**British Romanticism, Slavery and the Slave Trade 1780s to 1830s**

## Abstract

This thesis investigates the Romantic discourses on slavery in their socio-political context from 1780s to 1830s. I explore the abolitionist discourses of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, and examine how they expressed their egalitarian sensibilities and revolutionary ideas through their work. The thesis demonstrates how Romantic ideology and eighteenth-century radicalism developed alongside the growth of the abolitionist movement in England. The egalitarian ideology of the Romantics derived from their republican nature as well as their dissenting philosophy. The Romantics showed sympathy towards black slaves and their suffering. As dissenters, they shared the frustration and indignation felt by black slaves, whose social rights were repressed in English society. Through their anti-slavery propaganda, the Romantics criticised the way in which the British government and the Established Church were destroying human freedom and equality. The thesis shows how the Romantics used their abolitionist discourses to display their humanitarian theology as well as to protest against social injustice.

I also examine the complex relation between the Romantic discourses on slavery and liberalism and nationalism. The Romantic abolitionists often revealed a Euro-centric vision with regard to slavery issues; I refer in particular to the role of anti-slavery propaganda in the argument for justifying the conversion of slaves to Christianity. By claiming that it was necessary to educate slaves by imposing Christian doctrine on them, the Romantics demonstrated their belief in the superiority of white European civilisation. This assumption mirrored the fierce discrimination against black people which prevailed at that time. I investigate the delicate balance between the Romantics' humanitarian sensibility and their nationalist ideology in their abolitionist work.

Chapters 1 and 2 examine the history of the British slave trade and the abolitionist debate, in preparation for an analysis of the relationship between Romantic poetry and its social context. Chapters 3 to 6 focus on the abolitionist discourses of each Romantic poet. This study offers a key to understanding the socio-political nature of Romantic ideology.



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# British Romanticism, Slavery and the Slave Trade
# 1780s to 1830s

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**A Copyright Statement**

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**Declaration**

Parts of Chapter Three of this thesis have been published as the following articles: "Coleridge and the British Slave Trade" (in Japanese) in *English Literature and Morality*, ed. Eishu Sonoi (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press, 2005), pp.153-73; "Coleridge and the British Slave Trade" in *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 27, Summer (Nether Stowey, 2006), pp.27-37; "Coleridge and Unitarianism: In the Relation with the British Abolition Movement " (in Japanese) in *Kyushu University English Review*, No.50 (Fukuoka: The Society of English Literature and Linguistics, Kyushu University, 2008), pp.135-56.

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## Introduction

The period from 1780s to 1830s saw the development of the abolition movement in England and also the rise of Romanticism. And the fact that these two ideological milestones coincided had important and lasting intellectual repercussions. To analyse Romantic discourses in an abolitionist context cast a new light on our understanding of Romanticism in social, political and ideological terms. The aims of this thesis are to investigate how the first generation of Romantics engaged with the abolition cause, and to analyse how their artistic visions developed. I examine the abolition discourses of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, as they all became closely involved with the abolition movement in England. For instance, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were actually friends of the eminent abolitionist Thomas Clarkson and knew more than most about how the slave trade operated. Blake was the first Romantic poet who focused on slavery issues in his poems such as "The Little Black Boy" (1789) and *Visions of Daughters of Albion* (1793). In addition, the liberation campaign, which became especially active following the French Revolution, helped to shape the egalitarian sensibility of the Romantics.

In terms of religion, the Romantic poets were closely aligned with religious dissenters; and this thesis demonstrates how their dissenting sensibilities shaped the humanistic and political nature of their abolition discourses. The dissenters promoted an egalitarian philosophy and also campaigned for an extension of political rights in society, leading them to oppose slavery. Similarly, in their abolition poems, the poets protested against social injustice and criticized the British government for allowing the slave trade to continue. William Frend's idea of "universal benevolence" was typical in the way it expressed the humanitarian idealism of the dissenters:

> That every Christian is bound to entertain sentiments of universal benevolence, to love his fellow creatures of every sect, colour or

description, is the third grand point of my faith.[1]

Dissenters felt sympathy towards slaves who had been the victims of tyranny. They saw that the predicament in which slaves found themselves was similar to theirs, since they were also the victims of unjust repression in society. In their anti-slavery propaganda dissenters maintained that slaves should be free and have the right to live in an egalitarian society.

The position of at least some dissenters was reflected in abolition poems that utilised apocalyptic and millenarian imagery. In such poems, the sin of the slave trade was punished by God and after the collapse of slavery a millenarian society was realised as was shown in George Dyer's "On Considering the Unsettled State of Europe, and the Opposition Which Had Been Made to Attempt for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade" (1812). Dyer expected a millenarian world to be established after slavery had been brought to an end:

> And, see! I view a distant land;
> And hark! I hear a minstrel band.
> The negro[2]-slaves, now slaves no more,
> . . .
> Yet all is harmony complete,
> As when (so sung) atoms in atoms whirl'd
> And Chaos grew to form, and order rul'd the world.[3]

On the other hand, in a bitter condemnation of the British government that had

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[1] William Frend, *An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge against William Frend, M.A.* (Cambridge: B. Flower, 1793), 89.

[2] In this thesis, I employ the word "negro" as it is used in poetry, race theories, the analysis of race theories, and abolition debates. I have taken extreme care to avoid causing any offense through the use of this term.

[3] George Dyer, "On Considering the Unsettled State of Europe, and the Opposition Which Had Been Made to Attempt for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade", *Poetics: or, A Series of Poems, and Disquisitions on Poetry*, Vol. 1 (London: J. Johnson, 1812) in *Verse*, ed. Alan Richardson, Vol.4 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 340.

turned down William Wilberforce's motion for the abolition of the slave trade, Anna Letitia Barbauld characteristically illustrated the dissenting nature of abolition poems. It is a typical of dissenting rhetoric to point out the hypocritical nature of Anglican Christians who continued the inhumane traffic. Barbauld suggested that the sin of the slave trade was branded on the "forehead" of England:

> She knows and she persists—Still Afric bleeds,
> Unchecked, the human traffic still proceeds:
> She stamps her infamy to future time,
> And on her hardened forehead seals the crime.[4]

In "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade" (1788), Ann Yearsley also strongly denounced the hypocrisy of Anglican Christians who tyrannically ruled slaves on plantations:

> Are these your laws,
> Whereby the glory of the Godhead spreads
> O'er barb'rous climes? Ye hypocrites, disown
> The Christian name, nor shame its cause. . .[5]

Thus, dissenters often asserted that the British government and Anglican Christians were guilty of the misery of slaves. In their anti-slavery discourses, dissenters expressed their protest against the social system of the Establishment that repressed human liberty.

With regard to the political context of abolitionism, I analyse the relation between Romantic ideology and eighteenth-century radicalism. Essentially, dissenters protested against the existing social system and in favour of reform through the power of

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[4] Anna Letitia Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade" (1791), *Poems 1792* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1993), 146.

[5] Ann Yearsley, "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade", (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1788) in *Verse*, 149.

revolution. They welcomed the French Revolution because they believed that republican idealism would be realized after the destruction of the old system. By protesting against the social injustice of slavery, the dissenters found the opportunity to spread their philosophy — besides which, they aimed to increase their political power by promoting the abolition campaign. However, their arguments for their social rights met indifference, opposition and delay from the English government and, in response, the dissenters began to demand that the social and political system should be changed. These demands led the dissenters to be regarded as politically dangerous, especially after the Reign of Terror in France. And even in England it became risky to express republican sentiment after Pitt enacted a law to ban reform meetings in 1795. I investigate how the anti-establishment stance of the Romantic poets echoed this dissenting radicalism. The abolition cause made it clear that the Romantic poets took the position of social protester.

Slavery affected the form and style of the new 'Romantic' poetry. The language used in abolition poems was designed to be easy for ordinary people to understand, since the primary aim was to educate people about slavery issues. The basic approach adopted in many Romantic poems was to concentrate on describing "low and rustic life"[6] using simple language. Poetic style often follows ballad form, as illustrated in the work of Cowper and Southey. Romantic anti-slavery poems therefore effectively provoked a sense of guilt in white readers through their style as well as their themes. Southey's "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade" (1799) is typical. In this poem, Southey followed the style used in Cowper's anti-slavery ballads (1788)[7] as well as in Coleridge's "The Rime of The Ancient Mariner" (1798). The poem focuses on describing the agony of the sailor who had been involved in the slave trade and had administered punishments to rebellious slaves. Readers were able to understand something of what the slave trade was like by imagining the sailor's agony.

Slaves who were represented in other abolition poems revealed their sorrow and

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[6] William Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads "(1800), *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 743.

[7] "The Negro's Complaint", "Pity for Poor Africans", "The Morning Dream", and "Sweet Meat Has Sour Sauce".

indignation against slavery. Romantic poets showed their humanitarian approach towards slaves whose human rights had long been neglected in society. They focused on describing black people as the central figure of the poem. In Cowper's "The Negroe's Complaint" (1788), a slave appealed to readers' sympathy by lamenting his destiny as a slave. Moreover, Romantic poets also portrayed heroic slaves with human dignity. In "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803) Wordsworth represented his admiration and respect for Toussaint, who had led the slave rebellion in St. Domingo. This poem denotes that Wordsworth had sympathy with the frustrated sensibilities of slaves who had been repressed in society.

Furthermore, for the Romantic abolitionists it was important to put a high value on freedom and the individual rights of human beings. Blake's *Visions of Daughters of Albion* (1793) explicitly demonstrates the theme of the conflict of "captivity and liberty"[8] in the figure of Oothoon, whose situation alluded to that of slaves who had long been held captive under English imperial power. This theme was an important one for the Romantics, who aimed to emancipate captive human minds as a precursor to delivering human beings out of captivity and into freedom.

As their anti-slavery theme demonstrates, the Romantic abolitionists were involved with the abolition debate from the 1780s to the 1830s. This thesis examines in detail the history of the British slave trade and the abolition debate, in order to analyse the relationship between Romantic poetry and one of the most important social contexts of the time. The conflict between the anti-slavery and pro-slavery parties is a reflection of the complexities of that age, when people's ideologies blended liberalism with imperial sensibility. As a result, the Romantic discourses on slavery show a theology divided between anti-imperial sensibility and nationalism.

A complicating factor in the abolition debate was the issue of racial prejudice against black people. Racial theories, which were published between the late eighteenth-century and the early nineteenth-century, had the effect of strengthening racial consciousness among white Europeans. This thesis analyses how racial theories developed alongside the abolition movement in England, revealing how

[8] Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 95.

Romantic discourses had become complicated by the interaction of social and ideological contexts. Racial discrimination against black people often figured in both pro-slavery and anti-slavery arguments, the most popular rhetoric referring to the idea that slaves should be civilized through Christianity. The necessity of converting slaves to Christianity was sometimes used as justification for the slave trade by arguing that slaves should be educated according to the ways of European civilisation. The Romantic poets were not free of this ideological influence, and it is important to examine how they balanced their liberal ideology against their nationalist sensibilities with respect to the abolition cause.

Thus it is meaningful to examine the abolition discourses of the first generation of Romantic poets, since the development of their work parallels the development of the slavery debate in England from 1780s to 1830s. In this respect, the topic of the slave trade provided a more essential theme for the first generation of Romantics than for the second generation. Slavery issues in the romantic discourses of the time were important in highlighting the political, religious and philosophical thinking of the Romantic poets.

This thesis focuses on the social and political aspects of the Romantic age from 1780s to 1830s, and in this regard analyses the abolition poems of Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth and Blake. To provide a background for the analysis of slavery discourses from a social and political perspective, chapter one presents an overview of the history of abolitionism and of the abolition debate in England. Then in chapter two I address the issue of race theories, and examine the effects of racially-motivated thinking on slavery discourses. In chapters three to six I analyse Romantic abolition poems in order to investigate the relationship between the Romantics' liberal sensibilities and their artistic vision.

The first chapter describes the historical context in which the abolition movement in England took place, and examines the abolition debate in England from 1780s to 1830s. I analyse where and by what means abolitionism originated in England. The abolition movement echoed the liberation sensibilities that prevailed during the 1780s, the era that saw revolution in both France and America. This chapter notes that the

ideology of abolitionism was based on the egalitarian philosophy and republican sensibility of the age.

What abolitionists stressed above all in their anti-slavery propaganda was that the slave trade was inhumane; and those involved in the slave trade were denounced as heartless because they treated humans as objects. However, the abolitionists' revolutionary ideas came up against the social pressures of a conservative climate, particularly following the Reign of Terror in France. In addition, since the slave trade had become established as an important element in the commercial life of England, it was difficult for the English government to put a stop to it completely. Justification for the continuance of the slave trade also came from the argument that slavery was sanctioned by Bible. On this basis, I argue that the difficulties in bringing about the abolition of the slave trade were the result of many factors relating to the politics, economics and ideology of late eighteenth-century England.

Chapter one also explores the development of anti-slavery and pro-slavery thinking in English society. Wilberforce's twelve anti-slavery propositions in 1789 constitute the spark which ignited the abolition debate in England; in the period that followed, members of the Church, humanitarians and the Romantic poets all expressed their position with regard to abolition in their scholarly output as well as in social activities. The anti-slavery party protested at the inhumanity of the slave trade by criticising the conditions of hard labour under which slaves worked on plantations and the extreme misery of the middle passage. It was particularly through powerful descriptions of the middle passage that the utter cruelty of the slave trade came to light. Most of these descriptions were based on true stories told from personal experience by people who had worked on the slave ships, including John Newton and Alexander Falconbridge. While the anti-slavery debate highlighted the barbarous nature of the slave trade, the pro-slavery camp supported the slave trade on both economic and ideological grounds. They argued that the abolition of slavery violated the rights of slave masters. According to pro-slavery discourses, slaves were regarded as the property of plantation owners, whose property rights should be protected by continuing the slave trade. The pro-slavery party maintained the belief that slaves were suitable

for labour because of their physical strength and intellectual inferiority. The chapter analyses the way in which pro-slavery discourses were dominated by feelings of discrimination against black people.

In the same chapter I also consider the relationship between racial prejudice and the notion of civilising slaves by exposing them to aspects of Western culture. This proposition was supported by the Euro-centric view that slaves were basically primitive. The chapter demonstrates how this Euro-centric vision echoed the pro- and anti-slavery arguments.

Chapter two examines race theories that were published in Europe between 1774 and 1840, such theories having been developed by doctors, journalists, physiologists, naturalists and Church officials. Their challenge was to explain the existence of different races, their approach being to investigate the physical and mental differences between white, yellow, and black people. The chapter analyses how the rhetoric relating to racial differences affected the discourse on abolition. First, I analyse two streams of racial thought, the polygenist approach and the monogenist approach. Polygenist theories claimed that human beings originally derived from more than one stock. By contrast, monogenists argued that human beings came from a single stock and that racial variations resulted from external differences such as climate and diet. However, the two theoretical approaches were united by the importance they both placed on the differences between white and black people: after analysing the skeletons and the physical appearance of different races, white people were classed as belonging at the top of the race hierarchy. In the case of black people, on the other hand, they were often seen as a race with an appearance similar to that of apes. In both theories the inferiority of black people was generally established on the basis of both physical form and mental capacity. For example, the theory developed by Edward Long maintained the savageness of black people, and seems to have embodied the pro-slavery argument in its most extreme form. Nevertheless, Long's position mirrored the basic theology of the Euro-centric view on race. Long claimed that black people

> are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science. They have no plan or system of morality among them. . .[9]

Chapter two points out how racial discrimination against black people emerged in anti-slavery discourses. In anti-slavery propaganda, the humanitarian sympathy felt for black slaves was often mixed with the belief that black people were uncivilised. For instance, in his anti-slavery essay James Ramsay maintained that it was necessary to civilise slaves. Besides, he believed that the skin colour of black people would become paler when had been educated in England: "West Indian children, educated in England, improve not only in complexion, but in elegance of features. . ."[10] This hints at how the Euro-centric vision influenced abolition ideology. This chapter argues that the egalitarian idealism of abolitionists was in many ways a limited one.

Chapter three explores the relationship between Coleridge's radical sensibilities and his interest in abolitionism. In particular, it analyses how Coleridge's Unitarianism echoed his anti-slavery ideology. The Unitarian discourse on slavery reveals a form of humanism based on their radical theology. The chapter examines how Coleridge's Unitarian ideology was formed by investigating the Unitarian political discourses of William Frend and Joseph Priestley. Furthermore, it considers the nature of dissenting abolitionism by analysing the abolition poems of dissenters, including Coleridge's anti-slavery poems written in 1790s.

What Unitarians stressed in their political propaganda was the necessity of social reform to combat discrimination against dissenters in English society. This goal was a particularly significant one for Unitarians since they had been deprived of their political rights because of the non-conformist nature of their religious and political beliefs. They had denounced the Established Church and the British government by

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[9] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), Vol. 2, *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 8 of *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, gen. eds. Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 5.

[10] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: J. Phillips, 1784), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of *Slavery*, 6.

arguing that both took away the rights of dissenters. Unitarian philosophy was based on their belief in equality and human liberty. The Unitarian anti-slavery stance was therefore driven by their sympathy for slaves and their miserable plight. Coleridge positively engaged with anti-slavery activities when he converted to Unitarianism. The chapter suggests how Coleridge's Unitarianism influenced his republican sensibilities.

The chapter also analyses poems in the context of Unitarian discourse by investigating their abolitionist rhetoric, exploring how the millenarian theology associated with such discourse manifests itself. In addition, chapter three examines the radical nature of dissenting poems by analysing their artistic and ideological characteristics. The abolitionist texts examined here make much of the inhumanity of the slave trade and at the same time denounce the British government. Apocalyptic rhetoric is typical of these poems which also often incorporated the image of a millenarian world. The prospect of offering slaves a future in such a world demonstrates the egalitarian idealism of dissenters. Coleridge's abolitionist poems also exhibit a similar ideology. The chapter investigates three poems in which Coleridge illustrated his anti-slavery message alongside his millenarian theology. The anti-slavery theme was directly or allegorically demonstrated in "Religious Musings" (1794), "The Destiny of Nations" (1795), and "Fears in Solitude" (1798).

The chapter further explores the way Coleridge changed in his attitude to abolition during his later years, examining how a Euro-centric vision gradually emerged in his slavery discourse. An emphasis on educating slaves before emancipation was clearly shown in his article entitled "Review of The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, by Thomas Clarkson" (1808)[11], his idea of converting slaves to Christianity echoing the persistent view that slaves were intellectually inferior. It is argued that Coleridge's racial view perhaps became more concrete after meeting the race theorist Blumenbach. In addition, Coleridge became more conservative in his later years owing to his estrangement from Unitarianism. The chapter shows that Coleridge's religious and ideological shift caused him to sway in his attitude towards

[11] *The Edinburgh Review* (Edinburgh: D. Willson, 1808), Vol. XII (April 1808-July 1808), 355-79.

abolitionism in later years.

Chapter four demonstrates how the work of Southey relates to the question of abolitionism by analysing his radicalism and his abolitionist poems. Southey's liberalism was greatly stimulated by the wave of radical politics that swept through Europe around the time of the French Revolution. The chapter examines how Southey's republican sensibility was strengthened by his radical friends including Coleridge, George Dyer and Godwin. It is argued that his abolitionist activities grew alongside the development of his republicanism. For example, Southey was interested in Coleridge's plan for Pantisocracy that aimed to realise republican idealism since his egalitarianism accorded with the idea of a Pantisocratic Utopia. The concept of Pantisocracy was based on the Godwinian philosophy that "private considerations must yield to the general good"[12]. In addition, Southey found that his republican ideology accorded with the Unitarian philanthropic idea. Through his intellectual relations with Coleridge, Southey became more firmly radical.

Southey produced his abolitionist poems during the period from 1794 until 1798. The chapter examines how Southey expressed his indignation at the inhumane trade and his criticisms against the British government, in order to provoke a sense of guilt in white readers. Particularly radical is his description of rebellious slaves. Southey's supportive attitude towards revolutionary slaves stood out among the abolitionist poems, which often portrayed slaves as pitiable figures. The slave revolution in St. Domingo that took place in 1791 may serve as one of the triggers in describing the vengeance of slaves against white colonisers. I explore how Southey's radical egalitarian ideology was realised in his abolitionist poems.

Chapter four also examines the complexities of Southey's republicanism through an analysis of *Madoc* (1805). Southey aimed to depict Madoc as a Pantisocratic hero. Madoc, however, revealed his dual nature as republican and coloniser, which echoed Southey's ideology that blended liberalism with a Euro-centric vision. Madoc finally realised his ideal society in America by colonising the Hoamen. Although he liberated the Hoamen from enslavement, he colonised them by converting them to

[12] William Godwin, *Political Justice*, 2 vols. (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), Vol. 1, 165.

Christianity. It is clearly apparent that Southey held a Euro-centric vision that assumed a certain level of savagery in non-white Christians. The chapter further demonstrates that Southey's ambivalence became more apparent during his later years. Owing to political, social, and private circumstances, Southey gradually showed a conservatism in his political position. As far as the slavery issue was concerned, his indignation at the issue of slavery was mitigated by Christian paternalism and his imperial ideology. The chapter describes how Southey's republicanism typically showed the ideological precariousness that was often evident in the radical Romantics.

Chapter five analyses Wordsworth's abolitionist poems and his republican ideology. Wordsworth's involvement in the slavery issue had its origins in the humanistic indignation he felt at social injustice and also in his interest in the artistic value of "social outcasts". Wordsworth felt a profound sympathy for slaves, since he regarded their predicament as having been caused by an exploitative social system. He believed that the predicament of slaves should be tackled head-on by abolishing the slave trade, his abolitionist ideology being founded on anti-imperialism. His criticism of imperialism developed alongside his liberal sensibility. In addition, as he expressed in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800), he tended to choose rural dwellers and poor people as his poetical subjects. The abolitionist cause therefore coincided with his interest in the plight of the repressed and of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Like Coleridge and Southey, Wordsworth's republicanism gained particular strength through the radical politics of Godwinian theology and the liberation movement that followed the French Revolution. Wordsworth's experiences in France from 1790 to 1792 also clarified his republican ideas. During his stay in France, Wordsworth came to realise what republicans needed to do in order to create an egalitarian society. His friendship with the French soldier Michael Beaupuy also helped to shape Wordsworth's republican ideas. The radical nature of Wordsworth's political ideology was typically shown in "Letter to Bishop Llandaff" (1793), in which he emphasised the necessity of the revolution to create an improved society.

As far as abolitionism was concerned, Wordsworth demonstrated his radical

sensibility and humanitarian view towards slaves in three anti-slavery poems. Wordsworth's abolitionist ideology was stimulated by his long-term friendship with Clarkson. In "To Thomas Clarkson" (1807) he celebrated the enactment of the abolition of the slave trade in the British colonies in 1807. Wordsworth understood Clarkson's "toilsome"[13] task of abolishing the slave trade. His anti-slavery ideology combined with his republicanism was clearly illustrated in "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803). Like Southey, Wordsworth showed a supportive attitude towards the leader of the slave revolution, thus showing his radical theology. The black woman described in "The Banished Negro" (1803) represents Wordsworth's humanistic insight into the feelings of black people. In this poem Wordsworth makes very clear his protest against the violation of human rights. The "tropic fire" [14] in her eyes illustrates the anger and the independent mind of the black woman. This work stands out in its capacity to express the human dignity of black people.

In a reflection of his anti-imperialist sensibility, Wordsworth regarded the British Empire as having been built at the expense of human lives. Through episodes featuring discarded soldiers and vagabonds in "The Discharged Soldier" (1788), *The Prelude* (1805), and "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" (1795-c1799), he succeeded in demonstrating the vice of imperialism. The soldier described in "The Discharged Soldier" was dismissed from the army suffering from yellow fever, the powerlessness of the soldier showing Wordsworth's indignation at the capitalist system. Moreover, the soldier's yellow fever was a disease that was rife among soldiers and slave traders in the West Indies. In Romantic abolitionist poems, yellow fever was often used to allude to God's punishment for practising slavery[15]. In those poems, yellow fever represented a symptom of the moral degradation of the pro-slavery lobby. Wordsworth criticised the way in which the dismissed soldier was sacrificed by the imperial system, losing both his job and his life.

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[13] Wordsworth, "To Thomas Clarkson", *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1983), 2.

[14] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, In Two Volumes*, l. 10.

[15] Cf. Hannah More's "Slavery" (1788), Helen Maria Williams's "Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade" (1788), and James Montgomery's "The West Indies" (1809).

By describing the misery of social outcasts, Wordsworth tried to demonstrate the malfunctioning of a capitalist society that exploited human liberty and rights. By contrast, he emphasized the moral values to be found in the lives of beggars, soldiers and black slaves. The beggar with very poor eyesight "The Old Cumberland Beggar" (1800) shows a spiritual fortitude in pursuing a solitary life, his dignified demeanour resembling that of the black woman in "The Banished Negro". Wordsworth's humanitarian attitude towards social outcasts is indicative of his belief in human goodness, and his faith in human virtue demonstrates his understanding of the natural moral values which human beings followed in their daily lives.

