt and expressed was also taken into consideration. Smith claims that anger is most detestable 'when we indulge its fury without check or restraint', a form of anger that he associates with 'rage', whereas 'indignation' is a superior form of anger that is expressed appropriately, with no

[37] 'Notes', Edward Rushton, *West Indian Eclogues* (London: W. Lowndes, J. Philips, 1787) p. 32.

punishment or violence beyond what is necessary.[38] Once again, excessive emotion is condemned, whilst emotional self-restraint is highly-regarded. Smith's distinction between 'rage' and 'indignation' aligns with the etymological difference noted by Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), where 'indignation' is considered to be a righteous emotion exercised for the public good, as opposed to 'rage' which refers to an irrational passion indulged for personal destruction.[39] Andrew Stauffer furthers this by adding that 'to claim indignation is to appropriate a three-fold bonus for one's anger: it is justified (because it has been caused by evident wrongdoing), it is righteous (because it is felt on behalf of others), and it is dignified (because it has resulted from an affront to dignity worth defending).'[40] As Stauffer notes, the French Revolution intensified this division between justifiable indignation and irrational rage, particularly when the violent Reign of Terror demonstrated the dangerous nature of public rage.[41] Although Stauffer does not explore anger directly in relation to slavery, his work shapes the context within which the abolitionist campaign was situated, and exposes the problematic associations between anger and violence. This may explain why Rushton and Equiano's portrayals of anger were relatively rare amongst abolitionist literature in comparison to sentimental displays, with depictions of enslaved individuals expressing anger featuring less frequently within English literature following the Reign of Terror (1793-4).[42] The etymological difference between 'indignation' and 'rage' as synonyms of anger is thus a useful distinction, though for the sake of clarity this chapter uses

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[38] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 30.
[39] Edmund Burke, 'Reflections on the Revolution in France' [1790], in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, *in 9 volumes,* ed. by Paul Langford, VIII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989) pp. 117, 122.
[40] Andrew Stauffer, *Anger, Revolution and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 42.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015) p. 5.

‘anger’ as an umbrella term for all feelings of hostility, which collectively encompasses the distinctive definitions attributed to both indignation and rage.[43] Aligning the anger of enslaved individuals with justified indignation, rather than self-indulgent rage, served to portray the resulting violence as a defensive retaliation that could only be prevented by removing the cause through the abolition of slavery. This distinction will be explored not only in terms of the anger experienced by the enslaved, but also in terms of the anger inspired within the British reader, to analyse why Equiano and Rushton used anger to further the abolitionist campaign.

Retaliatory Anger

Edward Rushton’s *West Indian Eclogues* draws on a literary tradition that stems from Virgil – the creator of the eclogue form – to present slave rebellions as expressions of retaliatory anger.[44] Gregson Davis argues that Virgil’s *Eclogues* reflects the ‘human infelicity, catastrophic loss, and emotional turbulence’ caused by the Roman Republic’s political turmoil, which demonstrates ‘a profound anxiety about the human capacity to cope with misfortune’.[45] Rushton employs the eclogue form to evoke this notion of emotional turbulence; he shows that enslaved people’s sorrow and anger often manifested into violent revolts as a defensive retaliation to the oppressions of slavery, as the enslaved were unable to cope with such extensive ‘infelicity’ and ‘catastrophic loss’. Thomas Chatterton was the first to use the classical form to

[43] For more on the changing use and meaning of anger and its synonyms over time, see: Thomas Dixon, ‘What is the History of Anger a History of?’ *Emotions: History, Culture, Society*, 4 (2020) pp. 1-34 (esp. p. 10).
[44] See: Carey, ‘A Stronger Muse’; Joshua Crandall, ‘“The Great Measur’d by the Less”: The Ethnological Turn in Eighteenth-Century Pastoral’, *ELH,* 81 (2014) pp. 955-982; Dellarosa, *Talking Revolutions*; Pierrot, ‘*Droit du Seigneur’*.
[45] Gregson Davis, ‘Introduction’, in *Virgil’s Eclogues*, trans. by Len Krisak (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) p. ix.

contribute towards the abolitionist debate with his *African Eclogues* (1770), which emulates Virgil's 'sombre musings' whilst 'simultaneously operating a drastic shift in focus' from internal conflict within Rome to conflict between Britain and her colonies.[46] Rushton's poem formally and thematically echoes Chatterton's by focusing on how Europeans used slavery to oppress Africans, thereby revealing the corruption of Western civilisation.[47] These anti-slavery eclogues feature an 'antipastoral strain' that highlights the barbaric treatment of enslaved labourers, which 'challenges the reader's expectations, subverts the form, and exposes the irony of rural workers living in a world that could not be more unlike a vision of a pastoral idyll.'[48]

Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* is composed of four individual eclogues that collectively show the cyclical nature of anger in retaliation to slavery. Each eclogue is designated a different time of day, moving from 'morning' through to 'evening', 'noon', and 'midnight'. Unlike other eighteenth-century eclogues, such as those by Chatterton and Hugh Mulligan, this temporal variation between each eclogue was not accompanied by a geographical change, as Rushton's eclogues are all situated in Jamaica.[49] The singular geographical setting establishes a microcosmic exemplar of plantation slavery that represents the unlikelihood of enslaved individuals ever escaping. This is reinforced when Rushton's character, Jumba, is killed before he can carry out his revenge and escape enslavement.

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[46] Thomas Chatterton, *African Eclogues,* in *Court and City Magazine* (1770); Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur'*, p. 16.
[47] Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur',* p. 16.
[48] Dellarosa, *Talking Revolutions,* p. 145; Carey, 'A Stronger Muse', pp. 148, 149.
[49] Dellarosa, *Talking Revolutions.*

The fact that only the time changes, and not the location, shows that at the time of composition it seemed that slavery was unlikely to come to an end. It demonstrates both the cyclical nature of slavery, as the children of the enslaved would inherit their parents' enslavement, and the cyclical nature of the resulting anger and vengeance. It undermined the concept that enslaved Africans could be kept under control through the threat of violence and death, as shown when the warning of the death of Pedro, an enslaved individual who was 'gibbetted alive' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First'), fails to deter Jumba from seeking vengeance. The third eclogue features Quamina narrating Jumba's fate: 'In vain he fled: / This morn I saw him number with the dead!' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the Third'), with the rhyming couplet highlighting the inevitability of death following attempts to escape. Similarly, the fates of both Jumba and Pedro fail to deter Loango's vengeance in the fourth eclogue, although the latter does confess: 'I dread the White men's gibbeting alive' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the Fourth'). Fear is not enough to deter enslaved individuals from seeking justice for the oppressions that had been inflicted upon them by their enslavers. The cyclical nature of anger reveals that negative reinforcement is insufficient in preventing enslaved Africans from retaliating by inflicting violence on those who had previously inflicted violence on them. Rushton's eclogues warn the reader that ending slavery was the only way to prevent the retaliatory anger of enslaved individuals from manifesting into acts of violence against their enslavers.

Rushton subverts the eclogue form by depicting the barbaric realities of slavery as a contrast to the pastoral idyll that readers would have expected.[50] The opening lines of the first eclogue initially seem to depict the idyllic landscape of a conventional pastoral, and yet Rushton subtly introduces the oppressions of slavery that caused enslaved individuals to retaliate with anger and violence:

> The Eastern clouds declare the coming day,
> The din of reptiles slowly dies away.
> The mountain-tops just glimmer on the eye,
> And from their bulky sides the breezes fly.
> The Ocean's margin beats the varied strand,
> Its hoarse, deep, murmurs reach the distant land. (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First')

The 'Eastern clouds' literally refer to the sun rising in the east, but also symbolically represent Britain, which was geographically east of Jamaica, and by extension represent the British enslavers who would 'declare the coming day' by dictating work to the enslaved. The negative connotations of 'clouds' further reinforce the oppression as clouds block out sunlight, metaphorically blocking the narrator's potential happiness due to their enslavement, as a form of pathetic fallacy. These 'eastern clouds' re-centre the globe, challenging popular conceptions of Britain as 'Western' civilisation, thereby destabilising Eurocentric views.

The clouds also challenge conceptions of European Enlightenment by inverting its associations with light imagery. Revealing Europe's darkness exposes the

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[50] Carey, 'A Stronger Muse', p. 149; Grégory Pierrot, 'Sable Warriors and Neglected Tars: Edward Rushton's Atlantic Politics', in *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic*, ed. by Paul Youngquist (London: Routledge, 2013) pp. 125-144 (p. 130). For more on Rushton, eclogues, and the pastoral, see: Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Markman Ellis, '"The cane-land isles": Commerce and Empire in Late Eighteenth-Century Georgic and Pastoral Poetry', in *Islands in History and Representation*, ed. by Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 43-62; David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 172-216.

restrictions of Enlightenment ideology, such as egalitarianism, which largely failed to include enslaved Africans.[51] A decade after the *West Indian Eclogues* was published, Rushton expressed his concerns regarding Enlightenment in a letter to George Washington (1797), where he compared the American Revolution to the abolitionist movement and concluded that: 'If men were enlightened, revolutions would be bloodless'.[52] Rushton presents the limitations of Enlightenment, as an enlightened man would reason that the enslaved Africans and the American colonies both deserved to be liberated. Since this liberty was not granted to enslaved individuals, they resorted to violence as a means to gain their freedom in the same way that Americans had used violence to gain independence. The sense of oppression in the *West Indian Eclogues* is furthered with the restrictions and borders created by the 'Ocean's margin' that 'beats' the shore, which foreshadows the beatings of enslaved Africans. Such acts of violence signified that the Enlightenment was not as progressive as it was generally perceived to be, as notions of equality and liberty did not transcend the 'Ocean's margin' to reach the enslaved individuals in the colonies. Rushton suggests that anger was a natural retaliation to violence, and so enslaved individuals were justified in manifesting their anger into violence as a defensive response to such oppression.

This passage is accompanied with a footnote that expands upon the oppressive, and predatory, nature of enslavers: 'Myriads of these reptiles nightly prowl through the woods, in search of prey; and, at the approach of morn, retire to

[51] Milan Zafirovski, *The Enlightenment and Its Effects on Modern Society* (London: Springer, 2011) p. 44.
[52] Edward Rushton, 'Expostulatory Letter to George Washington, of Mount Vernon, in Virginia, on His Continuing to Be a Proprieter of Slaves' [February 1797], in *The Belfast Monthly Magazine,* 8.45 (April 1812) pp. 266-271 (p. 267).

their lurking places' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First'). Footnotes were a common eighteenth-century typographical feature providing supplementary material, though Rushton's footnotes were uncommonly extensive.[53] They provide the reader with information that they were unlikely to have known, highlighting the reader's ignorance of slavery. The footnote creates an extended metaphor, with the prowling reptiles symbolising the European enslavers in search of African prey. As Stuart Curran argues, Rushton's poem 'is not merely politicised, it reflects the preying of civilisation upon the innocent denizens of paradise,' resulting in anger and vengeance.[54] This promotes cultural relativism, which is the concept that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be considered in light of that person's own culture, rather than against the criteria of another.[55] Cultural relativism encourages the reader to judge the enslaved African's actions within the context of their enslavement, and the oppression that they experienced, in order to understand the cause of their anger. As Joshua Crandall argues, 'the pastoral pleasure lies in understanding rather than imitating'.[56] Rushton's eclogues exemplify this by revealing the hostile environment that caused the enslaved individuals' anger, and portraying the consequent anger as a defensive retaliation to slavery.

Rushton insisted that enslaved individuals reacted to these oppressions in the same way that any human would, as Africans experienced the same thoughts and sentiments as their European counterparts. Crandall argues that 'cross-cultural comparison' introduced the new genre of 'foreign pastorals', which questioned the

[53] Curran, *Poetic Form*, p. 92.
[54] Ibid., p. 92.
[55] John J. Tilley, 'Cultural Relativism', *Human Rights Quarterley*, 22.2 (2000) pp. 501–47.
[56] Joshua Crandall, '"The Great Measur'd by the Less": The Ethnological Turn in Eighteenth-Century Pastoral', *ELH,* 81 (2014) pp. 955-982 (p. 961).

propriety of the common pastoral trope of ‘measuring the great by the less’.[57] Rushton advocated racial equality by arguing:

> [T]o imagine that the wise Framer of the Universe is partial to this or that particular colour; or that he created a race of beings with sable complexions and woolly hair to be servile drudges to the rest, is, in my opinion, to degrade Omnipotence. Away then with this fancied superiority which the Europeans have vainly arrogated to themselves. Nature knows it not.[58]

By this logic, proslavery arguments undermined God’s supremacy, and so proponents of slavery appear heretical. European superiority is exposed as a myth that contradicted the will of God. Such cross-cultural comparisons satirically reveal the ‘moral dubiousness of contemporary society’, and contain an underlying criticism of political corruption.[59] Placing the marginalised enslaved individuals at the centre of the eclogues replaces Eurocentric outlooks with a transnational approach.[60]

Rushton later reiterates his belief in racial homogeneity in a footnote to his letter to Washington, where he dismisses Thomas Jefferson’s claim that Black people show a level of ‘reason much inferior’ to White people as ‘subterfuge’ that intended to protect Jefferson’s own interests by providing justification for slavery.[61] Rushton highlights the parallels between American Patriots (such as Jefferson) and enslaved Africans, as they both fought for their independence in rebellions, which suggests

[57] Crandall, ‘“The Great Measur’d by the Less”’, p. 956.
[58] Edward Rushton, ‘An Attempt to Prove that Climate, Food and Manners, Are Not the Causes of the Dissimilarity of Colour in the Human Species’, in *Poems, and Other Writings by Edward Rushton,* ed. by William Shepherd (London: Effingham Wilson, 1824) p. 208.
[59] Crandall, ‘“The Great Measur’d by the Less”’, p. 970; J. E. Congleton, T. V. F. Brogan, ‘Eclogues’, in *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, ed. by T. V. F Brogan (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 64.
[60] Franca Dellarosa, ‘“Behold in These Coromantees/ The Fate of an Agonized World”: Edward Rushton’s Transnational Radicalism’, in *A History of British Working Class Literature,* ed. by John Goodridge and Bridget Keegan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) pp. 116-129 (p. 125).
[61] Tim Burke, *Eighteenth-Century English Working-Class Poets,* III (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003) p. 10.

that enslaved individuals were as entitled to freedom as Americans. The parallel demonstrates that Black and White individuals were driven to rebel by similar logic and sentiments, which aimed to familiarise the motivations behind enslaved individuals' revolts. The eclogue features enslaved individuals discussing the desire for rebellion and vengeance, which shows not only their emotional sensibility, but also their intellectual abilities, as they exert reason to determine the best defensive strategy to use against their enslavers. Rushton portrayed rebellions as a defensive retaliation to slavery to familiarise enslaved individuals' anger and encourage sympathetic identification within the reader.

Although such anger was shown to be justified, and the resulting violence shown to be defensive, a lack of sorrow was considered to be a barrier to sympathy. Adam Smith was concerned that sympathy would not occur without conveying 'pain and agony'.[62] A contemporary critical review of Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* echoes this:

> We applaud the author for the humanity of his design: but there is some impropriety in making the Negroes […] chiefly employ themselves in venting imprecations, and planning revenge, against their oppressors. It is doubtless extremely natural for them to do so: but as the principal design of this performance is to excite pity for the unhappy slaves, their various calamities, not their impatience, should have been chiefly dwelt upon. […] A little reflection would have told [the author] that the tears and supplications, not the impotent rage and defiance of the wretched, are most likely to melt their persecutors' hearts, if formed, as we trust some of our West-India planters are, of 'penetrable stuff'.[63]

[62] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 45.
[63] *Critical Review* (December 1787) pp. 434-35.

Despite the critic's claim that anger was an 'extremely natural' reaction for the enslaved to experience, there remained the difficulty of such narratives inspiring the reader's pity, with the critic favouring sentimental tropes as a more effective method of evoking sympathy. And yet Rushton had integrated various sentimental tropes into his work, including the first eclogue's opening description of 'The Sons of Mis'ry, Britain's foulest stain,' who 'Arise, from friendly sleep to pining pain' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First'); though the meaning of this couplet depends on the interpretation of 'Sons'. Britain was often referred to as the motherland of its Jamaican colony, while Africa was also referred to as the motherland of the enslaved individuals that had been born there.[64] One interpretation is that the enslaved are presented as the 'sons and daughters of Africa', which is how Ottobah Cugoano refers to them in *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787).[65] This acknowledges the fact that the miseries of the enslaved were inflicted upon them because of their African heritage, and reflects the argument that Africans were inferior to Europeans. It also acknowledges that children inherited their parents' enslavement and resulting misery, which reinforces both the oppressive and cyclical nature of slavery. The ambiguity surrounding the parentage of these 'Sons of Mis'ry' offers an alternative interpretation linked to the first. Britain's 'foulest stain' is the racial discrimination that attempted to justify the nation's involvement with slavery, and therefore 'Mis'ry' is more fittingly the personification of Britain, reflecting that the nation was responsible for the Africans' enslavement and their subsequent misery. It also suggests that Britain will soon share that misery, either through sympathetic identification, or by

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[64] Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016) pp. 70, 298.
[65] Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 141.

becoming the victims of a similar form of oppression when the racial hierarchy is reversed following a successful rebellion led by enslaved individuals. Rushton encourages readers to relieve the sorrows of enslaved Africans to prevent such sorrow from transforming into anger and manifesting in revolts. In doing so, he indicates that abolitionist action was not entirely altruistic, as abolition would protect Britain's peace and stability by preventing revolts, whilst also protecting Britain's moral reputation from the 'stain' of slavery and the consequential violence.

The reference to misery sets up the emotional suffering that is caused by slavery, and shows that sorrow can easily transform into rage, as demonstrated in the first eclogue. A conversation between two enslaved individuals, Adoma and Jumba, follows the scenic description. Jumba notices Adoma's 'heavy sigh' and tells him that 'too plain thy griefs are told!' When asked for the reason behind this sadness, Adoma explains how he had received the wounds which were causing him so much sorrow that resulted in sentimental displays. He narrates the events of the day before where he was punished for defending his lover, Yaro. Adoma describes watching her pause her work to feed their crying child, only to be beaten for 'her laziness':

> I saw the deed, — I heard her grief!
> Could I do less? — I flew to her relief;
> I fell before him — sued, embrac'd his knee,
> And bade his anger vent itself on me,
> Spurn'd from his feet I dar'd to catch his hand,
> Nor loos'd it, JUMBA, at his dread command:
> For, blind with rage, at one indignant blow
> I thought to lay the pale-fac'd villain low! (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First')

Adoma’s initial reaction is to sacrifice himself to the anger of the ‘savage Driver’, taking a non-aggressive approach. He takes a passive stance as he ‘fell before him’, and ‘sued’ for relief by embracing the driver. Yet this quickly turns to anger, fuelling Adoma’s desire to punish the ‘pale-fac’d villain’ for such cruelty. The juxtaposition of ‘rage’ and ‘indignant’ within a single line, separated only by caesura, shows the fragility of the distinction between these two terms. On the one hand, Adoma’s anger aligns with Burke and Smith’s conception of ‘indignation’, as it is felt on behalf of his lover and child, and is justified as he is acting defensively. Yet on the other hand, since Adoma is metaphorically ‘blind with rage’ it seems that he is unable to see or think of anything other than the anger that overwhelms him to the extent that he is incapable of exerting self-control to restrain his emotional outburst. Rushton indicates that Adoma’s indignation is in danger of transforming into a self-indulgent rage that goes beyond the realms of self-defence, thereby demonstrating that there is a fine line between indignation and rage.

Rushton presents Adoma’s rage as an excessive form of anger to warn his readers that such anger could lead Black people to seek vengeance against White people. Adoma’s rage is accompanied with the desire for a reversal of the racial hierarchy where the ‘pale-fac’d villain’ is brought ‘low’ enough to experience the cruelties that he had inflicted on the enslaved. Rage drives Adoma beyond what is necessary to restrain the villain from torturing his lover, and he momentarily considers taking his vengeance. Nevertheless, the initial violence of the ‘savage Driver’ aligns more closely with the definition of ‘rage’ as an excessive form of anger, as he applies the lash simply because a mother paused to feed her hungry child. By comparison, Adoma’s anger aligns more closely with the defensive nature of

‘indignation’. Rushton suggests that the enslavers have more difficulty controlling their emotions than the enslaved, further reinforcing the reversal of the racial hierarchy since the enslaver becomes the inferior ‘savage’. Highlighting the immorality of slavery in this way simultaneously encourages feelings of revulsion towards the oppressors, and pity for the oppressed. Rushton’s presentations of slavery lead the reader towards the conclusion that such anger, and the resulting vengeance, can only be prevented when the cause of the anger is removed with the abolition of slavery.

The White overseers quickly regain control, and Adoma is punished for his failed attempt at defending his family. Jumba attempts to rekindle Adoma’s rage against those ‘who taunts our tears, with mocks, our griefs, repay (*sic.*)’. Their sorrow is mocked and serves no useful purpose, whereas anger could potentially be more productive when turned into vengeful attempts to eliminate those who enslave them. Jumba says ‘Thy great revenge demands a glorious blow. / But dar’st thou bravely act in such a cause?’ to which Adoma replies ‘I wish revenge like thee: / But oh! I shudder at their cruelty.’ Rushton shows that enslavers’ attempts to scare the enslaved into submission worked to an extent, as some, like Adoma, feared their cruel methods of torture. However, this was evidently a limited success, as many other enslaved Africans followed Jumba’s example by responding to such violence with violent acts of their own.

Having exposed the limitations of sorrow, Jumba attempts to justify the need for more radical emotional expressions such as anger, and encourages Adoma to seek 'thy great revenge':

> Our glorious aims shall soon succeed,
> And thou in turn shall see th' oppressors bleed.
> Soon shall they fall, cut down like lofty Canes,
> And (oh! the bliss) from us receive their pains (Rushton, 'Eclogue the First')

The passivity of 'they fall' creates an absence of causality, removing the agency of the enslaved. The passive voice suggests that the enslaved are exonerated of all blame, at least in their own eyes, as the 'oppressors' have caused their own fall through their own actions, and so are themselves to blame for the retaliatory actions of the enslaved. The simile comparing the oppressors to 'lofty Canes' cut down by their own tools reinforces the idea that they cause their own downfall, with the enslaved transforming their enslavers into commodities as a form of retribution. The inversion of the georgic establishes the poem as antipastoral, as the roles of labourer, supervisor, and commodity are all reassigned. The enslaved warn that if they are not granted racial equality then they will strive to reverse the racial hierarchy, using increasingly violent methods to match the degree of violence inflicted on them, never ceasing their efforts until justice was achieved.

In his *Interesting Narrative,* Olaudah Equiano also argues that enslaved individuals learned to direct their anger into violence from the example set by their enslavers, though the violence that he depicts aligns more with an act of self-defence than an act of vengeance. He familiarises the violence used by enslaved Africans by comparing it to a defensive war strategy used to combat attacks against them:

> When you make men slaves you deprive them of half their virtue, you set them in your own conduct an example of fraud, rapine, and cruelty, and compel them to live with you in *a state of war*; and yet you complain that they are not honest or faithful! (Equiano, p. 152, emphasis mine)

Equiano echoes John Locke's concept that enslavement paralleled a declaration of war:

> he who makes an *attempt to enslave me,* thereby puts himself into a State of War with me […] and therefore it is lawful for me to treat him as one who has *put himself into a State of War* with me, i.e. kill him if I can.[66]

Locke argues that individuals have the right of retaliation against their aggressors for initiating violence, and even murder is justified as a defensive act against enslavement. He had previously argued in 'The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina' (1669) that 'every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves.'[67] Yet over two decades later he argued in *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) that all men are naturally born into 'a state of perfect freedom' and 'equality', while in the chapter 'On Slavery' he similarly argued that 'the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth'.[68] Locke does not mention any racial exclusions to this premise, so his views on enslavement may have changed during his lifetime. However, Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann argue that Locke's investment in the slave trade indicates that he was mainly concerned 'with the freedom and prosperity of Englishmen, and not troubled if they were gained at the expense of Africans.'[69] Holly Brewer counters this argument by insisting that Locke actually opposed slavery, particularly the idea that slavery was

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[66] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1690) pp. 237-238.
[67] John Locke, 'The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina' (1670), in *Locke: Political Writings,* ed. by David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003) p. 230.
[68] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government,* pp. 189, 205.
[69] Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, 'The Contradictions of Racism: Locke, Slavery, and the *Two Treatises*', in *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Andrew Valls (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005) pp. 89-107 (pp. 102, 90).

hereditary.[70] It appears that Locke eventually came to view slavery as both immoral and unnatural because enslaved individuals were denied their natural right to liberty, leading Locke to conclude that the act of enslavement aligned with a declaration of war.

Although it is difficult to verify whether or not Equiano was familiar with Locke's works, the use of the exact same phrase when comparing enslavement to a 'state of war' strongly suggests that he was. Equiano draws on Locke's law of self-preservation to argue that enslaved individuals have the right to defend themselves against their aggressors until peace is achieved, matching the cruelty inflicted upon themselves if necessary, as they would in a 'state of war'. The anger that fuelled rebellions is thus positioned as a defensive act of war against slavery, with lives often needing to be taken to determine victory. If such acts of murder committed by the enslaved are to be considered as evidence of their moral degeneracy, then it is the enslavers who are responsible for teaching them such crimes with 'their own conduct', rather than teaching Christian values such as how to be 'honest' and 'faithful'. Equiano highlights the hypocrisy of enslavers who complain that Africans are 'not honest or faithful', and use this claim to justify the need for enslaving them, despite enslavers ironically lacking these qualities themselves. The alleged moral degeneracy of enslaved Africans is shown to be the effect of their enslavement, rather than the cause, as Equiano claims that the enslaved lose 'half their virtue' in retaliation to the substantially more severe moral degeneracy of their enslavers. Equiano suggests that enslaved people's anger – expressed in the form of

[70] Holly Brewer, 'Slavery, Sovereignty, and "Inheritable Blood": Reconsidering John Locke and the Origins of American Slavery', *The American Historical Review,* 122.4 (2007) pp. 1038-1078.

vengeance – is merely a form of self-preservation, with violence often needed to fight violence, and so the blame lies with the enslavers rather than the enslaved.

The *Interesting Narrative* also uses parallels between Biblical and colonial rebellion to familiarise the insurrections carried out by enslaved Africans, which aimed to help readers to understand the anger that culminated in revolts. Before introducing this parallel, Equiano reminds enslavers that insurrection is one of the consequences of their sinful engagement with slavery. After detailing the barbaric treatment of the enslaved, including the rapes, beatings, mutilations and hangings, Equiano questions: 'are there no dangers attending this mode of treatment? Are you not hourly in dread of an insurrection?' (Equiano, p. 152). He deliberately poses these points as questions rather than statements to avoid it seeming as though he is threatening insurrection himself. Instead, Equiano quotes an extract from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2.332-40) as an indirect warning that the enslaved will rebel against their enslavers, forming a parallel with the rebellion of the fallen angels:

> "No peace is given
> To us enslav'd, but custody severe;
> And stripes and arbitrary punishment
> Inflicted – What peace can we return?
> But to our power, hostility and hate;
> Untam'd reluctance, and revenge tho' slow,
> Yet ever plotting how the conqueror least
> May reap his conquest, and may least rejoice
> In doing what we most in suff'ring feel." (Equiano, p. 153)

The intertextuality situates Equiano's narrative within a longer literary tradition, reflecting Equiano's desire to 'resemble' the English and 'imitate their manners' (Equiano, p. 98). It also familiarises the alien concept of enslaved individuals

rebelling by appropriating it within Western culture so that the British public could better identify with the anger that caused the desire for vengeance.[71] Equiano's analogy between Milton's devils and enslaved individuals does not intend to suggest that the enslaved are sinful; instead, it highlights the resemblance between hell and slavery by revealing the similarities between the 'arbitrary punishment' inflicted upon them both.[72] The parallel centralises the natural instinct to resist oppression, and alleviate suffering, in any way possible. Despite their disadvantaged position, and the knowledge that their 'conqueror' would ultimately succeed, the enslaved were determined to resist conquest to limit the success of their oppressors. Equiano warns that their anger would grow in proportion to the degree and duration of their oppression, until the only solace from such emotional and physical turmoil was to transform their anger into a plan for vengeance.

Relating *Paradise Lost* to slavery also illuminates significant differences between Milton's devils and enslaved individuals, as Equiano implies that enslaved individuals had more cause to be angry since they were the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of oppression. Enslaved individuals, unlike Milton's devils, had committed no crime that warranted such a hellish punishment and enslavement. On the contrary, enslaved individuals were rebelling as a form of self-defence against

[71] Vincent Carretta, 'Olaudah Equiano: African British Abolitionist and Founder of the African American Slave Narrative, in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative,* ed. by Audrey A. Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 44-60 (p. 51).
[72] Eric B. Song, *Dominion Undeserved: Milton and the Perils of Creation* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013) p. 155; Reginald A. Wilburn, *Preaching the Gospel of Black Revolt: Appropriating Milton in Early African American Literature* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2014) p. 97. See also: Gesa Mackenthun, *Fictions of the Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 32; Joseph Fichtelberg, 'Word between Worlds: The Economy of Equiano's Narrative', *American Literary History*, 5.3 (1993) pp. 459–80; Mary Nyquist, 'Equiano, Satanism, and Slavery', in *Milton Now Alternative Approaches and Contexts*, ed. by Catherine Gray and Erin Murphy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) pp. 215-245.

the ‘mistaken avarice’ of their enslavers (Equiano, p. 151). Equiano insists that slavery ‘violates that first natural right of mankind, equality and independency, and gives one man dominion over his fellows which God could never intend!’ (Equiano, p. 151). If slavery is against God’s will, then enslavers align more with Satan. This alternative parallel between enslavers and Milton’s devils suggests that they are both the aggressors in the ‘state of war’, whereas the enslaved align with God’s angels as the defenders. As Mary Nyquist argues, Equiano’s intertextuality intends to ‘make violent resistance a defensible response to the tyrannous violation of basic, human rights.’[73] The parallel is inverted so that enslavers become the ‘fallen’ citizens who need to earn redemption; otherwise enslaved individuals would rebel against them as punishment for the sins of slavery. Equiano follows the Milton quotation by reassuring enslavers that ‘by changing your conduct, and treating your slaves as men, every cause of fear would be banished’ (Equiano, p. 153). In doing so, he claims that the abolition of slavery, or at least amelioration, is in the best interests of both the enslaved and their enslavers. After all, if enslaved individuals were treated as equals then they would have no cause to be angry, and thus no desire for rebellion and vengeance.

Equiano tries to distinguish between the need for rebellion as a form of resistance against slavery, and the need for enslaved Africans to exert emotional self-restraint. He is wary of explicitly approving of excessive anger transforming into vengeance, as he fears presenting himself and his fellow enslaved Africans as dangerous. Embedding Milton’s quotation within his own narrative is a distancing

[73] Nyquist, ‘Equiano, Satanism, and Slavery’, p. 220.

technique that allows Equiano to predict a revolution that will eliminate slavery, whilst detaching himself from the violent anger and vengeance called for by Milton's Beelzebub. As Adam Potkay argues, 'Equiano manages at once to endorse and reject the rule of revenge'; although he sympathises with the desire for vengeance, he knows that it is not a viable method of abolishing slavery because violence was associated with evil and immorality, as embodied by Satan.[74] Equiano demonstrates self-restraint by controlling his anger and desire for vengeance, thereby disproving the argument that Africans are emotionally incontinent.

