

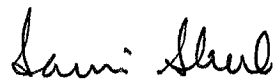
Persons and Potential:  
Education and Abolition in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain

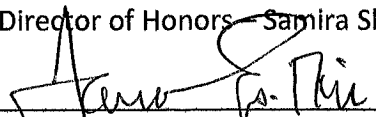
By  
Charlotte Gill

Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Department of History of Vanderbilt University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For Honors in History

April 2016

On the basis of this thesis defended by the candidate on April 27, 2016  
we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded HONORS  
in History.

  
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Director of Honors – Samira Sheikh

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Adviser – James Epstein

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Third Reader – Catherine Molineux

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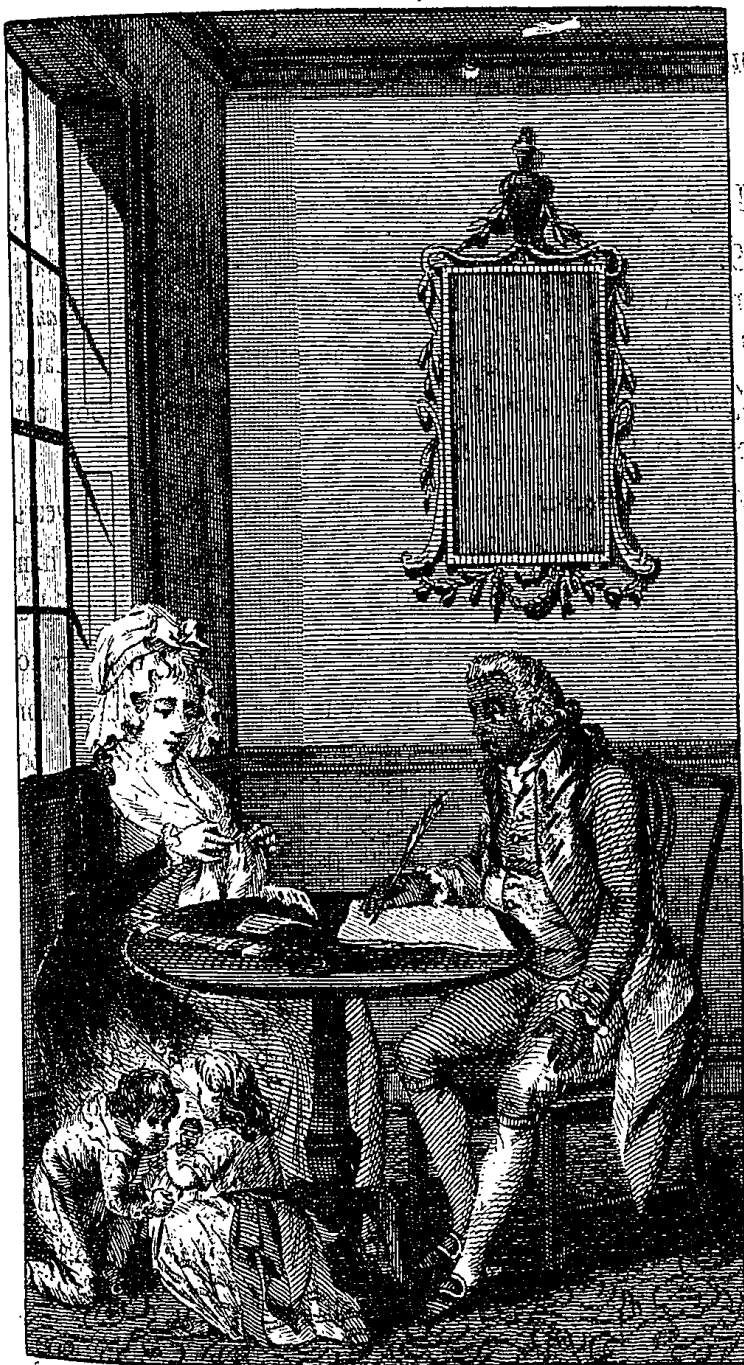
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**Persons and Potential:  
Education and Abolition in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain**

By Charlotte Gill

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Education in the Antislavery Age</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Educating the Poor in the “Age of Benevolence” .....	13
Education and Morality among the Bastions of Abolition .....	15
Personhood and the Potential for Education .....	18
<b>Teachings and Tales for the Home</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Education and the Family .....	37
Education and the Fictional Tale as Tool .....	39
Creatures and Compassion .....	42
Government, Justice, and Civilization .....	46
Platform for Encountering “the Foreign” and the Slave .....	48
<b>Politics from Child’s Play?</b> .....	<b>54</b>
Education as Antislavery Tool.....	58
Lockean Education and “Civilization” .....	62
Human Dignity: Personhood and Animality .....	66
Motif of Family and Child .....	70
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>74</b>



He was a faithful Servant, an affectionate -  
Husband, a kind Father, a warm Friend,  
a sincere Christian.

Former slave Ignatius Sancho writes  
at a table alongside the woman of the  
house and her children.

Sarah Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 3:203-205.

## Introduction

In her March 1789 edition of *Family Magazine*, author and education activist Sarah Trimmer introduced a letter written by former slave Ignatius Sancho by attesting to his industriousness and familial sympathies. She lauded the benevolence of the Duke of Montague, who provided Sancho his education as a child.<sup>1</sup> She expressed an explicitly abolitionist intention for printing this short biography alongside Sancho's writings: "A specimen of his writings will serve to convince the reader, that the negro race deserve to be ranked among the human kind, and that it is very unjust to treat those as brutes, who are capable of being as good [C]hristians as others."<sup>2</sup> Trimmer points to Sancho's ability to be educated as grounds for his consideration as fully human. Meanwhile, she praises Sancho's benefactor, as both parties benefit from the provision of Christian education. Trimmer's embrace of antislavery in a text directed toward familial instruction points to the double role of education in the abolitionist movement: it was both the means by which to effect the necessary moral change among the British populace and a justification for abolition itself. By examining the threads of abolitionist sentiment in writings of late eighteenth-century educationists as well as the rhetoric of such educationists in abolitionists' writings, this study will demonstrate that the motif of education was fundamental to abolitionists' conception of their activism.

The idea of a mutual relationship between British and African moral uplift pervades British imperial history. Protestant missions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emphasized slave conversion as part of the duties of slave-masters, and the morality of a master

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *The Family Magazine; Or, a Repository of Religious Instruction, and Rational Amusement*, vol. 3 (London: printed by and for John. Marshall and Co. Aldermay Church Yard, in Bow Lane, 1788), 204–205. She is referring to John Montague, the Second Duke of Montague.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:206.

in the Restoration period depended upon the care he took to Christianize his slaves.<sup>3</sup> For Trimmer, African *capacity* for intellectual and moral development was both argument for the immorality of slavery and an important point of education that she hoped would encourage moral reform in her readers. At least in the imagination of abolitionist leaders, reading and education were fundamental to the enlightenment of British citizenry, and their potential provision to enslaved Africans upheld justifications for abolition.<sup>4</sup>

The writings of educational reformers and abolitionists were steeped—to varying degrees—in the language of Protestant values as well as those of the Enlightenment. Religious revivals characterized much of eighteenth-century British culture. While Methodism influenced much of the lower class, Anglican Evangelicalism reinforced the role of the established Church of England and drew adherents from formerly aristocratic and middle-class families, alongside the proliferation of New Dissenters, the Independents, and Old Dissenters like Unitarians and Quakers.<sup>5</sup> Abolitionist rhetoric offered points of intersection between interdenominational, particularly Evangelical, Christian values and those of the Enlightenment. Here, I will refer to Enlightenment values as twofold: a faith in human reason and knowledge, and an adherence to the psychological and educational theories of John Locke. Authors of educational texts and family and children’s literature emphasized the role of objective truth as a product of human reason, warning their readers of the dangers of false representation and sensationalism. They relied upon the notion that moral development would follow from such dependence on reason.

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 118-120.

<sup>4</sup> In the letters that Trimmer includes, Sancho encourages one of his correspondents to dedicate himself to careful study to better himself intellectually and morally, p. 215. Furthermore, he blames “the general inhumanity of mankind . . . first, from the cursed false principle of common education” in an August 1777 letter. Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (London: printed for J. Nichols; and C. Dilly, in the Poultry, 1783), 135.

<sup>5</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), 73.

Locke's argument of *tabula rasa*—the initial “blank slate” of the human mind—and its consequent malleability according to environmental influence played an important, and understudied, role in antislavery agitation and rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> While I am not delving into Locke's actual views on slavery, this study traces the use of Lockean education theories in both education and family literature as well as in antislavery writings.

Of course, like any political movement seeking to transform public opinion, the abolition movement inherently dealt with education: it involved not only persuading large swaths of the British population of slavery's evils, but also convincing members of Parliament of the state's own interest in antislavery. But education played a more important role in British antislavery than simply a means to the passage of legislation. Rather, it figured poignantly in abolitionists' own conceptualization of antislavery as a specifically civilizing force—one which defined the categories that order human society: personhood, family, and the state. Furthermore, childhood education functioned both as a platform for sharing antislavery ideas within the home and as a rhetorical device for antislavery leaders.

In 1808, the British Parliament abolished the slave trade. Twenty-five years later, Parliament emancipated the slaves in its colonies with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. Public disapproval of slavery had predated the abolition movement of the late eighteenth century, beginning with the very birth of the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>7</sup> While voices, particularly from various Christian denominations, had condemned slavery since its inception, Anglican clerk

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<sup>6</sup> John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* were essential to the reigning philosophy of education – and its Enlightenment roots – in late eighteenth-century Britain. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 15th ed., vol. 1 (London, 1753); John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 5th ed. (London: Printed for A. and J. Churchill, at the Black Swan in Pater-Noster-Row, 1705).

<sup>7</sup> Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 37.



Granville Sharp served as the major pioneer of the antislavery movement from the mid-1760s.<sup>8</sup> In 1772, Lord Mansfield ruled that American slave James Somerset be freed when his Virginian master sought to forcibly ship him to Jamaica, marking the inconsistency of Britain's claim to house liberty alongside its brutal slave trade. The *Somerset* case was a point of celebration for London blacks and abolitionists, but hardly a concrete legal victory for slavery in general, as shown by the 1781 *Zong* case, in which the 132 Africans thrown overboard a ship were ruled as property according to maritime insurance law.<sup>9</sup> 1778 marked the first appointment of a House of Commons committee created for the purpose of investigating the slave trade.

Historians view 1783 as a major turning point in the abolition movement: British Quakers initiated the London Meeting for Sufferings, as well as an informal committee for antislavery publicity, and presented the first petition to abolish the slave trade to Parliament.<sup>10</sup> Christopher Brown argues that British Quaker political engagement actually resulted largely from an internal conflict between Quakers in Britain and Quakers in America.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, David Brion Davis points to the American Revolution as sparking increased antislavery activity among American Quakers, who pressured both British and American governments and fueled correspondence between the American Quakers of the Philadelphia Meeting for Sufferings and the London Quakers.<sup>12</sup> Partly due to this transatlantic relationship, the London Meeting for Sufferings created a committee on the slave trade in 1783, some of whose members already belonged to “an unofficial committee of six to consider steps ‘for the Relief and Liberation of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies, & for

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<sup>8</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 172. G. M. Ditchfield, “Sharp, Granville (1735–1813),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter, *ODNB*], ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); September 2012, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/25208> (accessed March 21, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 96-97. James Walvin, *Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 133, 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 393, 405.

<sup>12</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 218.

the Discouragements of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa.”<sup>13</sup> In the same year, Quakers presented the first antislavery petition to the House of Commons.

Abolitionist historiography has begun to account for the multiplicity of perspectives on the termination of the slave trade and slavery. The first accounts of the abolition movement consisted largely of biographies in the years immediately following abolition, notably Thomas Clarkson’s own account of the British abolition movement and hagiographies of William Wilberforce.<sup>14</sup> Breaking from the traditional praise of individuals to argue for the economic inevitability of antislavery, Eric Williams’ 1944 *Capitalism and Slavery* advanced the Marxist decline theory of abolition. Positing that the West Indian colonies were losing value following the American Revolution, the “decline thesis” argues that abolition was primarily the result of industrial capitalism’s maturation – that the West Indian colonies had outgrown themselves.<sup>15</sup> In response, Seymour Drescher’s 1977 publication of *Econocide* rebutted the argument for economic determinism, instead using data from the slave trade to illustrate slavery’s continued profitability in the colonies throughout the abolition movement.<sup>16</sup> In his wake, multiple aspects of Williams’ thesis have since been discredited. However, its emphasis on economic influences encouraged a broader approach to studying abolition, addressing the variety of the rhetoric and actors involved rather than simply political figures.

As studies on individuals and economics have given way to analysis of ideology and empire, further examination of cultural shifts undergirding changes in public opinion is

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<sup>13</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 4-5. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (Philadelphia: Brown and Merritt, 1808). Robert Isaac Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce* (London: JMurray, 1838).

<sup>15</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), vii, 176. Brown, *Moral Capital*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, first published in 1977, 2010 ed.).

necessary for a thorough understanding of the British abolition movement. This project explores family literature and educational tracts as both vehicles for and emblems of the shift in public opinion that contributed to the legal abolition of the British slave trade in 1808 and of slavery in 1833. Scholars have cited religious revival, political leadership, and economic concerns as important to the mobilization of abolitionist public opinion.<sup>17</sup> Intrinsicly linked to this shift in public opinion lies an important cultural phenomenon: an increased emphasis on the role of education for family and society at large. Britons of all denominations maintained a shared Christian belief in the connection between godliness and family.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, they considered the family not only to be the fundamental unit of society but also as a refuge for the imparting of religious knowledge to children and the exercise of a complementarian view of gender roles.<sup>19</sup> Anne Stott's biography of Wilberforce highlights the role of family not only in Wilberforce's actions and ideas, but also within the group of Evangelical Anglican political leaders comprising the "Clapham sect" and in British culture at large.<sup>20</sup> Catherine Hall likewise notes the value that the Clapham sect placed upon family, remarking that its members "in many ways lived like a large extended family."<sup>21</sup> As they demonstrate, a focus on the family unit is inextricably linked to

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<sup>17</sup> In addition to the aforementioned biographies and works by Williams and Drescher, see John Coffey, *Exodus and Liberation: Deliverance Politics from John Calvin to Martin Luther King Jr.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 74. For more on views of the family within Protestantism, see Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (New York: Longman, 1995), 46-57.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 108. "Complementarianism" refers to the belief of many Christian denominations that men and women, while sharing equal dignity, possess distinct roles within church and the family.

<sup>20</sup> Anne Stott, *Wilberforce: Family and Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The "Clapham sect" was a group of Evangelical Anglicans, "many of whom lived in or near the Surrey village of Clapham." Not all members necessarily lived in Clapham, but Clapham became the point of reference for the group of antislavery activists motivated by Christian piety. Members of the group included prominent abolitionists William Wilberforce, Hannah More, Henry Thornton, and Zachary Macaulay. John Wolffe, "Clapham Sect (*act.* 1792–1815)," in *ODNB*, September 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 84.

the roots of antislavery activism.<sup>22</sup> Family and educational literature, therefore, serve as an effective avenue to studying antislavery opinion.

