For The Sentiment

Emotions as Practice in the Development of Eighteenth-Century British Abolitionism

Stefania Chiro

School of Humanities

Department of English and Creative Writing

The University of Adelaide

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Abstract

At the end of the eighteenth century the British movement for the abolition of the slave trade emerged, arguing for reform based on notions of humanity and the fellow-feeling of mutual sympathy. With slavery still one of the biggest and most profitable crimes in the world today, how public sentiment was mobilised to create the first humanitarian movement to attempt to put an end to the slave trade remains a pertinent question. The chief aim of this thesis is to investigate the development of abolitionist emotional norms, evidenced in their mobilising materials, through an exploration of "emotional practices", Monique Scheer's concept for historical change in emotions. This approach, when combined with Barbara Rosenwein's concept of "emotional communities" and the rescripting of emotional norms, opens up the possibility of engaging with abolitionist texts in a new way, giving access to the methodology behind their politically engaged appeals to emotions like compassion and benevolence. Through analysis of the sentimental arguments employed across a range of texts, written both before and during the abolition campaigns, I uncover the centrality of the idea of emotional cultivation and improvement to the political agenda of abolitionist writers. In doing so I argue that there is a congruence between eighteenth-century theories of potentially transformative moral sentiments and the assumptions about the plasticity of human nature and emotions that informs emotions as a kind of practice. However, I do so while acknowledging that there are fundamental eschatological and teleological differences between the two. The politics of sympathy expressed by abolitionist academics, newspaper correspondents, preachers and divines, writers of fiction, and poets had an educative, progressivist, moral purpose which post-Romantic theories of

emotions have revised or discarded. Through their conviction that steady cultivation of the moral sentiments led to active and virtuous reform of society, abolitionists give their own account of the historical and emotional changes that saw communities within Britain come together to fight for abolition. Their conviction in the efficacy of their politics of sympathy may have wavered once their attempts at sentimental moral persuasion failed in the combative context of parliamentary debate. However, the question for my thesis is not whether emotional practice can answer why abolitionism developed or why it did or did not succeed. Rather, the question I ask is whether an emotions-as-practice approach can give an effective account of the methods by which communities manage emotions and how they understand the emotional shifts which contribute, alongside other socio- and cultural historic factors, to social change.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Atlantic slave trade flourished from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth century, and was a source of immense revenue for the European governments and individuals involved. For much of this period British planters and slave traders had the full support of the legislature and their source of income was little questioned by the public. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, a change in public opinion led to the creation of a social movement which built its arguments for the abolition of the institution on notions of humanity, sympathy and natural rights. Such terms had become so important during the abolition campaigns that many pro-slavery lobbyists and writers complained that "humanity is now the pop'lar cry" of reformist communities.[1] A "Humanity-mania" had spread across the country and its "Furor" had "seized on the people".[2] The British movement for the abolition of the slave trade, officially founded in 1787, involved people from all levels of society and from widely different religious and political backgrounds.[3] It was perhaps the first time in modern society that a social movement, from grass-roots committees to influential political figures, arose out of a concern for the condition of others. The debate over whether Britain should abolish the slave trade dominated public discourse during the height of abolitionist campaigning, from early 1787 to around 1793, when war with France took its place as the biggest national concern. Newspapers, pamphlets, popular literature, cartoons, sermons, public debates,

[1] John Walker, *A Descriptive Poem on the Town and Trade of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1789), line 56, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, (CW0114109230).
[2] *Public Advertiser*, 31 March 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale, (Z2001201301); Matthew Gregson quoted in Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *The Last Years of the English Slave Trade, Liverpool 1750-1807* (London: Putnam, 1941), 194.
[3] The movement was instigated by the establishment of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in London in June 1787. Similar committees were set up around the country in its wake whose purpose was to raise awareness through publications of political tracts, essays, sermons, and poems, and gathering petitions to send to parliament.

and plays were dedicated to discussing abolitionism, whether for, against, or somewhere in between.

With slavery still one of the biggest and most profitable global crimes today, how public sentiment was mobilised to create the first humanitarian movement to attempt to put an end to the slave trade remains an interesting object of study. While the question of whether legislative abolitionism was achieved as a direct result of a newly developed humanitarian impulse is debateable, there is no doubt that a fundamental change occurred in the eighteenth century which opened up the possibility for a movement like abolitionism to emerge. Understanding just one aspect of this change is the aim of my study. The focus of my thesis is to explore how emotional practice informed the mobilising methods of the British movement for the abolition of the slave trade. Its chief aim is to investigate the development of abolitionist emotional norms through an exploration of various communities' "emotional practices".[4] Taking into account specific cultural understandings of the role of emotions in eighteenth-century British society, we can begin to make sense of why activists used sentimental argument and expression to mobilise public opinion. The spaces used by abolitionists served as tools of those emotional practices, whereby shared emotional norms and values were developed, communicated, and reinforced. Such norms are revealed within abolitionist literature, which highlights the political and social purpose of emotional practice within the movement.

Through analysis of the sentimental arguments employed across a range of texts, written both before and during the abolition campaigns, I uncover the centrality of the

[4] Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuian Approach to Understanding Emotion", *History and Theory* 51 (May 2012): 193-220, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2303.2012.00621.x.

idea of emotional cultivation and improvement to the political agenda of abolitionist writers. In doing so I argue that, while we may not be able to fully explain the cause of the changes in attitude towards slavery and the slave trade towards the end of the eighteenth century, we can at least perceive in abolitionist arguments their own understanding of how their movement developed when it did. Through their conviction that steady cultivation of the moral sentiments led to active and virtuous reform of society, they give their own account, however biased, of the historical change that saw communities within Britain come together to fight for abolition. When it came to the success of that fight, however, their conviction wavered and the limits of their politics of sympathy were realised. From the perspective of recent theories of emotion, this raises the question of how effective emotions-as-practice is in accounting for the emotional shifts that are necessary for change to occur.

1.1 Overview of Scholarship: A Brief History of the History of British Abolitionism

Exploring the reasons behind the emergence of the British movement for the abolition of the slave trade has been the subject of historical research and scholarly debate for over 200 years. Thomas Clarkson gave the first full account of his own movement's rise and achievements in 1808, just one year after the first Abolition Act was passed. *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* explains abolitionism as the result of benevolent British humanitarianism, an account which helped create the legend of abolitionist activists as evangelical "Saints".[5] Since his book, there is hardly an aspect of British abolitionism

[5] This view lasted in British memory until well into the twentieth century. Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1808), The Making of the Modern World, Gale, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5HVwj2.

that has not been covered by histories of the movement. Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) was the first to challenge Clarkson's account, his book marking the economic turn of historical research on abolitionism.[6] Williams argued that the slave trade was eventually abolished simply because it was no longer as profitable at the end of the eighteenth century as it had once been. While this argument had merit, insofar as it introduced new criteria into the reasons behind abolitionism, it was successfully contested in the 1970s by Seymour Drescher's *Econocide* (1977) and other works which shifted the focus onto political and socio-cultural factors.[7] Several important studies by Drescher and Roger Anstey positioned abolitionism within the general broadening of the British political system at the time.[8]

The 1990s saw the attention on socio-cultural factors turn to disenfranchised groups and the role of women and dissenting religious communities in an effort to expand the notion of who was responsible for the emergence of abolitionism.[9] This phase in research also focused on the moral imperatives built into abolitionism as a movement for change. This is extensively explored by Christopher Brown in his

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[6] Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery,* (Richmond, Virginia: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

[7] Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

[8] See Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London: Macmillan, 1975); Seymour Drescher, "People and Parliament: The Rhetoric of the British Slave Trade", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20 (April 1990), 561-580, doi: 10.2307/203999. John Oldfield's *Popular Politics* was also important in this area: *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

[9] Davis was among the first to analyse antislavery as a reflection of the ideological needs of various groups and classes: David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, *1770-1823,* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975). On women's roles see Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: the British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (London: Routledge, 1992); Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834*, (New York: Routledge, 1992); Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); and Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713-1833*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). For discussion of the role of religious sects see David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860*, (London: Routledge, 1991); Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, eds., *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, (Hamden, Conn.: Archdon Books, 1980).

seminal *Moral Capital* (2006).[10] Most of these studies concur that abolition eventually occurred because of a complex mixture of financial and cultural factors; the extent of the movement's role in achieving it is still debated. However, while they reference the vast amount of literature produced by abolitionist supporters, most of these studies, including Brown's, lack close readings of primary texts. It has been left to literary scholars to uncover the ways in which abolitionism was mobilised and the extent to which it influenced literary tropes in Britain and the colonies. Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee's *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (1999) instigated this interest in antislavery literature, their work placing abolitionist texts within the genre of Romanticism.[11] Studies that followed in its wake placed abolitionism more specifically within the literary trend that pre-dates Romanticism: sentimentalism. Markman Ellis and Brycchan Carey's work in this area has uncovered the extent to which sentimental language was employed by abolitionists across a wide range of sources, from novels, pamphlets and newspaper accounts, to sermons and poems.[12]

It is largely thanks to these studies that the emotional content of abolitionist literature has been uncovered and emotions have become central to the majority of literary, and increasingly historical, studies of abolitionism in the last ten to fifteen years. Stephen Ahern's edited collection *Affect and Abolition* (2013) has been an important contribution to the study of abolitionism in terms of emotions in history, yet

[10] Brown's account claims it was the loss of the American colonies which led the British to re-evaluate their moral standing. Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism,* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[11] Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee, eds., *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999); see also Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).
[12] Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807*, (Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih, eds., *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838,* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

the essays it contains do not point to any specific theories current in the field of emotions research which could be useful to an understanding of the emergence, development and practices of the abolition movement.[13] There is therefore a gap which the concepts developed by researchers from the History of Emotions may help to bridge when examining historical movements like abolitionism, as they provide methodologies for uncovering the cultural and emotional systems within and around social groups and spaces when we do not have the benefit of surveying and questioning participants themselves. Particularly influential has been Arlie Hochschild's work on "feeling rules" – the shared norms about appropriateness or legitimacy of the feelings we display – and "emotion work" – the ways in which people consciously "manage" their emotions according to their social situation.[14] Many emotions historians base their theories of uncovering emotional styles or repertoires on Hochschild's concept.[15] My study is aimed at contributing to the gap in abolitionist studies which emotions history could potentially fill, adopting more recent approaches by Monique Scheer and Barbara Rosenwein to investigate their value to a study of literary abolitionism.[16]

[13] Stephen Ahern, ed., *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830*, (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013).
[14] See Arlie Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure", *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no.2 (1979): 551-575, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583. For an overview of influential work in the area of historical research on emotions see Susan J. Matt, "Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out", *Emotion Review* 3, no.1 (2011): 117-124, doi: 10.1177/1754073910384416.
[15] See Peter N. Stearns and Carol Zisowitz Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards", *The American Historical Review* 90, no.4 (1985): 813–836,doi: 10.2307/1858841; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).
[16] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice"; Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History", *The American Historical Review* 107, no.3 (2002): 821-845, EBSCO (6909152).

1.2 Sentiment, Sensibility and Sympathy: Key Terms in the Abolitionist Emotional Repertoire

Abolitionist literature made use of the language and emotional expression of sentimentalism, a style that encouraged effusive emotional displays and that stressed the importance of compassionate responses to those in distress. Sentimentalism has traditionally been studied as a literary style, concentrating on the emotional rhetoric used in the early novels of the period, and, rightly or wrongly, abolitionist discourse has been placed within this field. [17] Derived from "sentiment", sentimentalism became associated with moral judgement once the word became attached to eighteenth-century accounts of the moral sense.[18] To be "sentimental" was to have "a conscious openness to feelings, and also a conscious consumption of feelings".[19] Sentimental literature, therefore, focused on the feeling response of the characters and the readers alike, using an array of somatic language, expression and gesture to produce an affective and affecting moral tale.

"Sensibility" also denoted an open responsiveness to feeling. The person of sensibility was understood to be "quick both to understand an event and to experience feelings appropriate to it".[20] Some critics thus use the terms "sentimentalism" and "sensibility" interchangeably. [21] Barker-Benfield's seminal work on sensibility

[17] I maintain a distance from classifying abolitionist literature as strictly sentimental. Much of the poetry and fiction can be placed within the genre of sentimentalism, however there are many works which cannot. While the sentimental aspects of their literature is my focus here, it is to be understood that they use sentimental language and arguments alongside myriad other arguments, such as legal, religious providential, and economic.
[18]Amy M. Schmitter, "Passions, Affections, Sentiments: Taxonomy and Terminology" in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. James A. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 202.
[19] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (London: Fontana, 1976), 236-7.
[20] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 5.
[21] G.J. Barker-Benfield and Chris Jones, for instance, insist that the terms are cognate. G.J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xvii; Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 5. Others have insisted that "sentimentalism" and "sensibility" in fact imply

concludes that the magnitude of practices which come under the heading of sensibility, and the pervasiveness of them in all sorts of social, religious, political, and cultural arenas, attest to its being a dominant culture in eighteenth-century British society.[22] However, as a set of emotional practices it was not always so widely approved of as to be considered *the* defining cultural and emotional style of the era. Sensibility was as often disparaged as a dangerous, effeminate quality as it was celebrated as a moral value. Nevertheless, thanks to its ties to both popular culture and the ideas of polite sociability, its ubiquitous appeal persisted throughout the century in all sorts of discourses, whether philosophical, religious, or cultural. Moreover, whether one proclaimed oneself a person of sensibility or not, the rhetoric of heightened emotional responsiveness, and the language of feeling which characterised the man or woman of sensibility, remained a fixture of eighteenth-century writing of all genres, even when professing itself to be against the supposed self-indulgence and falseness of literary sensibility.[23]

While it has been a difficult concept to precisely define, the essential quality of a person of sensibility is their emotional receptivity.[24] As Brissenden states, the key word in eighteenth-century discourses on sensibility "is 'sensible': what we know derives ultimately from what our *senses* tell us – from our *sensibility*".[25] To have

very different meanings and traditions. For these discussions see Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, (London: Methuen, 1986); Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996); and Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[22] See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, xix.

[23] I discuss the complexities of eighteenth-century receptions of sensibility in literature further in chapter 5.

[24] Williams states that eighteenth-century uses of sensibility range "from a use much like that of modern awareness (not only consciousness but conscience) to a strong form of what the word appears literally to mean, the ability to feel". Williams, *Keywords*, 236-7. In scientific and medical terms, it signified the receptivity of the senses, the operation of the nervous system and the "psychoperceptual scheme" of human consciousness as defined and systematised by seventeenth century doctors, scientists and philosophers like Newton and Locke. See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, xvii.

[25] R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in Distress: Studies in the Novel of Sentiment from Richardson to Sade*, (London: Macmillan, 1974).

sensibility was to be open and responsive to the emotions of others, to have a heightened "susceptibility to tender feelings" and a capacity to identify with and respond to the sorrows of others.[26] On top of its physiological and psychological qualities, its usage in moral philosophy and theology added spiritual and moral values to its meaning so that it became synonymous with virtue and one's moral character: to be without sensibility connoted a lack of feeling and, thus, of humanity. It worked alongside sympathy, being the physical, mental and spiritual capacity that allowed the communication of feelings to pass from one to another.

Sympathy was therefore an important feature of sentimentalism. By the middle of the eighteenth century, "sympathy" had variable meanings and functions; it could describe the emotion, or sentiment, of fellow-feeling, as well as serve as an "index of physiological connection and communication".[27] While sympathy could sometimes denote a moral and emotional response, in abolitionist literature it more often represents a "social bonding force", and is described using notions as disparate as magnetic and mechanistic attraction, a physiological transfusion of feeling between bodies, or as a form of imaginary identification.[28] As Burgess points out, scholars tend to agree that "sympathy" meant much "more than the pity that it implies etymologically, and that is now conventionally associated with it"; it came to designate, rather, a feeling *with* another, as much as a feeling *for* another.[29] According to Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, humans receive, via sympathy, the feelings of others through various

[26] J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, (New York: Penguin, 1984), 615.
[27] Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 21. As with sensibility, the history of the term "sympathy" is, as Csengei points out, "marked by extensive transmission between fields, from astronomy to medical theory, and from moral treatises to the novel". Ildiko Csengei, *Sympathy, Sensibility and the Literature of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9.
[28] See Csengei, *Literature of Feeling,* 9.
[29] Miranda Burgess, "On Being Moved: Sympathy, Mobility, and Narrative Form", *Poetics Today* 32 no.2 (2011): 297.

means, "from accounts and relations of such happinesses, from the very countenances, gestures, voices and sounds, even of creatures foreign to our kind, whose signs of joy and contentment we can anyway discern".[30] Sympathy is the communicative mechanism by which we intuit such signs of emotion in others and enables us to be affected in turn.

For moral philosophers like David Hume and Adam Smith, sympathy is a means of communication for all passions, sentiments and feelings: its social operation is to conduct the movement of passions from one person to another. When we sympathise with others we "receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments".[31] Hume draws on a physiological notion that was often found in early modern medical theory and natural philosophy, which used the term "sympathy" to explain how the body, which is made up of separate parts, nevertheless works as a systematic whole.[32] As Forget states, there was a "logical continuity between physiological and sociological investigation" at this time.[33] Thus we see terms like "contagion" and "infection" being used in sentimental works with regards to the transfer of sentiments between people. Hume states that when we are "excited by sympathy", "the passions are so contagious, that they pass with the greatest facility from one person to another, and produce corresponding movements in all human breasts."[34] Smith, on the other hand, bases his

[30] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 3 vols. (London, 1711) 2:108, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, National Library of Australia (CW3304278427).
[31] Davide Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3 vols. (London, 1739-40) 2:73, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, National Library of Australia (CW3318260025).
[32] For discussions on early modern medical theories on sympathy see G.S. Rousseau "Nerves, Spirits and Fibres: Toward defining the origins of Sensibility", *AMS Studies in the Eighteenth Century* 3 (1976): 137-57; and Christopher Lawrence, "The Nervous System and Society in the Scottish Enlightenment", in *Natural Order: Historical Studies in Scientific Culture*, ed. Barry Barnes and Stephen Shapin (London: Sage, 1979).
[33] Evelyn Forget, "Evocations of Sympathy: Sympathetic Imagery in Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Physiology", *Annual Supplement, History of Political Economy* 35, no.1 (2003): 283, EBSCO (0728248).
[34] Hume, *Treatise,* 3:254, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, National Library of Australia (CW3318260844).

theory of sympathetic communication on the imaginative process. In his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) Smith formulates a concept of sympathy that is a process of identification achieved through an effort of imagination on the part of the sympathiser. His *Theory* stresses the specular nature of sympathy, arguing that it derives from an "impartial spectator" within, who allows us to change places with an object of sympathy.[35] However it was formulated, the moral and ethical basis of modern society depended for these philosophers on mutual feeling, or sympathy, between its parts.

These ideas became crucial to notions of improvement in British society. There is a practical purpose to eighteenth-century moral sentiment philosophy. As Harris points out, the moral philosophers understand philosophy not as a set of doctrines but as a practice, the purpose of which is to "help human beings live happier and more virtuous lives".[36] Being virtuous is not only in the interest of one's own happiness but also the happiness of society in general. Cultivating one's sensibility, "the power to feel", was an individual virtue which allowed sentiments to be easily transmitted from one person to the other through sympathy. [37] If this affective complex is allowed to flourish, "moments that fuse pain and virtue" become extremely important to one's emotional repertoire.[38] When the pain and suffering of another becomes our own, via sensibility and sympathy, we must feel a natural desire to relieve that pain.

In his work on abolitionist sentimental rhetoric, Carey points out that "recognition of the sympathetic impulse was vital to the formation of campaigns and

[35] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, (London, 1759), 11, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, National Library of Australia (CW3320137306).
[36] James A. Harris, "The Government of the Passions" in Harris, *Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 271.
[37] Julie Ellison, "Sensibility", in Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright, eds., *A Handbook of Romanticism Studies*, (Hoboken: Wiley, 2012), 39 and 41.
[38] Ibid., 38.

policies that aimed to relieve the suffering of others".[39] Sentimentalism, sensibility and sympathy were intended to be active impulses, linked as they were to ideas of morality, human sociability, and social improvement and reform. The ability to feel compassion towards another was lauded as the foundation of good society and moral welfare and, as such, became linked to a variety of words which describe the role of the sentimental person in society – "benevolence", "charity", "humanitarianism", and "philanthropy". These qualities, as Carey states, were used in sentimental discourse as "models of behaviour to be emulated by those with sensibility".[40] In their own discourse, abolitionists employed these qualities to gain public attention and encourage political action. As such, their politics of sympathy is closely linked to the idea of emotional cultivation, or practice.

Nevertheless, the idea and understanding of sentimentalism and sensibility was not always homogenous and abolitionists had to find ways around notions of affectation which became attached to the concepts late in the century. The multiplicity of discourses that contributed to its development as an idea, as a cultural phenomenon, and as an emotional practice made it possible for groups of various and opposing opinions to claim sensibility for their own views. Thus, as a form of rhetoric or persuasive tool, we can see its use on both sides of the abolition debate, with pro-slavery lobbyists using sentimental expressions to argue against humanitarian reform.[41] I do not claim therefore that the rise in popularity of sentimental discourse caused the emergence of humanitarianism or of the abolition movement. Only that the practices which aimed at habituating the moral sentiments were often engaged within the written sources of

[39] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 5. Many scholars agree with this point. See Norman S. Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Sympathy and Humanitarianism", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, no.2 (1976): 195-218, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2708821; and Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007).
[40] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 5.
[41] I will explore this further in chapter 3.

reform communities. As Swaminathan points out, the improvement or "progress narrative" evident in abolitionist discourse offered the movement a compelling premise from which to question the existence of the slave trade.[42]

1.3 Theory and Methodology

In her 2012 article, "Are emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)?", Scheer asks whether emotions can be conceived of as practices in the terms defined by Pierre Bourdieu.[43] Bourdieu's practice theory emphasises the importance of habituation and social context to human action, his notion of "habitus" stressing "the permanent internalisation of the social order in the human body".[44] Rather than the body being seen as a timeless, ahistorical entity, practice theory emphasises the body as socially situated, adaptive, and trained, thus making it historical.[45] An "emotions-as-practice" approach therefore understands emotions as emerging from bodily dispositions conditioned by a social context with cultural and historical specificities. [46] As Scheer states, in practice the body is not just a collection of organic material and processes but is conceived of as a "knowing" or "mindful body" which "stores information from past experiences in habituated processes and contributes this knowledge to human activity and consciousness".[47] The implication of this is that emotional expressions, gestures, and actions can be seen as "acts executed by

[42] Srividhya Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 33.
[43] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice". See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).
[44] T. H. Eriksen and F. S. Nielsen, *A History of Anthropology*, (London: Pluto Press, 2001).
[45] Scheer claims her theory bridges the gap between conflicting ideas about emotions as either universal or socially and culturally constructed: practice theory "elaborates most thoroughly the infusion of the physical body with social structure, both of which participate in the production of emotional experience". Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 199.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 201. See also Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, "A Mindful Body: a Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology", *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1, (March 1987): 6-41.

a mindful body", or as cultural practices in themselves.[48] As a concept for the history of emotions, it offers a way to integrate the physiological aspects of emotional processes with those that are constructed out of social norms.

In conceiving of a knowing body with a "habitus" that stores a "practical sense", practice theory highlights the largely unconscious and implicit knowledge of how we should behave in a given situation.[49] The "habitus" – Bourdieu's term for the body's "system of cognitive and motivating structures" – is described as "the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product".[50] The body therefore contains history. That history "consists not only of the sedimentations of evolutionary time, but also the history of the society in which the organism is embedded, and its own history of constantly being molded by the practices it executes".[51] Practices are therefore understood as skilful behaviours and habits, dependent on practice until they become automatic.[52] Thus, if emotions are considered practices, we must understand them as the habits, behaviours and everyday rituals that help people achieve an emotional state. These habits, or the "doings and sayings" that are dependent on and connected with emotional experiences and expressions – such as speaking, gesturing, and remembering – are termed "emotional practices".[53] Emotional acts like weeping, sighing, blushing, and trembling, though seemingly spontaneous and automatic responses, are learned and socialised behaviours which, according to practice theory, make lasting changes to the body and brain.[54]

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[48] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 205.
[49] Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 66.
[50] Ibid., 56. While Scheer prefers the term "emotional style" over "habitus", the concept is nevertheless important to an understanding of practice.
[51] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 201.
[52] Ibid., 202.
[53] Ibid., 209.
[54] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Emotional practices are a part of what is often referred to as "emotional management".[55] That is, they are the ongoing learning, maintaining, and shaping of an emotional repertoire.[56] In this sense, emotional practices can be said to be mobilising; they are the "manipulations of body and mind to evoke feelings where there are none, to focus diffuse arousals and give them an intelligible shape, or to change or remove emotions already there".[57] The implication for methodology is that, "instead of searching the historical record for the 'trigger' to explain the emotion that followed, the emotions can be viewed as the meaningful cultural activity of ascribing, interpreting, and constructing an event as a trigger".[58] In studies of political and social activism, the act of mobilising emotions through emotional practices is crucial. According to Eugenia Lean, in order to historicise emotions "the key methodological challenge is not just to identify the words or expressions (textual or bodily) of affect, but to think about how a particular narrative or bodily expression moves from mere rhetoric or empty gesture to become viscerally felt, somatically embodied, or to gain the status of a social norm."[59] Inherent to the study of emotions as practices, in the Bourdieuian sense of the word, is that emotions not only change over time because norms and expectations change, but also "because the practices in which they are embodied, and bodies themselves, undergo transformation".[60] This would suggest that thinking of emotions as practice can look beyond norms to felt experience, thus helping historians "get over the sense that

[55] See Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
[56] There are many terms for the idea of emotional management: "style", "repertoire", "system". While Scheer uses "style" in her theory, I prefer the term "repertoire" as it encompasses the whole range of skills or behaviours that a person habitually uses.
[57] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 209.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Eugenia Lean, "AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions", *American Historical Review* 117, (December 2012): 1498, doi: 10.1093/ahr/117.5.1487.
[60] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 220.

the history of emotions can only be a history of changing emotional norms and expectations but not a record of change in feeling". [61]

My study does not intend to explore whether this claim is applicable to eighteenth-century emotional repertoires or, indeed, if we can in fact get at changes in actual feeling in historical sources. I use Scheer's approach, rather, to look at normative changes over time which contributed to the abolitionist emotional repertoire, as I think this is all we can do as historians and literary analysts.[62] Moreover, if feelings change rather than norms, this would suggest that the emotions I focus on in this study somehow appeared and disappeared within the span of around a hundred years. Scheer claims that the "fashion" of sentimentalism may be considered more an emotional style than a habitus because it was so easily reversed by competing emotional repertoires.[63] If we are talking about the term "sentimental" itself then Scheer is right: the privileging discourse of sentiment came and went relatively quickly. Yet, emotions do not appear from nowhere. Compassion is still a felt experience in today's post-Romantic world. I am in accord with Michael Bell in that we often assume wrongly that the decline of a word represents the downgrading of its object.[64] In Bell's view, the transformation of the word "sentimental" into a negative descriptor of self-indulgent and mawkish feeling after the Enlightenment was not "a rejection of feeling, or of the underlying impulse of eighteenth-century sentimentalism", but was in fact "the development of an implicit

[61] Ibid.
[62] Like Rosenwein, I do not claim that the study of the emotional practices will tell us how "a certain individual feels in a certain situation." It can only tell us something of how people articulated, understood, and represented how they felt. As Rosenwein states, "This, in fact, is about all we can know about anyone's feelings apart from our own". "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions", *Passions in Context* 1, no.1 (2010): 11n37.
[63] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 217.
[64] Michael Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000).

criterion of true feeling on which the modern pejorative sense rests".[65] The change in how people privileged sentimentalism is on the level of discourse, not feeling itself.

The underlying assumptions about how emotions work in Scheer's theory itself justifies this view. She states that a practice theory approach to emotions is useful because it "does not reproduce assumptions in the sources". Yet, to the degree that the sources I examine in this study presume the potential transformation of the self and society through habituation to a "second nature", emotions-as-practice can be almost directly applicable to the assumptions about emotions that underpin the sentimental emotional repertoire, and which were also central to the changing emotional repertoire of the abolitionist community. In eighteenth-century formulations of sentimentalism the supposedly "natural" tendency to be sociable and benevolent was understood to require careful cultivation and practice over the course of one's life. Emotions-as-practice thus serves as a valuable entry point into abolitionists' methods of using sentimental language and argument and the meanings behind such use. In applying this approach, however, we need to keep in mind the fundamental differences between pre- and post-Romantic discourses on emotions and their underlying psychological, physiological, and theological foundations.[66] The eschatology and teleology that underpin eighteenth-century theories of emotion have apparently disappeared from modern theories, if not entirely from their application, and we need to be aware of this change when attempting to find a congruence between modern and Enlightenment ideas.[67]

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[65] Ibid., 2.

[66] For an overview of the idea of human nature that Shaftesbury and other eighteenth-century moral philosophers need to assume see Nancy Yousef, "Feeling for Philosophy: Shaftesbury and The limits of Sentimental Certainty", *ELH* 73, no.3 (2011): 609-632, Project Muse DOI: 10.1353/elh.2011.0021.

[67] Cf. Suzanne Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy", *Narrative* 14, no.3 (2006): 207-236. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/nar.2006.0015; Keen, "Fast Tracks to Narrative Empathy: Anthropomorphism and Dehumanization in Graphic Narratives", *SubStance* 40, no.1 (2011): 135-155. In her work on narrative empathy Keen critiques the claim that modern theories have discarded or displaced the teleological function of emotions.

Having said this, one of the most interesting implications of the concept of emotions-as-practice is that it allows us to focus on the practical emotive function of emotional expressions. It thus makes it possible to engage with abolitionist texts in a new way, giving access to activists' methods of mobilising political action through appeals to what they perceived to be embodied emotional norms in their society. Their material interest lay in moving the public to put pressure on the government by shaping their call for abolition as an act of humanity. In order to understand this process, we need to pay attention to language, performance, and gesture in abolitionist works and consider the ways in which their emotional rhetoric was used as a practice. Scheer does not provide a methodology for how to go about uncovering the practices of the past other than this necessary focus on language in extant records. I combine Scheer's approach with Barbara Rosenwein's theory of "emotional communities".[68] Her concept of uncovering a community's "system of feeling", or emotional repertoire, through its primary material sources provides a practical methodology for studying historic communities by which we can gain an understanding of how they expressed particular emotions and their purposes in doing so.[69] An important part of Rosenwein's methodology is to consider the social role of emotions, and the focus on how they are communicated sits well with emotions-as-practice, the two concepts emphasising the practical communicative function of emotional language. Changes which occur to communities and social groups over time drive the emergence of new emotional norms, or changes to "cultural scripts" for specific emotions.[70] In other words, emotions can be

[68] Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions", 842.
[69] Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods", 11.
[70] Cf. Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 204. For the idea of "emotion scripts" and their "rescripting" see Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods", 20.

"rescripted". Thus we can account for the fact that sentimentalism came and went as a dominant emotional culture over the course of the eighteenth century.

It is the concept of "rescripting" that drives the structure of my thesis. I posit that the realisation to which many came about the iniquity of the slave trade, and which drove them to form a movement to change British policy in this area, led those who privileged sentimentalism within their emotional repertoires to "rescript" their sentimental norms. Emotional practices function to sustain emotional communities, but they also create new ones.[71] We can see this in the development of the abolitionist movement. By drawing political conclusions about the slave trade and shaping them in terms of their sentimental norms, the abolitionist community created a new set of emotional norms, a politics of sympathy, by which they communicated their appeals to the public for reform. Over the next four chapters I examine the emotional practices which created the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the politics of sympathy of this new community, which began emerging from the 1760s and 70s and which coalesced into a formal movement in 1787. In doing so I trace the ways in which abolitionists rescripted the emotional norms that these practices were engaged with to suit their new political and reformist aims.

Access to the relevant practices is through the "doings and sayings" of various communities which build on their knowledge of habituated emotional norms.[72] The language of sentimentalism was a somatic one which highlighted the body and its responses to emotional stimuli and which centred particularly on pathos and the ability to sympathise with distress and misfortune. Both Adam Smith's idea of imaginative

[71] The collection edited by Broomhall examines this idea. Susan Broomhall, ed., *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650-1850*, (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).
[72] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 209.

sympathy and Hume's sympathetic contagion are in play here. The reader of a sentimental text, whether a work of fiction or a piece of religious or philosophical polemic, goes on the same emotional journey as the hero, heroine, or writer, thus establishing moments in which a community of readers can put their moral sentiments into practice and test their sensibility by sympathising with, or catching, the emotions on the page. The language of tears and of blushing, the up-close scenes of misery, and the emotion words, such as sympathy, benevolence, compassion, and shame, which represent the moral sentiments, are all signposts which point to the emotional repertoire of sentimental communities. I read these signposts as emotional practices and focus specifically on the ways in which different communities used this language to home in on the importance of the habituation of moral sentiments to their emotional repertoire. This focus allows us to see a common thread between the emotional practices of the communities which existed before antislavery became popular and the abolitionist community that emerged after 1787. It also uncovers a politicisation of the sentimentalism used by abolitionists, a rescripting of their emotional norms.

A key aspect to reading emotional practices is the sites in which they are carried out. As Benno Gammerl asserts, emotional styles or repertoires are shaped by the kinds of spaces they are performed in.[73] The notion of "spaces for feeling" current in studies of historical emotions is therefore useful to this study because such spaces are understood as communities, formed by shared norms and emotional repertoires which are practised through a specific set of emotional expressions, acts, or performances.[74] Spaces allow the engagement of emotional practices and can often determine the ways

[73] See Benno Gammerl, "Emotional Styles: Concepts and Challenges", *Rethinking History* 16, no.2 (2012): 161-175, doi: 10.1080/13642529.2012.681189. Like Rosenwein's "system of feeling", or the idea of an emotional repertoire that I use here, Gammerl's notion of emotional styles conceives how different sets of emotional norms can co-exist, become dominant or subordinate, and be conflictual with other styles.
[74] See Broomhall, *Spaces for Feeling*.

in which emotions are engaged in, managed, and expressed. Such spaces can either be physical, in which members of an emotional community meet face-to-face, or textual, in which practices are engaged between readers.[75] For instance, a site in which people gather to engage in sociability, such as the coffeehouse or club, is a space for feeling in which emotional practices are engaged, communicated and shared, and a novel is a space for feeling in which an imagined reading community shares in the emotional practices communicated by the writer. These spaces, particularly textual ones, become important tools of emotional practice, the communicative aid in which emotions can be mobilised and passed between members of a community. The texts produced by the communities which privileged sentimentalism in their emotional repertoires are central to this study and it is through the emotional practices – the doings and sayings presented within them – that I aim to uncover how abolitionists rescripted sentimental language and created their own emotional norms.

Each chapter explores a particular practice, or practices, in specific spaces, all of which were aimed at the cultivation of moral sentiments. I divide each chapter into three sections, the first of which examines the practice in question, followed by how the language employed in habituating the practice began to be adopted within antislavery texts before the emergence of abolitionism as a political movement. The third section of each chapter explores how abolitionist writers adapted this language, rescripting it into their own politics of sympathy to encourage action against the slave trade. Chapter one examines the emotional practice of habituating moral sentiments within educational settings, examining the ways in which an emotional education was advocated among

[75] Spaces for feeling are conceived in the broadest sense, similar to Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" in that they are not always physical and bring together communities that are socially constructed. See Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

some elite university circles and dissenting academies. It follows how the language of cultivation was adopted within early children's literature that presented slavery as cruel and inhumane, through to its rescripting in the university essay of Thomas Clarkson into a tool of abolitionist mobilisation. Chapter two explores the emotional practice of sociability, in particular the way in which the press enhanced emotional cultivation, how early antislavery newspaper correspondence surrounding the trial of James Somerset, a runaway slave, adopted this understanding in their debates, and how abolitionists adapted it in their own debates on the abolition question. Chapter three looks at the combined practices of religious weeping and of moral and social improvement, following how sermon literature was used by both antislavery and abolitionist preachers to employ Christian sentimental arguments against slavery. The final chapter explores the literary practice of "reading for the sentiment", aimed at cultivating an emotionally sensitive reading public, the way in which this was used by writers to explore new responses to slavery, and how abolitionist poetry relied on reaching an audience practised in the art of sentimental reading.[76]

While each chapter focuses on specific practices and spaces of abolitionist argument separately, the aim is to show that the sentimental reading practices which abolitionists were relying on to mobilise public opinion were informed and influenced by a range of practices from a variety of emotional communities which shared a similar understanding of sentimental ethics. Given the vast array of sources, I have limited my choice to works which were printed during the main years of campaigning between 1786 and 1792. I have chosen texts which were popular as pieces of persuasive material at the time and which particularly centre on their engagement with the idea of emotional

[76] The phrase comes from Samuel Johnson's description of reading a sentimental novel. George Birkbeck Hill, ed., *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 2: 175.

cultivation. I use the term antislavery when talking of texts and activity prior to the formation of the movement, or at least prior to a shift in emphasis from antislavery to abolitionism. These generally fall between the years 1760 and the early 1780s. Abolitionism refers to works from the period between 1786 and 1792, when the campaigns were focused solely on the main goal of an abolition of the slave trade, rather than slavery in general. While I use the term sentimental in regards to abolitionist literature, I mean only that they employ sentimental language and argument within their politics of sympathy, evidence of their rescripted emotional repertoire.

The rescripting of emotional norms carried out by abolitionists turned sympathetic feeling into a force of political action. Theirs was a politics of sympathy which was expressed by academics, newspaper correspondents, preachers and divines, writers of fiction, and poets, in an attempt to impose their emotional norms onto parliament, willing the legislature to act in the interests of humanity rather than commercial gain. Beginning with the antislavery writers of the middle of the eighteenth century who published tracts, sermons, and novels that ask readers to respond benevolently to the slave, and ending with the abolitionist activists who turned these appeals into methods of political mobilisation, the writers I examine in this study see benevolence as an active emotion, not a passive one. The main thread that runs through their texts is the idea of emotional habituation and the importance of cultivating sensibility as the key to morality. This led to the creation of abolitionist emotional norms which portrayed the actions of that community as morally virtuous and humane, a community which consisted of people who had cultivated sincere sentiments, the proof of which was in their reformist actions. This stood in direct contrast to their depictions of the pro-slavery opposition, who are painted as habituated in cruelty and tyranny and therefore incapable of feeling. Their conviction in the efficacy of their

politics of sympathy may have wavered once their attempts at sentimental moral persuasion failed in the combative context of parliamentary debate. However, the question for my thesis is not whether emotional practice can answer why abolitionism developed or why it did or did not succeed. Rather, the question I ask is whether an emotions-as-practice approach can give an effective account of the methods by which communities manage emotions and how they understand the emotional shifts which contribute, alongside economic and political factors, to social change.

Chapter 2: The "Mind Habitually Disposed to Cherish...Humanity": Emotional Self-Improvement and the Cultivation of Abolitionist Sentiments

Scheer's theory of emotions-as-practice emphasises actions and doings.[77] If we are to consider sentimentalism as a set of emotional practices within different spaces and communities in eighteenth-century Britain, then improvement inhabits a central role within those actions and doings which were aimed at habituating the moral sentiments. Social reform and the advancement of notions of progress were ubiquitous across different communities around Britain during the eighteenth century and abolitionism can be seen as just one part of the philanthropic turn that occurred during this period. [78] This also encompassed notions of self-development through education, sociability, and the cultivation of appropriate emotional experiences. These emotional practices, which aimed at refining the passions in order to function in a sociable world, are the focus of this chapter. As Taylor points out, the moral concerns that lay behind British philosophy and the science of human nature in the eighteenth century meant that much "attention was given both to self-cultivation and to social reform".[79] In the sentimental argument used by abolitionist writers, acts of social reform are the result of a cultivated sentimental emotional repertoire. The abolitionist emphasis on the difference between their own cultivated benevolence and the practised cruelty of slavers demonstrates the political rescripting of sentimental emotional norms that abolitionists engaged in,

[77] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice" (see chap. 1, n. 4).
[78] While the idea of "progress" can be overstated, a general commitment to meliorism and notions of human responsibility for the state of the world, both in a material and a moral sense, were expressed by a number of communities through their activities and cultural output. See Peter Borsay, "The Culture of Improvement", ed. Paul Langford, *The Eighteenth Century, 1688- 1815*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).
[79] Jaqueline Taylor, "The Idea of a Science of Human Nature", ed. James A. Harris, *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Eighteenth Centur*y, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65.

adopting the language of emotional cultivation and adapting it to suit their own politics of sympathy.

In the first section I examine how philosophical ideas about the cultivation of moral sentiments manifested in the emotional practice of sociability, particularly among small communities of educated elite in Britain, which was aimed at improvement. Many have already explored the influence of moral sentiment philosophy on the growth of humanitarianism as an intellectual concept during this period.[80] However, these studies concentrate on higher order ideas. What also needs to be considered are the practical foundations of moral philosophy. The prescriptions for social life and advocacy of individual emotional cultivation in the works of moral philosophers attempted to engender specific emotional norms among elite educational and sociable communities that privileged the expression of calm sentiments and benevolence using sympathy as the chief tool of emotional communication. Their understanding of the body and its emotions called for affective cultivation of so-called inherent qualities, the nurturing and habituation of certain emotions which were considered crucial to the happiness of society in general.

The second section of this chapter explores some of the communities that were engaging in practices of emotional self-improvement and the texts which they produced which set about mobilising a sentimental emotional repertoire. The focus remains on educational settings, from those centred around spaces of sociability that were established for self-improvement, like the philosophical and literary societies, to academic communities, such as the Warrington Academy for students from dissenting families. The emotional practices of these communities are evident in the literature they

[80] See in particular Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion" (see chap. 1, n. 39); and Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (see chap. 1, n. 39).

produced, which can be viewed as tools of their cultivation of moral sentiments. The didactic and moral children's literature that was written by members of these communities was aimed specifically at mobilising the moral sentiments and social affections which should be habituated through constant practice. The texts I examine teach moral sentiment philosophy as a practice for the cultivation of virtue. Moreover, the strong antislavery sentiment that emanated from the communities which privileged self-improvement and sentimental cultivation, foreshadows the relationship abolitionists later made between sentimental ethics, humanitarianism, and political reform.

In order to demonstrate the political rescripting of sentimentalism that abolitionists engaged in, I conclude this chapter with an examination of the arguments used in one of the most important abolitionist publications produced at the beginning of the first campaign. Thomas Clarkson's *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1786) was one of the most reprinted abolitionist essays written at the end of the eighteenth century. Created within an academic space, the movement of the essay as it was republished and distributed across Britain for use as a mobilising political tool highlights the way in which the sentimental emotional repertoire of one community was rescripted by abolitionists to suit their own emotional norms. The essay acts as a tool of emotional communication, mimicking the movement of emotional practices as people move from one space to another, journeying from its role as an academic dissertation to an abolitionist circulation, and finally on to national publication. Clarkson's use of sentimental discourse, based on a presumed cultivated benevolence in the reader, set an important precedent for the abolitionist discourse which followed its publication, highlighting the importance and popularity of its moral and emotional foundations. His arguments against the slave trade, using the moral sentiments as the basis of Christian and British ethical standards, make his essay a

production of the emotional norms of its creator and the spaces in which he socialised and cultivated them. At the same time, it acts as a space itself through which a new community emerges which privileges a politics of sympathy.

2.1 "An Habit is Necessary": Cultivating Sentimental Communities

One of the most important aspects of putting the idea of improvement into practice was the cultivation and education of one's own emotions because, according to theories of moral sentiment, it is only through enhancing one's sensibility to emotion and ability to sympathise with others that any broader notion of improving society in general can be achieved. The theories of emotional cultivation advocated by philosophers like Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Smith, are a crucial element to the idea and practices of improvement that emerged during the long eighteenth century. Scholars have acknowledged the role of moral sentiment philosophy in informing notions about social sympathy and humanitarian philanthropy and reform. However, I am interested in the emphasis such philosophy placed on the idea of practice in their theories for improvement. The practices which these philosophers advocated in their work, and in which they themselves participated, are in fact very similar to the idea of emotions-as-practice that Scheer has proposed, particularly in the ways they envisage emotions as both bodily and cognitive processes which people are capable of refining and habituating through actions and experience.

Conceiving of emotions-as-practice means understanding our feelings "as emerging from bodily dispositions conditioned by a social context, which always has cultural and historical specificity".[81] This is an idea that would have been familiar to eighteenth-century philosophers and scientists. Writers on the passions and sentiments

[81] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 193.

understood emotions as bodily processes; an emotional response activates the bodily senses while the effects of feelings are written on the body so as to make them visible and transmissible to others. They thus apprehended "the mutual embeddedness of minds, bodies, and social relations", as Scheer puts it.[82] They advocated the need for nurturing particular sentiments over others, the moral sentiments requiring careful cultivation so as to become a natural response in a given situation rather than other, more violent passions, which could have dire social consequences. They were as much aware of the "knowing body" – one that stores information from past experiences in habituated processes – as Bourdieu and Scheer.[83] The emotions they wished to become normative to society needed to be practised so as to become "natural".

According to the notion of emotions-as-practice, while the emotional practices which inform our experience of different emotional states are dependent on the environment around us, the social spaces we move in, and our interactions with other people, they are also bound up with the self, our bodily and mental dispositions experienced during an emotional moment.[84] Our experience of emotions therefore is shaped by our own past experiences and the ways in which we activate emotions habitually over time. If we are practised in feeling anger when faced with adversity then, more often than not we will feel that same emotion habitually over the course of our lives in similar situations. At the same time, it is possible to train ourselves to feel differently over time.[85] In the same manner, eighteenth-century moral writers on passions and sentiments are interested in the ways in which people can bring emotions under self-control, allowing the sociable ones to flourish. Sensibility may be considered

[82] Ibid., 199.
[83] Ibid., 201.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Studies of "emotional management" have emphasised the practices which communities and individuals use to keep emotions under control in specific situations. See in particular Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, (see chap. 1, n. 55).

an inherent human capacity for feeling but its effectiveness is dependent on the cultivation of affective experiences which centre on the social sentiments, such as benevolence, compassion, and pity.[86] Thus emotional practices which mobilise and habituate these emotions are of central importance to theories of moral sentiment and notions of improvement in the eighteenth century. Moral sentiment philosophy is not simply a set of doctrines and theories about human nature, but is considered a practice by its advocates – the affective cultivation of so-called inherent qualities that is habitually acted out within specific social contexts and spaces. Emphasis is put on the cultivation of so-called calm, natural, and sociable feelings which keep society in check against the violence and cruelty bred by harbouring unnatural passions. As will become clear, the argument that cruelty to other beings is unnatural and that compassion towards others is natural to humanity becomes an important feature of abolitionist publications and debates.

Hume's essay 'Of Eloquence' contrasts the "very stubborn and intractable" passions with "the sentiments and understanding, which are easily varied by education and example".[87] The "easily varied" affections and sentiments have a more cognitive content than the unruly passions; they "assume the form of judgments and become amenable to public assessment", as Schmitter points out.[88] As such, they are also considered more normative and capable of cultivation than passions because, in order to have appropriate, sociable and calm affective responses, we must subject our feelings

[86] As Amit Rai points out, according to these philosophers, the moral sentiments are considered natural and universal to all human beings. However, there is a paradox built into their theories that suggests that sentiments need to be actively cultivated though experience in them. *Rule of Sympathy: Sentiment, Race, and Power, 1750-1850*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 58.
[87] David Hume, "Of Eloquence" in *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary,* ed. Eugene F. Miller (Library of Economics and Liberty, 1987) accessed 8 February 2016, http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Hume/hmMPL13.html.
[88] Schmitter, "Passions, Affections, Sentiments", 205 (see chap. 1, n. 18).

to, as Hume puts it, "some steady and general points of view".[89] In other words, we form our sentiments and affections through correction and cultivation and by conforming to what is deemed socially appropriate. As Schmitter states, "Such adjustments allow us to achieve felt responses that nonetheless stem from a privileged standpoint, one that counts as impartial and appropriate by conforming to how others (should) respond".[90] This is not an idea particular to Hume's work; both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson also focus on the importance of cultivating the right kinds of affections and sentiments in order to be able to function in a sociable world. Shaftesbury couches the idea in terms of "self-study" and the disciplining of one's own mind.[91] His moral sense, an equivalent to other bodily senses like sight and taste, must be cultivated through self-reflexive refinement in order to be able to spontaneously distinguish between right and wrong.

Shaftesbury's belief in the necessity to cultivate the moral sense may have come from his own educational experience. The young Earl was under the tutelage of John Locke, whose own sensational psychology rejects the idea of innate qualities and advocates instead a sort of social constructionism – the self is created from the environment in which one is reared.[92] As a consequence, Shaftesbury was instructed in the notion that the practice of kindness in the child would shape the man:

> Be sure to keep up in him principles of good-nature and kindness, and encourage them as much as you can, by credit, commendation, and other rewards that accompany that state: and when they have taken root in his mind, and *settled there by*

[89] David Hume, *Treatise*, 3:214 (see chap. 1, n. 34).
[90] Schmitter, "Passions, Affections, Sentiments", 205.
[91] Taylor, "Idea of a Science of Human Nature", 68.
[92] See Robert Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671-1713*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984). See also Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility* (see chap. 1, n. 21).