Chapter six explores the anti-slavery poems of William Blake, arguing how Blake's republicanism and his anti-imperialist vision echoed his abolitionist message. Blake's republican ideology accorded with the revolutionary climate of the 1790s. He showed his belief in millenarianism by maintaining that through the revolution a new system could be created, as was suggested in *The French Revolution* (1791). Blake criticised the way in which elements of the Establishment, such as the Anglican Church and the monarchy, repressed human liberty. In Blake's mind, the Empire was the most abominable manifestation of tyranny, and he described how the slave trade typically represented the vice of imperialism. His anti-capitalist protests against the system of exploitation are revealed in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *The Book of Thel* (1789), "The Little Black Boy", "The Chimney Sweeper", and "Holy Thursday" in *Songs of Innocence* (1789).

Blake's criticism of the slave trade focuses on two main issues: he maintained that slavery oppressed human freedom through its imperial power; and he also pointed out, rather poignantly, that any justification of slavery turned Christianity into a hypocrisy. His humanitarian indignation against the oppression of human minds was stressed in the theme of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The situation of Oothoon, who was enslaved by Bromion, alluded to the predicament of slaves. Blake maintained his association with slavery through the engravings he made for John Gabriel Stedman's "*A Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the year 1772 to 1777*" (1796).

Stedman's experience in Surinam as an officer in the Dutch army revealed to Blake the pitiable situation of slaves in the European colonies. And in reaction, Blake criticised the way slaves were unjustly deprived of their liberty through the plight of Oothoon. The tyrannical nature of Bromion provoked in white readers a humanitarian hatred for oppression. Blake's anti-slavery agitation is more clearly shown in the helplessness of Theotormon, Oothoon's lover. Theotormon's inability to save Oothoon represents the unwillingness of the British government to abolish the slave trade. Blake deplores the hypocrisy of white Christians who continued to treat black people as commodities.

While *Visions* alludes to slavery, "The Little Black Boy" directly represents the discourse of slaves. The theme of this poem is a radical one, since it reveals a racial prejudice against slaves in the minds of white Europeans. Blake also challenges the imperialistic move to convert slaves to Christianity. It was through the figure of the black boy that Blake introduced the racial issue over the relationship between skin colour and the purity of the human mind. The black boy's discourse shows that black people were regarded as savage because of their appearance. Indeed, the assumed barbarity of black people was used as a justification for slavery. Blake implicitly criticised the eighteenth-century racial view that black people were inferior to white people. This racial prejudice against black people justified attempts to Christianise slaves. Blake ironically suggested that the inferiority of black people was the product of Christian dogma based on Euro-centric theology. Blake pointed out the hypocritical nature of Christianity in its determination to undermine black people both physically and mentally.

Blake's critical stance against social injustice was shown in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1798). In "The Chimney Sweeper", Blake denounced the capitalist bias of the social system and Christian hypocrisy by emphasising the misery suffered by poor children whose lives were given to hard labour. In "Holy Thursday", Blake's sharp criticism of the Church and its theology demonstrated the duplicitous aspect of Christian charity. To highlight its benevolence towards poor people, the Church latched onto the predicament of abandoned children. Blake particularly opposed the kind of Christian dogma that justified exploitation. His anti-exploitation

ideology was also suggested in *The Book of Thel*. Thel was taught a philosophy of self-sacrifice that encouraged the follower to offer her life for that of another. Blake criticised the way this Christian framework justified the slavery system.

Through his anti-imperialistic sensibility, Blake shows how the slave trade was under the control of European ideology. Nevertheless, as a republican humanist Blake believed that society would change for the better, no matter what measures might be needed, as he suggested in *The French Revolution*.

It was in this way that the Romantic poets expressed their political, ideological, and religious persuasions in their relationship with abolitionist movement, the anti-slavery movement testing their poetical sensibility in both artistic and humanistic terms. Slaves as a poetical subject gave the Romantics a new perspective on the social and racial situation in English society from 1780s to 1830s. As republican poets, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth and Blake expressed critical views of the British government and the Established Church; and it was through their anti-institutional ideology that social injustice and the hypocrisy of the Christian Church were revealed. Nevertheless, the Romantic poets inevitably show their Euro-centric vision, this duality in Romantic theology being delicately balanced in their anti-slavery discourses.

The relationship between British literature and slavery has been analysed in a number of recent works including Marcus Wood's *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (2002), Brycchan Carey's *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (2005), and *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition* (2007) edited by Brycchan Carey and Peter Kitson. In *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography*, Wood analyses the texts on slavery and black slaves written by white authors in England during the period 1780 to 1850. The book covers a wide range of genres such as Romantic poetry, journalistic pamphlets, philosophical essays and novels, its central aim being to investigate the literary and artistic content of the slavery narratives produced by white authors. Wood points out that the texts on slavery written by white people "fantasize"[16] the lives and suffering of black slaves. He examines how the stories of slavery were

[16] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 16.

intended to arouse a sense of guilt, horror and anxiety among white readers. In particular, Wood argues that the image of slavery created by white people stresses the emotional experiences of victimised slaves. He argues that the fantasy of tormented slaves provokes sadistic behaviour in their oppressors, victimisers, and tormentors. At the same time, Wood claims that being able to imagine the torture of slaves causes the victimisers themselves to suffer. He emphasises that this dual fantasy, combined with the sadistic and masochistic elements of slavery, turns the image of slavery into a cultural form of pornography in later years. In my opinion, however, the suffering of slaves in anti-slavery propaganda provokes feelings of guilt and pity rather than of sado-masochism in white readers. For instance, the torture of slaves described in Southey's "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade" (1799) creates an abhorrent and inhumane image of the slave trade in order to make readers feel pity for slaves. The sailor's profound agony at the evils of the slave trade arouses humanistic sensibility among readers. Particularly from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century it became crucial for abolitionists to portray the idea that slaves were human beings just as they were, since racial discrimination against black people was so strong during that period. By emphasising the suffering of slaves, abolitionists condemned the slave trade as a sinful practice that abused the human dignity of black people.

In this respect, Carey's analysis of the anti-slavery poems in *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (2005) accords with my own argument. In his book, Carey examines the sentimental rhetoric of writings on slavery and abolition by focusing on how these works provoke readers' sympathy and mutual sensibility with the suffering of slaves. By examining literary works, pamphlets, parliamentary debates and sermons on slavery issues, he considers how this sentimental rhetoric advanced the anti-slavery cause. I agree with Carey's argument that anti-slavery poems are based on the "sentimental philosophy of sympathy"[17] of authors. For instance, his analysis of William Cowper's "The Negroe's Complaint"

[17] Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (New York: Palgrave, 2005), 101.

shows how its sentimental rhetoric contributes effectively to its abolitionists aim. Carey points out that Cowper employs a sentimental rhetoric to make readers empathise with the sorrow and suffering of the poem's central figure, a black slave. He also maintains that the anti-slavery theme of the poem is emphatically demonstrated through the ballad. The popularity of the abolitionist poem was one of the important factors in promoting the abolitionist movement in society. Carey further investigates how the mode of sentimental rhetoric in abolitionist writings changed towards the end of eighteenth century.

The essays in the collection *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition* explore a range of writings and visual works concerned with slavery and abolitionist discourses from the literature of the eighteenth-century to contemporary works including paintings and films. The approach taken in the essays is based on the cultural and historical analysis of literary works on slavery and abolition. Some of the essays hint at the relationship between abolitionist sensibility and slavery in eighteenth-century English literature. For example, Diana Paton's essay on "Three Fingered Jack" analyses how the story of the rebel slave, Jack, was dramatised in novels and plays from the late eighteenth century. Paton argues that the image of Jack changes in response to the changing views on slavery in English society. Her analysis of the rebel slave in literature assists me in my own understanding of the significance of the rebel slaves described by Romantics in anti-slavery poems. Paton points out that Jack in William Earle's *Obi, or Three Fingered Jack* (1800) was described as a heroic slave who sought revenge against white colonists, claiming that Earle empathised with Jack and his family in their suffering. This argument partly echoes my own analysis of the rebel slave in abolitionist poems. In "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803), Wordsworth takes a notably sympathetic tone in describing Toussaint as a heroic slave, which was a remarkable position to take at a time when the slave revolution was regarded as dangerous and undesirable for white colonialist society. George Boulukos's essay on Charlotte Smith's *The Story of Henrietta* (1800) offers an influential analysis of the complexities of the racial view in abolitionist literature. Boulukos argues that Smith represents her belief in racial differences through her abolitionist message. His analysis

of Smith's race-conscious ideology relates to my argument on the abolitionist rhetoric that is complicated by a Euro-centric vision of black people.

Thus, these three works deal with a wide range of artistic, historical and cultural aspects of slavery and the abolitionist issue in various forms of writing. Some of them shed light on how to analyse abolitionist discourses from 1780s to 1880s. In my thesis, I further develop the relationship between the political and religious dimensions in the abolitionist writings of four first-generation Romantic poets. It is clear that this particular area deserves close scrutiny, since the relationship between the dissenting nature of the romantic poets and the abolitionist cause is central to any detailed exploration of the nature of the slavery literature from 1780s to 1830s. In addition, I examine closely how the rhetoric employed in abolitionist writings echoed race theories and the notion of Christian superiority. My thesis provides a new religious and philosophical perspective on the abolitionist writings of the Romantic poets.

## Chapter I

### Debate on the British Slave Trade from 1780 to 1830

### (i) Historical Background of the British Slave Trade and Abolitionism

The British slave trade started when John Hawkins sold 300 African slaves to Spain in 1562.[1] By the 1780s, trade – and especially trade from the West Indies – was flourishing. For instance, during the last thirty years of the British slave trade until 1808, 8,000 slaves were being imported annually to the West Indies. [2] This figure far exceeded the number of West Indian slaves being traded by either France or Portugal in the pre-1780s period.[3] In England, the three major ports were Bristol, Liverpool, and London. After the 1750s, however, it was Liverpool that emerged as the busiest of these. In fact, from 1795 to 1804, 86 percent of all British slave ships left from Liverpool. Most of them went to the Jamaican port that remained "one of the primary centres of slave importation" in America until the time of Abolition.[4] The slave trade system benefited the world economy as a whole given the combination of "American advantages in land and climate, the European advantages in capital development and international trading, and the African advantages in supplying deracinated labour". [5]

British abolitionism reached its peak around the 1780s. Religious groups, especially the Quakers who were concerned about the slave trade on moral grounds, also contributed to the growth of the antislavery movement. In 1783 the Quakers presented the first petition against the slave trade to Lord North's government. Although Lord North's government dismissed the petition on the grounds that the slave trade was still very important for the British economy,[6] the bill to regulate the slave trade passed through Parliament in the same year. To protect the basic human rights

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[1] James Walvin, *Black Ivory* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 25.
[2] Herbert S.Klein, *The Middle Passage* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 141.
[3] Klein, *The Middle Passage*, 144.
[4] Klein, *The Middle Passage*, 173.
[5] Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 4
[6] Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 490.

of slaves was the main interest of the Quakers when they presented the petition to the government. Other religious groups also joined the struggle against slavery in late eighteenth century England. John and Charles Wesley openly proclaimed their defiance against the slave trade in the late 1770s. By the 1780s, Josiah Tucker, Anglican Dean of Bristol, and some other Evangelicals such as John Newton and Hannah More had launched an active campaign against slavery.

The abolitionist movement was also found in industrial cities such as Manchester and Bristol where their economy depended on the slave trade during the 1780s. Particularly the development of the abolitionist network in Manchester influenced the spread of abolitionism across Britain. The mode of petitioning in Manchester was "highly"[7] unusual for 1780s England. Manchester started the appeal for abolishing the slave trade independently of the activities of the Quaker network and the London Committee of abolition. In December 1787 about 11,000 "eligible men" joined the petition against the slave trade there, although supporters of the slave trade accused the abolitionists of destroying "their own interests".[8] The abolitionists used their subscription fund to buy advertisements of their own petition in "every major newspaper in England", provoking similar reactions in other cities.[9] In fact, Bristol and Liverpool followed Manchester's action, and through active campaigning for abolition, the political movement in Manchester achieved national awareness after 1787. There are several complex reasons that could explain why Manchester showed such an enthusiasm for abolitionist activities. One likely reason was that the abolitionist movement was the medium which brought strangers together in Manchester from all corners of England. The population in Manchester grew threefold from 1774 to 1800, although many of the city's residents had their roots elsewhere.[10] People were able to unite socially by proclaiming the common goal that the slave trade was against "humanity, justice and national honour".[11] Through its

[7] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 70.
[8] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 70-72.
[9] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 70.
[10] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 70.
[11] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 73.

commitment to the abolitionist movement, Manchester had become one of the most important cities for the British government, both politically and economically, by the early nineteenth century.

The time of the French Revolution saw a growing public awareness of egalitarian ideals among Europeans. For instance, Robespierre's polity aimed to represent the "perfect" republican society where people could live under liberty and equality. Following Rousseau, he condemned all aspects of inequality in society. In England it was William Godwin, as well as Thomas Paine, who condemned the inequalities of society. In *Political Justice* (1793) Godwin argued that economic prosperity among the rich was created by exploiting the property of the poor. The Lockian discourse on human freedom and equality which claims that men were supposed "to be free because that was appropriate to their status as rational individuals"[12] demonstrates the philosophical climate regarding human liberation which was prevalent in late eighteenth century Europe. Although Locke suggested that he basically admitted the concept of slavery, he argued that no man had the right to control the lives of other human beings:

> For a Man, not having the Power of his own Life, cannot, by Compact, or his own Consent, enslave himself to any one, nor put himself under the Absolute, Arbitrary Power of another, to take away his Life, when he pleases. No body can give more Power than he has himself; and he that cannot take away his own Life, cannot give another Power over it. . . This is the perfect condition of Slavery, which is nothing else, but the State of War continued, between a lawful Conquerour, and a Captive.[13]

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[12] John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 217

[13] John Locke, "Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government", *Two Treatises of Government* (London: n.p., 1690), 242. qtd. in Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 21-2.

Humanitarian appeals against slavery could also be seen in political speeches during the American Revolution in the 1770s. Considered within American colonies as the "absolute political evil"[14], slavery often became the topic of debate during discussions on constitutionalism and legal rights, in the calls for resistance against the tenacious colonial temperament of the ruling English government. To take an example, Josiah Quincy, one of the commissioners in Massachusetts, declared the English as their oppressors: "I speak; with grief, —I speak it with anguish—Britons are our oppressors. . . we are slaves".[15] Quincy's speech suggests that the colonists believed their legal rights and freedom to have been largely restricted by the British constitution. Regarding those concepts of freedom and human rights, the plight of enslaved Negroes on American plantations started to attract attention. The preacher Levi Hart concluded that nobody had the right to deprive innocent people of their liberty and property: " What inconsistence and self-contradiction is this!. . . When, O when shall the happy day come, that Americans shall be consistently engaged in the cause of liberty?"[16] By 1776, religious groups in the American colonies had exerted much effort in their attempts to abolish the slave trade. In 1774 Rhode Island ruled that slaves imported into the colony would thereafter automatically become free. Connecticut followed the same Act and Delaware prohibited slave importation, while Pennsylvania taxed the trade out of existence. In 1775 the Quakers formed the first antislavery society in America.

In Britain, four years after the end of the American Revolution, the eminent abolitionist Granville Sharp, together with the Quakers, founded the London abolitionist committee in 1787.[17] The abolitionist movement gradually gained the attention of politicians. Amongst them William Wilberforce, on 12 May 1789, introduced to Parliament the twelve resolutions condemning the slave trade. In his

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[14] Barnard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of The American Revolution* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1992), 232.

[15] Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy Jun.* (Boston: Cummings Hilliard & Company, 1825), 451.

[16] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of The American Revolution*, 243.

[17] "The Quakers constituted three-quarters of the original 12-man membership of this committee." (Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery,* 62.)

arguments for the abolition of the slave trade, Wilberforce pointed out the high mortality rate of seamen and slaves during the middle passage:

> And that the mortality among them ("the British seamen") has been much greater than his Majesty's ships stationed on the coast of Africa, or than has been usual in British vessels employed in any other trade.
>
> That the mode of transporting the Slaves from Africa to the West Indies, necessarily exposes them to many and grievous sufferings, for which no regulations can provide an adequate remedy; and that in consequence thereof, a large proportion of them has annually perished during the voyage.[18]

Wilberforce insisted that the middle passage of the slave trade was severe for both slaves and seamen and that the great loss of life was economically inefficient. Wilberforce's arguments were supported by some leading politicians of the day such as William Pitt, Edmund Burke, and Charles James Fox. Wilberforce devoted himself to the abolitionist movement, especially after his conversion to evangelicalism in 1785.[19]

In his twelve propositions on the slave trade in 1789, Wilberforce claimed that the slave trade was morally wrong and that the British people were "all guilty".[20] Edmund Burke, who presented his anti-slave trade message in *Sketch of the Negro Code* in 1772, agreed with Wilberforce over the issue that the slave trade was against their morality,[21] although he nevertheless proclaimed that he did not entirely approve of Wilberforce's proposal. Burke claimed that the slave trade was "so horrid in all its circumstances, that it was impossible a single argument could be heard in it favour".[22]

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[18] William Wilberforce, "Speech on the motion for the abolition of the slave trade" (12 May 1789), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 148.

[19] Robin Furneaux, *William Wilberforce* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 42-53.

[20] *The Parliamentary History of England from 8th May 1789 to 15th March 1791*, Vol. 28 (Peterborough-Court: T.C. Hansard), 42.

[21] *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. 28, 71.

[22] *The Abolition Debate*, 167.

William Fox supported Wilberforce and professed that it was their duty to abolish the slave trade. Fox stressed that the slave trade was "not only inhumane but impolitic."[23] Wilberforce's speech met with much opposition, most of it insisting that a total abolition would cause undue damage to the British economy.[24] Not only politicians but also slave traders believed that the slave trade was "vital"[25] to Britain's financial interests. Up until the Act of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, debate over the slave trade went on both inside and outside Parliament. The British government continued its investigation of the slave trade until April 1791 when Wilberforce submitted the proposal of the Abolition of the slave trade.[26]

Coinciding with the time of the development of abolitionism, the movement for social reform was being hotly debated during the 1790s in England, with Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791-2) being one of the topical publications that represented the revolutionary sensibility pervading England at that time. Paine supported the French Revolution, as "a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity".[27] In fact France was "the first metropolitan area" to abolish the colonial slave system in 1794.[28] Paine also challenged the existing concept of property by saying that man had no rights to treat man as a property: "Man has no property in man: neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. . . ."[29] In addition to his disapproval of the slavery system, Paine also criticised the system of the inheritance of property. It was significant that he insisted on the importance of human rights for slaves, attempting to draw a clear distinction between slaves as human beings and property. William Fox, a member of the "radical"[30] abolitionist movement, precisely pointed out in his

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[23] *The Parliamentary History of England,* Vol. 28, 75.
[24] *The Parliamentary History of England,* Vol. 28, 76-78.
[25] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 302.
[26] Wilberforce introduced the Abolition of the slave trade on 18th of April in 1791.
[27] Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (London: Penguin, 1985), 144.
[28] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery,* 52.
Nevertheless, France restored slavery and the slave trade in 1802 and again in 1814.
[29] Paine, *The Rights of Man*, 42.
[30] *The Abolition Debate*, 153.

"*Address to the People of Great Britain*"(1791) that slaves should have "the legal and natural right" since they lived in the British islands:

> In demanding liberty then for the persons called slaves in our Islands, we demand no more than they are entitled to by the common law of the land. The most eligible mode of putting them in possession of their legal and natural right, may be a question of difficulty; but it is a question that ought to be considered with no other view, but to their happiness.[31]

The Abolitionists' claim that slaves should have the right to liberty reflects this egalitarian ideology in 1790s England.

Despite the concerted efforts of abolitionists, Pitt's government turned down Wilberforce's introduction of an abolition bill in 1791. Although the Act of the gradual abolition bill was passed in 1792 under the minister Henry Dundas, its relevance became increasingly questionable[32] as enthusiasm towards the abolitionist movement began to decline. This loss of momentum in the abolitionist movement during the 1790s was due to a number of external factors. For example, the French Revolution left the politics and social system of France in turmoil. In 1792 the country witnessed the September massacres. Under the Jacobin Reign of Terror from 1792 to 1794, Louis XVI was executed in January 1793. This made the British people afraid of making any moves towards social reform. Claiming the rights of liberty and equality was regarded as politically dangerous. In fact, in Britain Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was deemed "seditious libel" and Paine was judged to be "guilty and outlawed".[33] There was undoubtedly a regressive change in the minds of the British people from enthusiasm for reforming the social order to the more conservative position of retaining social stability. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution*

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[31] William Fox, "An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum" (11th edn. ; London: M. Gurney, 1791), in *The Abolition Debate*, 162.

[32] *The Abolition Debate*, xix.

[33] Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge The Radical Years* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 1988, rpt. 2003), 83.

*in France* (1791) captured exactly this shift in public sentiment. In his essay Burke condemned the revolution as subversion of the social fabric; "Laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigour; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished; a church pillaged, and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom. . ."[34] Burke's attitude was typical of 1790s England. After the war against France had started in 1793, the government repressed reform movements much more forcibly. In response, it was natural that reformists such as William Godwin and Charles James Fox disapproved of the government's policy. William Godwin condemned the government over Thomas Paine's trial in 1792:

> Good God! what species of monster is this Thomas Paine, that all the rules of equity cease to be rules the moment he is the subject of animadversion? I was myself present at the trial of this man. We all know by what means a verdict was procured: by repeated proclamations, by all the force, and all the fears of the kingdom being artfully turned against one man.[35]

Godwin also questioned the treason trial set by Lord Eyre, who charged leaders of the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information, which had been established to support the reform movement, with "High Treason" in 1794. Godwin insisted that Eyre's trial was made up of "hypothesis, presumption, prejudication, and conjecture".[36] As Godwin pointed out, the oppression against the reformists was getting hysterical. In December 1795 Pitt enacted the Two Acts to repress the reform movements: one was called the "Treasonable Practices" Bill, which prohibited any criticism against the monarchy, while the other was the "Seditious

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[34] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*, ed. C.C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 126.

[35] William Godwin, *Uncollected Writings, 1785-1822* (Gainesville, Florida: n.p., 1968), 116.

[36] Godwin, *Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794* (London: n.p.,1794), 10 qtd. in Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 189.

Meetings" Bill that limited the size of public meetings intended to bring about changes in the established order of church and state.[37] Such was the political climate in which the English abolitionist movement was trapped.

The political situation that abolitionists found themselves in had worsened following the 1791 slave revolt in St. Domingo. Toussaint L'Ouverture, a leader of the revolution, declared his wish for liberty and equality in St. Domingo.[38] Although Toussaint was imprisoned as a result of Napoleon's decision to re-establish slavery in 1802, Haiti finally became independent in 1804. This put planters and slave owners, especially those in the West Indies, on their guard against a "potential slave rebellion", encouraging them to tighten their control over local slaves using military help.[39] This event made Europeans realise that claiming liberty and rights was a dangerous activity and also made them question whether it was safe to give slaves their freedom. Planters in Haiti began to panic and fled to Cuba and Jamaica since they feared an uprising by slaves who were unable to integrate with the white population. The journalist William Cobbett, who opposed the abolitionist movement, emphasized in the "Political Register" of 12 June 1802 that slaves were brutal and barbarous. By exposing the fact that a force of troops consisting of black slaves worked against the planters during the rebellion in Dominica[40] during the period from 1791 until 1813, Cobbett also insisted that slaves should "never ought to have been. . . put upon a level with white men. . .".[41] He denounced the leaders of the French Revolution who tried to establish freedom for all nations including the West Indian colonies by creating havoc and desolation throughout France and her colonies.[42] Thus, the proponents of slavery often tried to bring together abolitionism and radicalism, especially after the execution

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[37] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 148.
[38] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 255.
[39] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 256.
[40] Dominica was one of the British colonies in the West Indies. Cf. Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 271.
[41] William Cobbett, "Summary of Politics" from *Cobbett's Political Register* (London: n.p., 12 June, 1802), *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 8 of *Slavery*, 268.
[42] Cobbett, "Slave Trade" from *Political Register*, Vol. 1 (London: n.p., January –June, 1802), *The Abolition Debate*, 376.

of Louis XVI in 1793.[43] Wilberforce and Clarkson were criticised as Jacobins in an anonymous pamphlet of 1792, referring to "the JACOBINS OF ENGLAND, the Wilberforces, the Coopers, the Paines and the Clarksons".[44] These events caused people who had hitherto supported abolitionism to become more cautious about their activities. Wilberforce's motion in support of an abolition bill was again rejected by Parliament in 1796. It suggests that the abolition of the slave trade was faced with a series of social and political obstacles until the abolition bill was finally enacted in 1807.

There is one crucial point that the anti-slavery campaign did not address. Abolitionists tried to avoid the question of whether slavery was justified according to the Bible or not. Raymond Harris, a Spanish Jesuit preacher, supported the slave trade. In his essay entitled "Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade" (1788), he claimed that God admitted the slave trade and that slaves were their masters' property:

> It is singular enough, that the very first Law, or *Judgement*, in the Scripture language, enacted by God himself immediately after he had delivered the Ten Commandments to his People, should be respecting the Slave-Trade. . .[45]

Harris affirmed that slavery was good and licit from a Christian point of view. According to his interpretation, the slave trade was upheld by the New Testament as well as the Old Testament. Since Harris presumed that the concept of the New Testament "fulfilled" that of the Old Testament, he claimed that the silence on slavery in the New Testament did not mean that slavery was prohibited:

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[43] *The Abolition Debate*, xx.