My project deepens Christopher Brown's question in *Moral Capital* of how people *became* abolitionists, in addition to building upon his focus on empire. Extending upon his recognition that abolition was the result of a variety of influences, it emphasizes a manifestation of public discourse largely neglected by previous scholars: family and education literature. Instead of tracing the direct causes of the antislavery movement, this thesis seeks to capture the reciprocal relationships among education, family literature, and abolition that typified the moral climate of late-eighteenth century Britain, particularly among the burgeoning middle class. Brown's *Moral Capital* presents a holistic study of multifarious influences and actors within the abolition movement, arguing against the inevitability of abolition. Instead of resorting to simplistic praise of abolition as a moral accomplishment or, alternatively, a complete disregard for the roles of ideology and individuals in favor of economic determinism, Brown probes the development of abolitionism by analyzing the birth of antislavery ideology from multiple participants, the history of proposed abolitionist solutions, and the political process of abolition.<sup>23</sup> Weaving back and forth between the ideologies and contributions of specific individuals before extrapolating to the broader roles of grassroots activism and political milieu, Brown strikes a

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<sup>22</sup> On the role of the family in the eighteenth century, Lawrence Stone charts the history of the family unit, specifically the development of the "Closed Domesticated Nuclear Family" which dominated Western culture after 1640. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), 7. For more information on changes in education, childhood in culture, and Locke's influence on eighteenth-century childhood education, see J. H. Plumb, "The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, 67 (1975): 64-95. Peter Stearns argues that the development of the modern phase of childhood developed in the eighteenth century, influenced in part by the rise of modern schooling; see Chapter Six of Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006). For more on the beginnings of childhood as a distinct phase, see also Harry Hendrick, *Children, Childhood and English Society, 1880-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society*, 61-74; and Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

<sup>23</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 25.

balance between the various factors of abolition by acknowledging the significance of key leaders without over-simplifying their motives to pure humanitarianism. Indeed, his exploration of the reciprocal relationship between abolitionists and abolitionism reflects his overarching critique of using false binaries to examine individuals and motivations. He emphasizes the role of the American Revolution as pivotal for British abolition, arguing that the American Revolution's importance forces us to consider the impact of empire. As his title suggests, Brown casts a critical eye over abolitionist claims of humanitarianism and religious idealism, instead contending that abolitionism functioned largely as a justification—the “moral capital” necessary—for a broader imperial agenda. Thus, not only does his work focus on the climate of public opinion, but it also paves the way for my analysis of the imperial insinuations of “civilization” within education and abolition rhetoric.

In response to Brown's work, this thesis harnesses educational and family literature as well as explicitly antislavery publications aimed at middle-class readers to understand the intersection of education and abolition. Literature directed toward the family provided a forum for the propagation of antislavery ideas, in addition to constituting a platform for Britons to “encounter” Africans.<sup>24</sup> Specifically, educational theorists and authors writing for families emphasized the centrality of the family while arguing that intellectual and moral development were inextricably linked in a Lockean fashion. As late eighteenth-century Britain saw the rise of children's literature as a specific genre, this thesis dissects the Lockean roots of education theories and moralism found in Georgian children's literature and educational materials and applies them to antislavery tracts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> See Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Gillian Avery and Angela Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English*

Print culture in late eighteenth-century Britain proves fundamental to my analysis. Roy Porter charts the proliferation of printed materials in the eighteenth century, dependent largely upon Britain's high literacy rates relative to the rest of Europe. This explosion of pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, and books fueled a culture of literacy.<sup>26</sup> Porter also points to the role of education in enlightenment thought as influencing abolition, examining utilitarian and natural rights arguments for antislavery in addition to invocations of a shared original state of liberty for slaves and free alike.<sup>27</sup> While he discusses Locke's position in the education landscape, his discussion of abolition and education does not fully take into account Lockean rhetoric underpinning justifications for slavery that connected both abolitionist and family literature.<sup>28</sup>

Also pertaining to print culture's role in abolitionism, J.R. Oldfield's analysis of the British petition campaigns of 1788 and 1792 focuses on public opinion and the transmission of the antislavery ethic.<sup>29</sup> Oldfield's emphasis on popular literature and grassroots activism fueled by a reading public with access to a variety of literature serves as foundational for an analysis of educational and family-related rhetoric on both the popular and political level. Following from Oldfield's argument that abolition was a product of mass mobilization facilitated by key individual actors and the existence of a literate, financially stable, and increasingly urbanized middle class influenced by religious revival and Enlightenment ideals, this study will vivify the

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*Children's Stories, 1780-1900* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), Samuel F. Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981).

<sup>26</sup> Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and Creation of the Modern World* (London: The Penguin Press, 2000), 73, 76-77.

<sup>27</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, 358-361.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 342-343.

<sup>29</sup> J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilization of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995). Seymour Drescher's *Capitalism and Antislavery* also examines the influence of popular opinion on national policy. Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (London: The MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1986).

interaction between antislavery leaders and middle-class families by demonstrating overlapping rhetoric.

An examination of the family unit inevitably encompasses the role of women in abolition. Clare Midgley's *Women against Slavery* further exemplifies a focus on social history.<sup>30</sup> In light of scant scholarly recognition paid to female abolitionists, particularly due to the community-based nature of their activism, Midgley's analysis links female contributions to abolition to feminine roles of moral guardianship and domestic consumption. Just as gender and class shaped who was involved in the antislavery movement and how, the political nature of abolition served as a vehicle for female empowerment. Extending Midgley's arguments, Chapters One and Two both concern themselves with the role of women in abolition, particularly female educational authors Maria Edgeworth and Sarah Trimmer, as well as the Lockean influence on girls' education. Women's prominence in the overlapping discourse of education and antislavery highlights not only the figure of the family but also the relationship between education and demographics typically excluded from mainstream schooling.

Activists' interest in both antislavery and education as twin issues in the "age of benevolence" demonstrates their shared roots. Chapter One explores this connection, examining the general state and theory of education. It focuses especially on the forms of education utilized in Quaker communities, who comprised a central base for antislavery support and activity, using contemporary accounts of Quaker practices and morality. This chapter will also focus on the works of education authors Richard and Maria Edgeworth, demonstrating the faith in reason and trust in education's capacity for edification that defined contemporary education ideologies.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1700-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>31</sup> While Richard and Maria Edgeworth penned *Practical Education* as a joint effort, I mainly focus on the chapters written solely by Maria Edgeworth. As such, I will frequently refer to only Maria Edgeworth as author.

Specifically, their educational theory tract *Practical Education* serves as a useful case study for demonstrating the shared rhetoric of education and antislavery.

Education and the home figure prominently as a forum for antislavery ideas in family literature itself. Chapter Two attends to the works of Sarah Trimmer—in particular, her *Family Magazine* which ran from January 1788 to June 1789—to illustrate the intersection of family, education, civic, and antislavery ideologies, as well as marking the role of fictional tales for children in forming the moral milieu surrounding antislavery. By using Trimmer’s *Family Magazine* as a case study, we can examine in depth popular understandings of personhood, justice, and civilization. Trimmer’s *Family Magazine* emblemizes the role of education directed toward the family as a mechanism for transmitting antislavery values. Finally, Chapter Three will apply findings from Chapters One and Two to the rhetoric—from an autobiography to Parliamentary debates and distributed tracts—of political leaders themselves, focusing specifically on the well-known abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce. As a member of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Clarkson wrote profusely for the public—typically the British middle-class. Likewise, Wilberforce wrote political tracts and letters as part of his antislavery campaign in Parliament. This analysis illuminates the tension involved with invoking “civilization” in antislavery speech, in addition to marking the use of education as a means for justifying antislavery and defining personhood. The rhetoric of education—antislavery as moral enlightenment and the capacity for improvement as demonstrating personhood—permeates both Clarkson’s and Wilberforce’s writings.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> It should also be noted that many in-text citations of primary sources have been updated with modern spelling and grammar.



# Chapter One

“Nearer on a par in the cultivation of their minds:”

## Education in the Antislavery Age

“We will venture to say, that there is no class of men to whom a nation is so much indebted as to those employed in instructing the young: For if it be education that forms the only distinction between the civilized and the savage, much certainly is due to those who devote themselves to the office of instruction.”

—Encyclopedia Britannica (1800)<sup>1</sup>

With general consensus pointing to the birth of elementary education in 1870, scholars often neglect the increasing cultural focus on childhood education in late eighteenth-century England.<sup>2</sup> This chapter explores the role of education in the moral milieu of late eighteenth-century Britain, building the foundation upon which to examine the relationship between antislavery and educational motifs. I will first examine the landscape of philanthropy and education in what is called the “age of benevolence” before delving into the role of education among abolition’s most consistent proponents—the Quakers. Finally, I will show that Richard and Maria Edgeworth’s *Practical Education* provides a basis for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of education and antislavery.

The philanthropic ethos that permeated both Quaker practices and the charity school movement undergirded the environment that forged popular abolition. Meanwhile, the emphasis on education in shaping the morality of the next generation typified the late eighteenth-century adherence to Enlightenment ideals of reason and knowledge. From the Quakers to educational theorists, the British antislavery movement was permeated by the notion that environmental

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<sup>1</sup> “Teachers,” *Encyclopedia Britannica: or, A Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., quoted in Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Press, 2000), 339.

<sup>2</sup> M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement: A Study of Eighteenth Century Puritanism in Action* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 3-4.

factors and dedication to truthfulness could produce goodness in a child. These texts in particular propose a Lockean view of the child as an impressionable, passive recipient of environmental influence that services an overarching argument as to the relationship between groups considered inferior or “other”—the foreigner, servant, poor, female, and, of course, the enslaved African. Such emphasis on the capacity for education inevitably facilitated an increasing focus on both women and children in society—a focus that would predicate the role of women in antislavery advocacy itself as well as the figure of the family as an important component of antislavery rhetoric. Thus, views on and the reality of education in eighteenth-century Britain shed light on the landscape that both nourished and received antislavery rhetoric.

### **Educating the Poor in the “Age of Benevolence”**

In her study of “the charity school movement” in England, Scotland, and Wales, M.G. Jones dubs the eighteenth century the “age of benevolence”—an epithet that she claims to be most typified by the charity school.<sup>3</sup> She writes that concern for the poor and rigid eighteenth-century social structures were far from mutually exclusive, and the growth of charity schools stemmed from a desire to quell poverty and immorality among the lower classes, which were strongly correlated in the middle-class mind.<sup>4</sup> New methods of funding charitable efforts such as associate philanthropy and joint-stock finance sustained such charitable efforts and perpetuated the puritan and utilitarian ethic of eighteenth-century philanthropy, in which overarching economic and social development lay at the core of philanthropy’s goals: “Charity must promote the glory of God by promoting the usefulness of man.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 13, 12.

By the end of the seventeenth century, England and Wales claimed over 500 endowed grammar schools, open to both rich and poor children alike but mainly directed toward the poor, while the three Education Acts of 1649 marked an increased state interest in education.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, eighteenth century elementary education stemmed from an increased emphasis on vernacular languages and the mathematical and natural sciences in late seventeenth-century curricula.<sup>7</sup> By 1799, though, Britain could boast thousands of elementary “charity schools”—both those funded by endowments and those funded by subscriptions—which sought to promote the moral edification of the poor through religion-based education.<sup>8</sup> With a curriculum grounded in a “Christian and Useful education” that taught “the three R’s”—reading, writing, and arithmetic – and occasionally practical handicrafts, such charity schools were the sole source of education for the poor until the establishment of Sunday Schools in the 1780s.<sup>9</sup>

Founded largely in response to industrialization’s demand for weekday child labor, these Sunday Schools—the product of a voluntary movement funded by middle class subscriptions and donations and which enrolled a quarter of a million children by 1787—must, however, be viewed as a continuation of the charity school movement.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, the charity school and Sunday School, as well as the less viable industrial school, comprised the three options for education for children of the poor.<sup>11</sup> Education of the poor proved a leading concern among religious advocates, particularly Evangelicals, alongside antislavery. Thus, the relationship of middle-class philanthropy to education mirrors that of middle-class activism

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<sup>6</sup>Jones, *Charity School Movement*, 15-16. The three Education Acts included the “Act for the Better Propagation of the Gospel in Wales,” which financed and established over sixty free schools in Wales; Chapter 31, which boosted compensation for preaching ministers and schoolmasters; and Chapter 45, which established the role of the State in providing religion and education for the natives of the colonies, see pp. 16-17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23, 26.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 143-144.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

regarding abolition. The proliferation of charity schools and Sunday Schools, particularly in the late eighteenth century, situates antislavery within its context of “the age of benevolence.”

### **Education and Morality among the Bastions of Abolition: The Quakers**

Contemporary authors on the Society of Friends considered praise for education and for equal access to education not only to be a product of Quaker ideology, but as necessary conditions for preservation of Quaker morality. The Quakers emphasized both antislavery and education, particularly for the poor. As such, education and antislavery shared roots of moral impetus among Britain’s major abolitionists. Quakers comprised the majority of antislavery activists long before the 1787 inception of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.<sup>12</sup> Following their first antislavery meeting in 1727, they condemned association with slavery and the slave trade among members at their yearly meeting in 1758 and officially banned slave-owners from their ranks in 1774.<sup>13</sup> While Quakers taught against slavery since the early eighteenth century, it was not until the latter half of the century that their “collective testimony” became explicitly political.<sup>14</sup> They propagated their abolitionist ideology through meetings, correspondence, and the distribution of pamphlets, as well as lobbying political elites.<sup>15</sup> In turn, they also further encouraged their American counterparts in the abolitionist cause.<sup>16</sup>

Stemming from the tide of dissenters leaving the established Church of England in the seventeenth century, the Protestant sect founded by George Fox emphasized the doctrine of the

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<sup>12</sup> Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital*, 391. Joseph Tallcot and Thomas Clarkson, *Statements in Relation to the Proceedings of Friends in England in Aid of the Efforts for the Abolition of Slavery: Also, Some Facts Respecting the Measures Taken by Members of Said Society in England and America for Promoting the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery* (1837), 6.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, vol. 1 (New York: J.S. Taylor, 1836), 89, 91-93, 114.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 213–214,

<sup>15</sup> Clarkson and Tallcot, *Statements in Relation to the Proceedings of Friends*, 5-6; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 423, 426-427, 432.

<sup>16</sup> Clarkson and Tallcot, *Statements in Relation to the Proceedings of Friends*, 5; Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 107–108.

“priesthood of all believers” and therefore the authority of all its members.<sup>17</sup> Egalitarianism and the relationship between morality and children therefore upheld the Quaker approach to education. In his “Portraiture of Quakerism,” Thomas Clarkson uses his experience working with Quakers in abolition to provide a holistic description of religious and communal practices that defined the Society of Friends, highlighting the all-encompassing nature of Quaker morality. Clarkson wrote that education for the children of the poor held particular significance among the Society of Friends, who typically arranged apprenticeships for boys and service jobs for girls following publicly funded basic instruction.<sup>18</sup> Albeit disproportionately middle-class and wealthy compared to other Christian sects, the Quakers were relatively egalitarian in their practices, in which both rich and poor were “admitted into the meetings for discipline equally.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he notes that this egalitarianism pervaded the Quaker impetus for education, writing that “extraordinary knowledge” serves as a distinct trait among the Society: “Every Quaker-boy or girl who comes into the world, must, however poor if the discipline of the Society be kept up, receive an education. All, therefore, who are born into the Society, must be able to read and write. Thus the keys of knowledge are put into their hands.”<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Evans, another author on the Society of Friends, reiterated the centrality of education to the Society of Friends, stating that “[t]he subject of affording the means of a good literary and religious education to the children of all its members, has, from the earliest rise of the Society, engaged its earnest attention” and that “Monthly Meetings are enjoined to see that

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism: As Taken from a View of the Moral Education, Discipline, Peculiar Customs, Religious Principles, Political and Civil Oeconomy and Character of the Society of Friends*, vol. 1 (London: Printed by R. Taylor and Co., for Longman; Hurst ; Rees ; Orme, 1806), ix-x, xiii. 1 Peter 2:5.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism: As Taken from a View of the Moral Education, Discipline, Peculiar Customs, Religious Principles, Political and Civil Oeconomy and Character of the Society of Friends*, vol. 2 (London: Printed by R. Taylor and Co., for Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1806), 94–95.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:99. Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 86.

<sup>20</sup> Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 2: 99.

the children of the poor Friends are schools without cost to their parents.”<sup>21</sup> Quakers also strictly delineated between “useful” and “hurtful” forms of recreation for children, banning those that fell among the latter category.<sup>22</sup> Questions of childhood and the family unit underpinned notions of moral compulsion, and children were portrayed as the first victims of immorality. Later, in 1837, the activists Joseph Tallcot and Thomas Clarkson provided an account of the Society of Friends from their experiences in the abolition movement. When explaining the Quaker rationale for their antislavery stance, Clarkson and Tallcot addressed the effects of slave ownership on the owners themselves, pointing directly to the “corrupting [of] the minds, and debasing [of] the morals of their children” as a core reason to avoid slavery and the slave trade.<sup>23</sup>

Quaker culture and educational practices concerning education emphasized the well-being of children and placed issues of individual development and caring for the poor in direct dialogue. In his 1795 account of Quaker history, author and Anglican clergyman William Sewel emphasized the spirit of moral reform in the ministry of George Fox. He pointed specifically to Fox’s indictment of corrupt trade practices and his “warn[ing] [of] schoolmasters and schoolmistresses to teach their children to mind the fear of the Lord...”<sup>24</sup> This emphasis on responsibility and the public good likewise undergirded the active philanthropy of the Society of Friends extending into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>25</sup> Clarkson noted that all aspects of Quaker daily life submitted to moral concerns, slavery being one of many. Before addressing Quaker dictates on education, he surveyed their views of trade, addressing topics from slavery

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Evans, *A Concise Account of the Religious Society of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers; Embracing a Sketch of Their Christian Doctrines and Practices*. (Philadelphia: Friends’ Book store, 1870), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 2:13.