Equiano further familiarises the anger of enslaved Africans by using his personal experiences, such as being threatened with violence for no apparent cause, to present anger as a retaliation to the injustices of slavery:

> I was therefore much embarrassed, and very apprehensive of a flogging at least. I dreaded, of all things, the thoughts of being striped, as I never in my life had the marks of any violence of that kind. At that instant a rage seized my soul, and for a little I determined to resist the first man that should offer to lay violent hands on me, or basely use me without a trial; for I would sooner die like a free man, than suffer myself to be scourged by the hands of ruffians, and my blood drawn like a slave. (Equiano, p. 197)

At the thought of being flogged, Equiano initially experienced apprehension, embarrassment, and dread, soon transforming into rage to demonstrate the complex emotional reaction to such cruelty. This shows the fluidity of emotions as fear, shame, and anger are not mutually exclusive. The thought of having 'the marks of […] violence' inflicted upon him causes not only apprehension for the pain that he would experience, but also embarrassment at the thought of having a physical,

[74] Adam Potkay, 'Olaudah Equiano and the Art of Spiritual Autobiography', *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27.4 (1994) pp. 677–92 (p. 690).

perhaps permanent, reminder of such degradation enforced onto his body. The transformation to rage appears to be prompted by the realisation of the injustice of being punished 'without a trial', and thus his anger is presented as a defensive response because it drives him to 'resist' the violence, rather than seek revenge. Equiano jeopardised this logical justification by claiming that 'a rage seized my soul', which could be considered as evidence that his emotions overpowered his morality, as represented by the soul. However, the justification behind this emotional response is part of a rhetorical strategy of self-presentation intending to show that Equiano was able to rationalise the defensive expression of his anger. He intended to show that his rage was driven by a sense of morality that sought to combat injustice, proving his ability to control his emotions through rational thinking. Equiano associates this defensive anger with 'rage', which demonstrates the instability of the distinction between rage and indignation that was made by Burke and Smith, as it was not established amongst all references to anger in the eighteenth century.

The degree of autonomy available to enslaved Africans is also a complex issue, particularly in relation to anger. The pair of similes implies that Equiano had a choice to either accept enslavement so that he would bleed 'like a slave', or to rebel against it and 'die like a free man'. The comparison of being 'like' a free man/slave suggests that neither of these are a definite status because one can fluctuate between these two positions during a lifetime. Neither of these extremities can truly exist for Equiano, as he refuses to submit to the status of a 'slave', but also acknowledges that the status of a 'free man' is merely theoretical since he will always be restricted in some form by social and cultural norms. Even after he is emancipated, his freedom is still severely restricted by racial discrimination, as two

men attempt to re-enslave him. Although the men quickly realise that their scheme would not be plausible when they discover the eloquence with which Equiano speaks English, this encounter reveals the dangers faced by 'free' Black people:

> One said to the other—it will not do; and the other answered that I talked too good English. I replied, I believed I did; and I had also with me a revengeful stick equal to the occasion; and my mind was likewise good. Happily however it was not used; and, after we had talked together a little in this manner, the rogues left me.
> (Equiano, p. 224)

Equiano forces his own opinion into the discussion between the two White men, further supporting their speculation that he was too well educated to pass as a runaway enslaved African. By voicing his own opinion, he shows his autonomy, and demonstrates that he deserves to be heard.

Equiano's response to the attempt to take away his independence culminates in a fleeting desire for vengeance. He warns his adversaries that he is prepared to use his 'revengeful stick' in order to defend his freedom. This was accompanied by the claim that 'my mind was likewise good' to indicate that he was both mentally and physically strong enough to resist re-enslavement. The adjective 'revengeful' is attributed to the stick, rather than Equiano himself, which echoes Lady Macbeth's 'keen knife'.[76] In both instances, the potential weapon is personified by its desire for violence, thereby exonerating the individual using it. In Equiano's case, he is simultaneously enforcing and denying his own agency. He demonstrates that he will resist enslavement, although he distances himself from the act of resistance and the

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[76] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. by Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) Act I, Scene 5, p. 113. All future references are to this edition.

resulting violence. The problematic dichotomy of portrayals of anger is made clear once again: the desire to assert a Black individual's agency through autonomous acts needs to be balanced against the aversion to portraying their violence for fear of appearing dangerous. Therefore, Equiano moderates the stick's vengeful desire by writing 'happily, however, it was not used'. The *OED* demonstrates that eighteenth-century definitions of 'happily' could either mean that the issue was resolved by chance, or that Equiano was pleased that he did not have to resort to violence.[77] The former interpretation reinforces the lack of autonomy, while the latter further demonstrates Equiano's emotional complexity, as anger can quickly be subdued and transformed into happiness. Combining both definitions suggests that Equiano was a fortunate individual who was glad to avoid unnecessary violence, thereby presenting himself as an African capable of controling his emotional expressions.

The personification of a weapon to dictate agency is a technique also used in Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues.* While the personification of Equiano's stick suggests that the agency belongs to the weapon rather than the person using it, Rushton's protagonist is clearly in control of the weapon he brandishes. In Rushton's fourth and final eclogue the enslaved protagonist, Loango, has planned to run away with his lover, Quamva, and is furious when she does not turn up at the arranged time. His anger manifests into the desire for vengeance against both Quamva and their enslaver, as he convinces himself that they are lovers:

> Come then, revenge, and 'midst this horrid roar
> My thirsty knife shall drink their streaming gore.

[77] *OED,* adv. 1 and adv. 2.

> Come, swiftly come, and aid me to surprise
> These guilty lovers acting o'er their joys (Rushton, 'Eclogue the Fourth')

The anaphora evokes Lady Macbeth's imperative 'Come, you spirits', summoned to help to fulfil her murderous desires (*Macbeth,* I.5. p. 112), forming a parallel with Loango's desire to carry out his revenge on those that he believes have wronged him. The similarity does not end there; the personification of Lady Macbeth's 'keen knife' is paralleled by Loango's knife being 'thirsty' for the blood of the 'guilty lovers'. Loango's anger manifests into vengeance against those who he believes deserve punishment for having betrayed him, whereas Lady Macbeth was motivated by the selfish desire for personal gain when she directed her knife against the innocent King Duncan. Loango's murderous desires seem relatively justified by comparison, though his desire for vengeance is still problematic because it is not defensive. The possessive pronoun 'my' suggests Loango's ownership of the weapon, with the knife serving merely to 'aid' his revenge, rather than to enact it on his behalf. Rushton allows Loango to claim his autonomy, but in doing so opens Loango up to criticisms of emotional incontinency as he repeatedly says his anger is 'too much', and so it is difficult to justify Loango's actions.

The final eclogue is undoubtedly the most problematic of the four, as it is harder to condone the anger expressed by the enslaved protagonist, Loango, since his desire for vengeance cannot be justified as a defensive retaliation. The difficulty in justifying Loango's vengeance explains why it was removed from an 1824 posthumous volume of Rushton's collected poems since it may have hindered, rather

than helped, the abolitionist cause.[78] It is the only one of the four that Rushton presents in the form of a soliloquy, rather than a conversation between two enslaved individuals, and so it excludes the perspective of Loango's lover. Quamva is denied a voice of her own in the narrative, highlighting a gendered absence of the female perspective. She is unable to defend herself against Loango's claim that 'woman's mind/ Still changes like the Hurricane's fierce wind' (Rushton, 'Eclogue the Fourth'), which suggests that women's thoughts are not worth considering as they are so inconsistent and destructive. Yet ironically it is Loango's mind that changes from loving the 'beauteous' Quamva to wishing her dead. It is Loango that seeks his lover's destruction as he calls on the 'spirits of the air' to 'assemble all your winds', essentially evoking the very hurricane that he accused Quamva of resembling. She is denied the opportunity to defend herself, representing the dual nature of an enslaved woman who is controlled by her husband (as the supposedly superior sex) and by her White enslaver (as the supposedly superior race). These two opposing forces of control come into conflict, and ultimately racial control dominates, so it is likely that Quamva was prevented from meeting Loango by her enslaver through no fault of her own. The fact that Quamva's perspective is not included in the poem leaves the reader uncertain about whether she deserves punishment as Loango claims. Rushton explains in a footnote that the events of this eclogue are based on a true story of an enslaved African whose wife had been sexually assaulted by their enslaver. The enslaved individual reacted by killing both his wife and enslaver, and gained his freedom by helping the English to take control of Jamaica by defeating the Spanish. Rushton includes this additional information to show that the same cruelties

[78] Edward Rushton, 'West Indian Eclogues', in *Poems and Other Writings by the Late Edward Rushton,* ed. by William Shepherd (London: Effingham Wilson: 1824) pp. 141-164.

that were once criticised when they were committed by other nationalities are now being committed by English enslavers. Hidden amongst these facts is a warning that if such cruelty continues to go unchallenged by English law, then the challenge will be presented by the anger of enslaved individuals in the form of violent revolt.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABOLITIONIST FEAR TACTICS: THE THREAT OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION

Introduction

Abolitionists often engaged with Biblical theology to further their moral and emotive attack against slavery and the slave trade. They drew on contemporary fears regarding Britain's perceived moral status, claiming that enslavers – and the Protestant nation they represented – deserved to be subjected to divine vengeance for participating in slavery. This language of fear is exemplified in *The Law of Retribution* (1776), where Granville Sharp proclaims that 'God will SURELY avenge the Cause of the Oppressed', questioning: 'have we not therefore just reason to fear that God will visit for these things?'[1] The relationship between Christianity and slavery has been extensively explored by many scholars. David Brion Davis argued that abolitionist Quakers and Evangelicals 'made little use of Scriptural argument', which Adam Hochschild echoed by arguing that 'abolitionists placed their hope not in sacred texts, but in human empathy'.[2] More recently, John Coffey counter-argued that the scriptural 'idea of "national punishments" was far from being a marginal feature of abolitionist discourse', as 'it was used across the denominational spectrum from Methodism to Unitarianism'.[3] Brycchan Carey, Brian Temple, and Marcus

[1] Granville Sharp, *The Law of Retribution; Or, A Serious Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies, Founded on Unquestionable Examples of God's Temporal Vengeance Against Tyrants, Slaver-holders, and Oppressors* (London: W. Richardson, 1776) pp. 16, 25.
[2] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 525; Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005) p. 366.
[3] John Coffey, '"Tremble, Britannia!": Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807', *The English Historical Review,* 127.527 (2012) pp. 844-881 (p. 846).

Rediker explored how Quakers such as Ralph Sandiford, Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, and Anthony Benezet first employed the trope of divine vengeance as an abolitionist technique.[4] Although the trope originated with these Quakers, Thomas Welch argues that Granville Sharp was 'the most important pamphleteer of anti-slavery biblical thought' because he gave 'abolitionists a more formal biblical conceptual framework that enabled them to feel more assured that their project was endorsed by the will of God.'[5] Sharp particularly influenced *The Dying Negro* (1773) by Thomas Day and John Bicknell, and *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787) by Ottobah Cugoano, though in very different ways.[6] This chapter considers the impact that Sharp had on both of these texts, whilst also exploring the different abolitionist fear tactics that they present. *The Dying Negro* is one of the earliest forms of abolitionist propaganda, and *Thoughts and Sentiments* is the first English slave narrative to explicitly attack slavery; therefore, they also deserve to be explored as significant abolitionist works in their own rights.

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[4] Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657–1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Brian Temple, *Philadelphia Quakers and the Antislavery Movement* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2014); Marcus Rediker, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017). See also: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) pp. 483-493; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975); Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[5] Thomas A. Welch, 'The Role of the Bible in the British Abolition of Slavery, 1671-1824', *Historical Papers,* (2000) pp. 177-193 (pp. 180, 190).

[6] John Bicknell and Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro: A Poetical Epistle*, 1st edn (London: W. Flexney, 1773); Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Although abolitionists may not have truly feared divine intervention, I argue that they used the threat of divine vengeance as an allegory for the threat to Britain's morality. They employed the theological notion of divine providence as a rhetorical strategy to argue that God would punish everyone who participated in slavery, particularly those who identified as Christian because this jeopardised Christianity's reputation. This strategy aimed to persuade the reader that abolishing the slave trade (or even slavery itself) would redeem Britain's moral reputation by re-establishing the nation's Protestant values, so that it could defend its claims for both national and religious superiority. Srividhya Swaminathan refers to this as the 'Christian progress narrative', used by Protestant theologians to argue that 'society could be ameliorated through collective effort' and 'appeal[s] to the higher sensibilities of a rational public.'[7] The Christian progress narrative drew on the notion of slavery as sin, explored by scholars such as Davis, which allowed abolitionists to argue that abolitionist action was essential for ameliorating British society.[8]

Day and Bicknell's poem *The Dying Negro* is narrated by an enslaved African who commits suicide when his enslaver attempts to separate him from the woman he loves by sending him to the Caribbean. There are three known versions of *The Dying Negro*: the first edition (1773) was extended and revised in the second (1774) and third (1775) editions, with a further edition (1793) identifying who wrote which parts.[9]

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[7] Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759–1815* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009) p. 18. See also: David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) p. 97.
[8] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*.
[9] John Bicknell and Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro: A Poetical Epistle*, 1st edn (London: W. Flexney, 1773); John Bicknell and Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro: A Poetical Epistle*, 2nd edn (London: W. Flexney, 1774); John Bicknell and Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro: A Poem*, 3rd edn (London: W. Flexney, 1775); John Bicknell and Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro: A Poem* (London: John Stockdale, 1793). All subsequent references are to these editions. See also Marcus Wood, Notes on 'The Dying

Quotations are predominantly taken from the third edition, since this became the standard version after 1775, though this chapter also explores why the recipient of the requested divine vengeance changed in the poem's revised ending. The first section of this chapter compares the ways that these three versions depicted the enslaved protagonist's prayers for divine vengeance as an abolitionist fear tactic. Although the poem initially seems to indicate that only enslavers deserved to be punished for their involvement in slavery, closer inspection reveals the suggestion that the entire British nation deserved to be punished with divine vengeance for the injustices of slavery.

Whilst the target of divine vengeance is ambiguous in *The Dying Negro*, Cugoano explicitly states that such vengeance will be directed at both enslavers and the entire British nation. Cugoano weaves an autobiographical account of his former enslavement with a rhetorical digression about how slavery would inspire divine wrath and vengeance. Both Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* and Sharp's *The Law of Retribution* (1776) engage with Biblical accounts of divine vengeance to warn their readers that Britain would deserve to be subjected to a similar form of vengeance unless slavery was abolished. Other abolitionists employed similar fear tactics, but Sharp and Cugoano took a more radical approach by claiming that divine vengeance would be a national punishment not only for the slave trade, but also for slavery itself. The second section of this chapter argues that Cugoano combined Biblical exegesis with his own experiences to exploit contemporary fears regarding Britain's religious and moral reputation. Cugoano argues that Britain deserved to be

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Negro' (1773) by Thomas Day & John Bicknell, in *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology 1764-1865,* ed. by Marcus Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 36.

punished with divine vengeance because slavery contradicted notions of Christian compassion, and so abolishing slavery was the only way for Britain to atone for its sins and restore its reputation.

These portrayals of divine wrath and vengeance intended to validate enslaved people's anger, as God sympathises with their desire for retribution. The implication was that if God could sympathise with the plight of enslaved Africans, then God's subjects should do the same. The language of fear was considered a solution to the problem that portrayals of anger made enslaved individuals seem dangerous (see Chapter Three). Adam Smith reasons that 'the inspired writers would not surely have talked so frequently or so strongly of the wrath and anger of God, if they had regarded every degree of those passions as vicious and evil'.[10] In other words, if anger was experienced by the omnibenevolent deity, then anger could not be a dangerous or malicious emotion.

Portrayals of God delivering vengeance on enslaved people's behalf intended to exonerate the enslaved of any blame for the consequent destruction. As Pierrot argues, 'by imagining retribution spoken by the enslaved but performed by the Most High, poets could endorse the punishment of slavers while retaining moral righteousness, and avoid being accused of stoking the fires of slave revolt.'[11]

[10] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) pp. 78-127 (p. 90).
[11] Grégory Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur,* Slavery, and Nation in the Poetry of Edward Rushton', in *Studies in Romanticism,* 56.1 (2017) pp. 15-36 (p. 19).

It also indicates that enslaved individuals could restrain their emotions by resisting the urge to deliver vengeance themselves, challenging claims that Africans should be enslaved because they are emotionally incontinent and lack self-control. Abolitionist fear tactics sought to discredit this notion of African inferiority to persuade the reader that there was no justification for slavery.

Different types of fear tactics emerged within the abolitionist movement as a result of such debates concerning the intersection of race and emotional expression. *The Dying Negro* is arguably more radical than *Thoughts and Sentiments* because it demonstrates the (limited) agency of a Black enslaved individual who commands divine vengeance. As White males, Day and Bicknell would not have experienced racial discrimination for creating a fictional Black protagonist that actively sought vengeance and expressed excessive emotion. Although the protagonist was based on a real Black individual, Day and Bicknell knew that their muse would not suffer from being associated with vengeance because he was no longer alive.[12] Cugoano, on the other hand, was a Black individual who was aware that expressing anger, and seeking vengeance, could support the argument that Black people needed to be enslaved because they were unable to control their emotions. Therefore, Cugoano is careful to distance Black individuals from the act of vengeance by attributing the vengeful wrath to God, rather than himself or any other Black individual. In *Thoughts and Sentiments,* Cugoano argues that Black individuals should follow his example by seeking 'deliverance and protection for himself, and not a revenge upon others', as

[12] See the 'Praying for Divine Vengeance in *The Dying Negro*' section of this chapter. See: *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (28 May 1773); *The General Evening Post* (25-27 May 1773); *Lloyd's Evening Post* (26-28 May 1773).

‘Such vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and he will render vengeance and recompense to his enemies and the violators of his law’.[13] Cugoano insists that Black individuals (both enslaved and emancipated) should abide by Christ’s teachings, leading him to advocate forgiveness as a better alternative to personally carrying out vengeance. In doing so, Cugoano echoes Ignatius Sancho’s belief that it is best to control one’s emotions and be ‘above revenge’, whilst simultaneously warning enslavers that God would punish them for oppressing the enslaved.[14]

The concern for acting with moderation and respectability is shown in the series of letters written by a group of free Black people, including Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano, following the successful passing of the 1788 Dolben Act (which restricted the amount of enslaved Africans that could be transported per ship).[15] They published three letters in the *Morning Chronicle* (1788) thanking three of the Bill’s highest profile proponents: William Dolben, William Pitt, and Charles James Fox.’[16] In the letter to Dolben, these Black men express their desire to demonstrate their respectability and politeness, as ‘the best return we can make [for the Dolben Act] is, to behave with sobriety, fidelity and diligence in our different stations’.[17] Dolben replied that ‘showing their gratitude by their future conduct in steadiness and sobriety, fidelity and diligence, will undoubtedly recommend them to the British

[13] Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 64.
[14] Ignatius Sancho, ‘Letter XIII to Mr. S---e’, 11 October 1772, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African, In Two Volumes* (London: J. Nichols, 1782) p. 43.
[15] Vincent Carretta, ‘Ottobah Cugoano’, *ODNB* (26th May 2016) http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-59531 [Accessed 26/03/2019].
[16] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (New York: Cornell University, 2012) p. 40; *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (15 July 1788) p. 3 [referenced in] Ryan Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing 1770-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) p. 180.
[17] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (15 July 1788) p. 3.

Government, and he trusts, to other Christian powers, as most worthy of their further care and attention.'[18] Dolben and Cugoano (along with the letters' other contributors) demonstrate that politeness was considered to be an important part of the abolitionist campaign. Cugoano aims to show that he is able to conform to Western social norms concerning the appropriate expression and suppression of emotions, and in order to do so he must moderate his own feelings of anger. Delegating vengeance to God shows that Cugoano is capable of exerting self-restraint, and presents such vengeance as a form of punishment for immoral behaviour, rather than a self-indulgent act of emotional incontinence.

However, abolitionist fear tactics had the potential to undermine human agency by favouring divine intervention. Although the enslaved were exonerated from blame if God carried out vengeance on their behalf, such portrayals denied enslaved Africans the agency to obtain their own freedom, which risked perpetuating the racial hierarchy based on the notion of Black inferiority. Abolitionists also feared that if the British public believed that God would intervene to eradicate slavery, then they would not feel the need to take abolitionist action themselves. This raised an important question: could humans enact divine vengeance?

Abolitionists such as William Wilberforce depicted themselves as the 'human instruments' of Providence, responsible for punishing sinners and upholding justice, threatening that they would all be subjected to divine vengeance if they failed to fulfil

[18] Ibid., p. 3.

this role.[19] Nicholas Guyatt provides a useful distinction between 'judicial providentialism' (the belief that God either punished or rewarded a nation's actions dependent on their morality), and 'historical providentialism' (the belief that God assigned nations specific roles).[20] Guyatt's definition of judicial providentialism echoes Thomas Day's belief that 'the happiness of the species is the great end of the Deity, which he promotes by the rewards and punishments of a future state'.[21] Abolitionists employed the concept of judicial providentialism to warn people that God would not only punish those directly responsible for enslaving Africans, but also those allowing the crime to go unpunished so that enslaved individuals continued to suffer. One was either the saviour of enslaved people, or their oppressor by default. Therefore, abolitionists argued that divine vengeance would be extended to the entire British nation, exemplified by Sharp's claim that 'the Crime of *enslaving and vilifying mankind*' provided 'just reason to fear the effects of God's vengeance […] upon Great Britain […] unless a hearty Repentance and Amendment should avert the impending Vengeance'.[22] The threat of national retribution sought to encourage the British public to take abolitionist action, as Sharp further argues that 'national guilt must inevitably draw down from God some tremendous national punishment if we do not speedily take away the accursed thing from among us'.[23] Insisting that this punishment could only be avoided if abolitionist action was 'speedily' taken stresses the immediacy of the threat, which Roger Anstey has termed 'a spur to incessant

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[19] William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London, J. Hatchard and Son, 1807) p. 349.
[20] Nicholas Guyatt*, Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 57, 6.
[21] Thomas Day, *Fragment of an Original Letter on the Slavery of the Negroes, Written in the Year 1776* (London: John Stockdale, 1784) p. 4.
[22] Sharp, *The Law of Retribution,* pp. 250-252.
[23] Granville Sharp, *The Law of Liberty, Or, Royal Law, by which All Mankind will Certainly be Judged! Earnestly Recommended to the Serious Consideration of all Slaveholders and Slavedealers* (London: B. White, 1776) p. 49.

activity'.[24] The threat of divine vengeance is an allegory for the threat to Britain's moral and religious reputation, which abolitionists argued could only be restored by abolishing slavery.

The abolitionist threat of divine retribution became increasingly prominent in Protestant political culture. It represents the intersection of the theological notion of divine Providence, and Enlightenment philosophy's emphasis on human agency, which formed a philanthropic movement that was concerned with establishing and defending human rights.[25] Enlightenment ideas of liberty and equality were combined with the Evangelical desire for moral reform, culminating in critiques of slavery that were converted into political action.[26] Calvinist strands of Protestantism believed in predestination (the doctrine that God has already chosen who will be saved), and so abolitionists drew on concerns over which individuals were part of the elect in an effort to persuade people that God chose Britain to enact historical providentialism by abolishing slavery.[27] Britain was thus presented as both an agent of God, and a moral exemplar for other nations to follow. Although Cugoano was a Calvinist Methodist, while Sharp, Day, and Bicknell were Anglican, they all drew on the theological notion of divine providence as part of their abolitionist fear tactics.[28] Whilst the complex distinctions between the various denominations of Christianity lies outside the scope of this thesis, this chapter aims to demonstrate that these

[24] Anstey, 'A Re-interpretation of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', p. 313.
[25] Jakub Urbaniak, and Mooketsi Motsisi, 'Between Apologetics, Emancipation and Imperial Paternalism Mapping a Proto-liberation Theology behind the British Abolitionist Movement?', *Journal of Reformed Theology,* 14.1-2 (2020) pp. 100-127 (p. 120); Jakub Urbaniak, and Mooketsi Motsisi, 'The impact of the "fear of God" on the British abolitionist movement', *Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte [Journal for the History of Modern Theology], 2*6.2 (2019) pp. 26-52 (p. 48).
[26] Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*.
[27] Urbaniak and Motsisi, 'The impact of the "fear of God"', p. 50; Lisa Ford, 'Anti-Slavery and the Reconstitution of Empire', *Australian Historical Studies*, 45.1 (2014) pp. 71-86.
[28] Coffey, '"Tremble, Britannia!"', p. 861.

abolitionists all engaged with the threat of divine retribution to present a united front against slavery – despite their different religious beliefs.[29] They presented the British public with two options: become the saviour of enslaved individuals by campaigning for their emancipation, or allow slavery to continue and suffer the subsequent damage to the nation's reputation. In other words, Britain should either enact historical providentialism, or deserve to be subjected to judicial providentialism. This chapter reveals how Cugoano, Sharp, Day and Bicknell all encouraged the reader to take abolitionist action as a way to protect the moral reputation of both Christianity and the British nation.

Praying for Divine Vengeance in *The Dying Negro*

Day and Bicknell's poem *The Dying Negro* was inspired by a newspaper article, which briefly reports:

> Tuesday a black, servant to Capt. Ordington, who a few days ago ran away from his master and got himself christened, with the intent to marry his fellow servant, a white woman, being taken and sent on board the captain's ship in the Thames, took an opportunity of shooting himself through the head.[30]

The poem expands on this report by adding fictional embellishments, such as the protagonist praying for divine vengeance before committing suicide. The poem's advertisement states that 'as soon as his determination is fixed, he is supposed to

[29] For more information on the distinctions between Christian denominations in relation to British abolitionism, see: David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (London: Routledge, 2003); Anthony Page, 'Rational Dissent, Enlightenment, and Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *The Historical Journal*, 54.3 (2011) pp. 741-772; Coffey, '"Tremble, Britannia!"'; Ford, 'Anti-Slavery and the Reconstitution of Empire'; Urbaniak and Motsisi, 'The impact of the "fear of God"'; Urbaniak and Motsisi, 'Between Apologetics'.

[30] *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (28 May 1773); *The General Evening Post* (25-27 May 1773); *Lloyd's Evening Post* (26-28 May 1773).

write this Epistle to his intended Wife'.[31] In short, *The Dying Negro* is a biographical letter in verse that is inspired by a newspaper article: a hybrid of multiple literary genres that blurs the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction to complicate the authenticity of the tale, whilst exemplifying how poems can become channels of political commentary. Publicly publishing a personal letter in the form of an abolitionist poem obscures the distinction between public and private literature, demonstrating that slavery not only affects individual enslaved Africans, but that it is also a public issue that affects Britain's moral reputation.

Day and Bicknell used poetry as a form of satirical journalism to juxtapose the barbarous truths of slavery against the fictional notion that Britain was a culturally refined civilisation.[32] *The Dying Negro* is one of the earliest forms of abolitionist propaganda, which provides a political commentary on the shortcomings of British laws since the principles of liberty and equality that the nation so highly esteemed were not applied to enslaved individuals. It exposes the limited enforceability of the Mansfield Judgement, which was the outcome of the 1772 Somerset case. Granville Sharp had sought a writ of *habeas corpus* on behalf of James Somerset, who had escaped slavery for two years in England before his enslaver attempted to forcibly return him to a life of enslavement in Jamaica. Lord Mansfield ruled that all Black individuals must be free since slavery was not recognised in English law; therefore, enslavers could not forcibly remove individuals abroad. The newspaper article that inspired *The Dying Negro* demonstrates that this ruling was not adhered to in

[31] Bicknell Thomas Day, *The Dying Negro*, 1st edn.
[32] See F. Elizabeth Gray, 'Journalism and Poetry in the Nineteenth Century', *Journalism Studies,* 18.7 (2017) pp. 807-825.

practice, as Black individuals were still denied their right to *habeas corpus*, which 'exposes the fragility of Britons' idealizations of their nation's liberty and the inadequacy of the law to uphold such ideals.'[33] Even nature is ashamed of Britain's hypocrisy, shown through the personification of 'Ye flowers, which blush on yonder hated shore' (all editions). The 'shore' refers to England, as the ship in question was situated on the banks of the river Thames in London. The enslaved protagonist's hatred is so strong that even the flowers blush with shame at their country's cruelty and national guilt (explored further in Chapter Five). The shame is intensified by the hypocrisy of Britain claiming to advocate liberty whilst denying the liberation of those with a different skin colour. As a result of such hypocrisy, the enslaved narrator directs his anger into prayers for divine retribution to counteract the lack of temporal justice. As with the depictions of both Rushton and Equiano, the anger experienced by both God and the enslaved is portrayed as a retaliation to Britain's political failures and inability to implement justice.

The trope of divine vengeance is also used to argue that slavery was incompatible with Christian beliefs. *The Dying Negro*'s protagonist claims that Africans, like Europeans, were created in God's image, as 'In the wild wastes of Afric's sandy plain […] There too Heav'n planted man's majestic race; / Bade reason's sons with nobler titles rise'. The Biblical notion that humanity was created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) as one group of people sharing the same blood (Acts 17:26) was repurposed to support abolition.[34] Day and Bicknell take this

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[33] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006) p. 161.
[34] See: Welch, 'The Role of the Bible'; David Brion Davis, *Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage of Slavery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Marcus Wood, 'Emancipation Art, Fanon and the "Butchery of Freedom"', in *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays marking the*

monogenesis argument even further, as they assert that Africans were able to reason the same as all other members of the ‘majestic race’. Such logic suggests that it was blasphemous to claim that Africans were inferior to their European counterparts, as it would indicate a weakness within the supposedly omnipotent God who created all humans. Day and Bicknell suggest that the enslavement of Africans violated the divine concept of racial equality, and so slavery was against the will of God.

The Dying Negro presents geographical distance as evidence of God’s opposition to slavery:

> In vain Heav'n spread so wide the swelling sea,
> Vast wat'ry barrier, 'twixt thy world and me;
> Swift round the globe, by earth nor Heav'n controul'd,
> Fly stern oppression, and dire lust of gold. (3rd edn)[35]

The narrator suggests that the slave trade was against the will of Heaven (a synecdoche for God), and that its continuation was despite divine efforts to protect Africa from the oppressive greed of Europe, with the sea forming a natural ‘barrier’ deliberately put in place by God. The pronouns in the following clause, ‘'twixt thy world and me’, demonstrate that the enslaved narrator considers himself as not only from another country, but from another world, with different values and social norms. The poem reverses the racial hierarchy by arguing that Europeans are morally

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Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807, ed. by Brycchan Carey and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007) pp. 11-41; Sylvester A. Johnson, ‘The Bible, Slavery, and the Problem of Authority’, in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. by Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 231-248; Keith D. Miller, ‘All Nations, One Blood, Three Hundred Years: Martin Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, and Civil Rights Rhetoric as Transatlantic Abolitionism’, in *Rhetoric Across Borders*, ed. by Anne Teresa Demo (Anderson, SC.: Parlor Press LLC, 2015) pp. 71-82.

[35] 1st edn has ‘proud’ instead of ‘stern’.

inferior for having violated God's protective barrier to oppress others for personal gain, driven by a selfish 'lust of gold'. These sins of greed, cruelty, and disobedience create a motive for God's wrath and vengeance against those responsible for trading and enslaving Africans.

The poem suggests that enslavers would suffer if God was forced to intervene to alleviate the suffering of enslaved individuals, with divine vengeance punishing enslavers for not doing it themselves. It indicates that God's wrath was a response to both the enslaver's sins and enslaved people's emotional suffering. The poem begins by describing the sorrows of slavery, and the protagonist's refusal to return to the West Indies to 'groan beneath some dastard planter's chain':

> Where my poor countrymen in bondage wait
> The slow enfranchisement of ling'ring fate.
> Oh! my heart sinks, my dying eyes o'erflow,
> When mem'ry paints the picture of their woe!
> For I have seen them, ere the dawn of day,
> Rouz'd by the lash, begin their chearless way;
> Greeting with groans unwelcome morn's return,
> While rage and shame their gloomy bosoms burn (3rd edn)[36]

Sentimental tropes demonstrate that the protagonist pities his fellow enslaved Africans more than himself, as he has the ability to end his suffering by taking his own life, but has no way to stop the 'woe' of countless other enslaved individuals. The protagonist does not intend for God's vengeance to be executed on behalf of himself – merely one enslaved individual who would not live to reap the benefits – but on behalf of all enslaved people. Transferring the focus from the individual to the

[36] The last line of this extract is different in the 1st and 2nd editions, as it reads 'And while their souls with shame and anguish burn' instead of 'While rage and shame their gloomy bosoms burn'.

collective implies that any sympathy felt for the poem's protagonist should be extended to all enslaved Africans. The alliterative 'dawn of day', 'greeting with groans', and 'bosoms burn' creates a repetitive echo that warns that the continued suffering of enslaved Africans may lead them to follow the protagonist's example by replicating the act of suicide and/or prayers for divine vengeance.