> *practice*, the ornaments of conversation and the outside of fashionable manners, will come of themselves.[93]

While the adult Shaftesbury opposed his tutor in asserting the innateness of human nature and of human sentiments, Shaftesbury clearly adhered to Locke's views that self-study was also necessary to cultivate virtue in individuals and, in turn, society. For Shaftesbury, those who do not cultivate themselves constitute an "unthinking world", only ever appreciating pleasures superficially, and unable to take full possession of the role of the virtuous man in society.[94] Our reason must cultivate our moral sense if we are to enjoy the pleasures of taste and virtue.[95]

Hutcheson also advocates moral sentiment philosophy as a practice which nurtures the appropriate sentiments in the individual in order to improve society in general. According to Ellis, Hutcheson "refused to relinquish the pedagogical function of moral philosophy: that it should not only describe the operation of virtue and duty, but should recommend it too".[96] He believed that we have the ability to reduce the effects of "particular Passions" and establish the dominance of "calm universal Benevolence" through "frequent Meditation and Reflection".[97] The point of Hutcheson's philosophy is to help people help themselves, to instruct people, as Harris states, and to adopt "a particular kind of perspective upon the world, a maximally impartial perspective, a point of view which reveals one's place in the larger moral

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[93] John Locke to Edward Clarke, 1 September 1685, quoted in Voitle, *Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 8-9 (emphasis mine).
[94] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks,* 2:402 (see chap. 1, n. 30).
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility,* 12 (see chap. 1, n. 12).
[97] Francis Hutcheson, *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions with Illustrations on the Moral Sense,* (London, 1728) 167, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3319816865).

system".[98] It is through self-cultivation, attention to mind, and "due culture" that "our nature can be raised" to a level that makes it publically useful.[99]

Eighteenth-century moral philosophy, then, is as much interested in the practice of ordering and restraining affections and passions as the analysis of them.[100] Virtue and morality are attainable through the cultivation of those emotions that bring people together in a sociable manner. In Smith's words, "Virtue requires habit and resolution": this is the "foundation upon which the superstructure of perfect virtue can be built". [101] Cultivating the moral sentiments has the knock-on effect of cultivating the sensibility. One cannot receive, intuit, or feel along with someone else's emotional pain or suffering without sensibility, and a civilised society is one in which humans respond with compassionate benevolence to the feelings of others; sensibility is thus a crucial quality to nurture in the self. Sympathy – the mechanism by which we intuit emotions in others and enables us to be affected in turn – aids emotional practices which privilege the social sentiments and it, too, requires cultivation in order to function well. [102] As Smith points out, although human beings are "naturally sympathetic", it requires a certain amount of effort in the individual: the spectator must "endeavour, as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other", must "strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded".[103]

So, while the social sentiments, sensibility, and the ability to communicate emotions through sympathy are all supposed inherent human qualities, they are not quite instinctual or automatic. The moral philosophers are insistent that these qualities

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[98] Harris, "Government of the Passions", 278 (see chap. 1, n. 36).
[99] Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy,* 3 vols. (Glasgow, 1755), 1:77, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3321267416).
[100] Harris, "Government of the Passions".
[101] Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 512 (see chap.1, n. 35).
[102] Csengei, *Literature of Feeling* (see chap. 1, n. 27).
[103] Smith*, Theory,* 36.

must be exercised and practised regularly in order to be spontaneous and, therefore, natural. Fellow-feeling requires education in the appropriate affections and sentiments which make us sociable and virtuous and habituation in the operation of sympathy as a communicative tool. As such, the practice of moral sentiment philosophy is an emotional practice. True virtue, according to Hutcheson, relies on habits which have to be developed and cultivated by a process he calls the "culture of the mind", a process which allows the moral sense to assert itself against other, more inferior, passionate impulses:[104]

> The turbulent appetites and particular passions whether of the selfish or generous kind […] naturally arise on certain occasions […] To govern and restrain them an habit is necessary, which must be acquired by frequent recollection and discipline. […] [W]e must recollect our former experiences in ourselves, and our observations about others.[105]

In other words, performing and feeling calm affections over the course of one's life habituates them so that virtuous behaviour eventually becomes natural. In practice theory, "nature" is understood as the *habitus*. The habitual practice of an emotional response or experience over the course of one's life, or even as a result of one's external environment, makes that response or feeling seem automatic. This does not mean our emotional experiences and responses are false or consciously activated in any way; rather, that habitual practice of emotions make them embodied and normative – "natural" in the terms of moral sentiment philosophy. As with other cultural practices,

[104] Thomas Ahnert, "Religion and Morality", ed. Harris, *Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy*, 647.
[105] Hutcheson, *System,* 1: 102.

the *habitus* of the individual specifies what is "feelable" in any given setting or situation.[106]

One of the ways in which emotions are practised, according to Scheer, is through the mobilisation of specific feelings: "emotional practices are habits, rituals, and everyday pastimes that aid us in achieving a certain emotional state. This includes the striving for a desired feeling as well as the modifying of one that is not desirable".[107] In other words, the practice and habituation of emotions can be considered as strategic "manipulations of body and mind to evoke" the feelings required in a certain space, among certain people, and in response to a certain situation.[108] In a practical sense, this means that we often seek out spaces, people, objects and activities which help to manage our moods and to nurture those emotions which we, or our community, or society, find appropriate or acceptable. With this in mind, any examination of the practice of moral sentiment philosophy in eighteenth-century Britain must highlight the phenomenon of sociability as a key practice of improvement and sentimentalism.[109] As an activity which mobilises the social affections, like mutual sympathy, sociability was strongly advocated as a crucial emotional practice by those philosophers writing on the moral sentiments. Sociability – the phenomenon of middle-class socialising which began in the coffee-houses and taverns in the late seventeenth century and grew to encompass many kinds of clubs, societies, and social circles, both public and private – meant more to eighteenth-century culture than simply socialising

[106] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 205.
[107] Ibid., 209.
[108] Ibid. Keeping in mind that the term strategic here does not necessarily imply intentionality or "conscious goal-orientation" (203). Others refer to such mobilisation as "emotional management" (Hochschild), or the "navigation of feeling" (Reddy).
[109] See John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), in particular for a discussion on the inherent link between the eighteenth-century ideas of sentimentalism and sociability.

with friends and colleagues. It had as its aim, through habitual social gathering, the self-cultivation of the affections and sentiments which held polite society together.

Like the affections on which it is based, sociability is considered a natural impulse by writers in the eighteenth century, but one that needs to be habitually practised. Shaftesbury states, for example, that society is not "a kind of Invention, and Creature of Art", but is naturally based on our affections, which are a "*herding* Principle, and *associating* Inclination".[110] According to Smith, human beings are social animals who have a natural sociability towards one another. The best model of society is a conversational one in which pleasure arises "from a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, from a certain harmony of minds, which like so many musical instruments coincide and keep time with one another".[111] Sociability is thus considered key to morality, dependent upon the proper communication of passions and sentiments.[112] It relies on manners and rules of politeness, arrived at through the cultivation of the social affections such as benevolence and compassion.

Moral sentiment philosophers needed to advocate the practice of sociability as a daily activity not least because it proved that passions are controllable. Importantly, then, the moral sentiments were not just an abstraction from within the philosophical theories and treatises of a select group of intellectuals and elite; they consisted, rather, of "an ethics that could be taught and lived", as Ahnert and Manning put it.[113] Hume, Smith, and their contemporaries among the Scottish schools of moral philosophy, were in fact known for cultivating their social affections among themselves through their

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[110] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks,* 1:111, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, (CW3304278427).
[111] Smith, *Theory,* 541.
[112] John Dwyer, "The Imperative of Sociability: Moral Culture in the Late Scottish Enlightenment", *Journal for Eighteenth□Century Studies* 13, no.2 (1990): 171, doi: 10.1111/j.1754-0208.1990.tb00127.x; see also Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*.
[113] Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning, eds., *Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) 2.

socialising habits.[114] As Mullan points out, David Hume in particular exemplified the way in which these writers self-consciously put their conception of harmonious sociability into daily practice and lived out their models of social being: "the social existence of the philosopher and man of letters is seen to support, even sanction, his projects of enquiry and analysis. [...Hume's social being] depended not simply on a personal habit of gregariousness, but also historically (and geographically) specific forms of social organization".[115] As a member of the intellectual elite in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, Hume took part in a number of associations with his peers, including the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh, the Select Society, which founded the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture in Scotland, and the Poker Club, all of which consisted of members from Edinburgh's intellectual and social elite and all dedicated to improvement and sociability.[116]

Hume clearly either based his social existence on his theories of human nature or, conversely, his philosophical theories on his own social existence and the society that he knew and participated in. In his *Treatise*, Hume states that a "science of man" must be based on observations of human behaviour and the daily habits and customs of everyday life: observations which were to be taken "as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures".[117] Hume's account of sympathy and social affection is shaped by the context in which it was written, published, and read. As Fairclough points out, this context was very specific: "a genteel readership of individuals known to the author".[118]

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[114] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 132.
[115] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 2-3.
[116] See D.D. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth Century Literary Clubs and Societies*, (Washington: Washington State University Press, 1969); Roger L. Emerson, "The Philosophical Society of Edinburgh 1737–1747", *The British Journal for the History of Science* 12, no.2 (1979): 154-191, doi: 10.1017/S0007087400017039.
[117] Hume, *Treatise,* 1:9-10.
[118] Fairclough, *Romantic Crowd*, 2 (see chap. 1, n. 27).

This had the implicit effect of restricting his notion of "society" to a very small and defined community of educated, elite men.[119] Thus although, for Hume, sympathetic contagion allows the spread of refined sentiments and manners within a community, this community is imagined as a very specific "Club or Knot of Companions".[120] The same can be said of Shaftesbury, whose own resources for his notions of an innate human nature lay in his "very name and being", the heritage of his aristocratic family and their political views as "arch-Whig Commonwealthmen".[121] As Barker-Benfield states, Shaftesbury had clearly "been thinking of himself and his intellectual and class peers, taking 'Society' for 'society'" in his interpretation of an innate moral sense, even though the notion of its innateness allowed for wider applicability.[122]

Thus, the social existence of the moral sentiment philosophers was one of intellectualism, the pursuit of knowledge and education, and polite sociability based on the social affections of an elite group of men. The clubs and societies in which Hume and his peers gathered fostered philosophical and scientific advancements and activities which set out to improve their intellectual and emotional selves. The spaces in which this was taking place tell us something of the people involved. The culture of improvement in Scotland took root strongly within the universities and intellectual circles looking to "improve Edinburgh and Scotland and make them of more note in Britain and Europe, and in the republic of letters where their members' works and the clubs' activities might achieve recognition".[123] Academic spaces were essential, in Scotland at least, to the foundation of practices of improvement and sociability for those

[119] Ibid.
[120] David Hume, "Of National Characters", *Essays, Moral and Political*, 3rd ed. (London, 1748) 273, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3319717261).
[121] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 107.
[122] Ibid., 108.
[123] Emerson, "Philosophical Society", 158.

communities advocating and practising the cultivation of sentimentalism, sensibility, and social sympathy. While the English universities were slow to follow suit, the Scottish universities were aimed at becoming "agents of improvement", as Borsay puts it, seedbeds of new ideas in science, medicine, and philosophy which modernised education in Britain and adopted "more polite norms of behaviour" among its professors and students.[124] The lectureships and chairs of the major Scottish universities were taken up by the moral philosophers and academics leading the advancement of the moral sentiments – Adam Smith and John Millar in Glasgow, Hugh Blair and Dugald Stewart in Edinburgh, and James Beattie in Aberdeen.[125] While Hume never held an academic position due to the ambiguity of his religious convictions, he was a close associate of the Edinburgh professoriate through his membership of associations like the Philosophical Society.[126]

The Scottish project of improvement, as Ahnert and Manning state, "took place in a context where philosophical inquiry was essentially continuous with educative function".[127] Habit, education, and cultivation of the self on an intellectual and emotional level were the driving forces behind the practices of sociability and improvement which took place in the academic communities and intellectual clubs of early eighteenth-century Scotland. Hume, for instance, argued that education was imperative for a moral life, writing that "the great force of custom and education, […]

[124] Borsay, "Culture of Improvement", 194.
[125] Beattie was particularly renowned for his lectures attacking slavery and his *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (1770) rebuts Hume's racist assertion that Africans were inferior to white Europeans. See James Beattie, *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, *In Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1771), Part 3, 507-512, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3316260361).
[126] Hume applied twice for positions at Edinburgh and Glasgow, but "his reputation provoked vocal and ultimately successful opposition". W.E. Morris and C.R. Brown, "David Hume", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016), accessed 3 October 2016 http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/hume/.
[127] Ahnert and Manning, *Character, Self, and Sociability*, 9. See also Gordon Graham, "The Ambition of Scottish Philosophy", *The Monist: Scottish Philosophy* 90 (April 2007): 154–69.

mould the human mind from infancy, and form it into a fixed and established character."[128] That education and cultivation did, of course, remain the privilege of a select group of people at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As Borsay points out, "the acquisition of reading and writing skills was a socially selective process" and education of any higher order remained for the social elite.[129] The society of Hume's experience was different to that of an illiterate labourer for instance or, indeed, a woman of his own class. His fellow members of the societies and clubs in which he socialised were male, educated, professional, landed, and affluent.[130] Women were not, as yet, included in the public sphere of polite sociability and, as Emerson states, there was also a notable absence of members of the merchant class in the Philosophical Society in the first half of the eighteenth century, most likely due to the fact that until mid-century such men lacked the same educational opportunities or wealth to have made them eligible to join.[131]

However, as the middle classes increased in number, affluence, leisure, and literacy, sociability and improvement became increasingly pursued by a variety of communities across Britain, including women and the less affluent sections of society, such as artisans and shopkeepers. Emulation was a key factor in the growth of clubs and societies as people created new spaces and communities in which to practise self-improvement. The idea of the "Penny University" is a perfect example. Coffeehouse

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[128] Education in this sense did not just mean academic pursuit, but in the same way that Locke had previously taught Shaftesbury, habituation from childhood of virtuous habits and social sentiments. David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* , 3rd ed., ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, rev. ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 86.
[129] Borsay "Culture of Improvement", 94.
[130] Emerson states that in 1739 all forty-six members of the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh were well-educated, trained in a profession, possessed of land and affluence; twenty-six were closely related to titled aristocracy; and nine had landed estates. "Philosophical Society", 171.
[131] Ibid., 172. Hume, nevertheless, stated that he relished female company in mixed society, claiming that they were a calming and civilising influence on men. Feminised sentimental virtues were an important part of the practice of sociability and the cultivation of moral sentiments, as I discuss in the following chapter.

culture was creating spaces in which men, who had not necessarily attended university and who were not necessarily wealthy, could engage in debate, read newspapers and periodicals, conduct business, and practise sociability in a conversable manner. This was all achieved for a penny, the price of admission and a dish of coffee.[132] This was, of course, still a more or less elite form of cultural practice. A penny was not a particularly small sum to spend daily on a leisure activity. Nevertheless, the idea of the coffee shop being labelled as an educative space that everyone (male) might participate in indicates the importance of the idea of improvement for a widening section of society which came to include businessmen and members of the trading and merchant class. By the end of the eighteenth century, when the abolition of the slave trade emerged as a movement, sociability had become a central feature of society in general across Britain and the lines between public and private sociability blurred as women gained more influence on the consumption of culture. Sociability, and the emotional practices it engaged, moved beyond the all-male clubs and universities of the social elite to mixed social circles that included both genders and, to some extent, different classes, and religious communities.[133] The spaces of learning I examine next are of this more inclusive type, where women and religious dissenters engaged in their own practices of cultivating a sentimental emotional repertoire among their communities and where issues of national import, like antislavery, began to be discussed.

2.2 Refining "the Feelings of the Heart": Cultivating Humanitarian Sensibilities in Spaces of Sociability and Learning

The practice of a sociability based on politeness, virtue, and the activation of moral sentiments was not confined to those spaces and communities which made up the

[132] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*.
[133] Ahnert and Manning, *Character, Self, and Sociability*, 9.

intellectual and social elite, either in Scotland or the rest of Britain. As the eighteenth-century progressed, more and more people were engaging in this cultural phenomenon, in as many spaces as they could gain access to. Many were informal meetings held in coffeehouses and pubs.[134] In the capital, women became involved, some of the elite female members of London society finding it possible to host their own literary circles which included members of both sexes. Elizabeth Montagu, the famous bluestocking, held regular entertainments in her home in which literary and philosophical discussion was encouraged. By 1770 her house on Hill Street had become home to the leading literary circle in London and attracted the cream of eighteenth-century society, including Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke, David Garrick, and Horace Walpole.[135] While London was home to several thousand formal and informal clubs and societies, by the middle of the eighteenth century most regional centres had their own scientific, literary and philosophical societies.[136] Perhaps one of the best known was the Lunar Society (so named because members would meet only during the full moon, as the extra light made the journey home easier in the absence of street lighting), an informal institution established in Birmingham in the 1750s as a place to discuss new developments and theories in the fields of natural and moral philosophy.[137]

Other self-improving societies that emerged in the mid- to late eighteenth century were more formal gatherings, like the Literary and Philosophical Society of

[134] The Robin Hood in Butcher's Row, London, for example, was host to a literary club which gathered around the publisher Edward Cave whose members read papers which were afterwards printed in his *Gentleman's Magazine.* See Clark, *British Clubs*, 70.
[135] Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Montagu, Elizabeth (1718–1800)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2009), doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/19014. Montagu was also a great patroness of women writers, including Hannah More, Sarah Fielding, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, all of whom wrote against slavery and the slave trade.
[136] Clark, *British Clubs*, 2.
[137] Several members of the Lunar Society became involved in abolitionism including Josiah Wedgwood, creator of the seal and medallion of the kneeling slave which would become the unofficial symbol of the abolition movement, and Joseph Priestley, scientist and dissenting minister whose sermon against the slave trade I discuss in chapter 4.

Manchester, which had a subscription list, publishing agenda, and constitutional rules. Held in a room of the Unitarian Cross Street Chapel, the society was set up in 1781 by some of the leading figures of Manchester society – physician Thomas Percival, cotton merchant Thomas Walker, Unitarian minister Thomas Barnes, and surgeon Thomas Henry. These men were of a different class to some of the societies in London and Scotland. Predominantly professionals – doctors, lawyers, merchants, and manufacturers – and members of the Unitarian church, they took an active role in creating a culture of improvement in their city. Percival and his fellow members of Manchester society were highly active in their pursuit of sociability. Alongside several institutions for reform, they took part in political societies such as the Manchester Constitutional Society, wrote papers for the *Philosophical Transactions*, became members of the London-based Royal Society, and founded their own Literary and Philosophical Society.[138] Percival, along with educational reformer Thomas Barnes, was also involved in the establishment of the first British College of Arts and Sciences in 1783 and the Manchester Academy in 1786.

Not only were the clubs and societies of regional centres like Manchester providing the spaces in which people could engage in the practice of sociability, they also gave the men who frequented them the opportunity to actively read about and debate contemporary ideas through educational texts. This included ideas about emotions and their place in social practice. Tracts on the emotions and their proper cultivation were among the reading materials provided by clubs and highlight the optimistic view of progress and improvement such societies wished to promote. The

[138] See Albert Nicholson, "Percival, Thomas (1740–1804)", rev. John V. Pickstone, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2009) doi:, 10.1093/ref:odnb/21921;
Michael T. Davis, "Walker, Thomas (1749–1817)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2009), doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/63603.

Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, published annually since 1783, afford a good view of the types of publications members were reading, discussing, and contributing for publication.[139] Titles such as "On the Advantages of Literature and Philosophy", "On the Pleasure which the Mind, in many Cases, receives, on contemplating Scenes of Distress", and "On the Influence of the Imagination and the Passions upon the Understanding" are among other items on natural science and the arts included in the volume published in 1789. Moreover, the preface to this volume hints at the importance of self-improvement to the members of the Society, as well as the role of emulation in the advancement of intellectual clubs, stating that "the progress that has been made in Physics and the Belles Lettres, owes its rapidity, if not its origin, to the encouragement which these Societies have given to such pursuits, and to the emulation which has been excited between different academical bodies, as well as among the individual Members of each institution".[140]

Manchester was not a university town: its social elite was made up of middle class merchants and manufacturers, and professional men. Nevertheless, those who founded the improving societies in Manchester were not uneducated. Many were self-taught, in the true tradition of self-improvement. Thomas Henry, for instance, taught himself chemistry and became an apprentice to an apothecary in Oxford in order to be near the educational institution he had always hoped to attend.[141] Thomas Walker was also self-educated, writing in his later years that his opinions had been formed by an early acquaintance with the works of Rousseau, Hume, Locke, and Voltaire.[142] But

[139] The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society continues to publish annual memoirs and proceedings. Memoirs from 1789 to 1922 have been digitally archived and are available on their website.
[140] *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1789), Biodiversity Heritage Library, accessed 17 November 2016, http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/50808.
[141] Frank Greenaway, "Henry, Thomas (1734–1816)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2009), doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/12978.
[142] Davis, "Walker".

many had received a university education in Scotland, whose universities were open to religious dissenters. [143] Thomas Percival had attended the University of Edinburgh and maintained friendships with fellow students and professors through correspondence for many years. His surviving letters show his continued contact with numerous figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, including David Hume, for whom he "entertained a strong personal regard", and William Robertson among other renowned professors.[144] His contact with the educational spaces of Edinburgh and with men like Hume who both advocated and practised sociability as an ideal form of human interaction may have had some influence on Percival's future endeavours in the realm of improvement.

The educational life of a man like Percival highlights another important institution which engaged in the emotional practice of sociability and which advocated moral sentiment philosophy as an achievable way of life. Before attending the University of Edinburgh, Percival was the first enrolled student of the Warrington Academy, a school situated between Manchester and Liverpool, founded in 1756 for students from Dissenting families.[145] Such schools were an important feature of the increase in education of the middle classes in regional centres and were renowned for encouraging an atmosphere of free enquiry and intellectual debate. As I discuss in chapter four, the religious convictions of dissenting denominations were in many ways congenial with sentimental discourse and their schools often promoted the teaching of moral sentiment philosophy. The Warrington Academy is one such institution and the connections to both the intellectual societies of Manchester and the academic spaces of Scotland were important to the way it taught its students as well as to the sociability of

[143] Manchester having a large population of Dissenters and Unitarians, many men had been barred from studying at either Oxford or Cambridge, and so took degrees in Scotland, many of them in medicine.
[144] See Edward Percival, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Percival, M.D.*, (London, 1807), 13, Google Books, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=9LNbAAAAQAAJ.
[145] Although the school was founded by Dissenters for Dissenters, it did have an open-door policy to any religious denomination.

the area.[146] Before he entered the Academy, Percival's private tutor was John Seddon, one of the founders of the school and its first rector and librarian. Seddon had studied at the University of Glasgow and is said to have been a favourite student of Hutcheson's.[147] It is due to his move to the Academy that Percival was enrolled in the same school. Percival's son notes in his *Memoir* of his father that:

> The study of Ethics, […] which formed an important branch of academical discipline, attracted his early curiosity. Guided by an able master, he explored the various and fascinating regions of moral science; and imbibed a partiality for these pursuits, which, while it prompted his immediate industry, furnished a source of the most grateful occupation of his riper leisure.[148]

While he states that his father's "relish" for moral philosophy "might, perhaps, be associated with the singular purity or integrity of sentiment which characterised his moral nature", he points out that he had always been encouraged by "the assistance and example of a private instructor, to whom he has acknowledged the deepest obligations".[149]

The aim of schools like Warrington was to produce students like Percival, with his "integrity of sentiment": students who, once they had completed their schooling,

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[146] The Academy had a number of links with the Scottish universities, most of its tutors having studied at either Glasgow or Edinburgh, bringing "the influence of their university education to bear on their own teaching". Simon Mills, "Warrington Academy (1757-1786)", *Dissenting Academies Online: Database and Encyclopedia*, (2011) Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, accessed 22 Nov 2016, http://dissacad.english.qmul.ac.uk/sample1.php?detail=achist&histid=28&acadid=163.

[147] Alexander Gordon, "Seddon, John (1724–1770)", rev. S. J. Skedd, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2009), doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/25008. As librarian Seddon had control over every book that was purchased by the school and so would have had a heavy influence over what students could read. He is known to have fallen out with the school's moral philosophy tutor, John Taylor, for his vehement advocacy of Hutcheson's system of philosophy so we can only assume that Hutcheson's work was well known to the students, especially to Thomas Percival.

[148] Percival, *Memoirs*, 8.

[149] Ibid.

would carry the values of tutors like Seddon out into the world, into their own communities and spheres of practice.[150] The circular that Seddon sent out in 1754 seeking students for the school was particular in pointing out that a Warrington education would be "well calculated for those that are to be engag'd in a commercial Life".[151] The majority of students who attended Warrington did indeed come from the new commercial middle classes, sons of businessmen, manufacturers, and merchants, including West-Indian planters.[152] The background of its students and the curriculum of the school seem to be contradictory at first glance but it perhaps tells us something about the ambitions of its principles and tutors. Watts states that the academics at Warrington and at its successor, Manchester College, were "acutely aware" of the society of which their students were a part and, perhaps fearing the impact of the commercial world on the moral development of its new classes, sought to educate future citizens to direct their businesses "for the good and not the detriment of the individual and society".[153] Thus the emphasis on an extensive and moral education, "because of the roles which it was hoped a virtuous and enlightened laity might play" in the world.[154] The purpose of creating a cultured commercial class through education was simple for Thomas Barnes, Percival's friend and co-founder of the Philosophical Society in Manchester: to "contradict the disgraceful idea that a spirit of merchandise is incompatible with liberal sentiment, and that it only tends to contract and vulgarise the

[150] Whether this was achieved is debateable considering the school closed in 1780 reputedly due to the ill-discipline of its students.
[151] Betsy Rodgers, *Georgian Chronicle: Mrs Barbauld and Her Family*, (London: Methuen, 1958), 33.
[152] Bright points out in his history of the school that a vast majority of students became wealthy merchants. Henry Arthur Bright, *A Historical Sketch of Warrington Academy*, (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1859), 20.
[153] Ruth Watts, "Manchester College and Education 1786-1853", ed. Barbara Smith, *Truth, Liberty, Religion: Essays Celebrating Two Hundred Years of Manchester College*, (Oxford: Manchester College, 1986), 85.
[154] Ibid.

mind".[155] Yet, at the same time, most of these men were staunch anti-slavery and abolitionist campaigners who must have known that the "spirit of merchandise" which governed institutions like the slave trade was indeed incompatible with the "liberal sentiments" they wished to habituate in their students. Perhaps this is why they deemed it so necessary to cultivate those sentiments in the merchant class.

The idea of inculcating improvement was thus central to the educational spaces of the dissenting academies. All students at Warrington were taught moral philosophy.[156] Yet it was not just through the curriculum that the Warrington academics sought to pass on their values, but also through an attempt to habituate students in everyday practices of sociability which, within their emotional repertoire, were aimed at cultivating sensibility and the moral sentiments. Before a boarding house was built in the school's grounds, the principals and trustees decreed that all students must board with the families of its tutors or "only in such other families in the town as the Tutors shall approve of".[157] One of these families was the Aikins; perhaps the prime model of eighteenth-century dissenting sociability, they built a community around them at Warrington which exemplified the emotional norms the school was promoting. John Aikin, tutor in languages, literature, and divinity at Warrington and later principal of the school, and his literary children Anna (later Barbauld) and John, participated fully in the life of the school, both educationally and socially.[158] Anna was fifteen when her father took his first post as tutor and was central to the cultural life of Warrington and

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[155] Thomas Barnes, "A Plan for the Improvement and Extension of Liberal Education in Manchester", *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society,* (London, 1789), 2:29, Biodiversity Heritage Library, accessed 22 November 2016, http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/52225#page/6/mode/1up.
[156] Watts, "Manchester College".
[157] *A Report of the State of the Warrington Academy, by the Trustees at their Annual Meeting June 25th. MDCCLXI*, (1761) Harris Manchester College Library, ESTC (N47754).
[158] Both Anna and John had prolific careers as authors on subjects as varied as medicine, morality, literature, religion, and politics, as well as editors. I discuss Anna's poem *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1792) in chapter 5.

the sociability of the school, becoming friends with the tutors and their wives, as well as a sister figure to many of the students. Her poem, "The Invitation", depicts the atmosphere at Warrington and the type of learning they were offering to students. She describes the academic community in which she lived as a space where "generous youth" read "the classic page; / and virtue blossoms for a better age"; where "quick affections, kindle into flame / At virtue's, […] honour'd name"; and where students learn "generous scorn of vice's venal tribe" and "proud disdain of interest's sordid bribe".[159] This last line attests to the school's aim of producing a commercial class which spurns the "interest" which sees traders engage in practices which may bring wealth but ignores humanity, like the slave trade.

John Aikin's daughter Lucy wrote a memoir of her aunt's life which is explicit in its praise of the "softening" influence of both the academic community at Warrington on the Aikin family and of the Aikin-Barbauld circle on the students that lived among them. The spaces that were shared by the members of these close-knit communities in Warrington, and the practices they engaged in, were, according to Lucy, critical to the self-improvement and cultivation of sensibility in both her aunt and the students who attended the school and lived among the tutors' families. She states of her aunt that "in some tempers sensibility appears an instinct, while in others it is the gradual result of principle and reflection, of the events and the experience of life. It was certainly so in that of Mrs. Barbauld".[160] For the young Anna Barbauld sensibility was not a "leading feature", but through constant effort her manners changed over the course of her life: "Her disposition […] now mellowed into softness".[161] As with the practical advice

[159] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, "The Invitation", *Poems,* (London, 1773), lines 111-14 and 123-28, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3315161999).
[160] Lucy Aikin, *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld. With a Memoir by Lucy Aikin*, 2 vols. (London, 1825), 1: lxiii-iv, Google Books, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=i39EAAAAcAAJ.
[161] Ibid., 64.

given by moral philosophers like Hume on the necessity of cultivating one's sentiments, Anna Barbauld, according to her niece, learned and applied her sensibility through practice. In the progressivist narrative of the Aikin family, sensibility was seemingly not an innate quality for Barbauld but an active result of practice and experience, learned from her daily contact with others in her community who shared her emotional norms and practices.[162]

These norms and practices were also being taught and shared among the tutors themselves and the students. Lucy Aikin claimed that their "manners softened with their system" of religion and education.[163] The norms that students were being taught and that they were encountering through living and studying in the family homes of the Aikins and other tutors were clearly much more representative of the "softened" manners and sentimentalism of the domestic space than the preparation for a commercial life would suggest. After all, as Wykes points out, "the social values and habits acquired" or, at least, were expected to be acquired, within the school through its teaching and through the environment of the institution itself "were often inimical to successful economic activity".[164] Perhaps knowing the background of many of their students and knowing that they would enter a commercial world which did not always take feelings and morality into consideration, they were attempting to temper the ethos of aggressive commercialism with a measure of sentimental ethics.

The emotional practices which took place in the academic and family spaces at Warrington aimed to make the moral sentiments normative to the community that used

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[162] For a discussion on the values of the Aikin/Barbauld circle see Daniel E. White, "The 'Joineriana': Anna Barbauld, the Aikin Family Circle, and the Dissenting Public Sphere", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no.4 (1999): 511-533, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053931.
[163] Anna Letitia Le Breton, ed., *Correspondence of William Ellery Channing, D.D., and Lucy Aikin, from 1826 to 1842*, (1874), 28-29.
[164] David Wykes, "Sons and Subscribers: Lay Support and the College 1786-1840" in Smith, *Truth, Liberty, Religion*, 36.

them. The spaces they shared provided the physical contact necessary to engage and practice the sentimental ethics and sociability of their emotional repertoire. However, the training and cultivating of feeling required of people of sensibility does not just occur through tacit socialisation, but also through explicit instruction.[165] Therefore it is important when considering the emotional practices of a community to examine their cultural output and use of media that communicates their emotional norms. The community at Warrington had its own printing press run by William Eyres, with links to publisher Joseph Johnson in London, from which numerous works by tutors, former students, and dissenting friends and families of the school community were issued.[166] As White points out, by printing and publishing nationally recognised works by Aikin and Barbauld, as well as by Thomas Percival, dissenting ministers Joseph Priestley and William Enfield, abolitionist William Roscoe, and prison reformer John Howard, Eyres "provided a coherent identity for the network of authors associated with Warrington".[167] The publications issued by these writers show a shared view of the world which was not just dissenting and reformist but which was dedicated to sharing their emotional norms with readers all over Britain.

Thomas Percival's collection of tales for children, printed by Johnson, reflects the values and emotional norms of his emotional communities, among which were the sites of learning and sociability in Manchester and Warrington. "Designed to Promote the Love of Virtue, [and] a Taste for Knowledge", according to its subtitle, *A Father's Instructions: Moral Tales, Fables, and Reflections* (1775-77) was written to:

[165] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 216.
[166] Eyres's connections to the publisher Joseph Johnson created an important network for the dissemination of radical material, including abolitionist publications and prints.
[167] White, "The 'Joineriana'", 512.

> refine the feelings of the heart, and to inspire the mind with the love of moral excellence: and surely nothing can operate more forcibly, than striking pictures of the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; which at once convince the judgment, and leave a lasting impression on the imagination. [168]

Percival hopes, through his instruction and through "the pure and correct moral sentiments with which it abounds", according to his son, that those who read his work are as affected by his prescription for a virtuous life as he was by his time spent in Warrington and Edinburgh.[169] Aikin, who later wrote his own collection of children's educational stories with his sister, writes to his friend in 1784 of his approval of the moral scheme of the collection, expressing his "peculiar satisfaction in the design of *teaching virtue by examples*, and appealing to the *feelings* of youth as much as to their reason".[170]

The moral tales in the collection provide a textual space in which the emotional norms of the community that produced and used it could be mobilised and spread further into other communities. They also provide a space in which the writers could shape their arguments for reform in the language of their own emotional repertoire. Moral tales that proselytise against cruelty and oppression and that laud compassion and benevolence make up a majority of Percival's collection. Several of the titles are written explicitly on the necessity of treating other creatures with humanity, including insects.[171] The tale of "Cruelty to Horses", in which a racehorse is "broken" and

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[168] Thomas Percival, *A Father's Instructions; Moral Tales, Fables, and Reflections*, 5th ed. (Warrington, 1781), xi-xii, Google Books, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=SQcGAAAAQAAJ.
[169] Percival, *Memoirs*, 45.
[170] Dr. Aikin to Dr. Percival, 1784, in Percival, *Memoirs*, 95-6 (his emphasis).
[171] Stories which caution young boys who are cruel to animals was a common method of instructing children about the need to cultivate sympathy in eighteenth century educational literature. Locke had used this method in his instruction of the young Shaftesbury: "For the custom of tormenting and killing of

"seasoned" for a life of servitude, is particularly interesting as it can easily be read as a metaphor for the life of the slave.[172] The horse is taken from his native Arabia, "where he ranged […] in the most fertile and extensive plains", and sent to England to become a racehorse and to live a life of "servitude and misery".[173] Percival gives details of the tortures of "the lash" inflicted upon racehorses by "savage" masters who do not feel for their victims.[174] The distress of the compassionate onlooker is contrasted to the inhumanity of the perpetrator of the violence. This technique, often used in antislavery writing, is aimed at mobilising the compassion of the reader, who is meant to identify with the witness of the suffering in the story.

In the second volume of the book, published in 1777, Percival focuses his moral teaching on the slave trade itself and the cruelty and suffering which slaves endure on their journey from Africa to the West Indies. Like the horse, the African is "torn" from family, friends, and native land, "consigned for life to misery, toil, and bondage".[175] Aside from the scenes of torture which it relates, in which slaves are held over the sides of ships and dunked, the most shocking fact, he states, is that "this infernal commerce is carried out by the humane, the polished, the Christian inhabitants of Europe; nay even by Englishmen, whose ancestors have bled in the cause of liberty, and whose breasts still glow with the same generous flame!"[176] He is "shocked" to have to relate this to young English minds and the intent is to highlight the brutality that, arising from an

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beasts will by degrees harden their minds toward men". John Locke to Edward Clarke, 8 February 1686, quoted in Voitle, *Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, 9. The notion of animal rights emerged in the eighteenth century and the movement for animal welfare was founded, in 1824, by a number of abolitionist activists, including Wilberforce.

[172] Percival, *Father's Instructions*, 87. The period between the arrival of a shipment of slaves in the colonies and their sale to plantation owners was known as "the seasoning". The slaves were tortured for the purpose of "breaking" them, like horses, and conditioning them to their new life.

[173] Ibid., 85-6.

[174] Ibid., 87.

[175] Ibid., 130.

[176] Ibid. The tale in which this appears is contradictory. Percival is giving a description of the "six races" of men which is highly discriminatory. However, the moral he is teaching – and one that is common in antislavery literature – is that, "despite" looks and customs, all humans deserve to be treated humanely.

uncultivated sensibility, can be carried out by even the most "polished" and supposedly "humane" race of people.[177] The young readers of his *Instructions*, after being practised in compassion and benevolence through reading tales such as his "Cruelty to Horses", should be able to feel similarly for the African slave and shame for the actions of tyrannical slavers.

While "teaching virtue by examples" was clearly the aim of communities like that at Warrington, whether a majority of students felt themselves affected by their tutors' appeal to their feelings and whether they became habituated in their emotional norms we cannot say. As with any community, there must have been individuals or groups within Warrington who did not agree with, conform to, or practise those emotional norms that the school and its tutors were aiming to pass on. Indeed, many of its students were the sons of West-Indian planters and merchants who dealt in the slave trade. According to Bright, these students were the cause of "great anxiety to those who had charge of the Academy" as they would delight in shocking the tutors with their tales of plantation life, "declaring that the earliest request of a planter's child was always for a 'young nigger to kick'".[178] Moreover, being practised in sensibility and softened manners did not necessarily lead to an ability to sympathise with the sufferings of others. As Scheer points out, our reactions to another person's feelings, such as experiencing compassion for another's distress, are themselves emotional practices and thus also deeply embedded in social settings.[179] Whether we feel compassion for someone is "tightly bound up with apprehensions of who the other is, […] if they are like or unlike oneself," and is mediated by our habitual predispositions learned from an

[177] Ibid.
[178] Bright, *Historical Sketch*, 22.
[179] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice".

early age.[180] This, indeed, is the argument abolitionists use to assert the value of cultivating sensibility, as Clarkson's essay, discussed below, demonstrates. Habituation in violence leads to hardened hearts. If these students, who were born and raised on plantations in the West Indies, and whose first requests as children involved inflicting violence on a slave, as Bright suggests, the school's intentions of creating a compassionate commercial class may not have always been successful.

Nevertheless, such behaviour, if true, perhaps suggests a reason for the emphasis placed on the moral sentiments and cultivation of virtue by the Warrington community as a whole. In any case, the extant documents written by members of that community, and those associated with it, certainly tell us of the value placed on self-improvement through education, sociability, and the cultivation of moral sentiments. The texts produced within the spaces shared by members of the Warrington community consistently reinforce their emotional norms. These works must thus be read as products of the spaces in which they were written, often collaboratively, edited and published. The collections of children's stories, poetry, prose, and essays that emerged from the Warrington press were, as White tells us, "colored by the sympathies of its domestic space". [181] The cultivation of sensibility and moral sentiments inform their pedagogy, their practical advice for living, and their ethical system.

Edward Percival states of his father: "to a mind *habitually disposed* to cherish the strictest notions with regard to the rule of justice and humanity, it may readily be conceived, that the negro trade of Africa, and slavery in the West-Indies, would appear in a high degree iniquitous".[182] The Percivals, and no doubt many others who shared

[180] Ibid., 211.
[181] White, "The 'Joineriana'", 516.
[182] Percival, *Memoirs*, 84 (emphasis mine).

their emotional norms, had a firm belief in the power of cultivating a disposition that was open to seeing the injustices around them. Those "habitually disposed" to ideas of justice and humanity, that is, those practised in privileging emotions such as benevolence and compassion, must naturally see the slave trade in its proper light: not as a necessary evil of a booming economy but as an immoral, unjust, and hateful crime against humanity. Whether such a disposition is naturally inclined to feel compassionately towards people other than those within one's own community or nation, no less act on that compassion, is not always a given, but there is no doubt that the Warrington Academy aimed to produce men like Percival: active members of society who contributed both to the improvement of their own communities and to aiding those without a voice. The Warrington community as a whole, and many of its alumni, were heavily involved in abolitionism when it emerged as a movement in 1787. According to McLachlan, the tutors at Warrington were "Anti-Slavery to a man".[183] While perhaps an exaggeration, the abolitionist activities of tutors like Joseph Priestley, Gilbert Wakefield, George Walker, and the Aikins, and their networks with abolitionists around Britain who came in and out of their social circles, attest to a strong link between the Warrington community and anti-slavery sentiment.[184]

For many abolitionists, the spaces of learning and sociability they frequented were crucial both to their emotional practices and to their political engagement in antislavery. James Currie, a physician based in Liverpool who befriended Percival while both were studying in Edinburgh, writes of abolitionism: "literary societies ought

[183] Herbert McLachlan, *Warrington Academy: Its History and Influence*, (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1943), 19.
[184] Priestley was a member of the Birmingham committee for the abolition of the slave trade. Walker and Wakefield were members of the Nottingham committee. Warrington's students also took an active role in abolitionism. Henry Beaufoy became one of the leading MPs who advocated for abolition in parliament between 1784 and 1795; John Prior Estlin was central to the group of abolitionists who founded a committee in Bristol; and Thomas Barnes joined Percival in setting up the Manchester committee.

particularly to interest themselves in this question, which addresses itself equally to reason, the feelings, and the imagination".[185] He clearly sees academic spaces and literary and philosophical clubs and societies as sites which not only promote emotional cultivation but which foster a culture of social reform. His hopes are that these societies will "establish the first link of a long chain of triumphs, which the influence of letters and of truth will obtain over prejudice, ignorance, and barbarity".[186] This was something he did not find in his home town of Liverpool.[187] For a man who had become "deeply versed" in the theories of David Hume during his years at Edinburgh, and who wrote essays on "the influence of affections [...] on the corporeal functions, and particularly of the passions and emotions", Liverpool did not provide many opportunities of engaging in practices that suited his own emotional repertoire.[188]

In Manchester, however, and in Warrington where he would often make visits, Currie found the spaces which were conducive to his emotional repertoire and to his views on slavery. He made frequent visits to his friends based at the Warrington Academy with fellow Liverpudlian and abolitionist William Roscoe and was a member of the Literary and Philosophical Society in Manchester, the majority of whom were also active members of the Manchester abolition committee. The link between the emotional practices and norms of the spaces of self-improvement and social reform was clearly strong in that city, despite the interest of many inhabitants in the slave trade

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[185] James Currie to Thomas Percival, 16 January 1788, *Currie Papers*, Liverpool Record Office (920 CUR 111).
[186] Ibid.
[187] When he moved to Liverpool as a young physician he was shocked by the society he encountered, not least because of its strong associations with the slave trade. His son and biographer states that "it does not appear that the society of Liverpool, as it then existed, was congenial to his disposition and turn of mind; [...] he describes the men as [having] ideas and opinions very different from those to which his college studies had accustomed him, and unrefined in their tastes and pleasures". William Wallace Currie, *Memoir of the Life, Writings, and Correspondence of James Currie*, (London: 1831), 57, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=3KlrNq4-QYEC.
[188] Ibid., 45-69.

itself.[189] Roscoe was also able to provide a space in his own home in which likeminded men in Liverpool could engage in sociability, self-improvement, and discussions on political reform. His abolitionist poem, *The African*, was written in such a space as a collaborative project with Currie.[190] Roscoe, whose major poetic contribution to the movement, *The Wrongs of Africa*, I discuss in chapter five, had already displayed his antislavery sentiments in his verse *Mount Pleasant* (1777), written in 1772 when he was nineteen. The poem is an early denunciation of slavery in the terms which became commonly used by abolitionists later in the century. "Torn from each joy", the African slave is "by rigorous hands opprest".[191] Shame is mobilised by the writer as a feeling which the humane must experience when considering the "horrors" of slavery: "shame to BRITONS most, Who all the sweets of Liberty can boast; / Yet, deaf to every human claim, deny / That bliss to others" (15-18). Slavery, and the Britons who engage in it, is an "inhuman rage" (23) that is "deaf" to the pain of others. Those who cannot feel the shame of "our avarice" when consuming produce "madly purchased by a brother's blood" – that is, slave-produced sugar – must, like the traders and slave-owners themselves, be inhuman.

The works of writers from the formal and informal academic communities in Manchester, Warrington, and Liverpool reveal their concerns on a wide range of political and social issues, from their own exclusions from public life to the conditions of the poor and sick, from the rights of children and animals to those of slaves. What

[189] The popularity of abolitionism in Manchester was seen as greatly significant to the movement. Many of its merchants dealt in cotton, imported from the Americas, and many of its manufacturers were involved in fitting out the slaving ships in Liverpool.
[190] The poem supposedly came about after an evening spent "in company with a few friends, men of genius", to whom Currie mentioned "that the African trade, so much the subject of general discussion, afforded a good subject for a song – & that a good song might be no bad succour to the general cause of humanity & virtue". James Currie to Graham Moore, 23 March 1788, *Currie Papers*, Liverpool Record Office (920 CUR 108). It was published in the London newspaper, *The World*.
[191] William Roscoe, "Mount Pleasant", (1777), lines 3 and 5, in James G. Basker, *Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems about Slavery, 1660-1810*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 195-6.

we see in their texts is the projection of their emotional norms onto the social injustices of the day, applying their optimistic belief in the malleability of human nature and its ability to cultivate benevolence to new political causes that fought for the rights of those less fortunate. Moreover, they were able to use their texts to establish networks between their communities and those further afield, using the "congeniality of their sentiments on many important subjects which affect the welfare of the human race" in order to push for social change.[192] With the founding of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, and its far-reaching committee system, the political potential of sentimentalism began to be realised, and the texts that argued against slavery became political tools of mobilisation against British involvement in the slave trade. The emotional repertoire of the new abolition movement, evident in texts such as Thomas Clarkson's academic essay, drew on a rescripted form of sentimentalism to create a politics of sympathy.

2.3 Thomas Clarkson's *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*: Politicising the Sentimental Ethic

Thomas Clarkson's account of the manner in which he became aware of the Atlantic slave trade is clear in terms of the influence of the academic spaces he attended. He states that before his time at Cambridge he "was wholly ignorant of the subject" of the slave trade.[193] His awareness was raised in his final year when the vice-chancellor of Cambridge, Peter Peckard, set the question for the 1785 Latin essay prize for senior bachelors: "Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?" Peckard was known for his liberal views, "a warm friend" of civil and religious liberty, as Clarkson claims, who preached often against the slave trade in his office as master of Magdalen

[192] Currie, *Memoir*, 146.
[193] Thomas Clarkson, *History,* 1:207 (see chap. 1, n. 5).

College.[194] As a student of the same college, Clarkson would have been very familiar with Peckard's views and he states that, having heard him pronounce "so warmly against it" he chose the African slave-trade as his subject for the competition.[195] Knowing nothing about the trade, the question set by Peckard forced Clarkson to research and read into the facts about slavery, gained largely from asking other students who had personal experience of the trade and from coming across Anthony Benezet's works.[196] Expecting to experience pleasure by engaging "in an innocent contest for literary honour", he spent restless nights in "grief" for the slaves and decided that the essay must be more than "a trial for academic reputation", but a work that "might be useful to injured Africa".[197]

Thus, by setting a question based on his own interest in ending the slave trade, Peckard produced one of the most tireless activists for the abolition movement, which would be established barely more than a year after Clarkson won the prize. By being encouraged to examine the slave trade as an academic endeavour, Clarkson states that he came to be "seriously affected" and "disconsolate" by what he had learned, and determined to translate his Latin dissertation into English as soon as he left Cambridge and prepare it for publication in London, thus setting the essay on its path to achieving a wider audience.[198] Encouraged by a vice-chancellor known to be critical of the trade

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[194] Ibid., 204. Peckard further contributed to the movement's activities by publishing two texts in 1788, one of which gave its title to the movement's adopted emblem, the kneeling slave: *Am I Not a Man? and a Brother? With all humility addressed to the British legislature* and *Justice and Mercy recommended, particularly with reference to the Slave Trade. A Sermon preached before the University of Cambridge*. I examine these in chapter 4.
[195] Clarkson, *History*, 1:207.
[196] Benezet was an American Quaker who set up a school for the children of slaves in Philadelphia and whose antislavery tract, *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1771), distributed in England by John Wesley and Granville Sharp, influenced and informed most abolitionist publications in the 1780s. Anthony Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea, its Situation, Produce, and the General Disposition of its Inhabitants. With an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, its Nature, and Lamentable Effects* (London, 1772), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3329853904).
[197] Clarkson, *History*, 1:209.
[198] Ibid., 210.

and judged by him to be the winner of the prize, the essay was clearly created in an environment that was conducive to an anti-slavery perspective. His college provided him with a space in which he could explore his feelings about the slave trade, discuss it with others, and finally share his views when, as winner of the prize, he was invited to read the essay before the senate-house of the university.[199] The arguments of the essay are based on sentimental ideas about benevolence and its proper cultivation which, when looked at against Peckard's own abolitionist works (discussed in chapter four), reveal a common emotional repertoire between two men from the same community. It also reveals a slight adaptation of these sentimental ideas – a rescripting – as he politicises the moral ethic of benevolence to appeal for reform.