<sup>23</sup> Clarkson and Talcott, *Statements in Relation to the Proceedings of Friends*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> William Sewel, *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers: Interemixed with Several Remarkable Occurrences*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Vol. 1 (London: Printed by James Philips, George Yard, Lombard Street, 1795), 37–38. S. A. Skinner, “Sewell, William (1804–1874),” in *ODNB*.

<sup>25</sup> Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 242.

and privateering to weapons of war manufacturing and bankruptcy regulations: “Trade [is] seldom considered as a question of morals – but Quakers view it in this light.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, a member of the Society of Friends was prohibited from engaging in the slave trade or slave ownership, particularly following the yearly meetings of 1758 and 1774, as well as from other vice-inducing economic activities.<sup>27</sup>

The Quakers’ distinctive religious and moral practices fueled their antislavery commitment. Tallcot and Clarkson characterized the community life of Quakers as intensely focused on abolitionist activity: “They were the first and foremost in forming Anti-Slavery Societies, attending public meetings, and not deficient in furnishing the cause with pecuniary assistance.”<sup>28</sup> Antislavery leader Thomas Clarkson commented that the Quaker culture and practice themselves bred an abhorrence of slavery: “[The] discipline of the Quakers was therefore a school for bringing them up as advocates for the abolition of this trade.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, Clarkson pointed to the antislavery engagement of the Quakers as a product of a particular environment conducive to individual transformation: the moral impetus for action was groomed within a collective unit.

### **Personhood and the Potential for Education: Locke, Edgeworth, and Girls’ Education**

The coinciding importance of education and antislavery among British religious advocates, as evidenced by the charity school movement and a case study of the Quakers, must also be understood in relation to education theory texts. The curricula and theories behind eighteenth century elementary education lend insight into attitudes toward children and moral development

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:114.; Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism*, 2:53.

<sup>28</sup> Clarkson and Tallcot, *Statements in Relation to the Proceedings of Friends*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 103.

that shaped the environment producing abolitionism. In addition to the philosophy of education behind the charity schools, holistic “guides” to all aspects of education for various types of educators characterized late eighteenth-century British education. Richard and Maria Edgeworth’s *Practical Education*, for instance, pointed to a view of education that encompasses the “whole child,” from physical to moral development. In addition, the question of female education rose to the forefront as girls’ boarding schools, typically for the middle- and upper-class, grew increasingly popular, and educational texts responded to this trend.

Foundational to British education reform and philanthropy stood John Locke’s works. His *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his *Thoughts Concerning Education* influenced educators’ and donors’ view of instruction well into the late eighteenth century, painting education as the means through which to shape the malleable minds of children. His “tabula rasa” psychology and consequent educational techniques held a particular poignancy regarding education of the poor—through correct instruction and environmental manipulation, the immorality and pauperism of the lower classes could be cured.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Locke’s writings on education were accessible to a wide range of readers, popular among both middle-class parents and elementary educators who took Locke’s advice how to mold a child’s character and personality for the social, economic, and moral demands of adulthood.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Samuel Pickering goes so far as to say that “[i]n eighteenth-century England, the educational writings of [Locke] were practically biblical. Everyone interested in education read the texts, and almost all were true believers.”<sup>32</sup> In line with this thinking, the charity school curriculum was designed with the goal of social and religious discipline in the realm of the useful and edifying rather than of

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<sup>30</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



the liberal arts variety.<sup>33</sup> A Lockean faith in the power of education to shape not only the intellectual but also the moral and personality development of a child therefore permeates theories of education and attitudes toward the child in the late eighteenth century.

Written in 1798, the Edgeworths' *Practical Education* embodies a renewed emphasis on the treatment of holistic education as both a science and an art, encapsulating the Lockean idea that reason and empiricism can be harnessed to foster moral development. Inspired largely by her role raising her thirteen younger half-siblings, Maria Edgeworth wrote a number of works on education, including *The Parent's Assistant* between 1796 and 1800, in addition to children's stories.<sup>34</sup> Richard Edgeworth, her father, co-authored the piece. *Practical Education* itself proved to be a novel work, drawing criticism for its lack of religious teaching and inciting attention over its discussion of the natural sciences, higher education for girls, and modern versus classical education.<sup>35</sup> The authors justify their work in the preface: "We have no peculiar system to support, and, consequently, we have no temptation to attack the theories of others; and we have chosen the title of Practical Education, to point out that we rely entirely upon practice and experience."<sup>36</sup> They claim to support an "education of [t]he heart ... endeavor[ing] to suggest the earliest means of introducing useful and agreeable habits, well regulated sympathy and benevolent affections," grounding their conclusions in the texts of Enlightenment philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Voltaire, as well as what Edgeworth deems as relevant contemporary works on education.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, I have chosen to use *Practical Education* as the case study from which to base my analysis of the connection between moral

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<sup>33</sup> M. G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, 73.

<sup>34</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 23–24, 233. W. J. McCormack, "Edgeworth, Maria (1768–1849)," in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, January 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1798), v.

<sup>37</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education* vi, ix.

and intellectual development in late eighteenth-century educational theory. Furthermore, the Edgeworths' work showcases the centrality of Locke's philosophy of education and the malleability of the mind as foundational to understanding social differences. As such, their writings will prove useful in examining the relationship between education and antislavery rhetoric.

Concerned over the impact of environment on the malleable mind, the Edgeworths' work upholds the role of representation and didactic entertainment for both effective learning and proper moral development. Maria Edgeworth warns the reader of the dangers of misleading toys, such as prints that misrepresent the relative sizes of animals and therefore contribute to "false ideas."<sup>38</sup> This emphasis on seemingly minor details reflects Edgeworth's assertion that "[p]ractical education begins very early, even in the nursery."<sup>39</sup> Her linking education to the very early stages of childhood emphasizes the importance of categorizing children appropriately: the growing agency of children as a question of importance enters the forefront of family considerations. She contended that anything can be used for educational purposes: "In the hands of a judicious instructor no means are too small to be useful; every thing is made conducive to his purposes, and instead of useless baubles, his pupils will be provided with playthings which may instruct, and which may at once amuse and improve understanding."<sup>40</sup> This attentiveness to infancy does not constitute an essentialist attitude toward childhood; rather, she seeks to provide greater nuance to distinct life stages. For example, she recommends avoiding overly complex ideas to young children: "General terms, whether in morals or in natural philosophy, should, we apprehend, be as much as possible avoided in early education."<sup>41</sup> Instead, she refers to Jean-

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<sup>38</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 13.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:34.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:71.

Jacques Rousseau to emphasize the importance of “knowledge of words” and the correspondence of ideas when encouraging intellectual and moral development.<sup>42</sup> Throughout *Practical Education*, she draws upon Enlightenment thought—depending on reason directed toward a productive end—to delineate the relationship among teaching, language, and reading, and their combined effect on moral development.<sup>43</sup> No opportunity for teaching should be wasted, and, somewhat paralleling the Quaker moral distinction between the “useful” and the “hurtful,” Edgeworth essentially argues that whatever is not useful is thus hurtful; even entertainment must be harnessed for individual edification.

The Edgeworths’ text depends largely upon extracting meaning and opportunity from everyday events. Almost every chapter of *Practical Education* begins with a short anecdote to introduce the issue, and Edgeworth encourages the use of “examples from real life” to expose young people to various virtues; for example, she references Livy for “continual energetic attention,” Enlightenment thinkers like Benjamin Franklin for “persevering industry,” and Voltaire and Reynolds for patience.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, this fixation upon historical role models and a condemnation of misrepresentation largely characterizes educational theorists’ embrace of narrative as an educational tool. She warns against morally dubious content, particularly “detestable characters, which are sometimes held up to admiration in ancient and modern history.”<sup>45</sup> However, books that avoided excessive sentimentality and fiction could still be used to encourage charity and demonstrate the use of reason and natural history to mitigate children’s

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<sup>42</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 1:64.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:104.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:217–218.

pursuit of pure pleasure and encourage moral behavior. Reality and truth were necessary for proper morality.<sup>46</sup>

Edgeworth points to the family unit as the necessary means through which a child learns to respect truth and appreciate integrity, as behavior is learned by imitating parents.<sup>47</sup> Such family-based values grant private education a superior status: “We are aware that with children, who are educated at public schools, truth and integrity cannot be taught precisely in the same manner as in private families.”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, she criticizes the ineffectiveness of rewards and punishment in public schools and discordant families, in which “[n]either indignation nor shame can affect children.”<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, Maria Edgeworth herself establishes her credibility by invoking her own status within her family, writing that she was “encouraged and enabled to write upon this important subject [practical education in general], by having for many years before her eyes the conduct of a judicious mother in the education of a large family” and pens her chapter on “Obedience” using notes from her own “successful practice in the management of her children.”<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the expansion of the provincial book trade in the latter half of eighteenth-century Britain enhanced accessibility to reading materials and fostered a culture of literacy as local booksellers and subscription and circulating libraries proliferated.<sup>51</sup> Private education enabled families not only to protect a child from potentially subversive material, but also to shape and cultivate daily reading practices.<sup>52</sup> As the Edgeworths argued, “A paragraph read aloud from the newspaper of the day, a passage from any book which parents happen to be reading themselves, will catch the attention of the young people in a family, and will perhaps

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<sup>46</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 1: 286, 334.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:195–196.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:219.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:246.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:x.

<sup>51</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 312.

excite more taste and more curiosity.”<sup>53</sup> As such, her notions of “practical education” stem both from developing Enlightenment theory about education and a confidence in the capacity of the family itself to inculcate these values.

Throughout their depiction of the family’s centrality, the Edgeworths fixate upon the nature of truth as fundamental for moral development, an impulse stemming from Enlightenment tradition. Ms. Edgeworth condemns “teaching truth by falsehood;” supports punishments and rewards based upon “rational morality” rather than determinism by nature; and recommends adhering to a “gradation ... in ... praises of different virtues” in which “those that are the most useful to society, as truth, justice, and humanity” supersede those that are merely “agreeable.”<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, she states that the goal of education is to combat vanity and pride and instead pursue moral goodness: “[W]e must enlighten the understanding to give our pupils the power of forming their rules of conduct rightly, and we must give them sufficient strength of mind to abide by the principles which they have formed.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, ideals of justice and truth—purportedly most exemplified from within the home—shaped the nature and goals of education. This connection facilitates the relationship between education and relationships between people groups that links education to abolition.

Edgeworth’s texts enter into a common narrative that parallels children with foreigners, slaves, and the poor, asserting a common thread of humanity based on a potential for intellectual and moral edification. Upon depicting the proper way to encourage communication skills and explicating the need for effective communication, Edgeworth likens a child to a foreigner facing language barriers, as well as referencing a story of a deaf and dumb “wild boy” who

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<sup>53</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 341.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:191, 249, 263.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:301.

consequently knew nothing of morality or religion.<sup>56</sup> Later, she extends this analogy by comparing children to the listeners of a missionary's sermon in faulty Chinese: "Children are sometimes in the condition in which the Chinese found themselves at this learned missionary's sermon, and their patience deserves to be equally commended."<sup>57</sup> This paternalistic view takes the child as foreigner and foreigner as child, each speaking a different language from the source of edification. With patience, though, each has the potential to reap the benefits of such instruction.

In her chapter "On Truth," Edgeworth likens children to slaves subject to the forces of their environment. She argues that positive treatment of a child can teach the love of truth and inculcate moral behavior, or oppression can fuel slave-like behavior.<sup>58</sup> In the same vein, she dedicates an entire chapter to the problems that arise with servants, warning against excessive interaction between children and servants out of fear that children will adopt their "awkward and vulgar" habits.<sup>59</sup> However, the need for this disparagement can be remedied:

What has been said of the understanding and dispositions of servants, relates only to servants as they are now educated. Their vices and their ignorance arise from the same cause, the want of education. They are not a separate cast in society doomed to ignorance, or degraded by inherent vice; they are capable, they are desirous of instruction. Let them be well educated, and the difference in their conduct and understanding will repay society for the trouble of the undertaking."<sup>60</sup>

Reflecting once again the optimism surrounding the potential for education to transcend social boundaries and likewise benefit society as a whole, Edgeworth points directly to education as the solution to vice. Childhood, physical incapacity, and racial, national, and economic difference equally represent, to the Edgeworths, a deficiency in moral and religious illumination—a

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<sup>56</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 1:62–63.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:75–76.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:211–213.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:124.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:126.

deficiency, however, that can be mitigated by practical steps. Thus, Edgeworth affirms an innate equality among various “othered” groups and views each as capable of improvement given the appropriate education. While not necessarily advocating for radical egalitarian social change, her invocation of the potential for development does critique a perceived immutability of social division. In this manner, her argument mirrors Locke’s assertion of *tabula rasa*, in which one’s environment shapes his or her intellectual and moral state. As we will see later, this emphasis on shared potential, rooted in a comparison between child, slave, and “other,” will prove fundamental to justifications for antislavery.

The potential for education to allow groups to transcend perceived inferiority extended to the enslaved African as well. Anne-Julia Zwierlein argues that the literary device of the child-African comparison became a trademark of antislavery rhetoric. She examines the role of childhood preceding a transformative moment of enlightenment that characterize slave narratives as well as the use of the “black child [as] a sentimental icon symbolizing the helplessness of the African race, designed to rouse the British reader into action” in abolitionist writings.<sup>61</sup> As such, the “othering” of the child while simultaneously subjecting the figure of the child to closer scrutiny once again underscores not only the idea that children are both in a state of need and fundamental difference, but also highlights the capacity of education to alter and improve its subject. This analysis of the slave-child relationship parallels Edgeworth’s Lockean invocation of education’s potential.

Alongside the heightened focus on children and family in general, the relationship between education and women gained significance in the public mind, particularly as Locke’s

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<sup>61</sup> Anne-Julia Zwierlein, “‘Poor Negro-Girl,’ ‘Little Black Boy’: Constructing Childhood in Eighteenth-Century Slave Narratives, Abolitionist Propaganda and Postcolonial Novels,” *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 52 (2004): 4-5.

writings encouraged education for all rational beings, including women.<sup>62</sup> In addition to *Practical Education*, a number of texts shaped the dialogue that sought to address the role of women as educators in the home and as students themselves, including Erasmus Darwin's *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, Thomas Gisborne's *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex*, Hannah More's *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*, Maria Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies*, and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*.<sup>63</sup> Darwin and Peddle mark the relative novelty of the phenomenon and thus the need for more literature on the topic:

The parents and guardians of young ladies of the last half century were less felicitous about procuring for them so extensive an education, as modern refinement requires. Hence it happens, that female education has not yet been reduced to a perfect system; but is frequently by those, who have not themselves had a good education, or who have not studied the subject with sufficient attention.<sup>64</sup>

Literature on girls' education both represents a broadening of perspectives on the role of education and an emphasis on the roles of women in general, as well as reinforcing the relationships among education, moral development, and family.

Education theory texts from the period specifically for girls largely parallel *Practical Education*'s focus on holistic education—embracing traditionally academic subjects as well as physical and moral edification. Indeed, Darwin floridly details the purpose of education as

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<sup>62</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, 342-343. Hall details the debate over the relationship between women's role and education as well as the Evangelical emphasis on complementarianism. Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class*, 82-83.