However, expressions of sorrow are once again shown to be futile, as the poem's protagonist recalls that the African Gods failed to respond to his pleas for divine intervention when he was first captured:

> Ye Gods of Afric! in that dreadful hour,
> Where were your thunders and avenging power?
> Did not my prayers, my groans, my tears invoke
> Your slumb'ring justice to direct the stroke?
> No power descended to assist the brave,
> No lightnings flash'd, and I became a slave. (3rd edn)

The two rhetorical questions satirically highlight that the sentimental groans and tears failed to grant the justice sought for in prayers, reinforced by the anaphoric repetition of 'no' to demonstrate the lack of assistance. The protagonist feels 'by heav'n abandon'd, and by man betray'd'. This double affliction of both temporal and divine neglect stresses the intensity of the protagonist's suffering, as it seems that neither man nor deity are willing to intervene to assist the enslaved. The fact that 'no pow'r descended' undermines the notion that Britain was a great global power by suggesting that it was too weak to intervene. The poem incites Britain to demonstrate her power by abolishing slavery to assist enslaved Africans. Yet the protagonist receives no assistance from either man or God to escape enslavement. There are no

'thunders' nor 'lightnings' to signal the divine retribution that the protagonist desires, which suggests that sentimental expressions were often ineffective.

Although the protagonist temporarily experienced his lover's comforting pity, it could not prevent the protagonist from being recaptured by his enslaver. His lover's pity was a 'balm' to his 'bleeding heart' that made his suffering bearable, and so he was able to 'absolve' Heaven's lack of favourable divine intervention. This aligns with Smith's argument that 'relating to some other person the injury which has been done' is advantageous, as 'the fury of […] passion [is] cooled and becalmed by sympathy', rendering it 'less capable of exciting […] violent and bloody revenge'.[37] However, the enslaver eventually separates the protagonist from his lover, preventing the sympathetic identification that had diminished the protagonist's anger and desire for vengeance. His anger returns when he is recaptured and no longer experiences sympathy. The enslaved protagonist's 'woe' transforms into 'rage' at the injustices of slavery, forming a parallel with the abolitionist works of Rushton and Equiano. However, in *The Dying Negro* the anger manifests in a different way, as it is expressed in prayers for divine vengeance so that the protagonist's emotional suffering seemingly incurs God's wrath. This threat of divine vengeance intended to arouse fears about Britain's moral and religious reputation by positioning those who engaged in slavery as sinners who deserved to be punished. Emotion's ability to move and transform in this way demonstrates that our emotions are often responses to the emotions experienced by others, creating a more complex causational link than the mere bonds of sympathy. The fluidity and multiplicity of emotions

[37] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* p. 310.

experienced by the protagonist in response to his enslavement is made more explicit in the third edition with the addition of the line ‘what soft emotions mingle with my pains’. The emotional bombardment intended to encourage the reader to share the protagonist’s sorrow and anger in the hope of inspiring them to take abolitionist action.

Since the protagonist’s sorrowful expressions had been fruitless, he chooses not to pray to the ‘Gods of Afric’ who had previously failed to help him. Instead, he prays to the Christian God, though these prayers appear just as futile:

> Again with tenfold rage my bosom burns,
> And all the tempest of my soul returns;
> Again the furies fire my madding brain,
> And death extends his shelt’ring arms in vain;
> For unreveng’d I fall, unpity’d die; […]
> Thou Christian God! to whom so late I bow'd,
> To whom my soul its new allegiance vow'd,
> When crimes like these thy injur'd pow'r prophane,
> O God of Nature! art thou call'd in vain? (3rd edn)

The protagonist describes his recent conversion to Christianity as a ‘new allegiance’ created to replace the disappointing African Gods who had failed to intervene. However, the Christian God was also seemingly ‘call’d in vain’ as he dies ‘unpity’d’ and ‘unreveng’d’ despite his religious devotion, with the negative prefixes signalling the extent of his loss. This was particularly frustrating considering that God also failed to punish the blasphemy of those enslavers who ‘injur’d’ God’s omnibenevolent reputation by engaging with slavery in the name of Christianity. The injustice of the innocent being forced to suffer while the guilty remain unpunished causes the protagonist’s ever-increasing ‘rage’, with the line breaks exposing the anaphora that

reveals that this rage was ignited 'Again […] And […] Again'. The repetitive nature of anger is further alluded to with the alliterative claims that his 'bosom burns' with rage, reinforced even further by an amendment that means that the phrase 'bosom(s) burn(s)' features twice in the third edition.[38] The repetition, alliteration, and anaphora reveal that anger continued to drive the protagonist's actions. Although his prayers had previously been fruitless, his anger drove him to one last prayer for divine vengeance.

The protagonist's final prayer not only asks for divine retribution against enslavers, but also challenges the supposed religious supremacy of Christianity, arguing that its reputation was threatened by slavery. The protagonist begins to dispute the Christian God's 'boasted power', questioning how God can be considered 'just and good' if He failed to relieve the 'groans of anguish' of a Christian convert who treated God 'with reverential awe' (1st edn).[39] The enslaved protagonist considers the possibility that God may be 'too weak' to grant his freedom, or that 'suff'rings move thee not', interpreting the lack of intervention as evidence that God lacked sympathy, morality, and power. This satirical stance challenges Christian beliefs in God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence, thereby attacking the foundations of Christianity. Christians were agents of God's will, responsible for upholding God's values and reputation, and so their failure to enact historical providential by abolishing slavery threatened to damage Christianity's reputation. As outlined in the poem's dedication: 'an impartial observer may find [much] to blame in

[38] The amendment in the 3rd edn features the phrase 'bosoms burn', as well as the 'bosom burns' that features in all editions. Although the 's' is in a slightly different place in each of these two instances, it is still close enough to count as repetition.
[39] In the 3rd edn of *The Dying Negro* 'boasted power' becomes 'vaunted power'.

Britain, [and] her colonies, I fear, are not more acceptable to Providence.'[40] Britain and her colonies' involvement in slavery – and failure to enact historical providentialism through abolition – determines that they will be subjected to judicial providentialism, particularly as they failed to strengthen Christianity's global status.

The protagonist appears aware of the theology of providence, and seeks a compromise. He accepts that the Christian God may lack the power to prevent his suffering, but pleads 'let revenge, let swift revenge be mine' (all editions). The possessive pronoun 'mine' claims ownership of the revenge, further demonstrating his autonomy and intellectual capabilities as he attempts to channel his emotions into productive actions, rather than conceding to a passive state of submission. In doing so, he defies the proslavery objectification of enslaved individuals who were treated as possessions without the right to own anything themselves. Enslavers could physically restrain enslaved individuals, but the intangibility of emotions prevents anyone from gaining complete control over another's passions. This allows the protagonist to use his anger and hatred to re-establish his autonomy through his plans for divine vengeance, before ending his own life as a final act of self-determination.[41]

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[40] Thomas Day, 'Dedication', *The Dying Negro: A Poem*, 3rd edn (London: W. Flexney, 1775) p. ix.
[41] For more on suicide and slavery, see: William D. Piersen, 'White Cannibals, Black Martyrs: Fear, Depression, and Religious Faith as Causes of Suicide Among New Slaves', *The Journal of Negro History,* 62.2 (1977) pp. 147-159; Richard Bell, 'Slave Suicide, Abolition and the Problem of Resistance', *Slavery & Abolition,* 33.4 (2012) pp. 525-549; Deanna P. Koretsky, 'Habeus Corpus and the Politics of Freedom: Slavery and Romantic Suicide', *Essays in Romanticism*, 22.1 (2015) pp. 21-33; Terry L. Synder, *The Power to Die: Slavery and Suicide in British North America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Terri L. Snyder, 'Suicide, Slavery, and Epidemics: A Perspective From Early Modern British America', in *The Shapes of Epidemics and Global Disease*, ed. by Andrea Patterson and Ian Read (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020) pp. 42-63.

The protagonist's revenge is specifically targeted at slave ships in order to punish the enslavers on board for participating in slavery:

> Be this proud bark, which now triumphant rides,
> Toss'd by the winds, and shatter'd by the tides!
> And may these fiends, who now exulting view
> The horrors of my fortune, feel them too!
> Be theirs the torment of a ling'ring fate,
> Slow as thy justice, dreadful as my hate;
> Condemn'd to grasp the riven plank in vain,
> And chac'd by all the monsters of the main;
> And while they spread their sinking arms to thee,
> Then let their fainting souls remember me! (All editions*)*

The protagonist's ideal punishment would reverse the racial hierarchy, with the enslavers who are 'now triumphant' and 'now exulting' in the 'horrors of my fortune' experiencing a temporal change: both in the sense of divine intervention on earth, and a change that will occur at some point in the future from 'now'. The protagonist envisions that this reversal of fortune will be caused by divine vengeance in the form of a storm that leaves the ship 'shatter'd', and so he enjoys the idea that the enslavers will 'feel' the same horrors and 'torment' that they inflict upon the enslaved. Since witnessing the horrors of slavery failed to inspire the enslavers' sympathy, they were 'condemn'd' to experience a similar torment. The protagonist's desire for the enslavers to be 'chac'd by all the monsters of the main' mirrors the sharks that chased after ships, waiting for enslaved individuals to be thrown overboard either because they were dead, dying (to avoid spreading disease), or simply because there were insufficient supplies to feed everyone on board (as exemplified by the 1781 *Zong* massacre).[42] The punishment forces enslavers to 'feel' the same fear and

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[42] For more on sharks, see*:* Marcus Rediker, Emma Christopher & Cassandra Pybus, 'Introduction', in *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World,* ed. by Emma

despair that they had once inflicted on the enslaved. The protagonist hopes that this will ensure that their 'fainting souls remember me', both in their dying moments on Earth and for eternity in the afterlife. While death would end enslaved people's suffering, their enslavers would continue to suffer when their 'fainting souls' were sent to hell for further punishment for the sins of slavery.

These are the final lines of the first edition of *The Dying Negro*, which ends with the protagonist's final plea for vengeance remaining unfulfilled. The protagonist's prayers to both the Christian God and the Gods of Africa situate the enslaved as a hybrid 'at the threshold of pagan and Christian culture'.[43] The protagonist's hope that his lover will experience 'the care of every pitying God!' (all editions) suggests that the Gods of all religions sympathised with the suffering endured by enslaved Africans and their loved ones. Yet the failure of both the African and Christian Gods reminds the reader that they should take action themselves, rather than hoping that God would act on their behalf, as their prayers for divine intervention would be as ineffective as the enslaved protagonist's futile prayers. Pierrot argues that 'violence fuelled by vengeance made for a terrifying and rhetorically efficient warning, but in order to convince English audiences of the soundness of […] British abolitionism, revenge – and by extension slave agency – could not possibly be shown to be successful.'[44] The first edition implies that enslaved Africans were unable to liberate

Christopher, Cassandra Pybus and Marcus Rediker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) pp. 1-19, (p. 3); For the *Zong* Case, see*:* Clare Anderson, 'Convict Passages in the Indian Ocean, c. 1790-1860', in *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World,* ed. by Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus and Marcus Rediker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) pp. 129-149 (p. 132).

[43] Pierrot, '*Droit du Seigneur',* p. 17.

[44] Ibid., p. 24.

themselves because they were dependent on the British public for their freedom, as their freedom was not sustainable unless slavery and the slave trade were abolished.

These final lines of the first edition were condemned by contemporary critics, with *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1773) criticising the 'rather impious expostulation with which the poem concludes'.[45] Carey highlights that *The Critical Review* (1773) 'attempted a more balanced, if patronising, assessment' of the poem.[46] *The Critical Review* describes 'this bold expostulation with the supreme Being, and the imprecations denounced' as the 'effusions of a negro' who has the desire to 'strongly express the[ir] sentiments'.[47] Although such actions 'might fill us with horror if uttered by any native of Europe', it is an 'entirely natural' response for enslaved Africans, whose 'effusions' were considered to be evidence of their inability to control their emotional outbursts.[48] These reviews suggests that the poem's first edition presented the enslaved protagonist as 'impious' and emotionally incontinent, which was counter-productive to abolitionist aims.

These reviews likely prompted revisions in the second and third editions, where the poem was substantially extended to contain 'prophetic visions' of divine vengeance that would soon establish 'eternal justice':

> Thanks, righteous God! – Revenge shall yet be mine;
> Yon flashing lightning gave the dreadful sign.
> I see the flames of heav'nly anger hurl'd,

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[45] *The Gentleman's Magazine,* 43 (1773) p. 504.
[46] Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p. 79.
[47] *The Critical Review,* 36 (1773) p. 71.
[48] Ibid.

I hear your thunders shake a guilty world.
The time has come, the fated hour is nigh,
When guiltless blood shall penetrate the sky. (3rd edn)

These new lines specify that the 'righteous God' now shares the protagonist's anger, particularly because enslavers were acting against God's will and damaging the reputation of Christianity in the process. The 'flames of heav'nly anger' allude to Moses freeing the enslaved in Egypt, as 'the Lord went before them […] by night in a pillar of fire to give them light' that guided the way to freedom (Exodus 13:21). The Biblical reference suggests that God promoted liberation, and punished oppression, which is reinforced a few lines later when the protagonist warns:

Then the stern genius of my native land,
With delegated vengeance in his hand,
Shall raging cross the troubled seas, and pore
The plagues of Hell on yon devoted shore. (3rd edn)

The 'plagues of Hell' mirror the plagues that God inflicted on Egypt as a punishment for slavery, implying that the enslavers of Britain would face a similar form of divine retribution. The threat of 'delegated vengeance' implies that 'the stern genius of my native land' is delivering the plagues on God's behalf as a form of judicial providentialism. Sharp echoes this argument, as he considers the plagues of Egypt to be 'examples of God's severe Vengeance against Slaveholders', using Exodus as evidence that God advocated liberty over slavery.[49] Moses seemingly contributes towards historical providentialism by freeing the enslaved on God's behalf, as the signs of divine intervention guide him to enact God's will. The 'flames' in the poem symbolises both liberty and the passionate anger that fuelled the desire for revenge, signifying that divine providentialism sought to simultaneously relieve the suffering of

[49] Sharp, *The Law of Retribution*, p. 13.

the oppressed and punish their oppressors. The poem draws on this symbolism to suggest that God would assist the enslaved, and unleash his wrath against those who opposed their liberation.

However, portrayals of God helping the enslaved to obtain their freedom removed the need for the British public to contribute towards historical providentialism by taking abolitionist action. Lynn Festa argues that the poem's closing lines 'do not call Britons to account; instead, Day's speaker displaces the culpability onto the crew immediately responsible for his plight, begging God to destroy their ship'.[50] Whilst the vengeance is undeniably directed primarily at enslavers, the claim that 'guiltless' blood will be spilt (second and third editions) implies that there may also be repercussions for those who were not directly involved with slavery. It subtly hints at the possibility of a national punishment for Britain's collective guilt as a form of judicial providentialism, which suggests that the British public were collectively responsible for the continuation of slavery.

Furthermore, the plagues of Egypt can be considered as a national punishment for a national crime, since the plagues were targeted at all Egyptians and not exclusively at enslavers. Abolitionists used this Biblical reference to draw parallels between the divine vengeance carried out against Egypt, and the divine vengeance that they warned would soon be carried out against Britain. In 1807, just before the British slave trade was abolished, James Stephen (a British lawyer who

[50] Festa, *Sentimental Figures,* p. 162.

had practiced in the West Indies) compared Britain's political leaders to an Egyptian Pharaoh:

> Like Pharaoh, we […] persevered in following the counsels of national avarice, in defiance of that voice of conscience, which is the undoubted messenger of God. Our public affront to the Majesty of Heaven […] exceeded that of Pharaoh; for he appears to have doubted, till convinced by repeated plagues, that Moses spoke by divine authority; whereas, Christians could not question the authority of those sacred principles, with the practical demands of which we nevertheless refused to comply. [51]

Stephen compares the 'national avarice' of Britain to that of ancient Egypt presented in the Bible, though he argues that Britain's 'affront' is significantly worse because Christian hypocrisy is added to the crime of slavery. As a Protestant nation, Britain claimed to abide by the 'sacred principles' of the Bible, and yet failed to adhere to God's will. Stephen implies that the punishment would match the severity of the crime, so that Britain would face a form of divine vengeance even worse than that inflicted upon Egypt. *The Dying Negro* likewise reveals Britain's hypocrisy and national guilt, which cause the nation's 'flowers' to 'blush' at Britain's role in slavery. The poem's alternate ending warned that God would carry out vengeance on enslaved people's behalf to restore justice and punish the guilty. Although this vengeance is explicitly directed against enslavers, there are several subtle hints that it would be extended to the entire British nation, as God's wrath was directed towards every Christian who failed to prevent slavery and the consequent religious hypocrisy.

The later editions of the poem not only promote abolition, but also promote the Christian conversion of Africans, as God eventually rewards the enslaved protagonist

[51] James Stephen, *The Dangers of the Country* (Philadelphia: Samuel F. Bradford, 1807) pp. 126-7.

for his religious devotion. In 1740 Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford, preached a sermon to persuade enslavers that it would be 'commercially useful' to convert enslaved Africans to Christianity because it would teach them 'Industry and Frugality, Temperance and Honesty', which would reduce their 'rebelliousness and intractability'.[52] Wilberforce made the same argument in a letter in 1807, writing that missionaries in the Caribbean 'declared, that a Slave, by becoming one of their converts, was worth half as much more than his former value, on account of his superior morality, sobriety, industry, subordination, and general good conduct'.[53] He therefore expected that the 'West Indian Proprietors would be prompted, not only by considerations of self-interest, but by motives of a still higher order, to pay some attention to the religious instruction of their Negroes'.[54] Wilberforce was inspired by James Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves* (1784), which provided evidence that Wilberforce later used in Parliamentary debates about the slave trade.[55] Ramsay was an ordained Anglican who drew on his experience in St Kitts as both a former enslaver and a surgeon on sugar plantations.[56] Although Ramsay considered emancipation problematic, he advocated the amelioration of slavery by arguing that 'the public would be profited, and […] the master would gain, by advancing slaves in social life' with 'their improvement in religion'.[57] Ramsay's

[52] Thomas Secker*, A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1740* (London: J. and H. Pemberton, 1741) pp. 20–21.
[53] Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 125.
[54] Ibid., p. 126.
[55] Srividhya Swaminathan, '(Re)Defining Mastery: James Ramsay versus the West Indian Planter', *Rhetorica*, 34.3 (2016) pp. 301-323 (p. 323).
[56] See: F. O. Shyllon, *James Ramsay: the Unknown Abolitionist* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1977); Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); David Beck Ryden, 'Anthony Benezet, James Ramsay, and the Political Economic Attack on the British Slave Trade', in *The Atlantic World: Essays on Slavery, Migration, and Imagination,* 2nd edn., ed. by Wim Klooster and Alfred Padula (Oxon: Routledge, 2018) pp. 251-268.
[57] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar* (London: James Phillips, 1784) p. xvi.

argument was not original, but it was the first ‘anti-slavery work by a mainstream Anglican writer who had personally witnessed slavery in the British Caribbean’; as Carey highlights, ‘Ramsay could count on social and ecclesiastical support for his work’, which helped the *Essay* to become one of the most influential contributions to the British slavery debate.[58]

The Dying Negro was published in the 1770s, roughly halfway between Secker’s sermon (1740) and Wilberforce’s letter (1807), and represents the negative repercussions of enslavers failing to encourage Christian conversion amongst enslaved Africans. The protagonist criticises enslavers since ‘Thy God’s blest symbol to my brows denied’ (1st edn), depriving him of the calming benefits of a Christian conversion discussed by Secker and Wilberforce.[59] On the contrary, his prayers to the Christian God incite revolution, rather than deterring rebellious tendencies. The lack of religious education leaves the enslaved protagonist unaware of the Christian belief that suicide was a sin. A Christian audience would have believed that the protagonist’s suffering would continue after death as punishment for taking his own life, which could have been prevented if he had received a Christian education. Ramsay’s *Essay* later explored this notion, arguing that if enslaved individuals were ‘properly educated’ and ‘taught [their] importance as a member of society’ then they would make enough ‘progress in the knowledge of religion’ and ‘reason’ to deter them from committing suicide.[60] Day and Bicknell’s protagonist also blames enslavers for failing to baptise enslaved Africans, subtly criticising them for depriving

[58] Brycchan Carey, ‘James Ramsay’, https://brycchancarey.com/abolition/ramsay.htm [Accessed 02/08/2022]; Carey, *British Abolitionist,* p. 109. See also: Swaminathan, ‘(Re)Defining Mastery’, p. 303.
[59] The 3rd edn of *The Dying Negro* reads ‘The holy cross to my sad brows denied’.
[60] Ramsay, *An Essay.*

God of new followers and for depriving the enslaved of the chance of salvation, which was contrary to Christian missionary aims. The failure to encourage enslaved Africans to convert to Christianity, combined with the suffering inflicted upon them, inspired portrayals of enslaved Africans praying to the Christian God for divine vengeance. *The Dying Negro* suggests that teaching enslaved Africans about Christianity would gain God's favour; failure to do so would incur his wrath.

By failing to convert enslaved Africans to Christianity, enslavers were threatening Britain's international moral reputation as a Protestant country. The protagonist's 'prophetic visions' of future vengeance situates Christianity as the one true religion, since the 'Christian God' succeeds where the African Gods had failed. Nevertheless, British enslavers represent a particular branch of Christianity as members of a Protestant nation, and their 'impious avarice and pride' risks presenting Protestantism as a corrupt Christian denomination. Abolitionists drew on this insecurity to argue that slavery was both a national and religious concern. Wilberforce's letter expresses his concern that 'this Protestant and free nation' paradoxically enslaved Africans and failed to provide them with 'religious instruction'.[61] Wilberforce contrasts this against the Catholic nations of France and Spain, who offered a Christian education to those that they enslaved.[62] As Ann Yearsley contends in *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade* (1787), 'The Spaniard stands / Your brighter contrast' because 'The Spaniard, immediately on purchasing an Indian, gives him baptism'.[63] Wilberforce echoes this, and fears that

[61] Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 126.
[62] Ibid., pp. 124-126.
[63] Ann Yearsley, *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade, Humbly Inscribed to the Right Honourable and Right Reverend Frederick, Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry, &c. &c.* (London: G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1788).

'what we deem a corrupted system of Christianity, has produced highly beneficial effects on the negro slaves of our Roman Catholic neighbours in the same quarter', which is yet 'more grievous to those who duly venerate and love our most pure and excellent form of Christian faith'.[64] The idea that Catholic countries (such as Spain) treated enslaved Africans better than Protestant nations (such as Britain) challenged the perceived superiority of Protestantism as the 'most pure and excellent form' of Christianity.

This threat to Protestantism's reputation led Wilberforce to confess, 'though the mind be naturally led to the Africans as the greatest sufferers, yet, unless the Scripture be a forgery, it is not their cause only that I am pleading, but the cause of my Country.'[65] He feared that the individual sins committed by enslavers would have a detrimental effect on the nation's religious reputation, and feared that it 'must infallibly bring down upon us the heaviest judgments of the Almighty'.[66] Although such warnings are not explicit in *The Dying Negro,* the poem exposes the paradoxical relationship between Christianity and slavery to persuade the reader that they were incompatible. *The Dying Negro* upholds the religious supremacy of Christianity, whilst implying that this superiority was threatened by slavery: a threat particularly directed at British Protestantism. It subtly indicates that the entire British population were responsible for protecting the international reputation of both the nation and its Protestant beliefs. The threat of divine vengeance is presented as a form of judicial providentialism to warn the reader that Britain deserved to be

[64] Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 129.
[65] Ibid., p. 348.
[66] Ibid., p. 350.

punished for the sins of slavery. This rhetorical trope intended to encourage the reader to redeem the nation's moral and religious reputation by taking abolitionist action to counteract the religious hypocrisy of enslavers.

Abolitionist Warnings of National Retribution in Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments*

Ottobah Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* draws on both Biblical exegesis and biographical accounts of his own enslavement to argue that Britain deserved to face divine retribution for its involvement with slavery, as this went against Christian values. Cugoano's scriptural analysis situates his argument within an abolitionist tradition that had already been established by his predecessors. In 1784, James Ramsay argued that slavery is 'opposed' to the 'law of nature, and of God', and so he asks: do 'men who consider slaves as property' not 'acknowledge […] Divine justice?'[67] Scholars have noted that Ramsay's *Essay* made several enslavers feel threatened enough to retaliate, with no other abolitionist publication inciting such a strong response from the opposition.[68] One such retaliation came from Nevis planter James Tobin (1785) accusing Ramsay of being 'most unfeeling' in his 'most illiberal and unchristian-like' criticism of enslavers, who are actually 'a very useful and respectable body of men'.[69] Tobin claims that he does not advocate slavery, as he hopes that freedom will be granted 'in due time', though in the meantime he justifies slavery based on the fact that it 'has existed in all ages of the world', including

[67] Ramsay, *An Essay,* pp. 3, xiii.
[68] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, pp. 119-124; Srividhya Swaminathan, 'Developing the West Indian Proslavery Position after the Somerset Decision', *Slavery and Abolition*, 24.3 (2003) pp. 40-60 (p. 303).
[69] James Tobin, *Cursory Remarks Upon the Reverend Mr Ramsay's Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the Sugar Colonies* (London, G. and T. Wilkie, 1785) p. 2.

'among the chosen people of God'.[70] Grenada planter Gordon Turnbull (1786) similarly argues that slavery is justified because it is 'permitted […] by the omnipotent Creator', which was later echoed by Reverend Raymond Harris (1788).[71] Tobin, Turnbull and Harris all use Biblical exegesis to defend slavery, although Swaminathan and Paula E. Dumas demonstrate that the proslavery 'movement' was not always as unified and homogenous as it seemed.[72] Swaminathan concludes that Tobin's tract primarily aimed to support enslavers rather than slavery, allowing Tobin to defend his own moral reputation.[73] Cugoano's *Thoughts and Sentiments* responds to these arguments, and includes an interrogation of several of Tobin's claims, which leads Cugoano to conclude that these 'advocates for slavery' are 'impious dogs' who are 'inebriated with avarice and infidelity' (Cugoano pp. 19, 81).[74]

Cugoano uses Biblical exegesis to form a counter-argument against proslavery discourse, aiming to persuade readers that slavery was a blasphemous sin that was

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[70] Tobin, *Cursory Remarks,* pp. 5, 8. See also: James Ramsay, *A Reply to the Personal Invectives and Objections Contained in Two Answers, Published by Certain Anonymous Persons, to an Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Colonies* (London: J. Phillips, 1785); James Tobin, *A Short Rejoinder to the Revd. Mr. Ramsay's Reply: With a Word or Two on Some Other Publications of the Same Tendency* (London: E. Easton, 1787).
[71] Gordon Turnbull, *An Apology for Negro Slavery*, *or The West-India Planters Vindicated from the charge of inhumanity. By the author of Letters to a Young Planter, 2nd edn.* (London: J. Stevenson, 1786) p. 7. See also: Gordon Turnbull, *Letters to a Young Planter; or, Observations on the Management of a Sugar-Plantation* (London: Stuart & Stevenson, 1785). In 1788, Reverend Raymond Harris provided one of the most extensive defences of slavery based on scriptural authority, though it is less contextually relevant to Cugoano's rhetoric since it was published the year after *Thoughts and Sentiments.* See: Reverend Raymond Harris, *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-trade, Shewing its Conformity with the Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, Delineated in the Sacred Writings of the Word of God,* (London: John Stockdale, 1788). For more on Harris, see: Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution,* pp. 541-5; Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade.*
[72] Swaminathan, 'Developing the West Indian Proslavery Position', p. 43; Paula E. Dumas, *Proslavery Britain: Fighting for Slavery in an Era of Abolition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) p. 17.
[73] Swaminathan, '(Re)Defining Mastery', p. 320.
[74] See: David Killingray, 'Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery: An African Hermeneutic, 1787', *Anvil*, 24.2 (2007) pp. 121-136 (p. 130); Jeffrey Hole, 'From Sentiment to Security: Cugoano, Liberal Principles, and the Bonds of Empire', *Criticism*, 59.2 (2017) pp. 175-199 (p. 178); Jeffrey Gunn, 'Literacy and the Humanizing Project in Olaudah Equiano's The Interesting Narrative and Ottobah Cugoano's Thoughts and Sentiments', *Orality and History*, 10.12 (2017) pp. 1-19 (p. 10).

worthy of being punished with divine vengeance. Yet enslavers are not the only perceived recipients of divine vengeance. Cugoano exposes the culpability of all 'the inhabitants of Great Britain', and argues that they all deserved to be punished if they failed to abolish both slavery and the slave trade (Cugoano, p. 110). In doing so, Cugoano writes in the Biblical prophetic tradition of the jeremiad. The 'jeremiad' originates in the Old Testament, with Jeremiah encouraging the Israelites to atone for their sins and regain God's favour rather than face severe misfortune as a divinely sanctioned moral punishment.[75] The 'Black jeremiad' literary form features a lamentation over the treatment of enslaved Black individuals, combined with 'constant warnings' that God would punish White people for 'the sin of slavery'.[76] Scholars researching the literary jeremiad typically agree that Cugoano presents himself as part of 'the Elect' who God chose to abolish slavery, but disagreements arise regarding whether he includes Britain as part of God's chosen community. David Killingray argues that Cugoano 'held moderate Calvinist views, and regarded himself as one of "the Elect"', living amongst the Britons who were 'chosen for a divine purpose but [were] also, as with Old Testament Israel, disobedient and headstrong to the divine will'.[77] Alternatively, Adam Dahl argues that Cugoano 'refuses to position Britain […] as God's chosen people with a divine mission to bring civilization to the world', forming a '*transatlantic jeremiad*' that 'repeatedly positions

[75] Willie J. Harrell, 'A Call to Consciousness and Action: Mapping the African-American Jeremiad', *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 36.2 (2006) pp. 149-180 (p. 152).
[76] Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of Religious Myth*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1982) pp. 30-31; William Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760–1865* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) p. 14. Both quotations appear in both texts. See also: Dustin D. Stewart, 'Cugoano and the Hermeneutics of Black Calvinism', *ELH*, 88.3 (2021) pp. 629-659.
[77] Killingray, 'Britain, the Slave Trade and Slavery', pp. 125, 129. See also: Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); Keith Gilyard and Anissa Wardi (eds.), *African American Literature* (New York: Pearson, 2004); George Shulman, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

himself outside of Britain by flagging his status as a native of Africa.'[78] The ambiguity surrounding whether God chose Britons to enact historical providentialism, contrasted against the clarity of Cugoano's divine abolitionist mission, suggests that Britons' varied reactions to slavery were problematic. It was up to the reader to decide whether to join Cugoano's abolitionist efforts and earn God's praise, or oppose him and earn God's wrath.

Although Cugoano warns that Britain's sins deserved to be punished with national retribution, he also focuses specifically on the sins of enslavers. He simultaneously warns and prophesises that enslavers will eventually be subjected to the 'vengeance of heaven' unless they atone for their sins:

> If they do not repent of their evil way, and the wickedness of their doings by keeping and holding their fellow creatures in slavery. […] and surrender that evil traffic, with an awful abhorrence of it, […] they must and cannot otherwise but expect in one day at last, to meet with the full stroke of the long suspended vengeance of heaven, when death will cut them down to a state as mean as that of the most abjected slave, and to a very eminent danger of a far more dreadful fate hereafter, when they have the just reward of their iniquities to meet with. (Cugoano, p. 25)

Cugoano argues that it was not enough for enslavers to merely relinquish their associations with slavery, as this change of lifestyle must be accompanied with a change of attitude. Enslavers must come to consider slavery with 'abhorrence' and 'repent their evil way' to earn God's forgiveness and avoid divine retribution. Abolition is seemingly about more than just liberating the enslaved, or national prosperity; it is also about redeeming the souls of sinners on a more spiritual level.

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[78] Adam Dahl, 'Creolizing Natural Liberty: Transnational Obligation in the Thought of Ottobah Cugoano', *The Journal of Politics*, 82.3 (2020) pp. 908-920 (p. 911).