Published in 1786, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* is prefaced with an appeal "to the feelings of the benevolent reader" and an acknowledgement addressed to every "humane and worthy" person who had made the subject of the slave trade one of popular discussion in recent years.[200] Benevolence and humanity are the main emotional drivers of anti-slavery feeling in Clarkson's Preface, a twelve page addition to the original essay in which he lauds those individuals and groups who had shunned slavery in America, despite its economic advantages, and who had produced works which demonstrated the "immoral", "cruel and disgraceful" traffic of slaves and the "tyranny and oppression" suffered by the "unfortunate *Africans*".[201] Indeed, the terms "benevolence" or "benevolent" appear nine times in the Preface alone, while "humane", "humanely" and "humanity" appear seven times. Other terms which highlight the sentimental ethics of the writer, and those expected in the reader,

[199] Ibid.
[200] 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,* (London, 1786), v, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3330905775).
[201] Ibid., viii-xiv.

are “virtue”, “piety”, “morality”, and “disinterested”. This last becomes an important term for abolitionists, a signal that their cause must be on the side of right because it is only someone who has no interest in the economic advantages of the trade that can speak with authority on the subject. As Clarkson states, “of all the publications in favour of the slave-trade[…]there is not one, which has not been written, either by a chaplain to the African factories, or by a merchant, or by a planter, or by a person whose interest has been connected in the cause which he has taken upon him to defend”.[202] On the other hand, those “who have had as competent a knowledge of the subject, but not the *same interest* as themselves, have unanimously condemned it”.[203]

Clarkson opens his essay with an argument that has its roots firmly in the moral sentiments: an opposition to slavery and the slave trade must arise in anyone who reflects on the people who have become subject to others and acknowledges that African slaves have “the same feelings with ourselves; […] the same propensities to pleasure, and the same aversions from pain”.[204] For those who reflect on these things, an understanding is formed which is “deduced from our own feelings and that divine sympathy, which nature has implanted in our breasts, for the most useful and generous of purposes”.[205] In other words, the virtuous will view the matter – when armed with the facts – as immoral, criminal, and unjust. This is a clear statement of his expectations of his audience. Clarkson is immediately demanding that his readers will react to the facts presented to them in the specified manner of the sentimental person of feeling. The “divine sympathy” which is natural to their dispositions will allow them to not only agree with Clarkson’s arguments, but will urge them to act on their benevolence.[206]

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[202] Ibid., xiii.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., 21-22.
[205] Ibid., 22.
[206] Ibid.

Sympathy is implanted in us "for the most useful and generous" purposes; benevolence must not only be present but useful. He is, then, asking his audience to become active reformers at a time when the abolition movement was yet to be formalised as a committee system. He is politicising the sentimental ethic of acting on one's compassion.

One of the principal methods of appealing to a person of sensibility was to use language which signalled to the reader or listener how they should be feeling. At several points in his argument Clarkson stops to remind the reader what their reaction to the information he supplies must be, professing that the "sighs and emotions of pity, […] must now ever accompany" the perusal of the history of African slaves and that, if the facts were groundless, he would spare "the sigh of the reader of sensibility and reflection".[207] To induce such sighs Clarkson makes use of the stock of sentimental words and phrases used in the literature of sensibility that highlight the wretchedness and misery of the subject. Africans are "wretched", "unhappy", "unfortunate", and "miserable", and therefore entirely deserving of the compassion of the reader who, if truly virtuous, is sensible to the feelings they must experience. The "sorrow" and "melancholy" of their loss of liberty, their inhuman treatment at the hands of plantation masters and managers, and the unnatural breaking of kinship and friendship bonds that the slave endures are all given in detail, their mental and physical sufferings accompanied with exclamations such as "Poor unfortunate men!" and "wretched slaves".

In the first chapter of Part III Clarkson presents part of his argument in the form of a short narrative in order to place the facts about the treatment of slaves "in the

[207] Ibid., 44 and 26.

clearest, and most conspicuous view".[208] The story he produces is a classic piece of sentimental narrative which asks readers to imagine they are on the coast of Africa, bearing witness to the chained Africans waiting to be boarded onto a slave ship set to depart for the colonies.[209] We see them "wringing [their] hands in despair", we hear their "dismal shrieks and yellings", and we talk to a "melancholy African" watching the scene "whose heart, if we can judge from the appearance of his countenance, must be greatly agitated".[210] The audience is told to notice the African's countenance in order to know what he is feeling. This witnessing of suffering, a technique of sentimental literature, asks the reader to use their sensibility to tune into the signals he is producing as an effect of his emotional experience. The African claims his own sensibility by stating that "the cries and yells of the unfortunate people" being loaded onto the ship "pierced [his] heart", asking the European witnesses of the scene, "Have you not heard me sigh, while we have been talking? Do you not see the tears that now trickle down my cheeks?"[211] His own compassion is compared to the insensibility of the slave-drivers who are "unable to be moved at all" by the groans of the slaves.[212]

This scene is produced with the intention of moving the reader to similar feelings. There can be only one reaction to reading this narrative: the treatment of slaves must "equally excite our pity and abhorrence".[213] If the reader is a humane, benevolent, and virtuous human being, naturally disposed to compassion and practised in being open to the feelings of others, they must oppose the conduct of their countrymen in Africa and the colonies and condemn those personally involved and who

[208] Ibid., 81.
[209] See chapter 5 for my discussion of sentimental literature and the importance of "witnessing" suffering in order to achieve imaginative sympathy.
[210] Clarkson, *Essay*, 83, 81, and 82.
[211] Ibid., 85.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid., 29.

sanction such cruelty. A passage earlier in the essay perfectly sums up how the reader must feel:

> We cannot sufficiently express our detestation at their conduct. Were the reader coolly to reflect upon the case of but *one* of the unfortunate men, who are annually the victims of *avarice*, and consider his situation in life, as a father, an husband, or a friend, we are sure, that even on such a partial reflection, he must experience considerable pain. What then must be his feelings, when he is told, that, since the slave-trade began *nine millions* of men have been torn from their dearest connections, and sold into slavery.[214]

The reader *must* experience "considerable pain", and that is upon reflection on the misery of just one slave. To help the reader along, Clarkson appeals to a personified "nature" who, recoiled from the horrors of slavery, applies a torch to the reader's breast to kindle their resentment and indignation, and "awaken the sigh of sympathy, or seduce the tear of commiseration from his eye".[215] These are techniques that we see used in the verse of abolitionism two years later, which I discuss in chapter five. Calling upon a personified "nature" aids the communication of sentiments between the writer and reader so that the reader's own nature can be affected by what he or she is witnessing.

As well as the sigh and tear of sympathy, shame is also frequently mobilised by the author, as it was by many abolitionists, and communicated to the reader. References to shame and its physical reactions – the blush and the shudder – are frequent in the

[214] Ibid., 76-77, (his emphasis).
[215] Ibid., 77.

essay as Clarkson pushes the point that a virtuous, benevolent person must feel ashamed at the actions of slave traders and owners who have abandoned any claims to decency and morality through their cruelty.[216] However, shame is a good sign: it is a sign of a person of sensibility and one who is likely to act benevolently upon witnessing a scene of suffering. It is those who are without shame, like the slave traders and owners in question, who are the ones that bear the guilt. The "brutal receivers" of slaves in the colonies "examine and treat them with an inhumanity, at which even avarice should blush".[217] Their cruelty as they whip, beat, and often kill slaves bares the "inhuman marks of passion, despotism, and caprice".[218] Clarkson asks, "how much […] ought you receivers [of slaves] to blush? […] to be considered as abandoned and execrable".[219] It is he who is left to blush on their behalf at actions which ought to make them "shudder".[220] Clarkson, who is sensible to others' pain and misery (as he hopes the reader is too), is able to feel both pity for the victim and the shame that ought to accompany the cruel actions of the perpetrators. Those who cannot do so "offend the dictates of nature".[221]

Shame is used, then, not so much with the aim of moving people to action, as their benevolent feelings should be enough to achieve this, but rather to cast aspersions on the character of those on the other side of the debate, particularly the merchants and planters directly involved in the trade. By pointing out that such actions would make him and "thousands of the enlightened" blush, he is setting himself and those who share his emotional norms apart, attempting to create an abolitionist identity based on those

[216] References to shame and guilt, and to somatic signs of these feelings, such as blushing and shuddering, appear 13 times throughout the essay.
[217] Clarkson, *Essay*, 89.
[218] Ibid., 100.
[219] Ibid., 80.
[220] Ibid., 101.
[221] Ibid., 80.

norms.[222] He is claiming that those who are on the right side of the debate – the abolitionists – have sensibility and the natural ability to feel for their fellow-creatures and act on those feelings in a charitable way by demanding an end to the slave trade. On the other hand, just as Shaftesbury had claimed that acts of torture and beholding another's pain with pleasure are "unnatural" and "inhuman", Clarkson asserts that those who do not feel for the slave "are monsters" and "out of the common course of nature".[223] Moreover, he makes the point that "when men once consent to be unjust, they lose, at the same instant with their virtue, a considerable portion of that sense of shame […] From that awful period[…]the heart is left unguarded[…] the vices[…]obtain an easy victory. […] There is nothing now too vile for them to meditate, too impious to perform".[224] Therefore, as with virtue and sensibility, so too the unnatural affections which lead men to wanton cruelty to others are practised habits and, for Clarkson, the ease with which a person can fall into a moral vacuum is evidence enough of the need to cultivate benevolence. Because, while virtue is achieved through constant effort, vice is the easy result of not trying hard enough to cultivate and practice the moral sentiments.

So aside from motives of avarice and greed, Clarkson makes frequent mention of the fact that the behaviour of those involved in the trade, particularly on the plantations in the West Indies, is learned and practised over time. The "severity of masters, or managers, to their slaves, which is considered only as common discipline, is attended with bad effects".[225] These bad effects are an inability to feel for fellow human beings, hardening their hearts, and making "them insensible of the misery of their

[222] Ibid., 112.
[223] Ibid., 86. Shaftesbury's "unnatural affections" consist of the "inhuman delight" some have in viewing distress and torment with pleasure. See Shaftesbury, *Characteristics,* 2:163.
[224] Clarkson, *Essay*, 45.
[225] Ibid., 96.

fellow-creatures": "It enables them to behold instances of cruelty without commiseration, and to be guilty of them without remorse".[226] Such effects can only beget "a turn for wanton cruelty".[227] As with the concern expressed by Warrington staff over students who were the sons of West Indian planters, there was a general disquiet among abolitionist activists about the way in which children were habituated in violence in the colonies. Clarkson gives an example of a boy who, on receiving six slaves from his father as a present, proceeds to slit their ears in order to claim them as his own. He states that "being trained up to scenes of cruelty from his cradle, he may, consistently with his own feelings, represent that treatment as mild, at which we, who have never been used to see them, should absolutely shudder".[228] Clarkson here is representing the emotional norms of colonial Britons on the plantations as other – as the direct opposite of his own and, he presumes, his British audience's norms – because of their very different experiences and their daily encounters with torture and cruelty. Just as there are emotional practices which enhance sensibility, there are practices which make one insensible to others' feelings. The planters and managers who drive the slaves are habitually disposed to seeing the cruelties around them and are therefore practised in violence and oppression; "where men are habituated to a system of severity, they become *wantonly cruel*".[229] On the other hand, if the cries and groans of the Africans "could reach the generous Englishman at home, they would pierce his heart […] He would sympathize" with their distress.[230]

Clarkson thus makes a clear distinction between colonial Britons and Englishmen "at home" who "are generous and brave"; who "support the sick, the lame,

[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid., 97 (his emphasis).
[230] Ibid., 86.

and the blind"; who "fly to the succour of the distressed"; and, with reference to the number of charitable institutions which emerged during this century, who "have noble and stately buildings for the sole purpose of benevolence".[231] An Englishman, according to Clarkson, has a benevolent heart and acts on that benevolence by supporting those less fortunate through philanthropic good works, establishing hospitals and asylums like Percival and his friends in Manchester were accomplishing. Such conviction in the supposed benevolent character of his British audience reveals the expectations of Clarkson as an emerging abolitionist. His confidence in the power of sympathy to engage people in benevolent actions is palpable across his essay and it is this confidence which drives him onto his political message. Encouraging the reader to be a true "Englishman", making sure they sigh and weep for the subjects of his essay, and appealing to the active benevolence of people who he is sure share his emotional norms, Clarkson is persuading the public to reflect on the evils of the slave trade and perhaps start thinking about how things could be changed. While the essay does not contain a direct appeal to campaign against the slave trade, as the movement per se had not been formally founded until a year after its publication, its aim is clear.

The Preface in particular hints at Clarkson's dissatisfaction, at least, at his government's hypocrisy in supporting the trade:

> I am sorry to add, […] that the reformation of an evil, and generally acknowledged to have long disgraced our national character, is yet left to the unsupported efforts of piety, morality and justice, against interest, violence and oppression; and these, I blush to acknowledge, too strongly countenanced by the

[231] Ibid.

> legislative authority of a country, the basis of whose government is *liberty*.[232]

Clarkson is clearly stating his personal shame that a country which should be proud of its supposedly liberal ideals supports the acts of violence and oppression inherent in the slave trade. It is left to "unsupported efforts" to make small changes when what is required is a full-scale reformation of government policy. This statement points to Clarkson's intentions of using his essay for a broader purpose. Its publication had a political function from the beginning. Clarkson, along with his publisher James Phillips, who was one of the group of Quakers responsible for the first petition for abolition in 1783, spent a year distributing the essay among influential MPs, including William Wilberforce, in an effort to get support in parliament. It was through the dissemination of his essay that he and his new Quaker friends in London recognised the extent of support an abolition of the trade would have, leading to the establishment in May 1787 of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.[233] From there the essay was published again by the London Committee, printing and distributing over 5,000 copies around the country, to friends and other committees that were being established almost monthly, to newspaper editors, and to booksellers.[234]

The essay's continual use as a mobilising tool by Clarkson and the committee, republished several times over the course of their campaigns between 1787 and 1792, attests to their confidence in its argument and the power of the emotional appeal within it. According to Scheer, communicating emotions is a practice, and this is exactly what

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[232] Ibid., viii (his emphasis).
[233] The minutes of their first meeting on May 22, 1787, state that their committee was set up for the purposes of "procuring such Information and Evidence, and for distributing Clarkson's Essay and such other Publications, as may tend to the Abolition of the Slave Trade". *FAIR Minute Books of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade*, British Library, Folio 1 (Add MS 21254).
[234] See John Oldfield, *Popular Politics*, (see chap.1, n. 8).

Clarkson and the committee were doing. Through its wide dissemination as a publication aimed at drawing public support and changing public policy, they were communicating their emotional norms to a wide audience. In so doing, they were attempting to engage its readers in the practice of mobilising the moral sentiments so that, in time, "there can be no need, either of a single argument or a reflection; as every reader of sensibility will anticipate them in his own feelings".[235] Such certainty in their mission may have waned by the end of the century, as constant defeats of Wilberforce's abolition bill in parliament set the abolition debate back, but their optimism in the power of their politics of sympathy is evident from the commencement of their campaign, beginning with Clarkson's essay. By creating new emotional norms particular to the abolition movement, through a rescripting of sentimentalism, the first humanitarian social movement tried to create room for a politics of sympathy in the public sphere.

Conclusion:

The emotional practices within the culture of improvement emphasised the need for emotional cultivation. The enhancement of sensibility through practices of polite sociability and education were aimed at creating a society which privileged benevolence and compassion above other passions. Just by focusing on spaces of education and self-improvement we can begin to see how the emotional norms integral to sentimentalism were practised by many communities in eighteenth-century Britain. In the texts that emerged from these spaces we can see a common understanding of emotions and how they work, which came directly from contemporary ideas from moral philosophy, but also theology, natural philosophy, medicine, and literature, as will

[235] Clarkson, *Essay*, 91.

become clear over the following chapters. It is an understanding that the abolition movement rescripted to create its own emotional repertoire. The emotional norms of the movement were grounded in the practical philosophy of the moral sentiments, practices of self-improvement and the understanding that particular emotions need cultivating through habituation. I am not stating that the Scottish schools of moral philosophy were necessarily seedbeds of antislavery sentiment just because of the system of ethics that they were teaching and the emotional practices that they were engaging in. While it is true that most of the Scottish moral philosophers wrote against slavery, it is not their opinions on slavery that matter.[236] Rather, it is their engagement in a language of emotional practice that provides the crucial link between the moral philosophy of the early eighteenth century and the discourse the abolitionists adopted and adapted at the end of that century.

Sociability was not, of course, an invention of moral sentiment philosophy. While the moral philosophers of the eighteenth century certainly helped to bring the ethics of sociability as an emotional practice into consciousness by naming sympathy as the central affective mode of human interaction, their philosophical discourse forms just one part of the process that produced sociability and social sympathy as defining features of improvement culture in Britain. Poovey points out that the social imaginary that emerged in this era was also "produced – and lived – by people at different points in the hierarchy of eighteenth-century British society".[237] Such practices as sociability which aimed to mobilise the moral sentiments "had come to seem, and therefore in a sense to be, natural" by the time writers like Hume were formulating their theories of

[236] Hume was perhaps the biggest exception and was criticised by abolitionists like James Beattie for his obvious racial discrimination in his essay "On National Characters" in which he writes of the natural inferiority of Africans and their fitness for servitude. David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, (London, 1758), 1,125n, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3317720495).
[237] Mary Poovey, "The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth-Century British Moral Philosophy", *Public Culture* 14, no.1 (2002): 142, doi: 10.1215/08992363-14-1-125.

human nature.[238] Thus philosophical theories were developed to some extent as a consequence of the world the moral sentiment philosophers found themselves in, the practices they were witness to and participated in themselves. The next chapter explores these practices of sociability as carried out in the spaces provided by the press, which can be seen as part of the complex of emotional practices which aimed to embody and make normative sentimentalism in eighteenth-century culture. The ways in which abolitionists used the same spaces to engage in their own politics of sympathy further highlights the link that community made between sentimental ethics and antislavery.

[238] Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling*, 17 (see chap.1, n.64).

Chapter 3: Sociability and the Press: Disseminating a Politics of Sympathy

When Joseph Addison reprised Aristotle's maxim that "Man is […] a Sociable Animal" he was asserting people's natural instinct for sociability, for "forming our selves into those little Nocturnal Assemblies, which are commonly known by the Name of Clubs":

> When Men are thus knit together, by a Love of Society, not a Spirit of Faction, and don't meet to censure or annoy those that are absent, but to enjoy one another: When they are thus combined for their own Improvement, or for the Good of others […] by an innocent and cheerful Conversation, there may be something very useful in these little Institutions and Establishments.[239]

While a good part of *Spectator* number 9 is taken up with making fun of the array of clubs that existed at the time Addison wrote his paper, he also points out an important use of these "little Institutions and Establishments" in his idea of a perfect society.[240] The significance of clubs and societies lay in their function as spaces in which people were supposed to generate that "Love of Society" which would foster social improvement. That "Love" was to be achieved through acts of sociability, the practices of which were meant to cultivate the moral sentiments and social sympathy.

This chapter focuses on that sociability as a form of social improvement in the eighteenth century, specifically the ways in which it was played out in the periodical

[239] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator,* no. 9, 10 March 1711, ed. Henry Morley, vol.1, (London, 1891; Project Gutenberg, 2004) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12030/12030-h/SV1/Spectator1.html
[240] See Ibid. Addison mocks some of them as either ridiculous, pointless, or immoral.

and newspaper press. As we have seen, for those communities that cultivated a sentimental emotional repertoire, improvement relied heavily on one's ability to improve the self through education and through the habitual practice of the necessary affections and sentiments that would lead one to live a moral and virtuous life. Within this ideology, honing one's sensibility was not meant solely for the enhancement of one's own emotional repertoire but also to cultivate the capacity to sympathise with others, thus enabling the practice of polite conversation. Many of the sociable gatherings in coffee houses and clubs were aimed at mobilising the moral sentiments not just for the self-cultivation of the individual but for the improvement of society at large, to generate among the population that "Love of Society" that Addison prescribed.[241] The types of sociability that emerged in eighteenth-century Britain therefore reflected the dominance of sentimentalism for the communities that practised forms of improvement, from sociable gatherings to intellectual circles, and from philanthropic societies to reform institutions.

The first section of this chapter centres on the role of the early periodical press in engendering practices of sociability, and the emotional ethics behind its practice, among its community of readers. For many scholars the press is the primary instrument of the new public sphere, helping to legitimise the codes of politeness and emotional cultivation that were deemed necessary to the process of improvement. [242] The public sphere, as Poovey points out, "was partly constructed by the shared understandings and images of itself that were generated through print and conversation, and partly by the

[241] Ibid.
[242] Most take their lead from Habermas for whom *The Spectator* was a foundational text of his "public sphere", more or less the creator of public opinion: Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); see also Poovey, "Liberal Civil Subject", 136 (see chap. 2, n. 161).

institutions that enabled these ideas about politeness to circulate and acquire social prestige".[243] Within Scheer's theory, such mechanisms that inform a group or community of what is "proper" or "appropriate" in different spaces, like the press, are crucial to the acquisition of emotional norms for that group.[244] The acquisition of a normative emotional repertoire for a community occurs through a process of both "tacit socialisation as well as explicit instruction".[245] The early periodical press in Britain did both by supplying the images of politeness and conversational exchange central to notions of social sympathy to a broad public. Men like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, whose *Tatler* (1709-11) and *Spectator* (1711-14) papers had a wide influence across Europe, created periodicals that contained explicit instruction on how to conduct oneself emotionally in public and private in order to create social harmony and live a virtuous, benevolent life.[246] At the same time, the manner in which the papers were produced and read offered people the opportunity to implicitly engage in the emotional norms of sociability simply by reading them.

The aim of exploring these practices as carried out in the press is to demonstrate that the emotional repertoire of the abolition movement was adopted and adapted from a variety of already existing emotional norms which were being developed and practised by a multiplicity of communities over the course of the eighteenth century. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the beginnings of this rescripting in some of the antislavery newspaper correspondence which appeared in 1772. This

[243] Poovey, "Liberal Civil Subject", 137.
[244] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 216 (see chap. 1, n. 4).
[245] Ibid.
[246] *The Spectator* had a fairly modest daily circulation of approximately 3,000 copies, but actual numbers of readers is impossible to quantify as most would have read the periodical while visiting a coffeehouse and were not subscribers themselves. Addison estimates that each number was read by 60,000 Londoners, about a tenth of the capital's population at the time. Given he states this as a form of advertisement in one of his papers, this number is probably unreliable. See Donald J. Newman, ed., *The Spectator: Emerging Discourses*, (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

correspondence, which emerged in response to the widely reported legal trial between James Somerset, an escaped slave, and his former master, marks the beginning of popular antislavery agitation in the press. The arguments contained within the space of these letters use the language of sentimental humanitarianism. While their arguments are not political in the sense that they were not written in order to agitate for a specific movement, their use of the idea of a humanity based on fellow feeling and universal benevolence both carries on the tradition of the early periodicals and looks forward to the abolition campaigns of the 1780s.

In the final section, I turn to that campaign and focus on the debate between abolitionists and supporters of slavery carried out within the pages of the London newspapers in 1788, the first full year of the campaign. I have limited my research, for both 1772 and 1788, to a select number of papers based in London for the main reason that these letters are often in reply to each other, or addressed and in response to political figures and events based in the capital. However, their arguments are by no means restricted to the papers I have chosen and similar correspondence can be found in newspapers from all around Britain in the same year. The sheer number and geographic diversity of newspapers that contain abolitionist opinions, and which express the same emotional norms, is an indication of a common abolitionist emotional repertoire. The use of newspapers as tools of both sociability and social reform demonstrates the way in which sentimentalism was rescripted within the abolitionist community into a politically driven set of emotional norms. The letters I explore here express a politics of sympathy, which focuses on compassion as an active sentiment and which creates a dichotomy between the feeling humanity of the abolitionist and the unfeeling inhumanity of the slaver. The sociability provided by the space of the newspaper can thus be seen to offer activists the opportunity to shape and practise the emotional

repertoire of the abolitionist community as well as set those apart who did not conform to their idea of a benevolent and virtuous society.

3.1 Social Sympathy and the Periodical Press: Establishing "Rules of Practice"

Any act of sociability is a practice, sought out and enacted as part of our daily habits. As an emotional practice it is an act which passively engages any number of emotions as people interact with others, whether family, friends, colleagues, or casual acquaintances. In a more active sense, it is also an act which is specifically sought out to mobilise those emotions that are central to the emotional norms of the group participating in it. For many communities in the eighteenth century sociability was a central practice to the mobilisation and regulation of those affections and feelings that were privileged as part of the moral sentiments. Being sociable, and practising sociability, was key to both one's personal morality and the harmony of society in general, both at a local and national level, because it was dependent upon the proper communication of appropriate sentiments through channels of social sympathy.[247] I talked of sociability in chapter two as a mobilising emotional practice for the cultivation of sentiments in the individual. Sociability, however, was not just about self-improvement. Here, I focus on sociability as a practice of social improvement, as an imperative for the harmonious working of society.

Scheer argues that emotional practices are learned, which means that feelings are transferred between people, not just intergenerationally from parents to children, but also through socialising processes between adults.[248] Engaging in acts of sociability in the eighteenth century was not only about mobilising appropriate emotions but

[247] Dwyer, "Imperative of Sociability", 171 (see chap. 2, n. 36).
[248] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 218.

regulating and managing them within specific spaces and communities. The management and regulation of emotions is a crucial element of practice theory. It explains how groups, communities, and whole societies acquire normative emotional standards which privilege some emotions while suppressing others. The emotional repertoire that the practice of sociability sought to produce and manage, as we have seen, was based on sensibility and the calm affections that would help one get along with others in the new spaces of public association that were emerging at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was a repertoire that depended on the workings of social sympathy between people and therefore on being sociable.

The coffeehouse, the club, and the philosophical, scientific and literary society represented for many the new conviviality of eighteenth-century society and the mutual benevolence with which people were meant to interact in public spaces. The aim, according to Borsay, was to downplay conflict, particularly of the religious and political kind, in public life.[249] For Borsay a great deal of civic investment took place in driving people into company with each other, an encouragement which was usually governed by the regulation of the passions and ordered by codes of polite conversation.[250] Social harmony and improvement were to be realised through politeness and manners in public spaces; through a way of conducting oneself so as to reduce the possibility of friction in social intercourse.[251] Thus Addison's "Love of Society" was to be achieved through "innocent and cheerful Conversation" which left the "Spirit of Faction" outside the door of polite public sociability. The art of conversation was crucial to eighteenth-century practices of sociability, its uses becoming a key issue for inquiries into social sympathy

[249] Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).
[250] Ibid., 150.
[251] See Borsay, "Culture of Improvement", 189 (see chap. 2, n. 2).

and the unity of the society many were hoping to build at the beginning of the century. As Mee points out, conversation in the polite spaces in which sociability was carried out did not just happen; "it was scrutinized, policed, promoted, written about, discussed," and actively practised.[252] George Drummond's essay on the *Rules of Conversation* (1740), for example, emphasises the need for sympathetic contact with others.[253] In order to thrive in the "conversable world" individuals needed to engage a number of emotional practices to control their passions, abide by rules of civility and render themselves agreeable to others to avoid conflict.[254]

Many attribute the move to establish politeness and conversability in spaces of public sociability to the ascendency of the Whigs and their project of consolidating the values of progress and improvement won in 1688.[255] As Bowers points out, writers who advocated social manners and politeness in conversation, such as Shaftsbury, Addison, and Steele, often betrayed a Whig agenda despite supposedly eschewing politics in their works on principle.[256] For Bowers, Shaftesbury, whose moral philosophy may well have been founded on his upbringing within a strong Whig family, "sought to consolidate the post-1688 Whig regime by establishing a gentlemanly mode of political

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[252] Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community 1762 to 1830*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.
[253] Ibid.
[254] See Jon Mee, "'The Use of Conversation': William Godwin's Conversable World and Romantic Sociability", *Studies in Romanticism* 50 (December 2011): 567-590, EBSCO (74442554).
[255] Key Whig policy positions included supremacy of Parliament over the King, tolerance of Protestant dissenters, and a general belief in innovation, progress, and liberty. After the success of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Whiggism dominated politics until about 1760, strongly supported by many leading families in Britain, merchants, Dissenters, and the middle classes, which is why it is seen as the core value behind the culture of improvement. See Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture, 1681 – 1714*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714 – 1760*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Charles A. Knight, *A Political Biography of Richard Steele*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).
[256] Terence Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability: *The Spectator*, Civic Enfranchisement, and the Rule(s) of the Public Sphere", in Newman, *Emerging Discourses*, 153. See also Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

rule founded on the principles of sociability and politeness".[257] In Shaftesbury's view, if virtue is connected to our social nature, then our practices of association, modes of communication, and spaces in which we socialise become central ethical concerns. The new institutions set up for the practice of sociability can thus be seen to have developed to "enable gentlemen to assert their liberty, cultivate virtue, and interact peacefully so that they could govern effectively as a group".[258] The success of Whigs in establishing their values as dominant norms within society "hinged on developing not only new institutions, but also new communicative procedures and norms of behavior that would substitute a culture of politeness for the authoritarian sociocultural system of the old regime".[259] Many would argue that this was achieved, the move away from civil strife proof of the success of the Whig modernising mission.

However, as Clark points out, it would be a mistake to consider the practice of polite sociability "as an inevitable development – simply the sociable face of the Whig oligarchic ascendency".[260] Tories had their clubs and societies too and took as great a part in the polite sociability advocated by prominent Whigs like Shaftesbury. With the resurgence of party conflict between the Tories and Whigs, organised political clubs were a major feature of the political landscape, especially in London.[261] It would also be a mistake to consider British society at this time as one of overflowing social sympathy between fellow men. Public life still had its conflicts and controversies, riots and public disorder, religious intolerance, and a press that often encouraged violent acts. As Mee

[257] Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability", 153. Klein also names Shaftesbury, Addison and Steele as the three most important Whig ideologists post-1688: "Theirs was primarily a cultural politics". Lawrence E. Klein, "The Figure of France: The Politics of Sociability in England, 1660-1715", ed. Elena Russo, *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment,* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 32.
[258] Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability", 153.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Clark, *British Clubs,* 60 (see chap. 2, n. 2).
[261] Ibid.

states, "intolerance and exclusion – supported by the coercive power of the law and the military – were part of the day-to-day life of this modern commercial society".[262] It is for this reason that many societies chose to ban politics as a topic of conversation. As Clark suggests, in a period when party faction was liable to spill over at any given moment and threaten to disrupt civic unity, either a ban on political discussion or a restriction on membership according to political allegiance may have been the most effective methods of ensuring harmonious conduct within a society or club.[263] We cannot say whether such bans and restrictions were successful; party faction was strong and political tensions and conflicts continued to occur throughout the century. Yet, at the same time, the very attempt to conduct sociability without political argument causing rifts among members of a society suggests that the will to put aside political differences in an effort to improve society was there. Indeed, one of the key features of the abolition movement was the ease with which people from diverse political, social, and religious backgrounds put aside loyalties and differences (to a certain extent) in order to push for reform of the slave trade.

Thus, while not always possible, most clubs and societies were established to at least encourage "mutual consideration" and "fellow-feeling".[264] Against the turbulent background that party political conflict produced, along with continued exclusion of non-Anglican religious communities from public life, the wish to create public spaces that fostered social sympathy is not an unreasonable one. Klein sees the use of politeness in clubs and societies as an attempt to establish "a norm in a world of often wild and incoherent sociabilities".[265] In the politeness paradigm, the key values of

[262] Mee, *Conversable Worlds,* 9.
[263] Clark, *British Clubs*, 180-81.
[264] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, xxvi (see chap.1, n. 21).
[265] Klein, "Figure of France", 150.

"moderation, mutual tolerance, and social comity" which were practised in spaces of sociability "concretized […] the high esteem for conversation and conversability" for large sections of the British population in the eighteenth century.[266] The point of establishing such norms was the improvement of the world around them. As Barker-Benfield points out, the culture of sensibility and sentimentalism that came to dominate the emotional norms of British society in the eighteenth century was also a culture of reform, and it was the possibility of reform that gave sociability much of its drive as an emotional practice. [267] Whether we attribute it to progressivist Whig ideology or to a general shift away from the pre-modern era that involved people putting politics aside (if only nominally) within certain spaces, the practice of improving or reforming sociability became a dominant feature of eighteenth-century society and culture.

Many scholars have pointed out that the pamphlets and periodicals of the popular press, in particular those produced by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, were distinctive for the way in which they elaborated polite sociability through their very existence.[268] It has been shown how, within their periodicals, Addison and Steele encouraged politeness in order to modify norms of gentlemanly behaviour, "from a primarily courtly and aristocratic code, given to the display of power and wealth, to a more bourgeois, commercial, and feminised code, given to the display of benevolence, and sensibility".[269] Both the periodicals' subject matter and the way in which they were

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[266] Ibid.
[267] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*.
[268] See Richmond P. Bond, *The Tatler: The Making of a Literary Journal,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism,* (London: Verso, 1984); Stephen Copley, "Commerce, Conversation, and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth-Century Periodical", *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18, (March 1995): 63-77, doi: 10.1111/j.1754-0208.1995.tb00182.x ; Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite, eds., *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[269] Ellis, *Politics of* Sensibility, 188 (see chap. 1,n. 12). See also Andrew Lincoln, "War and the Culture of Politeness: The Case of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 36, no.2 (2012): 60-79, doi: 10.1215/00982601-1548036.

written, distributed, and read, highlight the close relationship between spaces and the practices carried out within them. Spaces are social products and, as Broomhall suggests, the spaces used for sociability in the eighteenth century, whether physical or textual, reflected "contemporary understandings and experiences of social relations and identities"[270]. Spaces are thus shaped by the emotional practices of the individuals and communities using them. At the same time, practices are also developed, shaped and made normative as a consequence of the space in which they are carried out. Addison and Steele created their papers in response to the spaces they found themselves in and in which they themselves socialised with others. But they also, in turn, shaped and helped to normalise, through their productions, the very practices they were engaged in and which continued to be practised over the course of the century.

Written from the coffee-houses in which their creators reported on the sociable world they saw, heard, and took part in, Steele's *Tatler* (1709-11) and Addison and Steele's co-produced *Spectator* (1711-12, 1714), were composed literally of papers that were circulated within the actual sites of sociability frequented by these men. Within their papers they reproduced sociability by using a loose, conversational style, bringing the reader into the exchange. Steele's pseudonym of "Isaac Bickerstaff" in his *Tatler* papers presented the news and gossip he and his "reporters" allegedly overheard in some of the most popular coffeehouses across London. *The Spectator,* more or less the continuation of *The Tatler* with the additional input of Joseph Addison, was likewise created to re-enact sociability in print. The character of the "Spectator" claimed to record the conversations of a "society of gentlemen" overheard in his coffeehouse, a "Looker-on" to the conversations carried on around him. He remains removed from the

[270] Broomhall, *Spaces for Feeling*, 5 (see chap.1, n. 71).

action and is thus better able to report "without ever medling" and "to observe an exact Neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forc'd to declare myself by the Hostilities of either side".[271]

The journalism of Addison and Steele was a conscious attempt to elaborate polite conversation as the prime mode of human interaction. Through characters which represent the different strands of both urban and rural social life, the papers present social sympathy as a bonding force that enables society to get on with the daily transactions of civic and commercial life in relative harmony, without the dangerous passions flaring up between religious or political factions. After all, too much "Party Spirit", according to Mr. Spectator, "fills the Nation with Spleen and Rancour, and extinguishes all the Seeds of Good-Nature, Compassion and Humanity".[272] Referencing the violence and bloodshed of the Civil War of the previous century which arose out of a "Spirit of Division", Addison reports that it is "with a real Grief of Heart, that the Minds of many good Men among us appear sowered with Party-Principles, and alienated from one another in such a manner, as seems to me altogether inconsistent with the Dictates either of Reason or Religion".[273] Thus the periodicals of Addison and Steele enjoin their readers to avoid the party politics that divide society and ask that people no "longer regard our Fellow Subjects as Whigs or Tories, but should make the Man of Merit our Friend, and the Villain our Enemy".[274]

Creating men and women of merit was thus the professed mission of both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* in order to improve society's morals, manners and taste; "to

[271] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 1, 1 March 1711.
[272] Addison, *Spectator*, no.125, 24 July 1711.
[273] Ibid.
[274] Ibid. The fact that Addison and Steele were aiming to reach a mass audience may have been the influence on this sentiment. As Newman states, "the hypocrisy of participating in the factionalism they condemn probably would have alienated a significant number of readers". *Emerging Discourses*, 26.

expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour" by "setting forth the Excellence of Virtue and Knowledge".[275] Benevolence occupies a central role in this effort to improve society. For Steele, people in positions of authority have a duty of care towards those under their power and it is the benevolence shown towards those less fortunate which marks the virtuous gentleman from those "savages, that know no Use of Property but to be Tyrants; or Liberty, but to be unmannerly". [276] Steele's perfect landlord is a man whose benevolence distinguishes his superiority: "Benevolence, civility, social and human virtues" are "the accomplishments of a landlord".[277] As Rumbold points out, this is a figure whose authority over others is justified by his care for others.[278]

Addison's Mr. Spectator also identifies the moral sentiments as central to his reform program, highlighting the need for mutual compassion in society and for the cultivating of "Good-nature":

> Half the Misery of Human Life might be extinguished, would Men alleviate the general Curse they lie under, by mutual Offices of Compassion, Benevolence, and Humanity. There is nothing therefore which we ought more to encourage in our selves and others, than that Disposition of Mind which in our Language goes under the Title of Good-nature.[279]

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[275] Richard Steele, "Dedication to Mr. Maynwaring", *The Tatler*, no. 1 , 12 April 1709, ed. George A. Aitken, vol. 1 (New York, 1899; Project Gutenberg, 2004) http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/13645.
[276] Steele, *Tatler*, no.169, 9 May 1710, ed. George A. Aitken, vol.3 (New York, 1899; Project Gutenberg) http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31645/31645-h/31645-h.htm.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Valerie Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler* in 1710: Polite Print and the Spalding Gentlemen's Society", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 40 (September 2016): 1-35, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1215/00982601-3629336.
[279] Addison, *Spectator,* no. 169, 13 September 1711.

Like Shaftesbury, Addison supports the idea that such sentiments are natural to human beings, yet also need to be cultivated through practice: "Good-nature is generally born with us" but "Education may improve" it.[280] The *Tatler* and *Spectator* papers were offering such an education to their community of readers, one which was based on good sense, virtue, religion, and the moral sentiments, and which was intended to promote civility, sociability, and charity to the deserving.[281] As Newman points out, their papers were a practical guide for living in eighteenth-century Britain, providing people "with rules for conducting themselves properly – with due attention to social decorum and a sensitivity to the feelings of others – in virtually every imaginable personal encounter, from the drawing room to the stagecoach".[282]

As such, *The Spectator* and *Tatler* acted as tools of the emotional practices which they were advocating. In other words, they were texts which were specifically used as guides and stimulants of the emotional practice of sociability. The communication of emotions and emotional norms is a crucial emotional practice.[283] The use of media, in this case the printed page, helps to transmit emotions from one person, or one community, to another. The way in which the papers of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were used by those who subscribed to them indicates the importance of having tools which assist in the habituation of emotions within a community. These papers were purchased and read, often aloud to the company, inside coffeehouses, the very spaces in which they were created. Moreover, the papers often provided space for reader's contributions and input to those conversations, creating an informal club or society within the space of the printed page, as well as within the physical space around

[280] Ibid.
[281] Newman, *Emerging Discourses*, 14-15.
[282] Ibid., 17
[283] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 214.

them.[284] The issues for discussion and moral tales contained in the papers, supposedly gleaned from conversations within the coffeehouse, became, in turn, the subjects of debate among the patrons of that and other coffeehouses. This circular re-production of sociability and exchange – the middle classes holding up a mirror to themselves, as Habermas termed it – was aimed at making the practice normative to its community of readers over time.[285]

The extent to which this occurred may be judged by the popularity of the papers and the way in which they were used by readers. Steele published his *Tatler* "every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, in the Week, for the Convenience of the Post," thereby strategically making use of the postal system in order to facilitate a regional readership.[286] Clubs and societies in regional towns were thus able to make use of the papers in their own spaces of sociability. From the very beginning of their run, various clubs around Britain subscribed. One example is that of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society in Lincolnshire, whose founder Maurice Johnson recorded its uses for the papers:

> These papers [*The Tatler*] being universally approved, as both instructive and entertaining, they ordered them to be sent down thither […] and they were accordingly had and read there ever[y] post-day, generally aloud to the company, who would sit

[284] Borsay, "Culture of Improvement". Although whether many of the letters were truly from readers or simply inventions of the papers' writers is unknown.
[285] As Habermas writes, "The public that read and debated this sort of thing read and debated about itself". Habermas, *Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 43.
[286] Steele, *Tatler*, no. 1, 12 April 1709.

> and talk over the subject afterwards. This insensibly drew the men of sense and letters into a sociable way of conversing.[287]

The *Tatler* papers were a tool of the emotional practice of the Society in Spalding, a starting point for their sociable conversation as well as a method of improving themselves as individuals and as a community. Johnson states here that the use of the papers "insensibly" drew the men gathered there into conversation, but this belies the active efforts of the men to engage in the practice. This was no casual gathering in a coffeehouse but a strategic effort to put sociability into practice.[288]

In addition to subscriptions to the papers themselves, Addison and Steele's periodicals were republished in sets of volumes almost as soon as publication of *The Spectator* ended in 1712. Cheap editions of the volumes meant that both periodicals had an extended life and increasingly wide circulation beyond their initial runs right through into the nineteenth century.[289] A sub-genre in which the original periodical papers were abbreviated, adapted or repackaged also emerged along with regularly released editions of Addison and Steele's other works.[290] The continual reproduction of their papers helped guarantee its use as a tool of emotional practice over the course of the century. As Bowers points out, when people purchased the books, they were not simply buying works of moral instruction or entertainment; they were also buying into a cultural system which was organised around a particular set of social institutions, practices, and norms.[291] As a tool of practice, a copy of the periodicals allowed people to effectively

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[287] Richard Gough, *Bibliotheca Britannica Topographia*, 52 parts in 8 volumes, no.20, (1784), quoted in Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler*", 3.
[288] Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler*", 5.
[289] See Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 7.
[290] Klein states that "hardly a year in the eighteenth century passed when some part of the Addisonian corpus was not reprinted". Lawrence E. Klein, "Addisonian Afterlives: Joseph Addison in Eighteenth-Century Culture", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35 (March 2012): 103, doi: 10.1111/j.1754-0208.2011.00416.x
[291] Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability", 170.

operate within that system while also acting as proof of the endorsement of that system over a long period of time.[292]

Such endorsement was so widespread that these editions were not just used as conversation starters in gentlemen's clubs but also as educational matter in academic spaces, including the Dissenting schools in the north of England like the Warrington Academy. In her own edition of the papers published in 1804, Anna Laetitia Barbauld states that "no books were so popular, particularly with the female sex [...] From the papers of Addison we imbibed our first relish for wit; from his criticisms we formed our first standard of taste; and from his delineations we drew our first ideas of manners".[293] Clearly, for Barbauld, the periodicals of Addison and Steele were foundational texts which intervened in the culture of British society at the beginning of the eighteenth century to help construct new cultural and emotional norms, so much so that she considered it "probably the very first [book] that, after the Bible, [a young lady] would have thought of purchasing".[294] Elizabeth Montagu, the centre of the bluestocking circle, perhaps agreed as she is known to have copied out the entire *Spectator* for her own edification as a young girl. Moreover, the attraction to the periodicals remained strong for many years, as Hester Piozzi, a member of Montagu's circle, attests in her diary in the 1790s, stating that she was still turning to Addison's works "for mental Food".[295]

As a point of reference on taste, manners, and improvement, it seems the periodicals of Addison and Steele attracted women as much as men and in this point

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[292] Ibid.
[293] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, ed., *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian, and Freeholder: With a Preliminary Essay*, 3 vols. (London, 1804), I: iii-iv.
[294] Ibid., I:iii.
[295] John Doran, *A Lady of the Last Century (Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu),* (London: Richard Bentley and Sons, 1873) 13; Katharine C. Balderston, ed., *Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942), 774.

their papers can be seen to have furthered the emotional norms and practices within them to spaces well beyond the closed and restricted membership of coffeehouse clubs. Men *and* women were the targets of the improving program of Addison and Steele, and their papers were as much directed towards a female readership as a male one. Steele's Bickerstaff declares in his first *Tatler* paper that "I resolve also to have something which may be of Entertainment to the Fair Sex, in Honour of whom I have invented the Title of this Paper".[296] Mr. Spectator likewise states that:

> there are none to whom this Paper will be more useful, than the female World. I have often thought there has not been sufficient Pains taken in finding out proper Employments and Diversions for the Fair ones. Their Amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are Women, than as they are reasonable Creatures.[297]

In this vein he promises to "always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving Entertainment" of his work.[298] Some have argued that this form of "improving" translated into a scheme for domesticating women during this century, restricting their activities to the private domestic sphere.[299] Steele's declaration that he will "lead the young through all the becoming Duties of Virginity, Marriage, and Widowhood" certainly suggests that female domestic duties were of utmost importance in the improving scheme of the periodicals and his hope that "among reasonable Women this

[296] A somewhat backhanded compliment according to Rumbold, *The Tatler* referring to idle gossip of which women were supposedly masters. See Rumbold "Reading *The Tatler*", 22.
[297] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 10, 12 March 1711.
[298] Ibid.
[299] See Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical*, (London: Routledge, 1989).

Paper may furnish Tea-Table Talk" gives a hint at the type of spaces in which females were meant to conduct their sociability.[300]

However, it can also be said that Addison and Steele were broadening the scope of polite sociability beyond the traditional public sphere of male-centric coffeehouses and clubs. The periodicals were as much critical of coffeehouse culture as they were approving of it, often making fun of the ridiculous or immoral nature of many of the existing clubs at the time. [301] As Klein points out, according to the periodicals, "when clubbability malfunctioned, it became a cover for human vapidity and even malevolence: clubs narrowed as well as broadened horizons".[302] Mackie argues that in their critique of traditional coffeehouse culture Addison and Steele were trying to present an alternative realm of polite sociability, enlarging the public sphere itself to include spaces "that stood at a critical distance outside any actual coffeehouses, periodicals, or town talk".[303] In *Spectator* 10, Addison states, "I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee-houses".[304] Not only is Addison staking his claim as a social improver by claiming his papers as facilitators of conversation and education in spaces not traditionally associated with education and "Philosophy", he is also hinting at the appropriate spaces for practising polite sociability. The tea-table, located within the private space of the home, and presided over predominantly by women, was considered just as important to

[300] Steele, *Spectator*, no. 4, 5 March 1711.
[301] See Addison, *Spectator*, no.9, 10 March 1711.
[302] Klein, "Figure of France", 34.
[303] Erin Skye Mackie, "Being Too Positive About the Public Sphere", in Newman, *Emerging Discourses*, 82.
[304] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 10, 12 March 1711.

the practice of sociability, with its focus on emotional and moral cultivation, as the public domain of the coffee-house and the gentlemen's club.