<sup>63</sup> Erasmus Darwin and M. Peddle, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education, in Boarding Schools, Private Families, and Public Seminaries* (Philadelphia: Printed by John Ormrod, no. 41, Chesnut-Street, 1798), Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London: printed for T. Cadell jun. and W. Davies (successors to Mr. Cadell) in the Strand, 1797), Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune*, Vol. 2 (London, 1800), Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies. To Which Is Added, an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification* (London: printed for J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1795), Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies. To Which Is Added, an Essay on the Noble Science of Self-Justification*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: printed for J. Johnson, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1799), Mary Wollstonecraft, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Darwin and Peddle, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, 9.



providing the means through which the individual can develop moral faculties: “Education should draw the outline, and teach the use of the pencil; but the exertions of the individual must afterwards introduce the various gradations of shade and colour, must illuminate the landscape, and fill it with the beautiful figures of the Graces and the Virtues.”<sup>65</sup> He lists the “five departments” of moral instruction as “[a] sympathy with the pains and pleasures of others, or compassion; [a] strict regard to veracity; [p]rudence, justice, chastity; [f]ortitude; [and] [t]emperance.”<sup>66</sup> Although Darwin’s focus on boarding schools and public schools as well as private education perhaps casts education outside the home in a more positive light than does Edgeworth’s piece, he still emphasizes the role of learning through relationships, lauding emulation among children as a learning device among those “pursu[ing] same studies” and claiming that education facilitates interpersonal relationships, “render[ing] them more intelligent, and more interesting companions; and is of greater consequence in our passage through life, than almost any single accomplishment.”<sup>67</sup> While indicating potential benefits to education outside the home, the emphasis on edification in a community setting and the role of peer influence underscores the way in which education can shape individual moral development.

It is worth noting that authors made clear that girls’ education was to differ from boys’ education. In the preface of *Practical Education*, Edgeworth informed the reader that she would address issues of chastity and matters concerning feminine education separately in *Letters for Literary Ladies*.<sup>68</sup> She also later specifically discussed education as an antidote to woman’s potential for being overly emotional: “Women, who cultivate their reasoning powers, and who acquire tastes for science and literature, find sufficient variety in life, and do not require the

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<sup>65</sup> Darwin and Peddle, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, 12.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 169–171.

<sup>68</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, viii.

stimulus of dissipation, or of romance.”<sup>69</sup> Certain types of literature could also be considered unsuitable for women, or at least unnecessary for their roles as wives and mothers; Darwin in particular warns against long novels, romanticism, “flowery scenes of fiction,” and some forms of poetry.<sup>70</sup> Thus, while books and reading are generally positively associated with Enlightenment and moral edification, approval did not extend to all forms of content and practices of readership.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the importance of the domestic sphere for the moral development of children inevitably granted women a place in the public imagination of middle-class Britons. Female authors such as Maria Edgeworth (who, as aforementioned, capitalized on her role as older sister to assert her authority), Hannah More, and Sarah Trimmer published a number of popular works for children and family, and the rising middle class culture of literacy combined with the lauding of education as a solution for societal ills created a space for women in the public sphere.<sup>71</sup> Such public activity also took the form of charity schools, as both Trimmer and More engaged in education for poor children.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the presence of a discussion of girls’ education likewise suggests that a greater awareness of the stage of childhood included that of girlhood.

The increasingly prominent role of women, particularly in philanthropy and education, was complicated, varying according to the author in question. For example, in *Strictures on the*

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<sup>69</sup> Edgeworth and Edgeworth, *Practical Education*, 298.

<sup>70</sup> Darwin and Peddle, *A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education*, 49–51.

<sup>71</sup> More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*; Sarah Trimmer, *Easy Lessons for Young Children*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Printed for Joseph Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1790); Sarah Trimmer, *The Family Magazine; Or, a Repository of Religious Instruction, and Rational Amusement*, vol. 2 (London: printed by and for John Marshall and Co. Aldermay Church Yard, in Bow Lane, 1788).

<sup>72</sup> Hannah More, Correspondence to William Wilberforce, 1795-1789, William Wilberforce Letters, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Sarah Trimmer, *The Oeconomy of Charity; Or, An Address to Ladies Concerning Sunday-Schools; the Establishment of Schools of Industry under Female Inspection; and the Distribution of Voluntary Benefactions* (Dublin: Printed by M. Graisberry, 1787).

*Modern System of Female Education*, More asserts that the role of girls' education was not for the sake of women's equality, but for the fulfillment of feminine duties, as "[s]he who has the best regulated mind will, other things being equal, have the best regulated family."<sup>73</sup> Yet her complementarian view of the sexes does not preclude the need for further education and her admission of women's capabilities:

[‘T]ill the female sex are more carefully instructed, this question will always remain as undecided as to the degree of difference between the understandings of men and women, as the question between the understandings of blacks and whites; for until Africans and Europeans are put nearer on a par in the cultivation of their minds, the shades of distinction between their native powers can never be fairly ascertained.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, she pinpoints education and environmental influence as barriers to opportunity in both gender and race without necessarily explicating the implications of such equality—for More, would the potential for equality of capability without equality of duty between the sexes imply the same for equality between races? Despite the ambiguity, this comparison between Africans and women is reminiscent of Edgeworth's marking the relationships among foreigners, servants, and the poor. For both of these writers, the potential for upliftment through education binds together groups otherwise considered inferior.

### **Conclusion**

From Quaker practices and the charity school and Sunday School movements to education theory texts espousing Lockean philosophy and illuminating the role of women, the state of education serves as a lens through which to analyze the period that fostered the antislavery movement. Authors on education in the late eighteenth century emphasized moral edification and the role of environmental influence. As views on education combined with a proliferation of

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<sup>73</sup> More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune*, 2:5–6, 13.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:28-29.

accessible reading material to an increasingly literate middle class, the potential for education and the role of reading wielded implications in the political realm, as we will see in Chapter Three.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 19.

## Chapter Two

### Teachings and Tales for the Home: Antislavery Rhetoric in Late Eighteenth-Century Family Literature

“Mrs. Tomkins, I have brought my Daughter, to retrieve her Character amongst you, pray give her leave to read a chapter ... and ever after [Eliza] was as attentive to her book as any little lady need to be.”

—Sarah Trimmer, *Easy Lessons for Young Children*<sup>1</sup>

This excerpt from Lesson XII of Sarah Trimmer’s *Easy Lessons for Young Children* typifies the theme of moral transformation through education that builds upon coexisting education theories and permeates the fictional children’s stories of the last two decades of the eighteenth century. In a mere five pages, the young reader can trace Eliza’s discontent with her ignorance and her consequent academic success, as she “in time learn[s] not only English but French and Italian, and many other things” with the help of her mother and her Sunday School teacher.<sup>2</sup> She gains not only knowledge, though: she “retrieve[s] her [c]haracter.”<sup>3</sup> Intellectual understanding and moral edification, therefore, once again come in the same package. This fictional tale, intended for the academic benefit of young readers, highlights the matter-of-fact moralism of late eighteenth-century literature for family and children. While the short narrative of Eliza is of course part of an explicitly didactic text—*Easy Lessons*—her story of progression is not an isolated case. Rather, popular literature directed toward domestic readership, including children’s literature, broadly incorporated the notion that education, morality, and natural and religious truths went hand-in-hand. This chapter offers an analysis of Sarah Trimmer’s works—in particular, her *Family Magazine*—as a case study of the intersection among family, civic,

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<sup>1</sup>Sarah Trimmer, *Easy Lessons for Young Children*, 122-124.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-125.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

education, and antislavery rhetoric. As the book trade and middle-class readership expanded amidst a renewed focus on the family unit, Trimmer's works point to the influence of Lockean theory on the relationship between moral edification and intellectual enlightenment. This emphasis, in addition to her views on family, the state, and animals, undergirds the view of human personhood employed by antislavery writers.

One of the most influential educational writers of the late eighteenth century, this home-schooling mother of twelve children published works for schools, religious education, and the home, many of which entertained a broad readership extending into the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> An evangelical Anglican, she was an active leader in the Sunday School movement, and her *Economy of Charity* outlines her views on the establishment and maintenance of such schools.<sup>5</sup> Her work producing annotated Bibles, particularly for children and the working class, made her among the most widely read female authors of her time.<sup>6</sup> In addition, her educational and religious tracts, including *An Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature* (1782) and *Sacred History* (1782-1784), were directed toward both Sunday Schools and the home.<sup>7</sup> Between January 1788 and June 1789, she edited and published *The Family Magazine, or a Repository of Religious Instruction, and Rational Amusement*, a monthly periodical directed toward lower and middle class families and charity school teachers.<sup>8</sup> *The Family Magazine* was short-lived, possibly because she decided to focus on a periodical, *The Guardian of Education*, from 1802-1806.<sup>9</sup> In addition, she dabbled in fictional tales for children, such as her *Charity School Spelling*

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<sup>4</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 38, 246.

<sup>5</sup> F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 158. Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 39. Trimmer, *The Economy of Charity*. Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)," in *ODNB*, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Donelle Rowe, "Guarding the British Bible from Rousseau: Sarah Trimmer, William Godwin, and the Pedagogical Periodical," *Children's Literature* 29 (2001): 1.

<sup>7</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 246. Schnorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)," 2004.

<sup>8</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 3:17.

<sup>9</sup> Schnorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)."

*Books*, which included the supplement *Easy Lessons for Young Children*, and *Instructive Tales* from the *Family Magazine*.<sup>10</sup> Two of her most significant contributions to children's literature and education were the inclusion of illustrations and the use of animals and the natural world in fables.<sup>11</sup> While her preeminence as an educational writer and Sunday School activist warrants her place in a discussion of education and family in the late eighteenth century, scholars have largely neglected to examine her works in light of antislavery. Trimmer's inclusion of both explicitly abolitionist material as well as themes typical of antislavery rhetoric makes her writings a unique case study for understanding the intersection of education rhetoric and abolition.

Trimmer's *Family Magazine* epitomizes the manifestation of education-related ideologies in the realm of family and children that helped fuel antislavery public opinion. Spanning three separate volumes over eighteen months, the monthly periodical included informational tracts about religion, morality, government, health advice, and news reports. From morality tales to advice on caring for infants and avoiding the "[p]ernicious [e]ffects of [d]ram [d]rinking," Trimmer's publication addressed a variety of topics for the edification of her middle-class readers and included excerpts from authors besides herself.<sup>12</sup> As she encouraged readers to

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<sup>10</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 246. Trimmer, *Easy Lessons for Young Children*, iii. Also, her *Fabulous Histories*, *Economy of Charity*, and *Family Magazine* were listed in the 1799 London Catalogue of Books. See William Bent, *The London Catalogue of Books* (London: Printed for W. Bent, Paternoster Row, by M. Brown, St. John's-square, Clerkenwell, 1799), 96. Other works by Trimmer include *The Sunday-School Catechist* (1788), *A Comment on Dr. Watt's Divine Songs* (1789), and *A Companion to the Book of Common Prayer* (1791), *The Servant's Friend* (1787), *The Charity School Spelling Book* (1799), *The Ladder of Learning* (1789, 1792), *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools* (1792), *A Friendly Remonstrance* (1792), *An Address to Heads of Schools and Families* (1799), *The Teacher's Assistant* (1800), *An Essay on Christian Education* (1812), *A Comparative View of the New Plan of Education Promulgated by Mr. Joseph Lancaster* (1805), *A Description of a Set of Prints of Scripture History* (1786), *A Description of a Set of Prints of Ancient History* (1786), *A Description of a Set of Prints of Roman History* (1789), *A Description of a Set of Prints Taken from the New Testament* (1790), *A Description of a Set of Prints of English History* (1792), *A New Set of Prints ... from the Old Testament* (1808), and a *Concise History of England* (1808). Schorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)."

<sup>11</sup> Schorrenberg, "Trimmer, Sarah (1741–1810)."

<sup>12</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:33–38, 1:178–180.

“entertain [their] famil[ies] by reading to them, or endeavoring to improve them,” she sought to provide families the means with which to do so.<sup>13</sup>

Samuel Pickering points to John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690 as the predominant influence on children’s literature beginning in the early eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> However, it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that children’s literature became a distinct genre, stemming from a history of secular and religious instructional books for children as well as less robust tradition of texts for entertainment.<sup>15</sup> Such literature included catechisms, tracts, and primers, “chapbooks” comprised of ghost and crime stories, fairy-tales, and popular adult novels.<sup>16</sup> Publisher John Newberry’s *A Pretty Little Pocket-Book* intended for both “Instruction and Amusement” initiated a continuing children’s book trade in 1744, thus replacing the chapbook’s hegemony among child readers.<sup>17</sup> In his wake, publishers such as John Marshall, J. Harris, Stockdale, Rivington, Longman, and J. Johnson fueled the incipient children’s book trade, which, with the help of rising middle-class prosperity and social mobility, became established by the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the popular readership that accompanied the rising number of Sunday schools in the 1780s and 1790s contributed to the development of the children’s story as a category in of itself.<sup>19</sup> London publisher James Lackington, noting the rapid expansion of book sales in his *Memoirs* (1792), pointed to the rise of reading material other than the Bible for schoolchildren

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<sup>13</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1: 232.

<sup>14</sup> Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Darton, *Children’s Books in England*, 1. Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, 3-4; Katie Trumpener, “The Making of Child Readers,” in *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 556.

<sup>16</sup> Trumpener, “The Making of Child Readers,” 556.

<sup>17</sup> M. O. Grenby, “The Origins of Children’s Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*, ed. M.O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4-5. Trumpener, “The Making of Child Readers,” 558.

<sup>18</sup> Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.



contributed to the rising popular appetite for literature.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the publishers' commissioning of named rather than anonymous authors in the 1780s marked another turning point for children's book publishing.<sup>21</sup> This boom in the book trade was part of the rapid proliferation of printed materials in general in late eighteenth-century Britain, in which newspapers and periodicals flourished.<sup>22</sup>

Publishers and authors sought to avoid tales designed simply for enjoyment and imagination. The late Georgian children's story centered on diligence, obedience, and proper behavior.<sup>23</sup> However, Avery emphasizes that "[d]idacticism was not confined to children's books. It was the spirit of the period, the official creed of authors, critics and public ... They held, in theory at any rate, that the business of the novel was to educate and to inculcate morality by example."<sup>24</sup> This ethic thus defined children's literature in the home and in schools. In the same vein as Edgeworth's scorn for falsity, the boundaries between educational literature and entertainment blurred. The mainly female authors springing up in the last two decades of the eighteenth century largely condemned fantasy, often qualifying their works with the sub-title "a moral tale" to eradicate any suspicion of dubious content.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Avery and Bull's dubbing late Georgian children's literature as "cheerful materialism" proves appropriate.<sup>26</sup> Authors typically relied upon the exposition of facts and examples to encourage virtues such as obedience to parents, diligence, and the correct degree of "sensibility," as well kindness to the poor and to

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<sup>20</sup> Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Porter, *Enlightenment*, 77-80.

<sup>23</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. While it is unclear exactly which novels such authors might be referring to, Roy Porter describes a proliferation of printed books for entertainment, including titles such as *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Random*. Porter, *Enlightenment*, 75.

<sup>25</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 14, 16-17.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

animals.<sup>27</sup> This burgeoning genre focused on children and the family marks the moral milieu of late eighteenth-century Britain and thus serves as a mechanism through which to understand the shifts in public opinion which produced the popular antislavery movement.

While Trimmer's *Family Magazine* does not confine itself to children's literature, it encompasses both tales indicative of children's literature and informational pieces that, combined, address the entire family. First, this analysis will demonstrate the codependency of intellectual and moral improvement in the context of home and family. Next, Trimmer's moral tales highlight the role of fiction as a morally useful tool for understanding and solving social problems. Her critiques against animal cruelty situate her writing within the antislavery dialogue probing the distinction between man and animal and the consequent question of who deserves sympathy. Furthermore, *The Family Magazine* demonstrates a trust in Britain's prevailing governing system to service justice, positing slavery a particularly "civilizing force." Finally, Trimmer includes both explicit and implicit references to slavery that facilitates her work as a place of "encounter" between the Briton and the "foreign." Overall, Trimmer's work links education rhetoric and the home to abolitionist argumentation.

### **Education and the Family**

Trimmer remarks in the preface to *The Family Magazine* that "[i]t is certainly a very desirable thing to learn to read[,] and never was there a time when this advantage was so generally enjoyed in England."<sup>28</sup> She does not intend to allow widespread popular literacy of her age to go to waste. She explicitly informed readers of *The Family Magazine's* purpose: "[T]o counteract the pernicious tendency of immoral books ... which have circulated of late years among the inferior

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<sup>27</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 34, 37.