The prophecy allows Cugoano to present himself as God's messenger, sent to plead for enslavers to consider the morality of their actions, and the consequences of incurring God's wrath. The claim that God's vengeance was 'long suspended' could refer to an inevitable punishment that has been extensively delayed, although the *OED* also defines 'suspended' as 'keep[ing] (one's judgement) undetermined'.[79] If this latter definition is applied to Cugoano's prophecy, he appears to suggest that God is giving enslavers the chance to repent and change their ways (by promoting abolition and emancipation) before he conducts their punishment. Offering enslavers a chance for redemption provides a coping mechanism, allowing enslavers to channel their fear of punishment into abolitionist action to avoid the 'just reward of their iniquities'. The use of 'just reward' signifies a deserved outcome, or fair payment for a service, suggesting that the punishment will be equal to the sufferings inflicted upon the enslaved. The enslaved are rewarded for their patience when justice is finally carried out through the reversal of the racial hierarchy, as their enslavers are reduced to 'a state as mean as that of the most abjected slave', followed by 'a far more dreadful fate hereafter'. This 'dreadful fate' after death predicts that enslavers would be sent to hell to experience the 'vengeance' carried out by 'heaven' on behalf of the enslaved. Although enslavers may not have been punished yet, Cugoano argues that Christian teachings dictated that they would certainly be punished in hell unless temporal justice was restored.

[79] *OED,* v. 4a.

The warning that Christians should fear divine wrath is later supported by Biblical exegesis, which argues that God's disapproval of slavery is 'obvious from the Scriptures of Divine Truth' (Cugoano, p. 3). Cugoano declares:

> those men who dare not face the consequence of acting uprightly in every case are detestable cowards, unworthy the name of men; […] such men are more afraid of temporal inconveniencies than they are of God: *And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Luke xii. 4, 5.* (Cugoano, p. 120).

Cugoano recommends that enslavers fear the 'power' of God instead of 'temporal inconveniences', because he considers divine punishment in hell as the greater threat. Proslavery arguments dismissing these warnings seemingly undermined God's omnipotence and omnibenevolence. Biblical exegesis is presented as evidence supporting Cugoano's warning, with a reference provided so that readers can find the section to verify that the quotation is taken directly from the Bible. Cugoano's language of fear echoes the semantics of the Biblical quotation to emotionally subvert the reader's intellect, as appealing to their fear renders them more receptive to the evidence subsequently provided. The Biblical exegesis attempts to validate Cugoano's own emotional reaction to slavery by suggesting that God shares his desire for retribution, thereby adding authority to his abolitionist arguments.

Cugoano presents himself as an honourable and obedient Christian, in stark contrast to the allegedly 'Christian' enslavers who were driven more by greed than

religion or morality, including those who worked for the Church of England.[80] Having been baptised 'John Stuart' at St James' Church in London in 1773, Cugoano quotes scripture to demonstrate that Africans can be 'civilised' through Christian conversion.[81] Cugoano's self-depiction as a devoted Christian convert demonstrates that Africans had the ability to acclimatise to Western social norms. He simultaneously writes 'within and against the terms of the dominant culture' by conforming to ideals of Christian devotion whilst encouraging opposition against slavery.[82] His assimilation to British culture ironically allows him to highlight its contradictions and argue that Britons are unworthy of their self-imposed place on the metaphorical racialized pedestal. He uses his Biblical knowledge to argue that slavery was antithetical to Christianity, concluding that enslavers were 'unworthy the name of men'. The suggestion that enslavers are subhuman, or even an inferior species, forms a parallel with polygenism (the theory that Africans were a different species, which was used to justify slavery). Although polygenism was later popularised in America by Josiah Nott (1854), traces of polygenism are found much earlier in British eighteenth-century literature.[83] In 1778 Lord Kames wrote that 'the

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[80] The Church of England profited from slavery, and received £8,823 8s. 9d. as compensation for loss of property when slavery was eventually abolished. In 1710 the Church's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) acquired two plantations in Barbados, as well as the enslaved individuals who worked there. The profits from these plantations funded Christian missionary work in the Caribbean, and so the SPG argued that amelioration and 'gradual emancipation' were preferable to immediate abolition because slavery ensured that Africans received a Christian education. References: Richard Ennals, *From Slavery to Citizenship* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2007) p. 170; Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018) p. 92; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, *Report from the Committee of the Codrington Trust* (London: G. Woodfall, 1831) p. 2. For more information, see: Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[81] Martha Frederiks, 'Ottobah Cugoano, Son of Africa: An Angry African Abolitionist Voice', *Europe as the Other: External Perspectives on European Christianity,* ed. by Judith Becker and Brian Stanley (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014) pp. 219-242 (p. 226).

[82] Geraldine Murphy, 'Olaudah Equiano, Accidental Tourist', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27.4 (1994) pp. 551–568 (p. 553).

[83] Josiah C. Nott, *Types of Mankind* (Charleston: James, Williams and Gitsinger, 1854) p. 397.

colour of the Negroes […] affords a strong presumption of their being a different species from the Whites' owing to the former's alleged intellectual inferiority.[84] Cugoano counters this theory by claiming that the barbaric sins of slavery prove that enslavers are 'unworthy the name of men', not enslaved Africans, thus inverting polygenic arguments to reverse the racial hierarchy that considered Black people to be inferior. Biblical exegesis allows Cugoano to present himself as a devoted Christian, whilst simultaneously portraying enslavers as hypocritical sinners, to demonstrate the moral superiority of a Black African over White Europeans. His analysis of religious discourse reveals his intellectual proficiency, whilst his sensitivity to emotions suggests his superior sensibility. Overall, Cugoano intends to depict himself as morally, intellectually, and emotionally superior to enslavers to discredit the notion of Black inferiority.

However, proslavery forces also used Biblical exegesis to argue that slavery intended to punish Africans for the 'curse of Ham', with enslavement presented as a form of judicial providentialism that rendered enslavers the agents of divine retribution.[85] In the Bible, Noah placed a curse on all the descendants of Ham, known as Canaanites after Ham's son Canaan (Genesis 9:18-25). One night Ham witnessed Noah undress himself whilst intoxicated, and laughed at his father's embarrassment. So when Noah awoke and discovered Ham's actions he said 'Cursed be Canaan! A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers'. Proslavery forces argued that this curse was marked by the Canaanites' dark skin, even though

[84] Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Sketches of Man,* 2nd edn (Edinburgh: A. Millar, 1778) p. 64.
[85] Coffey, '"Tremble, Britannia!"', p. 850.

the Bible does not mention their skin colour.[86] Thomas Wilson's *An Essay Towards an Instruction for the Indians* (1740) exemplifies this, arguing that 'the Negroes, the descendants of Ham and Canaan, […] according to one of the most ancient prophecies, [*Gen.* ix. 25] are become slaves to Christians'.[87] Travis Glasson highlights that Wilson demonstrates 'that Anglican ethnic theological exegesis could provide intellectual support to slavery, serving as a vehicle for the wide circulation of the association between Noah's curse and black people's enslavement', whilst simultaneously presenting 'black slavery [as] a fulfilment of scriptural prophecy'.[88] Proponents of slavery claimed that the 'curse of Ham' manifested in the enslavement of Africans as punishment for Ham's sin, and since the curse was inherited by all of Ham's descendants, then all the descendants of enslaved Africans would also inherit the divinely sanctioned curse of slavery.

The alleged relation between the 'curse of Ham' and slavery was refuted by abolitionists more often than it was asserted by proslavery forces. In *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God* (1776), Sharp protested that the story of Ham 'can by no means justify the *African slave trade*'.[89] Wilberforce concurred, and

[86] David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) p. 1. For more on the 'curse of Ham', see: Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*; Benjamin Braude, 'The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997) pp. 103-42; S. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (Oxford, 2002); C. Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2006); Winthrop D. Jordan, 'First Impressions', in *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader,* 2nd edn., ed. by Les Back and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2009) pp. 33-36; David M. Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009); David M. Goldenberg, *Black and Slave: The Origins and History of the Curse of Ham* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2017).

[87] Thomas Wilson, 'Preface' to *An Essay Towards an Instruction for the Indians* (London: J. Osborn, 1740) p. x.

[88] Glasson, *Mastering Christianity,* p. 134.

[89] Granville Sharp, *The Just Limitation of Slavery in the Laws of God, Compared with the Unbounded Claims of the African Traders and British American Slaveholders* (London: B. White & Dilly, 1776) p. 48.

in 1791 he claimed that it was 'impious blasphemy' to claim that enslavers are 'the instruments of the divine vengeance' against Africans.[90] Meanwhile, in *Thoughts and* Sentiments, Cugoano refuted the proslavery theory with his own Biblical exegesis. The Bible states that the Canaanites were destroyed by Noah's flood, and so Cugoano argued that their punishment 'has already been fulfilled as far as it can go' (Cugoano, p. 34). He concludes that 'colour and complexion had nothing to do with' the curse (Cugoano, p. 36), undermining its use as justification for racial discrimination. Cugoano insists that 'all mankind did spring from one original' since the Bible states that all of mankind was made in God's image, and so 'the life of a black man is of as much regard in the sight of God, as the life of any other man' (Cugoano, pp. 30, 119).

Advocating racial equality supported the argument that slavery was blasphemous and warranted divine punishment. Cugoano prophesises:

> It cannot be thought otherwise, but that the abandoned aggressors, among the learned nations will, in due time, as the just reward of their aggravated iniquity, be visited with some more dreadful and tremendous judgments of the righteous vengeance of God, than what even befel to the Canaanites of old. (Cugoano, p. 56)

Cugoano is unwavering in his beliefs, ascertaining that 'it cannot be thought otherwise' than that justice will eventually ensure that enslavers are punished. He suggests that this retribution for their immoral 'iniquity' has been 'aggravated' by the blasphemous claim that God supported the enslavement of Africans, which Cugoano

[90] William Wilberforce, 'Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade' [18th April 1791], in *The Parliamentary History of England*, XXIX, ed. by William Cobbett (London: T. C. Hansard, 1817) pp. 250-293 (p. 259).

asserts is in direct contrast to God's true allegiance. Such blasphemy further provoked the 'vengeance of God', resulting in the divine judgement that enslavers had committed a crime 'more dreadful and tremendous' than that committed by Ham, and are thus worthy of a harsher punishment. Cugoano uses the curse of Ham as an example of divine retribution to support his argument that God would intervene again, though he warns that this time it would be to enact vengeance against enslavers. This abolitionist fear tactic is both a defensive strategy against proslavery claims of African inferiority, and an offensive strategy against enslavers, which aimed to reverse the racial hierarchy in terms of moral supremacy.

Cugoano lists the many forms that divine vengeance can take on Earth as punishments for the sins of slavery:

> Loss of territory and destructive wars, earthquakes and dreadful thunders, storms and hurricanes, blastings and destructive insects, inclement and unfruitful seasons, national debt and oppressions, poverty and distresses of individuals, &c. (Cugoano, p. 102)

Divine acts of judicial providentialism arise in the form of both natural disasters (poor weather conditions) and human failure (unsuccessful wars and poverty). This particularly resonated with the British nation following their defeat in the American Revolutionary War (1775-83), which undermined Britain's reputation as a powerful nation, and led many to question the morality of the British Empire.[91] The British colony of Jamaica was known for its severe hurricanes, experiencing five in the seven years between 1780 and 1786, which likely inspired abolitionists such as

[91] Dwight McBride, *Impossible Witnesses: Truth, Abolitionism, and Slave Testimony* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) p. 20.

Cugoano to suggest that they were evidence of divine providentialism.[92] Hurricanes caused significant damage to plantations, destroying crops and leaving enslavers with financial losses.[93] Cugoano presents hurricanes as a form of divine retribution against enslavers to suggest that abolishing slavery would be financially beneficial to enslavers, and by extension the British economy, as it would prevent hurricanes and the cost of the consequential damages. The threat of national retribution is thus used both to attack slavery as a sin worthy of divine punishment, and to discredit the proslavery argument that slavery was a form of divine punishment for the 'curse of Ham'. The combination of these defensive and offensive strategies allowed Cugoano to claim that slavery was the cause, rather than the effect, of judicial providentialism.

Claiming that slavery was the cause, not the effect, of judicial providentialism reverses the roles of who enacts – and who receives – it. Abolitionists countered proslavery arguments by claiming that enslavers were the recipients, rather than the agents, of judicial providentialism. Using 'wars', 'national debt', and 'poverty' as examples of divine vengeance suggests that this punishment for the sins of slavery was not only directed at enslavers, but that it could also be extended to the entire British nation. It undermined the proslavery tactic of 'sentimental diversion', which sought to divert attention away from the abolitionist movement by claiming that poverty in Britain was a more urgent problem than slavery.[94] Tobin exemplifies sentimental diversion by insisting that 'the negroes [are] much better off than the labouring poor of Great Britain', with Turnbull echoing that 'the negroes are much

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[92] Michael Chenoweth, *The 18th Century Climate of Jamaica: Derived from the Journals of Thomas Thistlewood, 1750-1786,* XCIII, Part 2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophy Society, 2003) pp. 130, 88.
[93] Ibid., p. 88.
[94] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* p. 41.

happier than the peasantry in most parts of the globe', who were likely to 'miserably perish, with hunger, or with cold'.[95] Cugoano counters such arguments by drawing on his own experiences to argue that 'no freeman, however poor and distressing his situation may be, would resign his liberty for that of a slave' (Cugoano, p. 17). He maintains that the poor people of Britain are free, so have a greater degree of agency than enslaved Africans. Listing 'poverty' amongst the examples of divine retribution suggests that abolishing slavery would eliminate poverty, as a punishment would no longer be required (Cugoano, p. 102). Cugoano hoped that presenting poverty, wars, and natural disasters as punishments for Britain's role in slavery would evoke contemporary fears concerning the nation's moral reputation, and encourage Britons to seek moral redemption. Cugoano attempts to persuade readers that abolishing slavery would transform them from sinners who deserved to be punished with judicial providentialism, to saviours who enacted historical providentialism on God's behalf. Readers are thus presented with a choice between enacting historical providentialism and deserving judicial providentialism. In other words: punish enslavers, or you will deserve to be punished.

The idea that Britain was collectively responsible for slavery is expressed more explicitly when Cugoano claims that natural disasters are 'tokens of God's judgements against the British empire' (Cugoano, p. 101). The *OED* reveals that contemporary definitions of 'token' included references to factual evidence, and an omen.[96] The duality of the term suggests that Cugoano believed he was offering both factual evidence of God's opposition to slavery, and an omen warning of further

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[95] Tobin, *Cursory Remarks,* p. 69; Turnbull, *An Apology,* p. 32.
[96] *OED,* n. 1a (factual evidence) and n. 5 (omen).

repercussions if Britain failed to abolish slavery. Granville Sharp presented a similar argument in 1776, declaring that 'we know not how soon a just *national Retribution* may overtake us! How soon the Almighty may think fit to recompense the British nation, according to the work of their hands'.[97] Sharp warns that this judgement could occur at any time, and so stresses the urgency of Britain's atonement through the abolition of slavery. Sharp clearly inspired Cugoano because he includes these lines in *Thoughts and Sentiments,* developing Sharp's concept by claiming that 'the inhabitants of Great Britain […] seem almost equally guilty of the oppression' as enslavers (Cugoano, p. 110). The qualifying 'seem' and 'almost' concede that the guilt is not distributed equally, though Cugoano stresses that the whole nation shares the responsibility for the suffering experienced by enslaved Africans. It is no coincidence that Sharp and Cugoano employed similar fear tactics, as they had already established a relationship when *Thoughts and Sentiments* was published. In 1786, Cugoano sought Sharp's assistance in saving Harry Demane, a Black individual, from being kidnapped and returned to slavery.[98] Interactions like these formed what Mary Louise Pratt terms 'contact zones' where colonial encounters took place, creating a diverse abolitionist movement that was far from homogenous, although certain arguments and approaches were repeated throughout abolitionist literature.[99] The intertextuality of Sharp's quotation situates Cugoano within the eighteenth-century culture of borrowing, drawing on the work of a prominent abolitionist (who was already

[97] Sharp, *The Law of Retribution,* p. 262.
[98] Carretta, 'Ottobah Cugoano', *ODNB*.
[99] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession* (1991) pp. 33–40. See also: Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) pp. 3, 48.

highly esteemed following his involvement in the Somerset Case) to validate the abolitionist sentiments of an emancipated Black man.[100]

Since the actions of each individual collectively contributes towards a nation's moral reputation, every Briton should feel somewhat responsible for Britain's involvement with slavery. As Cugoano explains, 'every man, as a rational creature, is responsible for his actions, and he becomes not only guilty in doing evil himself, but in letting others rob and oppress their fellow-creatures with impunity, or in not delivering the oppressed when he has it in his power to help them' (Cugoano, pp. 114-115). Cugoano echoes Edmund Burke's claim that 'when bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.'[101] Cugoano applied this principle to abolition, claiming that inaction was insufficient because it allowed slavery to continue. By this logic, anyone failing to campaign for abolition was a sinner by default, deserving to be punished with judicial providentialism for allowing slavery to continue unchallenged. The reference to rationality dictating guilt draws on both the Enlightenment ideal and the sentimental hero, which merge together to create society's moral exemplar: one who is sensitive to emotional cues, with the intellectual ability to determine how to channel this emotional experience into philanthropic action to benefit society. As 'rational creature[s]', Britons should be fulfilling their philanthropic destiny and social

[100] Jeffrey Gunn, 'Creating a Paradox: Quobna Ottobah Cugoano and the Slave Trade's Violation of the Principles of Christianity, Reason, and Property Ownership', *Journal of World History*, 21.4 (2010) pp. 629–57 (p. 634).
[101] Edmund Burke, 'Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents' [1770], *The Works of Edmund Burke, With a Memoir,* I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860) pp. 157-190 (p. 187).

responsibility – if not, then Cugoano warns that they would collectively be subjected to God's judgement.

The notion of collective punishment was later echoed by James Stephen in 1807:

> Kingdoms have no world to come; communities of men will not, as such, stand collectively, before the judgement seat of Christ. If then, it pleases the Almighty in his temporal providence, often to punish and reward in a remarkable manner, the vices and virtues of individuals; we may reason from analogy […] to the probability that Nations, will sometimes be made to illustrate in the same way, his justice, power, and mercy.[102]

Stephen suggests that if an individual can be punished for one sinful act during an otherwise moral lifetime, then it follows that an entire nation can be punished for the crimes of the minority. He believes that the same principles apply in both situations; the only difference is that individuals are rewarded and punished in the afterlife, whereas kingdoms and communities are collectively rewarded or punished according to temporal providence. The dual threat of punishment, both on Earth and in the afterlife, creates the impression that divine punishment was unavoidable. The only question that remained was whether God would limit the punishment to those directly responsible for enslaving Africans, or whether He would judge an entire nation collectively. Stephen draws on the Christian belief that God's judgement was the only one that mattered, arguing that God's disapproved of slavery meant that all Christians should do everything that they could to abolish it. Abolitionists argued that abolishing the slave trade and slavery would prevent national retribution, and

[102] Stephen, *The Dangers of the Country*, p. 112.

encouraged readers to choose either ‘prosperity and long life’ or ‘misery and dissolution’, both for enslaved individuals and for themselves.[103]

Abolitionist fear tactics were used for several decades: *The Dying Negro* in the 1770s; *Thoughts and Sentiments* in the 1780s; Wilberforce’s parliamentary speeches in the 1790s; and Stephen’s *The Dangers of the Country* in the early 1800s. At the turn of the century abolitionists incorporated the ongoing war against France into their fear tactics, presenting the conflict as divine punishment for Britain’s role in the slave trade. Wilberforce made this argument in the House of Commons in 1797:

> If any man believed in a moral Providence, he must perceive, from present events, that our perseverance in this horrid trade, which was consistent with no principles except those of practical Atheism, had provoked the divine vengeance.[104]

Wilberforce uses ‘present events’ to suggest that Cugoano’s prophecy of a ‘long-suspended’ divine vengeance was now being fulfilled with the French Revolutionary Wars. Andrew Stauffer notes that expressions of anger became particularly problematic following the French Revolution’s Reign of Terror (1793-94), which demonstrated the dangerous nature of public rage leading to violence.[105] Excessive expressions of emotion were discouraged more than ever, and so abolitionists became wary of portraying and evoking anger – at least amongst humans. Because Stauffer does not explore anti-slavery depictions of divine wrath, he overlooks the fact that anger strengthened the British abolitionist campaign, as the violence of the French Revolution was used as an example of divine retribution caused by God’s

[103] Ibid., p. 112.
[104] *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (15-17 May 1797).
[105] Andrew Stauffer, *Anger, Revolution and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 1.

wrathful reaction to slavery. For example, Stephen responds to those who question ‘Have no calamities, indicatory of Divine wrath, overtaken that guilty land?’ with the example of ‘the French Revolution, and […] the fatal wars that have ensued’, which have threatened ‘the security of England’.[106] He contends that these ‘evils we have endured, ever since our first refusal to abolish the slave trade’, and so they were caused by ‘the chastising hand of God.’[107] Britain’s involvement with the slave trade is transformed into an issue of national security, with abolitionists arguing that this threat to the nation’s peace and prosperity should be eradicated. Wilberforce argues that Britain’s involvement in international conflicts would increase alongside ‘our perseverance in this horrid trade’, which he associates with ‘Atheism’ to further strengthen the connection between Christian beliefs and abolitionist sentiments.[108] The use of such fear tactics in parliament demonstrates that abolitionists believed that combining religious discourse with emotive rhetoric would contribute to the abolition of the slave trade.

It is not possible to ascertain whether abolitionists truly feared divine intervention, or merely used it as a rhetorical strategy to suit their abolitionist aims. Nevertheless, in a letter to the inhabitants of Yorkshire, Wilberforce claims:

> of all the motives by which I am prompted to address you, that which operates on me with the greatest force, is, the consideration of the present state and prospects of our country […] That the Almighty Creator of the

[106] Stephen, *The Dangers of the Country*, p. 132.
[107] Ibid., p. 132. Stephen argues that ‘The abolition of the Slave Trade was first virtually refused by parliament, in April, 1792. Immediately, we were engaged in those stormy contentions within the realm, and those disputes with France, which soon terminated in the last calamitous war’ (Stephen, p. 133). However, the first abolition Bill was actually proposed and rejected in 1791, followed by a second attempt in 1792 that granted the ‘gradual’ abolition of the slave trade, though, as Stephen points out, this was postponed indefinitely.
[108] *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (15-17 May 1797).

> universe governs the world which he has made; that the sufferings of nations are to be regarded as the punishment of national crimes; and their decline and fall, as the execution of His sentence; are truths which I trust are still generally believed among us.[109]

Wilberforce insists that fear of divine retribution was the primary motivation behind his abolitionist campaign, and believes that it also fuelled the abolitionist efforts of his peers. He uses fear tactics to encourage the British public to abolish the slave trade as a form of historical providentialism to avert the threat of the impending divine retribution. Abolitionists such as Wilberforce argued that carrying out historical providentialism would mitigate the damage to Britain's reputation, and so abolition was an opportunity to reassert Britain's morality and global influence.

Historical providentialism allowed humans to act on God's behalf; and if Britons could enact divine vengeance against enslavers, then it follows that enslaved Africans could too. If God sympathised with the anger felt by enslaved Africans then it seems logical that God would also sympathise with their desire to revolt, which could be considered as a form of divine vengeance that punished enslavers. The prophetic vision in *The Dying Negro*'s later editions attributes vengeance to both God and the enslaved protagonist in the line, 'Thanks, righteous God! Revenge shall yet be mine', in addition to 'Afric [who] triumphs!' as the personified 'great avenger of thy race' (3rd edition). Vengeance is depicted as a collective effort between God, the enslaved protagonist, and Africa, which shows that enslaved Africans could enact divine vengeance as a form of historical providentialism to punish both the enslavers and the British nation for their involvement in slavery. These lines are attributed to

[109] Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade,* p. 4.

Day, who later echoes these sentiments during a discussion of ‘those rights which the great Creator taught [the enslaved] to discover when he gave him reason, which he urges him to defend by passion’.[110] Day argues that enslaved Africans used rational reasoning to direct their emotions into actions that would defend their God-given rights. In doing so, he implies that God condoned slave revolts, which he may have considered to be a form of divine vengeance against enslavers. Day adds that ‘whenever any individual presumes to exercise this species of authority over his fellow-creatures, he must be a tyrant and an oppressor, whom it is permitted to destroy by every possible method.’[111] The idea that slavery should be destroyed by ‘every possible method’ is key to understanding the diverse range of abolitionist tactics. The various agents of vengeance depicted in abolitionist literature reveals the necessity of the combined efforts of both the British public campaigning for parliamentary change, and the enslaved individuals’ acts of rebellion. Collectively, they suggest that British abolitionists and enslaved individuals were both agents of divine vengeance who had to work together to enact historical providentialism.

Depictions of Black individuals trusting in God intended to show that they were able to conform to Christian moral standards, particularly concerning emotional expression and the notion that only God should judge one’s actions. Although portrayals of enslaved individuals praying could make them appear passive, prayers for vengeance were still a form of rebellion against slavery that demonstrated that Black people could obediently submit to God’s will. Abolitionist fear tactics attempted to reverse the racial hierarchy by arguing that White – rather than Black – individuals

[110] Day and Bicknell, *The Dying Negro* (1793) pp. 45, 47; Day, *Fragment of an Original Letter,* p. 5.
[111] Day, *Fragment of an Original Letter,* p. 6.

were morally inferior. Cugoano's religious discourse particularly contributes towards the disruption of the racial hierarchy, owing to his self-portrayal as a moral Black Christian. Meanwhile, the protagonist of *The Dying Negro* demonstrates emotional self-restraint by praying for divine vengeance, rather than acting on his own anger, whilst his submission to God's will and judgement also presents him as an obedient Christian. Both of these texts depict the moral refinement and religious piety of Black individuals to form a strong contrast to the immorality of White enslavers. Exploring the intersection of contemporary racial and religious hierarchies demonstrates that abolitionists used the notion of Christian supremacy to undermine the idea that White people were superior to Black people.

Abolitionist portrayals of divine vengeance drew on fears that Britons would be considered as sinners, rather than saviours, unless slavery was abolished. *The Dying Negro* and *Thoughts and Sentiments* present judicial and historical providentialism as polarities at either end of a spectrum, whereby failure to enact historical providentialism by punishing enslavers meant that Britain deserved to be punished with judicial providentialism. However, abolitionists were aware that readers would consider it unjust to be punished for a sin that they had not committed. Therefore, they decided to portray the guilt of those who indirectly contributed towards slavery to reinforce the moral threat that slavery posed to Britain's moral and religious reputation. The next chapter explores how abolitionist literature presented Britain's collective guilt for enslaving Africans.

CHAPTER FIVE

NATIONAL GUILT AND THE SHAME OF SLAVERY

Introduction

Abolitionists combined emotive rhetoric with an analysis of national identity to claim that individual citizens were collectively responsible for maintaining Britain's moral reputation. Patricia Bradley argues that 'the Somerset decision appeared to expurgate much of British guilt, and in a mood of self-congratulation after Somerset, the British were happy to move blame to American shoulders.'[1] Although the Somerset case was initially celebrated, this was soon replaced with frustration as abolitionists realised that the Mansfield judgement did not guarantee Black individuals' freedom in Britain (see Appendix 1).[2] Abolitionists insisted that Britons should be ashamed of their nation's guilt because slavery corrupted Britain's morality. The trope of national guilt intended to inspire a sense of collective responsibility for allowing slavery to continue, and for indirectly contributing towards slavery by consuming the products of enslaved labour (such as sugar and rum). In *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787), William Roscoe criticises those 'Who see' the suffering inflicted on enslaved individuals, and 'yet [do] not resent it', arguing that those who 'partake the luxuries it [slavery] supplies' should 'feel / The keen emotions of remorse

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[1] Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998) p. 81.

[2] Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005) p. 51; Norman S. Poser, *Lord Mansfield: Justice in the Age of Reason* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013) p. 296.

and shame' because 'THEY PARTAKE THE GUILT'.[3] Such reproachful rhetoric sought to manipulate the reader's guilt, and manufacture their shame, to encourage readers to abstain from purchasing and consuming goods produced by enslaved individuals. This chapter argues that the abolitionist trope of national guilt exposed Britain's immorality to invert the existing racial hierarchy, aiming to persuade Britons to seek redemption from the national guilt of slavery by joining the abstention movement as a form of abolitionist action.

For the purposes of this chapter I shall distinguish between shame and guilt to reflect the distinctions frequently made in abolitionist literature. According to Samuel Johnson's dictionary, guilt is the feeling that one gets when one commits a 'crime' and/or causes someone to suffer; while shame is the sense of one's own moral depravity and how that effects one's social 'reputation'.[4] Abolitionist condemnatory rhetoric predominantly differentiates between guilt and shame in a way that resonates with the parameters of these definitions. It also aligns guilt and shame with Aristotle's understanding of the three types of rhetoric: forensic, epideictic, and deliberative.[5] Brycchan Carey explores how abolitionists used forensic rhetoric in

[3] William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa: Part the First* (London: R. Faulder, 1787).
[4] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1755). Johnson writes that guilt is 'The state of a man justly charged with a crime', whereas shame is 'The passion felt when reputation is supposed to be lost; the passion expressed sometimes by blushes'.
[5] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* trans. by George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). See: Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, 'Structuring Rhetoric', in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (London: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 1-33; Dorothea Frede, 'Mixed Feelings in Aristotle's *Rhetoric'* in *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, ed. by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (London: University of California Press, 1996) pp. 258-285; Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) pp. 173-185; Bernard Yack, 'Rhetoric and Public Reasoning: An Aristotelian Understanding of Political Deliberation', *Political Theory*, 34.4 (2006) pp. 417-438; Daniel N. Robinson, 'Rhetoric and Character in Aristotle', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 60.1 (2006) pp. 3-15; Eugene Garver, 'Aristotle on the Kinds of Rhetoric', *Rhetorica*, 27.1 (2009) pp. 1-18; Jamie Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015).

press reports on the trials involving James Somerset and Captain Kilmber, with a particular focus on sentimental language.[6] This chapter takes a different approach, as it explores how abolitionists, such as William Fox, employed forensic rhetoric to argue that slavery was a moral 'crime', even if it was not recognised as such in English law.[7] Abolitionists argued that such a crime should not go unpunished, using the trope of national guilt to argue that everyone was collectively responsible for the continuation of slavery. They aimed to establish the guilt of those who contributed towards slavery directly by enslaving Africans, and indirectly by purchasing goods produced by enslaved individuals. Abolitionists blurred the boundaries between the idea of guilt as a rational judgement that someone has broken a law or social code, and the idea of guilt as an emotion that emerged from a shared responsibility for the welfare of others, thereby combining rational and emotive rhetoric to persuade people to campaign for abolition.

Abolitionists also employed epideictic rhetoric to evoke shame in response to slavery. For example, William Cowper implies that enslavers should be ashamed of their moral depravity and religious hypocrisy, questioning: 'Canst thou, and honour'd with a Christian name, / Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame?' ('Charity', 1782).[8] Shame is considered to be an emotional response to the judgment that one fails to conform to social expectations of polite and respectable behaviour that

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[6] Carey, *British Abolitionism* pp. 173-185.
[7] William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum* (London: M. Gurney, 1791).
[8] William Cowper, 'Charity', in *Poems: by William Cowper* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1782) ll. 180-181.

formed an ‘honour code’.[9] Adam Smith argued that the ‘impartial spectator’ allows ‘the man who has broke through all those measures of conduct’ to feel ‘a very high degree of that shame which he would be exposed to if his actions should ever come to be generally known’.[10] Smith portrays shame as an indicator of immorality arising from the impartial spectator’s self-evaluation, which is heightened when others become aware of the sinful conduct. As Roy Porter argues: ‘morality was the passport people had to display to prove that they were abiding by the social code. Honour and shame provided the motivation.’[11] Abolitionists used deliberative rhetoric to create their own social code concerning goods produced by enslaved labour: consumption was shameful, while abstention was honourable. This chapter analyses how and why abolitionists employed abstention rhetoric, which is the term that I use to refer to the persuasive language that incorporated elements of forensic, epideictic, and deliberative rhetoric with the specific aim of promoting abstention as a form of direct action.

While shame signifies that one’s actions had damaged their moral reputation, guilt signifies one’s responsibility for committing a crime that negatively impacts others. Roscoe’s *Wrongs* illustrates this distinction by depicting ‘guilt’ as an inevitable consequence of contributing towards another person’s suffering, whilst implying that ‘remorse and shame’ are only felt by those whose conscience renders them sensitive to emotional triggers following an assessment of their own immoral behaviour. Smith

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[9] Krista K. Thomason, ‘Shame and Contempt in Kant's Moral Theory’, *Kantian Review,* 18.2 (2013) pp. 221-40; K. A. Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010) p. 177.
[10] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 137.
[11] Roy Porter, ‘Enlightenment and Pleasure’, in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (London: Macmillan Press, 1996) pp. 1-18 (p. 7).

argued that those who commit ‘the most dreadful crimes’ take great measures ‘to avoid even the suspicion of guilt’, as their shame would be heightened if others knew of their crimes.[12] The distinction between guilt and shame was not always so clear cut in abolitionist literature, as the two terms were often used interchangeably during the period.[13] Nevertheless, using the distinction in this chapter serves the methodological purpose of differentiating between the two aims of abstention rhetoric: the depiction of collective guilt sought to inspire a sense of national responsibility towards enslaved Africans; whilst the immorality of indirect contributions to slavery sought to inspire the reader’s shame at their own unethical behaviour to encourage abolitionist action as a form of moral redemption.