Over the course of the century, as the practice of sociability grew to incorporate a wider range of communities across a wider range of spaces, the emotional practices taking place within these spaces became increasingly difficult to define as either class- or gender-centric. As Rumbold points out, many societies aspired to a sociability that was more compatible with the new forms of polite mixed society, unlike the hard drinking, whoring, and politically factious societies caricatured as immoral in *The Tatler* and *Spectator*.[305] Spaces of mixed membership occurred more frequently than we might think from our standpoint three hundred years later. Literary societies and circles, of which both men and women were members, and which attracted intellectuals from both the nobility and middle classes, often gathered in the homes of central figures, the drawing room acting as both a private and public space of sociability. Examples of literary and philosophical societies meeting in private spaces, the most famous of which was probably that of Lady Elizabeth Montagu, can be found all across Britain from the middle of the century. [306] Such spaces were not exclusively male or female, but they were often, as Richardson points out, "female-*managed*" and offered the women hosting them an opportunity to exercise influence over their guests and participate in intellectual, and sometimes political, debate.[307]

Many saw the company of women as a sign of Britain's progress into civility and improvement. Hume, for instance, compares the "barbarous nations" of the world,

[305] Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler*", 22.
[306] See my discussion in chapter 2.
[307] Sarah Richardson, "'Well-Neighboured Houses': The Political Networks of Elite Women, 1780-1860" in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson, (Hampshire: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 64 (her emphasis).

where polygamy is practised and women are reduced to "abject slavery", to the "civility" and "respect" that women "among a polite people" enjoy.[308] Women are held up by Hume as prime examples of manners and virtue, and are therefore welcome additions to spaces of sociability as agents of improvement: "what better school for manners, than the company of virtuous women; where the mutual endeavour to please must insensibly polish the mind".[309] As Mee states, "feminized domestic virtues were an important part of the configuration of conversation in *The Tatler* and *Spectator*" as well.[310] The aim of Addison and Steele to improve and cultivate women's sensibilities and virtue as well as men's was a crucial element in their scheme of social improvement, establishing the domestic circle as an essential "laboratory of character formation".[311] Women, whose sensibilities were supposedly naturally more acute, were given moral authority in the private sphere and their influence would "melt" and "soothe" the violent passions in men, making them more "agreeable".[312]

The development of polite sociability was thus as much about an injection of feminine emotional norms into public spaces as an actual broadening of the public sphere. There was an integral connection between the intimate space of the family home and the practice of sociability in the public sphere. As White puts it, "eighteenth-century culture projected sensibility, the essence of humanity inherent in idealized familial relationships, out from the home as a civilizing force of sympathy that would bind together otherwise unconnected individuals".[313] For the proponents of a sociability

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[308] David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and the Sciences" in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. E.F. Miller, (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987), 133-4.
[309] David Hume, "Of Polygamy and Divorces" in Miller, *Essays*, 184-5.
[310] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 10.
[311] Dwyer, "Imperative of Sociability", 173.
[312] Alice Browne, *The Eighteenth Century Feminist Mind*, (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester, 1987) 28-29. A reviewer of Maria Susanna Cooper's *The Exemplary Mother* (1769) writes that within the "narrow sphere" of "domestic life", "the tender emotions of the heart are exerted in their utmost sensibility": quoted in Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 21.
[313] White, "The 'Joineriana'", 513 (see chap.2, n. 86).

based on natural affections and sympathy, the aim was to inject the values and emotional norms of the private, domestic sphere into the public sphere of society at large.[314] The periodicals of Addison and Steele were particularly important in elaborating this movement of norms from the private to the public. As Rumbold states, "*The Tatler* presented a pervasive revaluation of social and family relationships, not as dull and oppressive alternatives to the glamor of unfettered appetite, but as attractive opportunities".[315] Bickerstaff presents family life as one of mutual appreciation and compassion, emotional norms that are to be carried through into social life and public spaces.[316] Mr. Spectator's recommendation of his own "Speculations to all well-regulated Families that set apart an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butter", highlights the author's hopes that his papers will be a central tool of the practice of sociability within families and a model of improvement through his advocacy of social sympathy and compassion.[317] It is "for their Good" that he "would earnestly advise them […] to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage".[318]

An example of the compassion Mr. Spectator is trying to exemplify comes out in *Spectator* 11 in his relation of a story that would become popular during the abolition campaign later in the century.[319] In a piece written by Steele, the narrator hears from a

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[314] The "feminization of culture" was not necessarily accepted by all communities. Mee points out that for many, "the cultural visibility of women was a sign not of progress, but of a decline into effeminacy and luxury wrought by commercial society". *Conversable Worlds*, 10.
[315] Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler*", 21.
[316] On a piece that describes the deathbed of the mother of a family, a correspondent writes that he "has wept over" this piece "with great pleasure" and claims that the influence of The Tatler has been so great in his locality that the squire has entirely reformed. See *Tatler*, no. 95, 15-17 November 1709.
[317] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 10, 12 March 1711.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Playwright George Colman adapted the story into a play in 1787 and, according to Elizabeth Inchbald, who later wrote the play's Preface, it helped focus the public's attention on "that great question". It was performed over 160 times between 1787 and 1800, although whether it had a mobilising effect is hard to say. For Inchbald its political and moral aim was clear: "This is a drama, which might remove from Mr Wilberforce his aversion to theatrical exhibitions, and convince him, that the teaching of moral duty is not confined to particular spots of ground". Quoted in Basker, *Amazing Grace*, 329n (see chap. 2, n. 115).

woman of "good Sense" the tale of "Inkle and Yarico", the supposedly true story of an English trader shipwrecked in the West Indies who seduces an "*Indian* maid" and then betrays her when offered the chance to recover his financial losses by selling her into slavery:

> Mr. Thomas Inkle, now coming into English Territories, began seriously to reflect upon his loss of Time, and to weigh with himself how many Days Interest of his Mony he had lost during his Stay with Yarico. […] Upon which Considerations, the prudent and frugal young Man sold Yarico to a Barbadian Merchant; notwithstanding that the poor Girl, to incline him to commiserate her Condition, told him that she was with Child by him: But he only made use of that Information, to rise in his Demands upon the Purchaser. [320]

The young man may be "prudent" and "frugal" in his decision to sell Yarico but these are not commendable qualities in the situation being related. At a point he should relent in his scheme and "commiserate" with the girl's condition, he is only made even more greedy in his demands for her price. Steele is clearly presenting the story as a moral tale, not one that necessarily warns against greed but which nonetheless casts the character of the Englishman into question. Steele frames it in such a way as to give the reader no doubt as to the appropriate reaction to such a piece. When the story is finished, Mr. Spectator says that "I was so touch'd with this Story […] that I left the Room with Tears in my Eyes".[321] Here is a clear example of Mr. Spectator, or Steele,

[320] Steele, *Spectator*, no. 11, 13 March 1711 (his emphasis). The story was first related in Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbadoes* (1657) but was made popular by Steele.
[321] Ibid.

producing a paper which not only reflects the emotional norms of the polite society of which he is a member, but in which he also gives a clue to his readership on how to practise those norms. Compassion is felt on hearing the sad case of Yarico and his tears are the physical embodiment of that sentiment. As I discuss in chapter five, reading a text for its emotional content and its ability to communicate sentiments through somatic language became central tenets of sentimental literature in this century.

This is one of the earliest uses of the Inkle and Yarico story as a tool of emotional practice. It puts emphasis on the unfeeling nature of the greedy merchants and traders in the colonies while it urges a feeling, somatic response from the reader. While it is not an abolitionist piece, it provided a model for its community of readers – who, as we have seen, existed well beyond the lifetime of its authors – of the emotional response required on being presented with such a story. Examples of Mr. Spectator's discourses on benevolence and compassion run throughout the 635 papers of Steele and Addison's periodical, not to mention those of *The Tatler* and their other works.[322] Through these papers the authors "seek to make people not only morally better but also civically functional by instilling within them the proper temperament of fellowship needed for participation" in society.[323] For Addison and Steele, "doing Good" to others is "the Exercise of the noblest Power"; their idea of the virtuous person is abundantly clear: "mild, good, and benevolent, full of a generous Regard for the publick Prosperity, compassionating each other's Distresses, and relieving each other's Wants".[324]

The commitment of Addison and Steele to such principles had remarkable influence on social and emotional practices for many communities in the eighteenth

[322] Good examples are in *Spectator* nos. 230, 248 and 257.
[323] Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability", 155.
[324] Steele, *Spectator*, no. 230, 23 November 1711.

century. Some scholars have argued that their papers were largely "significant in attesting to the importance of sociability as a fact in eighteenth-century public culture, and in producing this sociability as a value".[325] As vehicles of polite conversation, Addison and Steele's periodicals "popularised the philosophical ideals of the Scottish Enlightenment, self-consciously promulgating sociability as a virtue" and enacting in print the ideals of polite and sociable interchange based on mutual sympathy and affections.[326] At the same time, the polite sociability advocated and reproduced in papers like *The Tatler* and *Spectator* was only normative to specific kinds of people and consisted of very controlled emotional practices within tightly held spaces in terms of who could take part in them. As Broomhall states, "implicit in the rules of these communities or styles are acceptable forms of emotional control and expression for the particular individuals who are their adherents".[327] Spaces of polite sociability could thus be very exclusive of people who did not conform to the emotional repertoire practised within those spaces.[328] Standards of sociability were often used, as Rumbold points out, to condemn those who were represented as other, often "an unsocialized anomaly within the lower orders, dangerously exempt from the expectations imposed by a hierarchically ordered community".[329] In the antislavery and abolitionist arguments which adopted notions of social sympathy, this other took the form of the proslavery opposition.

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[325] Russell and Tuite, *Romantic Sociability*, 8.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Broomhall, *Spaces for Feeling*, 2.
[328] The lower orders of society were perhaps most often represented as lacking the appropriate sensibilities and opportunities to practise polite sociability. However, the higher orders were also set apart by the middle classes as not conforming to their own emotional norms. As Paul Langford points out, the function of the "sentimental revolution" that held such an appeal to middle class communities "was to express the middle-class need for a code of manners which challenged aristocratic ideals and fashions", viewed by many as excessive and distasteful. *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 461.
[329] Rumbold, "Reading *The Tatler*", 20. Instead, the associative activities of the lower orders were often presented as a threat to public good. See also Fairclough, *Romantic Crowd* (see chap. 1, n. 27).

Other fields of inquiry and discourses were also working towards the same goals as the periodicals of Addison and Steele. As Mee points out, the numerous examples of conduct and advice manuals available at the time "should correct any idea that Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele somehow invented the discourse of politeness".[330] Nevertheless, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* did have a significant impact and influence on generations of readers throughout the century as tools of their emotional practice. In Mr. Spectator's own words, so that "Virtue and Discretion may not be short transient intermitting Starts of Thought, I have resolved to refresh their Memories from Day to Day", because "The Mind that lies fallow but a single Day, sprouts up in Follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous Culture."[331] His use of "Culture" here is in the sense also used by Hutcheson in 1755, that is, the habitual self-cultivation necessary for social improvement. Addison is explicitly staking his claim for his papers to be used as a tool of practice as, indeed, Samuel Johnson declared them to be in 1776: "it has now for more than half a century supplied the English nation with [...] rules of practice".[332] Addison and Steele's program for social improvement through emotional practices was consistent and clear, and when we look at the activities and emotional norms displayed by many members of the abolitionist community at the end of the century, we can see the same values repeated and rescripted in order to drive their own reform agenda.

[330] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 7.
[331] Addison, *Spectator*, no. 10, 12 March 1711.
[332] Samuel Johnson, *Public Advertiser*, 14 December 1776, quoted in Bowers, "Universalizing Sociability", 150.

3.2 "Callous to Every Humane Feeling": Antislavery Sentiment during the Somerset Trial

The improving program carried out in the newspapers and periodicals of the press opened up the space, both literally and metaphorically, for the coupling of the idea of an emotions-based social reform with new political agendas that emerged towards the end of the century. Through stories like Steele's Inkle and Yarico and other reports from Africa and the West Indies published in newspapers and in pamphlet form, the British public were becoming increasingly aware of the conditions on slave plantations and the mode in which the slave trade was carried out. The emotional response expected of Steele's readers to his tale of European greed at the cost of African lives was clear and, with depictions of slave suffering becoming increasingly available through the press, the linking of a humane and morally virtuous sensibility with an antislavery stance started to emerge by the second half of the century. Pamphlet writers and newspaper correspondents began to question the validity of slavery in terms of the emotional effect it had on victims, on perpetrators, and on themselves as witnesses to the crimes. For the most part these were more or less sporadic efforts to gain a public ear. However, in the 1770s, one particular story was picked up by the newspapers which opened up the debate around the question of the inherent inhumanity of the institutions of slavery and the slave trade. While this debate did not have the clear sentimental or political agenda as the one conducted almost two decades later during the abolition campaign, an early link between antislavery and "humane" feelings is evident in the reportage and correspondence of newspapers which covered the story.

The story in question was the legal trial between James Somerset, an African slave, and his former owner, Charles Stewart. After coming to England with his master

in 1769, Somerset escaped and sought the help of Granville Sharp who had been making a name for himself by helping slaves pursue their owners through the courts.[333] In 1771 he intervened in Somerset's recapture by obtaining a writ of *habeas corpus*, allowing for a trial to establish whether Somerset was a free man. After six hearings over the course of seven months Chief Justice, Lord Mansfield, ruled on June 22, 1772, that there was no authority under English law to take a slave out of the country by force and Somerset was discharged. Many interpreted the ruling as an acknowledgment that English law did not allow for slavery and that, once a slave set foot on English soil, he or she was free.[334] However, as Carey states, while Mansfield's decision empowered slaves in England to emancipate themselves by running away, he did not actually rule that slavery was illegal.[335] Nevertheless, in the debates that were carried out in the pages of the press around the case, we can see a burgeoning antislavery identity being expressed which founded its arguments on a capacity for feeling while positioning its opposition as an inhumane other.

As I noted above, the practice of polite sociability often made an other of groups that did not share the same emotional repertoire as those middle class communities which privileged social sympathy, whether for reasons of social status, education, gender, religion, or any other factor which set a group outside of their norms. For those

[333] Many runaway slaves enlisted Sharp's help. Although not a lawyer to begin with, his work with slaves led him to study the law and to publish his pamphlet*, A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery in England* (1769), distributed mainly amongst the legal community. Sharp later became the Secretary for the Abolition Society.
[334] Abolitionist poets in particular used Mansfield's ruling as the basis for their arguments that "Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs / Receive our air, that moment they are free". William Cowper, "The Task, Book II", *The Task and Other Poems*, ed. Henry Morley (London, 1899; Project Gutenberg, 2015), lines 40-41, www.gutenberg.org/files/3698/3698-h/3698-h.htm.
[335] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 175-6 (see chap. 1, n. 12). For interpretations of Mansfield's ruling see Jerome Nadelhaft, "The Somersett Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions", *Journal of Negro History* 51, (July 1966): 193-208, http://www.jstor.org/stable/i327616; James Oldham, "New Light on Mansfield and Slavery", *Journal of British Studies* 27, (January 1988): 45-68, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.adelaide.edu.au/stable/175399.

who took an antislavery, and later abolitionist, position this included people who did not share their views on slavery. Antislavery reformers placed the proof of their sentimental emotional repertoire in one's ability to sympathise with the sufferer and to practise benevolent actions towards aiding their suffering. Those who supported slavery, or had a personal interest in it and who were thus blind to the suffering of slaves, could not fit into their idea of a feeling, virtuous community according to their emotional norms. Such othering became a useful political technique for the abolition movement, allowing them to claim a position of moral superiority by casting their opponents as unfit for the emotional community of the nation, or at least the version of the nation that they advocated. We can first see this othering take shape much earlier than the abolition campaigns, in the newspaper debates which emerged around Somerset's case.

Several London newspapers covered the case widely, publishing both reports of proceedings and readers' letters on the subject. For the most part, court proceedings were not reported in particularly sentimental terms. However, some of the arguments from Somerset's counsel were clearly based on notions of humanity and the idea of emotional cultivation.[336] William Davy's speech relies on the sentimental image of slaves being "torn from their nearest and dearest" in order to conclude that slavery "was pregnant with every thing shocking to the ideas of honour and humanity, and therefore hoped it would never be adopted in a free country."[337] His fellow counsellor Allen,

[336] While we have newspaper reports of the court proceedings, these are not official accounts of the speeches that took place. As Carey points out, reports and transcripts of trials that appeared in newspapers were not always reliable and could depend on the bias of the reporter or newspaper editor. Nevertheless, these are all historians have at their disposal in order to gain insights into the language used in such spaces. Given the fact that several newspapers repeat the speeches given, if not the same, terms we can fairly deduce that the evidence before us is as accurate as we can hope for. See Carey, *British Abolitionism*.

[337] *Morning Chronicle*, 25 May 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000824058). Carey in fact states that the *London Evening Post* gives the only report of Davy saying this. *British*

meanwhile, reportedly framed Somerset's owner Stewart and others "who arrogated such" a "dangerous Dominion over a Man" as "inhuman".[338] It was also reported that Allen "remarked upon the great danger of familiarizing the most distant idea of slavery here, as though it may shock one of us, at present, to see a man tied to a tree, and undergoing whatever punishment the avarice, ambition, or revenge of a master might dictate, in time it would grow as familiar, and perhaps as little disgusting, as seeing a parcel of slaughtered sheep hanging up at Whitechapel".[339] Allen, or the reporter, is clearly alluding to the idea that practice in cruelty makes people "familiar", or used, to witnessing scenes of suffering and pain so that they become unfeeling towards its victims. This idea – the practice of cruelty as opposed to the moral sentiments – is one that will be repeated in abolitionist texts across many genres. Casting their case as an act of humanity and their opposition as men who take part in inhuman practices sets up the terms in which the ensuing debate about slavery takes shape.

Readers' letters carry on the debate using the same basis for their arguments against slavery in which the slave owner is cast as the "cruel West-Indian" and the antislavery position is one of "common humanity".[340] The nature of the men who "do the work of Infamy" in taking part in slavery is seriously questioned by antislavery letter writers, one letter stating that it is a "wonder such a Band of prostitute, *voluntary Slaves* are not ashamed to look one another in the Face; much more their injured Country[men]".[341] According to this writer, such men have "sunk" so low and "degraded" themselves to such an extent that they must, if they were men of feeling, be

Abolitionism, 177. However, there are several extant publications which recounted the same words in their court reports, including the *Morning Chronicle* and *Bingley's Journal.*

[338] *Public Advertiser*, 15 May 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001141306).

[339] *Morning Chronicle*, 18 May 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000824010).

[340] *London Evening Post,* 11-13 June 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000683106).

[341] *Public Advertiser*, 9 March 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001140761), his or her emphasis.

ashamed of their actions.[342] Even Lord Mansfield came under fire as unfeeling and callous for seemingly sitting on the fence for some time before his ruling. Before adjourning for deliberation, which took him a month, Mansfield addressed Stewart and advised him to discharge Somerset and have the matter settled out of court, in order to avoid a definite decision on his part which could set "dangerous" precedents.[343] An antislavery correspondent to the *Public Advertiser* expressed his disgust at Mansfield's apparent vacillation, calling the judge "callous to every generous Sentiment – dead to every Feeling, but the base Passions of Avarice, Fear, or Lust".[344] In this writer's estimation, anyone who did not avow themselves as taking a strong position against slavery could not claim to have "generous" sentiments or be a man or woman of feeling.

A similar letter in the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* casts the proponent of slavery as "callous to every humane feeling".[345] "Humanity", according to this writer, is not "confined to any particular country" and men are not "to be excluded from it, whose crime is to have been born with a darker skin (but perhaps with not a blacker heart) than their fair complexioned tyrants".[346] In the clearest terms this writer states the case for the antislavery position, a position which continued to be taken over the course of the next few decades as abolitionism took hold. It was a position which was based on the dichotomy between humanity and cruelty and antislavery writers in the press were clear on which side their arguments lay. Slavery is founded on "the most base and contracted selfishness that ever hardened the human breast" and, in an echo of

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[342] Ibid.
[343] *London Evening Post*, 21-23 May 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000683002).
[344] *Public Advertiser*, 13 June 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001141500).
[345] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 20 May 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000372071).
[346] Ibid.

Somerset's counsel, if Britain was tolerant of slavery "we should insensibly become callous to every humane feeling, and be as little shocked to see a fellow-creature flea'd [sic] alive as if we were viewing a beast's carcase hanging in a butchers shop".[347] Practices of cruelty, in other words, habituate a population in violence and oppression.

Many proponents of slavery who were beginning to come under fire for their practices towards the end of the century, and who were particularly targeted during the debate over Somerset's case, showed that they were not entirely pleased with their new label of "inhumane". A tactic many use is to praise the "humanity" of the writers who express themselves against slavery and even go so far as to say they too wish slavery did not exist. A letter from "Caius" in reply to an antislavery letter begins with stating that the arguments made by "A Friend to Mankind" are "humane, but not convincing", and goes on to state that "I am as little an advocate for slavery as the *Friend to Mankind*; I wish it was never *legal*, nor now *necessary*." [348] The italicised words here are the crux of the proslavery argument, emphasising the legality of slavery under English law and its necessity to the prosperity of the kingdom. After all, "the master has a right to the labour and service of his servant during the life of the latter, according to a purchase made in *the course of law*", made by "Acts of Parliament".[349] While the "municipal laws" which are a "necessity, arising from the disproportion of numbers between Blacks and Whites," have "an air of oppression", they are aimed at "nothing but the immediate safety of the King's subjects".[350] The writer is clearly worried about the consequences of the Somerset case should it be decided that slaves are not subject to the same colonial laws when in England. He states that it would not be "just" to

[347] Ibid.
[348] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 20 February 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000370849), his emphasis.
[349] Ibid. (his emphasis).
[350] Ibid.

"deprive a man of property", "of his purchase", simply "from a pretended distinction between the constitution of the different parts of the English dominions".[351]

The idea of humanity and of acting humanely was not given up easily by the proslavery side. As well as their legal and economic arguments for the continuation of slavery they often tried to prove in their letters that they could act out of ideals of humanity as much as any "Friend to Mankind". One writer, calling himself "Benevolus", argues for the expulsion of the African population from England and for those who are unwilling to leave to "remain here subject to the wills and commands of their masters and mistresses, as abroad, without any pretence to a benefit from our laws".[352] "Thus", he or she states, "this difficult and important matter may be settled upon just and equitable principles, constitutionally with the *laws of the land* and those of humanity".[353] It seems humanity here is thrown in for good measure. "Caius" states that "the statutes made [in the colonies] for the regulation and government of slaves refrain masters from too great an exercise of their power, and oblige them to acts of humanity in properly feeding and cloathing [sic] their Negroes."[354] The proslavery letter writers clearly did not want to be labelled as inhumane by their opposition even though their practices were. Although the fact that they were "obliged" to act humanely because of "statutes" placed upon them to do so somewhat diminishes any argument based on humanity.

The terms of the debate had already been set by antislavery writers and it was very difficult for those with an interest in a practice inherently cruel and inhumane to attempt to argue the opposite. Professing to be a humane, morally virtuous man or

[351] Ibid.
[352] *Morning Chronicle*, 2 June 1772, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000824127).
[353] Ibid. (his or her emphasis).
[354] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 20 February 1772.

woman of feeling was one thing but, if feelings were restricted to one's own family, community or nation, or blinded to the suffering of slaves through personal interest in the trade, then one could not belong to the emotional community that antislavery reformers were shaping towards the end of the century. The crux of the antislavery arguments used in the press during the Somerset case lay in the essential difference between the feeling and the unfeeling, linking feeling with humanity and lack of feeling with the inhumane. This argument was re-emphasised again and again during the later abolition campaigns of the 1780s and 90s. The newspaper debates of the 1770s may not clearly express the politics of sympathy which became central to abolitionist arguments in the future, but they nevertheless helped to lay the emotional foundations of abolitionist rhetoric nearly twenty years before the emergence of the movement.

3.3 "Humanity-Mania": Newspaper Debates during the Campaign for Abolition

Letters to newspapers by abolitionist writers can be examined not just as useful pieces of political agitation during the campaigns to end the slave trade, but as performances of their abolitionist emotional repertoire. Building on the arguments used by antislavery writers before them, abolitionist newspaper correspondents in 1788 used the space of the newspaper column to establish the identity, and hence emotional repertoire, of the abolitionist community. This was perhaps done in a more combative way than other types of texts I look at in this thesis, as their correspondence often takes the form of debate with opposition writers and rebuttals of previous letters. Newspaper correspondence often therefore contains stronger statements of indignation and anger, yet the tenets of their arguments remain the same as their counterparts in pamphlet or sermon literature, or even poetry. Humanity and the cultivation, or practice, of moral sentiments are central to abolitionist newspaper correspondence during the first years of the campaign, while an othering of inhumanity and cruelty establishes the dichotomy

between the two sides of the debate. There is thus a sense of a shared community created amongst abolitionist letter writers as they refer back to each other and to the committees and activists working on getting the abolition bill passed in parliament. Because they are speaking to each other through the page, the newspaper becomes a tool of their practice, engendering their emotional repertoire and abolitionist identity through repetition of arguments which emphasise their own capacity for feeling against the incapacity of their opposition to feel at all.

As we saw above, the page of the newspaper or periodical acts as a space in which the practice of emotions is carried out by communities. Addison and Steele had created "papers" which not only aided conversation between the writers and their community of readers but also mobilised and regulated the practices central to the emotional repertoire of their community. Social sympathy was thus practised and reinforced as an emotional norm through the use of their conversational papers. The newspaper columns that abolitionists wrote to express their views and feelings on the slave trade and to mobilise public support for the movement were used by that community in a similar way. As Scheer argues, "media use is an extremely important emotional practice" as it aids the mobilisation and regulation of emotional norms.[355] Just as the periodical papers were used to engage in the emotional practice of sociability through the space of the text, the newspapers in 1788 were used by the abolitionist community (and the proslavery community) to engage with others in their community and establish their own emotional norms.[356] The nature of the debate they were engaging in, moreover, meant that those norms were rescripted into their political

[355] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 210.
[356] As I will demonstrate, proslavery writers were often as keen to establish that their own emotional repertoire privileged the same sentiments as their abolitionist opposition and that their arguments were based on the same principles of humanity.

agenda as they used their sentimental arguments for the politics of sympathy adopted by the abolition movement.

Building on the ideas expressed by antislavery writers during the Somerset case decades earlier, abolitionists argued their case for political reform of the slave trade on the basis of humanity. For abolitionists writing to newspapers during the first political campaign of 1788, the word "humanity" is laden with emotional meaning. They tie it firmly to their own emotional practices and repertoire, whereby a person of humanity or a humane act requires the activation of the moral sentiments. Being humane is equivalent to being compassionate, benevolent, and sensible of another's feelings. These are active feelings – compassion must lead to humanitarian action – and they are actively cultivated through the practice of engaging in reform and political debate. Thus, most abolitionist letter writers use the language of the moral sentiments and base their arguments firmly on the principles of compassionate humanitarianism. Many, if not most, claim these arguments as based in their Christian faith, drawing on sentimental doctrines made popular by Latitudinarian divines in the eighteenth century.[357] *The Morning Chronicle* of 9 April 1788 includes a letter which states that "The Slave Trade is totally inconsistent with the benign spirit of the gospel, which breathes peace on earth, and good will unto men; and I must confess I am not a little surprized that any benevolent and disinterested man, should endeavour to justify the inhuman traffick".[358] Similar sentiments are expressed in a letter in the *Public Advertiser* that same month, declaring that "The glorious system of the Gospel […] makes us citizens of the world, by obliging us to profess universal benevolence; but

[357] See my discussion of the religious influence on abolitionism in chapter 4.
[358] *Morning Chronicle,* 9 April 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000882071).

more especially are we bound, as Christians, to commiserate and assist, to the utmost of our power, all persons in distress, or captivity".[359]

This letter is signed Gustavus Vassa, the pen name of African ex-slave, Olaudah Equiano, whose autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) became a popular abolitionist publication.[360] His letter is interesting for its assertion of "our" duty as Christians and "our" "charity", which is owed "to all the rest of mankind". Equiano counts himself as a member of the abolitionist community and also of the wider community of the nation. He belongs, not through citizenship, but through the sharing of emotional norms with these communities or, at least, with the norms that the first community wished to impart to the latter. Thus he is able to state that "We must not for the sake of Old England, and its African trade, or for the supposed advantage or imaginary necessities of the American colonies, lay aside our christian charity".[361] He is not preaching as an African to the British but as a member of a prominent emotional community in Britain, asking fellow members of his society to act "according to the law of Nature" and bestow "universal love" on "all persons in distress".[362]

The appeal to a sense of Britishness based on their own sentimental emotional repertoire was a common tactic used by abolitionist activists. A vicar from Warwickshire addresses his letter directly to the Abolition Society, stating that "No Briton who feels for […] the misery of his fellow-creatures, can hear of the benevolent

[359] *Public Advertiser,* 28 April 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001201621).
[360] Equiano's work was used by abolitionists to prove the intelligence and humanity of Africans in the face of racist proslavery arguments to the contrary.
[361] *Public Advertiser,* 28 April 1788.
[362] Equiano, indeed, was fully immersed in London's scene of sociability. Friends with several prominent abolitionists, including Granville Sharp and Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, he was also a member of several societies and debating clubs.

purpose for which your Society is instituted, without approving of the undertaking."[363] He states that slavery "is inconsistent with every idea of justice and humanity" and

> We are taught by reason and religion to consider every man as our brother, and to regard him with the same degree of affection, with which we regard ourselves. Not to confine our benevolence to those of our own colour, country, or kindred, but to extend it unto all who are endowed with the same common nature.[364]

These are clear sentimental arguments, affirming the natural rights of all humanity and thus the extension of social sympathy to the African slaves on the basis that they are "fellow-creatures". Moreover, by stating that slavery is "inconsistent" with "humanity", a humanity that is imbued with all the moral sentiments privileged by the abolitionist, and by claiming that "No Briton who feels" for the suffering of fellow human beings can possibly accept the institution, he is challenging anyone opposed to abolition. Because no true Briton could possibly see the suffering inflicted on slaves and not feel compassion for their pain, the efforts of the Abolition Society must be approved of by all.

These letters are clearly setting up a dichotomy between the humane British abolitionist and the inhumane un-British supporter of slavery, thereby establishing their own emotional norms as the right ones. The trade is "inhuman", it induces "misery" on "fellow-creatures", and so its perpetrators and supporters who conduct and condone the business must inevitably be as cruel and unfeeling as the acts they carry out. The *Morning Chronicle* of 22 August includes a piece which at once directly shames the

[363] *Morning Chronicle*, 29 February 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000881758).
[364] Ibid.

insensitivity of slavers and masters and challenges the sensibility of the reader. Although not a letter, it is an item which was most likely sent in by an abolitionist activist or, indeed, included for activist purposes by the editor himself. Headed as a piece from the *Virginia Gazette*, it tells the sentimental story of "A remarkable Instance of Friendship between two Negroes", whereby two Africans for sale at a market in Santa Cruz appeared to be closely tied: "there appeared in every look and action the tenderest affection and heart-felt attachment to each other".[365] The two begged to be sold together but "even this poor request" was refused "through the brutality of their salesmen".[366] The story reports that the two slaves later ran away from their respective plantations and were both found hanging from the same tree branch "locked fast and folded in each other's arms, embracing and embraced":

> Such was the attachment, even in death, of mortals formed like ourselves, with souls informed with every noble and generous sentiment, and capable of cultivation like our own; but whom with the most barbarous oppression, we, at our pleasure deprive of liberty, of life, and even of the advantages of common brutes – the horse and the ass. Hear this, ye Christians, and blush! [367]

Here is a sentimental piece of rhetoric in which the African is depicted as equal to the European based on his ability to feel "generous sentiment". The affection the two slaves demonstrate towards each other proves that they are more human than the "brutal" slavers who tore them apart, breaking their social bond. The final line, moreover, challenges the reader on their own feelings, demanding that they blush and feel the

[365] *Morning Chronicle*, 22 August 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000883600).
[366] Ibid.
[367] Ibid.

shame that a true Christian and man or woman of feeling must on witnessing a scene of misery that has only taken place through the oppressive practices of their own society.

The use of shame as a sign of a person of sensibility is a tactic used by many activists across abolitionist materials. A lack of shame equates to a lack of feeling on the part of the reader and this would suggest affinity with the inhuman slaver. In newspaper debates, writers are often fairly direct in their abuse of the "unfeeling", a result perhaps of the argumentative nature of debate within the space of the newspaper, as well as the anonymity with which writers could express their views. Thomas Cooper was clearly not concerned with having his name known, however. Cooper, a member of the Manchester Committee whose outspoken political radicalism worried his fellow abolitionists in London, writes to the *Morning Chronicle* to criticise the intelligence of Samuel Estwick, MP, for his recent proslavery pamphlet.[368] In a letter full of scorn for the "marplot" who wrote the "absurd" pamphlet, he states that if Estwick "is not ashamed, however, for himself, I am greatly mistaken, if his friends are not ashamed for him."[369] It is men like Estwick who sanction the actions of the "unfeeling" slavers and "doom" the slaves to "unlimitted labour and unlimitted punishment".[370]

A letter signed "M" in the *St. James's Chronicle* is similarly critical of a previous letter sent in by "N" which argued that Africans are not fellow humans and therefore no better than animals who do not need any better treatment than the horse or

[368] Abolition Society member John Barton writes to William Roscoe that he is "sorry to add that we had a very petulant letter from our friend Cooper" complaining that he had not heard anything from the London Committee in weeks. John Barton to William Roscoe, 12 December 1787, *Roscoe Papers*, Liverpool Record Office (920 ROS 252). Cooper, for his part, had written to fellow Manchester Committee member, Thomas Walker, "that the Blundering London Committee have deceived us in saying that Wilberforce had pledged himself to bring the Matter of the Slave Trade into Parliament". He did not trust "the London drones" to get the job done politically. Thomas Cooper to Thomas Walker, 9 December 1787, *Letters Addressed to Thomas Walker (1749-1817)*, British Library, (Add MS 88955).
[369] *Morning Chronicle,* 18 February 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000881598).
[370] Ibid.

the ass. "M" states, "I hope, for the Honour of the human Species, that this Writer's Sentiments are more the Result of Ignorance than Inhumanity: […] I will so far subscribe to this Opinion, as to allow that he may be no better than one of these Animals".[371] This writer turns the argument of the proslavery letter around by arguing that he is in fact the brute for his lack of humanity, not the African slave. After attacking the nature of the "Gentleman (I forget, I do not mean Gentleman)" who wrote in with such claims, he or she praises "those who follow the Dictates of Humanity" and states "that our Fellow-Creatures in the Torrid Zone have a greater Claim to our humane Exertions, than the Fellow-Creatures of N".[372] In other words, Africans "have Feelings as well as other Men" and have a right to expect the benevolent actions of men and women "of Humanity" to aid their suffering.[373] Anyone who agrees with "N" simply prove themselves to be inhumane and less deserving of such compassion.

The supporters of slavery and the slave trade are seen by abolitionists as people who are directly interested, or directly involved, in the slave trade and that is why they do not wish to see a stop to it. Indeed, most pro-slavery letters predominantly focus on economic arguments, claiming that abolishing slavery would ruin the empire. "Valerius Publicola" states, "my defence of [the slave trade] arises entirely from a conviction of the necessity of it to support the cultivation of the Islands, and as I consider the Islands as the main sinew of the commercial and naval strength of the Empire, I cannot but dread the adoption of any plan which may tend to lessen their importance".[374] A writer to the *The World* argues that "It will be a very difficult matter to induce the Legislature of this country to conceive it so inhuman a traffick as has been represented by the

[371] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 20-23 December 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001310765).
[372] Ibid.
[373] Ibid.
[374] *Morning Chronicle*, 22 January 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000881177).

enthusiastic few" and is angered by those who "assume the mask of humanity, liberty, and religion" and "brandish the name of Slavery, (ever much sharper than a serpent's tooth, to the feelings of a Briton)".[375] He or she is clearly disparaging of the "humanity" of abolitionists and of their adoption of the language of feeling for their cause. This writer's argument is based purely on the economic effects on Britain should the abolition be carried and his fear of abolitionists comes through in his depiction of them as underhanded radicals:

> The annual produce of these Colonies to British subjects, owners of estates in them, is at a moderate computation, £3,500,000 per annum, which this country must lose, if she suffers herself to be misled by the mistaken infatuation of those enthusiasts, who daily endeavour to inflame the minds of the people, and under the mask of humanity, have surreptitiously obtained the signatures of those more ignorant than themselves, to petition the Legislature for an abolition of a trade, which would totally ruin our West India settlements, and a commerce of the utmost importance to the welfare of this country.[376]

Humanity, for this proslavery writer, is the mark of an "enthusiast", a political agitator who could ruin the country. This stance was taken by many on the proslavery side of the debate, accusing their opposition of indulging in a "Humanity-mania".[377]

Not all proslavery writers were happy to be cast as the inhumane monsters that abolitionists claimed them to be, and many used the idea of humanity for their own

[375] *The World,* 18 March 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001503748).
[376] Ibid.
[377] *Public Advertiser*, 31 March 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001201301).

arguments, claiming that slaves were far worse off in their native countries and the inhumanity lies in them being left there rather than taken under the "care" of British masters. The writer of the above letter in *The World* states that "the emancipation of Slaves in our islands, would be the utmost cruelty to them, because they are not capable of providing for themselves", while the Rev. John Duke, from Barbados, argues that "Much, you may suppose must depend upon the humane dispositions of those into whose hands they may fall; and, as the minds of those are civilized by an intercourse with the world, and the benefits of education, so are their hearts open to the feelings and sufferings of their fellow-creatures."[378] This turns the abolitionist argument that a cultivated sensibility leads to compassion and benevolence to his own purpose, claiming that cruelty could not be performed by "civilized", "educated" British men. As men of feeling they are aware of the "sufferings of their fellow-creatures" and therefore must treat their slaves humanely. It is more inhumane, Duke states, "that they should remain in their own country, the prey to merciless and savage conquerors".[379]

Attempts to prove their own humanity by claiming the practice of slavery is, in fact, benevolent rather than cruel, are met largely with scorn by abolitionists. In the *Morning Chronicle* "Factum" protests the use of humanity as an argument for the continuance of slavery, stating that the opponents of abolition are "men immediately interested" in the trade and "who, by a constant practice in this inhuman traffick, are so bigotted, that they call upon Government to countenance them, for the sake of humanity! […] Every honest feeling must take the alarm, and arouse our indignation at the endeavour, which is not maintainable by any law, religious or moral."[380] For the

[378] *The World*, 18 March 1788; *Morning Chronicle*, 10 July 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000883123).
[379] *Morning Chronicle*, 10 July 1788.
[380] *Morning Chronicle*, 13 June 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2000882644).

abolitionist it is the "constant practice" of cruelty inherent to the "inhuman traffick" which has made supporters of slavery so "bigotted" and unfeeling. He calls on fellow activists – people of "honest feeling" – to take alarm at proslavery arguments which try to commandeer humanity for their own purposes. A letter signed "Philanthropos" similarly states, "That the African Trade cannot be stopped, is evidently false – that it would be inhuman to stop it, is a gross Misrepresentation".[381] To counter the proslavery use of humanity, "Philanthropos" expresses his "trust and hope that the Spirit of Christian Charity will not be discouraged by such childish Arguments from Exertion."[382] It is this "trust and hope" that abolitionists were counting on in their use of a politics of sympathy within the space of newspaper debate: that the spirit of "Charity" and benevolent action would be "exerted" by the public in the cause of the African slave.

While many of the letters written by abolitionists were preaching to the converted and simply engaging in an emotional practice with already existing members of their own community, there is no doubt that their aim was to increase the membership of the abolition movement. By rescripting the emotional norms of sentimentalism, they urge political action through an appeal to common humanity and to those shared norms which they hoped had cultivated the moral sentiments. The following letter sums up this appeal:

> I do not indeed suppose that my Argument will induce any Persons to alter their Opinion upon this Subject, for those who argue in Favour of it are too strongly influenced by worldly

[381] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 6 November 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001310490).
[382] Ibid.

> Motives to be convinced by any Reasoning against it, and those that think as I do, being misled by no Views of Interest, want no further Conviction. I write then merely because I think it the Duty of a free Man and a Christian, to contribute what lies in his Power, towards the Relief of so many unhappy Fellow-Creatures, and shall think myself amply rewarded if this Letter can make even one Convert to the Cause of Humanity.[383]

While casting the supporter of slavery as being too interested in the trade to be able to change their opinion, this writer is hopeful that he can call on those who have feelings to support a cause which springs from no other motive than to relieve the suffering of fellow human beings. The politics of sympathy being exercised by newspaper correspondents relies on the idea that readers will become fellow activists through the social sympathy of the letter. By engaging the readers' moral sentiments, asking them to feel pity, compassion and shame, the abolition movement used the space provided by newspapers as tools of their sentimental mobilisation of public support. In doing so, they were adopting existing emotional norms in use by certain elements of the press over the course of the eighteenth century and adapting them to suit their own emotional repertoire, one which relied on the sentimental appeal of mutual sympathy to urge political reform.

Conclusion

Though it may be too much to affirm that forms of sociability like those provided by the early periodicals of Addison and Steele had a direct influence on later eighteenth-

[383] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 17 April 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001309412).

century emotional norms, it is possible to see in their works, and the way they were used for so many decades as tools of sociability, an emphasis on self- and social improvement. Through their critical discussions of the modes of behaviour and emotional norms relevant to such behaviour, their works formed a vital part of the habituating practice of everyday sociability that polite, virtuous middle class people were meant to engage in. Sociability was an emotional practice which aimed at cultivating sensibility and the moral sentiments. The use of the printed text of periodicals as tools of this practice continued to inform the way in which many reading communities mobilised and regulated their sentimental emotional repertoire throughout the century. It was to this repertoire, and the practices which maintained it, that abolition activists turned towards the end of the eighteenth century in order to argue the case for a political solution on the slave trade. By rescripting the emotional norms found in the sociability of the early press, abolitionists used the space of newspapers to establish their community as one which privileged the moral sentiments over commercial interest and which adapted earlier antislavery arguments found in the press of the 1770s into their own politics of sympathy.

As one abolitionist writer in the *Public Advertiser* put it, abolitionism "is a cause of humanity against oppression – it is a cause of public virtue against public sin – of honour against cowardly treachery – of truth against falsehood – of Englishmen in their true character against men in the disguise of Englishmen!"[384] Arguments which distinguished "us", the abolitionists, as humane, compassionate and actively benevolent, and "them", the proslavery supporters, as inhumane, monstrous, unfeeling, uncultivated, and shameful, set up a dichotomy that would last throughout the campaign and that was used in all sorts of materials aimed at mobilising public and parliamentary

[384] *Public Advertiser,* 4 March 1788, 17th and 18th Century Burney Collection, Gale (Z2001200990).

support for the movement. They were testing the "true" character of the Englishman, promoting their own emotional repertoire as the appropriate one that all Britons should practise. Once this was achieved, they argued, charitable and philanthropic practice would be second nature and an abolition of the slave trade, an inherently cruel and inhumane practice, would be willingly abolished despite its commercial profitability. The next chapter demonstrates that the emotional practices used and the emotional repertoire evident in the letters explored here were not confined to the space of political debate in the newspapers of the day, but were central to the abolitionist appeal in religious texts of the time as well.

Chapter 4: *Mercy Recommended:* Philanthropy, Tears, and Preaching for Abolition

Since the first account of British abolitionism was written by Thomas Clarkson in 1808, the links between its emergence and the spiritual reformist zeal of British Protestant communities in the eighteenth century have been the subject of much scholarship.[385] Anstey, for example, argues that while Enlightenment philosophy fostered critiques of slavery, it was the evangelical impulse that converted anti-slavery sentiment into political action.[386] Turley, likewise points out that the varying denominations of English Christianity all articulated a powerful abolitionist appeal.[387] Yet, the "terminological swamp" of eighteenth-century religion in Britain, as Page describes it, has made it difficult for scholars to pin down which aspects of theology were important to the emergence of abolitionism, which denominations of Protestantism were key to the creation of the so-called reformist zeal, or, indeed, which religious communities were responsible for the transformation of Christian beliefs and practices in general that occurred over the course of the long eighteenth century.[388] This chapter offers an account of the religious context from which abolitionism emerged with particular focus on the emotional practices which suggest a link between the emotional norms of several

[385] Thomas Clarkson's account in his *History* (1808) was the first to focus on the religious backgrounds of abolitionist activists. More recent scholarship continues to highlight its broader theological roots. See Turley *Culture of English Antislavery* (see chap. 1, n. 9); Brycchan Carey, "John Wesley's *Thoughts upon Slavery* and the Language of the Heart", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 85 (Summer-Autumn 2003): 269-283, doi: https://doi.org/10.7227/BJRL.85.2-3.17; Anthony Page, "Rational Dissent, Enlightenment, and Abolition of the British Slave Trade", *The Historical Journal* 54 (September 2011): 741-772, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23017270; John Coffey, "'Tremble Britannia!': Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1758-1807", *English Historical Review*, 127 (August 2012): 844-881, doi: 10.1093/ehr/ces149.
[386] Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade* (see chap. 1, n. 8).
[387] Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*.
[388] Page, "Rational Dissent", 746.

religious communities that existed in Britain during the eighteenth century and those of the abolitionist community that emerged in the 1780s.

I examine two related emotional practices that were central to several Protestant communities during the eighteenth century – acts of "doing good" and compassionate weeping – and suggest a link between these practices and the sentimental discourse that abolitionists used to mobilise public opinion. This is not to say that religious emotional practices led directly to either the emergence of abolitionism as a movement or to sentimentalism as an emotional style. Rather, in a close relationship with other discourses, religious norms and practices that were inherently emotional and sentimental contributed to the way in which many communities went about improving their society, morally, spiritually and materially. The first section focuses on this improvement. The idea of "doing good" was a crucial practice which spanned denominational sects; I argue that these acts of charity are emotional practices because they engaged feelings of pity, compassion and benevolence and allowed people to act on those feelings by helping others. The regular performance of good works for many religious communities was a method of cultivating benevolence through the mobilisation of the moral sentiments. I examine the philanthropic reform agendas for some of these communities and demonstrate that antislavery activism formed a central part of their programs of "doing good".

The second section explores compassionate weeping as an emotional practice. My focus here is on expressions of weeping and tears in religious texts by both High-Church Anglicans in their privileging of sentimental parables from the New Testament and by Methodists in their passionate displays of lachrymosity. While each sect has a different style of weeping, both have the same purpose: tears are specifically mobilised

in texts and rituals in order to produce a feeling congregation, members of which cultivate benevolence through the practice of compassionate weeping. In the texts of both Laurence Sterne and John Wesley, among others, tears are used as a mobilising tool for compassion and their early discussions of slavery in this context highlights the emerging link many made between sentimentalism and humanitarianism. I examine John Wesley's use of sentimental language in particular, in his antislavery tract *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1774), in order to suggest a link between practices surrounding the Christian maxim "weep with them that weep" and the sentimental use of tears in antislavery literature.

In the final section I consider examples of abolitionist sermon literature which make use of sentimental arguments for reform based on cultivated benevolence and tearful compassion. Sermons were one of the largest types of mobilising material for abolitionists which enjoyed large audiences, both as listeners within the space of a congregation and as readers of the published manuscripts. With examples taken from different denominations, I show that the sentimental language in sermons highlights the relationship between religious emotional norms and practices and sentimental abolitionism. The discourse they contain can tell us much about the emotional repertoire of these communities. Religious leaders made a distinction between cultivated benevolence, which is the mark of a virtuous Christian, and cultivated cruelty, which is the effect of slavery. By emphasising compassionate tears, they can claim that those who are capable of shedding them are truly virtuous while those who do not cry when confronted with the miseries of slavery have an insensibility to the suffering of others, thus casting the slave trader and owner as unchristian. Through their pulpits and influential published manuscripts, priests and ministers linked the active and tearful compassion of Jesus with the political urgency of campaigning for abolition,

thus rescripting their emotional norms by politicising their sentimentalised language and arguments for a morally improved, benevolent society.

4.1 "Doing Good": The Cultivation of Benevolence through Charitable Practice

There may have been differences between certain elements of doctrinal belief, in the emphasis put on passion and enthusiasm, and in the aims and forms of religious worship of the many Protestant denominations active in Britain during the eighteenth century. However, the practice of "doing good" was promoted and encouraged as a moral and religious duty in most religious discourses across the spectrum of beliefs. "Doing good" entailed acting on one's compassionate feelings towards suffering and distress through charitable works. For evangelical Christians, the view that through divine grace and re-birth they were freed from sin gave them "the assurance that they could overcome the sin of and in other men" by performing good works.[389] Methodists, following Wesley, did not perform good works in order to be saved, but rather in thankfulness for salvation.[390] Quakers, on the other hand, believed in a God that governs the world and directs all the concerns of human beings, and the possibility, therefore, of being rejected for salvation depended on the personal responsibility of every human being to act morally. This imposed the duty of good works because benevolence and charity contributed to God's order.[391] An urgent commitment to moral life through advocacy of universal principles of religion and natural laws was shared among all dissenters. The common imperative to activism amongst Rational Dissenters, meanwhile, drew upon the conviction of an ordered universe revealed progressively

[389] Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 198.
[390] Brown, *Moral* Capital, 336 (see chap. 1, n. 10).
[391] Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, 19-20. See also Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, eds., *Quakers and Abolition*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

through rational investigation and scientific enquiry.[392] The revelation of an ordered universe convinced most Rational Dissenters that greater understanding brought them closer to God and, like the Quakers and evangelicals, they relied on human benevolence to underpin this belief and to act it out.[393]

The importance of benevolence as a practice was explicated early in the century by Latitudinarian Bishop Joseph Butler in his *Analogy of Religion* (1736). Butler advised that the repeated exercise of compassionate responses to suffering had an effect on moral action; that is, habitually engaging the feelings of pity and compassion in everyday life strengthened the habit of providing relief. This is the result, as Fiering points out, of the general rule elaborated within discourses on moral sentiments that "repeated action tends to form indelible habits".[394] In Butler's view, "perception of distress in others is a natural excitement, passively to pity, and actively to relieve it".[395] Once again the close relationship between self-cultivation and social improvement is evident here. A central part of the practice of sentimentalism for any kind of community participating in it was the idea that virtue comes from acting on benevolent feelings; simply feeling sorry for someone is not enough. Performing acts of social improvement through philanthropic and charity work provided the means for members of religious communities to cultivate one's inner virtue while doing disinterested good to society – an emotional practice central to both their sentimental ethos and their religious principles.