[44] *A Very New PAMPHLET indeed! Being the TRUTH addressed to THE PEOPLE AT LARGE containing some strictures on the ENGLISH JACOBINS and THE EVIDENCE OF LORD MCCARTNEY, and others, before the HOUSE OF LORDS, respecting THE SLAVE TRADE* (London: n. p., 1792), *The Abolition Debate*, xx.

[45] Raymund Harris, *Scriptural Researches on the licitness of the Slave Trade, shewing its conformity with the principles of natural and revealed religion* (Liverpool: H. Hodgson, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 284.

> If the Writings of the New Testament mention nothing, as it is *falsely supposed*, in vindication of the Slave-Trade, neither do they *in reality* and *truth* mention any thing in condemnation of it; if then the supposed silence of the Inspired Writers respecting the licitness of that Trade, that is, their not mentioning that Trade at all, as it is *supposed*, can be brought as an argument of its moral inconsistency with the principles of true Christianity. . . [46]

This discourse was one of the strongest weapons for people who supported the slave trade in the abolitionist debate. Cobbett in the "Political Register" (January-June, 1802) also stressed that both the Old and New Testaments "authorized" the slave trade:

> . . . the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament authorize a slave trade, your lordship dares not deny: nay, my lord, you must allow they do more.[47]

From this assumption Cobbett developed a firm belief in the racial inferiority of black people. He argued that black people should be controlled by white people since they were savage and brutal.[48] As Cobbett's discussion made clear, the biblical vindication of the slave trade was partly derived from the prejudice against black people who had a different culture and religion from those of the white people.

Both abolitionists as well as proponents of the slave trade argued that slaves should be civilised through Christianity before being liberated. James Ramsay, an Anglican priest and surgeon who presented his objection against the slave trade, emphasised in "An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies" (London, 1784) that to teach Christianity would make slaves gradually more intelligent:

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[46] Harris, *Scriptural Researches*, *The Abolition Debate*, 303.
[47] Cobbet, "Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 374.
[48] Cobbett, "Summary of Politics", *Theories of Race*, 267-8.

> In short, we can have no idea of intellect, but as acting with infinite power and perfect propriety in the Deity, and with various degrees of limited power and propriety, in the several orders of intelligent created beings.[49]

Ramsay considered that monotheism rather than paganism would civilise slaves. Although Ramsay insisted that he did not discriminate against black people because of their skin colour, he openly expressed his belief that black people lived in a savage society:

> Their food would have needed no preparation, their bodies no covering; they would have been born without any sentiment for liberty; and, possessing a patience not to be provoked, would have been incapable of resentment or opposition. . .[50]

In his essay entitled *Sketch of the Negro Code* (1792), Edmund Burke argued that the lives of slaves in plantations should be improved, claiming that slaves should be educated in "religion, morality and learning".[51] Burke maintained that slaves in plantations should go to church every Sunday, insisting on the necessity of controlling slaves by white people especially through religion:

> And the principal Overseer of each plantation is hereby required to deliver annually unto the Minister a list of all the Negroes upon his plantation. . . and shall cause all the Negroes under his care. . . to attend Divine Service once on every Sunday. . .[52]

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[49] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: J. Phillips, 1784), *The Abolition Debate*, 30-31.
[50] Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion*, *The Abolition Debate*, 29.
[51] Edmund Burke, "Sketch of a Negro Code", (1792), *Works* (London: n.p., 1818), Vol. 9, *The Abolition Debate*, 185.
[52] Burke, "Sketch of a Negro Code", *The Abolition Debate*, 197.

This reasoning was often taken up by missionaries who went to Africa as well as to the British colonies in the West Indies and America. The importance of Christianising slaves was "a common conviction"[53] shared by those involved in missionary activities and the antislavery movement. At first, a "vital division" existed between missionary societies and the antislavery movement – while abolitionists concentrated on stopping the slave trade and on denouncing slavery, missionaries did not:

> The antislavery movement, while it aimed only at abolishing the slave trade, condemned slavery. The missionary societies did not. They regarded slavery as a manifestation of the mysterious working of God.[54]

However, on a "practical level" both abolitionists and missionaries agreed that it was to their benefit to place slaves within the framework of Christianity. In fact, most of the abolitionists were dissenters such as Quakers and Baptists who actually worked as missionaries in the British colonies. Alongside the development of missionary activities, the abolitionist movement and the missionary activities were gradually moving closer together.

As far as the missionary activities were concerned, political disagreements flared up between Anglicanism and other denominations. The British polity was officially against missionary work, and the 1807 Assembly of the imperial government in Jamaica admitted that only Anglican doctrine could be preached for slaves.[55] It is obvious that the British government was cautious about the increasing number of dissenting believers in plantations. Finally in 1813, Anglican churches also officially allowed missionary activities in the British colonies.[56] In this respect, for dissenters

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[53] Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries* (Barbados: The University Press of the West Indies, 1998), 8.

[54] Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries,* 8.

[55] Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries,* 16.

[56] Lord Castlereagh granted missionaries in the Parliament. Wilberforce who was converted to Evangelism in 1785 recorded "with triumph": "Lord Castlereagh agreed to Lord Buckinghamshire's and our arrangement for East India Christianizing Resolutions—far surpassing my expectations." (May 27, 1813) in Robinson, H.C. *Diary* (1872) in Furneaux,

the abolitionist movement was one of the great opportunities to expand their political power over plantations by converting slaves to their religion. Furthermore, dissenters were able to gain their social right by claiming abolition of the slave trade, which was meaningful for them, especially in England where they had long been politically impotent. The contribution of William Wilberforce who worked hard for the abolitionist movement was also significant for dissenters. It was fortunate for dissenters that Wilberforce, the Evangelist, was tolerant of other creeds. In fact, Wilberforce conveyed in a message to his son his belief that the difference between churchmen and dissenters was "unimportant".[57] On the other hand, the expansion of missionary activities made the planters fear that missionaries might teach slaves that "God made all men equal".[58] Naturally, resistance by plantation owners against missionaries became stronger. The social atmosphere after the French Revolution made the situation worse since the practice of preaching to slaves was associated with the dogma of radicalism. Dissenting abolitionists inevitably had to play down their appeal towards equality and human rights.

Thus, there were three sets of factors — economic, political and religious — which weakened the abolitionists' claims. Economically there was no "competitive alternative" to the slave trade in terms of cotton and sugar from 1780s to 1830s. Politically, it was becoming dangerous to voice support for the rights of slaves since some people regarded abolitionism as a radical movement. Supporters of slavery rationalised the trade on racial and religious grounds, claiming that black people were racially inferior and that the Bible sanctioned the trade. Several incidents took place illustrating the complex problems which surrounded the slave trade. The Somerset case in 1792 and the Zong affair in 1783 help to shed some light on these problems. In Bristol, a political judgement of 1772 by Lord Mansfield on the escaped slave James Somerset allowed Somerset freedom from his master: " No master ever was allowed here to take a slave by force to be sold abroad because he deserted from his service, or

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*William Wilberforce*, 325.

[57] Furneaux, *William Wilberforce*, 47.

[58] Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 8.

for any other reason whatever – therefore the man must be discharged."[59] Mansfield's decision, however, did not deny the legality of overseas slavery. The judge managed to secure Somerset's release without broaching the fundamental question of the justification of slavery. Since the economic effects of the slave trade were not insignificant in 1780s England[60] and since Mansfield was an expert in commercial law[61], it was natural for him to try to secure "the imperial commercial stability". In fact, in 1785 Mansfield proclaimed that the 1772 decision was "no further than that the master cannot by force compel him to go out of the kingdom."[62] It reveals why Mansfield did not liberate the entire population of slaves in England and its colonies.

The Zong affair provides a good illustration of how slaves were typically treated in slave ships in 1780s England. In 1783, the captain of the slave ship the Zong ordered his crew to throw 130 sick slaves overboard as a means of conserving water supplies. This action resulted in a legal battle between the ship owners and the insurance company. In the first trial, the court ruled in favour of the ship owners, and the insurance company was ordered to pay compensation for the dead slaves.[63] Although abolitionists such as Granville Sharp tried to turn this issue into a prosecution case for the murder of slaves, the case was again treated as an insurance matter in the second trial. Mansfield, the presiding judge, declared that "the case was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard."[64] Although Mansfield recognized the importance of this case and tried to set up a fresh trial, there was insufficient evidence to proceed. Significantly, then, the Zong affair was treated as a commercial incident from beginning to end. This fact also highlighted the economic predicament of the British slave trade at that time because it had to depend on the mercantile

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[59] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 15.

[60] According to Drescher, Britain's economy regarding the slave trade in the 1780s was peculiar.The combination of political strategies drawn from the everyday economic life of Britons in the 1780s could not have been achieved so casually in the 1680s or even the 1730s, despite the fact that the imperial economy was less dependent on slave production in 1685 or 1735 than in 1785. (Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 73).

[61] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 15.

[62] F.O. Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974), 165.

[63] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 18.

[64] Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain*, 193-9.

necessity of slavery. In particular, cotton and sugar were the most profitable products for England during the age of British abolitionism. In fact, even in 1838 when the British emancipation of slaves was enacted, slaves were still engaged to produce over "nine-tenths of the Atlantic economy's sugar".[65] It was therefore difficult for European countries in the 1780s put an end to the slave trade.

### (ii) The Debate For and Against The Slave Trade

Especially after the Quakers had submitted to the government their petition for the abolition of the slave trade in 1783, numerous pamphlets and essays both for and against the slave trade written by priests, MPs, poets, and journalists came into circulation. The way in which the debate developed during the period from the 1780s to the 1830s offers a valuable insight into the problems faced by the abolitionist movement. When Wilberforce introduced his twelve proposals to abolish the slave trade in 1789, one of the main topics in the anti-slave trade debate was to convey the inhumane aspect of the slave trade by claiming the wretched situation of the middle passage and the high mortality of slaves and British seamen. Wilberforce's speech in 1789 was based on those facts which abolitionists such as Thomas Clarkson, Alexander Falconbridge, and John Newton had collected about the slave trade. It was Thomas Clarkson in particular who worked together with Wilberforce to abolish the slave trade by giving concrete evidence that the slave trade was atrocious and inhumane. Clarkson, as one of the members of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, travelled to Bristol and Liverpool to interview people who were actually engaged in the slave trade.[66] In his work entitled "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species" (1788), Clarkson described in detail how slaves were taken from Africa and subjected to the severe conditions of the middle passage. Clarkson tried to convey the harsh circumstances which slaves were forced to endure by portraying a realistic image of the slave trade. He showed that many slaves were simply thrown

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[65] Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery*, 9.
[66] *The Abolition Debate*, 38.

into the sea if they were found to be worthless on the market:

> On board a ship, which had been attempting to sell her slaves last year, were left a man and woman, for whom, on account of their sickly state, no purchaser was to be found. In a little time the man died. . . . The tyrant of the ship, to rid himself of the burthen, ordered the woman to be taken also, and to be thrown overboard, though alive, at the same time.[67]

Clarkson reported that slaves were beaten, tortured and badly clothed. Furthermore, he described the unbearable heat in the slave ships, which was often discussed during parliamentary debates on the slave trade:

> The other vessel measured eleven tons. The length of the apartment for the slaves was twenty-two feet. . . . The vessel was calculated and sailed for thirty slaves. . . . The only idea, that will perhaps strike the reader, in examining these dimensions, will be, that the apartment must be in shape and size, as well as in heat, similar to an oven.[68]

Alexander Falconbridge, who worked as a doctor on board the slave ships, also recounted the problems of seasickness, heat and insanity suffered by the slaves in *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788):

> The hardships and inconveniencies suffered by the Negroes during the passage, are scarcely to be enumerated or conceived. They are far more violently affected by the sea-sickness, than the Europeans. It frequently terminates in death, especially among the women. . . .

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[67] Thomas Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *Essay on the Slavery, The Abolition Debate*, 60

[68] Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce, The Abolition Debate*, 50.

> The fresh air being thus excluded, the Negroes rooms very soon grow intolerably hot.[69]
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> The deck, that is, the floor of their rooms, was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughter-house.[70]

John Newton presented his experience as a slave trader from 1745 to 1754 in *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (1788). He considered that the slave trade was "always unjustifiable"[71], and described how slaves on board the slave ships were kept in a confined space and made to suffer "wretched" conditions:

> Let it be observed, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewise in irons, for the most part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to rise or to lie down, without hurting themselves, or each other.[72]
>
> . . . I saw and heard enough to satisfy me, that their condition, in general, was wretched to the extreme.[73]

Slaves suffered not only from the long voyage but also from the punishments meted out by the white seamen. As Newton showed, slaves who put up resistance against crew members were punished on board:

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[69] Alexander Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 126.
[70] Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 127.
[71] John Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 83.
[72] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 110.
[73] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 113-4.

> I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their misery, and hardly a sign of life has remained. I have seen them agonising for hours. . . under the torture of the thumb-screws; a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguish.[74]

Newton not only pointed out the high mortality of seamen and slaves but also drew attention to a hideous effect of the slave trade in the minds of those involved:

> There is a second, which either is, or ought to be, deemed of importance, considered in a political light. I mean, the dreadful effects of this trade, upon the minds of those who engaged in it.[75]

Clearly, this strategy made appeal to the compassion of the British people for their own compatriots. Newton concluded that this dreadful trade was against the "common sense" of mankind.[76]

On the other hand, Clarkson also pointed out the immorality of the British people. He denounced the actions of so-called Christians who were abusing the principle of Christianity by selling slaves:

> Do you not see the tears that now trickle down my cheeks? And yet these hardened *Christians* are unable to be moved at all: nay, they will scourge them amidst their groans, and even smile, while they are torturing them to death.[77]

Clarkson criticised the hypocrisy of people involved in the slave trade since those

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[74] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 93.
[75] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 89.
[76] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 117.
[77] Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce*, *The Abolition Debate*, 43.

self-proclaimed Christians made their profits by sacrificing the human rights of slaves. He concluded his essay with the accusation that the slave trade was a crime that violated the rights of men:

> Unpardonable crime! that they should have the feelings of nature! that their breasts should glow with resentment on an injury! that they should be far overcome, as to resist those, whom *they are under no obligations to obey*, and whose only title to their services consists in *a violation of the rights of men*![78]

Falconbridge suggested that slaves suffered a longing for their own country and for their freedom. During the middle passage, Falconbridge saw that one female slave put some dirt from an African yam into her mouth. He described that she seemed to rejoice at the opportunity of possessing some of her native earth:

> From these instances I think it may be clearly deduced, that the unhappy Africans are not bereft of the finer feelings, but have a strong attachment to their native country, together with a just sense of the value of liberty. And the situation of the miserable beings above described, more forcibly urge the necessity of abolishing a trade that is the source of such evils, than the most eloquent harangue, or persuasive arguments could do.[79]

It is noticeable that both Clarkson and Falconbridge emphasized that slaves had human feelings. It suggests that, at this time, slaves were still generally regarded as things rather than as human beings.

Clarkson went to London to prepare the Abolitionists' case for Wilberforce before he gave a speech in May 1789. And in the inquiry by the Privy Council prior to

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[78] Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce*, *The Abolition Debate*, 69.
[79] Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 134.

Wilberforce's speech in 1789, Falconbridge testified that what Clarkson had claimed about slaves and the slave trade was indeed true. John Newton also verified in the Privy Council that "slaves driven mercilessly to the coast thought that they were to be eaten by the white men".[80] After Wilberforce had obtained many reports about the slave trade, he resolved to present the abolitionist issue to parliament:

> I began to talk the matter over with Pitt and Grenville. . . . I resolved to give notice on a fit occasion in the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward.[81]

Pitt, who took a positive attitude towards the abolition of the slave trade, at this moment supported Wilberforce's motivation.

After the French Revolution, however, claiming the rights of slaves became socially treacherous. Abolitionists in the 1790s were becoming more conservative and more cautious about appealing for a total abolition, to the point where some proposed a gradual abolition as a compromise to supporters of the slave trade. The idea of the gradual abolition of the slave trade had already been introduced into the parliamentary debate in which Wilberforce gave his speech in 1789. In his response to Wilberforce's proposals, Mr. Alderman Sawbridge maintained that the slave trade should be regulated instead of being abolished totally.[82] This argument was a frequent topic of parliamentary debate throughout the 1790s. The MP John Baker Holroyd opposed Wilberforce's motion to abolish the slave trade by introducing the regulation bill. He asserted that decreasing the number of slaves would produce "a greater degree of comfort and happiness"[83] for slaves. Burke, who in 1789 had supported Wilberforce's speech in that he demanded an immediate halt to the trade, changed his attitude towards gradual abolition in 1790. In *Sketch of the Negro Code*

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[80] Furneaux, *William Wilberforce*, 86.
[81] Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life* of *William Wilberforce*, 5 vols. (n.p.: John Murray, 1838), Vol. 1, 150-1 qtd. in Furneaux, *William Wilberforce*, 72.
[82] *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. 28, 78.
[83] John Baker Holroyd, *Observations on the Project for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London: J. Debrett, 1790), *The Abolition Debate*, 367.

(1792) he implied that the increased regulation of the slave trade would lead to its eventual abolition.[84] This change in direction was partly motivated by the fact that the British economy still relied on slavery and slave-produced commodities. Amongst those who still supported slavery, the economic importance of the slave trade had been repeatedly discussed. Bryan Edwards, a West Indian merchant and banker, protested against Wilberforce's proposals in 1789 by appealing for the property rights of planters:

> The patented lands in this island are held by purchase: Many of the present proprietors have vested large capitals in wood-land, and even those who hold immediately from the Crown, have paid, and continue to pay, a *quit-rent* as a consideration for the grant.[85]

This was the key argument used by slave owners who tried to retain their existing rights. Edwards also criticised Pitt's policy by arguing that Pitt would damage their "possessions and commercial privileges".[86] William Cobbett, who also raised the matter of property rights by referring to the property of the clergy, argued that it was necessary for the government to compensate for the loss of property if the slave trade were to be abolished:

> . . . if we are to be deprived of our own property without compensation a property the legislature has invited and encouraged us to purchase and improve by industry and diligence, at the risk of our fortunes. . .that it is unjust and inhuman to purchase slaves; will not the same argument be with more reason employed to deprive the

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[84] Burke, "Sketch of a Negro Code", *The Abolition Debate*, 176-177.

[85] Bryan Edwards, *A Speech delivered at a free Conference between the Honourable the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, held the 19th November, 1789, on the subject of Mr. Wilberforce's Propositions in the House of Commons concerning the Slave Trade* (Kingston, Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1789), *The Abolition Debate*, 327.

[86] Edwards, *A Speech delivered at a free Conference*, *The Abolition Debate*, 334.

clergy of every thing they possess?[87]

By claiming the right of planters over slaves, Cobbett attacked the religious humanitarians as the "embodiment of sanctimonious hypocrisy"[88]. In Cobbett's conception, Lord Mansfield's decision in 1772 did not deny the slave masters' title to their slaves' services. In addition, he argued that the labour undertaken by slaves in plantations was not hard and was in fact lighter than that of the British peasantry:

> Your lordship, by referring to that evidence, will learn, that the labour of the slaves in the sugar colonies is lighter than that of the British peasantry; and that they are better provided for, in sickness and in health, in infancy and in old age, than the labouring poor in any part of Europe. [89]

Cobbett tried to justify the slave trade by suggesting that slaves were particularly suited to hard labour in plantations. Bryan Edwards also insisted that the British laws controlling the slave trade were "mild, temperate, and exemplary":

> . . . their conduct as legislators was comparatively mild, temperate, and exemplary. . . . They had themselves resisted tyrannical authority in the mother-country, and they disclaimed and abridged the exercise of it over others, when circumstances placed it within their reach.[90]

The argument that slaves were treated leniently in the British plantations was, however, criticised by William Fox and S.T. Coleridge. In "An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum" (1791) Fox bitterly condemned the comparison between West Indian slaves and the

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[87] Cobbett, "Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 376.
[88] *The Abolition Debate*, 371.
[89] Cobbett, "Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 373.
[90] Edwards, *A Speech delivered at a free Conference*, *The Abolition Debate*, 341-2.

British peasantry, describing it as a "an insult to common sense."[91] In his lecture "On the Slave Trade" (1796), Coleridge also tactically pointed out that the labours of slaves were so arduous that their hardships were not compatible with anything, including those of the British peasants:

> Now I appeal to common sense, whether to affirm that the slaves are as well off as our peasantry, be not the same as to assert that our peasantry are as bad off as negro-slaves? And whether if our peasantry believed it, they would not inclined to rebel?[92]

Coleridge summarised the following five objections against the abolition of the slave trade: I. Abolition would be useless, since other nations would continue to trade in slaves even if Britain were to stop. II. The African people are better treated and happier in the plantations than in their native country. III. The revenue would suffer greatly. IV. The rights of property would be invaded. V. This is not the fit opportunity.[93] It is clear that Coleridge was familiar with both sides of the slavery debate. He insisted that the British people should abolish the slave trade, and suggested some solutions to these questions: I. Somebody has to begin. II. Slaves are much happier in their country since black people prefer to have families in their own country.[94] Coleridge gauged whether slaves were happy or not through their rate of procreation, asserting that the slave population grew healthily in Africa but not in the West Indies. In answer to objection III, Coleridge admitted that stopping the slave trade would have a negative effect on the economic well-being of life in England. He nevertheless argued that the slave trade was "more often a losing than a winning trade" because of the high rate of mortality among slaves and seamen.[95] This approach was similar to those of Newton and Clarkson, which he had read as the main sources for his

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[91] Fox, "An Address to the People of Great Britain", *The Abolition Debate*, 164.
[92] S.T. Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", Issue 4, *The Watchman* (Bristol: n.p., 1795), *The Abolition Debate*, 220.
[93] Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 213.
[94] Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 213-214.
[95] Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 214.

lecture.[96] It is significant that Coleridge mentioned the financial repercussions of abolishing the slave trade. It means that Coleridge partly agreed with claims made by slave merchants and plantation owners. However, a cautious attitude could be detected in his proposition towards objections IV and V. In his response to IV, Coleridge suggested that the law of Abolition should leave the estate and everything on it untouched.[97] In the proposition for V, Coleridge claimed that abolishing the slave trade would become a political weapon against other European countries that had colonies. He asserted that the British people should have the advantage over other European countries to "preach" the basics of human rights to slaves:

> We make war there more effectually as well as economically by sending over a few adventurous officers to preach the rights of man to the Negroes, and furnish them with weapons to assert those rights.[98]

Coleridge tried to quell the fear of the British people who regarded any claims for human rights as dangerous. Thus, Coleridge demonstrated how sensible it was for the British people to abolish the slave trade in a rational way. A judicious and logical approach like that of Coleridge was maybe the wisest way to bring about abolition in the 1790s.

The slave trade debate encountered particular difficulties over the topic of the emancipation of slaves. The importance of educating slaves before emancipation was often discussed by William Beckford Jr., who supported the slave trade in *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica* (1788), and Coleridge, who insisted in his article of 1808 "Review of The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, by Thomas Clarkson"[99] that slaves should be educated through Christianity. Beckford raised objections to "unconditional emancipation"[100] for slaves. He suspected that slaves

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[96] *The Abolition Debate*, 209.
[97] Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 215.
[98] Coleridge, "On the Slave Trade", *The Abolition Debate*, 215-16.
[99] *The Edinburgh Review* (Edinburgh: D. Willson, 1808), Vol. XII (April 1808-July 1808), 355-79.
[100] William Beckford Jr., *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, impartially made from a local experience of nearly thirteen years in that Island* (London: T. & J. Egerton, 1788),

were not sufficiently civilised to live in the country to which they had been imported:

> It is true that African negroes do not seem possessed of much spirit and alacrity as the creoles are; may not this be owing to their want of that confidence which a native soil gives the last, and an ignorance of their customs, manners, and tongue?[101]

It is obvious that Beckford, like Burke and Ramsay who insisted on the importance of converting slaves to Christianity, judged that slaves were not suited to settling in other nations. Coleridge was also concerned with the cultural importance of Christianity and of civilization for the Africans, although he was clear that the slave trade was an evil:

> Privileges, both useful and flattering, should be held forth to such of the African tribes as would settle round each of these forts: still higher honours should be given to the individuals among such settlers as should have learnt our language, and acquired our arts of manufacture or cultivation.[102]

Coleridge proposed that slaves should learn about European culture before they were allowed to live freely in society. After the abolition bill was enacted in 1807, the emancipation of slaves followed in 1833. What Coleridge suggested here is that European people feared that slaves who were not sufficiently civilised would create social problems.

Thomas Clarkson and John Newton claimed that slaves were civilised, though this belief was not a commonly held one among those involved in the anti-slavery debate. Through his experience of living in a village in Africa, Newton illustrated that black

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[101] Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes*, *The Abolition Debate*, 276-7.

[102] Coleridge, "Review of Clarkson's History of the Slave Trade", *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. XII, 377.

people called the *Purrow* lived in a well-established society like a "Common-wealth":

> The *Purrow* has both the legislative and executive authority, and, under their function, there is a police exercised, which is by no means contemptible. Every thing belonging to the *Purrow* is mysterious and severe, but, upon the whole, it has very good effects; and as any man, whether bound or free, who will submit to be initiated into their mysteries, may be admitted of the Order, it is a kind of Common-wealth.[103]

In addition, Newton went on to insist that African people were modest and delicate, just as white people were.[104] Clarkson also demonstrated that black people naturally had the desire for freedom when they were forced into captivity:

> The unhappy wretch is chained, scourged, tortured; and all this, because he obeyed the directions of nature, and wanted to be free. And who is there, that would not have done the same thing, in the same situation? Who is there, that has once known the charms of liberty, that would not fly from despotism?[105]

Both Clarkson and Newton tried to maintain that slaves were human beings who shared the same kinds of feelings as white people. To deny savagery in black people despite their skin colour and their different social structure marked a bold step especially when black people were regarded merely as commodities.