<sup>28</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:3.

classes of people, to the obstruction of their improvement in religion and morality.”<sup>29</sup> *Family Magazine* was intended for the reader’s edification, and the values espoused by Trimmer thus point to the ultimate ends of improvement. Although largely consumed by middle-class families, the emphasis on reading as contributing to the religious and moral development of the poor—for better or for worse—is indicative not only of a theory of education for children in general, but also of the view of education as a means toward the betterment of lower classes. In other words, the rise of the middle-class that facilitated increased readership likewise encouraged readership as a means toward upliftment. She likens reading material to either nutrition or poison, depending upon its content: “Were we to see a man or woman refusing wholesome food, and willingly swallowing poison, should we not think them destitute of understanding? Yet this is often the case in respect to the mind—whatever can nourish it to eternal life is rejected.”<sup>30</sup> The attraction of detrimental reading materials not only suggests the urgency with which such moralistic writers sought to “save” readers from themselves but also points to the influence of John Locke’s philosophy of education on materials beyond simply children’s books. Eighteenth-century authors considered reading materials to possess the power of altering a person’s character – the reader becomes a recipient of the ideas to which he or she is exposed, and these ideas can have an eternal impact. In this vein, Trimmer writes, “At first they read these infamous publications under the notion of *amusement*, and by degrees lose all sense of *virtue* ... [and] too frequently end in *ignominious death!*”<sup>31</sup> Thus, the threat of degradation is both subtle and drastic.

For Trimmer, the home serves as the bastion of moral edification. The compilation of Christian devotionals, fictional stories, poems, educational pieces, and news updates that

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<sup>29</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:5.

constitutes *The Family Magazine* points to the values which Trimmer deems appropriate for a family's flourishing. In line with the title of the publication, she focuses specifically on the family unit as opposed to simply individuals. Each monthly issue begins with a section entitled "Sunday Employment," consisting of an excerpt from a sermon. Typically based upon a passage or theme from the Bible, notable topics addressed in "Sunday Employment" include "A Discourse on the Goodness of God" by Dr. Jortin and "A Discourse on Justice."<sup>32</sup> In the very first publication of *Family Magazine*, the former reflects upon Psalm 145:9—"The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works"—and remarks upon the intrinsic goodness of the "beauty and order of the world."<sup>33</sup> Dr. Jortin continues with a discussion of man's capacity for goodness as derived from the goodness of God, attributing family bonds to divine benevolence, as "[God] hath implanted in his creatures a natural affection towards their offspring."<sup>34</sup> Not only is the parent-child relationship formed by divine intent, but reason itself and likewise its definitive role in forming man's identity are gifts from God: "He made [mankind] what they are, *reasonable creatures*, capable of enjoying so many blessings."<sup>35</sup> Later, Trimmer maintains this centrality of the family in "Sunday Employment: A Discourse on Family Worship," in which the author affirms that "[t]here is no duty belonging to our most holy religion, which comes better recommended to us, than the duty [of family worship/devotion]."<sup>36</sup>

### **Education and the Fictional Tale as Tool**

Both Trimmer's *Easy Lessons for Young Children* and her "Moral Tales" found in each issue of *The Family Magazine* exemplify the role of the fictional narrative as both reflective of and as a

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<sup>32</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:7, 75.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:8.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:9.

<sup>36</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 2:806.

means for transmission of ideologies that, as we will see, formed the basis of arguments for abolition. Desirous of remaining within the realm of factual and ethical truth, the late eighteenth-century author of children's literature reassured her readers that the coming narrative would indeed qualify as "moral." And moral they were: fiction served the express purpose of imparting beneficial advice and wisdom for the edification of the reader.<sup>37</sup>

Trimmer's "Moral Tales" intersperse accounts of the lives of the philanthropic and venerable main characters Mr. and Mrs. Andrews throughout her *Family Magazine*.<sup>38</sup> Each story shares the same basic structure: either Mr. or Mrs. Andrews—who, being wealthy and without children, always remain vigilant of opportunities to help the poor—encounters somebody in the midst of familial strife.<sup>39</sup> Through the restoration of family values, a return to reading the Scriptures, and notably Sunday School for any children involved, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews' interventions ultimately effect positive change in the lives of those in need in paternalistic fashion. For example "An Unkind Daughter" features an old widow who has sacrificed her entire life for the wellbeing of her ungrateful daughter who refuses to care for her mother in her old age.<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Andrews convinces the undutiful daughter to change her ways, and her moral progress parallels her relationship to reading, as Trimmer presents openness to the Scriptures and Sunday Schools as a means to filling educational gaps left for children whose parents are unable to teach them effectively.<sup>41</sup> Later, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews conspire with a squire to "promote conjugal happiness in [a] village" by starting a Sunday School and distributing an "Address to Parents" that urged parents to "set good examples at home."<sup>42</sup> Other forms of familial discord

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<sup>37</sup> Avery and Bull, *Nineteenth Century Children*, 12–13.

<sup>38</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:22.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:21-22.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:22-25.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:24-25.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 392-393.

center on dutifulness to grandparents, alcohol-imbibing husbands, “overly neat” and jealous wives, poverty and general marital strife, and so forth.<sup>43</sup> Overall, she suggests that the efforts of benevolent reformers, with the help of diligence and education, wield impressive capacity to effect improvements in dubious family relationships. Furthermore, education and family prove central to understanding both social ills and, consequently, their solutions.

Trimmer’s *Easy Lessons for Young Children*, published in 1790, likewise utilizes stories explicitly aimed toward the moral edification of their young reader.<sup>44</sup> Trimmer’s narrator prizes industriousness, eloquence, neatness, self-control in the face of temptation and potential overindulgence, diligence with studies, and obedience to parents.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, disobedience often culminates in drastic consequences, sometimes manifesting itself in a child’s death, illness, or physical disability.<sup>46</sup> For example, Trimmer’s narrator in Lesson VI states in matter-of-fact tone: “Now this little girl might have lived long and happy would she but have minded what her good mamma said to her.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, moral behavior is linked to personal reward and punishment. In addition, Trimmer’s stories portray a disdain for fancifulness at the expense of prudence. Lesson XI depicts the beginning stages of the transformation of the Eliza Blissit from our introductory story, as her mother warns her that she “will cut a sad Figure when [she] grow[s] a Woman, for should [she] be ever so pretty, People will laugh at [her], and despise [her], if [she] cannot read and converse like a Lady.”<sup>48</sup> Once again, Sunday School serves as the solution, and Eliza is saved from her own misplaced priorities. As such, Trimmer’s moral tales foreground the

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<sup>43</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:26-28, 28-33, 89-93, 93-98, 234-245.

<sup>44</sup> Trimmer, *Easy Lessons for Young Children*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-8, 11, 14, 16, 20-26, 45, 77-82, 86, 91-92.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-86, 97, 104-111.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-114.

centrality of the family as the moral focal point of society, affirm the usefulness of fiction, and emphasize the role of children as recipients of morality.

### **Creatures and Compassion**

Trimmer's moral entreaties particularly valued the humane treatment of animals. As with slavery's effects on the moral characters of slave owners themselves, authors viewed cruelty to animals as harmful not only to the animal, but also to the abuser. Furthermore, this rise in sympathy toward animals parallels that toward slaves. Such attention to animals likely falls under the influence of Locke's exhortation to teach children to treat animals kindly, not only for the animals' sake, but also for the ensuing effects on children's attitudes toward other people: "For the Custom of Tormenting and Killing of Beasts, will, by Degrees, harden [children's] Minds towards Men; and they who delight in the Suffering and Destruction of inferior Creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate, or benign to their own kind."<sup>49</sup> Trimmer's use of animals also mimics the message of Hogarth's "The Four Stages of Cruelty," a 1751 series of engravings for popular distribution that depict a poor boy's progression from torturing animals, to killing a human and finally becoming the subject of dissection at the Royal College of Physicians.<sup>50</sup> As such, humanitarian concerns encompassed both the treatment of animals as well as of fellow man—perhaps eroding the boundaries of whom or what is deemed worthy of compassion. As *Family Magazine* was directed toward the family unit as a whole, Trimmer's essays on certain animals mark the intersection of trends in children's literature and in family-oriented texts. However, *The Family Magazine* does not constitute Trimmer's first incorporation

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<sup>49</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: A. and J. Churchill, 1693), quoted in Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> James A. Steintrager, "Monstrous Appearances: Hogarth's 'Four Stages of Cruelty' and the Paradox of Inhumanity," *The Eighteenth Century* 42, no. 1 (2001): 59; Trimmer's father was also a close friend of Hogarth. See F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 157. For more on animal welfare and the Enlightenment in Britain, see Porter, *Enlightenment*, 348-351.

of animals for didactic purposes. Her first book for children, *An Easy Introduction to The Knowledge of Nature, And Reading The Holy Scriptures, Adapted to the Capacities of Children*, harnesses the idea of understanding the natural realm in order to understand divine truths.<sup>51</sup> Six years later, she published *Fabulous Histories. Designed For the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals*, which revolves around the lives of four robins. To avoid misleading her audience, Trimmer explicitly reminds the reader that her story is merely that – a story. *Fabulous Histories* serves as the signature work of the late eighteenth century addressing kindness and varying attitudes toward animals.<sup>52</sup> Trimmer’s works provide a valuable means toward understanding shifting heightened attention toward animals in the realms of education and morality. In doing so, her works enter the discourse of animality and personhood that underscore the antislavery debate.

In “A Discourse on Justice” in the “Sunday Employment” section of *The Family Magazine*, Dr. Stebbing does not limit justice to men of one’s own station, but extends even beyond humanity to the “treatment of brute creatures also,” embracing the sympathy for animals endorsed by Locke.<sup>53</sup> This inclusion of animals based upon their state as “destitute of speech to complain of the wrongs they suffer, without hope of a state of restitution” also sheds light on this form of altruism: helping those who cannot help themselves, including animals.<sup>54</sup> The emphases on God-given human dignity, the sanctity of the natural realm, and natural law as a component of divine law permeate the “Sunday Employment” segments as well as the various religious hymns, poems, stories throughout *Family Magazine*.

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<sup>51</sup> Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books in Eighteenth-Century England*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-21.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:81.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:81.



The passages in *Family Magazine* do not simply use animals for a broader teaching about morality but rather indicate the moral value of animals in themselves while using both informational exposition and imaginative tales. In her first issue, Trimmer introduces the need for an understanding of animals and nature in “The Shepherd and the Philosopher: A Fable,” in which the philosopher learns strictly from a school environment, while the shepherd’s understanding stems from his own experience working with nature. She remarks that “[h]appy would it be for the Brute Creatures, if people in general would seek instruction from them in the manner described in the foregoing Fable; for it is really shocking to think of the wanton cruelties that are exercised on poor dumb beasts in this country, and frequently by people who are very good natured to their fellow creatures of their own species.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, Trimmer argues that morality toward fellow man must be paralleled by one’s treatment of animals. Furthermore, this passage hearkens to an emphasis on nature as the basis for truth, perhaps somewhat ironically pointing out shortcomings of traditional, “civilized” education. In order “to point out in what respects they set a good example to us” and thus “procure the poor creatures better treatment than it is at present the fate of many of them to meet with,” she details the attributes of specific animals.<sup>56</sup>

She begins with horses, employing anthropomorphic language to describe their lives and work. Indeed, this explication provides us with the first reference to slavery in *Family Magazine*: “What would be your fatigues had not you horses to assist you. You already complain of your hard labour; but do you toil like horses, as many poor wretches of your kind are obliged to do? (particularly the African slaves, of whose suffering we shall give you an account of those parts in

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<sup>55</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:45.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:46.

which they are employed).<sup>57</sup> Trimmer extends this relationship between horses, slavery, and horses' consequent desire for freedom in "The Council of Horses: A Fable:" "how abject is our race/ condemned to slav'ry and disgrace?/ Shall we our servitude retain/ Because our fires have borne the chain? ... Let us, like them, our freedom claim/And make him tremble at our name."<sup>58</sup> In "Of Sheep," Trimmer links Christian responsibility and human behavior toward animals: "Man, it is true, has dominion over brute creatures, and may, without a crime, use them in his service, and apply the produce of them to his own benefit, after giving them a reasonable supply for their subsistence ... but the Creator never gave the human race a license to be cruel, on the contrary, he has enjoined them to be merciful, as He is merciful."<sup>59</sup> Trimmer also urges her audience to behave kindly to donkeys, oxen, cats, dogs, and more.<sup>60</sup> Thus, she offers a reminder that stewardship of the earth and its creatures falls under divine mandate and is therefore subject to moral laws of mercy and justice. The combination of literary usage of animals with invocations of moral responsibility toward animals points to the influence of both Locke on children and family literature, in addition to highlighting shifting notions of what it meant to be "humanitarian" or "charitable." She parallels animals with slaves, questioning the boundaries of whom deserves sympathy and the status of person. Finally, the depiction of animals as subjects and characters in the antislavery imagination of middle-class Britons represents the use of a relatively recent literary tool for children. Interestingly, the rise of sentimentality toward animals, children, and slaves coincided with abolitionists' need to distinguish slaves from animals, as Chapter Three will show.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:50.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:50-51.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:264-265.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:112-115, 1: 190, 2:545, 1:402-408.

<sup>61</sup> Literature on historical comparisons between slave and animal include discussions on various anthropological theories, such as Lord Kames' 1774 suggestions of a relationship between blacks and monkeys, Porter *Enlightenment*, 356-357. In addition, James Turner links the rise of sentimentality to both slaves and animals in the

### **Government, Justice, and Civilization**

Intrinsic to the antislavery debate was the role of government in protecting justice and the rights of persons versus the protection of commercial interest. Trimmer also used *The Family Magazine* as a means for civic education, including a section entitled “Of the Constitution of Great Britain” in each publication. Trimmer expresses her optimism over the efficacy and propriety of the prevailing British governing system simply by granting it priority in each issue of her magazine, thereby embracing the ideal of a well-informed public. Once again, Trimmer views the act of reading and attaining understanding as admirable and efficacious not simply for individual character but for the wellbeing of society in general through proper governance. Government likewise served as a guardian of public morality beyond the secular realm, as the king possessed the role of “maintain[ing], to the utmost of his power, the laws of God, the true profession of the Gospel, and the Protestant reformed Religion established by the law.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, according to Trimmer, Protestant rhetoric safely belonged in the public discourse, as upholding Christian values remained a fundamental aspect of political authority. Trimmer defended the political status quo as the ideal means for effecting positive change, denigrating opponents: “There is no evil which Englishmen can endure under the present form of government, that can be compared to those which attend upon civil commotions in a nation; and those men are the greatest enemies of the people, who strive to make them discontented with the English government.”<sup>63</sup> Her enthusiasm for British government as a vehicle for justice and morality manifests itself in her extensive explications of the British constitution and parliamentary structure, in addition to

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eighteenth-century, as well as comparisons between monkeys and “primitive” peoples, James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 6-8.

<sup>62</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:53.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:57.

pointing to the British antislavery movement's focus on the eradication of slavery through legislative means. As the next chapter demonstrates, antislavery politicians often characterized abolition as a necessity of "civilized" governance.

This loyalty to British governance extends to Trimmer's overall sense of British superiority. Including in each monthly issue an essay or collection of essays entitled "A Comparative View of Foreign Countries," Trimmer seeks to "convince Englishmen, even of the lowest ranks, that they have reason to value their native land, and to be thankful to Providence that they were born on British ground," in addition to "mak[ing] [Englishmen] bear with patience the evils that all to their lot [by] knowing that there are others in the world who endure still greater."<sup>64</sup> Beginning with Greenland, Norway, Denmark, and Lapland, she eventually covers mostly European countries as well as Russia, India, the Spanish settlements in the Americas, and certain areas of Africa.<sup>65</sup> While her descriptions mainly address the type of climate, economy, and national identity of a country's members, Trimmer's description of other countries to reassure her British audience of their favored state is certainly significant in light of Britain's imperial interests and the relationship between slavery and empire. In addition to painting Britain as the paragon of civilization and progress—a point at tension with her simultaneous indictment of slavery—this section provides space for the middle-class family to conceptualize the "foreigner."

In addition, articles in her "Sunday Employment" section suggests that the state exists for the service of justice. In "A Discourse on Justice" in the February 1788 issue, Dr. Stebbing invokes a "natural sense of right and wrong ... which is always felt, when the righteous or

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<sup>64</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:38.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:39-42, 1:104-111, 1:183-189, 251-258, 765.

unrighteous dealings of others come to affect ourselves.”<sup>66</sup> Fully manifested in Christian charity, Stebbing emphasizes that the exhortation of Matthew 7:12 extend to all aspects of life, including commerce: “In respect to trade and traffic, the same rule will be equally serviceable: there can be no better for those who desire to do honestly, and to stand fair and secure in their reckoning with God at the day of judgement, than *Do by others as you would think it right in their circumstances to be done by yourselves.*”<sup>67</sup> Later, the “Sunday Employment” on “A Discourse on the Advantages of Religion” addresses the term “profit” as derived “from an idea that it contributes to the good of mankind,”<sup>68</sup> contrasting the profit of godliness with the profit of worldly wealth.<sup>69</sup> To cement this reminder and exhortation, Trimmer follows this excerpt on “[T]he Advantages of Religion” with “Texts of Scripture which confirm the Doctrine of the Foregoing Discourse.”<sup>70</sup> In the context of abolition, then, a civilized government would have a role in defending the dignity of human beings over profit from commerce.