Abstention rhetoric urged readers to consider the moral implications of their consumption habits, and encouraged them to replace the consumption of unethically produced goods with the consumption of abolitionist literature – essentially using the marketplace to trade guilt for honour. An increase in disposable income led to the ‘consumer revolution’ of the late-eighteenth century, as consumers were presented with a greater variety of choices regarding how to spend their financial surplus, since they could now afford to purchase ‘luxury’ commodities in addition to the usual necessities.[14] Consumption habits came to signal wealth and led to a culture of ‘conspicuous consumption’, whereby those attempting to permeate class barriers

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[12] Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 138.
[13] See: Phil Hutchinson, *Shame and Philosophy: An Investigation in the Philosophy of Emotions and Ethics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Anne-Marie Kilday and David Nash, *Cultures of Shame: Exploring Crime and Morality in Britain 1600-1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Hannah Dawson, ‘Shame in Early modern thought: from sin to sociability’, *History of European Ideas,* 45.3 (2019) pp. 377-398.
[14] Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) p. 7; Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa, 1982) p. 20.

purchased luxury goods to demonstrate their upward mobility and social promotion.[15] Although sugar was initially considered to be a 'luxury' that only the richest could afford, Sidney Mintz highlights that the price of sugar declined towards the end of the eighteenth century, so that it became more accessible to the working classes, transforming 'from luxury to necessity'.[16] The reduced price of sugar meant that its consumption was no longer considered as a display of wealth, so those seeking upward mobility found an alternative way to appear superior: by scrutinising the moral implications of their consumption habits.

Increased disposable income led an increasing number of consumers to believe that the ethical implications of commercial exchanges was more important than price. Many abolitionists used this opportunity to encourage consumers to establish their moral prestige by abstaining from West India sugar (produced by enslaved Africans). Putting enslaved individuals' happiness over their own pleasure at consuming sugar drew on notions of British sensibility and Christian self-sacrifice, allowing abstainers to claim the moral high ground. For those who were reluctant to forego sugar completely, abstainers promoted the slightly more expensive East India 'free labour' sugar as a more ethical alternative to indirectly contributing towards

[15] Michael McKeon, 'Aestheticising the Critique of Luxury: Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*', *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods,* ed. by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) pp. 57-68 (p. 58).

[16] Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986) p. 196; Diedre Coleman, 'Conspicuous Consumption: White Abolitionism and English Women's Protest Writing the 1790s', *ELH,* 61.2 (1994) pp. 341-362 (p. 344). The working classes were able to purchase tea at a low price, owing to both government protectionism and the East India Company's monopoly, which increased the demand for sugar to sweeten the popular beverage see: Julie L. Holcomb, 'Blood-Stained Sugar: Gender, Commerce and the British Slave-Trade Debates', *Slavery & Abolition,* 35.4 (2014) pp. 611-28 (p. 614). As a result, annual sugar consumption in Britain rose tenfold between 1700 and 1790, see: James Walvin, 'Slavery, Mass Consumption, and the Dynamics of the Atlantic World: An Overview', in *Representing Slavery: Art, Artefacts and Archives in the Collections of the National Maritime Museum,* ed. by Douglas Hamilton and Robert J. Blyth (London: In association with the National Maritime Museum, 2007) pp. 16-26 (pp. 19, 24).

slavery.[17] Abstainers hoped that reduced sales of West India sugar would decrease the profitability of enslaved labour, forcing enslavers to consider emancipation and the benefits of free labour to avoid economic ruin. Abstainers depicted Britain's national guilt, arguing that the nation's moral economy was more valuable than its financial economy. Charlotte Sussman explains that abstention efforts 'illustrate a discomfort with mercantilist imperialism, and seek to replace a market governed by tariffs and monopolies with one driven by the demands of individual consumers'.[18] A demand-driven economy granted power to consumers, which particularly appealed to those who lacked political representation and parliamentary influence. Religious dissenters, women, and colonial subjects were all unable to vote in the eighteenth century, and so abstention provided them with a means to achieve socioeconomic change, with the potential to extend its impact beyond the reaches of parliament by directly targeting the profits of slavery.

The abstention movement was supported by abolitionists from a variety of Christian sects, including Quakers and Evangelicals, who drew on the ancient belief that self-denial was an important aspect of religious piety.[19] The four main texts explored in this chapter were produced by writers from various Protestant backgrounds: Mary Birkett Card was a Quaker; William Fox was a Baptist; Andrew Burn was an Evangelical convert from 1772; and William Cowper was an Anglican Evangelical.[20] They represent the various Protestants who turned to abstention

[17] East India sugar was marketed as being produced by 'free' labour, but was still produced by indentured labour, which is now considered to be an alternative form of slavery. It was more expensive due to the government-imposed tariffs that protected West India interests (see Sussman).
[18] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties,* p. 23.
[19] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin, 2003).
[20] Josephine Teakle, 'Mary Birkett Card (1774-1817): Struggling to Become the Ideal Quaker Woman', *Quaker Studies,* 14.2 (2010) pp. 178-194 (p. 180); Anita McConnell, 'William Fox, 1736-1826', *ODNB*

rhetoric as an alternative method of political influence. As a woman, Birkett Card was unable to vote because of both religion and gender. Although Quakers largely conformed to the patriarchy, they allowed women more freedom in spiritual matters, so that they were able to preach and run their own meetings.[21] The distinctions between these different denominations lies outside the scope of this thesis, though religion clearly played a significant role in abolitionist literature, and the rhetoric of abstention was no exception.[22] Christians of all denominations were encouraged to reflect on their morality, atone for their guilt, and promote universal sympathy. Joseph Priestley entreated Britons to unite against slavery despite their sectarian differences, insisting that 'this is not the cause of Unitarianism, or Arianism, or of Trinitarians, but simply that of *humanity*, and our common *Christianity*'.[23] The abolitionist literature of Cowper, Birkett Card, Fox, and Burn all echo Christian theology by promoting abstention as a benevolent act of self-improvement that would relieve enslaved individuals' suffering.

(28th September 2006) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10045?rskey=QcEtNo&result=1 [Accessed 02/04/2021]; Richard C. Blake, 'Andrew Burn, 1742-1814', *ODNB* (3rd January 2008) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-56747?rskey=vUvdMg&result=1 [Accessed 02/04/2021]; John D. Baird, 'William Cowper, 1731-1800', *ODNB* (3rd October 2013) https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6513?rskey=mCEL6p&result=9 [Accessed 02/04/2021].

[21] Teakle, 'Mary Birkett Card', p. 180.

[22] For more on the relationship between religious beliefs (particularly in terms of Christian theology) and abstention, see: Porter, 'Enlightenment and Pleasure'; Clare Midgley, 'Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture', *Slavery and Abolition*, 17.3 (1996) pp. 137-162; Timothy Whelan, 'S. T. Coleridge, Joseph Cottle, and Some Bristol Baptists, 1794-96', in *English Romantic Writers and the West Country*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp. 99-114; Teakle, 'Mary Birkett Card'; Kristen Brill, 'Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America', *Women: A Cultural Review*, 24.2-3 (2013) pp. 237-238; Julie Holcomb, *Moral Commerce: Quakers and the Transatlantic Boycott of the Slave Labour Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[23] Joseph Priestley, *A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade* (Birmingham: Pearson & Rollason, 1788) p. 31.

Cowper, Birkett Card, Fox, and Burn all took a radical approach to the abstention campaign by using cannibalistic rhetoric to persuade their readers that sugar (and in some instances rum) was either 'steeped in the blood' (Fox), or saturated with the 'excessive Perspiration' (Burn), of the enslaved Africans who produced it.[24] Abolitionists used cannibalistic rhetoric to combat proslavery allegations that Africans practiced cannibalism, which were presented as evidence of African inferiority to justify their enslavement. Peter Hulme argues that the cannibalism trope is 'the mark of greatest imaginable cultural difference', which Mark Stein considers a 'potent rhetorical weapon […] used to justify belief in an inherent dichotomy between "savage" and "civilised"' on both sides of the slavery debate.[25] The slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano reverse the racial hierarchy by narrating how enslaved Africans initially feared that they had been captured to be eaten by their White enslavers. Showing this to be a fallacy indicates the likelihood that allegations of African cannibalism were just as misguided. Other abolitionists adopted cannibalistic rhetoric to present European consumers as cannibals, reversing the racialized cannibal stereotype to invert the racial hierarchy. Different abolitionist approaches to cannibalistic rhetoric emerged, though all variations intended to support the abstention movement. Some cannibalistic rhetoric claimed that sugar literally contained sweat, as featured in William Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint* (1788) and Andrew Burn's *A Second Address to the People of*

[24] William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum* (London: M. Gurney, 1791); Andrew Burn, *A Second Address to the People of Great Britain: Containing a New, and Most Powerful Argument to Abstain from the Use of West India Sugar, By an Eye Witness to the Facts Related* (London: M. Gurney, 1792).
[25] Peter Hulme, 'Introduction: The Cannibal Scene', *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 1-38 (p. 20); Mark Stein, 'Who's Afraid of Cannibals? Some Uses of the Cannibalism Trope in Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*', in *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies*, ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) pp. 96-107 (p. 97).

Great Britain (1792).[26] Meanwhile other abolitionist literature took a more figurative approach to cannibalistic rhetoric by claiming that sugar contained blood, including William Fox's *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum* (1791) and Mary Birkett Card's *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (1792).[27] Despite the different approaches, they all shared the common goal of inspiring the reader's guilt and shame at their indirect contributions to slavery as a tactic to encourage abolitionist action. The racial reversal of cannibalism incites revulsion towards goods produced by enslaved Africans to encourage abstention. It also challenges the misconception of African anthropophagy by portraying enslaved Africans as the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of cannibalism.

The abstention movement was itself a more radical approach to abolition, as it attacked slavery itself rather than just the slave trade. Having said that, cannibalistic rhetoric may have aimed for amelioration, rather than emancipation, as enslaved people's blood would not contaminate the products of their labour if they were treated better. Regardless of this distinction, and despite the efforts of over half a million British abstainers, the movement had limited success. The British abstention movement caused West India sugar sales to drop rapidly, while the sale of East India sugar increased more than tenfold over two years.[28] However, the height of the

[26] William Cowper, *The Negro's Complaint*, in *A Subject for Conversation and Reflection at the Tea Table* (London, 1788); Andrew Burn, *A Second Address to the People of Great Britain: Containing a New, and Most Powerful Argument to Abstain from the Use of West India Sugar, By an Eye Witness to the Facts Related* (London: M. Gurney, 1792). All subsequent references are to these editions.
[27] William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum* (London: M. Gurney, 1791); Mary Birkett Card, *A Poem on the African Slave Trade, Addressed to Her Own Sex, Part I and Part II* (Dublin: J. Jones, 1792). All subsequent references are to these editions.
[28] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains,* p. 193.

abstention movement coincided with the 1791 Haitian Revolution, with enslaved Africans in Saint Domingue rebelling against their enslavement. Saint Domingue was Europe's largest provider of sugar until the Haitian Revolution halted the island's sugar production.[29] As a result, demand for sugar severely outweighed supply, allowing British planters to export sugar to other European countries with increased prices to match the increased demand.[30] As Seymour Drescher argues, 'St. Domingue sounded the death knell for abstention as an effective political tactic' because 'the consumers of Europe easily cancelled out the abstainers in Britain.'[31] Furthermore, the abstention movement restricted its focus to sugar and rum, excluding other goods produced by enslaved Africans, such as cotton. When Thomas Clarkson was asked why the abstention movement did not include cotton, he replied that it would damage the economy too much because so many British labourers depended on cotton for an income.[32] A battle emerged between concerns for the nation's morality, and fears that abolishing slavery would damage the economy, leading to contradictory narratives about whether abolition was in the nation's best interests. These concerns meant that even if the abstention movement had significantly reduced the profitability of using enslaved labour to produce sugar, it would not have been enough to completely eliminate slavery because enslaved Africans were still producing cotton. A 'free cotton' movement eventually emerged in the 1840s and '50s, though by this point British slavery had already been

[29] Elizabeth Boody Schumpeter, *English Overseas Trade Statistics, 1697-1808* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960) pp.61-62.
[30] Holcomb, 'Blood-Stained Sugar', p. 624.
[31] Seymour Drescher, 'Women's Mobilization in the Era of Slave Emancipation: Some Anglo-French Comparisons' in *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation,* ed. by Kathryn Kish Sklar and James Brewer Stewart (Yale University Press, 2007) pp. 100-101; Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Anti-Slavery: British Mobilisation in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1987) p. 79.
[32] Drescher, 'Women's Mobilization', p. 101.

abolished.[33] The movement aimed to support American abolitionist efforts by reducing the amount of slave-grown cotton that Britain imported from America, and so the campaign had no relation to the abolition of British slavery.

Nevertheless, Clarkson considered the abstention movement primarily as a marketing campaign to promote petitioning and parliamentary reform. He claims that Fox's tract was successful in 'paving the way for signatures to the different petitions which we have all of us at heart; & […] in disposing the minds of such persons towards our cause, as we ourselves should have otherwise never reached.'[34] Clarkson demonstrates that reproachful rhetoric and the trope of national guilt could contribute towards a range of abolitionist aims, including abolishing the slave trade, ameliorating slavery, and emancipating enslaved individuals. This chapter begins by considering the transition from personal to collective guilt to explore how abstention rhetoric was used to further the abolitionist campaign. It then analyses how the radical use of cannibalistic rhetoric reinforced claims concerning consumer guilt to encourage abolitionist action.

Attributing Responsibility: Personal and Collective Guilt

[33] Margaret Hope Bacon, 'By Moral Force Alone: The Antislavery Women and Nonresistance', in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. by Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) pp. 275-300 (pp. 278-9); Susan Eva O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2010); Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014) p. 269; Holcomb, *Moral Commerce,* pp. 180-181.

[34] Thomas Clarkson, 'Letter to Josiah Wedgwood' [9 Jan 1792], in *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood,* III, ed. by Katherine Eufemia Farrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 184-186 (p. 184).

The guilt of slavery is most commonly attributed to individuals who enslaved Africans. Only a small minority of enslavers repented their sins and confessed their guilt before slavery was abolished. John Newton is a rare example: in *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* (1788) he expresses regret for previously being 'an active instrument' in slavery.[35] Newton had become an Anglican clergyman by this time, and so he felt bound 'to take shame to myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent, or repair, the misery and mischief to which I have, formerly, been accessary'.[36] He distinguishes between his shame at the thought of others knowing the 'misery and mischief' that he caused, and the inherent guilt that he feels for harming the enslaved. The public performance of guilt attempts to redeem his moral reputation to gain forgiveness from society and from God, prioritising the end of his own suffering over that of enslaved Africans.

Newton is the exception rather than the rule. Most enslavers defended slavery, which led many abolitionists to depict them as remorseless tyrants. In *A Poem on the African Slave Trade* (Part I, 1792), Mary Birkett Card claims that enslavers are unaware that they stain their moral reputation when they 'lave their hands impious in human gore', and that they lack the emotional deterrent to prevent such sinful behaviour because they are 'lost to [a] sense of shame' (Birkett Card, *Poem*). Their guilt automatically arises from their 'impious' participation in slavery, but shame only arises when they acknowledge the immorality of their actions. Enslaver's emotional deficiency leaves them 'dead to remorse', insensitive to the

[35] John Newton, *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Buckland & J. Johnson, 1788) p. 2.
[36] Ibid., p. 2.

shame that operates as an emotional indicator of threats to their morality. As a result, their sins go unchecked, and they continue to inflict 'th'extreme of human mis'ry' upon enslaved Africans. Edward Long (1774) and Samuel Thomas Soemmering (1784) attempted to justify slavery by claiming that Africans resembled apes more than humans.[37] Birkett Card challenges this by insisting that Africans are 'human' because they can feel emotions, contrasted against the dehumanised enslavers who are 'more rav'nous than the foulest beasts of prey'. The enslavers are dehumanised by their animalistic, predatory behaviour (demonstrated by the zoomorphism comparing enslavers to 'beasts') and complete disregard for emotional signifiers of morality. The enslaved can feel misery, but the enslaved cannot feel shame, suggesting that Africans have superior emotional capabilities to Europeans.

Several lines of Birkett Card's verse appear in Thomas Branagan's poem *The Penitential Tyrant; or, Slave Trader Reformed* (1807), which expresses Branagan's repentance for his past contributions to slavery to demonstrate that not all enslavers were completely lost to a 'sense of shame'.[38] Branagan does not reference Birkett Card, or acknowledge her as the original author of the lines that he incorporates into his own verse with a few alterations [see fig. 2, 3, and 4].[39] Branagan was born in

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[37] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, Or, General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of That Island: With Reflections on Its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws, and Government,* II (London: T. Lowndes, 1774); Samuel Thomas Soemmering, *On the Bodily Difference between the Moor and the European* (Frankfurt, 1784). See also: Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (London: C. Dilly, 1799). For more on the history of racial zoomorphism and scientific racism see: Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages: Ancient Roots of Modern Prejudice in Western Culture* (East Sussex: Routledge, 1999) pp. 51-128.

[38] Thomas Branagan, *The Penitential Tyrant; or, Slave Trader Reformed, A Pathetic Poem, in Four Cantos*, 2nd edn (New York: Samuel Wood, 1807). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[39] Branagan makes subtle revisions to Birkett Card's original, such as word substitutions and re-ordering the lines. For example, in Birkett Card's poem 'Dead to remorse' appears on line 171, followed by the lines beginning 'Now dead to hope' which span lines 175-184. This order is reversed in Branagan's poem, as he includes the 'Now dead to hope' section first, and then includes the 'Dead

Ireland, becoming a sailor aboard slave ships and then a foreman on an Antigua plantation, until eventually a Methodist conversion inspired him to renounce his sinful past.[40] He settled in Philadelphia after Pennsylvania's Abolition Act (1780) had outlawed slavery and changed its purpose to abolishing throughout America. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society had strong connections with the British abolitionist movement, particularly with Irish Quakers; although Branagan never officially joined the society, it is likely that other members introduced him to British abolitionist literature, including Birkett Card's poem.[41]

Branagan directly copies Birkett Card's lines to admit that he was once 'Dead to remorse', though he also makes some revisions to distinguish between his past sins and his present repentance. Branagan includes Birkett Card's line 'Tyrant, the cause, the guilt with thee must dwell' in his own poem, though he exchanges 'Tyrant' for 'Villains'. At first this appears counter-intuitive considering that Branagan is the eponymous '*Penitential Tyrant'*. However, Branagan stresses that he is no longer involved in the enslavement of Africans, and so the pluralised noun distances Branagan (a singular repentant tyrant) from the 'villains' who continue to engage in slavery. The intertextuality allows Branagan to distinguish between his past tyranny and his present penitence, reinforced by another revision replacing Birkett Card's 'We call them stubborn – apply the stroke' with his own 'I call'd them stubborn, and appli'd the stroke'. Changing the pronoun from 'we' to 'I' forms a personal confession

to remorse' reference afterwards with several additions and revisions, which can all be seen in figures 2, 3, and 4.

[40] Christopher N. Phillips, 'Epic, Anti-Eloquence, and Abolitionism: Thomas Branagan's *Avenia* and *The Penitential Tyrant*', *Early American Literature,* 44.3 (2009) pp. 605-637 (p. 605).

[41] Phillips, 'Epic, Anti-Eloquence, and Abolitionism', p. 605; Beverly Tomek, '"From motives of generosity, as well as self-preservation": Thomas Branagan, Colonization, and the Gradual Emancipation Movement', *American Nineteenth Century History,* 6.2 (2005) pp. 121-147 (p. 122).

narrative to admit his own guilt, and changing the tense locates his contributions to slavery firmly in the past. While Birkett Card criticises those 'whose avarice urged the deed, / Who with unblushing front for slavery plead' (Part II), Branagan offers his own repentance as a counter-narrative by confessing 'I blush with guilt, and terror more profound'. The blush is an embodied signifier of his guilt, presented as proof that he is sensible of the sins that he has committed, for which he now tries to atone. Newton and Branagan's confessions of guilt encouraged other enslavers to follow their example, aiming to persuade them that they could redeem themselves if they repented their sins and renounced all future associations with slavery.

Now dead to hope they see resistance vain,
They in their manly breasts conceal their pain;
A silent grief to furious rage succeeds,
And by resentment stung - their whole soul bleeds.
Firm in despair their hands refuse the yoke,
We call them stubborn - and apply the stroke;
Their reeking backs the dire correction shew,
Yet they unmov'd, nor fear nor tremor know;
Their strength heroic claims a nobler name,
And shews not their's - but their oppressor's shame.
Say not, that if not humbled they rebel;
Tyrant! the cause, the guilt with thee must dwell;
For when they view the authors of their woe,
No wonder if fierce passion aims the blow!

(Fig. 2. Birkett Card, *A Poem,* lines 175-188)

Say not, "that if not humbled, they rebel,"
Villains the cause, the guilt with you must dwell
For when they view the authors of their woe,
No wonder if resentment aims the blow;

(Fig. 3. Branagan, *Penitential Tyrant,* p. 68)

Now dead to hope, they see resistance vain,
They in their valiant breasts conceal their pain;
While silent grief to furious rage succeeds,
And fill'd with anger, every bosom bleeds;
Thus in despair, their necks refuse the yoke,
I've call'd them stubborn, and appli'd the stroke
Their lacerated backs the scourges show,
Still they invincible, no tremors know;
Their strength intrepid, claims a nobler name,
And shows not their's, but their oppressor's shame.
With penitential tears, I this affirm,
For, to my grief, I've borne the baneful term;
For I myself have oft stood by unmov'd,
Dead to entreaty I have often prov'd;
Dead to remorse, I often have stood by,
And still as often did the lash apply!

(Fig. 4. Branagan, *Penitential Tyrant*, p. 69)

However, abolitionists feared that portraying the guilt of enslavers alone would not inspire the British public to take abolitionist action, as it allowed readers to shift the blame onto another party. Although abolitionists believed that enslavers shared the largest portion of blame for Britain's sinful role in slavery, they believed that all British citizens were implicated in some way, either by indirect contributions towards slavery or by allowing slavery to continue. They argued that all British citizens shared a portion of the nation's guilt, particularly those who purchased goods produced by enslaved Africans, and so they were all responsible for abolishing slavery. In *A Sermon On the Subject of the Slave Trade* (1788), Joseph Priestley contends that the British public could no longer 'pretend innocence, and leave all the guilt upon those who are immediately concerned in this traffic', for:

> no less guilty are we ourselves, who, in order to have our sugars, and other West-India commodities, a little cheaper (though this will be found to be a mistake) connive at, and encourage, these iniquitous proceedings.[42]

[42] Priestley, *A Sermon*, p. 11.

The collective ‘we’ shows that the guilt is shared by all who at the very least overlook the ‘iniquitous proceedings’ despite knowing that they are indirectly contributing towards slavery, and at the worst ‘encourage’ it with their greed. Priestley mentions the common misconception that commodities produced by enslaved labour, including sugar, were cheaper than those produced by free labour. Though he does not elaborate on why this is a ‘mistake’, he refers to the import duties that rendered East India sugar more expensive than Caribbean sugar.[43] Yet the East India Company also received criticism for abusing the human rights of indentured workers in Bengal between 1788 and 1795.[44] The East India Company sought to divert attention from such accusations by advertising ‘free labour’ sugar, and profiting from its increasing demand despite the duties.[45] Parliament imposed these duties, and so Priestley concedes that ‘this guilt will lie the heaviest, no, doubt, upon the ministers of state’, although everyone has the ability to ‘petition and remonstrate on the subject’.[46] Therefore, refusal to participate in abolitionist action, from petitions to abstention, was considered to be a sin that deserved a proportion of the blame.

Consumer Guilt: The Rhetoric of Abstention

In *A Poem on the African Slave Trade,* Mary Birkett Card argued that accountability for the continuation of slavery extended beyond those personally engaged in the trade of enslaved Africans. She employed the abolitionist trope of collective guilt to

[43] Ulbe Bosma, ‘East Indian Sugar Versus Slave Sugar’, in *The Sugar Plantation in India and Indonesia: Industrial Production, 1770-2010* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 44-87 (p. 45).
[44] H. V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[45] Andrew Smith and Jennifer Johns, ‘Historicising Modern Slavery: Free-Grown Sugar as an Ethics-Driven Market Category in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal of Business Ethics* (2019) pp. 1-22 (p. 12).
[46] Priestley, *A Sermon,* p. 13.

reveal that the British public indirectly contributed to slavery when they purchased and consumed goods that were produced by enslaved labour. Birkett Card's uncle, George Harrison, was one of the Quakers who founded the London Committee in 1787, and is believed to have inspired Birkett Card's anti-slavery sentiments.[47] Josephine Teakle argues that Harrison may have assisted with the publication and/or circulation of Birkett Card's abolitionist poetry, since disseminating such literature was one of the abolitionist society's main roles.[48] In 1792 Harrison expressed his own abolitionist sentiments in an *Address […] on the Subject of the Slave Trade* to support William Wilberforce's second attempt at proposing the Abolition Bill.[49] Harrison wrote that the slave trade contradicted 'the principles of Christianity' by spilling 'the blood of Africa', leading him to entreat the Lords to acquit 'the guilt […] brought upon this nation'.[50] The inhumane treatment of Africans combined with religious hypocrisy creates a sense of national guilt, which is a theme that Birkett Card encompasses in her *Poem* (Parts I and II) published the same year. In Part II, Birkett Card expresses the hope that 'soon will every virtuous British peer, / Rise with one voice' to advocate abolition, encouraging politicians to 'Think, when arraign'd before the bar of Heav'n, / What vote you'll most sincerely wish to have given!' Birkett Card shows her awareness of the parliamentary campaign, combining religious language with forensic rhetoric to form a parallel between God's judgement and their own when assessing whether slavery was a crime. As David Brion Davis writes, for many Quakers 'the validity of religious truth, and of man's ability to know right from

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[47] Teakle, 'Mary Birkett Card', p. 179.
[48] Ibid., p. 180.
[49] George Harrison, *Address to the Right Reverend the Prelates of England and Wales on the Subject of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Parsons and Ridgway, 1792).
[50] Ibid., p. 7.

wrong, depended upon a perception of slavery as sin'.[51] Birkett Card encourages British peers to vote against human trafficking, but without directly ordering them to do so. Instead, she uses the imperative 'think' to command British politicians to consider the moral and religious implications of their actions – particularly in relation to slavery – whilst allowing them the agency to make such political decisions for themselves.

Like her uncle, Birkett Card portrays the collective guilt of the nation, drawing on patriotic notions of national identity by claiming that 'all Europe views your shame' since slavery is 'sanction'd by an *English* name'. She argues that a collective effort is needed to atone for such a national sin, advising them to all 'rise with one voice' as a united front against the slave trade. Birkett Card takes her own reproachful rhetoric further by encouraging her readers to join the abstention movement, particularly since it allowed women to take political action.[52] Clare Midgley explores how the *Poem* allowed Birkett Card to enter into political discussions regarding both the abolition of the slave trade and the roles that women played in society.[53] Publishing literature that discussed the political and ethical implications of domestic food

[51] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) pp. 325-6. See also: Nini Rodgers, 'Two Quakers and a Utilitarian: The Reaction of Three Irish Women Writers to the Problem of Slavery, 1789-1807', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 100C. 4 (2000) pp. 137-57; Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight Against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[52] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992) p. 35. See also: Bronwen Everill, *Not Made by Slaves: Ethical Capitalism in the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).
[53] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*; Phyllis Mack, 'In a Female Voice: Preaching and Politics in Eighteenth-Century British Quakerism', *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. by Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998) pp. 248-263.

consumption blurred the boundaries between public and private, creating a sense of collective responsibility, and thus collective guilt, for the national sin of slavery.

Birkett Card sought to raise awareness for the political power of consumer choice and the relatively unknown consequences of consumer activity. Purchasing sugar became a political act, with abstention rhetoric encouraging consumers to consider the repercussions of their actions in relation to the politics and economics of colonial life.[54] The collective pronouns indicate a collective responsibility towards enslaved Africans, for 'we increase or mitigate their wrongs' by consumption and abstention respectively.

> If from our lips we push the plant away
> For which the liberties of thousands pay,
> Of thousands once as blest, and born as free,
> And nurs'd with care, (tho' not so soft,) as we;
> If in benev'lence *firm*, we this can dare,
> And in our brethren's sufferings hold no share,
> In no small part their long-borne pangs will cease,
> And we to souls unborn may whisper peace. (Birkett Card, *A Poem*)

The rhyming couplets connect 'away' with 'pay', which alludes to the suffering of the enslaved Africans who are far away in the colonies. This is juxtaposed with the rhyme of 'free' and 'we' in the following couplet, positioning the enslavement of Africans in stark contrast to the relative freedom of Birkett Card and her readers. Birkett Card reminds her readers that their freedom allows them to choose the goods that they consume, and so she encourages them to consider not only the monetary

[54] Alan Richardson, 'Darkness Visible: Race and Representation in Bristol Abolitionist Poetry, 1770-1810', *The Wordsworth Circle,* 27.2 (1996) pp. 67-72 (p. 67).

cost of the sugar that they purchase, but also the fact that it could cost the ‘liberties of thousands’ who were once ‘as free […] as we’.

The juxtaposition of these two rhyming couplets simultaneously indicates the division, and connection, between the producers and consumers of sugar. Referring to Africans as ‘our brethren’ reinforces this relationship between the enslaved producers and the British consumers, inspiring a sense of global unity that contributes towards the poem’s overall message that God’s ‘best law is universal love’. This didactic approach promotes abstention as an act of ‘benev’lence’ that would help readers to redeem themselves by relieving the enslaved individuals’ suffering. Birkett Card implies that abstention could potentially abolish not only the slave trade, but also slavery itself, as she pleads ‘Oh, let us rise and burst the Negro’s chain’. The chain refers to the manacles that kept Africans enslaved, and symbolises that enslaved Africans were linked with the British public by their respective production and consumption of Caribbean sugar.[55] The symbolism intended to bridge the geographical distance between Britain and the colonies by stressing the interdependence of the domestic demand and the colonial supply of enslaved labour. Abstention sought to reduce this demand so that supply would decrease proportionately, intending to eventually break the chain of slavery by emancipating all enslaved Africans.

[55] Charlotte Sussman, ‘Women and Politics of Sugar, 1792’, *Representations,* 48 (1994) pp. 48-69 (p. 48).

Abstention rhetoric also shows that women could contribute towards political change, despite being unable to vote. The subtitle makes it clear from the start that Birkett Card's poem is 'Addressed to her own sex', specifically aimed at encouraging women to join the abstention movement by insisting that 'Yes, sisters, yes, to us the task belongs.' Birkett Card rejects the notion that the feminine domestic domain held no political influence by insisting that abstention played 'no small part' in relieving the 'sufferings' of enslaved Africans:

> Say not that small's the sphere in which we move,
> And our attempts would vain and fruitless prove;
> Not so - we hold *a most important share*,
> In all the evils - all the wrongs they bear,
> And tho' their woes *entire* we can't remove,
> We may th'*increasing* mis'ries which they prove,
> Push far away the plant for which they die,
> And in this one small thing our taste deny;
> We must, we ought, 'tis Justice points the way;
> Mercy and Charity loudly call - "obey." (Birkett Card, *A Poem*)

Birkett Card refutes claims that women were powerless to contribute towards abolishing slavery, insisting that 'we hold a most important share' in 'all the evils – all the wrongs' committed against enslaved Africans. The repetition of 'all' thwarts any excuse to escape culpability as they collectively 'share' the blame with enslavers. There is an outdated notion, conceived of in the twentieth century, about the existence of 'separate spheres' in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (the concept that men were solely responsible for political issues while women were solely concerned with domestic matters).[56] More recent literary criticism explores the

[56] See: Sudesh Vaid, 'Ideologies on Women in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1850s-70s', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20.43, (1985) pp. 63-67; Linda Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female World, Women's Place: the Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History*, 75.1 (1988) pp. 9-39; Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society, 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1988); Linda Colley*, Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale

ideology of Romantic sociability based on interactions between various communities and spheres of influence.[57] As a woman and a Quaker, Birkett Card represents the intersection of multiple spheres of influence relating to gender, religion, and politics (through her uncle's connections to SEAST), and so her abolitionist activities discredit the notion of separate spheres. Birkett Card exemplifies how different communities worked together towards an abolitionist, or even emancipationist, goal – a goal that would be aided by abstention. Clare Midgley highlights that Quaker's 'emphasis on the individual guilt of supporting slavery through consumption of slave-grown goods, and individual responsibility to abstain was tied to the Quaker's belief in the importance of following the dictates of one's conscience', and so abstention 'carried connotations of the moral righteousness of renouncing a sin.'[58] Abstaining from sugar is 'one small' sacrifice that Birkett Card believes would eventually have a big impact on enslaved Africans' welfare, and so she draws on both her Quaker beliefs and her feminine sensibility to encourage readers to work together in the name of 'Justice' to diminish the 'increasing miseries' of enslaved Africans.