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[103] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 102.
[104] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 97.
[105] Clarkson, *Essay on Slavery and Commerce*, *The Abolition Debate*, 67.

### (iii) Conclusion

Thus the debate over the slave trade in 1790s England was a complex one in terms of politics, economics, ethics and religion. These complexities partly derived from the racially-oriented thinking of English society in the late eighteenth century, which was one of the crucial elements that caused the clash between idealism for human equality and the realistic problems of slavery such as prejudice against black people. While Ramsay, Burke and Coleridge were against the slave trade, they also proposed that converting slaves to Christianity or educating them in the ways of European culture was significant. This fact exposes a flaw in the anti-slavery argument, which is that they were bound by their belief that European civilisation was superior to any other culture in the world. The discrimination against black people was inevitably shown even when they tried to deny the innate inferiority of black people. There is no doubt that this conception of black people prevailed in the minds of white people during the late eighteenth century.

A reference to plantation slavery was deleted from the American Declaration of Independence, although it should have formed an essential part of the American principles of liberty and equality.[106] This omission reflected the political and economic climate of the American colonies in the eighteenth century, and showed the extent to which arguments over slavery were both contentious and precarious. Indeed, this disparity highlights the "biased" nature of European-centred sentiment from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century.

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[106] Carl Becker, *The Declaration of Independence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1992), 14.

## Chapter II

## Theories of Race

### (i) Polygenist Theories

During the period from 1774 to 1840 in Europe, race theories, which explored the differences between black people and other races, were often discussed. These theories explored two lines of argument as to how human beings were divided into various groups; one was the polygenist approach that claimed human species were originally derived from different stocks, the other was the monogenist theory, which argued that the human race had sprung from a single stock and that physical variations resulted from differences in climate, diet and social environment. The polygenist argument was proposed by the English lawyer and judge Edward Long, the Scottish lawyer Henry Home Lord Kames, the English surgeon Charles White, the English journalist William Cobbett. On the other hand, the monogenist theories were developed by the German natural philosopher Johan Reinhold Forster, the Scottish Presbyterian minister Samuel Stanhope Smith, the Dutch anatomist Peter Camper, the English scholar Sir William Jones, the German physiologist and anatomist Johan Friedrich Blumenbach, the English physician and ethnologist James Cowles Prichard, the English surgeon Sir William Lawrence, and the French naturalist George Cuvier. These theories frequently claimed the physical and mental inferiority of black people, which obviously influenced the debate on the slave trade from 1780 to 1830.

Edward Long investigated the people and lifestyle of Jamaica, and published *The History of Jamaica* (1774). In this work he developed the theory that black people were a different species from white people, arguing that black people should be categorised as belonging somewhere between human beings and the higher apes. Although Long's approach was based on the polygenist view, he agreed with the view

held by the French naturalist George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon[1] who argued that orang-utans resembled African people in form and intellectual level:

> . . . if we admit with Mr. Buffon, that with all this analogy of organization, the orang-utan's brain is a senseless icon of the human. . . we must then infer the strongest conclusion to establish our belief of a natural diversity of the human intellect. . . an orang-utan, in this case, is a human being, quoad his form and organs; but of an inferior species, quoad his intellect; he has in form a much nearer resemblance to the Negro[2] race. . .[3]

To identify black people as a species similar to apes was not uncommon among race theories in eighteenth-century Europe. In particular, many theorists and commentators such as William Cobbett and Charles White regarded black people as being savage like animals because of their skin colour and appearance. This conception was largely at the forefront of a persistent and severe discrimination against slaves throughout the Romantic age.

Long asserted that the skin colour of black people was caused by black bile, and was not, according to his analysis, the result of climate conditions. He claimed that the skin colour of African people who were brought "directly from Africa" and those who were born in the milder climate of the "North American colonies" were not different. This approach contradicted some monogenist theories such as Blumenbach that argued that human skin colour was affected by external conditions such as temperature. In Long's theory, black skin was innate and persistent.

Long continued by claiming that black people were barbaric not only because of their skin colour but also because of their diet. He maintained that the uncivilised nature of black people was due to their custom of eating raw flesh that was "intolerably

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[1] Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *A Natural History, General and Particular*, trans. By W. Smellie, 91 vols, 3rd edn. (London: n.p., 1791).

[2] I employ the word "Negro" as it is used in race theories and the analysis of race theories. I have taken extreme care to avoid causing any offense through the use of this term.

[3] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols (London: T. Lowndes, 1774, rpt. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2002), Vol. 2, 371.

putrid and full of me[a]ggots." Furthermore, he was prepared to reveal the more shocking fact that some black people still pursued some form of cannibalism:

> Their old custom of gormandizing on human flesh has in it something so nauseous, so repugnant to nature and reason, that it would hardly admit of belief. . .some of whom [a multitude of voyagers] affirm to have been eye-witnesses of it. . .[4]

Long's research conveyed a cruel image of black people who were brought to the British colonies, which can only have aggravated the prejudice of white people against black people. By drawing a clear division between savagery and civilised society, Long placed African people in a position as far removed as possible from Europeans. According to Long's conception of the situation, there was ample reason to justify the enslavement of black people by white, since the former were by nature far inferior to whites. Furthermore, he reinforced his justification of slavery using the religious argument that black people were destined to be the slaves of white people owing to their sin of "avarice" in choosing gold over arts and sciences:

> . . .two sorts of favours were presented; to the Blacks, gold; and to the Whites, the knowledge of arts and sciences. It was from choice, that the Blacks had gold for their share: and, to punish their avarice, it was decreed they should ever be slaves to the white men. . .[5]

Long emphasized that black people had chosen their own fate as slaves from ancient times. And although the virtues of slavery that Long established here were clearly questionable, the justification of slavery on religious rounds was one of the strongest weapons of the pro-slavery party.

Long maintained that black people were void of intellectual and moral activities,

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[4] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 381.
[5] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 379.

which also suggested that a life of enslavement was fitting for black people. He argues that black people

> are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science. They have no plan or system of morality among them. . . They have no moral sensations. . .[6]

Believing that black people were savages, Long naturally speculated that the planters in Jamaica were not able to regard slaves as "human creatures."[7] Long stressed that the uncivilised nature of black people implies a superiority among paler skin species including Europeans, the Chinese, the Mexicans, and the Northern Indians. Long affirmed that the intellectual standard became higher as skin colour became paler, and claimed that white people set the ideal standard for human beings. Long's interest in the relationship between skin colour and mental capacity developed into his investigation into interbreeding between whites, blacks and Indians. Long was convinced of white superiority, and detested the idea of interbreeding between white people and black people since he was afraid that the savage blood of black people would damage the purity of white people. He insisted that it had taken a long time to purify the blood which had at one time been "stained":

> They add drops of pure water to a single drop of dusky liquor, until it becomes tolerably pellucid. But this needs the apposition of such a multitude of drops, that, to apply the experiment by analogy to the human race, twenty or thirty generations, perhaps, would hardly be sufficient to discharge the stain.[8]

This highly prejudiced analysis of interracial ties derived from Long's fear of a black

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[6] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 353.
[7] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 270.
[8] Long, *The History of Jamaica*, Vol. 2, 261.

invasion of white society. Long was afraid that European civilisation and society might become dominated by black people as a result of intermarriage. Long asserted in *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement lately awarded by the Court of King's Bench* (1772) that lower class English women tended to like black people:

> The lower classes of women in England, are remarkably fond of the blacks, for reasons too brutal to mention. . .By these ladies they generally have a numerous brood. Thus in the course of a few generations or more, the English blood will become so contaminated this mixture. . .[9]

Long's opinion reveals his class-conscious sensibility that people of the lower classes were almost the same as black people in terms of their level of savagery.

Long's belief in the relationship between black skin colour on the one hand, and moral and intellectual inferiority on the other, was very similar to the opinion of William Cobbett, who made a strong argument in support of slavery in "Summary of Politics" in *Political Register* (June 12, 1802). In his article, Cobbett criticised the revolt by black troops which took place on 9th April of 1802 at Prince Rupert's Bay in the West Indies. Especially after the slave revolution in St. Domingo in 1791, the governors of European colonies reinforced the security of their colonies through the deployment of troops including black slaves. It was these troops, organised by creolised black slaves in 1798, who led the revolt in 1802. The rebellion was staged because black soldiers believed that they were to return to slave duties after the West India Regiment had been "disbanded."[10] Cobbett's attack was directed against the British army's policy of recruiting black soldiers. Believing that black people were in every way inferior, Cobbett insisted that "Negroes never ought to have been thus put upon a level with white men."[11] However, his argument revealed a strong

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[9] Long, *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement lately awarded by the Court of King's Bench On what is commonly called the Negro-Cause* (London: n.p., 1772), 48-49.

[10] *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 8 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* , 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), notes, 364.

[11] William Cobbett, "Summary of Politics" (June 12, 1802), from *Cobbet's Political Register*, Vol. 1 (12 June, 1802), *Theories of Race*, 268.

"xenophobia"[12] rather than any pseudo-scientific viewpoint. The revolt in the West Indies convinced him of black people's brutality and savagery. Cobbett also had suspicions concerning British policy of the time. In Sierra Leone a society was established for freed slaves from Britain and the United States. For Cobbett, who did not admit equality between black slaves and white people, it was not acceptable to imagine that freed slaves coexisted along with white people in the same society. This sense of fear against the emancipation of slaves was common among the British people when the Emancipation Bill was enacted in 1833. People feared that slaves could become violent on gaining their freedom, since they had been suppressed for a long time. Cobbett criticised the British government for misusing its charity funds on Sierra Leone, pointing out that black people were not worthy of efforts to cultivate them. Cobbett, like Long, was also concerned about the possibility of intermarriage between black slaves and white women. He suggested that it was "truly shocking"[13] to see many English women married to black people. Cobbett emphasised that it was a "disturbing spectacle"[14] to see miscegenation and mixed marriages in England.

With regard to interbreeding among different species, Henry Home, Lord Kames tried to solve the issue of human varieties by applying the theory of mixed species. He asserted that different animal and vegetable species resulted from interbreeding among different species of one genus. He suggested that, in a small number of instances where the mixing of species was harmless, procreation went on without limitation. Kames illustrated such instances of mixed breeding by using as an example the procreation of the camel and the dromedary:

> The camel and the dromedary, though nearly related, are however no less distinct than the horse and the ass. . . these two species propagate together, no less freely than the different races of men and of dogs.[15]

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[12] Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 240.
[13] Cobbett, "Summary of Politics", *Theories of Race*, 268.
[14] Cobbett, "Summary of Politics", *Theories of Race*, 268.
[15] Henry, Lord Kames Home, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 2nd edn. (London and Edinburgh, 1778; 1779), *Theories of Race*, 48.

His idea of interbreeding among different species contradicted the established definition of 'species', which was that different species did not interbreed. The concept of interbreeding among different races was "contrary to a law of nature" for some theorists, who proposed that the diversity of human races resulted from the influence by environment. For instance, Buffon claimed that racial variation within humankind, such as difference in skin colour, was caused by the effects of climate rather than by interbreeding. Buffon hypothesised that colder weather gave human beings a paler complexion and that the hotter climate gave them a darker one; white in Europe, black in Africa, yellow in Asia, and red in America. Kames, on the other hand, suggested that skin colour was not the strongest factor in accounting for human differences. He introduced the fact that "Samoides, Laplanders, and Greenlanders" were of a "sallow"[16] complexion, and pointed out that extremities of heat and cold produced almost the same effect on the skin. Kames instead claimed that there must be "the different races of men fitted for different climates"[17] during their development that included intermixture among different races. Kames used this approach to develop his theory that black people survived in Africa because they were naturally strong against the heat. This analysis was often used by the pro-slavery lobby to justify their belief that black people were suitable for hard labour in conditions of extreme heat.

It was in fact typical of eighteenth-and nineteenth-century race theories to appeal directly to the Bible during the investigation of racial differences. White European theorists tended to depend on Christian theology to reinforce their claims, which suggests a certain limitation in the development of scientific technology at this time. Kames proposed that human beings became scattered all over the world following the chaos of Babel, and that since that time individual societies and languages have remained distinct:

> By confounding the language of men, and scattering them abroad upon the

[16] Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 56.
[17] Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 60.

> face of all the earth, they were rendered savages. And to harden them for their new habitations, it was necessary that they should be divided into different kinds, fitted for different climates.[18]

Kames insisted that various races emerged, each occupying a certain position on a social continuum ranging from savagery to civilization. According to his assumption, some races progressed rapidly, assisted by climate and by their "own nature", while others remained savage.

In later years, monogenists developed an analysis of the relationship between social conditions and racial differences. The leading factor in the pro-slavery argument was the understanding that black society was savage, leading to the claim that slaves were happier living in civilised plantations than in their primitive country.

Compared with Long, Cobbett and Kames, White's approach to the issue of race was more concerned with physiology; specifically, he differentiated between various races according to the measurement of the human skull and arms. His method of applying surgical knowledge is similar to those of Blumenbach and Camper, who also researched the differences found among human crania and facial lines. However, the phrenological approach to race theory was only one of the lines of argument pursued in Europe during the period from the end of eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. In *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799), White claimed the idea that racial differences among humans were caused by gradation in general, that human beings developed varying degrees of intelligence and active powers according to their situations. White argued that the skulls of Europeans differed in various ways those of Africans, and illustrated such differences using measurements of the forehead, the jaw and other bone structures:

> 1. That of a German. Every thing about it bears the impress of a European head, and it sensibly differs from the three [the East Indian, the African, and the Nomade Tartar] which follow. The hinder part is

[18] Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 63.

thicker, the fore part more slender: the forehead, better arched than the others. . .

3. That of the African differs from both of the preceding in the hind head, which is much narrower, and by the size of the bone which serves for its base. . . hence that little flat nose, and those thick lips, which are natural to all the nations of Africa.[19]

White was clearly proposing that Europeans, whose skulls were the most balanced and beautiful, belonged at the top of the race hierarchy, while at the same time affirming that Africans, whose skulls had degraded into something approximating to those of apes, were at the bottom. Furthermore, he introduced a method of establishing the relationship between arm length and a person's height, since he found that to measure the arm as a means of illustrating variation among human races was much more reliable than the result suggested by investigating skeletons:

> After having compared my Negro skeleton with the European, I was obliged to pursue the comparison with a great number of living subjects. . . I measured the arms of about fifty Negroes;--men, women, and children, born in very different climates; and found the lower arm longer than in Europeans, in proportion to the upper arm and to the height of the body.[20]

White discovered a certain degree of similarity in body size between African people and Europeans, despite the differences in climate. He therefore rejected Camper's theory, which asserted that the human race had descended from a single couple and that all variation was to be attributed to climate, nutrition, air and other external conditions. Instead, White maintained that environmental factors had little influence

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[19] Charles White, *An Account of the Regular Gradations in Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables; and from the Former to the Latter, Illustrated with engravings adapted to the subject, By Charles White, Read to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester at different meetings, in the year 1795* (London: C. Dilly, 1799), *Theories of Race*, 223-24.

[20] White, *An Account of the Regular Gradations in Man*, *Theories of Race*, 228.

on mankind's varying levels of civilisation from the European to the savage.

Like the theories of Long and Kames, White's approach also placed Africans in the lowest position on the race hierarchy. White investigated the gradation from European to savage in, for example, the cartilages, muscles, tendons, skin, hair, sweat, catamenia, rank smell, heat of the body, and lifespan. His findings suggested that Africans were closely related to apes by virtue of most of their organs and senses:

> The cartilage of the nose in the Negro is much broader than in the European, and still broader in the ape. The gastrocnemii muscles are smaller, and placed higher in the African than in the European; they are still smaller and higher in the orang-outang. . .[21]

White's physiological investigations into racial diversity among humans supported the notion that Africans were more animal-like than other races. Unlike Long and Kames, however, White was an abolitionist as well as a "total"[22] emancipationist. His intention was never to maintain the inferiority of African people in order to preserve the slave trade, which he considered "wholly indefensible."[23] On the contrary, he believed that Africans were "equally entitled to freedom and protection"[24] and that they should be given hope for the future. Nevertheless, White became aware that his theory of racial variation was being exploited to support the slave trade because it claimed similarities between black people and the apes. Blumenbach and Lawrence, who also declared themselves to be abolitionists while arguing for white superiority, disclosed this inconsistency. This situation reveals the difficulties in overcoming the persistent prejudice against black people that existed in Europe during the period from the late eighteenth century to nineteenth century, despite the developments that were being made in science and medicine at that time.

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[21] White, *An Account of the Regular Gradations in Man*, *Theories of Race*, 233.
[22] *Theories of Race*, 215.
[23] Charles J. Cullingworth, *Charles White, F.R.S. A Great Provincial Surgeon and Obstetrician of the Eighteenth century* (London: Henry J. Glaisher, 1904), 41.
[24] Cullingworth, *Charles White*, 41.

### (ii) Monogenist Theories

Pieter Camper was the Dutch anatomist who established the theory of differences in "facial angle" among human races. He analysed differences in the crania of apes, Africans, Indians, Tartars and Europeans, affirming that the angle of the facial line ranged from 70 to 100 degrees and that Africans had the narrowest head:

> The two extremities therefore of the facial line are from 70 to 100 degrees, from the Negro to the Grecian antique; make it under 70, and you describe an ourang or an ape. . .[25]

Camper insisted that the facial line of African people resembled that found in some species of monkeys, although he denied that this similarity between monkeys and African people indicated any moral degradation.

Camper stressed the closeness in appearance between African people and apes by examining the size of the chin, the angle of the mouth, and the position of the ear. He discovered that African people had the smallest chin among all racial groups while Europeans had the largest. Camper's analysis found that the angle of the mouth and the position of the ear in African people were same as in apes:

> In apes therefore, in the orang, and in the Negro, the rim or angle of the mouth must be more distended than in an European, as the projection of the upper jaw enlarges the distance. . . The central line of the ear is . . .never parallel with the facial line in white men. It is, however, in the Negro. . .[26]

Camper, who had the eye of an artist and sculptor, noticed that European faces were popular subjects among artists. While he claimed that the facial line of Negroes

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[25] Pieter Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on the connexion between the Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary*, trans. T. Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794), *Theories of Race*, 109.

[26] Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper*, *Theories of Race*, 111.

indicated savagery, he celebrated the European face, especially the classical Greek face in its "elegance and dignity":

> The eyes, which are placed nearly in a line with the upper edge of their sockets, gradually recede in an European and the antique. . . This gives a certain elegance and dignity to the countenance of the antique. . .[27]

Camper's theory of racial variation suggested that Europeans had the most beautiful appearance of any race. This white superiority, particularly in comparison with African people, was similar to the polygenist arguments of White and Long as well as to the monogenist theories of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Georges Cuvier.

Blumenbach was one of the most influential race theorists in late eighteenth-century Europe. He was a physiologist and anatomist who proposed that all existing races had degenerated from the original in response to climate and environment. He divided human varieties into five groups: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, Malay, and American. First of all, Blumenbach characterised the differences in skin colour among these five races:

1. The white colour holds the first place, such as is that of most European peoples.
2. The second is the *yellow, olive-tinge*, a sort of colour half-way between grains of wheat and cooked cooked oranges. . . very usual in the Mongolian nations.
3. The *copper colour*. . .or dark orange. . .peculiar almost to the Americans.
4. *Tawny*. . .midway between the colour of fresh mahogany and dried pinks or chestnuts: common to the Malay race. . .
5. Lastly, the tawny-black, up to almost a pitchy blackness (jet-black),

[27] Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, Theories of Race*, 110.

principally seen in some Ethiopian nations.[28]

Since Blumenbach studied Buffon and Kant, who had conducted research into the relationship between external conditions and human differences, he argued that variation in skin colour was caused by differences in climate. Blumenbach claimed that the colour of the skin was not "congenital" even in the black skin of Ethiopians, and argued that it resulted from the effects of nourishment and the surrounding air. For example, he proposed that a tawny skin colour came from an abundance of carbon in the body:

> . . .the proximate cause of the adust or tawny colour of the external integuments of the skin, is to be looked for in the abundance of the carbon in the human body, which, when it is excreted with the hydrogen through the corium, and precipitated by the contact of the atmospheric oxygen, becomes imbedded in the Malpighian mucus.[29]

According to Blumenbach's theory, the black skin colour of Ethiopian people was not constant, but turned paler as the temperature became milder.

Blumenbach also claimed that diet was somehow connected with the physical variation found among humans. He suggested that Europeans who had lived in areas with a moderate temperature and who had a good diet were more civilised than the Laplanders and pigmies who lived in an extreme climate and had a poorer diet which included alcohol abuse. For instance, taller races such as Scandinavians and some of the Swiss had a "more generous diet"[30] than those of the Laplanders and the pigmies living on the island of Madagascar. He considered that the taller Europeans were noble whereas the shorter pigmies were barbarians.

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[28] Johann Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind" in *The Anthropological Treatises of Johan Friedrich Blumenbach*, trans. and ed. Thomas Bendyshe (London: The Anthropological Society, Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), *Theories of Race*, 145.

[29] Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind," *Theories of Race*, 146-47.

[30] Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind," *Theories of Race*, 192.

Since Blumenbach believed that the human race was derived from a single stock, he maintained that the average height of people within some racial groups had, over a period of many generations, been affected by interracial unions involving races of different heights. In conclusion, he placed Caucasians at the very top of the human hierarchy, since he took them to be the most handsome and becoming"[31] race. As for other races, Blumenbach insisted that Caucasians degenerated in two directions, terminating in Ethiopian and Mongolian. Specifically, he argued that Ethiopians were maximally different from Caucasians in their skin colour and physiology, and asserted that the physical characteristics of Ethiopians were "nearer the apes", which was similar to White's analysis.

Blumenbach also protested against slavery and the slave trade, just as White did. He pointed out that this degeneration did not necessarily involve any loss of moral or intellectual capacity, which was clearly different from Long and Cobbett who justified slavery by arguing that black people made suitable slaves because of their inferior morals. In fact, Blumenbach's *Contributions to Natural History* (1806) recorded many examples of the scientific and literary achievements of black people. His hypothesis on racial variation, however, indicated a sense of white superiority and a prejudice against black people. In later years, Blumenbach's theory was read and applied by his followers such as Johann Reinhold Forster, James Cowles Prichard, William Lawrence and Cuvier.

The theory presented in the first edition of Blumenbach's "On the Natural Variety of Mankind" (1776) was applied by Forster, the naturalist, who accompanied Captain James Cook to the Antarctic Circle and the Southern Pacific to investigate the plants, animals and people of that region. In particular, he examined the differences between the Melanesians living in New Caledonia, Tanna and Mallicollo, and the Polynesians living in Tahiti, Marquesas, New Zealand and the nearer islands of the South Seas. His findings suggested that he was against the system of slavery. His view on the relationship between civilisation and race differed from the view of those who argued that black people lived like savages. For instance, Prichard and Cuvier

[31] Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind", *Theories of Race*, 201.

maintained that skin colour became lighter as civilisation developed. On the other hand, Forster showed that dark skinned people, such as those in Tahiti, were civilised. His analysis of Tahiti civilisation suggested that there was no relationship between a person's skin colour and the degree to which he was civilised.

Like Blumenbach, Forster hypothesised that racial variation was entirely caused by external influences such as climate. After examining differences in skin colour between two races, he defined the following relationship between darker skin and a hot climate:

> . . . if the same race of people should pass through a long and gradual circuit, the one through hot countries, and the other immediately by a sudden transition to the same climate; those who passed through the served climate would preserve a darker hue, than those who at once should pass to the same without making any stay in the intermediate climates. . .[32]

Through his analysis of the diversity in the complexion of the inhabitants in the South Seas, Forster surmised that they came from different districts. According to his theory, the Melanesians, whose skin was dark, came from Moluccas, while the Polynesians, who had paler skin, came from the Caroline Islands and Borneo. This assertion was supported by his discovery that the languages which they spoke were different from each other. Forster found that their language had changed from the one they had originally spoken. This linguistic factor was something new, but was to be taken up and developed by other theorists in later years.

In addition to his interest in language differences, Forster investigated the kind of society in which they lived. His assumption was that the level of civilisation could be measured by social complexity:

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[32] Johann Reinhold Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World, on Physical Geography, Natural History, and Ethic Philosophy* (London: G. Robinson, 1778), *Theories of Race*, 27.

> . . .men in their collective capacity ripen but slowly from animality, through the states of savages and barbarians into a civilised society, which has again an infinite variety of situations and degrees of perfection.[33]

Other race theorists often declared this relationship between racial variation and differing levels of civilisation in society. As Long insisted, black people were generally believed to live in a savage society, and furthermore, white culture was considered to be superior to other cultures. It was often suggested in race theories that black people would become civilised by coming into contact with white people in plantations, thereby lending further justification for slavery.