[392] Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*. 20.
[393] Ibid., 21.
[394] Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion", 213 (see chap. 1, n. 39).
[395] Joseph Butler 1736, "Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature" in *The Works of Joseph Butler*, 2 vols., ed. W.E. Gladstone (Oxford, 1896), 1:112.

Like the acts of sociability that I described in the previous chapters, seeking out spaces in which people can act on their feelings of compassion and experience the pleasure of helping others becomes a "mobilising" practice, in Scheer's terms, for religious communities.[396] According to practice theory, once communities are habituated in a certain emotional repertoire – in this case, one based on the moral sentiments – and the emotions within that repertoire have become normative, members of that group seek out ways to further engage similar experiences. Philanthropy was a practice that gave people the opportunity to experience the moral sentiments and that "fusing of pain and virtue" so central to the idea of honing one's sensibility and benevolent feelings towards others.[397] In this sense, acts of social reform were also "regulating" practices, that is, they allowed communities to manage their emotional norms through activities that explicitly engaged the emotions privileged within that group.[398] Taking part in an act which was aimed at the improvement and benefit of others engaged the sensibility and provided opportunities to experience feelings of compassion and benevolence.

As Borsay points out, there was a strong religious dimension underpinning improvement culture as a whole.[399] In fact, the majority of charitable institutions founded in the period emerged from within particular religious communities and were often contributed to by a number of different denominations working together. Fashionable culture fed on this stream of religious piety among the British upper and middle classes. London's Foundling Hospital, for example, was founded and kept running by frequent benefit concerts given by Handel, who became one of its

[396] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 209 (see chap. 1, n. 4)
[397] Ellison, "Sensibility", 38 (see chap. 1, n. 37).
[398] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 215.
[399] Borsay, "Culture of Improvement", 190 (see chap. 2, n. 2).

governors, in the institution's chapel.[400] Leading artists such as Thomas Gainsborough and William Hogarth also contributed works of religious scenes to the hospital for free. As Borsay argues, this close association of fashionable leisure, piety, and charity was frequently repeated during the eighteenth century and greatly reinforced the moral and religious function of improvement culture.[401] This perhaps answers for the fact that we so often see the combination of religious doctrine and sentimentalism in the discourse of philanthropy and reform, particularly in abolitionist material. The men and women writing such material were for the most part deeply entrenched in their religious communities. Moreover, they were also involved in a variety of reform institutions, campaign groups, and charitable societies.

Evangelical reform interests were primarily concerned with moral welfare. The theological framework of evangelicalism steered them towards reforms which fit their view of how society should be and this required a general improvement of manners and morals. The Proclamation Society, for example, was established in 1787 in order to solicit a royal proclamation from George III against the dangers of vice and immorality and for the encouragement of piety and virtue.[402] But perhaps even more important than the suppression of vice to evangelicals was their wish for spiritual reform and to spread their brand of Christianity, both to the upper ranks of society as well as the lower. Evangelicals were especially critical of the lifestyle of the ruling classes and hoped "to make them better exemplars to their social inferiors through the work of Bible Societies as well as the production and general distribution of religious tracts".[403] Prominent

[400] Performances of Handel's *Messiah* at the Foundling Hospital developed into a yearly ritual from 1750 which continued beyond Handel's death. *Messiah* debuted in 1741 as a charity concert in Dublin to raise money for prisoners' debt relief, the Mercer's Hospital and the Charitable Infirmary.
[401] Borsay, "Culture of Improvement", 190.
[402] E. Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). The proclamation called for the prosecution of anyone guilty of excessive drinking, blasphemy, profane swearing, lewdness, and other dissolute or disorderly practices.
[403] Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, 110.

evangelicals thus became involved in the founding of Sunday Schools and Bible societies, as well as missionary societies to spread Protestant Christianity beyond Europe and into the colonies.[404]

The theological and emotional ethos of evangelicalism which facilitated their antislavery activism equally directed them to a wider moral reform program. Founded in the same year as the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the Proclamation Society was established by two men who were to become prominent abolitionists, William Wilberforce and his close friend Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, and was supported by many evangelicals involved in abolitionism.[405] According to Owen, many of the core group of evangelical abolitionists in London subscribed to at least fifteen other societies for social reform and, at one stage, Wilberforce alone gave away a quarter of his annual income and subscribed to about seventy different societies.[406] Prominent evangelical abolitionists like Granville Sharp, secretary of the London committee, and Hannah More were involved in the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society and of several Sunday schools, respectively. Common to the set of evangelicals based around Clapham – often known as the "Clapham Sect" – of which Wilberforce, Sharp and More were members, was an ambition to spread their brand of Christianity, improve the morals of their society and participate actively in charities which improved the conditions of others.[407] Tomkins describes the Clapham Sect as "a

[404] Figures like Granville Sharp and Hannah More were both involved in the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society and several evangelical schools, respectively.
[405] These include Henry Thornton and Sir Charles Middleton, attributed by some as the one who persuaded Wilberforce to take up the cause of abolition and present it for debate in parliament. See Roger Morriss, "Middleton, Charles, first Baron Barham (1726–1813)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., January 2008), doi: 10.1093/ref:odnb/18666.
[406] David Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1964).
[407] The "Clapham Sect", so-called after an *Edinburgh Review* article of 1844 labelled the group as such, was not a religious sect at all but merely a group of friends, family and neighbours based in Clapham who shared a particular religious outlook and common philanthropic interests. See Stephen Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect: How Wilberforce's Circle Transformed Britain*, (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2010).

network of friends and families […] who were powerfully bound together by their shared moral and spiritual values, by their religious mission and social activism".[408] Inherent in their mission was the exercise of their emotional repertoire: their performance of charitable works an act of emotional cultivation which worked to maintain benevolence as a privileged sentiment within their community. Abolitionism presented evangelicals with another opportunity to mobilise and regulate their emotional repertoire by acting on the imperative to "do good" to society, both at home and abroad.

This philanthropic aspect of evangelicalism was also adopted early by Quakers, a sect which most evidently displayed "in practice the social and moral obligations that followed from these values".[409] By and large Quakers did not, like many evangelicals, restrict themselves to spiritual reform. A belief in working towards a righteous world and a duty to "do good" incorporated many reform issues for Quakers and, indeed, it was the Society of Friends who first took action against slavery by banning members from taking part in it. The special interests of the Society of Friends included prison reform, the education of the poor, and improving conditions in lunacy asylums. Quakers were also active during the years of the war with France in aiding the labouring poor. Members of the London abolition committee, Samuel Hoare and William Allen, for example, worked together on a "soup society" which organised the supply of food to the starving and out-of-work silk-weavers of Spitalfields.[410] Dissenting reform interests thus reached across a very broad range of movements and organisations and were, for

[408] Ibid., 12.
[409] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 397.
[410] Their evangelical commitment to the maintenance of order and discipline, however, led the society to impose moral tests on the recipients of their charity, making food available only to those who "gave evidence of keeping good order within their families, showed that they were searching for work and kept clear of alcohol." Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*, 144.

the most part, more liberal than other religious communities. This can be explained in some part by the fact that, although becoming increasingly affluent members of the middle classes, as a community dissenters were in many ways placed outside mainstream English society.[411] The social and political status of Quakers in particular has been used to explain the opposition of the Society of Friends to a number of social injustices, including its role as the first religious community to widely condemn slavery.[412]

Quakerism has been described as a "practical theology" rooted in the divine injunction to "do unto others as you would have others do unto you".[413] This injunction, common to Christian sects, is based on the understanding that compassion and sympathy must rule one's actions towards others. Their attempts at reform, beginning within their own community and filtering out towards society at large, can be seen as performances of benevolence which mobilised their emotional repertoires.[414] Anthony Benezet was one of the first members of the Society to push an agenda of active charity beyond his own community. Through his antislavery works and in his letters to associates in America and Britain he preached that it was not enough to turn away from the world in order to nurture godliness but, rather, a complete suppression of sin and human pride could only be fully achieved through a commitment to do good to

[411] The Test and Corporation Acts passed in the seventeenth century had made the holding of public office the exclusive right of members of the Church of England. Between 1689 and 1702 these exclusions were extended to the universities and the requirement for those attending Oxford and Cambridge to be practising Anglicans was not lifted until the 1870s.
[412] See Turley *Culture of English Antislavery*; Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others* (see chap. 1, n. 9); Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
[413] Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*, 17.
[414] Ibid., 16-17. The Quaker ban on slavery within their own community in the seventeenth century was expanded to a wider push for abolition when they became the first community to petition parliament in the eighteenth century. In many ways the strong trans-Atlantic links of the Quaker community, backed by its ability to muster significant economic influence, made it easier for members to circulate their message and to thus form the backbone of the early abolitionist movement.

others.[415] "Charity would be the most likely way to remove that selfishness which is the parent of obduracy of heart", he wrote to fellow Friend John Smith in 1760.[416] He laments that avowals of sympathy often superseded true benevolence and that "doctrines declared in the gallery are too much contradicted in practice".[417] Charity, then, must be a daily practice to cultivate benevolence and compassion and to avoid Christianity becoming "more a matter of opinion than a fructifying root".[418]

Through duty to their faith in charity and neighbourly love, the Society of Friends was a sect which renounced, in principle, all forms of violent coercion and one which encouraged the performance of good works as a necessary emotional practice among its members.[419] The conclusions the Quaker community made about slavery and, in turn, the decision to act against it as a group, can thus be seen as an extension of their religious and emotional practices. Many scholars have noted the pivotal role of Quakers to the rise of British popular support for abolition of the slave trade.[420] No other group, according to Brown, "labored with comparable intensity" for political action before 1787.[421] The emergence of a formally organised expression of abolitionism did indeed begin in 1783 with a petition to Parliament by the Quaker community. Signed by 273 members of the Quaker Society of Friends, the petition expressed "regret, that a nation

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[415] Ibid. Benezet practised his belief in doing good, aiding those who were displaced and dispossessed, such as the Native Americans, uprooted Acadians, enslaved Africans, and the general poor of his home town of Philadelphia. As a teacher, he refused to inflict harsh discipline on his pupils and in the evenings he set up classes for local slave children. He went on to establish the first public girls' school in America as well as the Negro School of Philadelphia in 1770.

[416] Anthony Benezet to John Smith, 1 August 1760, in *Friend Anthony Benezet,* ed. George S. Brookes (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 241-242.

[417] Ibid.

[418] Ibid.

[419] Brycchan Carey, "'The Power that giveth Liberty and Freedom': the Barbadian Origins of Quaker Antislavery Rhetoric, 1657-76", *ARIEL* 38 (January 2007): 27-47, General OneFile (A173715478).

[420] See in particular the collection of essays in Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition.* Some scholars argue, however, that, despite early involvement in abolitionism, the Quakers became ambivalent about abolition as the struggle moved into the nineteenth century, at least across the Atlantic. See Carol Faulkner, *Lucretia Mott's Heresy: Abolition and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

[421] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 391.

professing the Christian Faith, should so far counteract the principles of humanity and justice as by a cruel treatment of this oppressed race" and called "for the humane interposition of the Legislature".[422]

Rational Dissenters (later Unitarians) shared a similar impulse to practise good works and encourage social reform. According to Page, the involvement of Rational Dissenters in abolitionism is unsurprising given the fact that their religious views were based on a commitment to spiritual equality, individualism, sociability and humane treatment of others.[423] Rational Dissenters rejected much of the "theological superstructure" of orthodox Christianity as irrational superstitions.[424] They did not believe in the divinity of Christ but, rather, in the humanity of Jesus the man, thus placing him at the centre of their faith as the supreme role model for humankind. I demonstrate below that this focus brought with it an emphasis on the compassion of Jesus and his demonstrative weeping. As Webb puts it, "their insistence on His full humanity enhanced" the role of Jesus because "a man who had learned to be perfect was far more telling, as teacher and as example, than a god who had temporarily taken on human form for a morally loathsome sacrifice".[425] Rational Dissenting preachers like Joseph Priestley argued that theirs was an active faith, stressing that all people must take part in the "delightful employment" of "exerting ourselves, by every means in our power, to remove the distresses of our fellow creatures".[426] Rational Dissenters were thus often employed in reform associations which sought not only to better their own

[422] "Petition from the London Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends, presented to Parliament on 16 June 1783", *Yearly Meeting minutes* (YM/M17/298 - 307), The Abolition Project, accessed 7 May 2015, http://abolition.e2bn.org/abolition_view.php?id=34&expand=1.
[423] Page, "Rational Dissent", 747.
[424] John Seed, "Gentlemen Dissenters: The Social and Political Meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s", *The Historical Journal* 28, no.2 (1985): 301, doi: 10.1017/S0018246X00003125.
[425] R.K. Webb, "The Unitarian Background" in Smith, *Truth, Liberty, Religion*, 12 (see chap. 2, n. 77).
[426] Joseph Priestley, *A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade,* (Birmingham, 1788), v-vi, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3323449196).

position in society, but also that of other persecuted groups in Britain. As well as being prominent in the anti-slave trade campaigns, they sought both the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts as well as emancipation for Catholics and Jews; they led the anti-war petitioning of the Napoleonic years; and they took central roles in the founding of local institutions for the improvement of hospitals, asylums and prisons.

The commitment to reform among Rational Dissenters is evidenced by the activities of the men in William Roscoe's tight-knit circle in Liverpool, who were involved in multiple politically-driven reform movements throughout their years of abolitionist agitation. Staunch supporters of the revolution in France, they also raised agitation against the monopoly of the East India Company, while Roscoe and his friend William Rathbone sparked controversy when they distributed their pamphlet entitled *Equality* in 1792 in their struggle for parliamentary reform. [427] This liberal spirit can also be seen in the largely Unitarian and dissenting activist community living in Manchester. Close examination of the range of reform campaigns and anti-establishment movements makes it clear that anti-slave trade activity was only one element in a far-reaching culture of reform within the manufacturing town. As I discussed in chapter two, Thomas Walker, chairman of the Manchester anti-slave trade committee, particularly exemplified the spirit of reform. Alongside being a founding member of the Manchester Constitutional Society, which advocated parliamentary reform and equality for Dissenters, he worked with fellow member of the Manchester

[427] For discussion of the other political causes the Liverpool abolitionists were involved in see F.E. Sanderson, "The Liverpool abolitionists" in *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition*, ed. Roger Anstey and P.E.H Hair (Liverpool: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976).

committee, Thomas Percival, on the Board of the Manchester Infirmary to campaign for hospital reforms and improvements to sanitation.[428]

Such activity, in which multiple religious communities took part across Britain during the eighteenth century, formed a vital part of the middle-class philanthropic "reform complex", as Turley calls it, encompassing missionary activity, temperance, calls for peace and free trade, limited political reform, religious freedom and, eventually, a commitment to abolition of the slave trade and slavery, to animal rights and to the rights of children.[429] While it would be too simplistic to claim that all of these reform movements and associations necessarily emerged out of a combined sense of religious duty and a benevolent compulsion to "do good" by those involved, there can be no doubt that religious communities founded a large number of the philanthropic institutions and reform movements of the eighteenth century. The Wesleyan maxim that "if works without faith were in vain, faith without works was impossible" held true for many Protestant sects and communities in the eighteenth century, not just evangelicals.[430]

It is no coincidence that much of the reform activity of men like Walker in Manchester and Roscoe in Liverpool took place within the dissenting chapels that they frequented. Sites like the Cross Street Chapel in Manchester were not just spaces of worship; they also provided those within the dissenting community possibilities for self-improvement and sociability as the home of the Literary and Philosophical Society and the centre of organisation for the reform program of its members, including the

[428] He was also earlier involved in the campaign against Prime Minister Pitt's Fustian tax introduced in 1784, which increased the duties to be paid on dyed cotton and linen. Davis, "Walker, Thomas", (see chap. 2, n. 62).
[429] Turley *Culture of English Antislavery*, 6.
[430] James Downey, *The Eighteenth Century Pulpit: A Study of the Sermons of Butler, Berkeley, Secker, Sterne, Whitefield and Wesley*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 194.

committee for abolition. Such a space is evidence of the fundamental link between improvement and the religious emotional norms which had their foundations in the culture and emotional practices of sentimentalism for the communities that engaged in that particular emotional repertoire. Habits which privileged the moral sentiments, like active participation in doing good for the benefit of others, were part of the everyday practices of a space like the Cross Street Chapel and countless other spaces of faith across the country. These practices that take place within spaces of worship, whether that space is a physical site or a religious text, give insight into the emotions that are privileged by the community to which they belong. The practice of weeping that I examine in the next section highlights the importance placed on cultivation of benevolence within these communities through their incorporation of compassionate tears into the ritualistic performance of religious practice.

4.2 Compassionate Weeping: Mobilising Tears in Religious Communities

The texts written by religious leaders, whether sermons, jeremiads, or treatises, were important tools of the emotional norms and practices of their communities. These texts can be examined as spaces which sought to communicate and mobilise sentiments particular to the emotional repertoires of the religious communities from which they emerged. Sermons are particularly useful sources when examining the emotional practices of religious communities in the eighteenth century. The eighteenth-century sermon was not only the central feature of religious services but it was also published and widely read as popular literature. Throughout the period, sermons were best-sellers, publishers vying with each other for copyrights to the discourses of some of the more celebrated divines, like Butler and Sterne.[431] Sterne in fact found his sermons to be

[431] Ibid., 4. Downey states that the popularity and demand for sermon literature was so great that even members of the laity like Samuel Johnson tried their hand at sermon writing.

more lucrative than his novels, writing to Garrick that while "Shandy sells well", his two volumes of sermons "will more than double" its gains.[432] The religious minister was therefore, according to Seed, an important type of intellectual in the eighteenth century and the sermon a significant genre of writing.[433] Scholars explain the demand for sermon literature as a consequence of its protean nature: not strictly religious in their discourse, the sermons of the eighteenth century had "firm and conscious ties with secular society", expounding on issues of politics, philosophy, education, literature and social mores.[434] The eighteenth-century sermon thus had considerable power which reached well beyond the spaces of worship in which they preached.

The space in which the sermon was heard was, nevertheless, a vital element to its use as a tool of practice. The preacher giving the sermon had an extraordinary amount of influence over his or her congregation, which for the most part could be counted on to listen to their words attentively.[435] The way in which these words were read tells us something of the change in direction of eighteenth-century Protestant religion in England. According to Downey, preachers were no longer admonishing their flocks, raining hell and damnation on their listeners; rather, the new wave of moralistic and ethical preaching brought with it a calmer, softer mode of proselytising.[436] Meanwhile, the Methodists were eschewing carefully prepared manuscripts for the gesticulatory, outwardly emotional preaching they were to become known for. Overall, then, the content of the sermon affected the way in which it was delivered and how it

[432] Laurence Sterne to David Garrick, 16 March 1765, quoted in Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 5. His *Sermons* were indeed popular: they had a subscription list of over 661 names and it had gone through eleven editions before 1769. See Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 56 (see chap. 1, n. 12).
[433] Sermons were regularly reviewed and discussed in the pages of the *Monthly Review* and *Gentleman's Magazine* among others. See Seed, "Gentlemen Dissenters", 318.
[434] Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*. See also Seed "Gentlemen Dissenters"; and Carey, *British Abolitionism* (see chap. 1, n. 12)
[435] Quakers had many women preachers.
[436] Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*.

was received by audiences. Like the secular spaces of sociability that the members of religious communities also no doubt attended, religious spaces were becoming spaces of improvement wherein the sermon was used both as a way of advocating practices that fit in with that particular community's emotional repertoire and as a means of garnering an emotional response from the listeners in that moment. For Latitudinarian preachers this involved a calm approach to preach ideas about compassionate weeping, while for evangelicals an enthusiastic and passionate mode was required to wring the tears from their audiences' eyes.

According to Dwyer, Christianity in Britain was redefined in the eighteenth century "in terms of the highly cultivated social disposition" that was, at the same time, being promoted and practised in spaces of philosophical inquiry and polite sociability.[437] High-Church Anglican divines, as well as preachers from many of the dissenting Protestant sects, such as the Rational Dissenters, turned away from overtly passionate sermonising in favour of more moderate methods of encouraging virtue in their congregations. With the new focus on the natural affections in Anglican theology, the sermons from within that community in particular became increasingly centred on sentimental ethics. Butler's sermons, for example, were essentially essays on moral philosophy. *His Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (1726) are an account of human nature based on benevolence and virtue. His sermons "Upon Humane Nature", "Upon Compassion", and "Upon the Love of our Neighbour" are centred on preaching both the natural existence of benevolence and social sympathy as well as the necessity of acting on these sentiments and thus cultivating them to achieve Christian virtue. In "Upon Compassion" he writes that, "Men in Distress want Assistance, and Compassion

[437] Dwyer, "Imperative of Sociability", 172 (see chap. 2, n. 36). This was no doubt because many such spaces were shared by theologians and philosophers alike.

leads us directly to assist them".[438] Benevolence is an active sentiment: it requires a performance of charity to aid the suffering.

For Butler, it is not "Reason alone" that is "a sufficient Motive of Virtue" but rather "Reason joined with those Affections which God has impres'd upon his Heart".[439] These affections require constant practice: "when these are allowed Scope to exercise themselves, but under strict Government and Direction of Reason, then it is we act suitably to our Nature."[440] Affections such as compassion, governed by reason and "direction", that is, actively mobilised and habituated, must drive our actions: "The Exercise of these Affections, in a just and reasonable Manner and Degree, would upon the whole increase the Satisfactions, and lessen the Miseries of Life".[441] Those who do not put compassion into practice are in danger of becoming cruel: "Without the Exercise of these Affections, Men would certainly be much more wanting in the Offices of Charity they owe to each other, and likewise more cruel and injurious, than they are at present".[442] This, as we have seen, is the characterisation later given to slave traders and owners by abolitionist activists in the latter half of the century. The necessity of emotional practices which cultivate compassion is clearly central to the emotional repertoire developing among some religious communities in the eighteenth century.

One important practice aimed specifically at the cultivation of compassion is the mobilisation of tears that is communicated in these sermons.[443] The text Butler uses for

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[438] Joseph Butler, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel upon the Following Subjects. Upon Humane Nature. Upon the Government of the Tongue. Upon Compassion. Upon the Character of Balaam. Upon Resentment. Upon Forgiveness of Injuries. Upon Self-Deceit. Upon the Love of our Neighbour. Upon the Love of God. Upon the Ignorance of Man*, (London, 1726), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3318224794).
[439] Ibid., 86.
[440] Ibid.
[441] Ibid., 88.
[442] Ibid., 91.
[443] Compassionate weeping was not, of course, an invention of eighteenth-century sentimental practice. While I focus on specifically sentimental forms of weeping in the eighteenth-century, the mobilisation of tears has a long history in religious texts, particularly in the medieval period, as the Book of Margery

his sermons on compassion is from *Romans xii. 15* - "Rejoyce with them that do rejoyce, and weep with them that weep".[444] Jesus is presented as "the Example of all Perfection in Human Nature, as represented in the Gospels mourning, and even, in a litteral [sic] Sense, weeping over the Distresses of his Creatures."[445] Jesus's compassionate nature is evident in the somatic signals which prove his ability to sympathise with the distressed – his tears. New Testament texts that highlight the gentle tears of lamentation wept by Jesus and his apostles were becoming popular for many Protestant communities at this time.[446] Philip Doddridge, an Independent minister, sermonised in 1750 that Jesus, through allowing "a Set of Sorrowful Ideas arise and lodge in his Mind", had "set himself to practise that Lesson, which he afterwards taught by his Apostle, of weeping with them that weep".[447] As Dixon points out, there was a consensus that Jesus's tears "were tokens of tenderness and compassion which should be seen as a divine pattern for those who would imitate Christ".[448] In other words, the figure of Jesus Christ was held up as the original "man of feeling."[449] Such texts, according to Dixon, "provided opportunities for reflection on the religious duty to weep, as well as opportunities for readers and hearers of the texts […] to emulate

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Kempe attests. This fourteenth-century autobiography features excessive weeping as an embodied display of piety. Thomas Dixon discusses this history in *Weeping Britannia: Portrait of a Nation in Tears*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For medieval weeping see Andrew Lynch, "'Now, Fye on Youre Wepynge!': Tears in Medieval English Romance", *Parergon* 9, no.1 (1991): 43-62, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/pgn.1991.0028. Heather Kerr also looks back to the religious tradition of weeping that Shakespeare made use of in his work. "'Sociable' Tears in *The Tempest*", in *Shakespeare and Emotions: Inheritances, Enactments, Legacies*, ed. R.S. White, Mark Houlahan, and Katrina O'Loughlin, (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[444] Butler, *Fifteen Sermons*, 79.

[445] Ibid., 95.

[446] Ibid.

[447] Philip Doddridge, *Meditations on the Tears of Jesus over the Grave of Lazarus: A Funeral Sermon Preached at St Alban's, 16 December 1750, on Occasion of the Much Lamented Death of the Reverend Samuel Clark D.D.*, (London, 1751), 11-12, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3319776161).

[448] Thomas Dixon, "Enthusiasm Delineated: Weeping as a Religious Activity in Eighteenth-Century Britain", *Litteraria Pragensia* 22 (January 2013): 71, EBSCO (25821344).

[449] I discuss the character of the "man of feeling" in the following chapter.

them".[450] Thus the space of the text acted as a tool of the practice of weeping, communicating the tears of compassion felt by Jesus to the reader through sympathy. As I will discuss in chapter five, the hero of sentimental fiction embodied the Christian injunction to "weep with them that weep", as did the readers who were encouraged to do the same.

As Dixon states, weeping was both "a moral and religious activity; something to be cultivated, tutored, practiced, learned, performed".[451] Sentimental language which highlighted scenes of distress and suffering, and which encouraged readers and listeners to weep in sympathy with the victims of that suffering, emerged in religious sermons and texts alongside similar discourses in other forms of literary and cultural production. Sentimental literature was particularly concerned with both the emotions of the characters portrayed and with the emotions of the reader who, it was hoped, would be reduced to tears of pity by the descriptions of distressing or tender scenes.[452] Sermons were, after all, a major part of literary culture in the eighteenth century and were generally subject to the same fashions.[453] Eighteenth-century sermons were thus increasingly written in a style to match the themes of natural affection and moral sentiments that they often preached. Parables from the Bible which highlighted the benevolent and sympathetic nature of people, in particular the text of the Good Samaritan, became popular in the sermon literature of multiple communities. The sermons of Laurence Sterne, perhaps more than those of any other divine, can be

[450] Thomas Dixon, "Weeping in Space: Tears, Feelings, and Enthusiasm in Eighteenth-Century Britain", in Broomhall, *Spaces for* Feeling, 145 (see chap. 1, n. 71).
[451] Dixon, "Enthusiasm Delineated", 75.
[452] Carey, "John Wesley's *Thoughts*", 279.
[453] Ibid.

regarded as sentimental moral essays which highlight the importance of cultivating benevolence through acts of philanthropy and through compassionate weeping. [454]

Sterne's published *Sermons* often lack any discussion of doctrine while stressing the need for compassion in human relationships.[455] His design in publishing his sermons was similar to that of his novels: "to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do – so it runs most upon those gentler passions and affections, which aid so much to it".[456] Philanthropy and compassion are thus central to his collection. The preface to the first volume states, "as the sermons turn chiefly upon philanthropy, and those kindred virtues to it, upon which hang all the law and the prophets, I trust they will be no less felt, or worse received, for the evidence they bear, of proceeding more from the heart than the head."[457] In "Philanthropy Recommended", Sterne uses the parable of the Good Samaritan and the maxim of "love thy neighbour" in order to preach the virtue of cultivating compassion through good works. In describing the disinterested benevolence shown by the Samaritan towards the suffering Jew, Sterne uses the language of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* to explain the impulse to act in people who have a cultivated sensibility:

> In benevolent natures the impulse to pity is so sudden, that like instruments of music which only obey the touch – the objects which are fitted to excite such impressions work so instantaneous an effect, that you would think the will was scarce

[454] Downey states that, with Sterne the sermon comes closer to the field of literature than with any other preacher of the eighteenth century: "only the presence of a Biblical text distinguishes one of Sterne's sermons from a vigorous moral essay". Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*, 137.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Laurence Sterne to Mrs James, 12 November 1767, *Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne. To his most intimate Friends*, 3 vols. (London, 1776) 3:258, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW0110712241).
[457] Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1760) 1:viii, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/57kDT2.

> concerned, and that the mind was altogether passive in the sympathy which her own goodness excited.[458]

We are to understand, however, that this is only the case for those with "benevolent natures": "sudden as the emotion is represented, you are not to imagine that it was mechanical, but that there was a settled principle of humanity and goodness which operated within him, and influenced not only the first impulse of kindness, but the continuation of it throughout the rest of so engaging a behaviour".[459] Such "settled principles" as "humanity" and "goodness" in benevolent characters are achieved through constant practice of compassion so as to make the instinct to pity natural.

This is not so great an achievement because, as he states in his sermon on the "Vindication of Human Nature", "the miseries of this world are so constant an exercise of [compassion], as to leave it in no one's power (who deserves the name of man) in this respect, *to live to himself*".[460] The opportunities to exercise compassion are ample in a world full of miseries, so that no humane person - deserving of the name "man" - could help but have benevolent natures. This is not always the case, however. He uses the idea of practice to explain that, like the priest and the Levite who pass the sufferer by, there are some who act "as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connection at all with the species".[461] Therefore, while "one would think it impossible for man to look upon misery, without finding himself in some measure attached to the interest of him who suffers it", there are some whose characters are "formed either of such impenetrable matter, or wrought up by habitual selfishness to

[458] Ibid. 58-9. Smith writes of social sympathy that pleasure arises "from a certain correspondence of sentiments and opinions, from a certain harmony of minds, which like so many musical instruments coincide and keep time with one another". *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 541 (see chap.1, n. 35).
[459] Sterne, *Sermons*, 1:59.
[460] Ibid., 2:17 (his emphasis).
[461] Ibid., 1:52.

such an utter insensibility of what becomes of the fortunes of their fellow-creatures".[462] Thus the Levite's refusal to help the victim "had all the aggravation of a deliberate act of insensibility proceeding from a hard heart."[463] In a foreshadowing of the arguments used in abolitionist sermons discussed below, people without compassion for the distress of others have, through "habitual selfishness", hardened their hearts and become insensible of others' pain.

For Sterne "it is painful to dwell long upon this disagreeable part of the story".[464] He instead turns to weeping as a way of mobilising the compassion of the reader. In an extended scene in which the thought processes of the Samaritan are imagined as he comes across the victim, he supposes the benevolent man saying "if I can do nothing else, – I shall soften his misfortunes by dropping a tear of pity over them".[465] By referencing the bodily act of crying during a scenario in which pity is felt and benevolence is acted out, Sterne is signalling to the reader or listener of the sermon that tears are the required emotional response to all such situations. His sermon on the Good Samaritan is an example of reading "for the sentiment", a practice of reading which emphasises the emotions in the piece and the communication of them from writer to reader.[466] Given the fact Sterne was also a writer of sentimental novels this is perhaps not surprising. The majority of his sermons in this collection use weeping to mobilise compassion in scenes of distress. Even Old Testament stories are reimagined through this sentimental view. Sermon 12, which is based on the story of Joseph from the book

[462] Ibid.
[463] Ibid., 55.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid., 65.
[466] I discuss this in the following chapter.

of Genesis, presents Joseph as a "man of feeling", able to sympathise with his brothers, despite their betrayal of him. He portrays this through tears:

> the historian says, he wept. Sympathy, for the sorrow and distress of so many sons of his father, now all in his power […] – concern and pity for the long punishment they must have endured by so stubborn a remorse […] The affecting idea of their condition, […] so many tender passions struggling together at once overcame him; – he burst into tears, which spoke what no language could attempt.[467]

Tears are also used in this particular sermon in an early condemnation of slavery. For Joseph's brothers, selling him into slavery rather than simply killing him outright was deemed a more compassionate act. Yet, "to be sold for a slave", according to Sterne, was a fate "worse than death": "it was not compassion which then took place, for had there been any way open to that, his tears and entreaties must have found it when they saw the anguish of his soul when he besought and they would not hear."[468] Sterne is casting the characters of Joseph's brothers, that is, men who sell fellow human beings into slavery, as unfeeling and insensible to another's pain. If compassion was at all engaged in this scenario, they would have seen Joseph's tears and pitied him.

Sermon 10, on "Job's Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, Considered", also condemns slavery and is often quoted as an early instance of antislavery sentiment from Sterne.[469] He states:

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[467] Sterne, *Sermons*, 2:108-9.
[468] Ibid., 105.
[469] See, for instance, Ellis's treatment of it in *Politics of Sensibility*, 56-7. See also Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 146-7.

> Consider how great a part of our species in all ages down to this, have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their distress. – Consider slavery – what it is, – how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it; – which if it can poison all earthly happiness when exercised barely upon our bodies, what must it be, when it comprehends both the slavery of body and mind?[470]

What kind of slavery Sterne is talking about here is unclear. He mentions the "tyrants" of the "Romish church", "who seem to have taken pleasure in the pangs and convulsions of their fellow-creatures".[471] As Ellis states, he could also be talking about "the older sense of being without liberty", or some other "metaphoric extension" when he asks his readers and congregation to consider slavery.[472] Nevertheless, it can be interpreted as a reference to the system of slavery being carried out at that time between Britain, Africa, and the colonies. For Ignatius Sancho, an ex-slave living in Britain, this is exactly what he gained out of reading Sterne's sermons and, in his letters to Sterne, his tears are given as a sign of the effectiveness of them:

> Your Sermons have touch'd me to the heart, and I hope I have amended it, which brings me to the point. - In your tenth discourse […] is this very affecting passage – […] 'Consider slavery' […] Of all my favourite authors, not one has drawn a

[470] Sterne, *Sermons*, 2:71-2.
[471] Ibid., 72.
[472] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 56-7.

> tear in favour of my miserable black brethren – excepting yourself, and the humane author of Sir George Ellison.[473]

Sancho has found the piece to be so "affecting" that tears have been drawn on behalf of those currently suffering under the "cruel and capricious tyrants" that Sterne describes. Not only this, but reading the sermons, he states, has "amended" his heart. The sermon has done its job as a tool of Sterne's emotional practice, mobilising tears of compassion in his reader and amending, or cultivating, his virtue.

Many religious communities had their own emotional norms which privileged weeping. While gentle tears of lamentation and compassion, particularly those wept by Jesus and his apostles, were privileged within Anglican texts and sermons, evangelical practices of compassionate weeping were somewhat more passionate, driving many contemporaries to view the presumably uncontrolled "enthusiasm" of evangelicalism with contempt.[474] Dixon points out that the difference between Anglican and evangelical forms of weeping can best be envisaged as that between New Testament and Old Testament styles, the one a gentle form of lament and the other an overtly passionate and often public form of sobbing over sin and salvation. [475] However, despite such differences in method, the evangelical revival which began with George Whitefield and John Wesley was heavily influenced by much of the early Latitudinarian focus on feeling and the heart. While some of the passion of evangelicalism was directed at sinners and focused on the shame and guilt that should lead to repentance,

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[473] Ignatius Sancho to Laurence Sterne, 1766, in *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, ed. Vincent Carretta (London: Penguin, 1998), 74. The author of Sir George Ellison is Sarah Scott, whose treatment of slavery I examine in the following chapter.

[474] This was mainly because of the types of audience evangelical preachers were reaching out to. Methodist congregations were in the main labouring class men and women. Encouraging enthusiastic religious practices among the lower orders was a dangerous exercise in an era when many were distancing themselves from the divisiveness of enthusiasm experienced in the previous century.

[475] Dixon "Enthusiasm Delineated", 67-68.

much of the focus of revivalist faith was on joy and love. Thus the term "heart religion" that is used to describe evangelical theology.[476] Wesley argued that true Christians need an emotional commitment to God, calling for a love of God "as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties".[477] In matters of doctrine, Wesleyan theology was not very different to that of the Latitudinarians with its focus on the affections.[478] As Barker-Benfield states, in Anglican religious thought, Wesley was certainly "heir to the Cambridge Platonists".[479] Where he and, to a greater extent, George Whitefield differed most from their Anglican counterparts was in their method of preaching. Through direct appeals to the emotions of their listeners, evangelical preachers elicited tears, fainting, and cries of joy from their congregations. Such passionate forms of worship became ubiquitous to Methodism, the open-air congregations that came to define the revivalist approach, creating spaces "for direct and intense kinds of religious experience".[480]

As an emotional practice, weeping was especially privileged, both by audiences and preachers alike. As Dixon states, "Methodists wept actively and often: as they prayed, wrestling with God and their own souls; as they preached, enacting and eliciting penitence for sin; and as they listened, in shame or in love and joy."[481] George Whitefield became known as the "Weeping Prophet" for his tendency to break down in copious tears during sermons and it was a practice which became exemplary to his

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[476] See Phyllis Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See also Barker-Benfield who attributes the emergence of "heart religion" to the wider campaign for the reformation of manners in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Culture of Sensibility*, 65-66 (see chap. 1, n. 21).
[477] John Wesley, "Sermon II: The Almost Christian. Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, Before the University on July 25, 1741", in *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 2 vols., ed. Edward H. Sugden (London: The Epworth Press, 1921), 1:53-67, quoted in Carey, "John Wesley's *Thoughts*", 280.
[478] See Downey, *Eighteenth Century Pulpit*.
[479] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 71. The Cambridge Platonists were a group of seventeenth-century theologians and philosophers often credited with formulating the optimistic view of human nature taken up by later moral sentiment philosophers.
[480] Dixon, "Weeping in Space", 140.
[481] Ibid.

followers. In his open-air sermons in the fields and on hillsides in rural towns he demonstrated how to weep, giving his listeners the opportunity to follow suit.[482] One observer wrote of his preaching:

> I hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping, more or less, and I truly believe his were the tears of sincerity. His voice was often interrupted by his affection. […] I could hardly bear such unreserved use of tears, and the scope he gave to his feelings, for sometimes he exceedingly wept, stamped loudly and passionately, and was frequently so overcome, that for a few seconds, you would suspect he never could recover.[483]

Whitefield's passionate displays seemed to have a contagious effect on his congregations wherever he preached, and if he wept so too did his listeners. During a sermon to a group of coal miners near Bristol, it was reported that Whitefield's "words seemed to cut like a sword upon several in the congregation, so that whilst he was speaking they could no longer contain, but burst out in the most bitter piercing cries. At this juncture Mr Whitefield made an awful pause of a few seconds – then burst into a flood of tears".[484] Whitefield himself noted of one of his congregations that "the first discovery of their being affected, was, to see the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks, as they came out of their coal pits".[485] The men and women who wept with Whitefield were joined together not just as an

[482] See Dixon, "Enthusiasm Delineated".
[483] William Jay, *Memoirs of the Life and Character of the Late Rev. Cornelius Winter*, 2nd ed. (London, 1840) 27–28.
[484] A. C. H. Seymour, *The life and times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 2 vols. (London, 1840), 1:430, quoted in Tomkins, *The Clapham Sect*, 30.
[485] John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Rev. George Whitefield*, (New Haven, 1834), 40, Google Books, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=b0k7AQAAMAAJ. Whitefield's audiences were often coal-miners and other groups of labourers in rural areas.

audience for his sermons, but as communities who shared a faith and an emotional repertoire that held feelings as important vehicles to knowledge of God.

The practice of weeping, either in lamentation or in joy, was a bodily manifestation of the intense feelings experienced and shared by preacher and congregation. It became almost ritualistic: a required act that demonstrated the strength of one's emotional connection to the religious experience. As with any type of space in which a community chooses to practise its emotional norms, the spaces in which Methodists chose to worship gave members the opportunities to learn, practise, and perform, time and again, the emotions which they believed to be important to their faith and their spiritual and moral well-being. Such spaces were many and varied due to the itinerant nature of evangelical preaching. Often taking place in the open-air, evangelical spaces did not necessarily have physical borders or stationary locales. The important feature of evangelical spaces was not, then, their physical structure or location but the nature of what was taking place within them. As members of their congregations gathered and performed their rituals, they developed a shared set of emotional norms which would come to characterise their faith. Public weeping became a habituated and embodied form of emotional responsiveness which emerged from the spaces in which Methodists and other evangelical communities worshipped.

While such overtly passionate practices seemingly stood apart from the calm, reasoned religious experience that was being advocated within the established Church and in other areas of Enlightenment society and culture, it would be a mistake to regard the rise of evangelicalism as a separate and curious anomaly. Hempton makes an important point when he states that a figure like Wesley was as much a man of the Enlightenment as a man of enthusiasm: his explanation of spiritual rebirth relied on Locke's account of the operation of the senses, while his advocacy of religious

toleration, abolition of slavery, and the improvement of manners and social order in general, hint at a man much interested in Enlightenment ideas, moral sentiment philosophy, and sociability.[486] Enlightenment rationalism and religious enthusiasm both existed in eighteenth-century Britain, not necessarily as conflicting opposites, but as two sets of norms and practices which often informed and defined each other.[487] Therefore, while Methodism has often been seen as a counter-culture in eighteenth-century Britain, it shares many of the features of other emotional repertoires extant at the time, particularly with the sentimental discourses being used within works of moral philosophy, the popular press, literature, and, of course, by other religious communities . As Carey states, while Wesley's sermons were "not unequivocally sentimental", and indeed quite often displayed far stronger passions than was usually found acceptable by advocates of sentimentalism, the preacher was "quite able to draw attention to the 'tender emotions' that interested sentimental writers".[488] His religion of the heart "was in accord with the prevailing mood of the 'age of sensibility'".[489] Compassionate tears were also a feature of Methodist practice and Wesley's use of them in relation to slavery demonstrates his faith's understanding of emotional cultivation.

Wesley may have stated that he was opposed to sentimental literature, but this did not preclude him from using the same discourses and techniques in his own writing.[490] In fact, his 1774 pamphlet *Thoughts Upon Slavery* is one of the first major works on slavery that frames abolitionist arguments in sentimental terms. The majority of the pamphlet, using the information in Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea*

[486] David Hempton, "Enlightenment and Faith" in Langford, *The Eighteenth* Century, 98 (see chap. 2, n. 2). See also Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*.
[487] Hempton, "Enlightenment and Faith", 99.
[488] Carey, "John Wesley's *Thoughts*", 280.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Carey states that Wesley's *Journal* articulates strong reservations about the word "sentimental" itself, while also aiming unfavourable remarks at Sterne's novel, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Ibid.

(1772), sets out legal and moral arguments against slavery and the slave trade in largely unemotional language.[491] In the final eight pages, however, Wesley moves away from the evidence he gleaned from Benezet's work and his tone shifts towards an emotional language which matches both his feeling religion and sentimental literature. With anger and admonition he addresses the following passage to the slave trader in the manner of a passionate evangelical, while also making use of sentimental conventions about compassion:

> Are you a *man*? Then you should have an *human* heart. But have you indeed? What is your heart made of? Is there no such principle as Compassion there? Do you never *feel* another's pain? Have you no Sympathy? No sense of human woe? No pity for the miserable? When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breasts, or the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow-creatures, was you a stone, or a brute? […] Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast? Do you feel no relenting *now*? If you do not, you must go on, till the measure of your iniquities is full. Then will the Great GOD deal with *You*, as you have dealt with *them*, and require all their blood at your hands.[492]

The weeping, the sighing, and the bleeding – all hallmarks of sentimental literature, demanding an emotional response in the reader – are utilised by Wesley in this passage.

[491] See Benezet, *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (see chap. 2, n. 120).
[492] John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (London, 1774), 46-7, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3321432786), his emphasis.

At the same time, his accusatory tone and threats of eternal damnation to the slave traders sit comfortably within the tradition of his Methodist preaching.

By pointing out the lack of feeling in slave traders and owners and their inability to shed tears over scenes of distress, Wesley is expressly accusing those involved in the slave trade of being without natural affection and having an uncultivated sensibility. He questions if these men are human since they cannot "*feel* another's pain". Furthermore, his italicising of words like "man", "human", and "feel" are signals to the reader of the connection between humanity and feelings of compassion and pity, qualities which slave traders must lack if they can witness the miseries of their cargo, squeeze "the agonizing creatures down in the ship", and throw "their poor mangled remains into the sea" without any sign of relenting shame or compassionate tears.[493] Wesley is setting up a dichotomy between the humanity of people who oppose slavery and the inhumanity of those who support and are involved in it directly. This dichotomy became central to the way in which abolitionists identified both themselves and those opposed to them in their mobilising materials, making sure they were seen as firmly on the side of humanity and Christian duty.

Carey suggests that, on the evidence of his *Journal*, "Wesley's opposition to slavery derived from, rather than preceded, his spiritual mission".[494] This is possible given that his evangelical conversion occurred in the 1730s, while any mention of his opposition to slavery does not enter his *Journal* until the 1770s. However, such spiritual conversions did not guarantee an opposing opinion on the legality or morality of trading or owning slaves. While Wesley states that "ever since I heard of it first, I felt a perfect detestation of the horrid Slave Trade", Whitefield was an avid proponent

[493] Ibid.
[494] Carey, "John Wesley's *Thoughts*", 278.

of slavery and in fact owned a plantation which was worked by slaves. [495] Against the ill-treatment of slaves, he nonetheless argued the scriptural justification of slavery and campaigned for its legalisation while living in the colony of Georgia.[496] When comparing these two men, who belonged to the same religious community, practised the same religious rituals, and engaged in the same, or at least similar, emotional repertoire, it is clear we cannot definitively say that sentimental religious practices had a central role in developing humanitarian or abolitionist principles. The opinions about the humanity of African slaves, or on how far Christian duty to aid the suffering of others should extend, differed markedly between these two men. It leads us to ask, what was the significant difference between the two for one to feel so strongly against slavery and for the other to participate in and defend it? One possibility could be personal interest: Whitefield clearly gained materially from slavery while Wesley did not. Another could lie in looking at the other communities with which they had contact: Wesley carried on a correspondence with men who were involved in fighting against slavery from early on, like Benezet and Sharp, while there is no evidence Whitefield was connected with anti-slavery figures in any way. Whatever the cause for their differing views, it is evident that practice theory, when looked at against a single community, cannot answer for individual motivation and action. This does not mean, however, that it is invalid as a method of exploring how particular emotional repertoires become normative among communities and groups of people, and how those repertoires can change over time.

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[495] John Telford, ed., *Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 8:17. The occasion is likely to have come in 1772 when Wesley records in his *Journal* that he had been reading Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea*. Nehemiah Curnock, ed., *Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), 5:446.

[496] Georgia had outlawed slavery in 1735 but calls to legalise it for the sake of the colony's prosperity were successful in 1751. Whitefield saw the "legalization of slavery as part personal victory and part divine will". Jessica M. Parr, *Inventing George Whitefield: Race, Revivalism, and the Making of a Religious Icon* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 76.

Of course there will be sub-cultures or counter-cultures within communities where norms and values differ or even clash. No one individual is the same as another, after all. As Scheer argues, it would be a mistake to assume that practice theory leaves no room for individual agency, however socially conditioned a body is.[497] Multiple factors, such as contact with different people and different communities and institutions over the course of a lifetime, produce an individual habitus which, although "dominated by earliest experiences, of the experiences statistically common to members of the same class," is nonetheless "a unique integration".[498] Wesley's individual experiences over the course of his life led him to very different conclusions about the inhumanity of slavery than his fellow Methodist preachers and he may well have been an anomaly in his own community. Clarkson points out in his *History* that Wesley's supporters were not so much abolitionists as merely promoters of "a softness of feeling" towards slaves.[499] Their benevolence, in other words, did not stretch so far as to become demonstrably active as a community in the abolition campaigns. This, however, did not prevent Wesley himself from preaching an abolitionist sermon in Bristol in 1788 or from offering to republish his *Thoughts* for the benefit of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The point of equating "emotional communities" with social groups is to show that people negotiate the gamut of emotional norms that exist in their society. Being a member of one community does not exclude one from also taking part in other communities whose emotional norms may differ. Rosenwein shows that people can

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[497] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 203.
[498] Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 60 (see chap. 1, n. 43).
[499] Thomas Clarkson, *History*, 1:184 (see chap. 1, n. 5). Such an approach conformed to the "ameliorationist" position that many who wrote about slavery took during the 1760s and 70s, whereby improving conditions on plantations and slave ships was the main goal. For a full discussion of amelioration as a political position see George Boulukos, *The Grateful Slave: The Emergence of Race in Eighteenth-Century British and American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

move continually from one "emotional community" to another, adjusting their emotional displays and evaluations to each environment: "not only does every society call forth, shape, constrain, and express emotions differently, but even *within the same society* contradictory values and models, not to mention deviant individuals, find their place".[500] The mobility of people in eighteenth-century Britain and their involvement in multiple communities which used multiple spaces meant that emotional norms could be shared, practised and developed among a variety of different communities as people moved from group to group. It also meant that norms and values could vary greatly, not just from group to group, but even within groups. The differences between Whitefield and Wesley in terms of their positions on slavery are evidence of this.