It is difficult to ascertain the poem's exact readership due to the lack of information concerning subscribers, contemporary reviews, and quantities of printed

University Press, 1992); Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, 36 (1993) pp. 384-414; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850,* 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 2019).

[57] Stephen C. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2009) p. 8; Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000) pp. 2-3; Gillian Russell, and Clara Tuite, 'Introducing Romantic Sociability', in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[58] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992) pp. 35, 36.

copies.[59] Abolitionist literature was frequently subsidised by charitable donations so that it could be freely distributed to a wider audience.[60] This method of circulation intended to recruit new members to join the abolitionist campaign, rather than preaching to the converted, though this makes it incredibly difficult to establish the scope of readership. Nevertheless, it seems that Part I of Birkett Card's *Poem* had a good response, because the preface of Part II explains that Birkett Card was 'encouraged by the kind and unmerited Partiality with which the first Part […] has been received'. As Josephine Teakle argues, although we cannot determine the scale of the poem's audience, we can assume its popularity since it went into two editions and two parts.[61] Moreover, Branagan's intertextual relationship with Birkett Card's poem reveals that Birkett Card's readership was not exclusively female, nor exclusively British, demonstrating the wide appeal of her abolitionist discourse and the extensive circulation of literature. Stephen C. Behrendt conjectures that such gendered addresses were 'something of a rhetorical subterfuge that ostensibly shielded the poets from charges of pursuing in print a supposedly inappropriate subject while permitting them to do just that.'[62] Birkett Card attempts to minimise the threat posed to the patriarchy by seeming to direct her commands at women, rather than men, as a defensive strategy to protect herself against potential criticism and misogyny. William Wilberforce raised concerns about women campaigning for abolition, arguing that 'all private exertions […] become their character, but for ladies to meet, to publish, to go from house to house stirring up petitions – these appear to

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[59] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) p. 5.
[60] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties,* p. 135.
[61] Josephine Teakle, 'The works of Mary Birkett Card 1774-1817, originally collected by her son Nathaniel Card in 1834: an edited transcription with an introduction to her life and works in two volumes' (unpublished dissertation, University of Gloucestershire, 2004) p. 155.
[62] Behrendt, *British Women Poets,* p. 156.

me proceedings unsuited to the female character as delineated in scripture.'[63] Although Wilberforce's views support the theory of 'separate spheres', his outlook is not representative of the entire population. The fact that women like Birkett Card were abstaining, petitioning, and publishing highly politicised propaganda shows that many women refused to adhere to such restrictive beliefs, and integrated with multiple overlapping spheres of influence.

The contrast between Wilberforce's criticism, and Birkett Card's advocacy, of female contributions to political campaigns reveals the distinction between Evangelicals and Quakers. Although Quakers still adhered to a patriarchal structure, they granted women a greater freedom in educational, charitable, and domestic matters than other religious dissenters. In 1792, Quaker William Allen contended that women 'are universally considered as the Models of every just and virtuous sentiment - and we naturally look up to them as Patterns in all the softer virtues. Their example, therefore, in abstaining from the use of West India produce must refute every objection - and render the performance of the Duty as universal as their Influence.'[64] Birkett Card's poem reflects the Quaker belief that women were virtuous role models, with the gendered address seeking to persuade women to join the abstention movement and inspire 'the kindling force of sympathetic love' to influence their male relations (Birkett Card, *A Poem*). Birkett Card admits that 'their woes *entire* we can't remove', reminding the reader that abstention had to be accompanied by parliamentary change to re-establish the 'justice of our laws', which implies her

[63] William Wilberforce, Letter to Thomas Babington [31 January 1826], cited in Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce by His Sons,* 5 volumes, V (London: John Murray, 1839) pp. 264-5.
[64] William Allen, *The Duty of Abstaining from the Use of West India Produce: A Speech delivered at Coachmasters' Hall, January 12, 1792* (London: T. W. Hawkins, 1792) p. 23.

support for the 1792 Abolition Bill proposed the same year that the poem was published. Nevertheless, women played an 'important' role as active agents in the market, with the domestic sphere's economic power convincing certain grocers to stock East India sugar to replace West India sugar.[65] Sussman argues that 'the passivity of "taste" and "fashion" have been replaced by a new attention to the moral process of choosing and displaying commodities'.[66] Birkett Card encourages women to consider the moral implications of their consumption habits, arguing that consumer choices could potentially have a significant political impact if everyone worked together towards a collective goal, which leads her to conclude that 'we must, we ought' to abstain (Birkett Card, *A Poem*).

However, the abstention movement was challenged by arguments that sugar was a necessity, and that abstention could be detrimental to one's health. Sidney Mintz records how sugar's status changed over time, transforming from a 'rarity in 1650', and 'a luxury in 1750', to 'a virtual necessity by 1850.'[67] Yet claims for the necessity of sugar arose as early as 1715, when Dr Frederick Slare proposed that there is 'a strong and home argument to recommend the use of sugar to infants' as an 'agreeable' substitute for breast milk.[68] Sussman establishes that 'Slare naturalizes sugar consumption by associating it with the biological processes of the female body; the child who can have sugar substituted for its mother's milk is as dependent on international trade for sustenance as it is on her breast.'[69] Sugar is

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[65] Hochschild, *Bury the Chains*, p. 193.
[66] Sussman, 'Women and Politics of Sugar', p. 62.
[67] Mintz, *Sweetness and Power,* p. 116.
[68] Frederick Slare, *A Vindication of Sugars against the Charge of Dr. Willis, other Physicians and common Prejudices, Dedicated to the Ladies* (London: Tim Goodwin, 1715) p. 32.
[69] Sussman, 'Women and Politics of Sugar', p. 49.

domesticated through claims of its nutritious value to supplement the feminine role of caregiver. This theory remained influential several decades later, as a supporter wrote anonymously in 1792 that 'my reason tells me, and experience tells me, and medical authority assures me, that sugar is not a luxury; but has become, by constant use, a necessary of life; and great injury have many persons done to their constitutions by totally abstaining from it.'[70] Many came to view sugar consumption as a biological need supported by 'medical authority', presenting a problem to the abolitionist abstention movement.

Abolitionist abstention rhetoric sought to discredit claims regarding the nutritious value of sugar by arguing that it was a luxury, rather than a necessity. Birkett Card highlights that 'while sipping o'er the sweets of charming tea', consumers fail to consider 'how oft their lux'ry robs the wretch of rest' and happiness, as they increase demand for the products of enslaved labour (Birkett Card, *A Poem*). The emotional theft illustrates that consumers are complicit in the crimes of slavery, and although Birkett Card appears reluctant to directly assign guilt to anyone other than enslavers, she suggests that consumers share a proportion of the blame. Birkett Card claims that abstention could achieve abolition 'If we the produce of their toils refuse, / If we no more the blood-stain'd lux'ry choose', rhyming 'choose' with 'refuse' to stress the powers of consumer choice. Describing sugar as a 'blood-stain'd lux'ry' suggests that sugar was neither a luxury nor a necessity because it was contaminated by the blood of the enslaved Africans who produced it. It implies that

[70] *Strictures on an Address to the People of Great Britain on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum* (London: T. Boosey, 1792) p. 6.

those who consumed such sugar were guilty of cannibalism, intending to inspire the reader's revulsion towards sugar as a deterrent from consumption.

Birkett Card intended to inspire the reader's revulsion not only towards sugar, but also towards certain consumption habits. Julie Holcomb explores how the abstention movement engaged with depictions of 'uncontrolled, narcissistic female consumption,' which 'opened up the slave-trade debate to larger questions about feminine consumption and colonial expansion, creating in the process a broader base of support for the boycott of slave labor'.[71] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace argues that 'the woman who refuses to eat sugar [...] boycotts not only a product but also a cultural construction of herself as an unconscionable consumer, as an unscrupulous appetite', indicating that 'she is not to be associated with mindless sensual pleasures.'[72] This leads Kowaleski-Wallace to question:

> Are colonial products, which "corrupt" British tastes by infiltrating British blood, the source of contamination, or does the origin of contamination lie within a gendered body that cannot control its insatiable appetite in the first place?[73]

This concern regarding the inability to control one's appetites extends beyond the parameters of both gender and race, and resonates with debates about emotional indulgence and emotional incontinence. Birkett Card feels a connection between herself and enslaved individuals, as she writes: 'A sorrowing sympathy surrounds my heart, / And mild compassion bleeds in every part' (Birkett Card, *A Poem*). Kowaleski-Wallace argues that this 'unites the female abolitionist and the male slave

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[71] Holcomb, *Moral Commerce,* p. 37.
[72] Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) p. 41.
[73] Ibid., p. 42.

in more ways than one' because 'if both […] bleed, both can also be seen as contaminated', especially because female menstruation was considered as a form of contaminated incontinence.[74] Yet I argue that Birkett Card uses the physical incontinence of bleeding as a metaphor for emotional incontinence (sorrow for the enslaved, and guilt and shame for the consumers), which leads to emotional contamination. The consumer's greed drives them to consume enslaved individuals' sorrow, which is either ignored to begin the cycle again (with consumption also causing enslaved individuals' sorrow), or is transformed into guilt and shame. Cannibalistic rhetoric became part of a more radical approach to abstention, which argued that the guilt of indirectly contributing to slavery was increased by the sins of cannibalism. Abolitionists argued that abstention was the only way to atone for such immoral behaviour, with Part II of Birkett Card's poem encouraging the reader to 'repent, while yet repentance may be given'.

Radical Abstention Rhetoric: The Racial Reversal of Cannibalism Stereotypes

Cannibalistic rhetoric was employed to benefit the abolitionist movement in several ways. It aimed to encourage abstention by inspiring revulsion towards sugar produced by enslaved Africans, while simultaneously reversing the common misconception that Africans practiced cannibalism, thereby encouraging the reader to consider their own morality. In 1774 Edward Long wrote that the African 'custom of gormandizing on human flesh has in it something so nauseous, so repugnant to nature and reason, that it would hardly admit of belief, if it had not been attested by a

[74] Ibid., p. 49.

multitude of voyagers; some of whom affirm to have been eye-witnesses of it'.[75] Long accuses Africans of cannibalism to portray them as gluttonous, animalistic, and immoral creatures that are incapable of exerting 'reason' or self-control, with such unnatural behaviour used to justify their enslavement. A similar accusation was made by politician Bryan Edwards in 1789, in a speech responding to 'Mr Wilberforce's Propositions in the House of Commons'.[76] Edwards claimed that the enslaved Africans who participated in Tacky's Revolt in Jamaica (1760) slaughtered 'white' overseers and their families 'in the most savage manner, and then drank their blood mixed with rum.'[77] Such cannibalism was presented as evidence of the 'savage' nature of enslaved Africans so that slavery could be justified as a civilising process. It also allowed enslavers to argue that emancipation should be opposed as it would put White people in serious danger. Recent research has led Carl Plasa to conclude that such accounts were 'largely fabricated of inference and hearsay', with false representations of African cannibalism serving merely 'to fashion an image of the racial other as savage and inferior to the civilized white self and so fixing it as a legitimate candidate for colonial subjection'.[78] Both Edwards and Long owned plantations that were operated by enslaved Africans, so their allegations of African cannibalism intended to defend slavery and protect their own interests. Abolitionists reversed this stereotype by claiming that British consumers of sugar and rum were guilty of the cannibalism that they had once scorned in Africans. They presented Britain's insatiable hunger for commodities (including the commodified enslaved

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[75] Long, *The History of Jamaica,* p. 351.
[76] Bryan Edwards, *A Speech Delivered at a Free Conference Between the Honourable the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, Held 19th November 1789, On the Subject of Mr Wilberforce's Propositions in the House of Commons, Concerning the Slave Trade* (London: J. Debrett, 1790).
[77] Ibid., p. 49.
[78] Carl Plasa, '"Stained with Spots of Human Blood": Sugar, Abolition and Cannibalism', *Atlantic Studies*, 4.2 (2007) pp. 225-243 (p. 229).

Africans) to highlight that the nation was driven by greed and brutality, rather than enlightened thought and philanthropy. Abolitionists adopted cannibalistic rhetoric as a counter-hegemonic discourse to encourage moral self-reflection, with the implication that unethical consumption habits rendered White people more savage than civilised.

The racial reversal of cannibal stereotypes is presented in the slave narratives of Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano. In *Thoughts and Sentiments* (1787) Cugoano explains that when he 'saw several white people' it 'made me afraid that they would eat me'.[79] Accusing 'white people' of cannibalism reinforces the sinful behaviour of enslavers while situating Africans as the fearful victims. Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789) features a similar reaction, as Equiano believed that Europeans were enslaving Africans in order to eat them:

> When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate, and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me […] I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not.[80]

The Africans display a multitude of emotions in response to their enslavement, ranging from 'dejection and sorrow' to 'horror and anguish', the latter overwhelming Equiano to the extent that he faints as his body can no longer cope with the

[79] Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* [1787] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 9.
[80] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789) p. 63. All subsequent references are to this edition.

emotional torment that has 'overpowered' him. Stein argues that Equiano creates a '*strategically* "naïve"' belief in White cannibalism 'to expose the avarice of the plantation economy' and the slave trade.[81] In the words of Alan Rice, enslavers are presented as 'inhuman, cannibalistic demons' who transport enslaved Africans in 'the belly of ships that often become literal graves', which is 'shown to be an equivalence to the barbarism of cannibalism.[82] Slavery is exposed 'as a form of anthropophagy', encouraging readers to reconsider who they deemed savages.[83] Stein further argues that 'the one-sided reading of the signification of African physiognomy is unsettled and relativized by performing a reading of European physiognomy.'[84] The defamiliarisation of Europeans suggests that the issue is a lack of knowledge and understanding, rather than racial inequality. The fact that Equiano misinterprets his captor's motives exposes the likelihood that rumours of African cannibalism and Black inferiority are equally as misguided.

Despite the initial reassurance that the White men would not eat Equiano, his fear returns slightly later in the narrative. Equiano recalls being told that the ship was running low on food provisions, and so 'the captain and people told me in jest they would kill and eat me; but I thought them in earnest' (Equiano, p. 77). Although the Captain repeatedly jokes about eating Equiano, he occasionally relents by saying that 'black people were not good to eat' (Equiano, p. 79), which suggests a fear of

[81] Stein, 'Who's Afraid of Cannibals?', p. 98.
[82] Alan Rice, '"Who's Eating Whom": The Discourse of Cannibalism in the Literature of the Black Atlantic from Equiano's "Travels" to Toni Morrison's "Beloved"', *Research in African Literatures*, 29.4 (1998) pp. 106-121 (p. 113). See also: Michael Wiley, 'Consuming Africa: Geography and Identity in Olaudah Equiano's "Interesting Narrative"', *Studies in Romanticism,* 44.2 (2005) pp. 165-79 (p. 166).
[83] Brycchan Carey and Sara Salih, 'Introduction', to *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies*, ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) pp. 1-8 (p. 5).
[84] Stein, 'Who's Afraid of Cannibals?', p. 98.

racial contamination. The fact that the Captain was able to joke about practicing cannibalism without consequences reflects the benefits of his White male privilege, and reveals that enslavers relied on fear to discourage enslaved individuals from revolting against them. Contrastingly, when Equiano is asked if he had ever practiced cannibalism he simply, yet unequivocally, replies 'No'. Equiano's definitive reply is a clear denial of any involvement in cannibalistic practices. He is unable to make the same playful claims as the Captain without running the risk of perpetuating the racial stereotypes that Long and Edwards used to justify enslaving Africans. In fact, Ryan Hanley notes that the *Times* (1788) had previously accused Equiano of admitting that Africans committed cannibalism by consuming 'Sable Soup'.[85] Equiano's counter-hegemonic response was immediately published in the *Morning Post* (1788): 'thus sayeth the Almighty – "No Lyars, nor Devourers of human Rights, shall have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven"'.[86] The accusation that enslavers are cannibals who consumed African's human rights involves the 'careful appropriation and mimicry' of European cannibalism fears, forming a 'hierarchical inversion' that represents the 'fallen Christian Englishmen' who would not be able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.[87] Hanley argues that this exchange inspired Equiano to invert the cannibalism myth in his *Narrative*, published the following year, as a defensive strategy against charges of African inferiority.[88]

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[85] *Times*, 5th July 1788; Ryan Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing, c. 1770-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) p. 62.
[86] *Morning Post*, 5 July 1788; Hanley, *Beyond Slavery,* p. 62.
[87] William Mottolese, '"Almost an Englishman": Olaudah Equiano and the Colonial Gift of Language', *Bucknell Review*, 41.2 (1998) pp. 160-171 (p. 160).
[88] Hanley, *Beyond Slavery,* p. 62.

Equiano claims that the Captain 'jocularly' made these comments, with humorous intent, and yet he repeatedly draws the reader's attention to the trope of cannibalism to expose parallels between two types of sinful consumption: the eating – and the trading – of human flesh. The parallel is reinforced when Equiano refers to overseers as 'human butchers, who cut and mangle the slaves in a shocking manner […] and altogether treat them in every respect like brutes' (Equiano, p. 142). The commodification of enslaved Africans is shown when they are treated like animals who are bought and sold for the financial gain of their enslavers. They are physically abused to increase their productivity, satisfying their enslaver's sexual appetite and hunger for profit.[89] As Rice argues, Equiano uses cannibalistic rhetoric as part of a polemical strategy to advance the anti-slavery cause by depicting enslavers as inhuman cannibals, whilst highlighting 'the savagery at the heart of the Europeans' own everyday practices.'[90] Equiano and Cugoano's accounts initially seem to provide evidence that African superstitions were mistaken, but by alluding to the commodification of enslaved Africans they show that their fears were justified.[91] Cannibalism metaphorically represents the greed of those who profit from the products of enslaved labour, which ironically subverts the racial stereotype by portraying Africans as the victims, rather than the perpetrators, of cannibalism.

Many White abolitionists took a more radical approach to the racial reversal of cannibalistic stereotypes. While emancipated Black people directed their accusations of cannibalism specifically at their enslavers, White abolitionists extended the

[89] Vincent Woodard, *The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture*, ed. by Justin A Joyce, and Dwight A. McBride (New York: New York University Press, 2014) p. 37.
[90] Rice, '"Who's Eating Whom"', p. 114.
[91] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties,* p. 112.

accusation to include consumers of goods that were produced by enslaved labour. Cannibalistic rhetoric radicalised the abstention campaign by persuading the reader that sugar and rum contained the bodily fluids of the enslaved Africans that produced them. There were a few different approaches to cannibalistic imagery: some claimed that sugar contained sweat, as argued by William Cowper and Andrew Burn; while others claimed that sugar contained blood, as proposed by William Fox and Mary Birkett Card. These different approaches led to debates concerning whether it was more useful to portray the literal, or metaphorical, contamination of sugar and rum. Sweat was usually portrayed in a literal sense to inspire revulsion towards sugar, whereas blood was typically a metaphor for the moral corruption of such unethical consumption habits. There may be some debate about whether consuming tears and sweat should be classified as cannibalism, as it does not require the death of the person being consumed, though neither does the consumption of blood. Another possible point of contention concerns the fact that it involves consuming bodily effusions, rather than the body itself. Nevertheless, Cowper and Burn's abstention rhetoric presents sweat as a synecdoche for the enslaved individual's body; therefore, in the words of Carl Plasa, they argue that sugar consumption involves 'a literal rather than merely symbolic anthropophagy'.[92] The remainder of this chapter explores the differences between these presentations of literal and metaphorical contamination, including the role of synecdoche and metonym in cannibalistic rhetoric.

[92] Carl Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness: British and Caribbean Literatures of Sugar* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009) p. 43.

Each approach to cannibalistic rhetoric had its strengths and weaknesses, though they ultimately shared the same three goals. First, cannibalistic rhetoric encouraged readers to reflect on the morality of their consumption habits, intending to inspire their guilt and shame by highlighting the negative repercussions of their actions. Second, it aimed to encourage abstention by arousing disgust towards the sugar and rum that was produced by enslaved Africans. Third, abolitionists sought to undermine the notion of Black inferiority that was based on the misconception of African cannibalism, and reverse this racial hierarchy by demonstrating that Britons were in fact the barbaric cannibals. Collectively, these aims contributed towards the abolitionist movement's broader goals by presenting all interactions with slavery as sinful. By attributing guilt to indirect contributions to slavery, abolitionists were able to show the misguided fallacy of arguments that presented Europeans as morally and intellectually superior to Africans – thereby undermining certain justifications for slavery.

William Cowper's poem *The Negro's Complaint* (1788) – commissioned by the newly-formed London Committee – features one of the earliest examples of cannibalistic rhetoric used in abolitionist literature. Although the poem makes no direct appeal for abstention, Cowper employs abolitionist aversion tactics by claiming that enslaved Africans' bodily fluids saturate the sugar that they produce:

> Why did all-creating Nature
> Make the plant for which we toil?
> Sighs must fan it, Tears must water,
> Sweat of ours must dress the soil.

The ‘tears’ and ‘sweat’ operate as both a literal presence and a symbol of the enslaved narrator’s hard work and suffering. Sussman argues that the ‘bodily fluids become metonymies for the bodies of the slaves’ so that sugar ‘seems to result from the physical excretions of the slave – tears and sweat – rather than from his or her agricultural labour.’[93] These bodily fluids become a significant ingredient in the production of sugar, which suggests that it is the harsh conditions under which the enslaved carry out their labour, rather than the labour itself, that contaminates the sugar. Sussman later contradicts herself by stating that ‘in Cowper’s poetry, sweat is a metonymy for labor’, without explaining this inconsistency.[94] Both of Sussman’s claims have merit, but they require further development. The sweat and tears are simultaneously metonymic in the way that they figure laborious suffering (because they are produced when ‘we toil’), and synecdoche for the bodies of enslaved individuals (because the part represents the whole). Although Sussman does not explicitly state that this is cannibalism, it is implicit in her argument that Cowper’s strategy involves ‘replacing the body of the slave with its constitutive fluids’.[95] The synecdoche literalises the cannibalistic nature of consuming sugar, intending to inspire the reader’s revulsion.

The relationship between the synecdoche and the metonymy is further highlighted by the narrator’s claim that ‘sweat of ours must dress the soil’. The *OED* reveals that ‘dress’ had multiple definitions at the time, with the most obvious interpretation being that it refers to cultivating crops, although ‘dress’ also meant

[93] Sussman, ‘Women and Politics of Sugar’, p. 53.
[94] Ibid., p. 55.
[95] Ibid., p. 53.

dividing an animal carcass for food.[96] The former definition suggests that sweat is literally excreted from enslaved Africans to fertilise the soil in which the sugarcane is grown. The latter definition alludes to the ways that enslaved Africans were treated as animals, and as a result their sweat was drawn from their bodies to contaminate the food that British people would go on to eat. The idea that enslaved individuals are treated as animals to be prepared for food supports the argument that bodily fluids are synecdoche for the enslaved individuals' bodies, further literalising the cannibalistic consumption of sugar. The enslaved narrator beseeches the reader to 'Deem our nation brutes no longer', and instead recognise the emotional suffering endured by enslaved individuals. Cowper implies that the British public were partly responsible for this emotional suffering, as they allowed Africans to be treated as their inferiors.

The Negro's Complaint undermines the notion of African inferiority in many ways. Cowper rejects the notion that Europeans had a greater emotional capacity than Africans by insisting that 'affection/ Dwells in white and black the same.' He also rejects notions of intellectual inferiority by claiming that Africans are 'Still in thought as free as ever' because 'Minds are never to be sold'. Attention is drawn to the human component of sugar production to reverse commodity fetishism. Africans are humanised through a discussion of their emotional and intellectual abilities, which shows that their skin colour is the only factor that naturally distinguishes them from Europeans. Cowper suggests that if racial inequality does exist then it is Europeans who are naturally inferior, thus inverting the existing racial hierarchy. He explains that

[96] *OED*, v. 17 (fertilizer), and v. 20a (butcher animals).

it is ‘men from England’ who are the ‘slaves of gold’, simultaneously reversing the balance of power and claiming that English people are corrupted by greed since they are driven by avarice rather than benevolence. The narrator questions English people’s emotional capacity by challenging the reader to ‘Prove that you have human feelings, / Ere you proudly question ours!’ The direct address encourages readers to contemplate their own emotional response to the barbarities of slavery. The plurality of ‘feelings’ suggests that enslaved people demanded a range of emotional responses from the readers, including pity, shame and guilt. Readers are encouraged to undertake a self-reflection concerning individual and national morality, to produce an emotional response that would re-establish their humanity. Emotions aimed to motivate readers to relieve enslaved Africans’ suffering, with abstention promoted as the recommended course of action. Cowper implies that the lack of abolitionist action in Britain signals that White people – not Black people – are emotionally deficient, suggesting that if racial inequality did exist, then the inferiority lay with White Europeans.

The poem was subsequently published in a volume entitled *A Subject for Conversation and Reflection at the Tea Table* (1788), which demonstrates the relationship between sugar consumers in the domestic realm (represented by the tea table) and enslaved people’s suffering in the colonies (represented by *The Negro’s Complaint*).[97] The title blurs the distinction between ‘the domestic’ in reference to England as the colonial motherland, and ‘the domestic’ as the private family home.[98]

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[97] For more information, see: John O’Brien, *Literature Incorporated: The Cultural Unconscious of the Business Corporation, 1650-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).
[98] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties,* p. 110.

Blurring these boundaries acknowledges that private interactions had public repercussions concerning Britain's colonial relations.[99] In doing so, the paratext reinforces the relationship between personal and collective guilt, as unethical consumption damaged the moral reputation of not only the individual consumer, but also the entire nation.

The 'blood-sugar topos' was an alternative abolitionist approach to cannibalistic rhetoric, which depicted sugar as containing the blood, rather than the sweat, of enslaved Africans.[100] Bookseller and radical pamphleteer, William Fox, is amongst the abolitionists who favoured this approach, as shown in *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum* (1791). The *Address* was written three months after the first bill proposing to end the slave trade was rejected by parliament, and offered support to Wilberforce's undeterred efforts to revive abolitionist propaganda in the wake of his second bill in 1792.[101] In the first paragraph Fox concedes that 'notwithstanding the late determination of the House of Commons on the Slave-Trade, we may hope that the discussion it has received will not be useless; and that the public attention has not been excited in vain' (Fox, p. 2).[102] He hoped that the abstention movement would

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[99] Peter J. Kitson, 'Romanticism and Colonialism: Races, Places, Peoples, 1785-1800', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830,* ed. by Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 13-34.
[100] Timothy Morton, 'Blood Sugar', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830,* ed. by Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp. 87-106 (p. 87).
[101] Holcomb, 'Blood-Stained Sugar', p. 619.
[102] Fox's *Address* was published by Martha Gurney, whose brother, Joseph, was a shorthand writer for parliament. Joseph shared his knowledge of parliamentary proceedings on the slave trade debate with his sister – who then passed the information on to the likes of Fox and Burn – to give them an advantage over other writers and London Dissenting printers. See: Timothy Whelan, 'William Fox, Martha Gurney, and Radical Discourse of the 1790s', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 42.3 (2009) pp. 397-411 (p. 400).

support the parliamentary campaign by putting economic pressure on both politicians and enslavers, yet the failure of the 1791 bill led him to take a more radical approach to abstention rhetoric.

Fox proposes that when enslaved Africans are physically abused their injuries are so extensive that their 'blood' and 'flesh' literally contaminate the sugar that they produce, rendering its consumption a form of cannibalism. He uses this argument to advocate abstention:

> They may hold it to our lips, steeped in the blood of our fellow-creatures; but they cannot compel us to accept the loathsome portion. With us it rests, either to receive it and be partners in the crime, or to exonerate ourselves from guilt, by spurning from us the temptation. […] The slave-dealer, the slave-holder, and the slave-driver, are virtually the agents of the consumer, and may be considered as employed and hired by him to procure the commodity. (Fox, p. 4)

The tract establishes the consumer's choice by insisting that they cannot be forced into purchasing anything, reminding readers that they are granted the freewill that is denied to enslaved individuals. The insistence on the power of consumer demand is evidence of the transition in economic theory to favour a free market economy over traditional mercantilist government regulations. Having established the consumer's freewill, Fox encourages readers to resist the 'temptation' of sugar, since it is rendered 'loathsome' by being 'steeped' in enslaved people's blood. The reference to 'temptation' offers a parallel between the enslavers who tempt Britons into committing the crime of cannibalism by consuming sugar, and the devil who tempted Adam and Eve into committing Original Sin by consuming the forbidden fruit. The parallel between these two types of consumption implies that both acts were equally

sinful, and that the tempted consumers share the 'guilt' by becoming 'partners in the crime'. Therefore, the blood-sugar topos also operates on a metaphorical level: the blood that contaminates the sugar symbolises the guilt that contaminates the consumer's morality as a result of their indirect contributions to slavery. And yet enslavers are the 'agents of the consumer', as they are 'employed and hired' to meet the consumer's demand for sugar, suggesting that consumers also tempt enslavers into committing the sins of slavery. Fox exposes the guilt attributed to both supply and demand, as both elements contribute to a vicious cycle of sin. Consumers were encouraged to prevent bloodshed by abstaining from such unethical produce, as this would 'exonerate' them from the consequential consumer guilt.

Fox distinguishes between guilt as a result of having participated in a 'crime', and shame as a response to the degradation of one's social reputation. He argues:

> If we, as individuals concerned in the Slave Trade (either by procuring the slaves, compelling them to labour, or receiving the produce) imagine that our share in the transaction is so minute that it cannot perceptibly increase the injury; let us recollect that, though numbers partaking of a crime may diminish the shame, they cannot diminish its turpitude. (Fox, p. 6)

Fox once again shares the responsibility of slavery between those 'procuring the slaves, compelling them to labour', and 'receiving the produce', with the latter guilty of both cannibalism and indirectly contributing to slavery. The *OED* demonstrates that 'turpitude' was defined as a 'base or shameful character; baseness, vileness; depravity; wickedness'.[103] According to this definition, Fox initially seems to contradict himself by claiming that one's shame can be diminished, but the

[103] *OED,* n. 1a.

shamefulness of one's character cannot. Yet the distinction lies in the claim that the wickedness of participating in slavery is not lessened by its prevalence. It is still considered to be worthy of inspiring shame, even if that shame does not occur. Guilt is established by the 'injury' that the action causes to enslaved Africans, which remains unchanged regardless of how many others commit the same injury. In contrast, shame is more concerned with social reputation, and so the more people complicit in the crime, the less likely the individual is to be scrutinised for their sinful behaviour as the shame is shared amongst all participants. The shame may be reduced by a large number of people committing the crime, making it more socially acceptable, yet the immorality of the action does not change because the 'crime' remains the same. The degree of shame experienced depends on the individual's sensitivity to emotion, degree of self-reflection, and social esteem of the crime; whereas guilt is a constant that rises in proportion with the seriousness of the crime, rather than the proportion of those who commit it. Therefore, the only way for consumers to diminish their guilt, and the shame that may follow, was to stop 'receiving the produce' of slavery.