Although Forster admitted the superiority of European culture, he considered that the environments of the South Seas were showing how people could develop into civilised societies by themselves. He suggested that an increase in population was one means of uniting societies for "mutual defence and assistance."[34] In this respect, he concluded that life in Tahiti was the happiest in the South Seas, since the mildness of the climate reduced their wants and gave them a great abundance of food, clothing and shelter:

> . .. it cannot be denied that these people enjoy a happiness which is more attainable by every individual, for there cannot be an instance among them, that ever a person died for want of shelter, cloth, or food. . . [35]

He claimed that no-one among the Tahitian people was ever forced into a life of hard labour by "a hard master" or destined to perpetual toil and "unremitted labour."[36] By suggesting that the Tahitian people lived in a civilised society, Forster opposed the prejudice against coloured people and criticised the hard labour endured by slaves working in plantations.

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[33] Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World, Theories of Race*, 30.
[34] Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World, Theories of Race*, 32.
[35] Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World, Theories of Race*, 37.
[36] Forster, *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World, Theories of Race*, 37.

Samuel Stanhope Smith, a Presbyterian minister and a professor of moral philosophy in America, argued that the physical variation observed among humans was due to natural and social causes. He believed that there was only a single stock of humans in the world, but with a gradation in their complexion. As Blumenbach suggested in his theory, Smith proposed that the main cause of skin colour differences was climate; he affirmed that exposure to heat and sunlight made the skin darker, which rendered the colour black "the tropical hue":

> Bile, exposed to the sun and air, is known to change its colour to black—black is therefore the tropical hue.[37]

Smith also claimed that, in southern regions, a certain bile disorder caused by heat affected the colour of the skin and made those of a relaxed disposition:

> Men who remove from northern to southern regions are usually attacked by dangerous disorders that leave the blood impoverished, and shed a yellow appearance over the skin. These disorders are perhaps the efforts of nature in breaking down and changing the constitution, in order to accommodate it to the climate; or to give it that degree of relaxation. . .[38]

He argued that people who had the darker skin were lazier than those who had paler skin.

Furthermore, Smith investigated that a dark colour was typical in savage countries. His theory claimed that Europeans with their fairer skin would not be easily affected by climate, while the men leading a barbaric lifestyle were more readily influenced by climate. In this respect, Smith maintained that people with darker skin were less civilised than those with fairer skin. This reasoning was frequently employed by the

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[37] Samuel Stanhope Smith, "An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion in the Human Species to which are added Strictures on Lord Kaims's Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind" (Philadelphia, 1787; rpt. London: John Stockdale, 1789), *Theories of Race*, 80.

[38] Smith, "An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion", *Theories of Race*, 80.

pro-slavery lobby in their attempt to show that African people made suitable slaves because of their savagery. For instance, in "Summary of Politics" (1802) Cobbett suggested that black people were "savage monsters"[39] and spiritually inferior. Meanwhile, William Beckford claimed that African slaves did not have much "spirit and alacrity"[40], and that they were given the "comforts of certainty"[41] in the British plantations.

James Cowles Prichard, the English ethnologist and physician, firmly believed in the scriptural account of creation and the unity of mankind. Prichard reversed Blumenbach's Caucasian hypothesis of racial diversity, arguing that humans were originally black since there were well-documented instances of black people producing white children but no reliable examples of climate causing black to be produced from white. He also rejected Blumenbach's claim of the influence of climate on racial variation.

Prichard's conception that black people belonged to the original race derived from the hypothesis that nations which had never progressed beyond a savage state were Negroes. In other words, Prichard maintained that skin colour became paler in response to an increase in the degree of civilisation within the society. He followed John Hunter's[42] claim that the change of colour observed in various animals was from darker to lighter. Prichard investigated how humans with a lighter skin colour often appeared amongst darker races, as was suggested in his analysis of racial variety in America and Africa. On the other hand, he insisted that there were no examples of Negroes appearing amongst races characterised by a lighter complexion. To explain this phenomenon, Prichard argued that people belonging to dark races, such as Africans, were genetically suited to a severe environment whereas lighter-skinned

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[39] Cobbett, "Summary of Politics", *Theories of Race*, 268.

[40] William Jr. Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, impartially made from a local experience of nearly thirteen years in that Island* (London: T. & J. Egerton, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, Vol. 2 of Slavery, 276.

[41] Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, The Abolition Debate*, 278.

[42] Hunter, a British anatomist and surgeon, was an influential theorist who illustrated his idea of gradation by arranging a series of skulls beginning with European, then proceeding through Asiatic, American, African, and finishing with apes. He published *Observations on the Diseases of the Army in Jamaica* (1788).

races, such as Europeans, were adapted to a higher level of lifestyle:

> The Negro is particularly adapted to the wild or natural state of life. His dense and firm fibre renders him much more able to endure fatigue, and the inclemencies of the seasons, than the European with his lax fibre, and delicate constitution.[43]

In Prichard's approach, European civilisation was placed in the highest position within human society as a result of development.

Prichard argued that the influence of climate seemed to have no effect on human diversity. Through examples, he showed that skin colour did not depend on the degree of latitude where people lived; instead, he insisted that the lighter and darker colours co-existed in areas of the same latitude. For example, in his investigations into the skin colours of American and Negroes, Prichard noted:

> The Mexicans, as we have already observed, are more swarthy than the Indians of Quito and New Granada, who inhabit a climate completely analogous, and we even see that the tribes dispersed to the north of the Rio Gila are less brown than those in the neighbourhood of the kingdom of Guatimala.[44]

> There are indeed variations from the deep black, as the tawny colour of the Foulahs and Hottentots, but the lighter people live either among or in the vicinity of others who are perfectly black. . .[45]

Instead of claiming the influence of climate, Prichard maintained that the social conditions had a greater effect on variations in skin colour. He argued that the black

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[43] James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1973), *Theories of Race*, 301.
[44] Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 278-9.
[45] Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 286.

skin of Negroes was a result of their savage society, and conversely, that European people were white because of their higher civilisation:

> . . .the higher class are very much in the same circumstances, with the better order of society in the civilized communities of Europe. The savage tribes are all of them completely Negroes, quite black. . .and resemble the Africans in their anatomical structure. . .[46]

Like Smith, who argued that Negroes who settled in a civilised society developed a fairer complexion, Prichard affirmed that savage people who lived with white people for a certain time became "extremely agreeable."[47]

William Lawrence, an English surgeon, basically accepted a modified version of the Blumenbachian five-fold typology of racial variety through the process of degeneration. He applied biological and zoological methods to establish the way in which different races had formed, and argued that variation resulted from the interbreeding of different species, in parallel with the variation found within the animal kingdom. Although Lawrence supported a monogenist view, he believed that European people were superior to Ethiopian people. He was not a supporter of human equality, although he did oppose slavery.

Lawrence argued that the scriptural account of creation did not make it clear whether or not all humans across the world had descended from Adam and Eve:

> If we are to believe that the original creation comprehended only a male and female of each species, or that one pair only was rescued from a universal deluge, the contradictions are again increased.[48]

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[46] Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 290-1.
[47] Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, *Theories of Race*, 293.
[48] Sir William Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Mankind delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons* (London: n.p., 1819, 3rd edn., London: James Smith, 1823), *Theories of Race*, 320.

This assumption was criticised by religious groups as "materialistic and atheistic."[49] Nevertheless, Lawrence pursued the argument that interbreeding within the same species produced variation among humans. He argued that the original character of domestic animals belonging to the first generation would be lost during the process of degeneration. Lawrence further proposed that human beings also "run into varieties of form, size, proportions, colour, disposition, faculties"[50] and that they became different from the original race after many generations.

Although Lawrence did not follow Prichard's assumption that black people were the original race of humans, he did refer to the difference between Caucasians and Ethiopian people. According to Lawrence's definition, the Ethiopians were anatomically closer to "monkeys" in the size of their facial bones, forehead, teeth, chin, and so on. However, he denied any similarity in mental capacity between the Ethiopian people and apes. By suggesting that black people possessed mental capabilities, Lawrence criticised the pro-slavery argument that slaves could endure hard labour since they were "below the standard of the human species."[51] Yet Lawrence's view showed that the Ethiopians were completely different from Europeans in appearance and character. This research again emphasises the belief of white European superiority.

Georges Cuvier was a French naturalist, anatomist and paleontologist. Rather than accepting Blumenbach's division of humanity into five varieties, he divided the human species into three: the Caucasian, the Mongolian and the Ethiopian races. He affirmed that these races were determined by physical properties such as the size of the forehead in proportion to the rest of the face. For instance, he claimed that people with a larger face were more prone to sensation while people with a larger forehead were more prone to reflection. Through this theory, Cuvier predicted the mental superiority of Caucasians over Ethiopians.

In addition, Cuvier examined the relationship between the physical and moral

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[49] *Theories of Race*, 309.
[50] Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, Theories of Race*, 334.
[51] Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, Theories of Race*, 336.

development of human beings and their environment. He asserted that mankind's knowledge was acquired through "the result of his situations, his observations or those of his predecessors."[52] Cuvier insisted that the degree of development in civilisation differed among different racial groups in different places, and claimed that this diversity affected the physical and moral development of humans:

> The glacial climates of the north of both continents, and the impenetrable forests of America, are still inhabited by the savage hunter or fisherman. The immense sandy or salt plains of Central Asia and Africa are covered with a pastoral people. . .Mild climates, soils naturally irrigated and rich in vegetables, are the natural cradle of agriculture and civilisation. . .such were formerly (the first in Europe,) Italy and Greece. . .[53]

Thus, Cuvier claimed that circumstances were partly responsible for either assisting or hindering the progress of social conditions.

According to this research, Cuvier concluded that the Caucasian was the most beautiful and intelligent race, while asserting that the Negroes were closer to the apes in appearance and character:

> The Caucasian, to which we belong, is distinguished by the beauty of the oval which forms the head; and it is this one which has given rise to the most civilized nations. . .
>
> The Negro race is confined to the southward of the Atlas chain of mountains: its colour is black. . .The projecting muzzle and thick lips evidently approximate it to the Apes: the hordes of which it is composed

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[52] George Leopold Nicolas Frederic Dagobert de Baron Cuvier, *Cuvier's Animal Kingdom, arranged according to its organization; forming the basis for a natural history of animals, and an introduction to comparative anatomy* (London: William. S. Orr & Co., 1840), *Theories of Race*, 346.

[53] Cuvier, *Animal Kingdom*, *Theories of Race*, 347.

have always continued barbarous. . .[54]

Cuvier's theory argued for a direct relationship between the appearance of Negroes and their savagery.

Sir William Jones was a scholar in languages, literature, culture and law, who traced the origins of racial variety through customs and language. Since Jones accepted the Biblical account of Moses and the scattered families of his sons, Ham (Arabian), Shem(Indian) and Japhet (Tartarian), he concluded that there must be three varieties of humans: Arabian, Indian, and Tartar.

Jones supported the theory of the Swedish naturalist Linnaeus,[55] who had claimed that God created only a single pair of every species. He maintained that the pairs became dispersed across the world and migrated in separate families and clans. He also insisted on the ethnic unity of Hindu, European, and Chinese, and argued that the world's oldest book was about the Persians, written in Hebrew:

> The most ancient history of that race, and the oldest composition perhaps in the world, is a work in *Hebrew*, which we may suppose at first, for the sake of our argument, to have no higher authority than any other work of equal antiquity, that the researches of the curious had accidentally brought to light. . .[56]

Among the Eurocentric race theories, Jones's approach was noteworthy in that it proposed an Asian source for the original human race. In addition, Jones observed that the inhabitants of Asia belonged to a civilised society with established laws, commerce, cities, and writing systems in "about twelve or at most fifteen or sixteen

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[54] Cuvier, *Animal Kingdom*, *Theories of Race*, 348.

[55] Linnaeus in *Systemae naturae* (1758) divided human varieties into six "diurnal" varieties and one "nocturnal" variety: "farus (four-footed, mute and hairy); americanus (red, choleric, erect); europaeus (white, ruddy, muscular); asiaticus(yellow, melancholic, inflexible); afer (black, phlegmatic, indulgent); monstrosus(several deviant forms)" (*Theories of Race*, x). He argued that each natural form was unchangeable because it was created by God.

[56] Sir William Jones, "On the Origin and Families of Nations", delivered 23 February, 1792 (London: n.p.,1821), *Theories of Race*, 127.

centuries before the birth of Christ."[57]

As far as the origins of Negroes were concerned, Jones hypothesised that they were the children of Ham, who developed writing systems. He asserted that they improved "the art of sailing" and that they had become scattered over various regions including India and Egypt:

> . . .they were dispersed at various intervals and in various colonies over land and ocean; that the tribes of MISR, CUSH, and RAMA settled in Africa and India; while some of them, having improved the art of sailing, passed from Egypt, Phenice. . .and Greece. . .[58]

Jones's claims, which suggested that Negroes already had civilisation from ancient times, contradicted most race theories of that period, which portrayed black people as savages. Although Blumenbach, like Jones, had referred to the literature of black authors, his observations failed to make such a strong impact as those of Jones. Jones's attitude towards racial diversity was a novel one, but one which was not easily accepted at a time of strong prejudice against coloured people.

Thus, racial variation was a topic of hot debate and serious analysis, and one which was approached from a range of different angles. Blumenbach, Smith, Camper, Cuvier, White, and Lawrence argued for the influence of climate and the environment on human diversity. Forster, Kames, and Prichard particularly stressed the effects of differing degrees of civilisation. Cuvier and Kames also applied the zoological approach. Jones examined the customs, manners and languages of different races. On the whole, Negroes were considered as belonging at the bottom of the human hierarchy and their nature was regarded as savage and uncivilised; on the other hand, European people were seen as the most civilised. These theories are indicative of the interest that people showed in human differences during this period; they also had a certain influence on the ideological prejudice against slaves.

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[57] Jones, "On the Origin and Families of Nations," *Theories of Race*, 127.
[58] Jones, "On the Origin and Families of Nations", *Theories of Race*, 138.

### (iii) Race Theories and the Rhetoric of the Abolitionist Debate

Abolitionists were mostly opposed to race theories which maintained the inferiority of black people. Yet their rhetoric was often similar to the language of race theories, which revealed an ambiguous attitude towards human equality. In the abolitionist debate, they lodged their protest against slavery at the same time as expressing their belief that black people were inferior.

James Ramsay's *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) was originally written to oppose Edward Long's view that black people were inherently inferior. Ramsay denied that the black skin of the Negroes suggested their inferiority:

> We see sets of national features independent of colour. We see colour gradually verging from white to black, through every intermediate degree of tawny and copper. We see genius sporting in various forms. . .Where shall we fix the claim of genius?[59]

He argued that the theory which drew a direct connection between climate and mental capacity was convincing enough:

> Supposing the general superiority of Europe over natives of the torrid zone, while we argue from these principles, how shall we account for the Mexicans being less black, and more civilized within the equatorial girdle, than the Californians, inhabiting the region of genius, and white skins?[60]

This analysis was against the views of race theorists such as Smith, who maintained that a hot climate affected the nervous system of human beings.

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[59] James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: J. Phillips, 1784), *The Abolition Debate*, 7.

[60] Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion*, *The Abolition Debate*, 12-3.

Ramsay, however, argued that black people were savage since they lived in an uncivilised society. Clearly, he presumed that differing degrees of civilisation influenced skin colour. This approach was similar to those by Blumenbach, Forster, Smith, White, and Prichard, who claimed that the black skin of Negroes was a result of their savage society. They also maintained that skin colour became paler according to the progress of civilisation. In addition, Ramsay hypothesised that if the lives of Negroes were to become civilised, they would improve in every respect:

> . . .suppose savages to be so far civilized, as to be fixed in their habitations, to be well clothed, and properly fed. . .Would not the brain, favoured in its growth, force the skull to take its natural spherical form, and according to our hypothesis, make the man more capable of improvement?[61]

Ramsay undoubtedly suggested that European civilisation would provide the best way of improving the lives of savages. He also believed that the skin colour of humans became fairer when they lived in a more civilised environment: "West Indian children, educated in England, improve not only in complexion, but in elegance of features. . ."[62] Ramsay's assumption about the interaction between skin colour and civilisation contradicted his presumption that black skin did not suggest savagery.

Ramsay's insistence on the importance of converting slaves to Christianity[63] also showed his conviction that European culture definitely improved African people both mentally and physically. Ramsay's abolitionist claim was, therefore, not entirely sympathetic towards slaves, since his view of African people was still dominated by a European sensibility.

The conversion and education of African slaves were issues which were often brought up by Burke, Coleridge, and Beckford[64] in abolitionist debates. Like

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[61] Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion*, *The Abolition Debate*, 22-3.
[62] Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion*, *The Abolition Debate*, 6.
[63] More details are discussed in chapter I.
[64] I analyse the relationship between concerting slaves to Christianity and abolition discourse in chapter I.

Ramsay's argument, this reflects the position adopted in some race theories – for example, those advocated by Blumenbach, Smith, Lawrence, Prichard, Forster and White – which claimed that human nature would be improved by a civilised environment. Like Blumenbach, Burke supposed that the barbarity of African people would be quelled by learning the ways of European civilisation. Burke proposed that English Ministers should manage schools, marriage, and religion in the plantations:

> . . .be it enacted, that for every two districts a school shall be established for young Negroes to be taught three days in the week. . .who shall be chosen, and vacancies filled, by the Minister of the district. . .a competent Minister of some Christian church or congregation shall be provided for the due instruction of the Negroes, and for their performing Divine Service . . . either of the parties is authorized to require of the Minister of the district to be married in the face of the Church.[65]

It is clear that Burke firmly believed in the values of English civilisation. In other words, he argued that slaves became civilised through exposure to European culture during their enslavement.

Generally speaking, it was natural for eighteenth-century English people to think of civilising African people before giving them their freedom. As race theories had emphasised, slaves were mostly regarded as being closely related to apes. The savage image of slaves made most white Europeans fearful of possible violence by black people. In particular, they were conscious of the threat of a slave rebellion. Indeed, a successful rebellion was staged in St. Domingo in 1791. In this respect it is natural for abolitionists to argue for the necessity to educate slaves before emancipation.

In his essay entitled "Review of Clarkson's *History of the Slave Trade*,"[66] Coleridge claimed that the people of Africa who were "barbarians"[67] should be

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[65] Edmund Burke, "Sketch of a Negro Code", *Works*, Vol. 9 (London: n.p., 1818), *The Abolition Debate*, 200-2.

[66] *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 12 (May, 1808) (Edinburgh: D. Willson, 1808), 355-79

[67] Coleridge compared North American Indians and Africans: "The American Indians are savages:

enlightened as "men" by being converted to Christianity:

> It cannot be denied that the superstitions of the Africans will occasion great difficulties and embarrassments; but, by a systematic repression of all religious proselytism, except indeed that most effective instrument of conversion, the christian conduct of our agents. . .and by sedulous endeavours to enlighten them as men; this obstacle might gradually be removed. . .[68]

Like Blumenbach, White, Lawrence and Smith, Coleridge believed that the barbarity of African people derived from both their nature and culture; he saw the indigenous customs of the African people as the "obstacle" hindering their conversion to Christianity. Clearly Coleridge followed the contemporary view that African people had only a primitive culture and that they were not equal to "civilised" European people in terms of intellect and morals.

Beckford apparently maintained that he felt no discrimination against the African people and their country, which goes some way towards suggesting that he did not presume the African people to be innately savage. His attitude towards slaves and the slave trade, however, was based on his presumption that the African people were satisfied with their situation. Beckford stated that slaves enjoyed a better life in plantations than in their native country:

> . . .they [slaves] leave a bad climate for one that is better, for one in which their natural wants may be as easily provided, and without that risk and labour which must attend a life of constant warfare, can hardly be denied.[69]

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the Africans. . .barbarians." and considered that people living as barbarians could be improved by "religion and laws." (*The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 12, 373.)

[68] *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 12, 377.

[69] William Jr. Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, impartially made from a local experience of nearly thirteen years in that Island* (London: T. & J. Egerton, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 277.

Discourse such as this was often heard among members of the pro-slavery lobby such as Cobbett and Bryan Edwards. They argued that slaves had the strength to tolerate hard labour in a hot climate – this notion perhaps having its roots in the race theories of Kames, Smith and Prichard, who asserted that black people could withstand extreme heat since they belonged in the savage environment.

Beckford also argued that a "good" slave was one who was educated by a white master and who never rebelled:

> A good slave will be attached to a good master from principle, and where he has been entrusted with the preservation of his life, he has never, as far as I have been able to learn, been found a traitor.[70]

This image of the obedient slave reflected one of the stereotypes of slaves that people in eighteenth-century Europe expected. Supporters of the slave trade considered that the slavery system provided slaves with the opportunity to learn how to live in a civilised society, which in turn made them more obedient to their white maters. In addition, Beckford seemed to justify the punishments meted out by masters to slaves, based on the assumption that slaves had no sense of fear. This point also demonstrated Beckford's racial prejudice against black people:

> As Negroes are not acquainted with the horrors of anticipation, they are relieved from one of the greatest curses that human nature can experience: if punishment come, it is sudden at least, and unexpected; and the impression of sorrow wears away with that of the lash.[71]

Similar to Long, Beckford affirmed that slaves were void of human feelings.

The barbaric nature of the African people, both mental and physical, was often cited by pro-slavery campaigners in order to justify the slave trade. In seeking

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[70] Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica*, *The Abolition Debate*, 280.
[71] Beckford, *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica*, *The Abolition Debate*, 265.

additional support for the slavery system, Raymund Harris, Cobbett and Long appealed to the scriptures, claiming that African people were destined to obey white people. The justification for slavery was also supported by the concept that European civilisation and Christianity improved the mental well-being of slaves. Hugh Murray, the Scottish ethnologist, developed the idea that human society would be rendered "more numerous, more splendid, more civilized"[72] through external influences. In particular, he stressed the benefits of cultural contact between the "advanced" and the "backward", claiming that both would be corrupted at first, but that both would then progress in the end. Murray predicted that the 'backwardness' of African culture would improve through contact with European people. This argument was developed in Wilberforce's "diffusionist"[73] attitude, which maintained that European culture had the effect of civilising African culture:

> How is it that civilization and the arts grow up in any country? The reign of law and of civil order must be first established. . . we are well warranted. . .that the arts and sciences, knowledge, and civilization, have never yet been found to be a native growth of any country; but that they have ever been communicated from one nation to another, from the more to the less civilized.[74]

Wilberforce argued that only "legitimate trade"[75] could civilise African people, and that their savagery was due to the influence of the slave trade. He emphasised that barbarism had been introduced to the coastal area where the slave trade was flourishing. This contradicted the pro-slavery argument which claimed that it was European slave traders who civilised the African people. By taking a humanitarian stance,

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[72] Hugh Murray, *Enquiries Historical and Moral Respecting the Character of Nations and the Progress of Society* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1808), 2.
[73] Philip D Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 253.
[74] William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Addressed to the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (London: n.p., 1807), 73-74.
[75] Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 86.

Wilberforce criticised the evils of the slave trade. Nevertheless, his attitude revealed that he too regarded Africans as people who should be rescued from a state of barbarism.

The original reason for appointing missionaries to work in plantations was also based on the conception that Christianity should instruct slaves; Christianity was regarded as superior to the indigenous religion of slaves. This notion developed naturally out of the racial prejudice against the African people. In a period when black people were not commonly seen in England, even the missionaries who went to Africa held some feelings of prejudice against African people. William Singleton, a Quaker missionary, disclosed his xenophobic attitude towards Africans in his report in Bethurst: "Some [the African people] appeared to possess so little of the human face, so little indication of intellect, that, at first glance, I was rather painfully affected. . ."[76] Singleton's view of the African people had much in common with that of Cobbett. Most of the missionaries believed that Christianity was the best tool to instruct the black people in civilisation. Especially in plantations, "laziness" was thought as the characteristic trait of black people, which should be corrected by Christian dogma. This moral degradation of black people was often discussed not only by plantation owners and slave masters but also by pro-Africanists who, albeit with Christian overtones[77], dubbed the African "the noble savage"[78].

In the missionaries' discourses, "converts" were required to be obedient to their masters. The missionaries found that the most "effective"[79] method for converting slaves was to use catechisms designed for teaching children, since slaves could not read English. For instance, John Shipman, the Wesleyan district chairman in Jamaica

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[76] William Singleton and others, *Report of the Committee Managing a Fund Raised by Some Friends for the Purpose of Promoting African Instruction; with an Account of a Visit to the Gambia and Sierra Leone* (London: n.p., 1822), 25.

[77] Abbé Grégoire, in *De la literature des négres*, which drew much from Blumenbach, argued that African laziness could be corrected by Christianity and civilization. (cf. Abbé Grégoire, *De la literature des négres, ou recherches sur leur facultés intellectuelles, leurs qualités morales, et leur litérature* (Paris: n.p., 1808), trans. D. B. Warden as *An Enquiry Concerning the Intellectual and Moral Facilities and Literature of Negroes. . .* (Brooklyn: n.p., 1810).

[78] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 241.

[79] Tuner, Mary, *Slaves and Missionaries* (Barbados: The University Press of the West Indies, 1998), 72.

created a special version of the catechism for slaves, which was adapted from John Wesley's *Instructions for Children*. Shipman's catechism showed that "duty and obedience"[80] were necessary in order for servants to gain salvation. In this catechism, the virtue of labour was emphasised. The missionaries in Jamaica applied this catechism while preaching in plantations. To convert slaves, they tried to suppress aspects of the slaves' own culture, including drumming and dancing, since these were connected with "the slaves' traditional religion."[81] In addition, the missionaries advised that slaves should neither steal nor run away from their masters. The Wesleyan missionaries recounted the story of Onesimus, who had once run away from his master and was converted to show how the servant should be:

> Was [Onesimus] a good and dutiful slave?
> No, he was a very bad one, for he was a thief and runaway.
> And how did the slave behave himself after his repentance and conversion to Jesus Christ?
> He behaved himself well and was profitable to his master.
>
> Does religion produce the same effect now on slaves that have it?
> Yes, they neither rob nor run away, but are good servants.[82]

By claiming that submissive slaves were ideal models within Christian society, missionaries made an attempt to protect the rights of slave masters over their slaves. In this respect, missionaries had a political influence upon slavery in terms of compromising the pro-slavery system in plantations.