Nevertheless, a focus on shared practices and norms are still important to a study of communities like social reform movements. It is the norms and practices that are shared across different communities that can elucidate how a movement emerges out of seemingly nowhere and gains momentum as it mobilises public support. What connects members of a movement across geographical and temporal space are the shared norms and practices which bring them into that community of activists and supporters. The appearance of tears in both evangelical and high Church sermons, whether done enthusiastically or calmly, highlights the importance of weeping and sensibility to the emotional repertoires of both communities in the eighteenth century. Through ritualistic performance and through emotional communication between the writer or speaker and audience, depending on the space, the aim of mobilising tears was to cultivate compassion and benevolence in people, thus attempting to make the Christian maxim of "doing good" a natural compulsion. When abolitionism became a

[500] Barbara Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions", 842-3 (see chap. 1, n. 16).

popular movement in 1787, preachers from these Protestant communities adopted and adapted this idea in their own sermons written in support of political reform of the slave trade, their texts rescripting their sentimental norms into a politics of sympathy.

4.3 "On the Subject of the Slave Trade": Abolitionist Sermons and the Politics of Sympathy

The point of highlighting natural affections and sentimentalised images of compassionate tears within sermons was to urge congregations to philanthropy and social reform: acts which engaged and mobilised the emotional repertoire of sentimental communities. The preacher's influence, via the sermon, was vital to the process of making moral sentiments normative to whole communities and to the formation by these communities of the countless charitable and reforming institutions described above. Flogging, torture, slavery, ill treatment of children, of animals, of the sick and mentally ill, all came "under powerful condemnation in the name of plain feeling" within sermon literature, both preached and published.[501] It is to feeling that the sermons I discuss here direct their pleas for action on the slave trade.

While much sentimental sermon literature proselytised on the social and moral benefits of philanthropy, when ministers turned their attention to abolition this message was coupled with a sustained political call to action. Religious leaders, through the use of their pulpits and influential published manuscripts, were rescripting the emotional norms of their communities by politicising their sentimentalised language and arguments for a morally improved, benevolent society. Peter Peckard, whose influence is well known, was one of the most outspoken Anglican ministers to attack the slave trade in numerous sermons given to his school and congregation in Cambridge and to

[501] Fiering, "Irresistible Compassion", 208-9.

readers across Britain.[502] In his *Justice and Mercy Recommended,* a sermon preached before the University of Cambridge and published in January 1788, Peckard pointedly states that he has written this piece with the purpose of aiding the political movement for the abolition of the slave trade which had formed the previous year.[503] In his dedication to Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, whom he describes as "the Patron of Benevolence and Humanity", Peckard offers himself as a "volunteer" to the cause, announcing that his motive is "an impulse of Conscience to contribute my feeble endeavours, but principally an earnest desire to incite some more able advocate".[504]

His course of action is to use his position as educator and church minister to influence those around him. Underplaying his "sphere of action", he states that "My efforts, probably, can reach little farther than to infuse into the minds of the young men committed to my care, principles of reverence for […] Universal Benevolence: and thus on the solid foundation of true Virtue eventually serve the good Cause, to which I most devoutly wish all possible success".[505] We know that he strongly influenced at least one important activist in Thomas Clarkson, as Peckard points out himself in his Preface: "I gave the Indefensibleness of Slavery as a subject for the Public Exercises of the Batchelors; and Mr. Clarkson's performance which gained the Prize, has been laid before the world in more than one edition".[506] Through the example of his prize student, Peckard is able to support his attempt at influencing others at this crucial point in the

[502] As I pointed out in chapter 2, Thomas Clarkson, who attended Magdalen College, was inspired by Peckard to embark on his abolitionist mission.
[503] Peter Peckard, *Justice and Mercy Recommended, Particularly with Reference to the Slave Trade; A Sermon Preached Before the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1788), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3323004142).
[504] Ibid., vi and x.
[505] Ibid., viii.
[506] Ibid., ix.

campaign: “through him, I look upon myself as in some small degree a Promoter of the glorious attempt to set the Slave at Liberty”.[507]

Education is evidently of vital importance to Peckard’s emotional norms. He begins his sermon with a typically Latitudinarian discourse on the positive features of human nature and a divinely gifted moral sense, claiming “that the Social Affections of Compassion and Love for our fellow creatures are as much a part of our Nature, as those of a more selfish sort, and much more so than those which are mixed with malignity towards others”.[508] To therefore engage in acts of cruelty towards others, as slave traders and slaveholders do, would “seem to sin against Nature as much as against the Commands of God”.[509] He blames “Education”, or practice, for the perverseness of people who go against nature in inflicting pain on other human beings:

> Education hath its Effect much sooner than is generally thought. It is seldom what it ought to be, and is sometimes so pernicious, that at length the whole order […] of nature is perverted. And thus by degrees it comes to pass that we see men with deliberation of mind, approve what is abominably Evil; approve even of Cruelty, and the sight of Human Misery.[510]

A lack of cultivation of the moral sentiments is to blame here for the perversities of human nature that allows some people to subject fellow beings to slavery. This argument is an echo of the one used by Clarkson in his *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* which blames the existence of cruelty on the practice

[507] Ibid.
[508] Ibid., 18.
[509] Ibid.
[510] Ibid.

and habituation of unnatural affections.[511] The wrong sort of education (practice) results in the wrong kind of human being, one who "with coolness, with apathy and fraudful circumvention oppress, enslave and torture their fellow creatures".[512] The action taken by members of his University in signing an Address to the Legislature as part of the petition campaign is proof to Peckard of the effects of an education based on moral sentiments: "the precepts of moral instruction have not been thrown away upon us."[513]

Peckard's spiritual rhetoric is also grounded on consideration of the moral sentiments. The sermon preaches Christian duty and gratitude to God for bestowing benevolence in our Nature. These should inform our actions and justice and mercy should be foremost in people's motivations. Action against the slave trade is therefore considered a "truly Christian Charity" because it allows Christians to perform their duty to God and to their fellow human beings, while it also gives people the opportunity to engage their benevolent sentiments by putting them into practice through involvement in a charitable cause. [514] Carrying on with the slave trade, on the other hand, is a "deliberate perpetration of a Crime against God under all the most horrid circumstances of cruel aggravation: it is therefore a transgression of the command, To Love Mercy."[515] However, the principal argument which carries through the whole sermon, draws on the commonly used distinction that abolitionists made between themselves and the slave traders. Peckard states, "it is to be hoped there will not be either places or persons in whom the mercenary gripe [sic] of self-interest will totally eradicate the generous emotions of Philanthropy".[516] Yet, of course, the nature of the slave trade and

[511] See my discussion in chapter 2.
[512] Peckard, *Justice and Mercy*, 18.
[513] Ibid., vii.
[514] See Ibid., vi.
[515] Ibid., 30-31.
[516] Ibid., vii.

of the institution of slavery itself is mercenary and not at all executed with any "generous emotions" towards the enslaved. He is setting up the opposition as the unfeeling other in the abolition debate, drawing on the idea that their greed and self-interest must have eradicated any moral sentiments that may have existed in them from nature.

Slavery, then, is caused by a failure of sensibility as much as by the drive for economic and imperial growth. He labels it as "a Systematic Institution of hardness of heart" and its operators as "unfeeling task masters" and "hard-hearted tyrants".[517] Those who have had the wrong emotional education, those who are practised in cruelty towards others, lack the capacity to feel for others, thus making it possible for them to participate in an act of gross inhumanity. It is left to those who have sensibility to force a political change and abolish the institution. But they must actively engage their sensibilities in order to do so. He therefore asks his listeners and readers to "look with an eye of Pity upon those who are fast bound in misery and iron" and to "contemplate those circumstances which else must hurt every one endued with sensibility and benevolence";[518] in doing so they must, as people with sensibility, be able to activate their moral sentiments and join the cause. Such an act would be the mark of "true and tenderhearted Christians".[519]

Peckard's tract on the subject, entitled *Am I not a man? and a brother? With all humility addressed to the British legislature* (1788), argues the same case as his sermon, exclaiming on the "hardness of heart" displayed not just by those directly involved in

[517] Ibid., 27 and 34.
[518] Ibid., 39 and 41.
[519] Ibid., 39.

the trade but also by the nation as a whole for allowing its continuance for so long.[520] This time addressing members of the legislature itself, rather than his own congregation and readers, he uses the pronoun "we" instead of "they" in order to ensure they share in the guilt of the slave trade's existence. He uses tears, or rather, a lack of tears, to connect the slave trade with inhumanity and insensibility:

> [O]h! hardness of heart beyond imagination! it is said that Nature gave Man the most compassionate heart when she gave him the power of Tears. […] but we are estranged from our Nature; we have no tear to bestow, no heart to feel the sufferings of these our fellow-creatures: oh! shame that such reproach must rest upon us without possibility of refutation.[521]

Tears are the embodiment of one's compassion. In this affective appeal to those in power, Peckard is thus equating a lack of tears with a lack of compassion amongst them and amongst society. Through habituation in cruel practices which disregard common humanity they have become "estranged" from their natures, unable to feel for the sufferings of their "fellow-creatures". By shaming the legislature through claims of a general lack of feeling amongst them, he is demanding that each of them prove that they have, indeed, sensibility and that they act on the compassion that is natural to everyone.

As the abolition movement gathered momentum in 1788, many preachers used the same arguments as Peckard with the hope that they too could have some influence over their congregations and community of readers. Joseph Priestley, a Rational

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[520] Peter Peckard, *Am I Not a Man? And a Brother? With all Humility Addressed to the British Legislature* (Cambridge, 1788), 84, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3304602851). The title of this tract was used by the London committee for their design of an emblem. The Wedgwood-produced cameo of the kneeling slave, which was emblazoned on everything from jewellery and snuff-boxes to chinaware and tea sets, displayed the words "Am I not a man? And a brother?"
[521] Ibid., 84-5.

Dissenter who had once taught at the Warrington Academy, preached and published his *Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade* in Birmingham in 1788. Priestley noted the fact that abolitionism was an opportunity for denominations to work together for the cause – a cause "of *humanity*, and our common c*hristianity*."[522] Almost the entire Preface is given over to these sentiments, stressing the shared values between sects who, after all, share "true Christian principles".[523] It shows a willingness, by Priestley at least, to acknowledge the shared norms and practices among the denominations and put aside differences in order to act on the principles which are common to all Christians. In the "delightful employment" of improving society we:

> ought, as his own children, to act like God; exerting ourselves, by every means in our power, to remove the prejudices, correct the errors, cure the vices, and relieve the distresses, of our fellow creatures. In exertions of this kind, our motives are pure, pious, and benevolent. We feel as we are conscious we ought to do; and with whatever *success* it may please God to crown our endeavours, we shall enjoy the satisfaction of *having endeavoured,* and our *labour will not* wholly *be in vain*.[524]

Priestley was a firm believer in "doing good" for the betterment of both society and the self. In an echo of Shaftesburian moral sentiment philosophy and Latitudinarian theology, for Priestley virtue was defined as "that disposition of mind, and that course of conduct arising from it, which is best calculated to promote a man's own happiness

[522] Priestley, *Sermon*, 33 (his emphasis).
[523] Ibid., ix.
[524] Ibid., v-vi (his emphasis).

and the happiness of others with whom he is connected".[525] He therefore takes the sentimental parable of the Good Samaritan as his text for the sermon. He combines this with the sentimental argument that society is held together through social sympathy and benevolent acts. He addresses his listeners and readers in the following terms:

> I do not know whether it be more in the character of *men*, or in that of *Christians*, that I shall now take the liberty to address you. But if you feel as becomes either, you cannot but sympathize with the miserable and oppressed of the human race, how remote soever they be from yourselves in every other respect. […] And as we ought to feel for our fellow men, we ought, to the utmost of our influence, to exert ourselves to relieve their distresses.[526]

Whether one is listening to these words as a Christian or simply as a human being, the matter of the slave trade must be seen in its proper light by people of sensibility. Priestley is making a point of the fact that current religious discourse and discourses on the nature of man have the same emotional norms: sensibility and the moral sentiments are considered by both as central to humanity. Whether Christian or not, man must "feel as becomes either" and sympathise with the miserable. The crucial part of this address, however, is the last line – feeling for others must move us to action, to provide relief for their distresses. Priestley is signalling to his followers "the political tenor of his sermon from the start".[527]

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[525] Joseph Priestley, "Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever", 2nd ed. (London, 1787), in *Works IV*, 356, quoted in Seed, "Gentlemen Dissenters", 311.
[526] Priestley, *Sermon*, 1 (his emphasis).
[527] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 153.

He frames his call for action as a "friendly interposition" in support of those who "have been made to suffer numberless miseries" and who thus "deserve our compassion".[528] Coming in 1788 at the height of the first petition campaign, this is not just a call for philanthropic aid but a political call to act from someone with ties to the movement. Speaking to his parishioners in Birmingham, he asks them to become politically engaged and involved in petitioning: "let not us be the last, though we cannot have the honour of being the first, to join heartily in the measures that are now taking for their relief; it being proposed to recommend their case to the consideration of parliament the present session, and the friends of the measure thinking that a general application from all parts of the country, and especially from towns of note like this, will tend to promote it, and almost ensure its success".[529] Universal benevolence is used as an argument to move people to act:

> If we have any sentiments of benevolence […] we shall wish to see every thing extended to others that we covet for ourselves. […] remote as they are from us in situation and condition, we should consider them as brethren and neighbours, and therefore exert ourselves to the utmost for their relief.[530]

This passage also stresses the Christian maxim of the "obligation to do to others as we would that they should do to us, in the same circumstances", highlighting the relation between all humans and the re-emphasising the moral of his chosen text, the Good Samaritan.[531] It is thus, by linking sentimental and spiritual arguments for philanthropic

[528] Priestley, *Sermon*, 2.
[529] Ibid., 3.
[530] Ibid., 31-32.
[531] Ibid., 14.

compassion to political action that he engages in the politics of sympathy that abolitionists were creating to mobilise for their cause.

This is repeated again and again in the sermon literature in 1788 through to the second campaign of 1792. James Dore, a Baptist minister, appeals to the social sentiments of his audience and their natural feelings as human beings. He states that "whatever is human should interest your feelings" and thus he asks his readers and listeners to "consult your feelings and let them speak" before he begins recounting the misery of slavery.[532] Describing the breaking of family ties that slaves endure, Dore emphasises the tears of the suffering:

> Here you behold daughters clinging to their mothers, and mothers to their daughters, in all the agonies of grief, bedewing each other with their tears, and pouring out their unavailing sorrows. – There you see father, mother, and children, locked in each others [sic] arms, praying never to be separated. Here the husband and the wife, in the most suppliant manner, earnestly entreat not to be torn asunder. There are others still weeping for their native shore, and for their endearing connexions whom they have left behind.[533]

Dore's appeal demands a transfer of the tears shed by slaves to his congregation, asking readers and listeners to imagine their own families being torn apart. He uses a story told by John Newton in his *Thoughts Upon the African Slave Trade* (1788) about a slaver

[532] James Dore, *A Sermon on the African Slave Trade, Preached at Maze-Pond, Southwark, Lord's Day Afternoon, Nov. 30, 1788* (London, 1788), 19, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3319029824).
[533] Ibid., 23-24.

who threw an infant into the sea because of its constant wailing.[534] Dore lays emphasis on the weeping of the baby's mother, stating that, while the "child was soon silenced indeed", "her lamentations" did not cease.[535] At this point he addresses the women listening to and reading his sermon: "Ye affectionate mothers, when you feast your eyes on your little infants in your arms, think of this story: and if you CAN, justify the practice of trading the persons of men".[536] As Carey states, Dore has transformed Newton's eyewitness tale into a sentimental parable, asking, once he has reduced the mothers in his audience to tears, that they turn their attention to political action.[537] Dore is so certain that his sermon will affect the women in his audience that he claims, "if females only were to contribute, on this occasion, a liberal collection would be raised".[538] But his appeal is to everyone and he actively asks his congregation and readers to give money to the newly formed Abolition Society, stating that "they earnestly and respectfully solicit the assistance of 'every well-wisher' to their cause".[539] In his final appeal to act, the compassion of Jesus is connected to political action: "In the person of our great Redeemer benevolence was the most prominent feature; and in his life, the most pure, active, and extensive benevolence was displayed".[540] He thus encourages his audience, "in the language of my divine Master, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE", the conclusion of the parable of the Good Samaritan.[541]

[534] Newton's *Thoughts* were influential and used as evidence by other abolitionist writers because of Newton's first-hand experience working on slave ships. As an evangelical Anglican cleric he was a member of the so-called Clapham Sect and was good friends with Wilberforce and other abolitionists from that circle.
[535] Dore, *Sermon*, 26.
[536] Ibid., 26.
[537] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 154.
[538] Dore, *Sermon*, 25.
[539] Ibid., 37.
[540] Ibid., 34.
[541] Ibid., 39.

This parable, and its ethic of compassion, also forms the central argument of fellow dissenting minister John Liddon's 1792 sermon, which begins with an emphasis on the "practical side" of their religion – to do good:

> Christianity is a system of pure benevolence. Its origin is the love of God; and its end is human happiness […]. To accomplish this end, all the doctrines and actions of Jesus Christ were directed. *He went about doing good*.[542]

The title of Liddon's sermon – *Cruelty the Natural and Inseparable Consequence of Slavery* – hints at the minister's belief that slavery as a practice cultivates cruelty and violence, whereas the aim of a Christian is to cultivate compassion through good works. Slave traders and owners, "accustomed to cruelty", "are not only callous to the cries of the wretched, but take an infernal delight in the miseries of mankind".[543] Such men are "the disgrace of human nature" for suppressing the compassion that is inherent to humankind.[544] He thus exhorts his audience to:

> Copy the example of the good Samaritan. Exert all your talents and all your influence to dry up the tears of the Africans, to meliorate the condition of those already enslaved, and to prevent the continuance of the abominable traffic.[545]

By claiming that "Every christian ought to do all in his power to put a stop to the infernal traffic", Liddon is pointing to the power of Britons to dry up the tears of slaves

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[542] John Liddon, *Cruelty the Natural and Inseparable Consequence of Slavery, and Both Diametrically Opposite to the Doctrine and Spirit of the Christian Religion: Represented in a Sermon, Preached on Sunday, March 11th, 1792, at Hemel-Hempstead, Herts.* (London, 1792), 3 (his emphasis), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/57uiR8.
[543] Ibid., 5-6.
[544] Ibid., 6.
[545] Ibid., 21.

and go to their aid, linking the active duty of a Christian to a politics of sympathy.[546] He states that there are "means" of performing charitable acts to aid slaves that "are peaceable and constitutional", but are nonetheless political.[547] The first "is by petitioning the legislature to interpose its authority, and to put an end to a traffic which wounds the feelings of humanity".[548] The other way of getting involved "is the conscientious disuse of West India produce, till the Slave-trade be abolished", which he stresses is a method of protest that can be adopted by "every Christian", whether rich or poor, male or female.[549] He states that "many poor Christians, if they were to see a man robbed and wounded, might pity him, but could not administer relief. But here, they may prevent the wounds of many by rendering their labour useless." In other words, involvement in political protest to abolish the slave trade is an opportunity for any Christian who has sensibility to put their religious, moral, and emotional norms into practice.

Conclusion:

In terms of practice, acts of reform had become more than simple acts of charity to many within religious communities by the end of the eighteenth century. An examination of the variety of institutions and reform causes set up and participated in during the course of the century attests to the fact that the so-called "reform complex" encompassed much more than simple charity for those less materially fortunate, but ranged from social welfare to political rights, from moral welfare to religious freedoms.[550] The sermon literature of abolitionist ministers and divines shows that, to an increasing number of people in Britain, philanthropy was an important emotional

[546] Ibid., 20.
[547] Ibid., 29.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Ibid., 30.
[550] See Turley, *Culture of English Antislavery*.

practice with the specific aim of mobilising the moral sentiments of compassion and benevolence. It was a practice aimed at habituating compassion so that it became an immediate, "natural" response to aid suffering and improve society. In the act of helping those less fortunate one's sensibility is engaged, the feelings of others are received through sympathy, and, in turn, compassion and pity compel one to improve the situation of the distressed. It is also conceived as an act of religious duty, framed as a necessity of Christian virtue if one was to follow the guidance of Jesus, the prime example of active and tearful compassion.

While the dynamics of the different religious traditions differed on various points, the deployment of particular arguments by members of religious communities reveal, as Turley points out, "a family resemblance in fundamental ideas".[551] The important issue here is that large sections of the Anglican, Quaker, evangelical, and dissenting communities could all reach a similar commitment to abolitionism through their own intellectual, theological, and personal beliefs, and they could also agree on the fundamental arguments they were to use in their mobilising rhetoric. The moral sentiments of compassion and benevolence, the cultivation of sensibility, the moral imperative to do good to others, and ritualistic practices of weeping, inform their abolitionist texts and are made political through the insistence on active participation in the movement by writers and preachers. The enjoinder at the end of each abolitionist sermon to participate in political action demonstrates the rescripting undertaken by religious communities of their emotional norms. By linking Christian duty to good works with political involvement, via the compulsion of a cultivated compassion, religious ministers and preachers adopted the sentimental arguments already in use

[551] Ibid., 17.

within their communities and adapted them to suit the politics of sympathy that abolitionists developed to argue their case.

It could be said that, with the majority of the British population belonging to some Christian denomination or other, the link scholars have made between religion and philanthropy is perhaps not surprising.[552] Charity for the poor had always been a part of Christian practice, yet antislavery opinion did not emerge in any meaningful way until the eighteenth century, so there was clearly more to people's decisions to become involved in abolitionism than just their religious moral duty. As with any community in the eighteenth century, religious communities were not isolated entities with impermeable borders. Members bring to religious communities the norms and practices from all the other communities and groups they may belong to, and vice versa. Religious ideas about performing good works for the improvement of others fit in easily with the growing interest in self and social improvement which was occurring in other communities, in both public and private arenas of sociability.

As we have seen, the chief aim of self-improvement was the cultivation of virtue through the habitual practice of appropriate sentiments and affections, such as compassion and benevolence. Social improvement gave people the opportunity to do so, through charitable acts towards those in need of food, shelter, education, religious freedom and political representation. We cannot solely focus, therefore, on the religious element in the practice of philanthropy and reform in Britain during the eighteenth century, just as we cannot focus solely on moral philosophy or sociability as sources of

[552] Clive D. Field, "Religious Statistics in Great Britain: An Historical Introduction", *BRIN Discussion Series on Religious Statistics Discussion Paper 001* (Manchester: British Religion in Numbers Institute for Social Change, 2009), accessed 19 April 2016, http://www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/development-of-religious-statistics.pdf. Field states that while secularism is usually traced back to the eighteenth century, it has never been a strong numerical force in Britain.

change in this era either. The emotional repertoires of eighteenth-century Protestant communities emerged alongside other communities which shared membership and which, therefore, shared similar convergent emotional practices. Some of these communities, to which I will turn in the next chapter, were the literary and reading communities of Britain which elaborated the practice of moral sentiments in the literature of sensibility and which shared in the practice of reading "for the sentiment".[553]

[553] The phrase comes from Samuel Johnson, who declared after reading Richardson that his plot was subservient to the sentiments it contained. He considered "the story as only giving occasion for the sentiment". Hill, *Life of Johnson*, 2:175 (see chap. 1, n. 76).

Chapter 5: "The Kind Contagion" of Abolitionist Sentiment: Adopting and Adapting Sentimental Reading Practices

We have already seen how the abolitionist debate played out within academic essays, newspaper correspondence, and religious sermons. These were the tools of practice with which abolition supporters engaged in the new politics of sympathy, using the texts to carry out emotional practices which came to define the abolition movement and its emotional discourse. This final chapter pays attention to one of the most studied aspects of abolitionism in recent years: sentimental literature.[554] The bonds of fellow-feeling and social sympathy that were promoted in texts produced by those groups and communities which privileged sentimentalism were reinforced within the works of sentimental fiction which emerged in the 1740s. In the novels and poems of sentimental writers, sensibility is represented as the ideal human virtue and acts of benevolence as the natural end of social sympathy.[555] Indeed, it was perhaps due to the growing success and popularity of the sentimental style in literature that sensibility, and the practices which came to define it, became such a widespread cultural and emotional phenomenon.

The close relationship between inner experience and outer bodily manifestations of emotions theorised by Scheer, is closely tied to the function of sentimental literature. Attention to the ways in which sentimental texts represent feelings highlights the importance of the body in eighteenth-century notions of emotional experience. The first

[554] For the most in depth discussions of sentimental rhetoric in abolitionist literature see Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility* and Carey, *British Abolitionism* (see chap. 1, n. 12). See also the collection of essays in Ahern, *Affect and Abolition* (see chap.1, n. 13).
[555] On sensibility and sentiment in eighteenth-century literature see Todd, *Sensibility* (see chap.1, n. 21); Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability* (see chap. 2, n. 33); Csengei, *Literature of Feeling* (see chap. 1, n. 27).

section of this chapter examines the act of reading as an emotional practice meant to engage the sensibility and cultivate the moral sentiments through somatic language which signified the emotional moment. Sentimental literature had a very specific function and it is important to understand how it was read and the relationship between the writer, the text, and the reader within the practice of sentimental reading. These were works that needed to be read "for the sentiment", to use Johnson's phrase.[556] The aim of doing so was always, initially at least, to achieve the emotional and moral education of its audience. [557] Sentimental fiction aimed to show its readers how to express themselves and how to respond to life's experiences.[558]

It has been argued that, by focusing on the miseries of the less fortunate and by encouraging compassionate responses to those miseries, sentimental fiction had a central role in cultivating sympathetic benevolence and philanthropic practice among many communities in Britain in the eighteenth century.[559] With this in mind, section two of this chapter focuses on how sentimental literature was used by some to ask questions about the validity of slavery in light of what they understood about social sympathy and the moral sentiments. In order to follow the abolitionist rescripting of sentimental literary rhetoric into a political instrument, I examine early forms of antislavery literature written in the decades before the establishment of abolitionism, including Sarah Scott's novel *Sir George Ellison* (1766) and poetry by William Cowper and Thomas Day published between 1773 and 1782. These works are examined to see how sentimental fiction was beginning to be enlisted for a specific political purpose, even if they were not explicitly advocating for a stated reform.

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[556] Hill, *Life of Johnson*, 2:175 (see chap. 1, n. 76).
[557] Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 142.
[558] See Todd, *Sensibility*.
[559] See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility* (see chap. 1, n. 21); and Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*.

The final section focuses on abolitionist verse written between 1787 and 1796 and discusses the techniques used to mobilise public opinion and political action. As Carey points out, these poems were addressing an audience "experienced in sensibility; an audience which not only found itself capable of being moved by sentimental writing, but which demanded to be so moved."[560] It is true these poems work from a purely sentimental understanding of how to read a text, yet they also display a rescripting of the practice by injecting a political edge to their sentimental verse. I explore the links abolitionist writers made between emotional cultivation and political action by examining two main strategies. The first is their argument that habituation in the moral sentiments leads to virtue and benevolent humanitarian action, and the second is their use of apostrophic verse to enact the sympathetic contagion of sentiments between the writer, or the text, and the reader. While Anna Barbauld's work is examined as an antithesis to the other poems explored here, even in her less sanguine view of the utility of sentimental language in effecting political change, the contrast between a good emotional education, which defined the virtuous benevolence of the abolitionist movement, and a bad one, which defined the cruel tyranny of the pro-slavery position, is still evident in her poem. Even after continual political defeats, the abolitionist emotional repertoire remained tied to the language of humanitarian benevolence.

5.1 Sentimental Literary Practice: Writing and Reading "For the Sentiment"

With the vital role that philosophers, theologians, and other writers were placing on social sympathy and the moral sentiments, sentimentalism became linked not only to very specific ways of expressing and responding to emotions, but also to very specific ways of writing and reading emotions. Dr Johnson's summation, when reading Samuel

[560] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 48-49.

Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), that "you must read him for the sentiment" has been taken as a disparaging comment on the lack of plot in what is considered the first example of a modern novel.[561] However, as Mullan points out, Johnson in fact meant this as praise for the elevation of "sentiment" over mere "story" as the prime purpose of the novel.[562] The practice of reading that Johnson was implying, and that Richardson was advocating, centred on the emotions of not just the characters within the novel but also those of the reader, or often listener, of the story. In terms of sentimentalism, the novel was crucial to the development of a practice which explicitly targeted the cultivation of sensibility in a mass audience. Richardson presented his novels as moral guides which explored the virtue of sensibility and the practice of benevolence and social sympathy. They were not conduct books in the traditional sense, in that readers were not asked to follow particular actions but rather to feel particular emotions. As Todd states, characters in a sentimental novel "should teach through their gestures and responses", and the "reader should be moved less by identification with the characters […] than by contemplation of" their emotional displays.[563] In other words, the feelings created within the novel should be "sentimentally contagious" to the reader.[564]

Throughout the eighteenth century, those who copied Richardson and who promoted his works as models of respectable and virtuous writing emphasised the relationship between distress, compassionate feeling, and morality. Later works by Laurence Sterne and Henry Mackenzie were designed to be read so as to instruct audiences through sentimental feeling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sterne wrote that the purpose of *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768) was

[561] This is perhaps because Johnson states "your impatience" with the plot "would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself". Hill, *Life of Johnson*, 2:175.
[562] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 57.
[563] Todd, *Sensibility*, 75.
[564] Ibid.

"to teach us to love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do", much as his sermons aimed to do as well.[565] Meanwhile the reviewing magazines were also promoting an image of appropriate reading practice. The *Critical Review*, for example, stated that Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771) must be read with "satisfaction" by all "those who have feeling hearts", while the *Monthly Review* declared that "the Reader, who weeps not over some of the scenes it describes, has no sensibility of mind".[566] The reviewers of sentimental fiction thus helped to reinforce this key link between sensibility, sentiment, and moral improvement.

Other interpretations of sensibility and the role of sentimental literature were made at the time. Novels were always problematic in terms of their respectability as a form of entertainment and instruction, as was the reliance on sensibility itself as a central tenet of moral virtue. As Goring argues, the literary form of what we now know as the novel was considered by many throughout the eighteenth century to be "morally dubious", its consumption "regularly condemned as anything from an idle waste of time to a deranged and corrupting indulgence in fantasy".[567] In a review of Sterne's work, an anonymous critic writes that *A Sentimental Journey* "is the work of an unprincipled man of feeling, whose nerves with peculiar irritability, can tremble every hour at the touch of joy or woe; whose finely-fibred heart would thrill perhaps with horror at the sufferings of – a fly".[568] Sensibility itself is being made fun of here, casting the over-sensitive "man of feeling" as irrational, weak, and too fixed on the sensations of emotional experience. Todd points out that critics of sensibility judged that aesthetic

[565] See chap. 4, n. 72.
[566] *Critical Review, Or, Annals of Literature* 31 (June 1771), 482, ProQuest, (4336118); *Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal* 44 (May 1771), 418, ProQuest, (4619625). On the importance of review magazines as promoters of sentimental reading see Frank Donoghue, *The Fame Machine: Book Reviewing and Eighteenth-Century Literary Careers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).
[567] Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility*, 166.
[568] "On Sensibility, or, Feeling, as Opposed to Principle", quoted in *Sterne, The Critical Heritage*, ed. A.B Howes (London: Routledge, 1974), 308.

experience obscured the moral imperative of emotions and that it too often had a decadent, effeminate quality about the way it was expressed, particularly in literature.[569] If taken too far, sensibility could disqualify men from worldly business, while also leading to melancholic debility, hypochondria, and hysteria in women.[570] In such cases, the result was isolation and solipsism rather than the ideals of sociability and social sympathy.[571] Sentimental fiction was thus always open to interpretations that bypassed the moral intent of the works.

However, what was aimed at and how it was interpreted by individuals are entirely different matters. The purpose of writing for the novelists of sentimental literature was clear. In order to distance themselves from the category of "romance" and its associations with the scandalous and titillating fiction of early writers like Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood, the sentimental novelists, beginning with Richardson, set out to make the novel respectable by attempting to control its interpretation.[572] This involved transforming not only the way it was written but also the way it was read. Warner sees the so-called "rise of the novel" as a project of reform; an attempt to transform readers by writing didactically and by conceiving exemplary models of virtue, politeness, and sensibility.[573] Richardson actively sought out different ways of showing his readers and friends how his books were to be read and interpreted, heavily

[569] Todd, Sensibility, 61-2.
[570] See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 141; see Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, on the disease-like qualities of sensibility.
[571] Anne C. Vila, "Beyond Sympathy: Vapors, Melancholia, and the Pathologies of Sensibility in Tissot and Rousseau", in *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment*, ed. Elena Russo, Yale French Studies, no. 92 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 88-90. Vila (88) states that "the same vital élan that seemed to inspire people to practise such crucial virtues as compassion and benevolence might instead trigger a physically grounded solipsism utterly incompatible with sympathetic social interaction". See also Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*.
[572] See Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 58.
[573] William B. Warner, *Licensing Entertainment: The Elevation of Novel Reading in Britain, 1684-1750* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

editorialising his works throughout his life. In introductions, notes, and appendices, Richardson pointed to the moral didacticism of his own fiction. In *Pamela*, for instance, his pseudo-editor promotes the novel as one that will "*instruct* and *improve* the minds of the YOUTH of *both sexes*" and one which "shall engage the passions of every sensible reader", a guarantee produced "from his *own* passions, (which have been uncommonly *moved* in perusing it) to the passions of *every one* who shall read with attention".[574] This reading "with attention" is the crucial point. "Sensible" readers are those who pay attention to the sentiment of the novel and who respond to that sentiment appropriately.

In order to respond appropriately both the writer and the reader were relying on the dual working of sensibility and sympathy. As Carey states, "almost all genuinely sentimental arguments in eighteenth-century writing revolve around the central relationship between sensibility, the capacity to feel, and sympathy, the capacity to imagine another's feelings as one's own".[575] Without sympathy sensibility would be pointless: its properties as a tool of emotional communication allow sentiments to flow between people and enable the capacity to tune into another's feelings. Whether conceived as a contagion or as an imaginative process, writers of sentimental literature were using contemporary understandings of how sympathy worked in their fiction. In order to move the reader and transfer the emotions they implanted within their works to a wider audience, they developed a specific language of sentiment that drew on the imaginative process of witnessing, as well as the symptoms and manifestations of emotions on the body. Physical and emotional suffering are thus placed at the centre of the story and a common strategy is to focus on a single figure in distress. As Ahern

[574] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Peter Sabor (London: Penguin, 1980, repr. 2003), 31 (his emphasis).
[575] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 284.

points out, directing readers' attention to a specific scene or a particular character "could make *real* a problem that afflicted a whole population, by allowing the reader to visualize the scene of suffering and engage in imaginative identification with the plight of the victim". [576]

In Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, the narrator, Yorick, ruminates on his inability to imagine the miseries of many and his failure to tune his feelings into the "multitude of sad groups" in the world who were poor, imprisoned, or sick.[577] Yorick tries to give "full scope" to his imagination by beginning "with the millions of my fellow creatures born to no inheritance but slavery".[578] He however finds that, even though the picture is "affecting", he could "not bring it near" him enough to be truly given over to sympathetic compassion. In fact "it did but distract" him from the goal of exercising his sensibility.[579] Instead, by focusing his imaginative capacities on "a single captive", Yorick is able to describe in detail the miseries of the captive's experience and bring the picture nearer to his mind's eye until his "heart began to bleed" in pity for the victim.[580] Thus, by zooming in on the "multitude" and looking at a "single" figure in despair, Sterne highlights the importance of imaginative identification which allows his character, and the reader, to witness pain and feel compassion. Yet, while this scene clearly asks the reader to enter into an imaginative identification with the sufferer, it also reveals some of the limits of sympathetic imagination, at least in regard to the idea of the proximity of the suffering. In a sign that it is perhaps too early for some to consider the Atlantic slave trade in terms of its abolition at this stage, Yorick is unable

[576] Ahern, *Affect and Abolition*, 5 (his emphasis).
[577] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy*, ed. Gardner Stout (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 201-2.
[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Ibid.

to focus on the multitude of distant slaves that must at that moment be suffering, instead having to look "closer" to engage his sensibility and exercise his moral sentiments. He is perhaps acknowledging that we sympathise more easily with those who are literally nearer to us than with the very distant and very different African slaves.[581]

Nevertheless, as scholars like Goring, Van Sant, and Carey have argued, "witnessing" or "gazing on suffering" is central to the function of the character of the "man of feeling".[582] The way in which writers engage sympathetic identification is to "convert an audience into spectators," offering visual tableaux of highly emotive situations, making the injustices of the world present through vivid images and particularising language.[583] Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey,* written less than a decade after Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* appeared, put imaginative sympathy into literary practice more than any other novel by using visual tableaux of suffering. Yorick goes on a journey driven by sensibility, encountering various unhappy, oppressed, or miserable people over whom he can pity and shed a tear. As Chandler points out, in the movement from one emotional episode to the next, "Sterne managed to find a conceit in which he could figure the practice of sympathy as a kind of imaginative mobility – the capacity, as Adam Smith had suggested a few years earlier, of passing into points of view not one's own".[584] The story has no plot other than to follow Yorick's emotional itinerary as he is propelled further on his journey of witnessing and feeling along with those he encounters. Yorick's sympathetic encounters occur through the witnessing of bodily communication rather than words. Looking into tearful eyes, for example,

[581] On the other hand, given Sterne's position on slavery, as evidenced in his sermon literature and his letters to Ignatius Sancho, we can presume that he himself did not entirely, or at least not always, agree with this aspect of imaginative sympathetic identification.
[582] Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility*, 157; Van Sant, *Sensibility and the Novel,* 46 (see chap. 1, n. 21); Carey, *British Abolitionism*.
[583] Van Sant, *Sensibility and the Novel*, 28-29.
[584] James Chandler, "The Languages of Sentiment", *Textual Practice* 22 (March 2008): 26, doi: 10.1080/09502360701841886.

Yorick "sees" what they are feeling which leads to an instantaneous transmission of their emotion to his: after wiping away their tears of melancholy he then needs to wipe away his own tears of sympathy. Therefore, as well as witnessing emotion, the sentimental hero suffers and feels concomitant emotions of pity and compassion stirred through sympathy.

The importance of making the sentiments of distressing situations central to the work lies in the relationship between sensibility, sympathy and active benevolence. Just as Shaftesbury and Butler had advocated for social sympathy and benevolence as harmonising forces in their philosophical and theological treatises, respectively, so Richardson's heroines and Sterne's heroes were promoters of the sentimental imperative to sympathise with others and act to benefit those in distress.[585] This lesson was not necessarily to be learnt from the actions of the central characters but, rather, through exciting the reader's pity and compassion. [586] While these novels do not, as Csengei states, "directly draw up any agenda for the reformation of social ills," they do in fact demonstrate the writer's position on social issues via emotional response and performance.[587] It is the reader who must interpret the text on the level of emotions and who must, through the practice of reading, cultivate their own sensibility and moral sentiments through the emotional contagion of sympathetic communication. As Todd points out, "Since virtue could be generated through an exciting to compassion, that reader would be most improved who had been most deeply affected".[588] In order to

[585] On the links between moral sentiment philosophy and sentimental literature see Todd, *Sensibility*.
[586] More often than not these characters fail to act, the suffering they encounter pushing them further into retreat from the world at large rather than towards actions that would aid the situation. Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*, Harley, and Richardson's *Clarissa* both welcome death as a blissful retreat from the disappointments and miseries of the world. As Mullan points out, sensibility often denoted debility and affliction. "Hypochondria and Hysteria: Sensibility and the Physicians", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (April 1984):146-8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41467321
[587] Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 123.
[588] Todd, *Sensibility*, 75.

achieve this and engage the imagination and feeling capacities of their readers, sentimental writers needed to convert their audience into spectators through a specific language that engaged the moral sentiments. The work of fiction must exercise the sensibility of the reader, that is, it must act as a tool of emotional practice.[589] Writers of sentimental fiction therefore used a somatic language of emotion which highlighted the body's feeling responses.

The sentimental moment is characterised by the physical and legible emotional responses, usually to distress, that are displayed on the body, such as tears, blushing, fainting, sighing and palpitations. Mullan calls these displays "symptoms" because "it is according to an idea of the body (and particularly the female body) as a visible and describable register of effects that these signs appear".[590] The most obvious symptom of being moved is crying, and tears form a large part of the symptomatic language of sentimental fiction. Pamela is "overwhelmed with tears" at instances of distress, sorrow, joy, and compassion for others, evidence of her sensibility to both her own feelings and to those of the people around her.[591] Tears therefore indicate, as Todd points out, a "correct response", denoting a feeling and benevolent heart.[592] The gestures and postures related to overwhelming moments of feeling, including falling to the knees, fitting and trembling, and even fainting, indicate the reaction of "the sanguinary indices" to emotional states and enhance the sentimental moment.[593] The quickening of the pulse and the reddening of the face are particularly prevalent in sentimental fiction.

[589] On "exercising the sensibility" see Van Sant, *Sensibility and the Novel*, 29.
[590] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 74. Although available to both men and women, sensibility and the physical symptoms of sentiment would come to be particularly associated with the female body. This had obvious repercussions on the way sensibility was viewed, particularly by its critics, as effeminate and politically ineffectual.
[591] Richardson, *Pamela*, 131.
[592] Todd, *Sensibility*, 77.
[593] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 19.

Blushing often signifies guilt and shame, but it also reveals innocence, purity and virtue. It reveals sensibility.

In Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1765-70), for example, blushing "demonstrates his sensibility; and his sensibility demonstrates some principle within him, that disapproved and reproached him for what he had committed".[594] A spontaneous rush of blood to the face thus reveals an emotional state of mind of a person who feels guilty over an action or is faced with a situation that society would deem improper or shameful. Brooke is clear on the meaning of seeing a woman blush. It is not necessarily out of personal guilt or shame at wrongdoing, but the mere apprehension that wrong has occurred: "A woman therefore, who blushes at what she disapproves, blushes not for herself, but for the faults of her rude and ill-mannered company, who have not the grace to blush for themselves."[595] Women who do not blush are usually depicted as vulgar and unvirtuous.[596] The ability to flush, that is, to feel shame, is an indication of moral virtue. For Brooke, it is "from the fountain of virtue alone, that this flush of shamefacedness can possibly flow".[597] As we have seen, abolitionists would later come to use the blush, alongside all the other gestures and bodily symptoms typical of sentimental fiction, in order to promote their moral stance against the slave trade. In abolitionist verse there is a fundamental difference between those who can blush out of shame and those who *ought* to blush at the cruelties they inflict on African slaves.

[594] Henry Brooke, *The Fool of Quality: Or, the History of Henry Earl of Moreland* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1906), 125.
[595] Ibid., 124.
[596] See Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 206.
[597] Brooke, *Fool of Quality*, 125.

Sensibility is, as Mullan points out, "not so much spoken as displayed" in works of sentimental fiction.[598] Its power lies in the fact that it is not spoken; the system of bodily signs and symptoms indicates feeling beyond words and therefore suggests sincerity because they are automatic responses to emotional states.[599] They are the supposedly "natural" signifiers of virtue. The body, and embodied emotion, thus play a vital role in the emotional practice of reading sentimental texts.[600] However "natural" these symptoms seemed to be, or were promoted to be, these writers understood that they were at once automatic and habituated movements of the body. Similar to the way in which Scheer historicises the body by emphasising "the mutual embeddedness of minds, bodies, and social relations", so writers of sentimental fiction were tying the body to inner thought processes and outer perceptions, creating works that used the idea of the learned experience of emotion – through the practice of reading for the sentiment – to shape and mould not just the body/mind of the reader but also social relations as well.[601] They were relying on the understanding that the cultivation of specific emotional states and sentiments would habituate the body's emotional processes and inform moral thought and action.

Novels of sensibility positioned each reader within a community of like-minded, and like-feeling, members; members that were capable of the sensibility of the central man or woman of feeling, and open to the sympathetic contagion of the sentiments presented within it. The reader is thus connected to the work, and fellow readers, through the sociability provided by the text. For Mullan, the sentimental text implies a

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[598] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 61.
[599] See Ibid., 75.
[600] Scheer argues that "the individual subject in practice theory is not conceivable without the body. […] The materiality of the body provides not only the locus of the competence, dispositions, and behavioral routines of practice, it is also the "stuff" with and on which practices work". "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 200 (see chap. 1, n. 4).
[601] See Ibid., 199. On this relationship see also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

social contract, "by the terms of which a reader was set apart from the anti-social vices or insensitivities which the novels were able to represent".[602] The act of reading a sentimental work, then, created an imagined, or emotional, community in which readers shared in the prescribed emotional norms of the writer.[603] If read correctly, that is, "for the sentiment", the practice of reading could enact sociability in any space a work of fiction was being read, not requiring physical contact to enable the practice and engagement of social sympathy. Like the periodical journalism of previous decades, the sentimental fiction of writers like Richardson reproduced sociability, with its focus on moral sentiments and social harmony, within the novels. Reading together, using the text to cultivate their sensibilities and embody the emotional experiences within the text, no matter how distant in time or place, allowed individuals to become part of a polite reading public engaged in the same emotional practice.

Reading "for the sentiment" was also practised as a social activity, reinforcing the sociability of the text. In a letter to Richardson, Aaron Hill describes the scene in which he reads his friend's *Pamela* aloud to "some Company".[604] As we have seen, this image was repeated in a number of spaces across the country: communal reading took place in educational spaces like that at Warrington, as well as in public spaces like the coffeehouse and literary and philosophical society. Hill goes on to give of the effect of reading on his son:

> [W]e heard a Succession of heart-heaving Sobs; which while he strove to conceal from our Notice, his little Sides swell'd, as if they would burst, with the throbbing Restraint of Sorrow. […]

[602] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 13-14.
[603] On Anderson's "imagined communities" and Rosenwein's similar conception of "emotional communities" see chap. 1, n. 63.
[604] Aaron Hill to Samuel Richardson, 29 December 1740, quoted in Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility*, 171.

> his Eyes were quite lost, in his *Tears:* which running down from his Cheeks in free Currents, had form'd two sincere little Fountains, on that Part of the Carpet he hung over. [605]

The body of Hill's son marks the correct response to a reading of sentimental fiction. The lasting effects of the novel on the little boy are highlighted to demonstrate that reading sentimental fiction is an improving activity. Not only are his tears given approval by the company – the ladies present "were ready to devour him with Kisses" – Hill links his son's emotional response with a change in his overall behaviour.[606] He has become a more studious pupil, "fond of his Book which (before) he cou'd never be brought to attend to".[607] The boy has learnt from the approval of his community that his embodied emotional response to *Pamela* was the correct one and has been transformed into a virtuous member of his family. As Goring argues, Hill shows that both Pamela the character and *Pamela* the novel have the power to move, transform, and moralise those who engage with the text.[608]

For Csengei, a novel like *Pamela* "demonstrates a belief in the ability of sentimental fiction intensively to form and reform the reading public, self-consciously acting out how such an education in feeling is brought about".[609] She suggests that both the sentimental novels themselves, and their success at the time of publication, demonstrate how a practice of reading that interprets texts through affective response "has the potential to connect fiction and life, and thus instantiates how reading that is performed in the private sphere also has public, social and political stakes".[610] The

[605] Ibid. (his emphasis). Richardson used Hill's letters in the Preface of the second edition of *Pamela* in 1741, no doubt to prove the polite, sociable, and improving nature of his novel.
[606] Ibid.
[607] Ibid.
[608] Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility*, 173.
[609] Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 123.
[610] Ibid.

connection between sentimental reading practice and the reformist intent of later abolitionist literature is founded on the idea that reading sentimental works, whether in fictional novels, verse, or even in periodicals and sermons as previously discussed, was an act that engaged the moral sentiments. The practice of reading was thus aimed at being an act of self and social improvement, the text used as a tool of emotional practice designed to cultivate and socialise the reader into a community of men and women of feeling. The antislavery texts I examine in the following section draw on this understanding to extend their readers' feelings towards the suffering slaves in the British sugar colonies.

5.2 Pre-Movement Antislavery Literature: Towards a Politics of Sympathy in Sentimental Fiction

The key feature of reading "for the sentiment" was the imagined causal link between reading sentimental fiction and the reform of society with which its practitioners, writers and readers alike, imbued it. The emotional practice of reading would create highly cultivated men and women of sensibility who had the capacity to see the injustices and miseries of the world and feel impelled through their compassionate natures to help in some way. As Ellis states, in a broad sense, "the sentimental novel's articulation of these themes constitutes an attempt to reformulate social attitudes to inequality through the development of a new humanitarian sensibility".[611] Sentimental literature developed victim-centred narratives which focused on the miseries and pain of "the world" while figures of benevolence and feeling shed tears of pity. No figure, perhaps, could be more miserable and in need of a compassionate witness than the African slave, a victim of brutal violence who had suffered the loss of liberty, equality,

[611] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 48.

and humanity. By the second half of the eighteenth century, slavery was increasingly recognised as a major source of human suffering, principally due to the widespread increase in circulation of information about the slave trade and plantation life through pamphlets, travel journals and histories, and books by men like Benezet.[612]

The attraction of the slave as the central figure in distress and the Briton – or Britain – as the figure of benevolent compassion and liberty was thus, in a certain sense, becoming increasingly obvious to writers of sentimental fiction. Sypher argues that the period between the late 1750s and 1787 was the moment when the theme of slavery transformed, first into antislavery sentiment, and later into more explicit abolitionist appeals.[613] This time frame coincides with the emergence of the same topic in sermon literature, pamphlet literature, and events such as the Somerset case, and it is in this period that much of the antislavery themes and its associated rhetoric of sentimentalism were developed. In sentimental novels, depictions of slaves, ex-slaves and plantation life appear as small episodes within the narrative of the book which emphasise both the pain, fear, and misery of the slave and the compassion and benevolence of the man or woman of feeling who pities them. One of the first and clearest statements against slavery was made by Sarah Scott in her sentimental novel *The History of Sir George Ellison*, published anonymously in 1766. Through the marriage of Ellison to his wealthy Anglo-Jamaican wife, and his consequent acquisition of a slave-worked sugar plantation, Scott makes important comparisons between the cultivated, benevolent Englishman and the unnaturally hard-hearted female plantation owner which draw on the sentimental understanding of emotional cultivation and habituation.