### **Family Literature as a Platform for Encountering “the Foreign” and the Slave**

Trimmer’s *Family Magazine* also serves as a means for portraying both racial images and abolition rhetoric either directly or indirectly. The first explicit reference to the abolition movement provides a report of the first meeting of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the first issue’s “Monthly Occurrences,” remarking that “[a] number of respectable gentlemen in Birmingham have formed themselves into a society, to join with those already established, in order to procure freedom to the poor negroes.”<sup>71</sup> In response to both this brief announcement and the reference to slaves in the poem about horses, a reader urges in a

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<sup>66</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1: 75-81, 75.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 80, 79.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:148.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:153.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:158-160.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:67–68. The “Monthly Occurrences” section of the June 1788 edition also includes a report on a revision of slave law in Jamaica, p. 1:432.

Letter to the Editor to include more information about slaves in the future, establishing both reason and religion as the fundamental basis for antislavery and arguing that “it is therefore of the utmost consequence, as a matter of justice, to establish their claim to *humanity*.”<sup>72</sup> She recognizes that *The Family Magazine*’s readership situates Trimmer’s work as a platform for antislavery activism and points to the family unit as the target for such messages, noting that “from the nature of [her] publication ... it is likely to be read by heads of families, as well as by their domestics [and therefore] may possibly prove a mean of informing some, who are inclined to contribute to every public charity.”<sup>73</sup> She points specifically to a capacity for “the most rational and generous sentiment” as basis for their humanity.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, this reader emphasizes that an understanding of a common humanity, and thus compassion and the reality of suffering, must be grasped in the context of family: “If these could be prevailed on to regard them as fellow creatures, it would awaken commiseration in their hearts, and they would ... endeavor, at least to mitigate the sorrows, which the parent, the wife, and the child, are doomed to feel.”<sup>75</sup> In this manner, conceptions of shared humanity, religion and reason as tools for moral betterment, and reading as a mechanism for advocacy take shape in the public discourse surrounding slavery within a context of family literature.

Trimmer’s “A Comparative View of Foreign Countries” in each monthly issue mostly focuses on European countries, but her November 1788 edition covers Guinea, explicitly endorsing the antislavery stance:

It has long been a prevailing opinion, that the inhabitants of Guinea, are a set of savages not worthy to be ranked among the human species, incapable of improvement, miserable, and insensible of the benefits of life; and that letting them live among civilized nations, even in a state of the most abject slavery, is doing them a favour; but in this age of

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<sup>72</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:50, 123.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:124.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

general benevolence, many persons, to their everlasting honour, have taken into consideration the injustice of this opinion, and exerted the most zealous endeavors to restore to the poor Africans the common rights of humanity . . . I shall give them some account of the country they inhabit; of their former condition; and of that commerce which it is a disgrace to a Christian nation to be concerned in.<sup>76</sup>

Trimmer first establishes the dichotomy between “savage” and “civilization,” pointing to the contradiction of slavery’s coexistence with the latter and criticizing the view that slavery is a form of charity. She specifically counters the belief that Africans are “incapable of improvement” to ground their humanity—harnessing the language of intellectual and moral development. In addition, she invokes the “age of general benevolence” previously cited in reference to the charity and Sunday School movements, suggesting the inextricable relationship between abolitionism and charitable activism in the realm of education for the poor. Overall, this passage depends not simply on what she perceives as “the common rights of humanity” but on the category of “humanity” itself—who counts to be “consider[ed] . . . as men and brethren.”<sup>77</sup> Moreover, she views her account as a direct call upon the reader to “judge for themselves” their view of black humanity and appeals to their place as citizens of “a Christian nation.”<sup>78</sup> This question of personhood and its intersection with rhetoric of civilization, charity, and education permeates the language of antislavery; Trimmer’s work therefore serves as both a means for and manifestation of abolitionist rhetoric. Trimmer continues with her rendering of Africans themselves, discussing the economy, government, and natural history of Guinea, Benin, Congo,

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<sup>76</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 2:765–766. Another “Comparative View of Foreign Countries” focuses on Turkey and lauds Britain’s superiority, ending with “a comparison between this tyrannic empire, and the mild government of Great-Britain, [which] will naturally determine in favour of the latter.” See 2:478–479. Trimmer’s “A Comparative View of Foreign Countries” is also reminiscent of the surge in “discovery” and “adventure” literature through which British readers sought to explore foreign lands. See Porter, *Enlightenment*, 354–358. This section is also interesting in light of Edward Said’s argument in *Orientalism*, in which European culture distinguishes itself from the constructed “Other” of the Orient. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>77</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 2:766.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:766.

and Angola before the arrival of the Europeans.<sup>79</sup> Finally, she describes the history of slavery in Britain and the Americas and presents an antislavery plea to her reader.<sup>80</sup>

Other instances highlight slavery and directly call for abolition. The “Monthly Occurrences” of April 1788 includes an account of a slave in Charles Town, Carolina attempting to drown himself rather than part from his wife and children.<sup>81</sup> Later, in the May 1788 edition, Trimmer includes an antislavery poem entitled “The Epilogue to an Opera, called the Padlock, Spoken by Mungo, a Black,” which beseeches the reader to recognize that “tho’ no Briton, Mungo is – a Man” seeking “those sweets of life,/The duteous offspring, and th’ endearing wife”—in other words, Mungo appeals for sympathy based on his shared familial affections.<sup>82</sup>

Trimmer’s “Some Account of Ignatius Sancho, an African” and “The History of a Negro” likewise typify the genre of slave narrative.<sup>83</sup> Each charts the story of an educated former slaves. As discussed in the introduction, Ignatius Sancho, a well-known figure, received an education from the Duke of Montague and, after a stint filled with gambling and “bad women,” reformed himself with a turn to Christianity, a respectable marriage, and a grocer’s shop.<sup>84</sup> Trimmer includes five of Sancho’s posthumously printed letters, attesting to his Christian faith, thoughtful relationships, and respect for hard work. Again signifying the role of education in classifying humanity, Sancho remarks that his “power of reflection” is at the “very head of [the] riches” bestowed upon him by God, evidence of the “breath of life which the Great Creator breathed into

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<sup>79</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 2:771.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:771-781. In addition, Trimmer cites abolitionists Antony Benezet’s *Historical Account of Guinea* and Rev. J. Ramsay’s *Account of the Treatment and Conversion of the African Slaves* as her sources, p. 781.

<sup>81</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:288.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:347, 346. For more on the figure of Mungo, see Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony*, 219 – 246. In particular, she discusses the description of Mungo here as a “British Negro” as a means to reinstate the figure of the black character in order to mitigate British shame, pp. 240-241.

<sup>83</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 3:204–216, 3:351-352.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 205-206.



the nostrils of the first man.”<sup>85</sup> Her use of the figure of Sancho, therefore, emblemizes the role of education as a means to validating antislavery and humanizing slaves to her audience. Additionally, her section entitled “The History of a Negro” describes the life of Job Ben Solomon, whose ability to read and write, as well as to translate Arabic into English, granted him the notice of a Mr. Oglethorpe and facilitated his passage from Maryland to England, where he was “honoured with distinguishing marks of favour by numbers of the nobility.”<sup>86</sup> After residing with the Duke of Montague, Jon Ben Solomon ultimately returned to Africa, but his ability to consort with English nobility made him a popular example for abolitionists.<sup>87</sup> In both cases, Trimmer uses examples of Africans who have demonstrated the beneficial effects of education, bringing antislavery rhetoric into the home.

Antislavery messages in *Family Magazine* are not always direct indictments of the slave trade. Her “Anecdotes of Negroes” highlight the benevolence of a freed black trader in Barbados who helps a man who lost all his possessions in a fire, questioning whether “any man [will] pretend to look down with contempt on one capable of such generosity, merely because the colour of his skin is black.”<sup>88</sup> Another “anecdote” depicts the story of an abandoned orphan cared for by a poor negro woman who purchased her freedom and treated her as a mother upon adulthood.<sup>89</sup> Trimmer concludes these tales with the reminder that such instances are the product of education and religion, calling upon the reader to consider those without the opportunity to develop such virtues as the preceding characters: “This Negress, it seems had had the advantage of Christian instruction; but there are thousands in our plantations, who are kept in worse than

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<sup>85</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 3:212.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 351.

<sup>87</sup> David Killingray, “Diallo, Ayuba Suleiman [Job Ben Solomon] (c.1701–1773),” in *ODNB*.

<sup>88</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:125–126.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:128.

heathen ignorance; but who, with proper encouragement and cultivation might become as amiable characters as Baby, and the generous Joseph.”<sup>90</sup> In addition to humanizing the African slave, these stories further the notion of education as a central moralizing force – Africans as well as Britons.

### **Conclusion**

Trimmer’s *Family Magazine* and fictional lessons provide insight into the relationship between Christian morality and Enlightenment thought on the development of an antislavery ethos. Amidst the increasingly literate and family-centered British middle class, conceptions of individual betterment through enlightenment and understanding shaped domestic life and likewise placed the image of the family on the forefront of the moral landscape. Questions of moral responsibility and the boundaries of shared humanity took precedence as family literature took a political stance. Highlighting the intersection of education and abolitionism in family literature, Trimmer’s works point to the role of literature as a poignant tool for the antislavery activist. She affirms the Christian underpinnings of justice and human dignity alongside her questioning the distinctions defining humanity in her humanitarian appeals to the treatment of animals. This combination of moral law and sentimentality encapsulates Trimmer’s approach to moral issues despite her appeal to factual truths free from the influence of emotion. Meanwhile, her moral tales specifically embed antislavery morality in context of family and education. As such, Trimmer’s *Family Magazine*, works of didactic fiction, and specifically instances of explicit antislavery rhetoric serve to link the relationship between ideologies of education and the abolition movement on the popular level.

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<sup>90</sup> Trimmer, *The Family Magazine*, 1:129.

## Chapter Three

### Politics from Child's Play?

#### The Intersection of Education, Family, and Antislavery Political Rhetoric

“This account of the manner in which light and information proceed in a free country, furnishes us with some valuable knowledge. It shows us, first, the great importance of education; for all they who can read may become enlightened. They may gain as much from the dead as from the living. They may see the sentiments of former ages. Thus they may contract, by degrees, habits of virtuous inclination, and become fitted to join with others in the removal of any of the evils of life.”

—Thomas Clarkson, 1836<sup>1</sup>

After the abolition of the slave trade and in the midst of the battle for emancipation, Thomas Clarkson laid out the proslavery case for his readers in 1822: “[T]hat the Africans are creatures of another species; that they have not the faculties and feelings of men; that they are upon a level with brutes; and ... that though some centuries have passed since Africa was discovered, its inhabitants have made no progress in civilization, like other people.”<sup>2</sup> According to Clarkson, to eradicate a slave’s claim to humanity—human personhood—an advocate of slavery had to demonstrate a dearth of intellect and emotion, a lack of difference from animals, and the capacity for civilization. Antislavery rhetoric used these particular criteria to justify abolition based upon shared humanity, and these contentions permeate the educational tracts and family literature heretofore examined. As such, the role of intellectual and moral enlightenment combined with the Lockean capacity for education that are found in educational and family literature serve as fundamental to abolitionists’ conception of the antislavery movement. Furthermore, the emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:201-202.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe: Or, A Survey of That Bloody Commerce Called the Slave-Trade* (London: sold by Harvey and Darton, 1822), 10.

on the distinction between person and animal as well as on the motif of family and child in abolitionist rhetoric marks the intersection of such grassroots literature and political writings. To prove the humanity and personhood of slaves, Clarkson harnesses sympathy toward the family unit and a Lockean view of education.

Historians have long acknowledged that religious imperatives permeated the rhetoric of leading abolitionists. “Protestant deliverance politics” played a multi-faceted role in the abolition movement.<sup>3</sup> John Coffey traces such language in proslavery writings that argue that biblical liberation should remain confined to the spiritual realm, to the theologies of the first abolitionists, and finally to the attitudes of grassroots religious groups and clergy. Coffey offers a critical analysis of the paradoxes and contradictions of deliverance rhetoric, particularly in relation to American slaveholder invocations of liberty during the American Revolution, the distinction between spiritual and physical liberty, and the shift from slave trade abolition rhetoric to calls for actual emancipation. In addition, philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah cites the British antislavery movement in his discussion of moral revolution and honor based on collective identity, arguing that abolitionists combined notions of collective honor nationally, regionally along urban boundaries, and according to class, to engage public support, particularly when honor correlated with already prevailing moral and ethical sentiment.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Brown’s *Moral Capital* effectively conveys the need to assess the relationship between cultural milieu and antislavery leadership.<sup>5</sup> Such scholars thereby focus on the role of rhetoric and ideology in shaping abolitionism.

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<sup>3</sup> John Coffey, *Exodus and Liberation*.

<sup>4</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 116-117, 134-135.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher L. Brown, *Moral Capital*.

Beyond the significance of religion and honor in the formation of the antislavery movement, this chapter will explore the motifs of enlightenment and family in the letters, tracts, and other writings of two leading abolitionists whose campaigning spanned from the late eighteenth century until slavery's abolition in 1833: Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce. Born on August 24, 1759 of an aristocratic background, William Wilberforce began his political career as a representative of Britain's largest county in the House of Commons before the age of twenty-five.<sup>6</sup> Experiencing an evangelical conversion in 1785-1786, he decided to use his position in politics to serve God: in his journal in 1787, he determined that "God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners."<sup>7</sup> In January 1790, Wilberforce began leading a parliamentary committee on the slave trade, and he made motions for abolition in February 1791, April 1792, February 1795. The legislative back-and-forth continued until the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, signed in 1808, and for which Wilberforce received much acclaim. Despite bouts of illness, he remained a leader in the parliamentary fight for emancipation. A member of the Clapham sect, he viewed his antislavery work, as well as his social reforms and philanthropic activities, as a product of his Evangelical Anglican faith. In his work *A practical view of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians in the higher and middle classes of this country contrasted with real Christianity* published in April 1797, he explicates the Evangelical movement's push for a return to "practical" Christianity, lived out seriously in day-to-day life.<sup>8</sup>

Because of his instrumental role as an antislavery politician, this project focuses on Wilberforce's writings as a means to understand the rhetoric of abolitionist leaders. Wilberforce

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<sup>6</sup> John Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, May 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, Vol. 1.149 (London: J. Murray, 1838), in "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," in *ODNB*, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," 2009.

made his first motion for an Abolition Bill on April 18, 1791 and this study makes use of the record of his four-hour speech in the debate that followed. Although defeated by 163 votes to 88, Wilberforce's speech marks one of his first forays into the public debate.<sup>9</sup> His *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, published in January 1807 before the passage of the Slave Trade Act, served as a compilation of Wilberforce's antislavery evidence and arguments from his entire career.<sup>10</sup> His 1814 letter to the French Prince of Talleyrand, Foreign Minister to Napoleon, on the slave trade likewise illustrates Wilberforce's rationale against slavery and the slave trade.<sup>11</sup> Finally, his *Appeal to the religion, justice and humanity of the inhabitants of the British empire in behalf of the negro slaves in the West Indies* in 1823 marks a turning point in the push for emancipation. Interrupting a period of relative inactivity, this work coincided with the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society that presaged the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Clarkson serves as my twin centerpiece for the study. While studying to be an Anglican clergyman at Cambridge and having already become a deacon, his participation in an essay contest sparked the abolitionist fervor that would alter his career. He wrote twenty-three works, mostly on slavery, during his time with the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade and the Anti-Slavery Society. He investigated slavery first-hand, interviewing those involved with the trade and gathering material evidence. Over the course of his antislavery

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," 2009. William Wilberforce and Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons., *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, in the House of Commons, on Monday and Tuesday, April 18 and 19, 1791: Reported in Detail* (London: Printed by and for W. Woodfall, 1791).