However, when missionaries taught slaves Christian dogma and the idea of human equality, they inevitably showed a certain contradiction in their teaching. On

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[80] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 76.
[81] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 75.
[82] Kingston Young, Mar.6, 1823, f.210, Box 118, from *Letters from missionaries in Jamaica to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee in London* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Correspondence, West Indies General, Boxes), 112-34, qtd. in Turner, 77.

one hand the missionaries preached that all human beings were equal:

> The missionaries. . .addressed themselves to the slaves as people with souls to be saved, capable of intellectual and moral judgements, and the activities they encouraged were presented in a philosophical framework that posited the spiritual equality of all men.[83]

Slaves were provided with the opportunity to claim their existing rights of equality between black and white. The mission churches also enhanced the social status of "slave converts":

> . . .they [the mission churches] awarded trusted converts responsible positions in the church hierarchy. . .at the top of the hierarchy were assistants recruited to help the missionaries conduct and supervise membership classes.[84]

On the other hand, the mission churches stressed that the slaves' rights should be kept within the slave system. Whilst promoting an increase in the number of slave converts, by 1816 the missionaries strictly denied slave converts the right to preach or teach; this maintained their desire to distinguish between authorised church members and native preachers. Nevertheless, slaves had already learned that they had the right to freedom from their masters.

Under these circumstances, the rebellions staged by slaves in order to claim their rights and freedom often took place in the West Indies. These frequent rebellions caused colonists to accuse missionaries of being "a disruptive element"[85] and the enemy of slavery. As a result of a rebellion in Demerara in August 1823, John Smith, the Wesleyan missionary, was imprisoned by colonists under suspicion of treason to

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[83] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 47.
[84] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 89.
[85] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 79.

instigate slaves to rebel against their masters. This incident disturbed the missionary committee in Jamaica, who made it clear that their mission was not against the policy of the colonial government. Some of the more extreme members of the committee published their resolution in the Jamaican press, saying that they "repudiated"[86] the antislavery cause. In England, abolitionists such as Wilberforce and his supporters were condemned by the Jamaican press for apparently defending the colonial rebellion.[87] These events demonstrate how missionaries in the early nineteenth century revealed the ideological limitations of their Christian dogma, especially when it came to human equality: they were strongly influenced by Euro-centric and imperial polity. Clearly, the assumed intellectual and moral barbarism of African people was useful both for the colonial government and the missionaries, since it allowed them to manipulate Africans "in the direction of their own desires."[88]

On the other hand, the anti-slavery arguments put forward by Clarkson, Falconbridge, Newton and Fox claimed that slaves were human beings just as white people were; this directly contradicted the theories of Long, White, Cobbett, Prichard, Lawrence and Cuvier, who insisted that black people were intellectually and psychologically similar to animals.

Clarkson affirmed that slaves "wanted to be free"[89] by recounting a story of the slave who tried to escape from his master. He asserted that slaves had the moral right to liberty. This assumption was incompatible with Beckford's view that slaves did not feel any discomfort during their lives in plantations.

Falconbridge saw a female slave who went mad during the middle passage; like Clarkson, his attitude was based on the hypothesis that black people experienced the same feelings as white people did:

> It frequently happens that the Negroes, on being purchased by the

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[86] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 110.
[87] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 111.
[88] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 258.
[89] Thomas Clarkson, *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (London: J. Phillips, 1786), *The Abolition Debate*, 67.

> Europeans, become raving mad. . . I saw a young negro woman chained to the deck, who had lost her senses, soon after she was purchased and taken on board.[90]

By portraying slaves as respectable human beings, Falconbridge criticised the way the slave trade abused the dignity of individuals.

Fox insisted that people who supported the slave trade should stop believing that Africa was a barbarous land inhabited by savages. On the contrary, he insisted that African people seemed to possess "noble and heroic minds":

> No longer can it be pretended, that Africa is a barbarous, uncultivated land, inhabited by a race of savages inferior to the rest of the human species. . . It appears that they possess noble and heroic minds, disdaining slavery. . .[91]

Fox argued that the most effective way of ending the slave trade was to boycott its products, especially sugar and rum. He suggested that a decrease in demand for sugar would mean a decrease in the need for slave labour in plantations.

Newton was eager to describe in *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (1788) that African people already led a civilised life and possessed a humane sensibility[92]. He insisted that the slave trade was so "iniquitous" and so "cruel" to abuse the human dignity of slaves:

> . . . I ought not to be afraid of offending many, by declaring the truth. If, indeed, there can be many, whom even interest can prevail upon to contradict the common sense of mankind, by pleading for a commerce, so

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[90] Alexander Falconbridge, *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 134.

[91] William Fox, "An Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum" (11th edn; London: M.Gurney, 1791), *The Abolition Debate*, 163.

[92] See in detail in the part of Newton's *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* in chapter I.

iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive, as the African Slave Trade![93]

### (iv) Conclusion

Within the race theories proposed during the period from 1774 to 1840 in Europe, the black skin of African people was the biggest issue to be overcome: theorists attempted to establish the reason why Africans had darker skin than Europeans. A number of approaches were pursued, including arguments claiming that black skin was caused by bile, climate, and environment. Generally speaking, most theorists believed there was a strong connection between black skin and the inferiority of African people. Assuming that their pale skin gave them an inherent superiority, European race theorists considered African people to be the most primitive race. Although their respective approaches were different, both Blumenbach and White argued for a racial hierarchy, which depicted the typical Euro-centric sensibility prevailing in eighteenth-century Europe by placing black people at the bottom and white people at the very top. Other theorists more or less followed this racial division and helped to reinforce the definition that African people were the most savage of all human races. This conception of African people as "uncivilised" strengthened the justification for the slave trade. Pro-slavery supporters insisted that African people made suitable slaves because of their savagery, and continued to lend their support for the slave trade even after abolitionists had repeatedly drawn attention to the cruelties of slavery. Their attitude towards African people was similar to that of the merchants towards their merchandise. John Baker Holroyd, for instance, in his pro-slave trade essay, maintained that African slaves would obtain "a greater degree of comfort and happiness"[94] through the regulation bill which decreased the number of imported slaves. He also considered that a reduction in the number of slaves would increase

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[93] John Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, 117.

[94] John Baker, 1st Earl of Sheffield Holroyd, *Observations on the Project for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (London: J. Debrett, 1790), *The Abolition Debate*, 367.

their price and, in turn, would help to improve the way slaves were treated:

> Such a regulation will operate strongly in favour of the Negroes, and raise proportionably the value of those now in the islands; the increase of value will promote better treatment of the Negroes, and ultimately the Planter will reap the advantage.[95]

Abolitionists often cited the barbarism of black people as justification for converting slaves to Christianity. Ramsay, Burke and Coleridge insisted that African people should be educated in the ways of Christianity before being given their freedom, since they presumed that "a previous introduction with Christianity"[96] could prepare slaves for settling into European society. Their convictions shared some common ground with missionary doctrine, which maintained that the teaching of Christian morals would make human beings "honest, sober, industrious, orderly, humble, self-denying, philanthropic, and beneficent."[97] According to missionary ideology, it was important to demonstrate to the colonial government that a religious grounding made slaves obedient and industrious. The missionaries essentially "emphasized" that the benefits of a Christian life would be reaped after death.[98] The religious teaching provided by missionaries culminated in an attempt to introduce images of heaven to slaves:

> What sort of place is Heaven?
> Full of Light and Glory.
> How will good men live there?
> In Joy and happiness greater than they can now desire or think.
> Wherein will happiness lie?

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[95] Holroyd, *Observations on the Project for Abolishing the Slave Trade*, *The Abolition Debate*, 368.
[96] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 420.
[97] Evidence of Dandeson Coates, Secretary of CMS, PP, 1836, vii (538), 516, qtd. in *The Image of Africa*, 420.
[98] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 77.

> In enjoyment of God.
> How will they spend their time?
> Singing praise to God.[99]

Slave converts on their death-beds expressed their desire to go to the place of comfort and glory. In fact, it should be acknowledged that missionaries took advantage of slaves' ignorance of Western culture and religion. The missionaries' intentions were primarily to demonstrate how they were turning slaves into ideal servants for their masters. This mission strategy reveals the delicate position in which missionaries found themselves, attempting to balance an obligation to a commercial society with a sense of loyalty to their humanitarian sensibilities. The missionaries could not risk provoking the keen desire of slaves to gain their rights and freedom.

Within colonial society, civilised slaves were considered preferable since they were regarded as profitable. In this respect, the mission to turn slaves into civilised Christians also became an "economic mission."[100] As a means of bringing a good deal of wealth to the English economy, slaves were a valuable commodity for the English government. Anti-abolitionists assumed that abandoning the slave trade destroyed the rights of property. Cobbett proclaimed that the slave trade was justified, pointing out that the institution of slavery was sanctioned by churches in his letter to the Bishop of Rochester, which was printed in his *Political Register* in 1802:

> Can your lordship consent to abolish a trade, which the moral as well as the common and statute law of the kingdom justifies, without a full and ample compensation to those persons whose fortunes must be ruined by such abolition? I might. . .call to your lordship's remembrance that it is not very long since your lordship's predecessors... had many slaves attached to the estates of the church. . .[101]

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[99] Tuner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 78.
[100] Curtin, *The Image of Africa*, 420.
[101] Cobbett, William, "Slave Trade" from *Political Register*, Vol. 1 (London: n.p., January—June, 1802), *The Abolition Debate*, 374.

In addition, Cobbett suggested that it should be necessary for the government to compensate slave masters and traders for the loss of their property if the slave trade was to be abolished. Coleridge also showed the importance of protecting the rights of planters over their estate if the abolition law were to be passed.

Race theories, which after all supported the racial inferiority of African people, helped to justify pro-slavery arguments and gave added momentum to the activities of the slave trade. Even monogenist approaches that had originally been conceived from an abolitionists' stance ironically strengthened the sensibility of European superiority and aggravated the racial prejudice held against black people. In conclusion, racial prejudice against black people was one of the obstacles hindering the spread of egalitarian ideology along with the abolitionist movement.

## Chapter III

### Coleridge and Abolitionist Poems in a Unitarian Context

### (i) Coleridge and Unitarianism

In October 1791 Coleridge became a student at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he showed an interest in the political activities of dissenters. After leaving Cambridge in December 1794, Coleridge became yet more active as religious dissenter as well as political radicalist. William Frend, Coleridge's tutor during his residence at Jesus College, played an important role in influencing Coleridge's religious and political beliefs. Frend had adopted a Unitarian stance since 1787 and published *An Address to the Inhabitants of Cambridge* (1788) to reinforce his "antitrinitarian views".[1] He was expelled by the university for his Unitarianism, which had come to be regarded as a sign of radical dissent especially after the French Revolution. Until 1813, when William Smith's Unitarian Relief Bill was passed in Parliament[2], Unitarians had been the target of strong discrimination in eighteenth- century English society for the rebellious nature of their religious beliefs and political ideals. Unitarianism rejected the Thirty-Nine Articles, one of which asserted the Trinitarian doctrine. The 1689 Toleration Act did not extend to Unitarians since this Act gave no concession to "any person that shall deny in his Preaching or Writing the Doctrines of the Blessed Trinity as it is declared in the aforesaid Articles of Religion".[3] Rejecting the Thirty-nine Articles meant a rejection of the Test and Corporation Acts, which required allegiance to the Anglican Church and the King. The Unitarian petitions to repeal these Acts were frequently submitted to Parliament alongside the reform movements in the 1790s.

The English dissenters' campaign for human rights found new impetus when

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[1] Stuart Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 27.
[2] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 168.
[3] *The Law and Working of the Constitution*, ed. W.C. Costin and J.S. Watson, 2 vols. (London: Adam Black & Charles Black), 1952, Vol. 1, 67.

Louis XVI sanctioned the "Declaration of Rights" in October 1789. This constitution declared that all men had equal and natural rights such as the right to resist oppression and the "rightful toleration of religious opinions".[4] Richard Price's sermon entitled "A discourse on the love of our country", delivered on 4th November 1789, spelled out precisely what the English Protestant dissenters expected from the Government. Price summed up the principle of the Revolution in the following three points:

> First; The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.
> Secondly; The right to resist power when abused. And,
> Thirdly; The right to choose our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.[5]

Price believed that, following the events of the French Revolution, people had the natural right to live equally. Price's *Discourse*, which was circulated among many dissenters including Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian scientist, much reflected Price's liberal philosophy. Priestley's sermon, which opposed the Test and Cooperation Act in Birmingham, was delivered just after Price's *Discourse* had been released. In his sermon, Priestley argued that the dissenters should have "all the natural and just rights of men".[6] And as for Price's sermon, this undoubtedly stimulated revolutionary feelings among dissenters.

Unitarian pamphlets and articles were circulated in England, mostly published by Joseph Johnson in London. Much of the Warrington Academy's output, such as Priestley's books, was published by Johnson. For example, Johnson published Priestley's *Essay on a Course of Liberal Education* (1765), a collection of his works at Warrington. The connection between Priestley and Johnson gradually grew in importance because Johnson also helps to publish his scientific works. Priestley appointed Johnson as his main agent in London because he found him to be "the most

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[4] Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 95.
[5] Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country 1789* (London: T. Cadell, 1789), 34.
[6] Joseph Priestley, *The Conduct to be Observed By Dissenters in order to Procure the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts*, 2nd edn. (Birmingham: Thomas Pearson, 1789), 15.

active, punctual & intelligent, as well as the most honest man in the trade".[7] Under these circumstances, not only Priestley but also other prominent dissenters had their poems and essays published by Johnson. Johnson published Mary Wollstonecraft's "sympathetic review"[8] for Price's sermon in the *Analytical* in December 1789. This monthly magazine, printed by Johnson, encompassed the genres of literature, theology, history, and science; and its tone apparently expressed a "rational anti-establishment position"[9] since most of the contributors were Protestant Dissenters. They also demonstrated their pro-revolutionary stance in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, whose editor was Benjamin Flower. Thus, dissenting articles, poems and extracts enjoyed a wide circulation in England from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century.

Priestley was one of the key figures who gave a strong influence on the Unitarian radicals such as Frend, Dyer, and Coleridge in late eighteenth- century England. Priestley's Unitarianism was based on his belief that there was a universal God who governed everything in existence:

> That there is one God, who made the world and all things in it, and who governs it by his providence, who loves virtue and rewards it, who hates vice and will punish it, are truths too sublime to have been investigated by human speculation.[10]

Priestley argued that God would redeem every vice in human society. Accordingly, he supported the revolutionary movements that aimed to remedy social disorders. Priestley considered that everything in society progressed towards "a more perfect state":

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[7] Priestley, *A Scientific Autobiography of Joseph Priestley* (1773-1804), ed. Robert E. Schofield (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1966), 17.

[8] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 96.

[9] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 89.

[10] Priestley, *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit to which is added, The History of the Philosophical Doctrine concerning the Origin of the Soul, and the Nature of Matter; with its Influence on Christianity, especially with Respect to the doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1777), 245.

> In the excellent constitution of nature, evils of all kinds, some way or other, find their proper remedy; and when government, religion, education, and every thing that is valuable in society, seem to be in so fine a progress towards a more perfect state, is it not our wisdom to favour this progress. . .[11]

Priestley's millenarianism accorded with the ideology of dissenters who were eager to reform the social and political order in England. In addition, in his philosophy of political liberty, Priestley expressed precisely what had become the central issue for dissenters in the1790s – namely, that every man should be "fully equal to any other person whatever":

> The sum of what hath been advanced upon this head, is a maxim, than which nothing is more true, that every government, in its original principles, and antecedent to its present form, is an equal republic; and, consequently, that every man, when he comes to be sensible of his natural rights, and to feel his own importance, will consider himself as fully equal to any other person what ever.[12]

Priestley criticised Pitt's government for its reluctance to progress towards an egalitarian society. This denunciation of the established society had the effect of fuelling social protest from dissenters, especially from Unitarians who had suffered severe discrimination in English society.

Priestley's *Defences of Unitarianism for 1786* (1787), which argued for the abolition of the rule of subscription for Oxford and Cambridge Universities, must have encouraged Frend to convert to Unitarianism. Since Frend also considered that

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[11] Priestley, *The Theological and Miscellaneous Writings of Joseph Priestley*, ed. John Towill Rutt, 25 vols, 1817-31 (Sterling, Virginia, and Bristol, 1999: rpt. from London edition 1817-31), Vol. 22, 122.

[12] Priestley, *The Theological and Miscellaneous Writings*, in Rutt, Vol. 22, 26.

subscription "imposed a tyranny over the mind"[13], he claimed that Unitarians should not be discriminated against in society because of their religious belief:

> The Dissenters are Men and Englishmen; they have distinguished themselves by their Love to their Country, and their Zeal for it's Liberties: they have produced within these few years some of the noblest Supporters of Christianity. . . and neighbouring Nations observe with astonishment our *in*consistency, when they perceive, that the greatest ornament of this Country; he, whom every learned Society in Europe is proud to enrol among it's members, should be debarred by the absurd prejudices of superstition, from a place in our Universities.[14]

Frend showed that the Unitarians loved their country just as other English people did, claiming that a state of harmony should be established between dissenters and Anglicans in England.

Frend also expressed his support for the French Revolution:

> . . . is there an englishman, who did not exult on this occasion? At what period did I rejoice? was it not at the time when every good man rejoiced with me, when tyranny received a fatal blow, when despotism was overthrown by the united efforts of all orders of men in an extensive empire?[15]

Frend praised the French Revolution by insisting that tyranny and despotism had been "overthrown". In May 1793 he was summoned to court in Cambridge for publishing a pamphlet entitled *Peace and Union* in February of that year. In this pamphlet,

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[13] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 85.
[14] William Frend, *Thoughts on Subscription to Religious Tests* (St. Ives: T. Bloom, 1788), 24, 19-20.
[15] Frend, *An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge against William Frend, M.A.* (Cambridge: B. Flower, 1793), 92.

Frend criticised the clergy of "the established church"[16] and Pitt's war policy against France. During 1790s in England, adopting the antitrinitarian view, together with supporting the French Revolution and opposing the war with France were all "equated"[17] with Jacobinism. In political terms, Unitarians who had supported the French Revolution were considered socially dangerous by Anglicans. Under these circumstances, it is most likely that Frend was prosecuted for "political rather than of religious character"[18].

Despite his sympathy towards the French Revolution, Frend demonstrated his uneasiness about the "bloodshed" resulting from the September Massacre which followed the Reign of Terror:

> ". . .but does it follow, that I was pleased with the scenes which succeeded, that I now look with joy and not with horrour on the dreadful outrages to which that country has been exposed? The massacres and bloodshed, disgracing so noble a cause, have pained every lover of freedom. . ."[19]

Frend's political attitude was based on his idea of "universal benevolence":

> Shall he, Sir, be esteemed an infidel, who, for the second article of his creed, grounds his hope of salvation solely on Jesus Christ? Who looks upon his saviour as a person sent from heaven to be the means of the greatest happiness to mankind?. . . That every Christian is bound to entertain sentiments of universal benevolence, to love his fellow creatures of every sect, colour or description, is the third grand point of my faith. [20]

In *Peace and Union*, Frend proposed to unite the differences between Republicans and

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[16] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 28.
[17] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 28.
[18] Henry Gunning, *Reminiscences of the University, Town and Country of Cambridge, from the Year 1780*, 2 vols. (London: n.p., 1854), Vol. 1, 303.
[19] Frend, *An Account*, 92.
[20] Frend, *An Account*, 89.

Anti-Republicans to spare the country "the horrours attendant on civil commotions."[21] As Coleridge sympathised with Frend in his egalitarianism and the idea of "universal benevolence", he applauded Frend's defence speech in court.[22] Coleridge's philosophical admiration for Frend led him to convert to Unitarianism; furthermore, as an indication of how much Coleridge's radicalism was strengthened by Frend's intellectual companionship, Coleridge left Cambridge University just one year after Frend was expelled from the same institution.

It was through Frend that Coleridge came into contact with Unitarian leaders such as George Dyer, the Cambridge graduate who also converted to Unitarianism, and Priestley. Frend's work was circulated in Oxford, Cambridge, and London and won "an admiring response"[23] from them. After leaving Cambridge, Coleridge frequently contacted radicals who had joined the London Corresponding Society, which was established in 1792 to support the democratic movement in England. This political group had close ties with Cambridge dissenters like Dyer and Frend, Cambridge University having been a centre for radicals and reformists during the1780s. In the1780, as "a forum for dissenting and reformist opinion in town and university"[24], the Cambridge Constitutional Society was founded by the members of The Society for Constitutional Information [SCI][25] that demanded "annual elections to parliament" and an extension of the franchise to provide "full male suffrage and political rights for dissenters".[26] Richard Price, another political model for Coleridge, was one of the members of SCI. In November 1789, Price welcomed "every triumph of liberty and justice"[27] of the French Revolution at the meeting of the London Revolution Society. The radicals, the dissenters, and especially the Unitarians made a common resolution to celebrate the French Revolution, since they felt that this revolution would open the

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[21] Frend, *Peace and Union, Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St. Ives: P.C. Croft, 1793), 1.
[22] Gunning, *Reminiscences of the University Town*, Vol. 1, 299-300.
[23] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 85.
[24] Nicholas Roe, Wordsworth *and Coleridge The Radical Years* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988, rpt.2003), 30.
[25] It was founded by Major John Cartwright in 1780.
[26] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 29.
[27] Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, Appendix 13.

way to civil and religious liberty for every religious sect. In the same year, many people at Cambridge University took a "friendly" attitude towards the French Revolution:

> . . .a great number of members of the Senate [were] friendly to the French Revolution; and soon after the destruction of the Bastile there were a proposal for a dinner to celebrate that event. . .[28]

Frend was among those who rejoiced at the revolution, and recorded the excitement of that time:

> . . . when the whole nation was of one mind, and this university thought it a duty to impress the sentiment on our young men, by giving them as a proper subject for their talents, the taking of the bastile. . .[29]

Through his friendship with Frend as well as his radical status at Cambridge University, Coleridge was naturally ready to become a social protester.

From a Unitarian point of view, the French Revolution was the realisation of millenarianism. The millenarian idea of revolution prevailed among some of the Unitarian thinkers in the late eighteenth century such as Frend, Price and Priestley. Frend understood that the French Revolution resulted from "terror" and "despotism". Moreover, according to his understanding of the Book of Revelation, Frend believed that the "terror" and "despotism" before the French Revolution symbolised the idea of the Apocalypse and that the Revolution itself represented the glory of Christ's "resurrection". Similar millenarian discourse is also associated with other eminent dissenters such as Price and Priestley.

Price proposed a motion to the National Assembly in November 1789, arguing

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[28] Gunning, *Reminiscences of the University Town*, Vol. 1, 290-1.
[29] Frend, *An Account*, 92.

that he had seen "salvation"[30] in the French Revolution, while Priestley assumed that the millennium was "on the way"[31] through the French Revolution. Priestley expected to see "the extinction of all *national prejudice*, and enmity, and the establishment of *universal peace* and good will among all nations"[32]. According to his firm beliefs in the *Old Testament*, Priestley insisted that "Christ's Kingdom would be a real kingdom, not a spiritual one"[33]. From Priestley's point of view, Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness would not be established "without the greatest convulsions and the violent overthrow of other kingdoms"[34]. He relished the violent events of the French Revolution since he was in no doubt that this violence was "the necessary evil" for the arrival of Messiah and for future peace and happiness.

Since the Unitarians regarded the French Revolution as the sign of millennium, they opposed to Britain's war against France. Their objection against the war was derived from religious as well as political reasons. Most of the eminent Unitarians such as Frend and Priestley not only disagreed with the British government's war strategy but also criticised the established Church. Unitarianism, therefore, was regarded as socially dangerous owing to its antitrinitarian beliefs as well as its political radicalism.

In *Peace and Union*, Frend showed his objection to the war by insisting that the execution of Louis XVI was not a "sufficient reason"[35] for the British government to go to war:

> If Louis Capet did, when king, encourage the invasion of his country, however we may be inclined to pity the unfortunate man for the errour of his conduct, we have no right to proclaim him innocent in point of law. It is in short no business of ours, and if all the crowned heads on the

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[30] Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, 49.

[31] Martin Fitzpatrick, "Joseph Priestley and the Millennium", *Science, medicine and dissent: Jeseph Priestley*, eds. R. G. W. Anderson and Christopher Lawrence (London: Wellcome Trust, 1987), 29-37, 34.

[32] Priestley, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1791, Introduction by Jonathan Wordsworth, Poole (Washington D. C.: Woodstock Books, 1997), 143.

[33] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 31.

[34] Priestley, *The Theological and Miscellaneous Writings*, in Rutt, Vol. 15, 534-5.