However, cannibalistic abstention rhetoric was problematic for several reasons: it risked dehumanising enslaved Africans by treating them as mere commodities; it often portrayed colonial goods as contaminated by their producers; and it risked inspiring the reader's disgust towards the enslaved. Sussman argues:

> by refusing suspicious products, consumers were helping to keep their own culture pure of disgusting items, as well as of disgusting peoples and practices. A hint of biological racism emerges in the way that the distaste campaigners sought to generate around suspect foreign goods

often derived from those campaigners' negative characterizations of the biological attributes of the cultural others who produced them.[104]

According to Sussman, the biological racism within cannibalistic imagery 'mobilised fears of bodily pollution', thereby reinforcing proslavery arguments that Africans were inferior to Europeans, which led White people to insist that interaction should be avoided to prevent racial cross-contamination.[105] Similarly, Erin Pearson claims that the blood-sugar metaphor engendered 'a readerly disgust that risked including enslaved people as well as the slave system'.[106] Fox's claim that 'in every pound of sugar used, we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh' is provided as an example of such biological racism (Fox, p. 2). Sussman argues that Fox 'transform[s] the slave into the commodity he produces: each two ounces of his flesh is eventually used up and replaced by a pound of sugar.'[107] Nevertheless, as Pearson concedes, the use of 'considered' in this instance 'implies an act of imagination,' and thus the cannibalistic imagery is figurative rather than literal.[108] The metaphor resists dehumanising enslaved Africans by informing readers that sugar contains 'human flesh', mentioning the enslaved Africans' humanity to stress similarities rather than racial differences. Fox focuses on species – not race – to direct the reader's disgust at cannibalism, and the barbarities of slavery, rather than the alleged racial cross-contamination. He further insists: 'No longer can it be pretended […] that Africa is a barbarous, uncultivated land, inhabited by a race of savages inferior to the rest of the human species' (Fox, p. 10). Rejecting the notion of African inferiority aims to undermine justifications for their enslavement; meanwhile,

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[104] Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties,* p. 24.
[105] Ibid., p. 113.
[106] Erin Pearson, '"A Person Perverted into a Thing": Cannibalistic Metaphors and Dehumanizing Physicality in Late Eighteenth-Century British Abolitionism', *ELH,* 83.3 (2016) pp. 741-69 (p. 764).
[107] Sussman, 'Women and Politics of Sugar', p. 52.
[108] Pearson, '"A Person Perverted into a Thing"', p. 753.

depicting the cannibalistic practices of British consumers as evidence of their moral inferiority intends to reverse the racial hierarchy. Therefore, the 'bodily pollution' should be considered as metaphorical, rather than literal, as it symbolises the moral corruption of engaging with slavery.

Fox's tract was popular in both Britain and America, outselling all previous abolitionist pamphlets with more than 250,000 copies sold by 1792.[109] The thirteenth edition includes a statement declaring that the circulation 'affords the most flattering hopes of the plan proposed being extensively adopted and producing very important effects: to further them a trivial price is affixed, that those who approve the Pamphlet may be more generally enabled to promote its circulation.'[110] Initial copies were sold for one penny or five shillings per hundred, though the price reduced as demand increased to further the abstention movement.[111] During Thomas Clarkson's national tour promoting abolition, he discovered that 'not less than a hundred, & in others by report, not less than between two & three hundred persons have left off the use of Sugar & Rum on the perusal of [Fox's] Address'.[112] The sales of the pamphlet, combined with Clarkson's claim that Fox's readers were persuaded into taking action, suggests that Fox's rhetoric was highly influential.

Nevertheless, Fox's pamphlet was met with some criticism, one of the first being an anonymous response entitled *An Answer to a Pamphlet Intituled [sic] An*

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[109] Holcomb, 'Blood-Stained Sugar', p. 619.
[110] Whelan, 'William Fox, Martha Gurney', p. 402.
[111] Ibid., p. 402.
[112] Clarkson, 'Letter to Josiah Wedgwood', p. 183.

Address to the People of England against the Use of West India Produce (1791), which argued that abstention would be economically devastating for Britain, harming a 'vast and extensive branch of commerce'.[113] The slight alteration in Fox's pamphlet's title to *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Propriety of Abstaining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum*, from the seventh edition onwards may have been a response to such criticisms. Replacing 'utility' with 'propriety', and 'refraining' with 'abstaining', emphasised the moral necessity of the abstention campaign rather than its usefulness to the abolitionist movement.[114] The author of *An Answer* also countered the high death rate of enslaved Africans with the high death rate of British working class men who were 'unenviable, even by the West Indian slave'.[115] The sentimental diversion creates a 'hierarchy of suffering', suggesting that White labourers deserved greater attention than enslaved Africans.[116] Abolitionists sought to undermine such claims by demonstrating that enslaved Africans were treated far more severely. Subsequent editions of Fox's tract feature Cowper's *The Negro's Complaint* (1788) as its epigraph to demonstrate that Fox was building on earlier cannibalistic imagery.[117] The intertextuality creates a discourse with other abolitionist writers, and shows that Fox was advancing abstention rhetoric with the blood-sugar topos.

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[113] *An Answer to a Pamphlet Intituled [sic] An Address to the People of England against the Use of West India Produce* (Whitechapel: W. Moon, 1791).
[114] Holcomb, 'Blood-Stained Sugar', p. 624.
[115] *An Answer to a Pamphlet.*
[116] Carey, *British Abolitionism,* pp. 41, 130.
[117] William Fox, *An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Utility of Refraining from the Use of West India Sugar and Rum,* Sixth Edition, (Sunderland: T. Reed, 1791), New York Public Library Digital Collections http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e3-a7bc-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 [Accessed November 4, 2019].

Andrew Burn was not convinced regarding the persuasiveness of Fox's metaphorical blood-sugar topos, and so he favoured a more literal approach to cannibalistic imagery in *A Second Address* (1792) by proposing that West India sugar contained the literal sweat of enslaved Africans. It was entitled *A Second Address* for two reasons: it intended to supplement Fox's abstention rhetoric, operating as both a sequel and a review; and it also expanded upon a point discussed 'a few evenings ago' to 'some select friends', merging the political and domestic spheres as private conversations are made public (Burn, p. 2). Though Burn does not name Fox, he mentions the 'worthy Author of a late Address to the Public' (Burn, p. 3). Both Addresses were published by Martha Gurney, so it is logical to conclude that Burn refers to Fox. Burn claims that this 'Author' succeeded in rousing 'those sentiments of humanity, which it is to be hoped, are more or less implanted in every breast' (Burn, p. 3). However, Burn believes that it is 'difficult to persuade some, that when they eat Sugar, they figuratively eat the Blood of the Negro', and so 'this task I leave for others to accomplish' (Burn, p. 7). Burn decides to 'tread in a very different path' from Fox by arguing that consumers 'literally […] eat large quantities' of bodily fluids, which intended 'to excite every opposite *emotions* in the breasts of my Readers […] to promote the same sacred Cause of Humanity' (Burn, pp. 3, 7, 3). As Carl Plasa argues, 'Burn looks back to Fox only to look beyond him', as Burn's 'cannibalistic trope becomes dazzlingly, if grotesquely, literalized'.[118] Both writers used cannibalistic rhetoric to promote abstention, although Burn preferred to focus on the literal presence of sweat, as opposed to Fox's blood metaphor.

[118] Plasa, '"Stained with Spots of Human Blood"', pp. 235, 227.

In the preface to his *Second Address,* Burn explains that his personal experience led him to conclude that 'neither motives of humanity nor conscience were sufficient' to persuade an audience of the merits of abstaining from West India sugar (Burn, p. 2). Burn found that factual accounts of the production methods of such sugar were more effective, as it inspired such 'disgustful Emotions' within his friends that they allegedly declared 'I'll never eat another bit of Sugar so long as I live' (Burn, p. 2). Therefore, Burn advertised the literal presence of sweat by providing a factual account of how enslaved Africans used their feet to tread down the sugar until 'the nauseous effluvia emitted from them by excessive Perspiration' was 'absorbed among the Sugar' (Burn, p. 8). The alliteration mimics the flow of the sweat as it leaves the enslaved and enters the sugar, where it waits to flow once again into the body of its consumer. The sugar becomes 'impregnated with this liquid from the human body', with such sexualised language seeking to shock readers into believing that a woman's virtue, innocence and chastity would be destroyed by consuming such cannibalistic products (Burn, p. 8). The enslaved corrupt the sugar to reduce the value of both the commodity and enslaved labour, forming an act of resistance against the colonial system.[119] Combining the literal presence of sweat with the allegorical impregnation intended to inspire both the reader's shame and disgust at such unethical consumption habits as a tactic to encourage abstention.

Burn also describes other forms of contamination, such as how 'the woolly head of the Negro is as fertile in the propagation of a certain domestic insect as the

[119] Ibid., p. 239.

flaxen locks of the European', some of which are likely to 'fall in among the Sugar' (Burn, p. 8). The similarity between the hair of the 'Negro' and the 'European' suggests that a difference in physical appearance does not render one inferior to the other, as both are subject to head lice. It is merely the conditions to which they are exposed that determines their susceptibility to such parasites. When enslaved Africans are flogged their wounds are likely to become infected with maggots eating into the exposed flesh, even on the rare occasions when the wounds are cleaned. In these instances the enslaved were likely to die unless they found someone willing to help 'pick out the large Maggots, that had already penetrated to the very bone; and who frequently half eat up their dying victim' (Burn, p. 4). Plasa argues that 'thus transformed into an object to be consumed, the enslaved body located at the site of colonial production assumes a status not wholly dissimilar to that which it possesses in the domestic context, where it is indirectly ingested by those who eat sugar.'[120] The maggots in the colonial context form an allegorical parallel to British sugar consumers in the domestic context, as both parties consume the bodies of enslaved Africans, revealing the parasitic nature of British culture. Pearson's point that 'Burn's imagery seeks to elicit not only disgust, but also the suspicion that European bodies risk being dangerously altered by consuming tainted sugar' is convincing in this instance.[121] There seems to be an underlying risk that maggots could be ingested with the sugar, which would expose British consumers to the danger of likewise being eaten by maggots. However, the maggots feast on the wounds that are created by enslavers, with the enslaved practically powerless to prevent the infestation. The maggots emerge because the enslaver's lack compassion, not

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[120] Ibid., p. 237.
[121] Pearson, '"A Person Perverted into a Thing"', p. 756.

because the enslaved are unhygienic, and so the enslaved are not to blame. Therefore, the disgust is directed at the maggots, the enslavers, and the British consumers who facilitate slavery – but not at the enslaved.

The debate between the advantages of literal and figurative cannibalism reflects the paradoxical nature of imperialism. The literal approach to cannibalistic rhetoric creates ‘a physical hybrid of African and European flesh’ that fuelled contemporary concerns about inter-racial relationships.[122] The consumption of goods produced by enslaved Africans created cultural hybrids, and so ‘dietary transculturation was perceived as a threat to British national identity.’[123] The risk of cultural cross-contamination could fuel Sussman’s argument that cannibalistic rhetoric was a form of biological racism, as it implies that Britain risked being corrupted by inferior cultures. However, abolitionists presented the colonial encounters that exposed Britain to cultural cross-contamination as the effect, rather than the cause, of Britain’s moral depravity. Abolitionists sought to expose that imperialism was driven by avarice to show that colonial slavery was the greatest threat to Britain’s image as a nation of justice and freedom. As Mary Douglas argues, readers must be ‘prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced on the human body.’[124] The metaphorical approach to cannibalistic rhetoric employed enslaved individuals’ bodily fluids to symbolise the consumer’s moral corruption, with the consumer’s body

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[122] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006) p. 126.
[123] Charlotte Boyce, ‘Luxury, Gluttony, Domestic Economy and Ethical Eating (1750-1830)’, in *A History of Food in Literature: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present,* ed. by Charlotte Boyce and Joan Fitzpatrick (Oxon: Routledge, 2017) pp. 153-200 (p. 153).
[124] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966) p. 115.

also symbolising the British nation’s collective moral corruption. It simultaneously enhances and tarnishes Britain’s national reputation, exposing the contradictions inherent within colonisation. The Empire contributes towards Britain’s sense of power and global influence as a superior nation, and yet threatens that very same notion through Britain’s dependence on, and assimilation of, other cultures. Britain adopts other nation’s social norms so that British culture becomes an amalgamation of its colonies – it consumes the cultures of its overseas territories so that it transforms into the very thing that it had previously deemed inferior. The paradox of establishing superiority whilst adopting allegedly inferior practices could not be resolved: either the Empire or the nation’s reputation would have to be sacrificed.

PEDAGOGICAL AFTERWORD: APPLICATION TO TEACHING

This thesis has incorporated a multitude of different voices to reflect the diversity of the British abolitionist movement in terms of race, class, and gender, and has shown that this created a range of different approaches to emotive rhetoric. I have demonstrated that the majority of abolitionist literature argued that enslaved Black people experienced the same emotions as White people, although there were disparities regarding whether this racial equality extended to intellectual capabilities. I have argued that abolitionists produced literature that engaged with, and reflected, contemporary social norms concerning the appropriate expression of emotions, which generally favoured moderated expressions of emotion that could be considered neither excessive nor deficient. Abolitionists were primarily concerned with the extent to which Black individuals conformed to these emotional social norms, though some (such as Mary Birkett Card) also held their White readers to account for their emotional sensibility, and encouraged them to take abolitionist action to alleviate the collective guilt of slavery. Emotive rhetoric was used to portray the humanity of enslaved individuals, whilst also encouraging British readers to demonstrate their own humanity, emotional sensibility, and morality by campaigning to abolish first the slave trade, and then slavery itself. Therefore, I conclude that abolitionists used emotive rhetoric to depict abolition (and sometimes emancipation) as an opportunity for moral redemption, which would benefit not only the enslaved, but also their enslavers, and the entire British nation.

Emotional responses and expressions continue to play an important role in discussions about the legacies of British slavery. British people have expressed 'anger' at the existence of statues commemorating enslavers such as Edward Colston, whose statue was removed from Bristol by protesters in 2020.[643] These protesters, and their critics, have both been described as expressing 'anger' and 'rage' in discussions about Colston's statue, with protesters accused of having an excessive, inappropriate, and 'incoherent' emotional response to the memorialisation of an enslaver.[644] Such emotional responses revitalised discussions about how British slavery is remembered, which intersects with discussions about colonial guilt.[645] For example, in 2020 people petitioned for Colston's statue to be replaced with one commemorating British abolitionists, such as Ann Yearsley, Hannah More and Olaudah Equiano.[646] Historian David Olusoga argues that the 'whitewashed' national curriculum overlooks this contemporary legacy of slavery and its abolition, and ignores other important aspects of Black British history.[647] I argue that the

643 See: Jack Grey, 'Bristol George Floyd Protest: Colston Statue Toppled', *BBC News* (7th June 2020) https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-52955868 [Accessed 16/02/2022]; Ben Quinn, 'Toppling Edward Colston's Statue is Unlikely to be Enough to Stop Public Anger', *The Guardian* (10th June 2020) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/10/toppling-edward-colstons-statue-is-unlikely-to-be-enough-to-stop-public-anger [Accessed 16/02/2022].

644 See: David Olusoga, 'Britain Can No Longer Ignore Its Darkest Chapters - We Must Teach Black History', *The Guardian* (15th June 2020) https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/jun/15/britain-can-no-longer-ignore-its-darkest-chapters-we-must-teach-black-history [Accessed 06/01/2022]; Nesrine Malik, 'The Colston Four's Critics are Deluded to Think Britain Owes No Apology for its Past', *The Guardian* (10th January 2022) https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/jan/10/colston-four-britain-apology-for-past [Accessed 16/02/2022]; Patrick West, 'Edward Colston and the Problem with the 'Right Side of History', *The Spectator* (9th January 2022) https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/edward-colston-and-the-problem-with-the-right-side-of-history- [Accessed 16/02/2022].

645 Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

646 Olusoga, 'Britain Can No Longer Ignore Its Darkest Chapters'; Mark Cousens, Petition to 'Replace Colston's Statue with a monument to Bristol's historic Anti-Slave Trade Movement' (2020) https://www.change.org/p/bristol-city-council-replace-colston-s-statue-with-a-monument-to-bristol-s-historic-anti-slave-trade-movement [Accessed 06/01/2022]; Tadgh Knight, 'Replace statue of slave-trader Edward Colston with abolitionist Hannah More' (2020) https://www.change.org/p/bristol-city-council-replace-statue-of-a-slave-owner-in-bristol-with-abolitionist-hannah-more [Accessed 06/01/2022]; Panny Antoniou, 'Replace the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol with Olaudah Equiano', (2020) https://www.change.org/p/bristol-city-council-replace-the-statue-of-edward-colston-in-bristol-with-elaudah-equiano-19bdf3a9-c2dc-4c06-a84a-24f75a0d19c9 [Accessed 24/01/2022].

647 Olusoga, 'Britain Can No Longer Ignore Its Darkest Chapters'.

research that has been presented in this thesis can be used to teach students about British slavery, and the literary achievements of Black British writers, in an attempt to address recent concerns that school students are not being taught about Britain's colonial past.

My research can contribute towards current efforts to diversify and decolonise the national curriculum, helping teachers to create educational resources on the role of emotions in past and present discussions of slavery. Teachers can also adopt my methodology by exploring a wide range of abolitionists, which can help to diversify the curriculum in terms of race, class and gender. There are ongoing debates regarding what 'decolonising' the curriculum means, though it is generally thought to be a paradigm shift that examines 'the influence of colonial legacies on education systems', whilst acknowledging other cultural perceptions from marginalised groups that challenge the narratives provided by canonical White males.[648] However, Eve Tuck and K. Wang insist that decolonisation is about more than increasing diversity and representation; it involves acknowledging that institutions and individuals acquired some of their wealth and resources from colonial exploits.[649] Sathnam Sanghera suggests that campaigners should discuss '*widening* curriculums rather than *decolonizing* them'.[650] I prefer the term 'diversifying curriculums', and so this is the terminology that I shall employ. In this concluding section I will evaluate existing

648 Martin Johnson and Melissa Mouthaan, 'Decolonising the curriculum: the importance of teacher training and development', *Runnymede* (25th June 2021) https://www.runnymedetrust.org/blog/decolonising-the-curriculum-the-importance-of-teacher-training-and-development [Accessed 18/01/2022].
649 Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonisation is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1.1 (2012) pp. 1-40 (p. 1); Priyamvada Gopal, 'On Decolonisation and the University', *Textual Practice*, 35.6 (2021) pp. 873-899.
650 Sathnam Sanghera, *Empireland: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain* (London: Penguin, 2021) pp. 215-216.

research and resources that aim to contribute towards diversifying both the history and English curriculums, and identify gaps that can be filled by further research and content creation. I argue that ethnic minority writers should be embedded more firmly into the English curriculum, although further research is needed to determine how this can best be put into practice.[651] I believe that my own research – alongside that undertaken by the likes of The Black Curriculum, The Runnymede Trust, and the Black Cultural Archive – can be used to create a set of modules with teaching resources that can help to diversify the national curriculum.

In 2020 Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson created a petition to 'Teach Britain's colonial past as part of the UK's compulsory curriculum', including the British slave trade and slavery.[652] It received over 268,000 signatures, and resulted in a parliamentary debate led by Member of Parliament Chris Evans on 28th June 2021.[653] A survey carried out by the Petitions Committee discovered that:

> 90% of respondents [teachers, school staff and home educators] felt that there should be a statutory requirement for all children to be taught explicitly about the history of Britain's ethnic and cultural minorities, including Britain's role in colonisation and the transatlantic slave trade.[654]

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[651] Throughout this pedagogical afterword, I choose to use the term 'ethnic minorities' instead of BME (Black and Minority Ethnicities) or BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities) in line with the recommendations of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021). See: 'Writing About Ethnicity', *Government Website* https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity [Accessed 18/01/2022].

[652] 'Teach Britain's colonial past as part of the UK's compulsory curriculum' (Petition closed on 10th December 2020), *Petitions: UK Government and Parliament website,* https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/324092?s=09 [Accessed 26/08/2021].

[653] 'MPs to debate petition relating to Black history and cultural diversity in the curriculum' (24th June 2021), *Committees: UK Parliament website* https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/326/petitions-committee/news/156079/petition-debate-black-history-and-cultural-diversity-in-the-curriculum-21-22?s=09 [Accessed 26/08/2021].

[654] Ibid.

On the few occasions that the transatlantic slave trade and slavery are taught in schools, the focus is primarily on America's involvement, while Britain's role is largely overlooked. This presents racism and slavery as an American problem, rather than a British one, whereas in reality it is both. Reni Eddo-Lodge considers this focus on American slavery to be 'a kind of displacement that went hand-in-hand with Britain's collective forgetting of black contributions to British history'.[655] Attempts to erase Britain's colonial guilt from public memory leads to important elements of Black British history being overlooked, including the contributions of Black abolitionists such as Equiano, which provides an unrealistic representation of Britain's past. Yet there is also the concern that Black students may feel alienated if the only Black people that they are taught about are presented as passive victims of slavery.[656] Therefore, it is important to credit Black agency by teaching students about acts of Black resistance against slavery – such as those explored in this thesis – whilst also acknowledging that Black history does not start and end with slavery.

The government responded to Jikiemi-Pearson's petition by arguing that the current history curriculum 'gives teachers and schools the freedom' to choose which elements of British history to teach.[657] However, this leads to inconsistencies

[655] Reni Eddo-Lodge, 'Forming Blackness through a screen', in *The Good Immigrant,* ed. by N. Shukla (London: Unbound, 2016) pp. 77-83 (p. 79).

[656] Nicholas J. Evans and Suzanne Schwarz, 'Pedagogical Responses to the Teaching of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its Diasporic Legacies in British Schools', in *The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: New Directions in Teaching and Learning,* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy and Benjamin P. Bowser (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2013) pp. 117-147; Katrina Browne, 'The Psychological Consequences of Slavery for Beneficiaries of Slavery: Implications for Classroom Teaching', in *The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: New Directions in Teaching and Learning,* ed. by Paul E. Lovejoy and Benjamin P. Bowser (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2013) pp. 219-244.

[657] 'MPs to debate petition relating to Black history and cultural diversity in the curriculum' (24th June 2021), *Committees: UK Parliament website* https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/326/petitions-committee/news/156079/petition-debate-black-history-and-cultural-diversity-in-the-curriculum-21-22?s=09 [Accessed 26/08/2021].

regarding what is taught, and means that teaching Black history can be consigned to Black History Month (BHM). Yet even BHM is optional, not mandatory, which runs the risk of Black history either being taught incorrectly, or not at all. For example, one school's interpretation of BHM involved 'playing a movie about the starving children in Africa and suggesting that the children in the school should be grateful for what they have.'[658] This teaches students nothing about Black history; instead, it presents Africans as passive victims, and risks fuelling notions of racial inferiority or 'otherness'. Furthermore, Katrina Browne argues that slavery should not be taught during BHM: firstly, because this reinforces the idea that 'Black history' is just about slavery, which ignores a vast history of Black achievements; and secondly, because it fails to acknowledge that slavery is also a big part of White history.[659] Olusoga recognises that some teachers try their best to teach Black history, but the fact that these modules are optional, rather than compulsory, means that 'teachers have to find the time to teach them with limited resources and in a packed timetable.'[660] The Petitions Committee's survey found that '1 in 4 teachers […] lacked confidence in their ability to develop their pupils' understanding of Black history and cultural diversity'.[661] Therefore, the majority of respondents (85-88%) requested 'specialised CPD/in-school training' to rectify this issue.[662] Teachers require more educational resources and training on Black history to give them the confidence to teach potentially sensitive topics in an appropriate manner.

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[658] Aishnine Benjamin, 'The Activists' Guide for Encouraging Your Local School to go further than Black History Month', *The Black Curriculum* blog post https://theblackcurriculum.com/blog/tbh365-one-year-on [Accessed 10/01/2022].
[659] Browne, 'The Psychological Consequences of Slavery'.
[660] Olusoga, 'Britain Can No Longer Ignore Its Darkest Chapters'.
[661] 'MPs to debate petition'.
[662] Ibid.

The Black Curriculum (TBC), the Black Cultural Archive (BCA), the International Slavery Museum (ISM), and the Understanding Slavery Initiative (USI) all provide learning resources and training opportunities that encourage educators to teach British slavery and Black history (see Appendix 2).[663] For example, TBC offer a free online course on FutureLearn entitled 'Teaching Black British History: A Teacher Training Guide', covering the importance of inclusive and active learning.[664] It offers useful insights into how teachers can embed Black British history into the curriculum.[665] TBC also offer curriculum audits to give schools feedback on their schemes of work, and make personalised recommendations about embedding Black history into their teaching as an unofficial form of quality assurance. By June 2021, TBC had trained over 3,300 teachers, reached over 3,500 students, gained over 177,000 followers, and received 150,000 website visits, reflecting the demand for such training and resources.[666]

However, some of the resources and workshops are intended as one off lessons (the BCA's workshops only last for 90 minutes each), and most of the resources are aimed at teaching history. The ISM claims that their booklet can also be used in English lessons for comprehension exercises that develop reading skills.

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663 *The Black Curriculum*, https://theblackcurriculum.com/ [Accessed 10/01/2022]; https://blackculturalarchives.org/ [Accessed 21/01/2022]; 'Resources for Schools', *International Slavery Museum,* https://images.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/2020-01/International-Slavery-Museum-teachers-pack_0.pdf [Accessed 21/01/2022]; 'Schools and Groups Resources: Transatlantic Slavery', *National Museums Liverpool,* https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learn/resources/schools-and-groups-resources-transatlantic-slavery [Accessed 14/04/2022]; Unlocking Perceptions booklet, 'Secondary Materials and Information to Support Teachers', *Understanding Slavery Initiative,* http://understandingslavery.com/teaching/secondary-teachers/ [Accessed 14/01/2022].
664 *The Black Curriculum*, 'Teaching Black British History: A Teacher Training Guide', *FutureLearn,* https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/teaching-black-british-history-a-guide-for-teachers [Accessed 10/01/2022].
665 Ibid.
666 Addie Tadesse, '#TBH365 ONE YEAR ON', *The Black Curriculum* blog post, https://theblackcurriculum.com/blog/tbh365-one-year-on [Accessed 10/01/2022].

Although comprehension skills are important, Benjamin Bloom's influential *Taxonomy of Learning Objectives* stresses that teachers should also focus on 'analysis', 'evaluation', and 'creation' to encourage critical thinking and innovation.[667] Meanwhile, a crossword is the only 'English' resource listed on TBC's website, which is not enough to increase diversity within the English curriculum. TBC's video and resource on Mary Prince would be more appropriate for a KS3 English lesson if they were adapted to include extracts from Prince's narrative for students to read and analyse. The research task can also be adapted to create a stronger literary focus by asking students to analyse the literature that is explored in this thesis, in addition to that produced by Elizabeth Heyrick, Thomas Clarkson, and the abolitionist Quakers who are all briefly mentioned in the resource already. Likewise, the ISM booklet could be tailored to include language analysis, textual comparison, and writing composition activities that support other objectives of the English curriculum.[668] For example, activities could involve students evaluating the use of emotion in anti-slavery texts, or writing their own piece of anti-slavery literature.

Whilst writing this thesis, I have worked for The Brilliant Club to design and teach a course based on my research, with an accompanying handbook entitled 'How do you feel? The use of emotions in British antislavery literature' (see Appendix

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[667] Benjamin S. Bloom, David R. Krathwohl, and Bertram B. Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*, Handbook 1 (New York: David McKay, 1956); Lorin W. Anderson and David R. Krathwohl (eds.), *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001).

[668] 'Resources for Schools', *ISM*; 'National curriculum in England: English programmes of study', *Department for Education* (16th July 2014) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study [Accessed 21/01/2022].

3).[669] This course includes five tutorials, each exploring a different emotion that aligns with my thesis chapters. For example, the second tutorial on 'The Role of Anger & Slave Revolts' explores some of the passages from Edward Rushton's *West Indian Eclogues* and Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* analysed in this thesis.[670] I designed this tutorial to credit Black agency by teaching students about Black individuals who rebelled against slavery, whilst also incorporating the methodology that I use in my research by exploring Black and White abolitionists together as equals. The starter activity briefly summarises two important slave revolts to assess students' reading and comprehension skills, and provides them with information that contextualises their analysis of abolitionist literature. Students are then asked to consider how biographical information about Rushton and Equiano can develop their understanding and analysis of abolitionist texts. This teaches students that biographical and historical contexts inform our interpretations of literature, preparing them for meeting Assessment Objective 3 of their GCSE English literature exams.[671] Furthermore, studying prose (produced by the likes of Equiano) alongside poetry (produced by the likes of Rushton) familiarises students with the distinctions between different forms and genres to aid their textual analysis. The tutorial also encourages debate by asking students to argue whether anger was more useful or harmful to the abolitionist movement, using examples from the text to

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[669] 'How do you feel? The use of emotions in British antislavery literature', Key Stage 4 handbook, designed by Nicola Westwood and The Brilliant Club for The Scholars Programme (Courtesy of The Brilliant Club c. 2022).
[670] Edward Rushton, *West Indian Eclogues* (London: W. Lowndes, J. Philips, 1787); Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African, Written by Himself* (London: T. Wilkins, 1789).
[671] 'Scheme of assessment', English Literature, *AQA,* https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702/scheme-of-assessment [Accessed 24/01/2022].

justify their answers. Students were then asked to write a few paragraphs for homework to consolidate their learning.

On reflection, there are ways that this course could be improved. Some KS4 students found it difficult to understand the eighteenth-century language, particularly in some of the poems. Therefore, it would be useful to include an additional resource that paraphrases each extract in simplified language, as students need to fully comprehend the texts before they can move on to analysis and evaluation. I also taught this course to KS5 students, adapting it slightly by encouraging students to do their own research to encourage independent learning and make the course more challenging. KS5 really engaged with the tutorials, despite the majority of students not having chosen to study English at A level. Students drew on elements of their A level subjects – including religious studies, history, and philosophy – to form innovative points that made me consider the material in a different way. The course could be expanded upon further to incorporate other sources explored in this thesis, and could perhaps become an inter-disciplinary course that incorporates elements of English, history, geography, religious education, and other subjects to diversify the national curriculum.

Although efforts have predominantly focused on diversifying the history curriculum, it is just as important to diversify the English curriculum, if not more so, considering that English is compulsory at GCSE, whereas history is optional. In 2020 Teach First found that 98% of English teachers believe that it is important or very important for students to study ethnic minority authors in secondary schools, though

75% are concerned about the English curriculum's lack of ethnic diversity.[672] Lincoln school believe that exclusively studying White British texts results in 'a lack of knowledge and understanding of anybody from minority ethnic backgrounds', which alienates ethnic minority students.[673] As Donna Boam (Assistant Vice Principal and former Head of English) argues:

> There is a strong moral imperative in English to explore opinions and empathy – it is the only subject where students are asked to step into someone else's shoes and identify with their emotions.[674]

Studying texts by ethnic minority authors increasea students' understanding of other cultures and ethnicities, encouraging empathy and inclusivity, rather than discrimination and alienation. Boam highlights the importance of emotional engagement in this process, and so teachers could explore the use of emotive language in a range of literature by authors of different ethnicities to create an English course that incorporates, and expands upon, some of the elements explored in this thesis.

Penguin and Runnymede have recognised the importance of diversity within the English curriculum, and so decided to collaborate on their 'Lit in Colour' initiative, aiming to 'support schools to make the teaching and learning of English literature more inclusive' and 'increase students' access to more books by writers of colour.'[675]

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[672] Teach First, *Missing Pages: Increasing Racial Diversity in the Literature We Teach* (23 July 2020) https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/English%20Curriculum%20Diversity%20Report..pdf [Accessed 07/01/2022].
[673] Victoria Elliott, Lesley Nelson-Addy, Roseanna Chantiluke, and Matthew Courtney, 'Lit in Colour: Diversity in Literature in English Schools', Commissioned by Runnymede, *Penguin*, p. 51, https://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour.html [Accessed 10/01/2022].
[674] Ibid., p. 52.
[675] 'Lit in Colour', *Penguin*, https://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour.html [Accessed 10/01/2022].