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[612] See Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 46. As stated in previous chapters, Benezet's *Some Historical Account of Guinea* was highly influential and passed around reformist circles through his Quaker links in Britain.

[613] Wylie Sypher, *Guinea's Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the XVIIIth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942).

Ellison is horrified by the cruelty and violence with which his slaves are treated by the overseer of his plantation and sets about improving the system, much to his wife's disdain. The rhetoric Scott uses in the scene of Ellison's interference in a slave punishment is classically sentimental, with tears emanating from both Ellison and the slaves he saves from abuse: falling to his feet, and with "streaming eyes", they thank him for his generosity while he "wept" with the joy of "relieving our fellow creatures from misery".[614] Ellison's sentimental argument for helping the slaves relies on the emotions that led to, and were experienced after, his benevolent action. Scott's novel has been explored in several studies of abolitionist literature to examine both the sentimentalism of the work and her focus on amelioration of the conditions of slavery.[615] While these studies have noted the stark difference between the emotional responses of Ellison and his wife which are a result of their respective upbringings, little attention has been paid to the significance of the relationship between the emotional norms of each character and their emotional practices implicit in Scott's tale. My interest in this novel lies in the way emotional cultivation is understood as affecting moral behaviour.

Mrs Ellison is presented to the reader as a hard-hearted woman who is unmoved by either the cruelties around her or the pity of her husband towards her slaves. More than unmoved, she is shocked and offended by his attempts to help them. Part of her reasoning is racially motivated: "she had a reasonable share of compassion for a white man or woman, but had from her infancy been so accustomed to see the most shocking

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[614] Sarah Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 11.

[615] Ferguson views the book as a "categorical endorsement of the status quo, provided slave owners act benignly". *Subject to Others*, 104 (see chap. 1, n. 9). Both Ellis and Carey agree with this view to a certain extent, but also argue that at the time it was written an amelioration of slavery was as radical an idea as abolitionism seemed twenty years later. Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*; Carey, *British Abolitionism*. See also Eve W. Stoddard, "A Serious Proposal for Slavery Reform: Sarah Scott's Sir George Ellison", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28 (Summer 1995): 379-396, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2739465.

cruelties exercised on the blacks, that she could not conceive how one of that complexion could excite any pity."[616] Her habituation in seeing slaves treated badly is highlighted here. From a young age she has witnessed violence and cruelty and has grown so accustomed to both that she no longer considers slaves as fellow human beings worthy of compassion. Ellis states that the text justifies Mrs Ellison's acceptance of slavery by declaring she is accustomed to it.[617] The point Ellis misses is that, while the character herself is justifying her reasons for insensibility towards slaves, it is her emotional cultivation and habituation, and its consequences, that are being condemned by comparing her behaviour with her husband's. Born and educated in England and therefore unaccustomed to the inhumanity of slavery, Ellison finds that in a different country, with different emotional norms, his benevolent humanitarianism is seen as out of place. From Mrs Ellison's point of view, her husband's intervention in the slaves' punishment is improper and goes against the customs of Jamaica with which she has grown up: "Accordingly she calmly represented to him the impropriety of what he had done".[618] However, Ellison pursues his reforms and proves his sensibility, and thus his proper emotional education, through his compassion and his benevolent and charitable actions towards those he sees in miserable situations.

Mrs Ellison, for her part, sees her husband's compassionate acts as weak, reflecting that she "had always kept her slaves in as good order as any man in the island, and never flinched at any punishment her steward thought proper to inflict upon them".[619] Good order, in her experience, is maintained with violence and oppression. Her supposed strength in unflinchingly directing the punishment of slaves is proof,

[616] Scott, *George Ellison*, 10.
[617] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 91.
[618] Scott, *George Ellison*, 11.
[619] Ibid., 12.

however, of her poor emotional education. In sentimental ethics, the softer, calmer emotions, like benevolence, are cultivated; her pride in being seen as hardened and as strong as a man in her situation paints her as unfeminine and lacking in sensibility, showing no sign of the softened sentiments with which virtuous women were depicted in sentimental fiction. Her heart is hardened to the scenes of misery around her and her habituation in such cruelty has denied her an appropriate sentimental emotional education. This is further highlighted using another argument common to sentimental antislavery arguments: her demonstration of false sensibility when she falls into a fit of tears at the injury of her lap-dog.

While walking the grounds of their estate and discussing their opposing views on compassion and slavery, an accident in which her favourite pet injures its leg draws "a shower of tears from Mrs. Ellison's eyes". [620] The force of the emotion she displays is in stark contrast to the total lack of emotion she is seen to feel towards slaves. Ellison is quick to see the hypocrisy of her feelings:

> to see any creature suffer is an affecting sight; and it gives me pleasure to observe you can feel it for the poor little animal, whose love for you occasioned his accident; but I confess I am surprized, though agreeably, to see such marks of sensibility in a heart I feared was hardened against the sufferings even of her fellow creatures.[621]

Mrs Ellison is clearly capable of sympathetic feelings – tears, after all, are an indication of sensibility. However, they are misdirected. Her response to the injury of a lap-dog, traditionally seen in eighteenth-century culture as an object of luxury and unworthy of

[620] Ibid., 12-13.
[621] Ibid., 13.

the amount of care lavished upon them by their mistresses, is disproportionate to the amount of feeling she shows towards figures more worthy of compassion – slaves.[622] The sensibility she demonstrates is yet another sign of her poor emotional education. She has cultivated it towards useless objects – lap-dogs – and has allowed humanity to suffer. The narrator uses the lap-dog not to prove that she indeed has some sensibility, but rather, as Ellis points out, "to deflate or dissolve Mrs Ellison's position, especially her 'hard heartedness', habituated cynicism and lack of compassion".[623]

Sensibility and sentimental ethics are thus appealed to in the novel as proof of the effectiveness of emotional practice, or cultivation, to moral action. Ellison, unlike his wife, is able to see the slaves' miseries and fears, imagine their pain, and feel compassion through the sympathetic contagion of feeling that passes between himself and the victims. In the same way that Clarkson would later highlight habituation as the key to the difference between benevolent Britons and cruel colonialists, Scott pursues the sentimental argument that being practised in cruelty leads to more of the same, while emotional practices which cultivate sensibility and enhance one's moral sentiments can only lead to humane and morally virtuous action. As scholars have stated before, despite only seemingly suggesting a mitigation of circumstances for slaves on colonial plantations, Scott's discussion of the morality of slavery and the emotional force with which she describes the necessity of considering them as fellow creatures was certainly innovative for sentimental fiction in the 1760s.[624] Contemporary critical reviews of the novel highlight this aspect of the text.[625] The fact

[622] Markman Ellis, "Suffering Things: Lapdogs, Slaves, and Counter-Sensibility" in *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Mark Blackwell (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007).
[623] Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 97.
[624] Ibid. See also Carey, *British Abolitionism*.
[625] The reviewer in *The Monthly Review* states that Ellison's "conversation with Mrs. Ellison, who had not imbibed such kind of sentiments, […] deserves to be quoted". *Monthly Review* 35 (July 1766) 44, ProQuest, (4614275).

that these journals were interested enough in Scott's representation of slavery and benevolence to reproduce its passages and circulate them to a wider readership points to its success both as a work of sentimental fiction and as an early piece of antislavery writing. The antislavery sentiments being appealed to in the text were beginning to find an audience.

One reader who was particularly heartened by Scott's message was Ignatius Sancho.[626] Writing to Sterne in 1766, he praises "the humane author", stating that, apart from Sterne himself, Scott is the only one to have "drawn a tear in favour of my miserable black brethren".[627] Sancho's letter is interesting for its suggestion that writing about slavery in sentimental fiction could be of use to slaves and demonstrates that, for him at least, there was gain to be made in terms of public sentiment from engaging their readership in sentimental arguments about slavery. Noting the effectiveness of Sterne's sentimental treatment of slavery in his *Sermons,* discussed in chapter four, Sancho asks his literary hero to include slavery in his next novel:

> – I am sure you will applaud me for beseeching you to give one half hour's attention to slavery, as it is at this day practised in our West Indies. – That subject, handled in your striking manner, would ease the yoke (perhaps) of many – but if only of one – Gracious God! – what a feast to a benevolent heart! […] – Dear Sir, think in me you behold the uplifted hands of thousands of my brother Moors. – Grief (you pathetically observe) is

[626] Taken to England as a young boy, Sancho was eventually taken in by the Montagu family who taught him to read and write. Sancho corresponded widely and *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African,* published two years after his death in 1782, provides one of the earliest accounts of African slavery written in English by a former slave.
[627] Ignatius Sancho to Laurence Sterne, 1766, *Letters*, 74 (see chap. 4, n. 88).

> eloquent; – figure to yourself their attitudes; – hear their supplicating addresses![628]

This passage is full of sentimental language and imagery – supplicating slaves, the "uplifted hands of thousands" presenting a "feast" to those with "a benevolent heart". Sancho here is suggesting ways of depicting slaves in a sentimental fashion in order to gain the compassion of the reader. In doing so he is also implicitly suggesting that this would do good for his fellow slaves: it would "ease the yoke of many". As Ellis points out, Sancho's position on the effectiveness of sentimental writing is sophisticated: he is not being literal in his claims that literature can "ease the yoke" of thousands of slaves, but rather he is concluding that the most effective way of influencing the public, and hence a reform of the institution of slavery, would be to affect people's feelings.[629] Whether Sterne listened to Sancho's pleas or had already set about writing a sentimental passage against slavery, the final instalment of his *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767) included the "tender tale of the sorrows of a friendless poor negro-girl".[630]

In the 1760s when Scott and Sterne were writing their novels, there was almost no discussion of antislavery ideas beyond what the Quaker community were producing.[631] The inclusion of antislavery themes into their sentimental fiction opened the way for new arguments to be made against slavery that were based on the emotional norms of an increasingly growing reading public. These novels were among the first to link sentimental values and a position of antislavery. This was crucial to the

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[628] Ibid.
[629] See Ellis, *Politics of Sensibility*, 64.
[630] Laurence Sterne, *Letters of the Late Rev. Mr. Laurence Sterne. To his most intimate Friends*, 3 vols. (London, 1776) 3:214, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW0110712241). Sterne states that Sancho's request was a coincidence as he had just begun writing his tale when he received his letter.
[631] Granville Sharp's first antislavery essay *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery* was published in 1769.

development of abolitionist emotional practices. Sentimental writers were planting the seed in their communities of readers that the institution of slavery ran against the emotional repertoire they were prescribing within their fiction and with the practice of reading that they were encouraging. Thomas Clarkson later commented that Sterne's fable in *Tristram Shandy* did indeed prove of benefit in directing sympathy towards African slaves: "Sterne, in his account of the Negro girl […] took decidedly the part of the oppressed Africans. The pathetic, witty and sentimental manner, in which he handled this subject, occasioned many to remember it, and procured a certain portion of feeling in their favour".[632] Social sympathy and the moral sentiments were from this point firmly attached to antislavery arguments in literature.[633]

Poetry was also vital to the developing practice of sentimental reading that linked sensibility, moral virtue, and an antislavery stance. At the same time as the sentimental novel emerged, a poetry which was associated with moralising, natural description, and melancholic mental states grew extremely popular.[634] As Mullan states, "the private sensibility and the high-minded reclusiveness celebrated in many novels has its parallels in the poetic postures of wounded melancholy and solitary meditation typical of many of the fashionable odes, elegies, and laments of the period".[635] In these poems the state of "the world" is particularly lamented and the poet wishes for retreat. However, the melancholy of sentimental poetry, while isolationist, was not meant to be solipsistic. Rather, the feelings of the poets were meant to suggest a superior sensibility, setting themselves apart from the unfeeling world. Reading their melancholic laments

[632] Clarkson, *History,* 1:60-61 (see chap. 1, n. 5).
[633] While sentimental rhetoric was used by both sides of the debate, there is evidence that the language of sensibility and moral sentiment was adopted most widely by abolitionists while pro-slavery lobbyists ridiculed the overtly emotional arguments of their opposition as unreasoned and often hysterical. See Carey, *British Abolitionism*.
[634] See Todd, *Sensibility*.
[635] Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*, 15.

was to share in the poet's grief for the ills they see around them and should result in benevolence on the part of the reader.[636] Poets like Edward Young and William Cowper exalt social sympathy and benevolence while also yearning for isolation and retreat. There was also an urgency and indignation expressed within these poems which give them a more didactic bent than their sentimental counterparts in prose fiction. As Todd states, sentimental poetry is ultimately outward-looking: "the aim is not individual self-analysis but emotional instruction".[637] Sentimental poetry was thus often used more explicitly by writers to express social and political ideas than were novels.[638] Sentimental poems, unlike novels, are more likely to attack the root causes of social problems, particularly the greed of the wealthy, using the traditional didacticism attached to poetry as a genre alongside sentimental arguments for the improvement of society.

William Cowper was one of the first sentimental poets to turn his attention to slavery as a topic of concern. Indeed, no major poet was as prolific in expressing antislavery ideas and his poems are central to exploring the abolitionist literary campaign. In his ode to benevolence and philanthropy, "Charity" (1782), in which he calls on a personified Charity to "prompt me with benevolent desires" and to "Teach me to kindle" the same "gentle fires" in others, Cowper rails against the "baser souls" who "thwart its influence" and enslave others.[639] With a nod to his sentimental and religious

[636] Todd, *Sensibility*, 51.
[637] Ibid., 52.
[638] According to White, writers like Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Gray gave "impetus for poems fusing the sentimental and the political" and used the persona of the benevolent man to draw conclusions about the stripping away of natural rights through the agricultural and social changes they saw occurring in Britain. R.S. White, *Natural Rights and the Birth of Romanticism in the 1790s* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 50.
[639] William Cowper, "Charity", *Poems by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq*., (London, 1782), lines 11-12, 14, and 37-38, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3313895453). In this case it is the Spanish who come under scrutiny for their ruthless imperial activities in South America, while Captain James Cook is lauded as a benevolent explorer: "Wherever he found man to nature true, / The rights of man were sacred in his view" (lines 27-28).

ethics, he asks, “Canst thou, and honour’d with a Christian name, / Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame?” (180-181). His allusion to shame is in line with later abolitionist arguments about the impossibility of carrying out atrocities on other human beings if one had any sense of the shame of it. Cowper here is casting the perpetrators of enslavement as unfeeling; their ability to “buy the muscles and the bones of man” is proof of their insensibility (140).

Cowper ties sentimental benevolence to a religious doctrine familiar to many by the end of the century, claiming it is God’s “social plan” which “by various ties attaches man to man” (15-16). In line with this belief in a sociable world, Cowper is clear on where he places slavery and the slave trade. These are institutions which go against both nature and God. When “the tender ties of father, husband, friend” are broken, as they are when people are taken forcibly from their homes and sold into slavery, then “all bonds of nature in that moment end” (141-142). This was one of the most prevalent arguments used by abolitionists when they began to campaign for an end to the slave trade. If humans are inherently sociable by nature, then to knowingly break those bonds is unnatural and inhuman. Yet, he states that “Still there is room for pity to abate / And soothe the sorrows of so sad a state” (198-199). He clearly wants Charity, called down to the world through his poem, to touch the hearts of his readers and to make them feel for the sorrows of others: “Teach mercy to ten thousand hearts, that share / The fears and hopes of a commercial care” (278-279). He is sure that, given the opportunity, no one “would lose, that had the power to improve / The occasion of transmuting fear to love” (224-225). While not an overtly political statement against slavery, Cowper is implying that engaging our benevolent feelings is a step towards treating the social ills of others. In his final appraisal, if Charity was allowed to prevail she would spread

"wide her arms of universal love" (596) and enclose "creation in her close embrace" (598). The world, in other words, would be a better place.

Before I move on to the poetry of the major campaign years, brief mention should be made of Thomas Day and John Bicknell's sentimental epic poem, *The Dying Negro* (1773-1775), written nearly ten years before Cowper's "Charity".[640] It is an overtly sentimental work, establishing a sentimental hero in the title character who expresses his feelings through the bodily symptoms readers had come to expect in literature of sensibility – tears, groans and sighs. The poem is a suicide note recounted by the enslaved African who wishes to leave the world rather than surrender his body to the chain and whip of oppression. The noble African is a sentimental hero because he undergoes suffering himself while also expressing his own compassionate emotional response to the plight of fellow creatures. His "dying eyes o'erflow" at the thought of his fellow slaves groaning "beneath some dastard planter's chain".[641] His feelings are contrasted to the slave traders who are characterised as having "feeble" souls, "unus'd to pity or to feel" (249-250). Once again, it is the inability to feel for others that marks the cruel from the humane and the fact that the traders are "unus'd" to the softer sentiments of compassion highlights their poor emotional education. Here Day deliberately juxtaposes the intrinsically noble African "savage" in whose "veins the tide of honour rolls" (126) and in whom "pity melts the sympathising breast" (129), with dehumanised, brutish slave traders marked by their inability to feel "each nobler passion" (252). Where greed tempts the Christian to perpetrate crimes against

[640] Written between 1773 and 1775, *The Dying Negro* was a collaboration between author Thomas Day and lawyer John Bicknell. The full title of the first and second editions of the poem – *The Dying Negro, a Poetical Epistle, Supposed to be Written by a Black, (Who Lately Shot Himself on Board a Vessel in the River Thames;) to his Intended WIFE* – hints at the factual inspiration for the poem from an article Bicknell read in the papers.

[641] Thomas Day and John Bicknell, *The Dying Negro*, 3rd ed. (London, 1775), lines 65 and 62, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3310014612).

humanity, the slave declares that, faced with the same temptations and promises of wealth, he would "scorn their glories as I hate their crimes" (304).

While *The Dying Negro* is opposed to slavery, it does not directly appeal for a political solution to the miseries it presents to the reader. In line with other sentimental works of fiction, its purpose is to raise the emotions of the reader and, as Carey states, it "often seems content merely to wallow in the misfortunes of the suffering victim".[642] Its preface, however, which was added to the 1775 edition, is more explicit in its attempts to persuade the reader towards a more active antislavery stance. This preface, which takes the form of a dedication to Day's idol Jean-Jacques Rousseau, conveys a number of arguments which condemn the slave trader and the hypocrisy of Western nations (in this case America comes under the most intense scrutiny) in clamouring for liberty while "the clank of chains, and the groans of anguish" are present in the background.[643] Yet again it is the greed of men, operating "under the mask of commerce", which lies at the root of human misery and which taints and tarnishes "the lustre" of his nation's "sublime institutions" – those organisations and establishments of philanthropy and improvement which have marked "the age of generous sentiment, and refined humanity".[644] Slavery is a blemish on the moral character of Britain and America.

It is the work of art which is called upon to effect some sort of change, though what that change should be is unclear at this stage. Day asks Rousseau (and the reader) to "Astonish and instruct posterity by the dreadful spectacle of human crimes".[645] It is through a presentation of the horrors and miseries of slavery through art and literature

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[642] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 80.
[643] Day wishes to "inscribe a piece, whose only merit is the humanity and freedom of its sentiments, to that man, from whose writings I have principally derived them". His sentimental arguments in this piece are clearly based on Rousseau's philosophy whereby civilisation is blamed for the ills of society. See Day, "Dedication", *The Dying Negro*, v. and ix.
[644] Ibid., v, viii, and vii.
[645] Ibid., v.

that the world can be instructed of its inhumanity. In light of this his dedication ends with the hope that his poem "might contribute to such a cause, or interest the generous minds of my countrymen to extend an ampler protection to the most innocent and miserable of their own species".[646] This is a far more explicit antislavery statement than is present anywhere in the poem itself and, while it is not obvious in what shape this "ampler protection" would take, Day is clearly calling for some further philanthropic action on the part of the reader. It is perhaps this aspect of *The Dying Negro* which led to its constant republication and use as an abolitionist text during the campaigning years. It is clear from Day's introduction to his work, and from the ideas presented by Cowper in his antislavery pieces, that the sentimental reader is not just meant to be saddened by the display of misery in these texts but is required to share in the indignation of the poets and to inquire more deeply into the causes of the injustices of the world.[647]

By the 1780s, no topic was becoming more pressing to the sentimental belief in benevolent philanthropy than slavery and the man or woman of feeling was being impressed upon to act on the basis of their emotional responses to sentimental literature. The reader was becoming the person upon whom both the slave and Britain were depending to bring about a reformation of social ills and of morals. Thus, with the establishment of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, the combination of sentimental affections and the more politically urgent, and perhaps more motivating, emotion of indignation combine to create a literature that was specifically political and distinctively abolitionist.

[646] Ibid., ix-x.
[647] See White, *Natural Rights*.

5.3 "Weep with me Substantial Ills": Poetry as a Tool of the Abolitionist Politics of Sympathy

The appeal of the emotional excess of sensibility portrayed in sentimental novels was increasingly seen as outmoded, or even dangerous, as the century drew to a close.[648] As Ahern points out, "commentators were increasingly likely to find a sentimental text more affect*ed* than affect*ing* by the time the abolitionist cause was gaining momentum".[649] This begs the question of why a vast majority of abolitionist mobilising material used sentimental language, particularly in poetry. With the popularity of sentimental literature already waning by the time the first campaigns got under way in 1787-8, it is unlikely that the reason lies purely in an appeal to the masses. Carey stresses the importance of the focus on "false sensibility" in abolitionist verse, which he states was a method abolitionist writers used to distance themselves from association with a literature often accused of populism, insincerity, and effeminacy.[650] Yet he does not give an adequate account of the possible reasoning behind the continued use of sentimental language and arguments in abolitionist poetry, despite their apparent declarations against it. An answer could lie in their advocacy of emotional cultivation. False sensibility is a sign of poor emotional cultivation in the emotional repertoire of abolitionists. In the protestations against sensibility within abolitionist verse, they are not proclaiming against sensibility itself, which is what Carey suggests, but a badly cultivated one.

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[648] See Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability*; Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*; Goring, *Rhetoric of Sensibility*.
[649] Ahern, *Affect and Abolition*, 7 (his emphasis).
[650] Carey, *British Abolitionism*. Carey claims that the reasoning behind their attacks on sensibility lies in the pro-slavery method of casting abolitionists as feminine, "tender hearted poetesses" unqualified to make political statements. Attacking sensibility was the abolitionists' way of distancing themselves from such associations and claiming reason, not feeling, was behind their arguments (88-92).

In the abolitionist verse I examine here, "false sensibility" is a sign of misguided emotional practice which leads to the wrong emotional responses, stemming from the wrong emotional stimuli. True sensibility, one that responds to real events like slavery and not the fictional scenes of a novel or play, is morally virtuous and leads to benevolent, philanthropic action – the mark of the abolitionist. William Roscoe begins his two-part poem, *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787-8), by accusing a personified Sensibility with inducing futile feelings as it sits "in crowded theatres" and "with wat'ry eye, / Drop[s] o'er fancied woes her useless tear".[651] The rhetoric of sensibility popular in the theatres and in other forms of literature is only good for inducing "useless" tears in a feeling audience that fall vainly over "fancied" scenes of fictive misery. The "strong emotion" of compassion rises "in vain" in these instances (16), but not when faced with scenes that are real. His request to "Come […] and weep with me substantial ills" (12) is a statement that what he presents for the reader to witness through his poem is not a fiction and is therefore worthy of all the sentimental language at his disposal to move the reader to compassion. So, far from distancing his work from the literature of sensibility, Roscoe is making it clear that his real subject is not only worth the tears that will be shed by the reader, but also one that will draw tears of active compassion rather than useless pity. He repeats this in the second part of the poem, published the following year:

> – But soft – perchance a tale of private woe,
> May lightly touch the mind: or shou'd it prompt
> The tear of sympathy, may fail to rouse
> Those strong emotions, that indignant glow

[651] William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, Part the First* (London, 1787), lines 10-11, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3313367102).

Which virtue feels, when generous aims inspire

Consenting bosoms; […]

– Listen then,

Whilst truth restrains the muse's wandering step,

And gives her awful sanction to the song.[652]

Once again the "tear of sympathy" is not enough when encountered with a tale of "private woe". Tears must inspire, rather, "Those strong emotions" which are felt when active compassion is stirred – those "generous aims" which lead to benevolent actions. Again Roscoe is making sure his readers are aware that the tears they shed when reading his work are for "truth" rather than "fancied woes". It is this knowledge that should lead to efforts to aid the suffering of slaves, which in the case of abolitionism, took the form of political action against the slave trade.

Roscoe's appeal to the reader to react to "substantial ills" is echoed by Hannah More in her *Slavery, A Poem* (1788): "O, plaintive Southerne! whose impassion'd strain / So oft has wak'd my languid Muse in vain!"[653] Referring to playwrights and poets that treated slavery before her, More is setting her work apart as one that does not awake an audience's compassion "in vain" (38) but in the hope that they will be moved to action. Pointing out that she is addressing a real and not an imagined problem, she argues that "for no fictitious ill these numbers flow, / But living anguish and substantial woe" (53-54); it is "Fair Truth" that is her "hallow'd guide" (50). These lines assert a separation from sentimental fiction, which draws useless tears, while using all the force

[652] William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, Part the Second* (London, 1788), lines 426-446, Brycchan Carey, http://www.brycchancarey.com/slavery/roscoe2.htm.
[653] Hannah More, *Slavery, A Poem* (London, 1788), lines 37-38, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3312280885). Thomas Southerne adapted Behn's *Oroonoko* for the stage in 1695. Throughout the eighteenth century Southerne's work was more popular than the original book by Behn as he emphasised scenes of pathos. It is Southerne's *Oroonoko* that is cited by abolitionists at the end of the century, not Behn's.

of sentimental language to move her audience to active compassion. Her poem, in other words, was not written for mere aesthetic enjoyment but as a contribution to a political debate and an instrument of a political appeal to call for an end to the slave trade. She wrote it, after all, with the express purpose of influencing minds in the lead up to William Wilberforce's parliamentary motion for abolition: in early 1788 she writes to her sister of her haste in getting it published, stating that "here time is everything".[654] Like Roscoe, her position on sentimentalism is not one of opposition but one which drafts sentimental language firmly to the aid of philanthropy and political movement. She is prompting an emotional response based on real suffering and upon which, in light of the efforts of the abolition committees in petitioning parliament, readers had real possibilities of acting.

Other writers repeat this line of argument. In an extended attack on sensibility, Barbauld's *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1791) echoes the scene of Scott's *Sir George Ellison* in which the refined lady, "Of body delicate, infirm of mind", embodies the "languid" gestures of a debilitating sensibility while wielding "the household scourge" over her slaves with "unruffled mien".[655] Barbauld's poem is more negative than the others mentioned here, as I discuss below, and her attack on sensibility's futility as an instrument of political mobilisation has more to do with contemporary failures of achieving abolition in the first instance of its being presented to parliament. However, there is a warning to the reading audience implied in all of these poems. The

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[654] William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (New York, 1834) 282, Google Books, https://books.google.com.au/books?id=mB88AQAAIAAJ. She also worried that "if it does not come out at the particular moment when the discussion comes on in Parliament, it will not be worth a straw" (281). More clearly had an idea that a poem on the subject would have a political purpose, her rush to get it printed suggesting that she hoped enough people, including her influential friends and acquaintances in parliament, would have read about and known the cruelties of the trade before they debated and decided the issue.

[655] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London, 1791), lines 66-69, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3326309495).

insistence that readers must be prepared to weep over real suffering as much as, or even more than, they do over "fictitious ills" is a hint at the practice of reading that abolitionists were creating in their sentimental poetry. That is, if a reader does not respond appropriately to the suffering presented to them in their poems, they have not cultivated their sensibilities to any real or moral purpose. They would display the hypocrisy of the slave traders and owners themselves who, like Scott's Mrs Ellison, could weep over an injured dog while remaining totally unfeeling to the human misery around her. Thus, sentimental abolitionist verse was able to adopt a literary style that suited antislavery arguments, retaining the centrality of sensibility and social sympathy within their emotional repertoire, while, at the same time, adapting it in order to claim the moral superiority of their position. They are moving beyond the realm of sentimental fiction, which only ever aimed at improving readers implicitly, to a body of work which explicitly calls for philanthropic, political action.

To adapt sentimentalism to their politics of sympathy abolitionist poets drew upon the rules of sympathetic contagion through personification and apostrophes that called up the sentimental ideals to affect the nation and literally move people to benevolent political action. Liberty, Mercy, Humanity, universal and social love, are hailed and called upon to literally affect the reader, and from thence the nation, with these values and sentiments. Personifying emotions makes them part of the conversation between writer and reader, the "person" who will carry the emotions from one to the other.[656] It thus acts to channel the emotions the poet wishes to pass on to the reader

[656] Apostrophic personification is a technique frequently used by James Thomson, whose works are frequently alluded to by abolitionist poets (More included lines from his *Liberty* as an introduction to *Slavery*). Keenleyside argues that Thomson understood personification to confer agency on sentiments which have the capacity to move persons, or a people. Presenting passions in this form gives them an agency to literally affect people: "Thomson imagines […] social love not as an internal feeling but rather as an external force, which binds" people together. Heather Keenleyside, "Personification for the People: On James Thomson's *The Seasons*", *ELH* 76 (Summer 2009): 458-464, doi: 10.1353/elh.0.0044.

through sympathetic contagion. At the same time, through the very act of apostrophising sentiments like social love, these poets are implying that they do not exist in their society. The sentimental poet is one who sees a world bereft of the emotions they wish to see form part of its emotional repertoire. By literalising the movement of emotions from one person to another, apostrophic personification makes the poet, or rather the poem, a necessary tool of sympathetic emotional communication and a politics of sympathy.

From his opening lines, Roscoe establishes "Humanity" as the principle upon which he bases his abolitionist stance. With his denouncement of false sensibility he turns to a personified Humanity to "strike the string that from a kindred breast/ Responsive vibrates" (5-6). He is appealing to the mutual sympathy of human beings, making full use of the idea of the text as the instrument of a reading practice which cultivates the social sentiments. It is through his sentimental rhetoric, his somatic language, and use of tropes of suffering that "Humanity" will spread from one person (the writer) to another (the reader). Thus the language of sympathetic contagion is tied to the idea of witnessing misery and feeling along with it:

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

And one bright blaze of universal love,

In grateful incense, rises up to heaven. (12-21)

In this passage we can see the poet's assumptions about how emotions work. The "strong emotion" of sympathy is described as a "kind contagion" which must be allowed to spread among people if society is to achieve "universal love". Personifying Humanity and calling it down to infect the nation with a contagious sympathy positions the text as an intermediary via which emotions can be passed between people, a tool of his emotional practice.

Having established his text as one to be read "for the sentiment", Roscoe asks: "Why feels not man for man?" (24). While "selfish aim[s]" (43) and "European avarice" (147) are at the root of the problem, Roscoe addresses the nature of the men who succumb to such greed that they ignore the suffering induced by it:

[…] what powers unknown

Of keen enjoyment can thy nature boast,

That thus thy single bliss can grasp the sum

Of hapless numbers sacrificed to thee? (69-72)

These hints at the unnatural feelings of masters and slavers are made throughout the entire poem: he asks if the "tears [of the slaves] delight" the trader (73); if he feels a "horrid bliss / In the wild shriek of anguish" emanating from the hordes of slaves (84-5); if "from the depths / Of loathsome dungeons, manacles, and chains, / [he] Canst draw strange pleasure, and preposterous joy" (100-102). The implication that those involved in the trade must feel a strange joy at the pain they inflict on others echoes Shaftesbury's idea of the "unnatural" affections which give people an "inhuman delight in beholding torments, and in viewing distress, calamity, blood, massacre and

destruction, with a peculiar joy and pleasure".[657] Moreover, like Shaftesbury, Roscoe is clear that such unnatural feelings, such "horrid bliss", are the result of cultivation rather than something they are born with:

> Or spring not rather thy detested joys,
> From some perversion of each nobler sense
> Indulgent nature gave thee? (77-79)

Their "detested joys" and their cruelty are a "perversion" of the natural moral sense that nature, or God, gave them at birth. Their hearts are referred to as being "harden'd" (85; 455), suggesting that they have become so through practice.

The inhumanity of these people is identified by their inability to shed a tear of pity or to hear the "groan" of the slave "without compassion" (433-4). Roscoe imagines the response of a master or slaver – "some veteran trafficker in blood" (441) – to the accusations made of him as being "void of feeling" (432). While it is assumed that their "ears are shut to misery's voice" and their "harden'd hearts / Lost to the social sympathies of man" (454-56), slavers claim that "the potent charm of interest" becomes the "substitute" of "humanity" and it is this which leads them to treat their slaves well (458-460). In highlighting the absurd reasoning of the pro-slavery debate, Roscoe reinforces his own argument that these men are not men of feeling. By suggesting that their proof of feeling lies in the fact that it is in their "interest" to treat slaves well, Roscoe is demonstrating to his readers the "veil,/ That not conceals, but more deforms" their "crimes" (489-90). Currie's preface to the poem pushes this point.[658] In an

[657] Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks, 2:163 (see chap. 1, n. 30).*

[658] James Currie was instrumental in promoting and printing Roscoe's abolitionist works. For discussion of the activities of Liverpool's abolitionists see Sanderson, "The Liverpool abolitionists", (see chap. 4, n. 43).

explication of the worst horrors of the trade, he states that the slaves are handed over to "masters whose natural feelings are destroyed by early and continual intercourse with the worst of slavery".[659] The planters have grown up in the Caribbean with slavery all around them, as Mrs Ellison had, witnessing cruelty on a regular basis and learning the emotional rules of their own plantocratic society. Thus "custom" led to a "corruption of the heart" and a "perversion of the understanding" on the part of the slave owners.[660] Their cruelty is not natural, it is a custom, a force of habit, and more "deeply to be deplored" is the fact that "there are some men deeply engaged in the traffic […] who are, in other respects, men of honour and integrity".[661] Such men, Currie implies, have not had the right emotional cultivation, their sensibility false for being misdirected.

In order to highlight the difference between the anti- and pro-slavery sides of the debate further, the blush is used to signify the feelings of shame that any person who had cultivated a proper sensibility would experience in the face of such confronting images of misery. Calling for an emotional response, he demands to "let the cheek with burning blushes glow, / And pity pour her tears" (397-8). "Man" is the "author of the wrong" and must feel the shame of it:

> And shall not they,
> In colour, nation, faith, – associate all –
> Who see, yet not resent it; hear of it,
> Yet stand regardless; know it, yet partake
> The luxuries it supplies; shall these not feel
> The keen emotions of remorse and shame?

[659] James Currie, "Preface", *Wrongs of Africa, I*, v.
[660] Ibid., vii.
[661] Ibid., vii-viii.

> And learn this truth severe, that whilst they shun
> The glorious conflict, nor assist the cause
> Of suffering nature, THEY PARTAKE THE GUILT? (399-407)

This passage is a direct challenge to his readers: if they are men and women of feeling they should be blushing for the wrong done, weeping for the suffering endured by slaves. He is also extending the blame here, to everyone who knows about the cruelties of the trade, who hear of and see its wrongs and yet who do not feel resentment or remorse, who stand by and do nothing to correct the wrong, and who "partake" in its luxuries, that is, consume the sugar and rum produced by "suffering nature" without a second thought. It is here that Roscoe turns his sentimental arguments into a politics of sympathy. It is not enough to hear and see the facts; action must be taken to put an end to the institution.

With friends in both the London and the Manchester committees, Roscoe was fully aware that the movement to abolish the slave trade had begun and knew that taking action was becoming a possibility for many readers, whether it be in the form of subscribing to one of those committees to fund awareness campaigns, signing a petition to parliament, or even refusing the consumption of slave produced goods.[662] He addresses his readers as "ye generous few, whose hearts can feel / For stranger sorrows; who can hear the voice / Of misery breathe across th'Atlantic main" (408-10). In doing so he sets up a dichotomy between "us", the abolitionists, cultivated in the appropriate sensibility to feel for the appropriate objects, and "them", the cruel tyrants and perpetrators of violence and their supporters. He is othering the opposition, claiming

[662] Correspondence between Roscoe and his friend John Barton, member of the London Committee, reveals that Roscoe's *Wrongs* was sent to the committee to print and publish, with proceeds from sales donated to the committee to fund its campaigns.

they are not like "us" because they cannot feel, while making sure the reader is included in the "we" of the abolitionist community. It is the other – the unfeeling – who do not belong in a Britain which prizes "freedom dearer than the blood / That circles round" its heart (582-3) and upon which the slave trade is a "universal blot", a "foul and open wound" (585, 588).

Hannah More's contribution to the abolition debate in *Slavery* praises iconic British figures who are meant to embody the moral sentiments. Her apostrophes to "gentle" James Cook (235) and "peaceful" William Penn (244) are aimed at praising the supposed benevolence of their actions in their encounters with colonial others compared to the brutality with which slave traders treat the same peoples. Though the mildness and liberality of these figures' colonial encounters are questionable, in the late eighteenth century they were held up as prime examples of sentimental patriots, spreading their benevolent brand of Britishness to the furthest reaches of the globe. In More's estimation Cook embodies the sentimental habitus: he has mild and gentle social affections which see him act benevolently towards others.[663] Britain, which is personified within the next few lines as liberty, must be filled with the same gentle spirit that has followed Cook around the globe. She asks Britain to show other nations that "the liberty she loves she will bestow" (254) on her empire, to "spread the blessing wide as humankind" (256) and "redeem OUR fame" (262).

Redemption is to come through action on the slave trade. In personifying Britain as a liberty-bestowing figure, imbued with the soft, gentle emotions of moral sentimental ethics, More is painting benevolence and social sympathy as particularly British virtues which its citizens have a duty to feel and perform. Along with her other

[663] Cook's "gentle mind" (235) and "love of humankind" (236) see him pursue a "mild and liberal plan" (237) in his voyages of discovery. More, *Slavery*.

major apostrophe, this time to a personified Mercy, the poem clearly sets out to urge the reading public to respond to her sentimental vision of a benevolent British empire with political, philanthropic action. Building on the assumption that the poem works as an instrument of emotional contagion in the practice of reading sentimental texts, the role of "the cherub Mercy" (263) called upon by the poet is to infect the nation with her "soft contagion" (268). In other words, the reader is to catch the feelings imbued in the poem – love and benevolence – and act appropriately on the strength of those feelings. The "spreading influence" of Mercy is to move "from soul to soul" (267) shedding her "celestial dew" "on feeling hearts" (265). Yet "her spirit" only "breathes" over "the enlighten'd few" (266); like Roscoe, More is establishing the abolition movement – "us" – as the enlightened, the generous few who have "feeling hearts". The reader is included in the "we" who can feel and it is therefore up to them:

> To still the clank of chains, and sheathe the sword
> To cheer the mourner, and with soothing hands
> From bursting hearts unbind th'Oppressor's bands;
> To raise the lustre of the Christian name,
> And clear the foulest blot that dims its fame. (272-276)

This is her politics of sympathy, expressed in the clearest terms in a vision of a benevolent people acting on their sympathy for others. Her keenness for this to be printed before Wilberforce's motion is significant; she is clearly hoping this poem will influence minds before the vote for abolition is carried.

The sentimental argument that runs through More's poem, and which should move the reader to action, is the contention that humans are equal, regardless of "the casual colour of a skin" (64), based on their capacity for feeling. She demands of her

readers to "Plead not, in reason's palpable abuse, / Their sense of feeling callous and obtuse" (147-8). In a footnote to these lines, More rebuts the pro-slavery argument that equates Africans with animals, thus justifying their treatment of them as commodified objects, stating that "Nothing is more frequent than this cruel and stupid argument, that they [Africans] do not *feel* the miseries inflicted on them as Europeans would do".[664] This statement, along with repeated lines on the equality of feeling between white and black, clearly positions the poem as a work of sentimental humanitarianism, engaging the language of moral sentiments to assert the natural rights of African slaves. However, More is not in fact contending that all humans are equal. With the basis for equality lying in emotions and the capacity to feel for others, the slaver and the pro-slavery opposition are excluded from More's vision of humanity. The "keen affections" and "kind desires" of Africans (69) – marks of the man of feeling – are placed in direct contrast to the "murderers" (111) who ravage Africa for slaves. The "deed" of slavery is "unnatural" (132); it springs from a perversion of natural affections. It is therefore the slaver who is presented as the "WHITE SAVAGE" (211), made an other within his own nation and empire because of his inability to feel compassion or shame. Yet this is not the result of a natural cruelty; even those "of ruffian heart, and ruthless hand / Love [their] own offspring" (113-14). Everyone, in other words, has the natural capacity for love and sympathy. The traders and plantation owners cannot feel the moral sentiments because they have not cultivated them, therefore losing the capacity to feel the social affections for anyone other than their own families.

As Carey points out, the deployment of the argument of common humanity based on the ability to feel for others allows More to identify herself and the movement

[664] More, *Slavery*, note to line 148 (her emphasis).

with the discourse of sensibility.[665] Her role as a poet engaged in the politics of sympathy is to bring the reader into that identity, creating a reading community who is willing to act for the movement. As a woman, More was peculiarly positioned to speak to, and for, a female as well as male community of readers. As Mitchell points out, female antislavery poets like More "established the legitimacy of her commentary on slavery in part by contextualizing her portrait of suffering within an ideology of domesticity".[666] As we have seen, there was a very real belief at this time in the civilising function of women and domesticity in society. Women were seen as agents of improvement insofar as their "feminized domestic virtues were an important part of the configuration" of polite society, as Mee puts it.[667] Women, whose sensibilities were supposedly naturally more acute, were given moral authority in the private sphere and the sanctity of family and the home were seen as vital to the moral compass of society at large, its influence on the public sphere especially felt by those who privileged a sentimental emotional repertoire.[668] Thus More proclaims that the "Horrors of deepest, deadliest guilt" (96) are those that see children torn from mothers and wives torn from husbands. She specifically draws the reader's attention to the scene of familial desecration and violation of social bonds perpetrated on African villages by European slavers:

> See the dire victim torn from social life,
>
> The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!

[665] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 86.
[666] Robert Mitchell, "'The Soul that Dreams it Shares the Power it Feels so Well': The Politics of Sympathy in the Abolitionist Verse of Williams and Yearsley", *Romanticism on the Net* 29-30 (2003): paragraph 9, doi:10.7202/007719ar.
[667] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*, 10 (see chap.3, n. 14).
[668] See Daniel White's discussion of the ways in which eighteenth-century culture projected sensibility out from the domestic space of the home "as a civilizing force of sympathy" in his article on Barbauld's social and family circle. "The 'Joineriana'", 513 (see chap. 2, n. 86). On the feminisation of manners in polite public sphere see also Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*.

She, wretch forlorn! is dragg'd by hostile hands,

To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands! (99-102)

The "hostile hands" of the traders, who carry out their crimes without feeling, further prove their inhumanity by breaking "the fond links of feeling nature" (108) in "one relentless stroke" (107).

By focusing on the violation of familial relationships as one of the fundamental evils of the slave trade, abolitionist poets implicitly appealed to a system of social morality which measured its "normative human identity through the enduring affective power" of social bonds.[669] Female poets could justify their poetic engagement in political and social issues by linking their antislavery positions to a sentimentalised domestic ideology. [670] While some have written of late eighteenth-century female writers as restricted in their subject matter to themes that demonstrate "delicacy of feeling" rather than social criticism, Midgley asserts that abolitionist poems in fact "demonstrate that women found a way to voice social and political criticism through the acceptably 'feminine' means of poetic sentiment and appeals to the emotions."[671] Their sentimental verse and arguments are, therefore, "clear calls for action".[672] Labouring-class women were also able to voice their social criticism through this feminised form of political protest. Ann Yearsley, the labouring-class milk woman from Bristol, used the same form of sentimental poetry and argument to add her voice to the campaign. Yet, her criticism of the institutions which are at the heart of slavery are somewhat sharper than her fellow female poets from the middling ranks.

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[669] Tobias Menely, "Acts of Sympathy: Abolitionist Poetry and Transatlantic Identification", in Ahern, *Affect and Abolition*, 56.
[670] It was not just female poets who used this technique: Roscoe included similar scenes in his *Wrongs.*
[671] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 34. Katherine Rogers' take on eighteenth-century women poets is of a group of women restricted from the political public sphere. *Feminism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).
[672] Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, 34.

In Yearsley's *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade* (1788) the trope of family bonds is crafted so as to force the reader to imagine the horror and familial devastation caused by slavery entering British homes, thus creating an essential conflict between domestic, sentimental space and commerce, between natural social bonds and the laws that allow such bonds to be broken across the globe. Alongside the pathetic scenes depicting the slave Luco, who is torn from his home, tortured, and killed, Yearsley asks the reader to imagine the break-up of his or her own family and the sale of each member for a profit. Through a direct address to the reader, who at this point is being asked to identify with "the crafty merchant", the poet launches her attack on the economic logic of a practice that denies the humanity of Africans, which in this case is determined by social and familial bonds.[673] She knows the merchant would "oppose" her "strain" (75) and argue that "His toils are for his children" (77), an argument which she shows to be essentially incompatible with the type of commerce they undertake. She thus issues a challenge to the merchant:

> Away, thou seller of mankind! Bring on
> Thy daughter to this market! bring thy wife!
> Thine aged mother, though of little worth,
> With all thy ruddy boys! Sell them, thou wretch,
> And swell the price of Luco! (83-87)

In this sustained imperative address to the merchant, demanding he sell his own family, Yearsley draws the reader into identification with him, the second-person address ("thou", "thy", and "thine") making these demands directly of the reader. The reader is

[673] Ann Yearsley, *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade* (London, 1788), line 75, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3326419074).

thus asked to imagine the intrusion of the "destructive system" (368) of "Commerce" (358) into his or her own domestic life.

The imagined horrified reaction of the reader/merchant is scorned by Yearsley: "Why that start? / Why gaze as thou wouldst fright me from my challenge / With look of anguish?" (87-89). The love that impels them to "clasp" the "blooming youth" (101-2) and "throw" their arms around their "little ones" (96-7) is completely hypocritical to the poet and proves the point that such men and women can only feel for their own "private woe" (104). The "selfish Christian" (104) who can weep for his or her own family and "Yet cause such pangs to him that is a father" (105) displays an emotional performance which is not based on sentimental norms. Weeping over an imagined act of separation is an emotional response to selfish feelings – the loss of one's own kin. It is through this scenario that Yearsley challenges the nature of the people who support and carry out the trade. She asks, "Is it Nature strains / Thine heart-strings at the image?" (89-90). The rhetorical answer is "Yes" and the poet orders the personified idea of "Nature" to "rend" their souls over the idea of their families being targeted by commerce (90-91). It *is* nature which makes them feel compassion enough to weep for their own kin but such compassion is misspent; their tears are as useful as those spilled by Sensibility's "wat'ry eye" described by Roscoe: they fall over imagined woes while the slave Luco's "little brothers weep" (114) for very real reasons. Yearsley is thus casting the merchant and other supporters of slavery, as well as the reader who may be identifying with them, as having a poor emotional education. Their sensibilities are not attuned to the feelings of others which prevents them from either seeing the pain they inflict or taking action to prevent it.

Yearsley's voice is more indignant and scornful of the institutions and people which trampled over the rights of others than either Roscoe or More had been.[674] Her "Curses" on these institutions and people are many: on those who "rob the Indian of his freedom" (65); "On him who from a bending parent steals / His dear support of age, his darling child" (66-7); and "On the destructive system that shall need / Such base supports" as murder and robbing (368-9). As Menely points out, the context and cause of the suffering of Luco and his many African counterparts is always at the heart of the poem, situating his grief and pain in the economic system that created the slave, a system upheld by "Custom" and "Law" (18).[675] She is deeply critical of laws in particular which "hang the meagre thief / That from his neighbour steals a slender sum / Tho' famine drove him on" (370-372) while, as he hangs, the priest "laments the crime" but "approves the law, and bids him calmly die" (373-4).[676] Moreover, this same law that "dooms the thief" (375) protects "The wretch who makes another's life his prey" (376) – the slave trader – making mass murder a lesser crime than stealing bread. "Custom" and "Law" are therefore "curses of mankind", as well as blessings; "we" are all "enslaved" by them while we "move" in their "direction" (18-21). In a final plea against them, in which she asks if this is "an English law, whose guidance fails / When crimes are swell'd to magnitude so vast" (378-9), she dares the "few / Who fill

[674] More, after all, was careful about the type of liberty she was summoning: her appeal to Liberty is certainly not one that aims to stir up "that unlicens'd monster", born of "Sedition" and the tool of "fierce Faction" – the mob – which the recent Gordon Riots had produced (lines 21-24). As Kaul states, Yearsley's poem "is on the whole much less chauvinist and nationalist in its antislavery argument […] a fact that probably derives from her social vision as a working-class poet". Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 253.