[35] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 96.

continent were taken off, it no business of ours.[36]

By treating the execution of Louis XVI as a domestic matter for France, Frend asserted that the British government exceeded its political right over France. In the same work, Frend expressed his disapproval of the current system of government and proposed constitutional reforms. He stressed that the Church of England could be a "threat to two houses of the legislature"[37]:

> For ten thousand men in black under the direction of an individual are a far more formidable body, than ten thousand times that number in arms, and more likely to produce the greatest injury to civil society.[38]

Frend warned that the expansion of the political power of the Church of England would be dangerous for "civil" life in England. He also condemned the rites of the Anglican Church as being full of "superstitious prejudices"[39]. The Master and Fellows of Jesus College, Cambridge, who accused Frend of degrading the established church and of disturbing "the harmony of society", condemned his provocative attitude.[40]

Priestley's opposition to the war against republican France stemmed mainly from his criticisms against the established church. He demonstrated that the war was followed by an assault on the "antichristian and idolatrous ecclesiastical establishment of Christianity" in the western world where "many more persons having been destroyed by *Christians*, as they have called themselves, than by *Heathens*."[41] He claimed that the Church of England was "contaminated"[42] by Catholicism, which he regarded as the most corrupt among Christian denominations. Priestley's conclusion was that church and state should be separated, his view being that the spread of

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[36] Frend, *Peace and Union*, 46.
[37] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 97.
[38] Frend, *Peace and Union*, 27.
[39] Frend, *Peace and Union*, 40.
[40] Frend, *An Account*, x
[41] Priestley, *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley*, ed. Jack Lindsay (Bath: Adam and Dart, 1970), 19.
[42] Fitzpatrick, "Joseph Priestley and the Millennium", *Science, medicine and dissent*, 34.

Christianity did not depend on government power. This position was clear from his letter to Pitt in 1787: "It wants no support that you, Sir, as a statesman can give it, and it will prevail in spite of any obstruction that you can throw in its way."[43]

He argued that there should be "complete toleration for all religion"[44] since he believed that all creatures should be happy:

> Strictly speaking, there are no more than two just and independent rules of human conduct, according to the light of nature, one of which is obedience to the will of God, and the other a regard to our own real happiness; for another rule, which is a regard to the good of others, exactly coincides with a regard to the will of God; since all that we know of the will of God, according to the light of nature, is his desire that all his creatures should be happy, and therefore that they should all contribute to the happiness of each other. . .[45]

Priestley's philosophy of human happiness was similar to Frend's concept of "universal benevolence". His humanitarian sensibility, together with his belief that the doctrine of the trinity was corrupted, made him protest against Test and Corporation Acts.

Priestley attempted to have the Test and Corporation Acts repealed, which had the effect of making Unitarians the target of discrimination in English society. He appealed to Pitt for the abolition of the Test Acts, insisting that all dissenters were "unjustly and ignominiously treated" by these Acts:

> I appeal to the impartial public, whether, though written with some degree of indignation at recent, and as we thought unjust treatment, there be

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[43] Priestley, *Letter to the Right Ho. William Pitt. . .on the Subjects of Toleration and Church Establishments, occasioned by his Speech against the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Act on Wednesday, the 28th of March 1787* (London: J. Johnson, 1787), in Rutt, Vol. 19, 119.

[44] Priestley, *A letter of advice to those Dissenters who conduct the application to Parliament for relief from certain penal laws*, 1773, in Rutt, Vol. 22, 459.

[45] Priestley, *The Institutes of natural and revealed religion*, 3 vols, 1772-1774, in Rutt, Vol. 2, 25.

> anything in it unbecoming men and Englishmen, unjustly and ignominiously treated.[46]

Priestley made this appeal after his house and laboratory in Birmingham had been attacked by a "church and king"[47] mob in July 1791. As Priestley revealed in his *Appeal*, the Unitarians became the target of "general odium and punishment".[48] Moreover, Priestley was publicly denounced for his radical protest against the Church of England as well as Pitt's government. On 2 March, 1790 the House of Commons debated Fox's motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; during the proceedings, Edmund Burke claimed that Priestley "hated all religious establishments":

> Mr. Burke then mentioned Dr. Priestley's declaration, "that he hated all religious establishments, and thought them sinful and idolatrous", and he produced a letter written by the doctor in which he talked of a train of gunpowder being laid to the church establishment, which would soon blow it up. . . [49]

Burke's criticism of Priestley derived from his belief that the constitutional system must forever remain. He was afraid that "the useless and the most dangerous" who resorted to the dissenting sentiment "broke asunder all those bonds which had formed the happiness of mankind for ages."[50] During the debate, Burke claimed that Unitarians such as Price and Priestley "were avowed enemies to the Church of England".[51] Burke warned that the Unitarians were "allies"[52] of the French Jacobins. His concerns for Unitarian ideology exactly represented the anti-Unitarian atmosphere

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[46] Priestley, *Appeal to the Public, on the Subject of the Riots in Birmingham* (London: J. Johnson, 1792), in Rutt, Vol. 19, 368.
[47] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 91.
[48] Priestley, *Appeal* in Rutt, Vol. 19, 369.
[49] *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. 28 (London: T.C. Hansard, 1816), 438.
[50] *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. 28, 435.
[51] *The Parliamentary History of England*, Vol. 28, 440.
[52] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 8.

that pervaded England in 1790s. In the end, Fox's motion was defeated by a margin of 142 votes to 63. The Unitarians remained socially impotent until 1814.

Although Priestley was forced to endure this extreme prejudice, he continued to criticise the established Church and the government. He challenged Burke by pointing out that Burke had at one time been sympathetic towards dissenters but had later changed his attitude and had become an enemy of Unitarians. Burke's political stance, certainly, became conservative, as was clearly expressed in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791).[53] Priestley observed with regret Burke's ideological shift in his preface to *Letters to Burke*:

> I must now no longer class him among the friends of what I deem to be the *cause of liberty*, *civil* or *religious*. . . he had been greatly befriended by the *Dissenters*, many of whom were enthusiastically attached to him. . . and he made a common cause with us in zealously patronizing the liberty of America.[54]

Priestley was surprised by the fact that Burke criticised the French Revolution, although he had indeed approved of the American Revolution. For Priestley, both revolutions arose out of the same basic principle of liberty. Burke, on the contrary, found "dangerous principles"[55] in the French Revolution, since he saw that the social order had been damaged as a result. In his last letter to Burke, Priestley argued that revolutions in France and America taught "the doctrine of *liberty*, *civil* and *religious*, with infinitely greater force than a thousand treatises on the subject".[56] Unlike Burke, Priestley's theory on universal liberty never altered throughout his life.

Thus, Unitarian discourse on social reforms was based largely on the belief that all human beings should have the right to pursue their own happiness and coming millennium—real rule of Christ. This ideology naturally influenced Coleridge, who

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[53] I discussed Burke and his political stance in chapter I.
[54] Priestley, *Letters to Edmund Burke*, iii-iv.
[55] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 85.
[56] Priestley, *Letters to Edmund Burke*, 140.

was enthusiastic towards radical social reforms. Coleridge also opposed the war against France. In his lecture entitled "On the Present War" (1795), he claimed that Britain's war with France would result in a violent revolution in Britain led by people who were frustrated by the expenses of the war as well as by food shortages. Coleridge was also concerned that the war would bring an "oppressed feel" [57] and restlessness to people's minds. He concluded that this war was, after all, against "reason", "freedom", and "human nature":

> Are we men? Freemen? Rational men? And shall we carry on this wild and priestly War against reason, against freedom, against human nature? If there be one among you, who departs from me without feeling it his immediate duty to petition or remonstrate against the continuance of it, I envy that man neither his head or his heart![58]

Coleridge argued that Britain's repressive war policy had a negative effect on human minds, and feared that the freedom of the British people might be compromised by the country's war action. In particular, he was concerned over the way the British government followed what had happened in France during and after the French Revolution.

Coleridge expressed explicitly the direction in which society should develop. He supported social reforms and criticised Two Acts of 1795 that repressed the reform movements particularly in *The Watchman*. As a Unitarian he was clearly opposed the whole polity of the Church of England, which discriminated harshly against dissenters. Coleridge passionately expressed his political and religious stance in "On the Slave Trade", in which he condemned the "impudence" of the English government that declined the movement for abolition:

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[57] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, eds. L. Patton and P.Mann (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 48.
[58] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, 74.

> The jealous spirit of liberty placed the Elector of Hanover on the throne of Great Britain: and the Duke of Clarence, one of his illustrious descendants, made his maiden speech IN FAVOUR OF THE SLAVE TRADE . . . Gracious God! enormities, at which a Caligula might have turned pale, are authorised by our laws, and jocosely defended by our Princes; and yet we have the impudence to call the French a Nation of *Atheists*![59]

Coleridge clearly showed his anti-establishment stance by arguing that it was morally wrong to support the slave trade. He did not even hesitate to criticise statements made by the Prince. Coleridge's praise for the philosophy of the French Revolution was typically dissenting. Like Dyer, Coleridge poignantly showed his sympathy with the repressed people and his disgust at the government.

In his anti-slavery discourse, Coleridge protested against the established system including the Church of England, ridiculing the religious beliefs of Anglican people who still enjoyed the food obtained through slave labour:

> A part of that food among most of you, is sweetened with Brother's Blood. "Lord! Bless the food which thou hast given us?" O Blasphemy! Did God give food mingled with the blood of the Murdered?[60]

Coleridge eloquently pointed out the hypocrisy of Christians who insisted on equality among all human beings but did not practise it. In other words, he criticised the pseudo egalitarianism of the Anglican people who actually did not regard slaves as their brothers. Coleridge's concerns for equality partly derived from his Unitarian sensibility. As Frend and Priestley strongly held egalitarianism in their Unitarian dogma, Coleridge also hoped to eliminate existing discrimination in English society. In this respect, Coleridge's criticism of the slave trade was based on his Unitarian protest against the government, society, and the Anglican Church.

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[59] Coleridge, *The Watchman*, ed. Lewis Patton (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970), 136.
[60] Coleridge, *The Watchman*, 138-39.

When Priestley emigrated to America, it was with a certain regret that Cambridge dissenters saluted his departure:

> To JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L.L.D., &c., on his departure into exile, from a few Members of the University of Cambridge, who regret that this expression of their esteem should be occasioned by the ingratitude of their country. Wm Frend, James Losh, John Tweddell, Godfrey Higgins.[61]

Coleridge also sympathised with Priestley by regarding him as a victim who was driven from his native land by "the blind multitude":

> Lo! PRIESTLEY there, Patriot, and Saint, and Sage:
> Him, full of years, from his lov'd native land
> Statesmen blood-stain'd and Priests idolatrous
> By dark lies mad'ning the blind multitude
> Drove with vain hate. Calm, pitying he retir'd,
> And mus'd expectant on these promis'd years.[62]

By addressing him as "Patriot", "Saint", and "Sage", Coleridge showed that Priestley was one of the "political, spiritual, and philosophic heroes"[63] of the 1790s. Coleridge condemned the government and the church as being so corrupt that neither could accept Priestley's philosophy.

Following Frend's banishment from Cambridge and Priestley's exile to America, Coleridge seemed to lose intellectual support for his Unitarianism. Nevertheless, he had been active as a successor to those eminent dissenters by preaching and lecturing on politics and religion across England. *The Lecture on the Slave Trade* of June 1795

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[61] Priestley, *The Life and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley*, ed. J.T. Rutt, 2 vols. (London: n. p., 1832), Vol. 2, 225.
[62] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Poetical Works 1, Poems (Reading Text)*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), ll. 372-77.
[63] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 96.

in Bristol was one of his Unitarian schemes to develop the political campaign for dissenters. As indicated in his letter, Coleridge had been interested in the slavery issue since entering Cambridge University: "I am reading Pindar, and composing Greek verse, like a mad dog. I am very fond of Greek verse, and shall try hard for the Brown's Prize ode."[64] He received the gold medal for the Greek verse entitled "On the wretched lot of the Slaves in the Isles of Western India" in 1792. Three years after writing this verse, he resolved to launch his protest against the slave trade in Bristol, where many dissenters had been working towards the development of abolitionism. Through slave trading Bristol had become a very prosperous city, and was also a centre for the political and economic supporters of slavery. From the1780s, Bristol also became one of the cities where abolitionism flourished, although there were a large number of pro-slavery merchants who presented their anti-abolitionist petition to the House of Commons after Wilberforce had tried to legally abolish the slave trade. In July 1785 the Bristol Quakers distributed copies of Antony Benezet's *Caution against the Slave Trade to Great Britain* to people who expressed their concerns about the slave trade. In January 1788, a public meeting condemning slavery was held at the Bristol Guildhall. The "leading supporters"[65] of abolitionism in Bristol were Hannah More, an evangelical writer, Josiah Tucker, the Anglican Dean of Bristol, the Baptist minister Caleb Evans, and the Unitarian John Prior Estlin. Estlin was a member of the Warrington Academy.

Estlin also called for the reformation of the church:

> . . . *in this country, and in the present state of society; with our laws, our institutions, our manners and our habits, the total abolition of the establishment would be attended with more inconveniences than advantages*; in a word, that it is *the reparation of the structure which is to be wished for, and not its demolition*; or to speak in the plainest terms

[64] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, ed. E.L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956-71), Vol. 1, 16-17.
[65] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 131.

possible, the *reformation* of the church, and not its *subversion* (italics by Estlin).[66]

Although Estlin's political stance was moderate, his claim for the reformation of the church was resolute and definite. Estlin's criticism against the church generally derived from his frustration in society governed by the established rules. In the lecture entitled "On Rights, Laws and Government", he claimed that human beings had natural rights and argued that the power of the established society was "adventitious".[67] According to his "Painite" concept of human right, he was naturally against slavery. Thus, the dissenting feeling against the established society was closely interwoven with protests against the slave trade. Joining the abolitionist movement was an effectual strategy for Unitarians, particularly as a means of strengthening their political influence in 1790s English society.

Coleridge's choice of Bristol gives a clear indication of his religious intention to promote Unitarian philosophy. Having lectured on several topics, he produced a weekly publication entitled the *Watchman* in 1 March of 1796, his *Lecture on the Slave Trade* appearing the fourth issue. The aim of this journal was " to co-operate (I) with the WHIG CLUB in procuring a repeal of Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's bills, now passed into laws, and (2) with the PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES, for obtaining a Right of Suffrage general and frequent".[68] After collecting the names of 400 subscribers for the *Watchman* in the South-West, Coleridge began to look further field for new subscribers by touring cities in the Midlands and Northern England in January 1796. He focused his efforts on cities where the Unitarian network was strong, such as Worcester, Birmingham, Nottingham and Derby. Among these cities, Nottingham was "the most politically active".[69] In Nottingham George Walker, a minister at High Pavement and former tutor at Warrington Academy, campaigned for parliamentary reform in 1782 and 1784 and for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in the late

[66] J. P. Estlin, *Familiar Lectures*, 2 vols. (n. p.: Longman,1818), Vol. 2, 316-17.
[67] Estlin, *Familiar Lectures*, Vol. 2, 3-5.
[68] Coleridge, *The Watchman*, 5.
[69] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 117.

1780s. Under these circumstances, Coleridge was invited to preach "the annual charity sermon" for High Pavement School. Coleridge wrote to John Edwards, a Unitarian minister in Birmingham, on 29th of January 1796, informing him that he had got "among the first families in Nottingham" and was "marvellously caressed."[70] Through this tour, Coleridge succeeded in gaining 1,000 subscriptions for the *Watchman*. Despite this, however, he was soon forced to abandon publication of the *Watchman* because the revenue from subscriptions was insufficient to cover printing expenses:

> . . .my tradesmen's Bill[s] for the Watchman, including what Paper I have bought since the seventh number, the Printing, &c—amount to exactly five pounds more than the whole amount of my receipts.[71]

Thus, Coleridge explained to Thomas Poole on 5 May 1796. Then on 13 May 1796, after ten issues, Coleridge posted a message on the last page of the *Watchman* informing readers that this was "the last Number of the WATCHMAN."[72]

Pitt's strategy for suppressing reform movements gradually came into effect during the period 1795 to 1796. In 1796, Thelwall also finished publishing the journal *Tribune*, which aimed at social reforms. In fact, after two "gagging acts"[73] were passed in Parliament, there were "no more"[74] mass reform meetings after December 1795. While giving lectures in 1790s, Coleridge experienced hostility from anti-Jacobin audiences, as was indicated in his letter to Dyer in February 1795:

> [T]he opposition of the Aristocrats is so furious and determined that I begin to fear, that the Good I do is not proportionate to the Evil I occasion—Mobs and Mayors, Block-heads and Brickbats, Placards and

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[70] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 179-80.
[71] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 208.
[72] Coleridge, *The Watchman*, 374.
[73] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 32.
[74] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge* , 155.

> Press gangs have leagued in horrible Conspiracy against me. . . and . . . were scarcely restrained from attacking the house in which the "damn'd Jacobine was jawing away".[75]

Coleridge was concerned about attacks from mobs led by the likes of those who had attacked Priestly. This tension between Unitarians and English society – in terms of political, social and religious movements – continued until the early nineteenth century.

### (ii) Abolitionist Poems and Unitarian Context

The Unitarian circle, which included poets, scientists, priests, and social reformers, became closely connected during the period from 1780s until 1830s. Their basic concern was to make society comfortable for every human being. In terms of religion, education, and politics, Unitarian millenarianism responded exactly to the revolutionary sensibility that pervaded late eighteenth -century England. Johnson released a large number of anti-slavery works by dissenters. Edward Rushton's "Slavery and the Slave Trade" in *Essays Historical and Moral* (1785) was published by Johnson.[76] *The Task* (1785), Cowper's debut collection of poems, was also brought out by Johnson. Cowper knew Johnson through John Newton, who was one of his close friends. The first edition of Newton's *Authentic Narrative* appeared in 1764 through the efforts of Johnson, in spite of its controversial topic. Newton, who regarded the slave trade as a national sin,[77] influenced Cowper's decision to write four anti-slavery ballads.

Johnson was especially interested in works by Warrington people, where Priestley had been a tutor. Regarding the slave trade, William Roscoe, the "Whig Unitarian lawyer well-known in Warrington circles"[78], expressed his opposition to the slave trade

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[75] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 152.
[76] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 76.
[77] I discussed John Newton's *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (1788) in chapter I.
[78] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 76.

in *Mount Pleasant: A Descriptive Poem* (1777), which was printed by Johnson. Johnson also issued Anna Letitia Barbauld's "Epistle to William Wilberforce" and George Dyer's abolitionist poem (1812). The anti-slavery attitude of the Warrington circle was founded on their protest against the repression of basic human rights.

Barbauld whose father was a tutor of Warrington Academy was known in Dissenting group especially when she published "An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Act" (1790). In the "Address" she bitterly denounced the government for refusing to repeal the Test Act — legislation which prohibited dissenters from exercising their rights as members of the public. In this address, she denounced Burke and others who opposed the removal of dissenters' "civil disabilities".[79] She argued aggressively that Unitarians could provide more intellectual leadership than Pitt's government: "If we are a party, remember it is you who force us to be so."[80] This work was "warmly"[81] praised by liberals in 1790s in England. She also showed her sympathy with Priestley, who was expelled from England in 1791 in "To Dr. Priestley" (1793). In this poem Barbauld showed her admiration for Priestley, and longed for the day when his philosophy would be accepted:

> . . . Well cans't thou afford
> To give large *credit* for that debt of fame
> Thy country owes thee. Calm thou cans't consign it
> To the slow payment of that distant day,
> If distant, when thy name, to freedom's join'd,
> Shall meet the thanks of a regenerate land.[82]

It is significant that Barbauld expressed her support for Priestley when many dissenters

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[79] Andrews, *Unitarian Radicalism*, 94.
[80] Anna Letitia Barbauld, *Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (London: J.Johnson, 1790) in *Anna Letitia Barbauld, Selected Poetry and Prose*, eds. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2002), 270.
[81] Barbauld, *Selected Poetry and Prose*, 261.
[82] Barbauld, "To Dr. Priestley", *Selected Poetry and Prose*, 136, ll. 16-21.

compromised and claimed their loyalty to "the Constitution of the kingdom, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons".[83] Barbauld, a millenarian thinker, firmly believed that the social evils of the period would be changed in the coming "regenerate land". She was convinced that the Unitarian philosophy would be appreciated in the near future.

Barbauld was also in the Unitarian circle of friends of Coleridge's. Coleridge often read her works and met Barbauld for the first time in Bristol in 1797.[84] Through their friendship, Coleridge esteemed her sensibility as was seen in his letter to John Prior Estlin on 1st of March in 1800: "The more I see of Mrs Barbauld the more I admire her—that wonderful *Propriety* of Mind!—She has great *acuteness*, very great. . ."[85] Barbauld and Coleridge had in common in their understanding of the relationship between the Universe and God. They believed that God ruled the Universe. Particularly in "The Eolian Harp" (1796) Coleridge expressed his Unitarian perception on divinity. He felt the divine presence when the "organic harps" trembled into thought:

> And what if all of animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of All?[86]

Coleridge praised God's work that harmonised the motion in Nature.

In " Summer Evening's Meditation" (1792) Barbauld also showed that the action of the Universe was created by God's energy:

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[83] *Gentleman's Magazine* 62 (1792), 1070 (qtd. in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, 135).
[84] After the meeting in 1797, Barbauld wrote the poem to him titled "To Mr. S.T. Coleridge" (1799).
[85] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 578.
[86] Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp", *Poetical Works, I*, ll. 44-48.

. . . the living eyes of heaven
Awake, quick kindling o'er the face of ether
One boundless blaze; ten thousand trembling fires,
And dancing lustres, where the unsteady eye,
Restless and dazzled, wanders unconfin'd
O'er all this field of glories. . .
. . . Adore, O man!
The finger of thy GOD.[87]

It is typically Unitarian to interpret all of the phenomena in nature as being caused by God's will. Priestley believed that disastrous events such as earthquakes and the "great slaughter of men"[88] were "followed by millennium".[89] He regarded the French Revolution as the earthquake in Revelation in which "in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand".[90] His belief in the book of Revelation led Priestley to claim that all such events were destined to happen. The most important thing for the Unitarians was that the Messiah would appear after apocalypse. This Unitarian theology influenced Coleridge and Barbauld in their understanding of the relationship between human society and God.

As far as the discussion on the slave trade was concerned, Priestley in a sermon argued that the slave trade was "the greatest, and most crying evil under the sun", since he considered human beings to be "*brethren* and *neighbours*".[91] The Unitarian poets, who held millenarian beliefs, adopted an anti-slavery stance because they associated the slave trade with images of the apocalypse and expected millennium to emerge with the abolition slavery.

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[87] Barbauld, "Summer Evening's Meditation", *Poems 1792* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1993), 138-39, ll. 25-35.
[88] Priestley, *The Present State of Europe Compared with Ancient Prophecies 1794* (London: J. Johnson, 1794), 12.
[89] Morton Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 21.
[90] Priestley, *A Farewell Sermon: Letters to Members of the New Jerusalem Church 1791* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1989), 25-6.
[91] Priestley, *A Sermon on the Subject of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Johnson, 1788), 1.

Around the time when Wilberforce's abolition bill was debated in parliament in 1791, Barbauld published an anti-slavery poem entitled "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade" (1791), which expressed the dissenting frustration and dismay at the failure of Wilberforce's motion for abolishing the slave trade. In this poem Barbauld strongly condemned the hypocrisy of the British people in wishing to keep the "human traffic":

> She knows and she persists—Still Afric bleeds,
> Unchecked, the human traffic still proceeds:
> She stamps her infamy to future time,
> And on her hardened forehead seals the crime.[92]

Barbauld expressed her indignation at the way the British government sacrificed the lives of African people. She argued that English people were committing a sin that would never be absolved. She regretted that the anti-slavery movement of the "Preacher" and the "Poet" and the "Senator" was after all "in vain" this time.[93] Through apocalyptic imagery, she stressed the moral degradation of pro-slavery supporters:

> In Britain's senate, Misery's pangs give birth
> To jests unseemly, and to horrid mirth—
> Forbear!—thy virtues but provoke our doom,
> And swell th'account of vengeance yet to come,
> . . .
> And injured Afric, by herself redrest,
> Darts her own serpents at her Tyrant's breast.
> Each vice, to minds depraved by bondage known,

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[92] Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. On the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade", *Poems 1792*, 146.
[93] Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce", *Poems 1792*, 145.

With sure contagion fastens on his own. . .[94]

Barbauld denounced the savage nature of some members of the British Parliament who expressed "mirth" on the misery of slave.[95] Barbauld's disappointment at the failure of Wilberforce's abolition act reflected the dismay and frustration shown by dissenters who eagerly expected social reforms. She lamented that "the buds of Virtue" which Wilberforce suggested were blown off from England. Through describing the spreading sickness over Britain after abolitionist movement, Barbauld tenaciously pointed out that pro-slavery country destined to be punished: "Corruption follows with gigantic stride, / And scarce vouchsafes his shameless front to hide:/ The spreading leprosy taints ev'ry part. . ."[96] Barbauld's description of rebellious slaves who had "angry eyes" [97]strengthened the apocalyptic fear. As an English liberal, she warned that prolonging the slave trade would corrupt the morality and honour of Britain's people and government.