<sup>10</sup> Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," 2009. William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London: Printed by L. Hansard & sons, for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807).

<sup>11</sup> Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," 2009. William Wilberforce, *A Letter to His Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand Perigord ... on the Subject of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Hatchard, and Cadell and Davies, 1814). David Lawday, *Napoleon's Master: A Life of Prince Talleyrand* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Wolfe, "Wilberforce, William (1759–1833)," 2009. William Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies* (London: For J. Hatchard and Son, 1823).

career, he became known for his sympathy for the French Revolution and his later renunciation of Anglican orders, drifting toward the views of the Quakers.<sup>13</sup>

Emblematic of the rhetoric of leading abolitionists, Clarkson and Wilberforce's writings reflect themes of education and family that pervade the literature consumed by middle-class Britons. They justified antislavery by invoking African capacity for education and morality – the potential for enlightenment. This enlightenment both was grounded in and reinforced notions of progress and civilization. Furthermore, both abolitionists sought to assert human dignity in contrast to animals while pointing to the figures of family and child to argue for antislavery—moves that reflected the universal nature of both Christian and Enlightenment categories of personhood.

### **Education as Antislavery Tool**

Thomas Clarkson's involvement with the antislavery cause is rooted in the very halls of formal education. As a student at the University of Cambridge in 1784, Clarkson listened to an antislavery sermon by Peter Peckard, recently appointed master of Magdalene College at the University of Cambridge, who had previously gained notoriety from "certain publications ... in favor of civil and religious liberty."<sup>14</sup> Inspired more by the prize promised to the winner than by Peckard's proclamation that "[a] crime, founded on a dreadful preeminence in wickedness ... being both of individuals and the nation, must some time draw down upon us the heaviest judgment of Almighty God, who made of one blood all the sons of men, and who gave to all equally a natural right to liberty,"<sup>15</sup> Clarkson entered Peckard's Latin dissertation contest which charged his class of seniors obtaining a bachelor of arts degree with the question of whether or

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<sup>13</sup> Hugh Brogan, "Clarkson, Thomas (1760–1846)," in *ODNB*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, May 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:157.

<sup>15</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:157.

not it is “right to make slaves of others against their will.”<sup>16</sup> Clarkson charts his path from ignorance to enlightenment: he obtained “manuscripts of a deceased friend, who had been in the trade” and met with “officers who had been in the West Indies,” but he reached a turning point when he stumbled upon an advertisement for American abolitionist Anthony Benezet’s “Historical Account of New Guinea.”<sup>17</sup> Clarkson describes the writing process as becoming “not so much a trial for academi[c] reputation, as for the production of a work, which might be useful to injured Africa.”<sup>18</sup> Finally, in the summer of 1785, he decided that “if the contents of [his] Essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end.”<sup>19</sup> By November 1785, he had begun plans to translate his prize-winning essay, particularly at the exhortation of a family friend and Quaker.<sup>20</sup>

Clarkson became connected with Quaker publishers James Phillips and William Dillwyn, who introduced him to the work of antislavery activists such as Granville Sharp, James Ramsay, and members of the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage in America, and Dillwyn’s own Quaker antislavery companions.<sup>21</sup> Making his way through antislavery circles,<sup>22</sup> he began his own personal investigation into the slave trade, visiting ships on the Thames to acquire African products as well as to examine slave-ship conditions and interview officers who had visited Africa, ultimately gaining access to the customs-house in London.<sup>23</sup> He met with William Wilberforce, who had read Clarkson’s dissertation, and later

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<sup>16</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:158.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:159.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:161.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:161-162.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:163; Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation, Which Was Honoured with the First Prize in the University of Cambridge, for the Year 1785, with Additions* (London: Printed by J. Phillips, 1786).

<sup>21</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:186.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:168-172.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:181-183, 188.



participated in one of Britain's first antislavery meetings, which in May 1787 officially formed the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and finishing after the abolition of slavery in 1833, Clarkson recorded his transformation into abolitionism in his three volume autobiography *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*. The motif of education figures poignantly in Clarkson's own "conversion." He embarks on his antislavery mission after hearing an antislavery sermon by a school faculty member; becomes personally engaged through a research project; and investigates the issue firsthand. Finally, he seeks to translate, publish, and spread his findings – all before official abolitionist mobilization. Likewise, Clarkson's campaign as part of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade revolved largely around the investigation and dissemination of information. He wrote a number of persuasive tracts for the Society's subscribers, ranging topically from slave conditions and artifacts from slave ships to the potential consequences of abolishing the slave trade. Clarkson also describes William Wilberforce's abolitionism in terms of a conversion from darkness into light. He writes that despite "the objections of the West-India planters ... Light indeed soon broke in upon him. The suspicion of his mind was every day confirmed by increasing information, and the evidence he had now to offer upon this point was decisive and complete. The principle upon which he founded the necessity of abolition was not policy, but justice."<sup>25</sup> Thus, Clarkson views information and justice as mutually supportive – his narrative depends upon the moral effects of an intellectual enlightenment.

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<sup>24</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:184, 187, 197.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, Vol. 2 (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1808), 35–36.

Clarkson's autobiography depicts the rise of antislavery sentiment and ultimate abolition as the product of moral and religious impetus, as well as intellectual enlightenment. He writes that "the Slave-trade teaches us the necessity of a due cultivation of religion, so it should teach us to have a brotherly affection for those, who, though they may differ from us in speculative opinions concerning it, do yet show by their conduct that they have a high regard for it."<sup>26</sup> Regardless of denominational creed, then, he asserts that the Christian religion forms the basis of moral conduct and unity among those who seek to fuel such conduct. The enlightenment that spurred antislavery, though, had political undertones, as Clarkson emphasizes that the history of abolition demonstrates "the manner in which light and information proceed under a free government in a good cause" and that such benefits are a product of what the modern reader might call democracy and equality as "all they who can read may become enlightened."<sup>27</sup> He lauds the impact that an individual can make given the preservation of the written word: "While living, [those directly influenced by a writer] instruct, like their predecessors; when dead, they speak also."<sup>28</sup> For Clarkson, education and free government are intrinsically oriented toward goodness and justice, as the above "is not true in any free and enlightened country with respect to the propagation of evil."<sup>29</sup> Thus, political freedom, moral goodness, and education form a virtuous circle, uniting both the living and the dead in mutual pursuit of goodness.

The account of a Parliamentary debate over abolition in 1791 similarly depicts Wilberforce's confidence in the inevitability of abolition once Britain becomes fully aware of slavery's evils. Again harnessing the imagery of light and darkness, the transcriber portrays Wilberforce declaring his belief that the slave trade "was a nest of serpents, which would never

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<sup>26</sup>Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 1:200.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:201.

have endured so long, but for the darkness in which they lay hid. The light of day would now be let in on them, and they would vanish from the sight.”<sup>30</sup> He views Britain’s capacity for the dissemination of information – in which “the means of information were so generally diffused”—as both servicing its role as a potential harbinger of liberty and magnifying its responsibility to effect justice.<sup>31</sup> Later, he blames “public ignorance of the actual evils of West Indian Slavery” for the perpetuation of the slave trade.<sup>32</sup> As such, the idea of antislavery as an enlightenment movement serves as foundational for leaders’ concept of abolition.

### **Lockean Education and “Civilization”**

In this model of enlightened government and society, then, antislavery and “civilization” prove to be mutually beneficial concepts. Clarkson also suggests an advantageous relationship between abolition, economic growth, and sound public policy. He notes that Wilberforce considered “justice [to be] the principle of the measure [of abolition] ... he trusted he should distinctly prove it to be reconcilable with our truest political interest.”<sup>33</sup> However, in his later autobiography, Clarkson begins his dissertation by upholding the economic benefits of emancipation, arguing that free labor among Quakers and other denominations which forbade slavery in Pennsylvania after abolition proved more productive than slave labor.<sup>34</sup> He further explains that the demise of the slave trade would tap into the “inexhaustible mine of wealth ... in Africa” with its replacement by “a trade ... which might be prosecuted with advantage and honor,” asserting from the beginning that “advantage and honor” can coincide.<sup>35</sup> This argument fits neatly into

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<sup>30</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 41.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>32</sup> William Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment* 2:36.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African, Translated from a Latin Dissertation, Which Was Honoured with the First Prize, in the University of Cambridge, for the Year 1785, with Additions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Re-printed by Joseph Crukshank, 1787), vii.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, viii.

Adam Smith's critique of the economic institution of slavery in his *Wealth of Nations*, in which he asserts that liberty constitutes one of the fundamental components of economic utility and attacks the long-term efficiency of slave labor.<sup>36</sup> However, such an appeal to British economic and political interests not only proves interesting in light of Drescher's refutation of economic determinism as the root of abolition but also indicates an overarching argument based upon the mutuality of justice and civilization. Such rhetoric reflects the intersection of Christian piety and commerce found in the "Sunday Employment" segment of Trimmer's *Family Magazine*. Combined with invocations of a Lockean view of education, as described in the Introduction and Chapter One, that emphasize African capacity for improvement, Clarkson and Wilberforce both embrace the notion of abolition as a specifically civilizing movement and counter the idea that "civilization"—or lack thereof—indicates racial superiority or inferiority.

Because supposed intellectual and moral inferiority served as a basis for slavery's justification, the rhetoric of education and children's literature—particularly of the Lockean variety—provided ample material for slavery's opposition. Among the number of proslavery arguments he addresses in his "Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire, 1807," Wilberforce specifically counters the charge of Africans' intrinsic inferiority by asserting their capacity for educational and moral attainment—and therefore the malleability of their character and potential for development. According to Wilberforce, the proslavery justification for slavery relies upon the premise that Africans "never had attained to any height of civilization; whence it was also inferred, that they never could be civilized; that therefore they might be reasonably regarded, as intended by

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<sup>36</sup> Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 21, 31-32.

Providence to be the hewers of wood and drawers of water of the species.”<sup>37</sup> He surveys several authors who profess Africans’ natural and inevitable inferiority—for example claiming that “their stupidity, and still more their indolence, were so firmly rooted in their nature, as to be absolutely invincible.”<sup>38</sup> This invocation of “invincibility” undergirds a natural immutability of character. The ensuing argument centers around the presence of “civilization,” stating that Africa never attained “any considerable state of civilization and knowledge, in any period of the world” and therefore must be incapable of the intellectual and moral capacity required to attain an equal status of humanity.<sup>39</sup> Instead, Wilberforce maintains the contingency of British notions of civilization, writing that the interior of Africa is “as much civilized as any other race of men would have been, if placed in the same situation” and posing the question of whether or not roles between Europeans and Africans could be reversed.<sup>40</sup> He further criticizes a predetermined view of civilization dependent upon racial superiority by arguing that relative advancements in Africa’s interior rely upon a lack of European interaction relative to that of the coasts, as the slave trade specifically prevents civilization.<sup>41</sup> This assertion mirrors Clarkson’s differentiation between natural equality and “incidental distinction” among men, as well as his comparison of societies in which he argues that the fact that Africans “follow the same mode of life, and exercise the same arts, as the ancestors of those very Europeans, who boast of their great superiority...” demonstrates their equality.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, Wilberforce includes an appendix to his *Letter to His Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand Perigord* that details the “Natural Disposition of the Africans, and Capacity for Civilization” as a means for demonstrating African potential

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<sup>37</sup> Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 63. Wilberforce also points to the success of black childhood education in Haiti as support for slaves’ potential, see Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity*, 66.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 71–72.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 73, 81, 82–83.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–87.

<sup>42</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 59, 108.

for civilization.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Wilberforce and Clarkson assert that civilization is not a product of racial determinism and that its potential demonstrates the humanity of a society.

Although Wilberforce challenges the proslavery conception of civilization, he does not abandon the appeal of civilization as both the herald and product of enlightenment. He continues from this discussion of contingency to emphasize that Britain itself had benefitted from “the rays of knowledge [from the continent which] enlightened [it],” thus perpetuating the idea of civilization as the source of goodness and truth. Rather than using “civilization” as proof of European superiority, Wilberforce employs the same language of knowledge and enlightenment to describe both abolition and European civilization, asserting that incompatibility of the slave trade with civilization and the consequent preclusion of the spread of civilization:

The very channels through which alone, according to all human calculation, Africa might have hoped to receive the blessings of religious and moral light, and social improvement, are precisely those through which her miseries flow in upon her with so full a tide. Thus the African Slave Trade provides for its own indefinite continuance. Here also, as in other instances which have been already pointed out, it turns into poison what has been elsewhere salutary, and renders that very intercourse, which has been ordinarily the grand means of civilization, the most sure and operative instrument in the perpetuation of barbarism.<sup>44</sup>

Clarkson likewise agrees that without the slave trade “[c]ivilization would go with [Africa] as well as other nations” and invokes the common ethics of civilization as revealing the injustice of slavery.<sup>45</sup> Thus, both authors continue to portray abolition as a civilizing force. Rather than having its roots in race, civilization is the product of “religious and moral light” whose passage is obstructed by the slave trade. Wilberforce argues that because Africans have the potential for

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<sup>43</sup> Wilberforce, *A Letter to His Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand*, 79–80.

<sup>44</sup> Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment*, 2:43. Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe*, 36.

enlightenment and therefore edification, the concept of “civilization” serves an antislavery function.

Wilberforce applies Locke’s idea of malleability of character and capacity for education to African society as a whole. Levels of “civilization,” though, remain to be measured according to a contemporary British standard; slavery was an obstacle both to an English civilization in Britain and to a similar form of civilization in Africa. Likewise, the authors perpetuate the notion of progress toward some notion of “civilization,” simultaneously criticizing British assumption of racial superiority and reinforcing British notions of civilization by setting British standards as the goal of progress. In explaining slavery as an obstacle, Wilberforce upholds the British duty to civilize Africa, marking that slavery “maintain[s] an impassable barrier on that side, through which alone any rays of the religious and moral light and social improvements of our happier quarter of the globe might penetrate into the interior, and thus lock up the whole of that vast continent in its present state of wretchedness and darkness.”<sup>46</sup> Again, literal enlightenment corresponds to intellectual and moral enlightenment. For Wilberforce, the contradiction between slave-holding and civilization does not detract from the responsibility of “the most free, enlightened, and happy people that ever existed upon earth.”<sup>47</sup>

### **Human Dignity: Personhood and Animality**

Following the 1781 *Zong* massacre in which 132 Africans were tossed off board a slave ship, Lord Mansfield applied maritime insurance law to the case, noting that “the case of slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard.”<sup>48</sup> In contrast, Clarkson and Wilberforce probe the question of human dignity by pointing to the Lockean potential for moral and intellectual

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<sup>46</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 40–41. Also, see William Wilberforce, *A Letter to His Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand*, 13–14.

<sup>47</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 42.

<sup>48</sup> Walvin, *Zong*, 153.

improvement. Trimmer's assertion of God-given sanctity of human life alongside an exhortation for compassionate treatment of animals figures into both abolitionists' counter to proslavery arguments against slaves' humanity. In this vein, Clarkson counters proslavery arguments by asserting the distinctiveness of humanity and the slave's own humanity. In his dissertation, he illustrates the history of slavery beginning in ancient Greece, distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary slavery and shifting from piracy to systematic slavery.<sup>49</sup> He argues that the perpetuation of slavery relies upon equating men and animals: "The commerce therefore, which was begun in the primitive ages of the world, by classing them with the brutal species, and by habituating the mind to consider the terms of *brute* and *slave* as *synonymous*, soon caused them to be viewed in a low and despicable light, and as greatly inferior to the human species."<sup>50</sup> He adds that African princes as well as Europeans reinforced this notion—"the very idea which the African princes entertain their villages, as *parks* or *reservoirs*, stocked only for their own convenience, and of their subjects, as *wild beasts*, whom they might pursue and take at pleasure."<sup>51</sup> In his second section on the slave trade itself, he distinguishes the "natural" ... "right to empire over brutes" from the "adventitious ... right to empire over men."<sup>52</sup> Appealing to the order of creation – from men, to "brutes," and to "stones"—ordained by natural law, he commends "giving to every created thing its due respect, to answer the views of Providence."<sup>53</sup> He seeks to find a natural difference between slave and master besides that of chance, beginning with an account of man as "originally free[,] as nature made every man's body and mind his

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<sup>49</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 28.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.



own.”<sup>54</sup> Similar to Locke’s emphasis on the mind’s initial state, Clarkson undergirds his assertion of African equality with a claim to the “original” state of humanity.