[675] Menely, "Acts of Sympathy", 54.

[676] Mitchell ("The Soul that Dreams") argues that Yearsley's criticism of commerce was connected to her social status as well as the circumstances of her emergence as a poet and the relationship with Hannah More, her one-time patron. More wished to control Yearsley's income from the sale of her poems while Yearsley interpreted this as a desire to keep her in economic dependency. Yearsley's *Inhumanity* has often been seen as an attempt to outdo More's *Slavery*. See Kerri Andrews, "'More's Polish'd Muse, or Yearsley's Muse of Fire': Bitter Enemies Write the Abolition Movement", *European Romantic Review* 20 (January 2009): 21–36, doi: 10.1080/10509580802565297.

Britannia's senate" (383-4) to try and "Defend the *honour* of a land so fall'n" (386, her emphasis).

While Yearsley's work is perhaps not as conservative as those described above, it still shares similar sentimental themes and arguments, particularly those based on the power of witnessing suffering, the nature of the slave trader, and the role of the poet in engaging the sentiments through apostrophe to affect the reader. In order to draw the reader's attention to the inhumanity of the suffering endured by slaves, she "summon[s]" the reader to the "sight" (38) of "human woe" (31), "horrid and insupportable" (36). Those summoned are not just the traders she attacks but also the "few / Who feel a more than cold, material essence" (48-9). Just like Roscoe and More, Yearsley is singling out the compassionate reader as one of the "few" of true sensibility, drawing the reader into the "us" of the abolitionist community. Meanwhile, shame is used to contrast the feeling few with the unfeeling nature of the slave trader and owner:

> His sigh, his groan avail not, for they plead
> Most weakly with a Christian. Sink, thou wretch,
> Whose act shall on the cheek of Albion's sons
> Throw Shame's red blush […] (204-207)

The wretch in these lines is not the slave but the Christian European. The poet here is othering those who should draw a blush of shame for the crimes they commit if they were truly feeling "sons of Albion". Indeed, she states that "the savage tribes / Are angels when compared to brutes like these" (351-2). The plantation overseer who tortures Luco, cast as a "renegade" (226) figure who from a young age "Abjures the tenets of our schools" (227), is "Unnat'ral", a man whose "cruel soul" "feeds, with

gross delight" (236) upon the sufferings of the slave. This directly echoes Roscoe's image of the "strange pleasure" and "preposterous joy" felt by torturers.

Finally, as Roscoe apostrophises the "universal love" spread by "Humanity", and as More calls upon Mercy's "soft contagion" to affect the reader, Yearsley also ends her antislavery poem with an extended apostrophe to a principle central to the sentimental emotional repertoire:

> Hail, social love! True soul of order, hail!
> Thy softest emanations, pity, grief
> Lively emotion, sudden joy, and pangs,
> Too deep for language, are thy own: then rise,
> Thou gentle angel! spread thy silken wings
> O'er drowsy *man*, breathe in his *soul*, and give
> Her God-like pow'rs thy animating force,
> To banish Inhumanity! (389-396)

"Social love" is the force that will "banish inhumanity" and bind people together in bonds of sympathy. It may be a principle "Too deep for language" but it is through language – her poem – that the sentiment is awakened. Through her personification of "social love", Yearsley is using her poem as a tool of her emotional practice, aiding the communication of the sentiment from writer to reader and beyond. It is also through this rhetoric that her politics of sympathy is made clear, as she calls on the "universal good" (415) to:

> touch the soul of man;
> Subdue him; make a fellow-creature's woe
> His own by heart-felt sympathy, whilst wealth
> Is made subservient to his soft disease. (420-423)

"Social love", by way of her poem, is transformative, working to open people's hearts to others and making them able to feel another's pain. It is only when this occurs that Custom, Law, and Commerce will be "made subservient" to the "soft disease" of the moral sentiments.

Such arguments were made countless times across a large number of poems written in this first vital year of the abolition campaign. One of Cowper's antislavery ballads contains similar arguments.[677] "The Negro's Complaint", which first appeared in April 1789, was the most popular of his set of ballads, perhaps because of its use of sentimental language.[678] Ventriloquizing the voice of a slave, the poem speaks of the equality of Africans based on natural affection:

> Fleecy locks and black complexion
> Cannot forfeit nature's claim;
> Skins may differ, but affection
> Dwells in white and black the same.[679]

He lays blame squarely on those who took part in stealing him from his home and selling him into a life of misery and torture, all for "paltry gold" (6), while reminding the audience of the suffering that produces their sugar: "Sighs must fan it, tears must water, / Sweat of ours must dress the soil. / […] Think how many backs have smarted / For the sweets your cane affords." (19-24). By using a first-person narrative, the reader or singer of the ballad is made to take on the identity of the slave, which plays into the

[677] Cowper is known to have written six antislavery ballads in 1788-9, although only five are extant today.
[678] At least two of the other ballads he wrote in this period – "Pity for Poor Africans" and "Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce: or, the Slave Trader in the Dumps" – are very jolting, satirical poems which the Committee chose not to make use of. See Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, 248.
[679] William Cowper, "The Negro's Complaint", *Poems, by William Cowper*, 2 vols. (London: 1800), 1: lines 13-16, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3315749582).

idea of sympathetic identification through witnessing and feeling along with the subject. Meanwhile, the final lines cast the "iron-hearted" (21) proponent of slavery as the unfeeling other and lacking the inherent humanity that their own arguments claim Africans do not possess: "Prove that you have human feelings, / Ere you proudly question ours!" (55-6). Such a conclusion works to call the reader to action, because in order to distance themselves from identification with the unfeeling slaver they must prove their humanity by acting on the compassion they feel for the narrator.

Members of the London Committee, and their supporters and associates, had made repeated requests to Cowper for some more antislavery verse in 1788, yet Cowper was reluctant to commit more time and effort to the cause.[680] Wood has written of his unwillingness to comply with these requests, referring to his letters which give details of his mental state when writing on such a melancholy subject: "I cannot describe to you, nor could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy" on contemplating the thousands of "miserable creatures, tormented as they have been from generation to generation".[681] Moreover, in an early example of the compassion fatigue that was to overcome Barbauld in her abolitionist poem, Cowper expressed himself as suspicious of the utility of another poem in the political cause of abolition, writing to Newton: "General censure on the iniquity of the practice will avail nothing, the world has been overwhelm'd with such remarks already, and to particularize all the horrors of it were an employment for the

[680] The source of these requests varies which perhaps highlights the fact that many would have asked Cowper to contribute more verse, either because he had shown an interest in antislavery previously or, with the popularity of abolitionist verse taking off in 1788, contributions from a renowned poet would have been seen as an aid to the cause. See Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 100; Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, 245; Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67; Joanne Tong, "'Pity for the Poor Africans': William Cowper and the Limits of Abolitionist Affect" in Ahern Affect and Abolition, 131.

[681] Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography*, 67-9. Quotes from James King and Charles Ryscamp, eds., *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979-86), 3:102-3 and 106.

mind both of the poet and his readers of which they would necessarily soon grow weary".[682] To his cousin he writes that "I hope also that the generality of my countrymen have more generosity in their nature than to want the fiddle of Verse to go before them in the performance of an act to which they are invited by the loudest calls of Humanity".[683] The poet was clearly dubious at this stage of the power of sentimental poetry to move a reader to action when the moral duty of abolitionism should be a natural consequence of having "Humanity".

Some of the verse he eventually produced thus combine a sense of futility and disillusionment with the idea of a politics of sympathy engaged through the use of poetry. In contrast to "The Negro's Complaint", his "Pity for Poor Africans" highlights the limits of the feeling in question – pity – in producing the desired emotional response that would make the reader take action against the slave trade. The narrator, who owns he or she "is shock'd at the purchase of slaves" and what they "hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans / Is almost enough to draw pity from stones".[684] However, the pity they feel on "hearing" about the suffering, no doubt from reading other abolitionist verse, is inactive, the narrator choosing to continue ignoring the inhumanity of the trade:

> I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,
> For how could we do without sugar and rum?
> Especially sugar, so needful we see?
> What? give up our desserts, our coffee, our tea! (5-8)

[682] William Cowper to John Newton, 5 June 1788, quoted in Tong, "'Pity for the Poor Africans', 147.
[683] William Cowper to Lady Hesketh, 21 March 1788, quoted in Tong, "'Pity for the Poor Africans', 147.
[684] Cowper, "Pity for Poor Africans", *Poems,* 1: lines 1-4.

Against the forces of custom, luxury, and greed, pity has no chance of effecting political action. The responsibility for slavery moves beyond the slave trader and owner to the public in general who increasingly knows the evils of the trade yet is unwilling to consider a life without the produce of slave labour. The narrator – or Britain – has learnt to live with the feelings of shame that such an argument should produce in a person of true sensibility and to suppress the pity which is naturally felt on encountering the suffering other. The final stanza, which comes after an extended moral tale of a boy who joins a gang of friends in robbing a poor man, repeats the futility of pity in effecting a moral act. While "Tom", or Britain, "blamed and protested", he nevertheless "join'd in the plan; / He shar'd in the plunder, but pitied the man" (47-8).

Anna Barbauld shared this concern for the effectiveness of pity to activate political reform. Her *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1791) displays a far less sanguine argument than the majority of abolitionist poems. Written in the weeks after the failure of Wilberforce's parliamentary motion to abolish the slave trade, the poem offers a searing prophetic portrait of the consequences of the moral failure of Britain in rejecting Wilberforce's bill and, like Cowper's "Pity", begins with a comment on the futility of sentimental rhetoric:

> Cease, Wilberforce, to urge thy generous strains!
> Thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame!
> The Preacher, Poet, Senator in vain
> Has rattled in her sight the Negro's chain.[685]

Alluding to the varied formats in which the plight of slaves had been brought to the public's attention, through the sermons of the "Preacher", the verse of the "Poet", and

[685] Barbauld, *Epistle to William Wilberforce*, lines 1-4.

the speeches of the "Senator", Barbauld states that "rattling the chains" of slaves in the faces of their readers was not enough. A personified Britain has borne witness to the horrors it inflicts on other people: the "Muse" (11) has "assail'd" her with the "deep groans" of the slave (5), "rent the veil that hid his constant tear" (6), and "Forc'd her averted eyes his stripes to scan" (7). "Pity's tear" has been "Claimed" (9) by numerous accounts of the inhumanity of the trade, yet Britain has failed to react according to the principles of sentimental emotional communication. The "Muse" was "too soon awak'd" (11), implying that against such forces as "Avarice" (25) and "thirst of gain" (30), the nation was not ready to respond to arguments based on appeals to the moral sentiments. Instead, the nation decided to live with the shame of its role in the slave trade and ignore the inhumanity of its actions: "She knows and she persists – Still Afric bleeds, / Uncheck'd, the human traffic still proceeds" (15-16). Thus, for Barbauld, the sympathetic bond that was supposed to form between the spectator and the sufferer broke down under the persistent crush of a custom which was far too lucrative to give up readily on the basis of emotional appeals: "Where seasoned tools of Avarice prevail, / A Nation's eloquence, combined, must fail" (25-6). In the end, the only consolation she can give is that, while British society will collapse into moral decay, the "generous band" (110) who fought for abolition will have "sav'd" (117) themselves in the eyes of future generations looking back at their deeds: "Succeeding times your struggles, and their fate, / With mingled shame and triumph shall relate" (118-19).

Despite her pessimistic response to the apparent failure of sympathy in the political process, Barbauld's poem does, nevertheless, tie her argument to the ethico-political discourse of sentimental abolitionist norms, in which the contrast between proslavery degeneracy and antislavery superiority is carried out. Custom, or the practices inherent in institutions which ignore humanity for the purpose of commercial

profit, has perverted the natures of people in Britain so as to override any benevolent feelings that would naturally arise from witnessing suffering and which should inspire philanthropic action. Those who oppose abolition are still depicted as "th'unfeeling" (31) who use "flimsy sophistry" (27) and "daring" lies (28) to justify their "thirst of gain" (30). Practice has hardened these men to the extent that members of "Britain's Senate" laugh at and mock the accounts of misery presented to them by the likes of Wilberforce who himself used sentimental arguments in his 1789 speech to parliament when introducing his bill:[686]

> From scoffing fiend bursts forth the laugh of hell;
> In Britain's senate, Misery's pangs give birth
> To jests unseemly, and to horrid mirth (38-40)

Their failure to respond to suffering with compassion is a sign of the failure of their own sensibilities. This argument is repeated in the vision of the planter's wife who lays about "on sofas of voluptuous ease" (58) while "With languid tones imperious mandates urge; / With arm recumbent wield the household scourge" (67-8). This image of the "delicate, infirm" (66) mistress of a slave plantation, "contriving torture, and inflicting wounds" (70) while she sits about "with unruffled mien" (69), is the epitome of the debased nature of people involved in slavery. Moreover, the cruelty with which she treats her household staff and the inhumanity with which the master of the plantation treats his slaves are passed on to the next generation, "fermenting" the "milky innocence of infant veins" (51-2). Using the abolitionist argument that practice,

[686] An example is given in chapter 6.

or cultivation, in cruelty begets further cruelty, Barbauld presents a scene which Festa describes as having "all the markings of sensibility gone bad":[687]

> Fermenting swift, the fiery venom gains
> The milky innocence of infant veins;
> There swells stubborn will, damps learning's fire,
> The whirlwind wakes of uncontroul'd desire
> Sears the young heart to images of woe,
> And blasts the buds of virtue as they blow. (51-56)

Growing up in an environment which sees cruelty and torture enacted on other human beings on a daily basis can only pervert a child's nature so that he or she, too, will be a cruel, unfeeling man or woman. Inured to "images of woe", the "young heart" will cultivate a "stubborn will" and "uncontroul'd desire" which will harden that heart to compassion and benevolence, thus effacing virtue from the world.

Therefore, the rhetoric of abolitionist sentimentalism is not entirely obsolete in Barbauld's poem, as some have suggested.[688] Rather, it is the failure of society in cultivating those norms which would have allowed such appeals to work which she protests. The poem is thus a lesson in moral improvement. Moreover, despite the expressions of dissatisfaction and indignation over the failure of emotional response in the British political process, Barbauld does envision a future in which such emotional response has occurred. There is a "future time" (17) which will look back at this failure and feel the "shame" of it (119). This must be a future, therefore, in which the abolition of slavery has been achieved and in which sensibility has been cultivated appropriately.

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[687] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) 200.
[688] Ellison states that through her critique of sentimental portrayals of slavery, Barbauld "declares that the conventions of abolitionist sensibility are obsolete". "Sensibility", 45 (see chap. 1, n. 37).

However, as Menely points out, what accounts for this difference between the present and "succeeding times" (118), "a nation ossified now in its narrow interests and a universal justice to come, is left undefined".[689] Barbauld does not account for the change in "British morals" (104) to come because it has not yet taken place, but in emphasising that it will, there is a hope implicit in the poem.

Despite increasing misgivings by some poets over the effectiveness of sentimental abolitionist verse in moving the nation to active compassion, the rhetoric made popular by Roscoe, More, Yearsley, and countless others was not abandoned after Wilberforce's successive parliamentary defeats in the 1790s. The same arguments continued to be made, though the number of abolitionist poems decreased. Abolitionist fervour somewhat diminished, particularly once war with France began in 1793 and the consequent clampdown by authorities on any material deemed anti-government propaganda.[690] Sentimental arguments likewise lost their political edge and were tied to the feminised, exaggerated language of gesture and affectation that came to define sensibility towards the end of the century, the type of sensibility that abolitionists had always been keen to distance themselves from. Questions over the role of emotions in political and social practice emerged as debates raged between conservatives and radicals over who was more aligned to the culture of sensibility. Conservatives like Edmund Burke, who had once supported the American Revolution and was an abolitionist himself, viewed sensibility as the revolutionary transgression of sexual and class boundaries which had taken place in France, where the mechanism of emotional

[689] Menely, "Acts of Sympathy", 48.
[690] Abolitionists remained careful of seeming too radical in their efforts to challenge an institution sanctioned by the state. Pitt's government enacted two Acts in 1795 in an attempt to repress all kinds of reform movements: the "Treasonable Practices" Bill which prohibited criticism against the monarchy, and the "Seditious Meetings" Bill which limited the size of public meetings. It therefore became very difficult for the abolition movement to be overtly political in their activities.

contagion was exploited by political writers in order to fuel violent uprising.[691] The conservative *Anti-Jacobin Review* helped to tie sensibility to radicalism, or 'Jacobinism', a term applied to any reformist view, laying blame on the power of impulsive feelings for the unrest it feared was spreading into England from France. For their part, radicals like Mary Wollstonecraft accused conservatives themselves of being aligned to sensibility, attacking the sentimental nostalgia which opponents like Burke used in their own political writings.[692] However, both sides of this debate continued to use sentimental language in their works. As Todd states, "Clearly neither side wished to be left in possession of a now unfashionable sensibility, but neither side wanted entirely to abandon the power of emotive, sentimental language".[693]

The poetry of sentimental abolitionism therefore waned during the last decade of the eighteenth century, but it did not disappear altogether. Robert Southey's collection of sonnets on the slave trade, published in his collection of *Poems* in 1797, resumed the protest against "cold-hearted Commerce" and the "inhuman trader", while scorning those who, at their "ease", "Sip the blood-sweeten'd beverage!"[694] While his sonnets are not necessarily sentimental in style, the abolitionist appeal to compassion through depictions of a weeping slave and his "silent woe" still make their appearance.[695] The Romantic poets did after all inherit sentimentalism, though they distanced themselves from its affectations. As R.S. White points out, "although the

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[691] See Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 49.
[692] Wollstonecraft was scathing of Burke's highly sentimentalised portrait of the toppled French royal family in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). See Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (London, 1790), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3330307827). For Wollstonecraft, sensibility prevented reform: "soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness [...] those beings who are only the objects of pity [...] will soon become objects of contempt". Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 81-2.
[693] Todd, *Sensibility*, 130.
[694] Robert Southey, "Poems on the Slave Trade", in Basker, *Amazing Grace* (see chap. 2, n. 115), Sonnet 1, line 12; Sonnet 3, lines 8 and 9-10.
[695] Ibid. Sonnet 3, line 14.

excesses of affective aesthetics became insipid in the sterner climates after 1790, the core values of appealing to the reader's sympathies, celebrating benevolence in its philosophical and political senses, passed directly into romanticism itself as a way of asserting natural rights through literature".[696] The Romantic poets who did write on slavery, such as Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, continued to be faced with the challenge of appealing to the compassion of readers while at the same time not appealing to an affected sensibility. However, the political urgency of abolitionist poetry had faded by the 1790s, along with abolitionism itself. With continual failures in parliament and the abstention campaign proving of little use, the effectiveness of abolitionist poetry had been questioned too many times to be used by what remained of the movement for any other purpose than revealing their own feelings on the subject.

Conclusion:

Abolitionist poets were deeply aware of the moral and social function of the moral sentiments and the practice of reading "for the sentiment" that had become popular by the mid-eighteenth century. Their understanding of the social nature of emotions and of sympathetic communication allowed them to use their poems as spaces in which they could converse with their readership and pass on their sentiments. This had political implications because, in the ethical terms of their sentimental repertoire, feeling compassion for the sufferer would activate benevolence and philanthropy. They imagined that people would be literally moved to perform acts of political reform, which could take shape in many ways: subscribing to a committee, signing a petition (if you were a man), abstaining from West Indian produce, displaying abolitionist texts and ornaments within one's household, using poems as conversation starters at the tea-table,

[696] White, *Natural Rights*, 63.

even influencing a parliamentarian who happened to be in one's circle of sociability.[697] Readers of abolitionist poetry consisted of not just the general public, but high-ranking members of parliament as well. Part of the campaign the committees undertook was to send their publications to parliamentarians in order to influence their votes once the bill entered the House of Commons.

Abolitionist poetry was thus explicit in its political and social commentary, more so than traditional sentimental literature. The occasional poems written in this period had specific political purpose and often explicitly urged action on the part of the public. While they used many elements of the sentimental language created by early works of fiction, abolitionists were not writing purely sentimental literature. Their constant statements against false sensibility highlight their wish to stay away from the affected excesses of literary sensibility. Rather, they were creating a specifically abolitionist literature, which used arguments based on ideas from a variety of discourses on the moral sentiments. The sentimental emotional repertoire common among so many communities in the eighteenth century gave abolitionists the opportunity to use the powers of emotion in appealing to people's sense of morality and their capacity to feel compassion, shame, and guilt for the wrongs their nation was committing on others. Working from the idea that witnessing inhumanity should produce feelings of sympathy, abolitionist sentimental poetry was essentially a test for its readers of their humanity and virtue. If they did nothing, or worse, if they identified with the unfeeling nature of the slavers, they could not lay claim to humanity because they did not have the capacity to feel. On the other hand, feeling compassion must produce an impulsive need to aid the suffering through philanthropic or political reformist action. Activists

[697] Cowper's "The Negro's Complaint" was printed with the title, "A Subject for Conversation at the Tea-TABLE". Clarkson, *History*, 2:190.

were clearly writing from the perspective, at least for the first few years of their campaign, that sympathy, humanity, and social love could literally move people to put enough pressure on the state to end its involvement in the slave trade.

Thus, while it is important not to overstate the impact of poetry in achieving social and political reform, there is value in acknowledging what abolitionist poets were trying to achieve through their poems. Their recognition of the sympathetic impulse and their sentimental discourse can be seen as an attempt at changing the way the reading community felt about the African slave, and about themselves as Britons, by producing texts which worked on the basis of emotional exchange. Reading "for the sentiment" was still vital to abolitionist rhetoric, but their insistence that it was not *just* for the sentiment is evidence of their rescripting of these norms. By combining the somatic language of sentimentalism with the apostrophic calls and personifications tied to political and didactic poetry, and by focusing their arguments on the principles of emotional cultivation, or practice, abolitionist poets created their own genre which brought together all the active elements of sentimentalism. Their politics of sympathy worked on the basis that a highly cultivated sensibility would naturally lead to a humanitarian impulse to do good. By making compassion and benevolence at once "natural" and something to be cultivated as part of the habitus of their reading communities, they could attempt to appeal to an ideal collective British "nature" that would be taught to see the suffering it caused and try to do something about it.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In his speech to the House of Commons on 13 May 1789, William Wilberforce repeated the argument of his fellow abolitionist activists when he cast the slaver as an other, habituated in cruelty rather than cultivated in the moral sentiments, and thus lacking that quality which is the mark of true humanity – sympathy:

> I do not accuse even the manager of any native cruelty, he is a person made like ourselves (for nature is much the same in all persons) but it is habit that generates cruelty: – This man looking down upon his Slaves as a set of Beings of another nature from himself, can have no sympathy for them, and it is sympathy, and nothing else than sympathy, which according to the best writers and judges of the subject, is the true spring of humanity.[698]

In this speech we see the abolitionist politics of sympathy reach what was probably the height of its short-lived power. Sympathy had entered into the political rhetoric of a Member of Parliament in his call for the legislature to implement a total abolition of the slave trade. The speech was widely applauded in the House by those who agreed with his sentiments, and his employment of sympathy was commended. Edmund Burke remarked: "the full view of it which the Hon. Gentleman had that day displayed could not fail to excite in the breast of every man not dead to sensibility, he blamed not the Hon. Gentleman for knocking at every door, and appealing to every passion, well knowing, as the Hon. Gentleman had forcibly and correctly said, that mankind were

[698] William Wilberforce, *The Speech of William Wilberforce, Esq. Representative for the County of York, On Wednesday the 13th of May, 1789, On the Question of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London, 1789), 21-22, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CB3326419250).

governed by their sympathies".[699] Yet the appeal failed. Delay tactics and new inquiries put forward by the pro-slavery lobby ensured a bill was not introduced for another two years and the result of that debate was a loss of 163 votes to 88 against abolition. The appeal to the humanity of parliament lost out to economic expediency.

Nevertheless, sympathy continued to be appealed to by abolitionists within the essays, correspondence, sermons, and poems they produced for the movement. Understanding the choices they made in mobilising public support for their campaign has been the subject of much scholarly examination and it is widely acknowledged that their methods relied on the rhetoric of sentimentalism. My approach to understanding these choices has been to examine them through the perspective of emotions-as-practice, an approach which opens up the possibility of engaging with abolitionist texts in a new way, giving access to the methodology behind their politically engaged appeals to emotions like compassion and benevolence. This is because the emotional norms on which these appeals were founded were themselves based on an understanding of emotions as embodied practices. Eighteenth-century notions of human nature as malleable and of emotions as cultivated habits are directly comparable to the Bourdieuian theory of bodies as socially situated, as well as Scheer's use of this theory to understand our emotions as practices which have a history.

The overlapping practices, communities, and discourses that privileged the moral sentiments in eighteenth-century Britain developed an understanding of emotions based on the idea of improvement through practice. This is evidenced in the texts that emerged from a variety of communities and spaces for which the moral sentiments formed the basis of their emotional repertoires. I have shown that, in a variety of spaces

[699] *Speeches in Parliament, Respecting the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (Edinburgh, 1789), 74, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW3304379887).

and communities, there existed a shared emotional repertoire which understood emotions as habituated experiences and practices and advocated virtue as achievable through the cultivation of social sympathy: the educational sites, from elite universities to dissenting academies, which advocated the cultivation of sensibility; the spaces of sociability, including those textual sites provided by the periodical press, which aimed to actively engage social sympathy in order to facilitate polite and improving conversation; the religious communities that championed active compassion through philanthropic reforms; and the reading communities that consumed novels and poems "for the sentiment". I have read the texts produced by and used within these emotional communities as tools of their practices, aimed at mobilising and regulating the emotions privileged within their shared repertoires. Their essays, children's stories, periodical articles, correspondence, religious tracts and sermons, novels, and poetry advocate and activate benevolence, compassion, and pity through the somatic language developed to enhance the sensibility of readers, their capacity to feel for others symbolised by the tears, sighs, and blushes of appropriate sympathetic response.

These philosophical, cultural, religious, and literary conditions of possibility for the development of abolitionist rhetoric have been discussed at length by many scholars in terms of discursive influence. However, these studies have for the most part focused attention on abolitionist literature as analogous to sentimental literature. Examining abolitionist arguments through an emotions-as-practice approach shifts the focus away from higher order theories of influence to the everyday practices which attempt to engage the emotional norms of communities in habitual ways. While my study continues the focus on literature – a necessity if one is to uncover the textual evidence of historical emotional norms – it does so with regard to abolitionist methods of practically engaging the emotions, rather than as a literary genre. In doing so we can see

that, while it makes use of specific sentimental arguments, abolitionist literature is not exclusively sentimental literature. The abolitionists' use of sentimentalism in their political essays, newspaper correspondence, sermons, and poems, is, rather, a rescripting of the norms which make up the sentimental emotional repertoire, adopting those which suited their movement and adapting them for political purposes. Emotions-as-practice is a useful approach to access the abolitionist emotional repertoire and their choice of rhetoric because they were rescripting norms based on an understanding of emotions that privileged emotional practice and the active cultivation of moral sentiments. Focusing on their arguments as emotional practices aids our understanding of how abolitionists came to rely, for a few years at least, on a politics of sympathy which appealed to the compassionate side of the British public and legislature.

What these texts show us, however, is that the conflicted attitude to sensibility at the time, and the assumptions informing the emotional practices which were aimed at its cultivation, meant that its political power could not last long. The abolitionist appeal to sympathy lost its political vigour as soon as the first defeat in parliament took place. The fact they began to question the political efficacy of sympathy within their own works, as Barbauld did, signals the shift at the end of the eighteenth-century in perceptions of the role of emotions in civic and political practice, marking the beginning of the modern sensibility in which sympathy is seen, as Menely states, "as being neither consistent enough to constitute an ethical virtue nor charged enough to provide a political motivation".[700] The emotional communities which first nurtured the sentimental abolitionist rhetoric no longer seemed to exist, or, at least, had begun to privilege new emotional norms by the time the Abolition Act passed in 1807. New communities emerged which privileged a new kind of emotionalism, themselves

[700] Menely, "Acts of Sympathy", 45 (see chap. 5, n. 116).

rescripted from the norms of sentimentalism, while the politics of the 1790s became more divided between radical and conservative as the pressures from a new libertarian France changed Britain's political atmosphere. [701]

Scholars of post-Enlightenment and post-Romantic emotions, particularly as expressed in literature, have shown that the decline of sentimentalism needs to be considered a matter of discourse rather than actual feeling. Michael Bell points out that our modern distrust of sentimentalism and the politics of sympathy that emerged toward the end of the eighteenth-century is an inheritance of the changing discourse around these terms that occurred from the nineteenth century onward.[702] His work shows that the quest for emotional education and cultivation in fact had an afterlife in the post-Romantic nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that, while "sentimental" may have transformed over time into a term which describes affectation rather than "true" feeling, the emotions inherent to its practice did not just disappear.[703] Suzanne Keen's work on narrative empathy, which argues for the importance of reading as a skill for the emotional education of the self, similarly emphasises the afterlife of sentimentalism. She states that the newly established capacity to study emotions like empathy through neuroscience "encourages speculation about human empathy's positive consequences".[704] These speculations, as we have seen, are not new and Keen claims that the moral sentimentalism of the eighteenth century "dovetail[s] with efforts on the

[701] Todd points out that in the years of war with France, sensibility soon "gave way to a stress on national literature and to qualities considered peculiarly British, such as restraint, self-control and stoical, wry acceptance. The years of most rigorous conservative attack – from Austen, to Coleridge, and the *Anti-Jacobin* –coincided with the alarmist and military years in England, when sensibility was felt to be demoralizing, anti-Christian and childishly French". *Sensibility*, 131 (see chap.1, n. 21).
[702] Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling* (see chap. 1, n. 64). Bell (2) states that "the long shadow of disapproval reflected in the modern use of the word […] has been an overreaction, at the level of discourse, which has thrown the baby of feeling out with the bathwater of sentimentality while disguising the more crucial impact of the 'affective turn' in modern culture".
[703] Ibid. See also Jerome McGann, *Poetics of Sensibility* (see chap. 1, n. 21).
[704] Suzanne Keen, "Theory of Narrative Empathy", 207 (see chap. 1, n. 67).

part of contemporary virtue ethicists, political philosophers, educators, theologians, librarians, and interested parties such as authors and publishers to connect the experience of empathy, including its literary form, with outcomes of changed attitudes, improved motives, and better care and justice".[705] In this way empathy is acknowledged, as sympathy was in the eighteenth century, as the "feeling precursor to and prerequisite for liberal aspirations to greater humanitarianism".[706]

Many have thus shown that the same emotions privileged within eighteenth-century sentimentalism continued to have a role in political discourse beyond the Enlightenment era. Robert White and Chris Jones demonstrate that, although the genre of sentimental literature was ridiculed by the later generations of writers in the 1790s and early 1800s, the core emotional norms of sentimentalism that centred on sympathy passed directly into Romanticism as a way of asserting natural rights through literature.[707] Thus the politics of sympathy created by abolitionists continued to be used in the political treatises, novels, and poems of Romantic writers.[708] Indeed, political movements and humanitarian groups still use sympathy for a moral or ethical function and can be seen to mobilise compassion and benevolence in their campaigns today, in particular those which focus on the humanity of downtrodden peoples. In light of this, Scheer's claim that sentimentalism could be considered a largely ephemeral emotional style rather than a habitus is somewhat narrow when we consider the emotions that underpin the sentimental emotional repertoire of eighteenth-century communities. I have demonstrated that sentimentalism was not so much rejected by bourgeois

[705] Ibid., 207-8.
[706] Ibid., 208. Keen's aim, at least, is to ask questions about this assumption. See also Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[707] White, *Natural Rights* (see chap. 5, n. 85); Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility* (see chap. 1, n. 21).
[708] For radical writers, the same tropes used for slavery by abolitionists became metaphors for all injustices at the time, such as the subordinate place of women in marriage and the economic dependence of the poor upon the privileged. Bell follows this inheritance through into the Victorian and modern eras in Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics*, *and the Culture of Feeling.*

communities, as Scheer suggests, but rescripted and harnessed to the discourse of self- and social improvement for particularly bourgeois purposes.[709] The post-romantic view of sentimentalism did not necessarily negate the emotions underlying it. What has changed perhaps is the theological context of these emotions.

It is this afterlife of the abolitionist politics of sympathy that has led many to make conclusions about the sources of the emergence of humanitarianism in the eighteenth century. For Hunt, "human rights grew out of the seedbed sowed" by feelings of benevolence and compassion.[710] She argues that, for the adherents of the emerging view of moral cultivation through sympathy, the practice of reading sentimental works and identifying with the emotions on the page helped to change the ways in which people regarded the other as well as their own roles in society.[711] Langford similarly claims that sensibility was fundamental to the legislative initiatives aimed at humanitarian reform during the last third of the century, helping to rouse public opinion towards a range of philanthropic and reforming activities.[712] Making a case for the centrality of literature to the rise in importance of natural rights in Western culture in the eighteenth century, White states that the three key sentimental ideas of "sympathy, natural benevolence, and unforced altruism" fundamentally linked "the individual with broader society through the communitarianism of fellow feeling".[713] Carey agrees that although the growth of sensibility as a popular literary phenomenon and philanthropy as a social force may only be seemingly related because they emerged

[709] See Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice, 217 (see chap. 1, n. 4).
[710] Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 58 (see chap. 1, n. 39).
[711] Ibid. see 55-58.
[712] Paul Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 485 (see chap. 2, n. 89).
[713] White, *Natural Rights*, 2.

at roughly the same time, it likely "reflects a complex brew of social, economic, and cultural conditions peculiar to the eighteenth century".[714]

It is true that by the end of the eighteenth century when abolitionism emerged, social improvement and philanthropy had come to be seen by writers and critics themselves as a national institution peculiar to the British, due mainly to the increased visibility of charitable foundations. Tobias Smollett noted that "The virtues of benevolence are always springing up to an extraordinary growth in the British soil," while Johnson claimed in his *Idler* that "no sooner is a new species of misery brought to view, and a design of relieving it professed, than every hand is open to contribute something, every tongue is busied in solicitation, and every art of pleasure is employed in the interest of virtue".[715] In his history of philanthropy in England Owen states that, "though sometimes no more than emotions which it was fashionable to display", the benevolence and sensibility associated with humanitarianism "had a good deal to do with forming the social temper of the time".[716] Arendt connects this humanitarian social temper to revolutionary politics, stating that "History tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for the spectacle of misery to move men to pity; even during the long centuries when the Christian religion of mercy determined moral standards of Western Civilization, compassion operated outside the political realm and frequently outside the established hierarchy of the Church."[717] It was not until the eighteenth century that compassionate humanitarianism became common among certain communities in European society who linked their feelings to political forces for

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[714] Brycchan Carey, *British* Abolitionism, 19 (see chap. 1, n.12).
[715] Tobias Smollett, *Continuation of the Complete History of England*, 4 vols. (London, 1760-1) 2:409, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW0101220698); Samuel Johnson, "Charities and Hospitals" in *The Idler*, 2 vols. (London, 1761), 1:20, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale (CW0111377014).
[716] David Owen, *English Philanthropy,* 14 (see chap. 4, n. 22).
[717] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 66.

change. These were not new feelings, but crucially, as Bell states, the moral sentiments were "not so much the invention as the coming into consciousness of a new sensibility".[718] In other words, the moral sentiments had been rescripted by new emotional communities.

In their association with fellow-feeling and humanity, sympathy and compassion certainly enabled new forms of political communication and action as people became increasingly aware of injustices and abuses of natural rights. However, drawing direct links between sentimental practices such as reading "for the sentiment" and the reform programmes of eighteenth-century humanitarian movements can be problematic in light of the paradoxes inherent in the understanding of sensibility at the time. As Jones and Csengei both argue, sensibility was never a homogenous idea.[719] As well as signifying a belief in innate benevolence and compassion, and being associated with "melancholy, distress and refined emotionalism", sensibility could also be seen as a threat by critics because of its spontaneous, impulsive and uncontrollable nature. [720] Many derided the two-faced nature of the fashionable cult of sensibility which emerged out of novel reading with its tendency to overly emote over the trivial while ignoring important social issues. As Barker-Benfield points out, alongside the concern for misery and misfortune in the world, there was a tendency in many works of sentimental fiction to romanticise the poor, depicting them in the classical pastoral tableaux of rustic peasants also popular in art and on chinaware.[721] Indeed, abolitionist activists continued this tradition, emblazoning tea sets and jewellery with their own sentimental tableau of the supplicating slave.

[718] Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling*, 18.
[719] Jones, *Radical Sensibility*; Csengei, *Literature of Feeling* (see chap. 1, n.27).
[720] See Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 4-5.
[721] Barker-Benfield, *Culture of Sensibility*, 228 (see chap. 1, n.21).

The multiplicity of discourses and practices that contributed to its development as an idea, as a cultural phenomenon, and as an emotional practice made it possible for groups of various and opposing opinions to claim sensibility for their own views, ethical or otherwise. Being an avid reader of sentimental literature, for example, or a member of a particular religious community which privileged weeping, did not make one necessarily become abolitionist, as I demonstrated with the difference between Methodists Wesley and Whitefield. The complexity of the definition of sensibility and the differentiation in the ways diverse communities understood and expressed it makes it difficult to always attribute "nice" sentiments to sentimentalism. As such, many scholars have warned that the political implications of sentimental discourse depend entirely on both the agenda of the writer and the preconceptions of the reader.[722] As Boulukos has argued, we cannot assume that the "sentimental attention to the suffering of slaves" that occurred in the final two decades of the century necessarily led to reformist political action.[723] Sentimental rhetoric was used for all sorts of opposing political arguments, from the radical ideals of the supporters of the French revolution to their conservative, anti-revolutionary opposition, and from abolitionists to pro-slavery apologists. As Csengei states, it was just as "possible for self- interest, cruelty and violence to become constitutive aspects of the ostensibly benevolent, philanthropist ideology of eighteenth- century sensibility".[724] Indeed, as a form of rhetoric or persuasive tool, we can see its use on both sides of the abolition debate, with pro-slavery lobbyists using sentimental expressions to argue against humanitarian reform, as I showed in chapter three.

[722] See Ahern, *Affect and Abolition* (see chap. 1, n. 13); and Boulukos, *Grateful Slave* (see chap. 4, n. 113).
[723] George Boulukos, "Capitalism and Slavery, Once Again with Feeling", Ahern, *Affect and Abolition*.
[724] Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 1.

Thus, being a man or woman of feeling, being practised in reading "for the sentiment", and feeling for the suffering of others, did not necessarily mean one was willing to act on those feelings or willing to act for the same causes. Moreover, the whole idea of sympathetic contagion could function as a dangerous contagion of violent passions rather than calm sentiments, aiding the mobilisation of riotous political forces as well as that of philanthropic reforms. In the formulation of the emotions by Hume and Smith, the emotions which could be transferred between people, either through the contagion of sympathy or through the imaginative process, could be positive or negative, calm or violent. Both Csengei and Fairclough show that the concept of sympathy as a principle of emotional communication raised doubts about the possibility of regulating such communication, which allowed for its disruptive as well as cohesive political application.[725] According to Fairclough, Hume's idea of social sympathy was always limited to his own idea of what constituted "society": his conception of intimate exchange between people takes place in the elite groups of which he was a member.[726] As Mee points out, however, "if human beings were increasingly defined as sympathetic creatures across a whole range of discourses and practices in the period, there remained an anxiety about where such sympathies led. […] What was the difference between the club and the crowd?"[727]

The question this raises is what abolitionist activists expected of their audiences in terms of emotional and political response. I think the method of examining their own understanding of emotional practice and how they employed that within their reformist arguments tells us something of why political change was

[725] See Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*; Mary Fairclough, *Romantic Crowd* (see chap. 1, n. 27). Fairclough points to the use of sympathy in radical agitations of the eighteenth century, whereby sympathy became the medium not of polite opinion as in the case of Hume, but of the popular opinion of the crowd.
[726] Fairclough, *Romantic Crowd*, 25.
[727] Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 7.

encouraged via sentimental appeals, even though reader response to such appeals was unreliable at best. Throughout their mobilising materials abolitionists are very clear on the virtue of cultivating a highly sensitive emotional repertoire, one that is open to the sufferings of others and one that is "naturally" induced, through experience and habituation in the moral sentiments, to act benevolently to aid that suffering. Their insistence on this as the "true" characteristic of the British people, and on the unnatural cruelty that arises from habituation in the practices of slavery, created a set of norms particular to the abolitionist community whereby their own actions were portrayed as morally virtuous and humane. Their political action to put a stop to the slave trade was proof, in their eyes, that theirs was a community of people who had succeeded in cultivating virtue. By setting up the dichotomy between virtuous activist and tyrannical slaver, the members of the abolition movement represented themselves and their wider community of supporters as having made the transition from self-cultivation of moral sentiments, through sociability and education, to social improvement, linking the moral sentiments to a social and political cause.

Many scholars have pointed out some of the consequences of the abolitionist appeal to a sense of British virtue and benevolence, consequences which seem inconsistent with their championing of rights and liberty but which are seen as the effects of the top-down nature of pity that activists used to mobilise support. Csengei states that the ideology of sympathy and benevolence functioned as a form of social control, the insistence on selective forms of charity pointing to a darker, ambivalent side of the charitable impulse.[728] As Ellison points out, sensibility was as much a "feeling down" by those in positions of privilege as a "feeling toward" victims of

[728] Csengei, *Literature of Feeling*, 49-50. For example, humanitarian acts which aided the poor, such as the establishment of soup societies and Sunday schools, often acted to reward the obedience of the socially inferior and the maintenance of the status quo.

suffering.[729] Festa writes that "pity carries within itself the very differences it is supposed to transcend".[730] Performances of benevolence by the privileged towards those less fortunate could thus further disempower victims of suffering. For Festa, Wood, and Ferguson, abolitionist appeals to pity the African slave contributed to a legitimising colonial, empirical, and racial discourse which carried through into nineteenth-century colonial practices.[731] These scholars demonstrate that sentimental texts often deploy sympathy to help rationalise the exploitation of the colonial other in the project of imperial expansion, particularly those which represent the African slave in supplication to their European captors and saviours. Hannah More's insistence that Africans "claim the common privilege of kind", despite being "dark and savage, ignorant and blind", betrays the same prejudice towards the colonial other as portrayed within the works of pro-slavery apologists.[732] Moreover, the images of benign colonisers, the triumphalist tone of abolitionist poetry in particular, with their claims of the need to spread British liberty across the globe, and the paternalistic brand of humanitarianism that abolitionist rhetoric in general used in their push for political reform, left a lasting legacy in terms of British imperial identity and brutal colonial practices.[733] We are warned by these examples to be wary of the progressivist claims of

[729] Ellison, "Sensibility", 41 (see chap. 1, n. 37). Ahern similarly argues that "the privileging of affect as a creative energy that can forge political community often occludes those without the power to assert the subjectivity of their pain". In abolitionist materials, "accounts of suffering are penned by those not in pain, and readers are made to inhabit the subject position of the observer" rather than the victim. *Affect and Abolition*, 11.
[730] Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, 4 (see chap. 5, n. 133). Amit Rai similarly states that "sympathetic identification creates difference rather than similitude". *Rule of Sympathy*, (see chap. 2, n. 10).
[731] See Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*; Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, (see chap. 1, n. 9); and Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010).
[732] Hannah More, *Slavery,* lines 137-8 (see chap. 5, n. 100). Ferguson states that More's discourse essentially denies the full humanity of the colonised other and that abolitionist texts leave in place the differential status between black and white. See Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 9.
[733] For discussion of the influence of abolitionist rhetoric on British national identity see Kaul, *Poems of Nation*, (see chap. 5, n. 120; Swaminathan, *Debating the Slave Trade*, (see chap. 1, n. 42).

abolitionist rhetoric and of self-congratulatory histories which speak of the "success" of abolitionism in Britain.

Yet, at the same time, we cannot assume that all abolitionist activists and writers were solely motivated by a future imperial project or by any other motivation for that matter. We can only know what the extant texts they produced tell us. While their rhetoric may have influenced nineteenth-century understandings of British national and imperial identity, their main goal was immediate and local, inasmuch as it restricted itself to an abolition of Britain's slave trade and not slavery itself. As Carey points out, in order to mobilise political action for the single aim of abolishing the slave trade, "it was not required that a reader fully empathised with the experience of slavery nor that they became alive to the dangers of colonisation. Instead, all that was required was that they were moved enough to write a letter, pay a subscription, sign a petition."[734] My study of abolitionist texts does not attempt to answer questions of motivation which may explain why the abolition movement developed or why, indeed if, it succeeded. The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the link the abolitionist community made between emotional practice and political action, as expressed in their mobilising texts. For this community, emotional practice was key to creating a society that would naturally want to aid the suffering of others and the practices I have examined here are just some of the ways in which they went about trying to achieve this. In their argument that philanthropic action emerges from a highly cultivated sensibility, and that tyranny is the consequence of a poor emotional education, the abolitionist movement marked the beginning of the rescripting of sentimentalism as it distanced itself from

[734] Carey, *British Abolitionism*, 50.

sentimentalism's reputation of solipsism and excess and tried to create a place for a politics of sympathy in questions of national reform.

Whether we choose to see abolitionism as the beginning of the rise of humanitarianism or as central to Britain's emerging imperial and colonial policy, an emotions-as-practice approach could open up new ways of analysing its legacy. Following the actions of abolitionists through into the nineteenth century and exploring the shifts and changes in emotional rhetoric, it may be possible to trace the abolitionist emotional repertoire in other reform movements and see how new emotional communities adopt and adapt its politics of sympathy. As a method for examining how emotional norms change over time emotions-as-practice highlights the ways in which emotions are understood and performed in their situational context. It has therefore proven useful to an understanding of social movement methods of political mobilisation. It would be interesting to follow up on the changes in emotional and political climate post-abolitionism and explore how these shifts changed the emotional scripts of other reform movements, from the further push for slave emancipation in the 1830s to subsidiary rights movements that emerged alongside abolitionism like those fought for women, children, and animals. Can we see remnants of the abolitionist emotional repertoire in the movements of today? We may not share the same emotional repertoire as the communities who fought for abolition at the end of the eighteenth century, but it may be possible to trace the inheritance of it within particular communities, like social movements, by focussing on their emotional practices.

Such studies may allow us to see that, while we acknowledge the impossibility of accessing "true" feelings in the past, we at the same time see, as Bell points out, that "there are rich layers of cultural practice assimilated into the present capacity for

understanding the life of feeling".[735] Despite changes in discourse on the emotions between the eighteenth century and the present, the moral sentiments have not disappeared. We just talk about them differently in terms of their psychological, physical, and spiritual foundations. This is why we cannot answer, as Scheer suggests, questions of changes in actual feeling in historical sources, even if we envisage emotions as practices of a "knowing" body. This does not negate the usefulness of Scheer's approach. But there may be limits as to how it can be applied. For instance, by focusing on the congruence between emotions-as-practice and eighteenth-century notions of emotions as malleable and transformative, there is a danger in blinding oneself to the fundamental differences between the two.

One difference lies in the consciousness with which humans are meant to carry out emotional practices. For Bourdieu, practices are largely unconscious habits whereas, in the formulations of eighteenth-century moral sentimentalism, the practice of emotions is very much a conscious effort to mobilise the feelings that were deemed vital to a person's role in society. It was not enough to have a "natural" tendency to be benevolent. As Bell points out, "Like other natural faculties, this can atrophy if not exercised", thus "the man of sentiment is positively enjoined to exercise and appreciate the springs of benevolence within himself".[736] The practical purpose of cultivating the moral sentiments is connected to their eschatological and teleological foundations in eighteenth-century discourse. Such foundations give them a moral, theological purpose, a progressive goal of achieving virtue, while modern theories like emotions-as-practice have no need for such "purpose".[737] So, even though eighteenth-century notions of

[735] Bell, *Sentimentalism, Ethics, and the Culture of Feeling*, 206.
[736] Ibid., 35.
[737] Although, as stated above, some scholars disagree that the moral purpose of emotions like sympathy, or today's empathy, has disappeared. See Keen, "Theory of Narrative Empathy".

cultivation and twentieth/twenty-first century theories of practice seem a good fit in terms of their approach to human nature as changeable, we have to keep in mind the differences between the two ages, if only to maintain distance from buying too heavily into the idea of the progressivist discourse of Enlightenment thinkers. If we were to focus on changes in "actual feeling", rather than emotional norms, there is a danger of implicitly confirming both the abolitionists' assumptions about the changeable nature of emotions and their progressivist views that such changes are for the better.

There may be limits as to what an emotions-as-practice approach to historical change can answer in terms of cause and effect. Moreover, while Scheer states that her theory "does not reproduce assumptions" in the source material of historical communities, I have argued that there is a degree of accord between emotions-as-practice and the emotional context in which abolitionism emerged and from which activists rescripted their own emotional repertoire.[738] Therefore, how Scheer's theory can be applied to emotional repertoires which do not offer the same correspondence in understandings of human emotions requires further investigation. Nevertheless, emotions-as-practice works well for understanding particular aspects of the "emotional politics" of early humanitarian movements like abolitionism. A focus on practice for any community is a useful concept to uncover how shifts in emotional repertoires affect the ways in which societies manage those changes.

[738] Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice", 217.

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