The project involved researching barriers that prevented ethnic minority writers from being studied at school to determine the next course of action (see Appendix 4). They found that less than 1% of students study an ethnic minority author at GCSE (see Appendix 4), raising concerns that students may only study White authors at school.[676] The government determines key areas that must be taught for GCSE, exam boards offer various set texts appropriate for those areas, and then schools select texts from the options available. The most popular exam board for English literature, AQA, only has two texts by ethnic minority authors, neither of which are Black (see Appendix 5). Pearson Edexcel recently added more texts, so that they now offer five texts by ethnic minority authors, but they have not yet been examined under usual circumstances because of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (see Appendix 5). Poetry is typically more diverse, though the pandemic led the government to decide that schools could drop one aspect of the English literature exam, which meant that many schools dropped poetry and sacrificed the most ethnically diverse content. Even when poetry's compulsory status is restored, it is important to remember that one poem by an ethnic minority author does not create a diverse curriculum.[677] Penguin argue that ethnic minority authors should not be limited to poetry and extracts, but should be thoroughly explored in full length novels.[678] The government should encourage exam boards to include more novels by ethnic minority authors, perhaps by instigating more regulations to help diversify the English curriculum.

[676] Ibid.
[677] Elliott, Nelson-Addy, Chantiluke, and Courtney, 'Lit in Colour', p. 62.
[678] Ibid., p. 62.

Penguin attempted to overcome these barriers by creating resources to support teachers to diversify the curriculum. Penguin donated 60,000 books to British schools to address funding issues that would otherwise prevent schools from purchasing new texts by ethnic minority authors.[679] They acknowledge that publishers have a big impact on children's access to texts by these authors, and argue that 'it's vital that the books we read in our formative years reflect the rich diversity of the society we live in.'[680] Therefore, Penguin published free teaching resources, and collaborated with exam boards, to encourage schools to teach more diverse texts.[681] These resources are aimed at KS3, KS4 and KS5 for both English language and literature lessons, including PowerPoint presentations, extracts, videos, and a workbook with activities that explore texts by ethnic minority authors (see Appendix 2.4). Penguin also created a document explainings how the activities align with English learning objectives, including making inferences, knowing the purpose, audience and context of literature, and exploring the effects of plot, setting, and characterisation. These resources are well thought out, as they promote higher-order thinking and encourage independent learning by asking students to do their own research. Overall, these teaching resources have many strengths; the only downside is that there are currently only resources for six texts by ethnic minority authors, so it would be useful if Penguin expanded this project to incorporate more texts.

[679] 'Lit in Colour', *Penguin*.
[680] Ibid.
[681] Ibid.

However, not everyone supports efforts to decolonise the English curriculum. English teacher, Katie Ashford, advocates prioritising the texts of ‘dead white men’ over racial diversity.[682] She claims that teaching a traditional curriculum of ‘dead white men’ introduces students ‘to worlds they may never otherwise explore’, and encourages students to ‘empathise with those from worlds different to ours.’[683] Yet this is precisely what efforts to diversify the curriculum seek to achieve by representing a diverse range of people and their different experiences. Ashford’s attack seems to be directed against those ‘who advocate the removal of dead white men from the curriculum’.[684] However, TBC, BCA, Penguin and Runnymede do not suggest that White men should be completely removed from the curriculum, but rather propose that White and ethnic minority people should be studied alongside one another. Penguin encourages teachers to fully acknowledge the socio-historical contexts of canonical texts by White authors:

> From *Jane Eyre*’s mixed race Bertha Mason, […] to the depictions of Indians in *The Sign of Four,* understandings of race, racism, and the British Empire are key to better knowledge and teaching of the 19th century British novel.[685]

Two of the compulsory components of GCSE English literature (Shakespeare and the nineteenth-century British novel) inevitably feature White authors, though the option to explore Charlotte Brontë (amongst other female writers) means that they do not necessarily have to be male.

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[682] Katie Ashford, ‘Schools Should Teach Dead White Men’, in *Michaela: The Power of Culture,* ed. by Katherine Birbalsingh (Woodbridge: John Catt Educational Limited, 2020) pp. 59-72.
[683] Ibid., p. 66.
[684] Ibid., p. 63.
[685] Elliott, Nelson-Addy, Chantiluke, and Courtney, ‘Lit in Colour’, p. 47.

It is the modern text component that allows teachers to increase diversity by exploring ethnic minority writers. After all, a decolonised curriculum is as much about representation as it is about national accountability. Djamila Boothman (English teacher and Assistant Headteacher) claims that ‘you cannot be what you cannot see’.[686] If this were entirely true then innovation would never occur, and pioneering would cease to exist. Nevertheless, Boothman highlights that representation is important for students to believe that everyone can achieve, whilst acknowledging that there are additional barriers faced by ethnic minorities. For example, students should learn about Black writers and historical figures, such as Equiano, Prince, and Toussaint L’Ouverture, to credit what they accomplished despite facing racial discrimination. Whilst Ashford concedes that the ‘canon’ should be challenged so that the curriculum ‘does not “whitewash” important thinkers away’, she argues that writers should be selected because of their ideas, rather than their identity or skin colour.[687] This is a valid comment, as writers should not be selected merely to increase diversity out of professional obligation. However, Ashford suggests that White writers’ ideas are superior to those of ethnic minority authors, thereby establishing a racial hierarchy within the curriculum. Students should be shown the value of texts written by ethnic minority authors, and taught that they can be as critical and engaging as texts written by dead White males. Furthermore, Jessica Tacon argues that students should explore ‘books by non-White writers about *everything,* not just about struggle’ as a way to avoid victimising ethnic minorities.[688]

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[686] Djamila Boothman, in ‘Missing Pages: Increasing Racial Diversity in the Literature We Teach’, *Teach First* (23 July 2020) https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/English%20Curriculum%20Diversity%20Report..pdf [Accessed 07/01/2022].
[687] Ashford, ‘Schools Should Teach Dead White Men’, pp. 60, 61, 68.
[688] Jessica Tacon, ‘I’ve Got A Diverse Range Of Books, What Can I Do Next?’, *The Black Curriculum* blog post, https://theblackcurriculum.com/blog/ive-got-a-diverse-range-of-books-what-can-i-do-next https://theblackcurriculum.com/blog/tbh365-one-year-on[Accessed 10/01/2022].

Penguin highlights the importance of teaching modern ethnic minority authors, such as 'Britain's only living Nobel laureate in Literature […] Kazuo Ishiguro,' although they have not yet provided any resources to encourage teachers to explore his work with their students, nor included him in their suggested reading list.[689] Teaching Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* would show students that ethnic minority people can achieve prestigious awards, such as a Nobel Prize, whilst demonstrating that ethnic minority authors wrote about more than just racism and slavery.

Integrating colonial studies, slavery, and the literary achievements of ethnic minority writers into the national curriculum is important, but there are debates regarding who should be involved in this process. Sadhana Bery believes that 'only black communities have the right to authorize the content of a curriculum on slavery and they, and not white educators, must control decision-making.'[690] This raises the question of whether Bery's advice should be heeded, or whether that would reinforce another type of racial discrimination. Malia Boutattia argues that 'there needs to be a recognition that Black people hold the knowledge necessary to provide the solutions to their oppression', and so White allies 'should support the implementation rather than trying to design top-down solutions without consulting Black students as well as Black academics.'[691] White allies (such as myself) should be conscious that there are gaps in our knowledge about racial experiences, which is why future research should consult with organisations such as Runnymede, TBC and BCA, and build on

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[689] Elliott, Nelson-Addy, Chantiluke, and Courtney, 'Lit in Colour', p. 51.
[690] Sadhana Bery, 'Multiculturalism, Teaching Slavery, and White Supremacy', *Equity & Excellence in Education,* 47.3 (2014) pp. 334-352 (p. 350).
[691] Malia Bouattia, 'Beyond the Gap: Dismantling Institutional Racism, Decolonising Education', in *Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy*, Runnymede Trust, ed. by Claire Alexander and Jason Arday (2015) pp. 27-29 (p. 25) https://www.runnymedetrust.org/ [Accessed 14/01/2022].

their existing work. It is important to avoid becoming guilty of that which Teju Cole terms the 'White-saviour complex' (the idea that White people need to intervene to save ethnic minorities) because this reinforces notions of racial superiority.[692] This is particularly relevant when studying, researching, and teaching the abolition of British slavery. A 'White-saviour complex' would emerge if the focus was exclusively on White abolitionists, as this would fuel the narrative that White people had to intervene to save enslaved Black people. This thesis has demonstrated that White abolitionists themselves contributed towards the 'White-saviour complex', as many believed that enslaved individuals were too weak to emancipate themselves. Discussions of the British abolitionist movement should not only acknowledge this issue, but should also credit the efforts of Black abolitionists (such as Equiano and Prince) to safeguard against this 'White-saviour' narrative emerging in our teaching and research practices. Future research projects should consult ethnic minority students, teachers, and academics to determine best practices for increasing diversity and decolonising the curriculum.

Although there are various research projects that have already explored how the national curriculum can be diversified, there are several gaps that require further research. The resources currently available predominantly focus on the history curriculum, and so I argue that it would be useful for the DofE, TBC, BCA, Runnymede, and Penguin to collaborate on re-designing the English curriculum to increase diversity. As Jessica Tacon argues, books by ethnic minority authors 'should not be a plaster to stick over the lack of diversity in whichever sphere you

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[692] Teju Cole, 'The White-Savior Industrial Complex', *The Atlantic* (21st March 2012) https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/ [Accessed 14/01/2022].

find yourself in, for example adding the dreaded “stories from other cultures” Scheme of Work to your school English curriculum’; instead ‘they should be embedded.’[693] Further research should explore how to embed these texts, and how to train teachers to teach these texts without tokenism and virtue signalling. The texts should develop critical thinking, rather than just comprehension, allowing students to fully explore and appreciate the literary achievements of ethnic minority authors. I have discussed how my research can help to create educational resources that support this goal. Now that research has identified *why* schools do not teach ethnic minority authors, further research is needed to determine *how* to overcome these barriers, with more focus groups, surveys, workshops and teacher training programmes. Further research can also explore initiatives for decolonising Higher Education institutions, which can build on the work already undertaken by organisations, such as Runnymede (see Appendix 6). Debates about the extent to which the curriculum should be ‘decolonised’, and what this decolonisation should look like, continue to ensue, but these discussions are important and need to be continued in order to determine an appropriate course of action.

[693] Tacon, ‘I’ve Got a Diverse Range of Books’.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Timeline of important historical events in the abolition of British slavery.

1770 – James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw published *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself,* (Bath: S. Hazard, 1770) – the first British slave narrative.

1772 – *Somerset v. Stewart* (a.k.a. The Somerset Case) – James Somerset, an enslaved individual, sought the legal assistance of Granville Sharp after Somerset's enslaver, Charles Stewart, attempted to forcibly transport him to Jamaica against his will. Following a writ of *habeas corpus,* the case was brought before Lord Mansfield, who argued that slavery was not recognised in English law, and so 'the black must be discharged.'[694] The Mansfield judgement had huge implications for the anti-slavery movement, as many believed that it established that enslaved individuals should be emancipated as slavery was not legally approved. Unfortunately, this proved fallacious; although slavery was not supported by English law in 1772, neither was it legally prohibited. The judgement's limitations are exposed by the fact that although in theory no individual could not be forcibly transported, the reality proved the contrary, as shown by Olaudah Equiano's unsuccessful attempt in 1774 to secure the release of the enslaved John Annis by obtaining a writ of *habeas corpus* and soliciting the help of Sharp.[695] Since Annis had already been shipped back to St Kitts, the rescue attempt could not be accomplished, and despite Equiano's best efforts Annis remained enslaved on St Kitts until his death. The limitations of the Mansfield judgement are highlighted in the poem, *The Dying Negro* (1773) by Thomas Day and John Bicknell, which is explored in Chapter Four.

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[694] For more information, see: Norman S. Poser, *Lord Mansfield: Justice in the Age of Reason* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).
[695] James Walvin, *An African's Life: The Life and Times of Olaudah Equiano, 1745-1797* (London: Cassell, 2000) p. 102.

1781 – *Zong* massacre – The *Zong* was a ship carrying enslaved Africans across the Middle Passage. In 1781 the ship was overcrowded and supplies were running out as a navigational error had set them back three weeks. Approximately 131 enslaved African were thrown overboard so that their deaths could be claimed on the insurance, whilst saving the limited supplies for the remaining enslaved Africans and crew members.

1783 – *Zong* trial – Olaudah Equiano brought the *Zong* massacre to Granville Sharp's attention in the hope that justice would be granted, and that other instances would be prevented. The case was tried in 1783, though as an insurance fraud case rather than a murder trial, presided over once again by Lord Mansfield. He judged that the enslavers were entitled to the insurance money, despite having murdered the enslaved Africans. Such poor treatment of the enslaved who had been transported across the Atlantic was used as evidence to support the abolition of the slave trade.

1787 – SEAST formed in London, and this can be seen as the beginning of the national abolitionist movement.

1788 – The Slave Trade Act (also known as the Dolben Act after Member of Parliament Sir William Dolben) was successfully passed through parliament. It limited the number of enslaved Africans that could be transported per ship, and ordered that all slave ships must carry a doctor. It aimed to improve mortality rates, which were measured by recording all enslaved individuals on board, and offered incentives to ships with high survival rates.

1791 – William Wilberforce tried to pass the first Bill through parliament to abolish the slave trade, but was unsuccessful. This was shortly followed by a second in 1792 in line with the rise of petitions and sugar abstention, although this too was defeated.

1807 – The Slave Trade was abolished in Britain by parliament.

1823 – Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery (which later became the Anti-Slavery Society) was formed. The initial title indicates the

cautious approach of this new emancipationist movement, which later split into two branches.

1831 – The Agency Committee was founded as a more radical sister group to the Anti-Slavery Society, which was formed out of frustration at the lack of progress, and campaigned for unconditional and immediate emancipation.

1833 – The Slavery Abolition Act was passed through parliament, largely as a result of the Great Reform Act (1832) of the previous year allowing those who had previously been denied political positions (due to their unorthodox religious affiliations) to become Members of Parliament. As a result, dissenters such as Quakers and Methodists were elected as politicians for the first time, whose religious views rendered them more likely to oppose slavery, and therefore vote in favour of abolition bills. Although the Slavery Abolition Act was passed in 1833, it was not implemented until August 1834, and even then it subjected enslaved individuals to a period of apprenticeship before emancipation was granted. This was considered as a compromise between abolitionists and enslavers, essentially implementing a gradual approach to emancipation. Apprenticeships were initially set at six years, but were later reduced to four so that all enslaved individuals were emancipated by 1838. However, some British colonial islands (such as Antigua) chose immediate abolition as an alternative to implementing the apprentice schemes.[696]

Appendix 2: Further details on research, resources, and workshops aimed at teaching students in a way that decolonises the curriculum.

1. The Understanding Slavery Initiative (USI) was founded in 2003 to develop relationships between museums and schools to create accessible programmes and resources for teachers to examine the history of slavery with their students

[696] Keith McClelland, 'Redefining the West Indian Interest: Politics and the Legacies of Slave-Ownership', in *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*, ed. by Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel Lang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) pp. 127-162 (p. 142).

by engaging with museums.[697] They have created resources for teaching about Black history, including ‘Resistance & Rebellion’, ‘The Campaign for Abolition’, ‘Legacies’, and ‘Diaspora’.[698]

2. The BCA have resources and workshops aimed at KS2 & KS3:
   - A History workshop on ‘*Windrush* Journeys’ for KS1 and KS2, which is adapted for KS3.
   - A workshop on ‘Black Abolitionists in Georgian London’ that can be suitable for English, Art and History.
   - An ‘Uprisings in 1981’ workshop for KS4 English Language, KS4 History of Art, and KS2 History.
   - A ‘Change Makers in Victorian Britain’ workshop for KS2 History.[699]

3. TBC have free educational videos and accompanying worksheets on the following topics (each with one version aimed at KS2 and another aimed at KS3):

- Bristol Bus Boycotts
- John Blanke and Black Tudors
- Olive Morris
- Notting Hill Carnival
- Lilian Bader
- Fanny Eaton
- Mary Prince
- Mary Seacole.[700]

4. Penguin have provided free teaching resources on the following texts:

[697] Understanding Slavery Initiative website, http://www.understandingslavery.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=348&Itemid=199 [Accessed 1st March 2016].
[698] ‘Secondary Teachers’, Understanding Slavery Initiative website, http://archive.understandingslavery.com/index.php-option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=128&Itemid=189.html [Accessed 24/01/2022].
[699] ‘Workshops, *The Black Cultural Archives,* https://blackculturalarchives.org/schools-workshops [Accessed 28/01/2022].
[700] ‘Learning Resources’, *The Black Curriculum,* https://theblackcurriculum.com [Accessed 28/01/2022].

- *The Hill We Climb*, by Amanda Gorman (KS3)
- *The Boy with the Topknot*, by Sathnam Sanghera (KS3)
- *Run Rebel*, by Manjeet Mann (KS3/4)
- *Burnt Sugar*, by Avni Doshi (KS4)
- *Minty Alley*, by C. L. R. James (KS4)
- *Living While Black*, by Guilaine Kinouani (KS5).[701]

Penguin's research also revealed that 'teachers often struggle finding books by writers of colour', which is why they created a suggested reading list with over 100 titles, that is then separated into lists for primary and secondary education. Penguin are calling this list 'incomplete, because we know it will never manage to be exhaustive or definitive, and we plan to update it annually bringing even more new and classic titles to the list.'[702]

5. Runnymede have designed a series of KS3 cross-curriculum lessons (for Citizenship, history, English and geography), which are presented in the *Belonging* teacher's guide.[703] These lessons were designed to allow young people to explore intercultural dialogue' by studying the effect of migration on local history in London, Paris and Lisbon, so there is not always a British focus.[704] It contains four English lessons under the heading 'Pride or Prejudice', which encourage students to explore films before researching and writing for a magazine in teams. This has the potential to be a useful resource, though it is only equivalent to four hours of work (one hour for each lesson). Diversity should be included more firmly within the English curriculum, rather than sporadic lessons such as this that can be incorporated briefly in the same way as Black History Month. Nevertheless, the 'lesson intentions' of teaching students to 'consider the impact of bias' and to 'identify aspects of cultural

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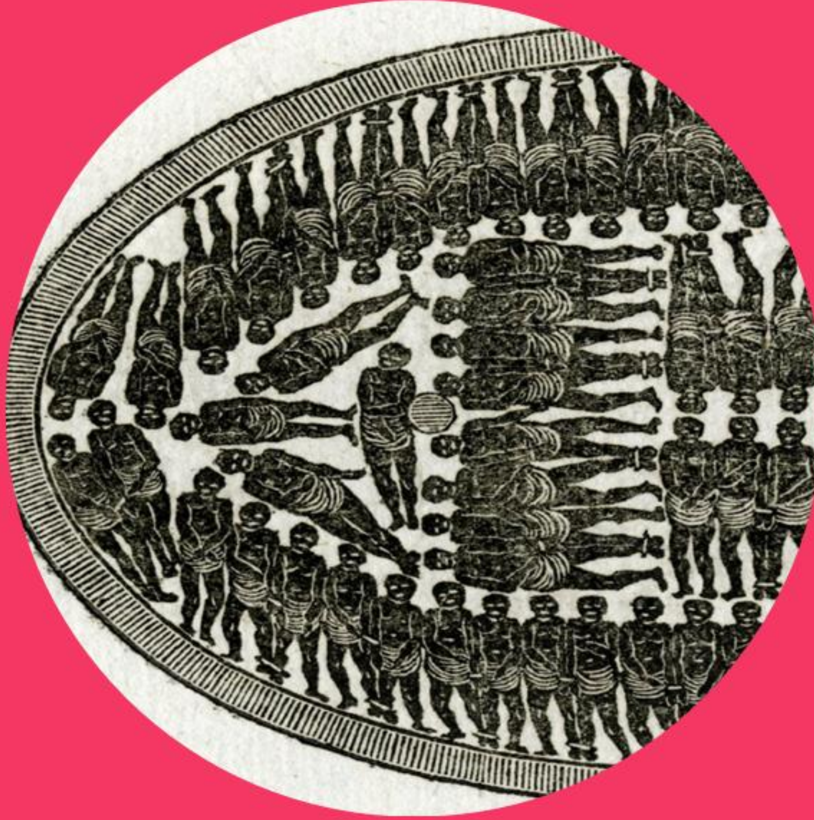
[701] 'Lit in Colour teaching resources', *Penguin*, https://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour/teaching-resources.htmlhttps://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour/teaching-resources.html [Accessed 10/01/2022].
[702] 'The (incomplete) Lit in Colour book list', *Penguin*, https://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour/teaching-resources/reading-lists.html [Accessed 10/01/2022].
[703] 'Belonging Teacher's Guide', Publication & Resources, *Runnymede,* https://www.runnymedetrust.org/companies/125/74/Belonging-Teachers-Guide.html [Accessed 21/01/2022].
[704] Ibid.

diversity' are good aims, which students can achieve whilst developing their writing skills.

Appendix 3: Extracts taken from the 'How do you feel? The use of emotions in British antislavery literature' Key Stage 4 handbook, designed by Nicola Westwood and The Brilliant Club for The Scholars Programme [c. 2022].

3a. Front Cover (Courtesy of The Brilliant Club c. 2022)

The Scholars Programme



How do you feel? The use of emotions in British antislavery literature.

Key Stage 4 Programme

Pupil Name

Coursebook Designed by Nicola Westwood

Tutorial Group

3b. Tutorial 2, pp. 14-16 of the handbook (Courtesy of The Brilliant Club c. 2022)

The following lesson plan is for the second of seven English tutorials:

1. The British Abolitionist Campaign & the Rhetoric of Sensibility
2. The Role of Anger & Slave Revolts
3. Divine Vengeance as a Fear Tactic

4. Shame, Sugar & Cannibalism
5. Slave Narratives: Was There a Happy Ending?
6. Draft Assignment Feedback and Reflection
7. Final Assignment Feedback and Reflection

I designed this course so that the first five tutorials align with my thesis chapters, with each tutorial exploring extracts from British abolitionist texts that I analyse in my thesis. It also follows the structure set out by The Brilliant Club, which involves students undertaking a baseline assignment at the end of the first tutorial, followed by a final assignment at the end of the course, so that I can establish the progress that each student has made.

Tutorial 2 – The Role of Anger & Slave Revolts.

'Edward Rushton Portrait' by Royden1 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.

Edward Rushton

Olaudah Equiano

What is the Purpose of Tutorial 2?

- Explain the cause of anger and slave revolts.
- Discuss: why slave revolts and anger were considered to be dangerous?
- Analyse the extent to which portrayals of anger helped or hindered the anti-slavery movement.

Starter Activity:

Read the following extract and write down 3 key facts about slave revolts.

In 1760 Jamaica experienced one of the largest slave revolts in the British West Indies, known as Tacky's revolt after the enslaved individual who led the rebellion. Despite its initial success, the rebelling slaves were defeated by the overwhelming power of the British. This failed rebellion came at a great cost; there was not only the financial cost of repairing buildings that had been destroyed, but there was also the human cost, as Tacky and many of his fellow rebels lost their lives.

In contrast, the Haitian Revolution was a successful slave revolt against French colonial rule in Saint-Domingue, which is now known as the island of Haiti. The revolt began in 1791, and ended in 1804 when the Haitian people won their independence. It is believed to have been inspired by the French Revolution, which started in 1789, spreading ideas of liberty and equality around the world. Toussaint L'Ouverture, a military leader and former slave, became famous for taking control of the revolution in the late 1790s to abolish slavery and establish Haiti's independence, and became the subject of a poem by William Wordsworth called 'To Toussaint L'Ouverture' (1803). However, in 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte sought to re-establish slavery throughout the French colonies, and tried to regain control of Haiti. They imprisoned Toussaint in France where he died in 1803. Nevertheless, the French were unable to regain control of Haiti, and the entire island was declared independent in 1804, making the Haitian Revolution the only successful slave revolt in history.

Notes:

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Biographical Information

Below is some biographical information on the two writers that may be useful to interpreting the texts that they produced.

Edward Rushton

Rushton had previously worked as a doctor on a slave ship, where he lost his sight as a result of an illness that he caught whilst caring for slaves being transported across the Middle Passage. He had almost drowned during a storm which destroyed the slave ship that he was working on in 1773, but a slave called Quamina saved him by surrendering the cask that he was using to stay afloat so that Rushton could survive. However, this cost Quamina his life, as he drowned as a result of this sacrifice. Rushton briefly acknowledges the slave who saved his life in 'The West Indian Eclogues' (1787) by naming a character after Quamina in the third eclogue, to commemorate the individual who committed such a selfless act.

Olaudah Equiano

Equiano is a former slave who worked hard to earn money during his enslavement so that he could purchase his own freedom. He learned how to speak, read and write in English, so that he could write his autobiographical slave narrative recording his life from his birth, to his enslavement, through to obtaining his freedom. He went on tour around the country to promote his book and campaign for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, so that his fellow Africans could share the freedom that he himself was able to enjoy.

Main Activity: Debate - Was anger useful or harmful to the abolitionist movement?

	Edward Rushton, 'West Indian Eclogues' (1787)	Olaudah Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, (1789)
How is anger useful to the abolitionist movement? Consider: - What is the cause of the protagonist's anger? - Why is their anger being portrayed? - Are we likely to sympathise with the anger of enslaved individuals? - The writer's background.		
How might anger have harmed the abolitionist effort? Consider: - How does this anger & violence make the protagonist appear? In a positive, or negative way? Why? - What problems might slave revolts cause? - Can it ever be right to use violence?		

Tutorial 2 – Homework:

Write down your thoughts on the following questions, and we will discuss them as a group at the beginning of the next tutorial.

- How can we apply our knowledge of slavery to portrayals of the anger behind slave revolts?
- Is it useful to know about slavery, and does it change our opinion about the anger felt by enslaved individuals, compared to if you knew nothing about slavery?

Appendix 4 – Statistics regarding racial diversity within the English curriculum.

According to *Penguin*, a 2019 study of students in England showed that:

- 34.4% of students are Black, Asian, or minority ethnic, but only 0.7% of students study a book by an ethnic minority author at GCSE.[705]
- 7% of students studied a book by a woman at GCSE, but only 0.1% of students study a book by a woman of ethnic minority at GCSE.[706]
- 35% of respondents who teach Year 7, 28% of those who teach Year 8, and 29% of those who teach Year 9 said that they 'teach no texts by a person of colour', with the percentage rising if poetry was excluded.[707]
- Approximately 12% of secondary school teachers reported 'having had training on how to talk about race as part of their initial teacher training course'.[708]
- Another barrier identified is that 46% of schools have no Black, Asian or minority ethnic teachers, and that 85.7% of teachers in England were White British in 2019, with this lack of representation particularly common amongst English teachers.[709]
- The attainment gap between students from high and low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds is further increased by racial differences: 'When students have high SES backgrounds, boys from Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean backgrounds score lower than White British boys.'[710]
- It is more difficult to get data on which texts are being taught at KS3 because teachers have greater freedom, without being restricted to exam boards and their set texts.
- 57.4% of students who were not continuing to study English Literature at A level believed that 'more diversity in the writers and stories we study' would have made them more inclined to study English at A level.[711]

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705 Victoria Elliott, Lesley Nelson-Addy, Roseanna Chantiluke, and Matthew Courtney, 'Lit in Colour: Diversity in Literature in English Schools', Commissioned by Runnymede, *Penguin*, p. 25, https://www.penguin.co.uk/campaigns/lit-in-colour.html [Accessed 10/01/2022].
706 Ibid., p. 25
707 Ibid., p. 29.
708 Ibid., p. 42.
709 Ibid., p. 35.
710 Ibid., p. 56.
711 Ibid., p. 26.

Appendix 5 –Text options offered by exam boards for English Literature.

AQA accounted for almost 80% of GCSE English Literature entries in 2020.[712] Only two of the set text options (not including poetry) were written by ethnic minority authors – Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* – though neither of those are Black.[713]

Pearson Edexcel added more GCSE texts that were due to be examined in 2020, but exams did not take place because of the pandemic. These texts include five works by ethnic minority writers: Tanika Gupta's *The Empress*, Benjamin Zephaniah's *Refugee Boy* (adapted for the stage by Lemn Sissay), Jamila Gavin's *Coram Boy,* Meera Syal's *Anita and Me,* and Malorie Blackman's *Boys Don't Cry*.[714]

Pearson Edexcel offers five texts by ethnic minority authors for A level English literature: Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns.*[715]

OCR has two GCSE texts by an ethnic minority author: Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go.*[716]

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[712] Ofqual, *Annual Qualifications Market Report: 2018-19 academic year*, p. 9 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-qualifications-market-report-academic-year-2018-to-2019 [Accessed 07/01/2022]; AQA, *GCSE English literature* (for teaching from 2015 onwards) https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-8702-SP-2015.PDF [Accessed 07/01/2022].

[713] 'Subject Content: GCSE English Literature', *AQA,* https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-literature-8702/subject-content/modern-texts-and-poetry [Accessed 24/01/2022].

[714] 'Specification: GCSE English Literature', *Pearson,* https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-gcses/english-literature-2015.coursematerials.html#%2FfilterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FSpecification-and-sample-assessments [Accessed 24/01/2022].

[715] 'Specification: AS and A level English Literature', *Pearson,* https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/english-literature-2015.coursematerials.html#%2FfilterQuery=category:Pearson-UK:Category%2FSpecification-and-sample-assessments [Accessed 24/01/2022].

[716] 'Specification at a glance: English Literature GCSE', *OCR*, https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/gcse/english-literature-j352-from-2015/specification-at-a-glance/ [Accessed 24/01/2022].

For A level, OCR has only one text by an ethnic minority author: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist.*[717]

At A level, AQA offers 2 specifications, each with 2 texts by authors of colour: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things,* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* for one; then Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, and Andrea Levy's *Small Island* for the other.[718]

Appendix 6 – Research and initiatives to decolonise Higher Education.

- Runnymede has produced a report called 'Aiming Higher', which outlines 'the continued inequalities for black and minority ethnic people in terms of admissions, degree attainment, curriculum content, and staffing in universities.'[719] It suggests that 'some of the key issues include a Eurocentric curriculum which Black students are unable to relate to given that it is not reflective of diverse contributions to the field'.[720] There are many other factors that the report considers, such as institutional racism and unconscious racial bias, which are barriers that universities should actively endeavour to overcome.
- In 2014 the 'Why is My Curriculum White?' campaign began at University College London with students protesting against 'the lack of awareness that the curriculum is white comprised of "white ideas" by "white authors" and is a result of colonialism that has normalized whiteness and made blackness invisible'.[721]

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[717] 'Specification at a glance: English Literature AS and A level, *OCR*, https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/english-literature-h072-h472-from-2015/specification-at-a-glance/ [Accessed 24/01/2022].
[718] 'Set text selector: AS and A level English Literature A', *AQA,* https://www.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-a/plan/set-text-selector-literature-a [Accessed 24/01/2022]; 'Set text selector: AS and A level English Literature B', *AQA,* https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-b-7716-7717/subject-content-as/literary-genres [Accessed 24/01/2022].
[719] 'Education and Young People', Runnymede Trust, https://www.runnymedetrust.org/ [Accessed 14/01/2022].
[720] Malia Bouattia, 'Beyond the Gap: Dismantling Institutional Racism, Decolonising Education', in *Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy*, Runnymede Trust, Ed. Claire Alexander and Jason Arday (2015) pp. 27-29, (p. 24) https://www.runnymedetrust.org/ [Accessed 14/01/2022].
[721] M. A. Peters, 'Why is my curriculum White?', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47, (2015) pp. 641-646 (p. 641).

- Malia Bouattia has explored the Black Ambassador Scheme at the University of Birmingham, which seeks to address the BME attainment gap with a peer mentoring project.[722] There was initially little engagement because it provided a 'Black space' that did not tackle the issues that led students to feel marginalised.[723] Black students were asked to suggest solutions that could be implemented, and so overall 'the project has helped not only to pave the way for an inclusive learning environment, but also changed the way we address the Gap to the extent that other HE institutions are also implementing such a scheme.'[724] Other Higher Education institutions could collaborate and share ideas of best practice for similar schemes.

[722] 'Birmingham leads on pioneering Student Ambassador programme championing diversity and tackling sexual harassment on campus', University of Birmingham, 15th March 2017, https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2017/03/birmingham-leads-on-pioneering-student-ambassador-programme.aspx [Accessed 14/01/2022].
[723] Bouattia, 'Beyond the Gap', p. 24.
[724] Ibid., p. 25.