As with the question of civilization—and the African potential for civilization—Clarkson defends African equality of humanity by hearkening to the capacity for moral and intellectual development: the mind is considered the mark of God-given human dignity. In response to the observation that “cattle are better protected in this country, than slaves in the colonies,” he writes that the “feelings [of a slave] receive of course a double poignancy from the power of reflection.”<sup>55</sup> As such, the “power of reflection” serves as a fundamental determinant of a slave’s superiority to cattle. He emphasizes the mind-body duality that distinguishes man from animal: “Whenever you sell the liberty of a man, you have the power only of alluding to the body: the mind cannot be confined or bound, it will be free, though its mansion beset with chains.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the mind constitutes the slave’s claim to freedom; Clarkson argues that the aberration of slavery is derived from a denial of the mind. However, he optimistically insists upon its freedom despite bodily captivity. Transitioning from this affirmation of the mind’s liberty, he nearly equates the soul with the mind, pointing out in the same breath that the slave owner is “under the necessity of also treating [the slave] ... as a *brute*, and of abusing therefore that nature, which cannot otherwise be considered, than in the double capacity of *soul* and *body*.”<sup>57</sup> In doing so, he points to the liberty of the mind as evidence of a soul – and thus of shared humanity.

Despite his assertion that intellectual liberty cannot be restrained entirely, Clarkson maintains a Lockean explanation for what proslavery advocates deemed as African inferiority. For Clarkson, intellectual liberty does not preclude the environmental influence on the mind. He

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<sup>54</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 56.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

explains that perceived African inferiority results from treatment by the slave trade: “They were tamed, like beasts, by the stings of hunger and the lash, and their education was directed to the same end, to make them commodious instruments of labour for their possessors.”<sup>58</sup> Clarkson tells his readers that the proslavery position of African inferiority confuses natural origin with “incidental effects.” He writes that “by classing [enslaved Africans] originally with *brutes*, and the consequent *treatment*, by cramping their *abilities* and hindering them from becoming *conspicuous*, give to these unfortunate people, at a very early period, the most unfavourable *appearance*.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, classifications themselves create the “appearance” upon which proslavery advocates justify slavery, and its perpetuation likewise fuels a self-fulfilling prophecy, as future generations “did not consider these *effects* as *incidental*: they judged only from what they saw; they believed the appearances to be *real*; and hence arose the combined principle, that slaves were an inferior order of men, and perfectly void of understanding.”<sup>60</sup> Once again referring to the capacity for “understanding” as the basis for human dignity, Clarkson mirrors the Lockean idea of environmental influence as forging an identity based upon moral and intellectual ability—a concept permeating contemporary educational literature.

Wilberforce’s writings extend this notion. At the suggestion of simply improved treatment of slaves, he not only denounces the idea as both “inefficacious” and “unsafe,” but he also argues that the granting “civil rights” to men whose “minds were uninformed” and whose “moral characters were altogether debased . . . must, in some measure, be restored to that level from which they had been so unjustly and cruelly degraded.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, improved treatment within the context of slavery cannot bring about true humanity as freedom would.

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<sup>58</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 32.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

<sup>61</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 37.

Because “[t]o be under the protection of law, was, in fact, to be a freeman; and, to unite slavery and freedom, in one condition, was a vain attempt,” for Wilberforce, political and economic freedom must accompany freedom of the mind and of the moral life.<sup>62</sup> Thus, he argued for the abolition of slavery because of the human capacity for intellectual and moral development.

To further reflect the Lockean relationship between the mind and morality, Clarkson points to moral accountability as distinguishing man from animal.<sup>63</sup> He asserts that liberty is essential for status as an “accountable creature.”<sup>64</sup> Wilberforce likewise pinpoints the lack of moral instruction as the gravest problem of slavery and that which blurs the distinction between man and animal: “It was not merely that they were *worked under the whip like cattle*; but no attempts were ever made to instruct them in the principles of religion and morality.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, slavery denies both the mind and morality of the slave.

### **The Motif of Family and Child**

Clarkson and Wilberforce also both harness an emphasis on family and children in order to garner sentimental appeal for antislavery. The emphasis on the man-animal distinction shifts toward a focus on the role of children raised as slaves. In his anecdotal portrayals of Africans being taken into slavery, Clarkson pays particular attention to families—the wives and children—of the captured.<sup>66</sup> Clarkson continues the slave-cattle comparison to emphasize the injustice of transferring the state of enslavement upon a child:

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<sup>62</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 37.

<sup>63</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 58.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Clarkson and Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Improving the Condition of the Slaves in the British Colonies with a View to Their Ultimate Emancipation: And on the Practicability, the Safety, and the Advantages of the Latter Measure*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Printed for the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions, 1823), 9.

<sup>65</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons., *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, in the House of Commons, on Monday and Tuesday, April 18 and 19, 1791*, 16.

<sup>66</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 82–86.

...if men can justly become the property of each other, their children, like the offspring of cattle, must inherit their *paternal* lot. Now, as the actions of the father and the child must be thus at the sole disposal of their common master, it is evident, that the *authority* of the one, as a *parent*, and the *duty* of the other, as a *child*, must be instantly annihilated; rights and obligations, our feelings, and are established by the voice of God, must contain in their annihilation a solid argument to prove, that there cannot be any *property* whatever in the *human species*.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Clarkson reminds his readers that slaves cannot be considered only as individuals, but as family units and as the predecessors of further generations. He raises this question of passing the position of slave unto the next generation again in the third and final section of his dissertation, noting that children have been “previously destined to the condition of their parents.”<sup>68</sup> In a Lockean context, the figure of the child slave epitomizes the innocence and malleability of the slave; as such, abolitionist indictment of perpetuating slavery through childbirth serves to combat the proslavery assertion of slaves’ natural inferiority. In another tract, he maintains his focus on the figure of the child, pointing to infant slaves as exemplifying the trade’s irrationality, as slavery is a “punishment inflicted” upon one who had committed no “injury.”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the use of children and family as a motif in general points to the connection with the cultural focus on children and family among middle-class Britons.

In addition to pointing toward the injustice of passing on the status of slave upon one’s birth, both abolitionists point to familial instincts in order to attract sympathy for their cause. Clarkson directly asks his reader to sympathize with the plight of a slave by identifying as a parent or son: “Let us ask you parents, if ever you thought that you possessed an *authority* as such, or if ever you expected a *duty* from your sons; and let us ask you sons, if ever you felt an

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<sup>67</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 56-57.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>69</sup> Clarkson and Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Improving the Condition of the Slaves*, 8-9.

impulse in your own breasts to *obey* you parents.”<sup>70</sup> In *A Short Address Originally Written to the People of Scotland*, Clarkson seeks sympathy by marking “conjugal affection and parental love” as “the best privileges of [human] nature”—thus elevating familial relations as central to human existence.<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Clarkson particularly highlights the violent disruption of families and the separation of children from parents when sharing anecdotal evidence of the slave trade, and he points specifically to the improved male-to-female ratio in the colonies that would result from the abolition of the slave trade.<sup>72</sup> In addition to also pointing toward the rapid decrease in the population of imported slaves, Wilberforce specifically discusses the kidnapping of African children as a particularly abhorrent aspects of slavery.<sup>73</sup> In the same vein, he notes that the system of slavery exploits natural family instincts, especially in the context of kidnapping: “[E]ven parental instinct and the domestic and social affections are rendered by the Slave Trade the incentives to acts of cruelty and rapine.”<sup>74</sup> Wilberforce also decries the “neglect of marriage” among slaves, positioning the ability to marry chief among the liberties of free men.<sup>75</sup>

Overall, examples of slavery’s abuse of family and children provide ample abolitionist material for Clarkson and Wilberforce. Clarkson and Wilberforce refer to the family unit as a fundamental aspect of human personhood as a means to demonstrating African humanity. Clarkson argues that slavery’s degradation of the parent-child relationship shows that it is

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<sup>70</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 148.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Clarkson and Houldbrooke, *A Short Address Originally Written to the People of Scotland, on the Subject of the Slave Trade. With a Summary View of the Evidence Delivered before a Committee of the House of Commons, on the Part of the Petitioners, for Its Abolition* (Shrewsbury: Printed by T. Wood, 1792), 3.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Comparative Efficiency of Regulation or Abolition, as Applied to the Slave Trade. Shewing That the Latter Only Can Remove the Evils to Be Found in That Commerce* (London: Printed by James Phillips, George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1789), 4. Thomas Clarkson, *A Summary View of the Slave Trade, and of the Probable Consequences of Its Abolition* (London: Printed by J. Phillips, George Yard, Lombard-Street, 1787), 15. Wilberforce also cites the rending apart of families in the Middle Passage, see Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 100-101.

<sup>73</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 24–27, 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 24–27, 38. See also Wilberforce, *A Letter to His Excellency the Prince of Talleyrand*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Wilberforce, *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity*, 18, 46. Wilberforce likewise derides he polygamy encouraged by colonial slavery. See Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 123-124.

slavery itself which degrades human personhood, rather than an intrinsic quality of the slaves themselves. For example, he points to the eradication of a slave's "authority as a parent, and ... duty as a son" alongside moral accountability as evidence of slavery's reduction to the individual to the level of "brute."<sup>76</sup> To contradict the notion of natural animality, he details familial virtues as evidence of a capacity for morality in an 1882 tract. Among a list of traveler anecdotes, Clarkson includes instances of loyalty to parents, mothers teaching honesty to their children, and the love within an African family to attest to African morality and therefore humanity.<sup>77</sup> Wilberforce follows suit, referring to various histories of Africa after invoking the need to "ascertain the real character and qualities, both intellectual and moral, of the natives of Africa."<sup>78</sup> From "Parke's character of the Negroes," Wilberforce alludes to familial relationships and values as the center of the testimony to African morality: "But the natural character of the Africans rises in our estimation, when, from considering their intellectual, we take a fair survey of their moral qualities; of the reverence for truth in which the children are educated by their mothers ... of their parental and filial tenderness, of their social and domestic affection..." and "of the conjugal fidelity of the women."<sup>79</sup> Throughout their writings, both Clarkson and Wilberforce invoke sympathy, prove African moral capacity, and assert similarities between races by positioning the figures of family and child.

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<sup>76</sup> Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, 149.

<sup>77</sup> Clarkson, *The Cries of Africa to the Inhabitants of Europe*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain, *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, 56.

<sup>79</sup> Wilberforce and Great Britain. Parliament. House of Commons., *The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, in the House of Commons, on Monday and Tuesday, April 18 and 19, 1791*, 66, 67. He later uses an anecdote of a mother's love for her children and the children's own "filial tenderness" from "Mr. Golberry's account," pp. 67-68.

## Conclusion

Following the abolition of slavery in 1833, the Evangelicalism that had largely characterized the preceding abolition movement dominated British culture at large.<sup>80</sup> An increasingly literate middle-class had transformed British demography, and the abolition movement itself had connected these middle-class Britons not only to the political sphere but to Britain's global tentacles—to the colonies themselves. Leading into the solidification of British imperial power, a historian's understanding of the ideological threads that linked the grassroots populace and abolitionist leaders lends insight into the cultural milieu surrounding the Britain that abolished slavery and ushered in a new stage of British history. The intersection of education and family literature with abolitionist rhetoric vivifies these connections.

In Britain's "age of benevolence," a cultural emphasis on education, particularly for the poor, coincided with the honing of the antislavery ethos. Quaker practices and the charity school movement particularly demonstrate this overlap. Meanwhile, Edgeworth's educational theories demarcate Locke's influence on educators' views on the intertwined relationship between education and moral edification. Likewise, literature directed toward the family and children harnessed themes that brought antislavery arguments into the private sphere. Sarah Trimmer's *Family Magazine* in particular demonstrates the perceived intersection of intellect and morality, as particularly exemplified by her moral tales. She reflects a Lockean, humanitarian sentiment toward animals and validates the role of the state and the cultivation of civic virtue, in addition to welcoming representations of slaves, foreign people and places outside of Britain. Furthermore,

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<sup>80</sup> Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class*, 78.

her works emphasize the role of children and the family unit in general, pointing to a cultural focus that supports abolitionists' use of family and child examples to garner public sympathy.

The Lockean idea of education as inducing moral enlightenment and the disdain for nonessentials outside the bounds of useful education link abolitionist rhetoric to authors like Trimmer and Edgeworth. In their works, the capacity for educational attainment and moral edification serves as the abolitionist counter to proslavery assertions of Africans' intrinsic inferiority. Likewise, Trimmer's consistent invocation of the correspondence between reason and virtue; her notions of both common human dignity and humanitarian sentimentality; and her endorsement of the relationship between enlightenment and civilization serve as a means to tracing methods of persuasion within abolitionist texts. Her invocation of familial sentimentality, alongside the importance of education as a good servicing moral edification, further plays a role in forming the antislavery impulse among its leaders. As such, popular education theory and family literature texts provide a mechanism for examining the rhetoric employed by antislavery leaders themselves, thus bridging the gap between the political helm and public opinion at the grassroots level. As mentioned before, the British abolition movement was characterized by a surge of public engagement across a multitude of media as an increasingly literate middle class subscribed to, wrote about, and purchased antislavery material.

Both Edgeworth and Trimmer's Lockean roots point to the capacity for education as an underlying determinant of shared humanity—the potential for “upliftment” unites various marginalized groups, from servants and women to foreigners and slaves. This rhetoric ultimately points toward Clarkson and Wilberforce's arguments for antislavery, which deem racial differences to be the product of environment rather than an innate characteristic—and therefore malleable rather than biologically determined. Indeed, Clarkson and Wilberforce highlight the



African capacity for education and moral edification as central to justifications for antislavery. In the search for proof of humanity, they likewise draw upon from the boundaries distinguishing person from animal. This approach ultimately leads to a conception of “civilization” both as a measurement of humanity and as the goal of progress. Wilberforce and Clarkson both reinforce the ideal of civilization—particularly, English civilization—and critique British assumptions about their own supposed civilized status. For these two abolitionists, slavery’s demise would serve as a civilizing force both for Britain and for the entire world.

These themes point to the overlap between educational theories and antislavery in late-eighteenth century Britain. As both issues took precedence in the eyes of the middle-class Briton, the debate over slavery revolved around the question of what constitutes human personhood: what criteria must be fulfilled to be granted not only liberty, but human dignity? Despite the absolutism of Trimmer’s religious rationale for the dignity of persons and her persistent warnings against the mistaking of fact and fiction, the reliance on sentimentalism that pervades her analysis of animals blurs her otherwise objective standard for human personhood. In contrast, Clarkson and Wilberforce emphasize the differences between man and animal, pointing to the mind and morality as indicators of personhood. Locke’s philosophy of education, therefore, extends across genres.

These education ideologies and the figure of the family are inextricably linked, and abolitionists and their contemporaries situate their consideration of the human person within the context of the family. While an emphasis on childhood points to the significance of education once again, it also suggests another means to understanding the individual as well to order society. Furthermore, rhetorical use of family and child provided an object of sympathy—

arguably sentimental, but also drawing from an objective similarity between the reader of an abolitionist text and the slave in question.

This study has provided an avenue for the examination of the Enlightenment ethos amidst the religious imperatives for slavery's abolition. As historians of abolition debate the various influences of individual actors, economics, and public opinion on the antislavery movement, family literature and antislavery writings reveal the ideological threads that connected middle-class Britons and antislavery activists. This relationship proves particularly poignant in light of the proliferation of reading material for an increasingly literate public. While Evangelicalism remained a dominating factor in ideological motivations for antislavery, Enlightenment rhetoric based on a belief in the capacity for reason and a progress through education likewise played a role in justifying abolition.

Furthermore, this thesis has implications for Brown's call to consider abolition in light of contingency and empire. Brown argues that ideology matters and cannot be reduced to its simplest forms. By demonstrating that abolitionists and consumers of abolition propaganda harnessed a Lockean conception of human personhood, this study links late eighteenth-century readers to writers catering to popular culture. The role of civilization in such rhetoric likewise ushers in the reign of Britain as an imperial power, supporting Brown's argument that abolition served as a form of "moral capital" for imperial expansion. Abolition solidified Britons' conception of British civilization as the harbinger of intellectual and moral enlightenment. In turn, this study provides impetus for further examination of the rhetoric of education in the Victorian age of empire.

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