Dyer, the Unitarian social liberal, also protested against the slave trade. Dyer's concern about the people in the repressed situation was shown in *The complaints of the poor people of England* (1793). In this work he demonstrated that there were many poor people living under repression in English society, comparing their miserable situation with that of slaves in the West Indies:

> I have been in many poor houses. I have heard men plead for keeping slaves in the West Indies, and treating them like beasts, by asking, Are they not as well off as many poor people in England?[98]

Dyer considered that the conditions endured by the poor in English society were just as

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[94] Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce", *Poems 1792*, 147-8.
[95] In the abolition debate "when William Smith recounted an incident of an African mother's being compelled to throw the body of her child from a ship, some members laughed". (qtd. in *Selected Poetry and Prose*, 124 n)
[96] Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce", *Poems 1792*, 151.
[97] Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce", *Poems 1792*, 150.
[98] George Dyer, *The complaints of the poor people of England 1793* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1990), 3.

hard as those suffered by slaves on plantations. He showed a sincere sympathy with the repressed, and insisted that the "common people" should form a government:

> The *common* people (for we call the poor) in America and France, understand the nature of government. Why? In those countries government is formed by the people, and made to serve their interest.[99]

Dyer supported the revolutionary movements in America and France, since he believed that revolution would result in an ideal form of government for everyone. Dyer criticised the present polity in England by pointing out that people acted primarily in pursuit of their own benefits. Dyer's appeals to the English government focused on improving the lives of those living under oppression. In 1812 he published his "On Considering the Unsettled State of Europe, and the Opposition Which Had been Made to Attempts for the Abolition of the Slave Trade". In this work he expressed his expectation that slavery would be abolished entirely after the war against Napoleon, who in 1802 had restored slavery in France: "When War shall break his lance, when Slavery shall expire."[100] Dyer predicted that the abolition of slavery would bring a harmonious world for everyone to enjoy:

> And, see! I view a distant land;
> And, hark! I hear a minstrel band.
> The negro-slaves, now slaves no more,
> . . .
> . . . now 'tis Freedom's song.—And, see!
> How the rapt soul fills the eye!
> And hark! Was ever minstrelsy

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[99] Dyer, *The complaints*, 5-6.

[100] George Dyer, "On Considering the Unsettled State of Europe, and the Opposition Which Had Been Made to Attempts for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade", *Poetics: or, A Series of Poems, and Disquisitions on Poetry*, Vol.1 (London: J. Johnson, 1812) in *Verse*, ed. Alan Richardson. Vol. 4 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 340.

So wing'd with fire, and strain'd to notes so high?
Wildly grand, and strangely sweet—
Yet all is harmony complete,
As when (so sung) atoms in atoms whirl'd
And Chaos grew to form, and order rul'd the world.[101]

The realisation of an ideal society was an indication of Dyer's millenarian view. Dyer saw slavery as representing one of the symptoms of a chaotic apocalypse before the coming millennium.

Charles and Mary Lamb's "Conquest of Prejudice" (1809) expressed their hope for equality between African and English people. Particularly following the revolt by slaves in St. Domingo in 1791,[102] opinion was divided on whether black people should be able to live without restriction in society. As William Cobbett discussed in "Summary of Politics" (1802), some English people were afraid that African people were not civilised enough to live in English society. This prejudice resulted in part from the belief that the black skin colour of African people suggested a degree of savagery. Charles and Mary Lamb tried to challenge this racial discrimination against black people. In the poem, the schoolmaster advised that the English boy would become accustomed to the "hue" of the African boy:

"Nearer acquaintance possibly
May make you tolerate his hue;
At least 'tis my intent to try
What a short month may chance to do."[103]

The poets suggested that English people would change their view of African people

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101 Dyer, "On Considering the Unsettled State of Europe", *Verse*, 340.
102 I discussed the relationship between the slave revolt and the prejudice against the black slave in England in chapter I.
103 Charles and Mary Lamb, "Conquest of Prejudice", *Poetry for Children, Entirely Original. By the Author of 'Mrs. Leicester's School'*, Vol.2 (London: M. J. Godwin, 1809) in *Verse*, 335.

after they had experienced living together in the same society. They believed that an ideal relationship of mutual understanding between English and African would establish itself:

> . . .both glad
> To hear of human voice the sound,
> The negro and the English lad
> Comfort in mutual converse found.[104]

Lamb's hope for achieving human equality reflects his liberal sensibility as well as his millenarianism. As a Unitarian, Lamb imagined the predicament of slaves as being similar to a social impotency of dissenters. Through the image of liberated slaves he may well have seen the future redemption of the Unitarians.

The Unitarian, William Roscoe, began to develop his abolitionist activities in Liverpool and became the important "correspondent"[105] of Thomas Clarkson. His strong support for abolitionism in Lancashire helped "evangelical groups"[106] such as those led by William Cowper and John Newton to spread the anti-slavery movement in 1780s. Roscoe published "The African" (1788) with his friend, James Currie, a Liverpool physician. In this poem the slave who killed himself wished his soul would go to "the realms of the brave".[107] Roscoe, who believed in millenarianism, expected that the slave trade would be abolished in near future:

> To-morrow the white man, in vain,
> Shall proudly account me his slave;
> My shackles I'll plunge in the main,
> And rush to the realms of the brave.[108]

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[104] Lamb, "Conquest of Prejudice", *Verse*, 336.
[105] *Verse*, 99.
[106] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 77.
[107] William Roscoe and James Currie, "The African", , *The World* (n. p.: n.p., 1788) in *Verse*, 100, l. 48.
[108] Roscoe, "The African", *Verse*, 100, ll. 45-48.

Unitarian poets such as Coleridge, Roscoe, and Dyer believed that the slave trade would eventually be abolished, although other dissenting poets found this optimistic attitude remarkable. While Evangelical poets concentrated on the importance of converting slaves and lauded the benefits of Christian life, the Unitarian poets placed more emphasis on demonstrating millenarian philosophy through their anti-slavery message. The Unitarian poets gave priority to the expansion of their religious dogma, and considered that producing anti-slavery poems was their opportunity to spread Unitarianism through the country. The anti-slavery propaganda produced by the dissenting poets had essentially a two-fold purpose: political motivation as well as humanistic appeal. In the Unitarian case, the political motivation was strengthened by the fact that their sect had for a long time been the target of discrimination in England. The Unitarian poets' moral indignation towards the slave trade was, in a complex way, reflected in their frustration at English society. Through their anti-slavery message, the Unitarian poets expressed their hope that social repression in every form, such as slavery as well as the unfair treatment of Unitarians, would be eradicated in the near future.

Not only Unitarian Poets but also other dissenting poets expressed their anti-slavery stance in their poems. Those poets were the Evangelical Hannah More, the Evangelical William Cowper, Ann Yearsley, the Quaker Mary Birkett, Eaglesfield Smith, Edward Rushton, and the Moravian James Montgomery.

Hannah More's principle of anti-slavery was also supported by the paternalistic idea of evangelicalism. The evangelical sense of paternalism is consistent with the Church's traditional teaching of subordination, restraint, inequality, hierarchy and obedience. More's anti-slavery sensibility derived from her Christian belief that the strong should protect the weak, since equality among human beings was unattainable. In the Evangelical pamphlet *Cheap Repository Tracts* founded by Hannah More and her circle of friends in 1795, More preached that it was important for waged workers or slaves to know their place and to practise humility. More assumed that "neither British workers nor African slaves could speak for themselves. . . and needed

assistance from better informed, more 'civilised' middle-class people".[109] The suggestion was that More admitted an established social and domestic order. In the aftermath of the French Revolution this view found new strength, at the same time being consistent with her religious beliefs. More regarded the French Revolution as "an assault" on all that she considered sacred. At first, Hannah More had supported the spirit of the French Revolution; later, however, after witnessing the chaos and tyranny that swept through France from 1792 onwards, she became horrified by disorder in society. She wrote to Horace Walpole: "I can figure to myself no greater mischiefs than despotism and popery, except anarchy and atheism".[110] Hannah More's ideals were firmly entrenched in Christian ethics and in the intrinsic sense of order in political and social systems, a position from which she never wavered.

More's concept of liberty in "Slavery, A Poem" (1788) reflected her respect for the system of order. Although More certainly insisted that slaves should be free, her sense of liberty was different from the kind of wild liberty that "unlicens'd, monster of the crowd":

> Thee only, sober Goddess! I attest,
> In smiles chastis'd, and decent graces, drest:
> Not that unlicens'd monster of the crowd,
> Whose roar terrific bursts in peals so loud,
> Deaf'ning the ear of Peace. . .[111]

Obviously, More required that liberty be established without chaotic confusion. It was her belief that freedom should be granted to slaves by white Christians, whom she regarded as superior to black slaves. While stressing "human rights" and "equal thoughts" throughout the poem, More's belief in African ignorance and British superiority was exposed:

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[109] Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 215.
[110] William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (second edition) 189 qtd. in Jeremy and Margaret Collingwood, *Hannah More* (Oxford: Lion, 1990), 76.
[111] More, "Slavery, A Poem", *A Poem* (London: T. Cadell, 1788) in *Verse*, 107, ll. 19-23.

Tho'dark and savage, ignorant and blind,
They claim the common privilege of kind;
Let Malice strip them of each other plea,
They still are men, and men should still be free.[112]

Despite More's sympathy for the plight of slaves (which reflected her genuine principle), she conceived of slaves as pagans who should be instructed in Christian dogma so that they could live in liberty with Christian restraint. Her understanding of the right to claim liberty for slaves is similar to that of Coleridge's in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1808.[113] She affirmed that black Africans were rationally inferior and essentially savage, so long as they were not enlightened by Christianity. It was essential for More, as an evangelicalist, to demonstrate the "conversion of the ungodly" through the discourse on abolitionism. [114]

The poem "The Sorrows of Yamba" clearly illustrates how More emphasised the necessity of converting African slaves. It was written by More and Eaglesfield Smith and published in *Cheap Repository Tracts* in 1795. The poem describes how Yamba the slave and her family were kidnapped, and how her child fell ill and died. While protesting against the vice of the slave trade, More supported the continuation of missionary work in plantations.

More presented the miserable vision of the middle passage:

Naked on the plat-form lying
Now we cross the tumbling wave!
Shrieking, sick'ning, fainting, dying;
Deed of shame for Briton's brave![115]

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[112] More, "Slavery, A Poem", *Verse*, 107, ll. 137-40.
[113] I analysed Coleridge's review in chapter I. Coleridge insisted the importance of civilisation of Africans before the emancipation.
[114] Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 148.
[115] Hannah More and Eaglesfield Smith, "The Sorrows of Yamba; or, The Negro Woman's Lamentation" (London: n. p., 1795), *Verse*, 226, ll. 33-36.

More argued that it was shameful of the British to make slaves endure the agonies of servitude. Moreover, her protests against the slave trade were deliberately made alongside her arguments for justifying missionary activities. Yamba, whose feelings of depression made her want to end her life, meets an English missionary and is converted to Christianity:

> Duly now baptiz'd am I
> By good missionary man;
> Lord, my nature purify,
> As no outward water can![116]

She even blesses her capture and prays that the Gospel will be introduced to Africa. More suggests that, paradoxically, slavery itself benefited Yamba, who went on to become a Christian. More believed that the vice of the slave trade was purified by introducing Christian dogma to slaves:

> Where ye once have carried slaughter,
> Vice, and slavery, and sin;
> Seiz'd on husband, wife, and daughter,
> Let the gospel enter in.
> . . .
> Tho' in Afric's distant land,
> Still shalt see the man I love;
> Join him to the Christian band,
> Guide his soul to realms above.[117]

More's discourse, which reminds us of the paradox of a "Felix Culpa", placed greater importance on the conversion of black people than on the humanitarian notion of

[116] More and Smith, "The Sorrows of Yamba", *Verse*, 230, ll. 137-40.
[117] More and Smith, "The Sorrows of Yamba", *Verse*, 230, ll. 173-84.

human equality. It seems as though More supported the slave trade because it opened the door to Christian enlightenment. In one sense it could be seen as religious imperialism through conversion. Moira Ferguson points out that More blended a "politically jeopardizing commitment to abolition"[118] with the primacy she affords conversion.

William Cowper, referring to More's "Slavery, a Poem", showed the sincerity of his interest in the matter by commenting that "Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun"[119]. Cowper regarded the slave trade as "the diabolical traffic" and represented his anti-slavery sentiment in *The Task* (1785) and in four ballads (1788). In Book II of *The Task* Cowper denounced those who were engaged in slavery as being morally corrupted:

> Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys;
> And worse than all, and most to be deplored
> As human nature's broadest, foulest blot,
> Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
> With stripes. . .
> . . .
> Then what is man? And what man seeing this,
> And having human feelings, does not blush
> And hang his head, to think himself a man?[120]

By stressing the cruelty of the slave trade, Cowper appealed to Christian morality. Furthermore, he reminded readers that England once prohibited slavery.[121] According to Mansfield's judgement on slaves in 1772, Cowper argued that slavery should be

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[118] Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, 219.

[119] William Cowper, *The Letters and Prose Writings of William* Cowper, eds. James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Vol. 3, 103 ("To Lady Hesketh", 16 February 1788).

[120] Cowper, *The Poems of William Cowper*. eds. John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Vol. 2, 139, ll. 20-28.

[121] Cowper referred James Somerset case in 1772. I analysed this case in chapter I.

banned not only in England but also in its colonies:

> We have no slaves at home.--Then why abroad?
> And they themselves once ferried o'er the wave
> That parts us, are emancipate and loos'd.
> Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
> Receive our air, that moment they are free,
> They touch our country and their shackles fall.
> That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud
> And jealous of the blessing. Spread it then,
> And let it circulate through eve'ry vein
> Of all your empire. That where Britain's power
> Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.[122]

Cowper stimulated readers' patriotic love for England by showing that the abolition of slavery would strengthen the moral power of England to rise above other European countries. *The Task* was "widely praised"[123] when it was published, which suggests that Cowper's claim for the reformation of the contemporary slave trade accorded with the revolutionary feeling that prevailed in late eighteenth-century England.

In "The Negro's Complaint", "The Morning Dream", "Pity for Africans" and "Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce" Cowper also made appeals for the abolition of the slave trade. These works gained speedy recognition; for instance, "The Negro's Complaint" was printed ten times during the first intensive campaign against the slave trade in the years 1789 to 1793. [124] This ballad was praised by Thomas Clarkson as "a powerful appeal on behalf of the injured Africans".[125] In "The Negro's Complaint" Cowper criticised the English government, claiming that they had no "right" to torture

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[122] Cowper, *The Poems,* Vol. 2, 140.
[123] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent*, 73.
[124] Cowper, *The Poems* Vol. 3, 284.
[125] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade by the British Parliament*, 2 vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1839), Vol. 2, 190.

black people. The Negro complains:

> Still in thought as free as ever,
> What are England's rights, I ask,
> Me from my delights to sever,
> Me to torture, me to task?[126]

He preaches that God made all human beings alike, and argues that human nature is the same both for Christians and black people:

> Fleecy locks and black complexion
> Cannot forfeit Nature's claim;
> Skins may differ, but affection
> Dwells in white and black the same.[127]

By taking the anti-polygenist stance, Cowper appealed for equality among white people and black slaves.

Cowper also criticised the hypocrisy of Christians who exploited slave labour for their own desires:

> Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
> Tarnish all your boasted powers,
> Prove that you have human feelings
> Ere you proudly question ours![128]

Cowper pointed out that white people became "slaves" of profit because of the financial rewards that they could gain through the slave trade. It was with bitterness

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[126] Cowper, "The Negro's Complaint", *The Works of William Cowper*, Esq. ed. Robert Southey, Vol. 10 (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1836-37) in *Verse*, 75, ll. 9-12.
[127] Cowper, "The Negro's Complaint", *Verse*, 75, ll. 13-16.
[128] Cowper, "The Negro's Complaint", *Verse*, 77, ll. 53-56.

that he suggested that white people were more morally savage than black slaves, who were generally thought to have no "human feelings".

In Cowper's depiction, the Negro's complaint pinpointed exactly the essence of racial discrimination – that is, discrimination on the basis of skin colour. The extent to which this prejudice pervaded throughout the population was plainly illustrated in a reader's letter to the *Morning Chronicle* in 1788:

> . . .the emphatick and leading characteristic of their nature, is an inimical propensity to lying and thieving. . . their mental capacities are not equal to ours. . . the proper situation of the Blacks seems to be between the Monkeys and the Whites.[129]

This letter appeared a month before Cowper published his four anti-slavery propaganda poems. Cowper's timing was therefore ideal, his appeal riding on the crest of this controversy.

In "Pity for Poor Africans" Cowper represented in an ironic way the pro-slavery argument, which maintained that the products made available through the slave trade were necessary for people's lives:

> 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, and tea![130]

Cowper exposed the fact that the forced labour of slaves produced luxury food for white people. He argued that the "tortures and groans" of slaves would never cease as long as European countries continued the slave trade:

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[129] Cowper, 5 February, qtd. in *The Poems*, Vol. 3, 285.
[130] Cowper, "Pity for Poor Africans", *The Works of William Cowper* in *Verse*, 77, ll. 5-8.

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes,
Will heartily thanks us, no doubt, for our pains:
If we do not by the poor creatures, they will;
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.[131]

In "The Morning Dream" Cowper focused on claiming liberty for slaves and predicted the abolition of the slave trade. In the last stanza Cowper addresses England, and claims that English people had the right attitude for abolishing slavery:

Awaking, how could I but muse
At what such a dream should betide?
But soon my ear caught the glad news,
Which served my weak thought for a guide,--
That Britannia, renown'd o'er the waves
For the hatred she ever had shown
To the black-sceptred rules of slaves,
Resolves to have none of her own.[132]

Like the patriotic tone in *The Task*, Cowper made it clear that it was to England's advantage to abolish the slave trade.

Cowper's sharp criticism against the cruelty of the slave trade is evident in "Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce":

Here's padlocks and bolts, and screws for the thumbs,
That squeeze them so lovingly till the blood comes;
They sweeten the temper like comfits or plums,
Which nobody can deny.[133]

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[131] Cowper, "Pity for Poor Africans", *Verse*, 77, ll. 9-12.
[132] Cowper, "The Morning Dream", *The Works of William Cowper* in *Verse*, 80, ll. 41-48.
[133] Cowper, "Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce", *The Works of William Cowper* in *Verse*, 81, ll. 17-20.

Although the basic tone was mockery, Cowper ironically revealed that the sugar products enjoyed by white people were the result of slave labour. Cowper continued to describe that the mind of the slave trader finally broke down because of the extreme cruelty that slaves were forced to endure:

> For oh! How it enters my soul like an awl!
> This pity, which some people self-pity call,
> Is sure the most heart-piercing pity of all,
> Which nobody can deny.[134]

Cowper pointed out that the inhumanity of the slave trade damaged the humane soul of both slaves and slave traders.

In fact, Cowper's mind became exhausted while writing his anti-slavery propaganda. He could not conceal his frustration with the disparity between an ideal society and real society. On one occasion he eventually confessed to his friend Walter Bagot that he was determined to have no more to do with the slave trade:

> Slavery, and especially Negro Slavery because the cruellest, is an odious and disgusting subject. . . I felt myself so much hurt in my spirits the moment I enter'd on the contemplation of it, that I have at least determined absolutely to have nothing more to do with it.[135]

Cowper was repelled by the social pressures deriving from the complexities of the slave trade. In addition, however, he also felt disturbed by his fundamental doubts towards the very concept of slavery. Four months before, he wrote to his close friend John Newton:

> Could I suppose that the cruel hardships under which millions of that

[134] Cowper, "Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce", *Verse*, 82, ll. 37-40.
[135] Cowper, *The Letters*, Vol. 3, 177-78 (17 June 1788).

> unhappy race have lived and died, were only preparatory to a deliverance to be wrought for them hereafter, like that of Israel out of Egypt, my reasonings would cease, and I should at once acquiesce in dispensation severe indeed for a time, but leading to invaluable and everlasting mercies.[136]

Cowper strongly doubted whether black slaves could receive genuine Christian salvation in the way Jewish people had done in the Old Testament. Cowper's investigation into the situation of the Jews as Biblical slaves seems to have been influenced by the dispute over the Biblical sanction of slavery in the late eighteenth century. The early anti-slavery movement coincided with the beginning of the period that saw serious criticism of the Bible on philosophical as well as on historical grounds. During the 1770s American and British abolitionists addressed the "disturbing thesis"[137] that interpreted Jewish law as a basic right of human beings, their response being that it must be generally consistent with the Lockian law of nature. On this premise, by the 1770s there had developed a widespread consensus on a moral level that "slavery not only violated natural law but represented the supreme denial of those benevolent instincts which preserved society from anarchy".[138] Yet in England, with the exception of a few despised Deists, no one seriously challenged the belief that the Old Testament was the revealed word of God. Since they were not yet prepared to challenge the authority of divine revelation, the majority of abolitionists claimed that Christians should regard Negroes as their "brethren", which followed the Jewish protection against perpetual servitude.[139] In 1776 Granville Sharp expressed his humanitarian position by insisting that "even under the Jewish dispensation it would have been illegal to enslave Africans".[140] Cowper's concerns over the dispensation of slavery also derived from his humanitarian sensibility, insisting that the sins of the

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[136] Cowper, *The Letters*, Vol. 3, 106 ( "To John Newton" 19 February 1788).
[137] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1975), 537.
[138] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 526.
[139] I discussed the religious aspect of abolition debate in chapter I.
[140] Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 538.

slave trade could not be purged by any religious or political justification of slavery. Cowper's sensibility was torn between social pressures and his humanistic instincts. He decided to be "silent" on the matter of slavery and so wrote to John Newton three months after his publication of the ballads.[141] Although Cowper's withdrawal does not suggest any shortcomings of his as a social protester, it could be understood as his realization that poetic sensibility would not always cope with social sensibility. In other words, Cowper came to accept that the religious, anthropological and economical issues surrounding the slave trade would not be solved through humanism and poetry alone.

In "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade" (1788), Ann Yearsley represented the rebellious slave who was executed by Christians. Yearsley poignantly censured the hypocrisy of tyrannical Christians who controlled slaves on plantations:

> Are these your laws,
> Whereby the glory of the Godhead spreads
> O'er barb'rous climes? Ye hypocrites, disown
> The Christian name, nor shame its cause. . .[142]

The cruelty of Christians contrasts with the heroic death of Luco, the rebellious slave:

> Luco is chain'd
> To a huge tree, his fellow-slaves are ranged
> To share the horrid sight. . .
> . . .
> "Burn, burn me quick! I cannot die!" he cries:
> "Bring fire more close!" The planters heed him not,
> But still prolonging Luco's torture, threat

[141] Cowper, *The Letters*, Vol. 3, 186 (24 June 1788).
[142] Ann Yearsley, "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade", (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1788) in *Verse*, 149.

Their trembling slaves around.[143]

Without doubt, this scene aroused both horror and pity among white readers. On the other hand, it suggested that white people could ultimately bring rioting slaves under their control. The imbalance of power between slaves and their white masters suggested that white people who had the ability to put an end to the slave trade should use their power to save slaves. Yearsley's Euro-centric view of slavery had the effect of weakening her protest against the slave trade. The image of pitiable slaves stood in stark contrast to the image of white Christians wielding their power over slaves. The superiority of European civilisation was stressed by describing how rebellious slaves were overcome and later converted by white people.

Mary Birkett also showed her concern over converting slaves to Christianity in her anti-slavery poem, "A Poem on the African Slave Trade" (1792). She advocated an equality between Christians and African people despite differences in skin colour:

All, (save the fable tincture of his skin,)
Say, Christians, do they not resemble you?
If so, their feelings and sensations too. . .[144]

This egalitarian stance, however, contradicted her view on African people, whom she regarded as savage:

Plant there our colonies, and to their soul,
Declare the God who form'd this boundless whole;
Improve their manners—teach them how to live. . .
For 'tis a duty which we surely owe,
We to the Romans were what to us Afric now.[145]

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[143] Yearsley, "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade", *Verse*, 146-47.
[144] Mary Birkett, "A Poem on the African Slave Trade", (Dublin: W. Corbet, 1792) in *Verse*, 203.
[145] Birkett, "A Poem on the African Slave Trade", *Verse*, 211.

Birkett assumed that English Christians could "civilise" slaves by teaching them their culture. This assertion was similar to arguments made in Ramsay's *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) and Burke's "Sketch of a Negro Code" (1818). Their stance of approving the conversion of slaves to Christianity was typically missionary. Justification for a religious invasion by a Christian force derived from the assumption that African people were intellectually inferior to Europeans, this prejudicial notion itself being based on race theories by the likes of Blumenbach, White, Lawrence, and Smith. In this respect, Birkett's egalitarian stance was limited and conditional, just like that of More's.

Edward Rushton also showed his paternalistic view towards slaves. In "West-Indian Eclogues" (1787), he described those slaves who committed suicide. Like John Newton, Rushton had converted from slave trader to abolitionist. Rushton's tone is sympathetic towards slaves who avenged themselves upon white people. In "Eclogue, The Second" Jumba, who was about to die, wished that his death would be as a revenge against tyranny:

> What! tamely die!
> No! vengeance first shall fall on tyranny!
> We'll view these white men gasping in their gore;--
> Then let me perish![146]

The dying slave in this poem serves as a reminder of the slave described in More's "Slavery, A Poem". Rushton invoked the white readers' compassion towards the plight of slaves. By having the suicidal slave accuse the white master of sexually assaulting his wife, the poet stressed the inhumane nature of the slave trade:

> The white man pleases, and my hopes are vain.
> Come then, revenge, and 'midst this horrid roar

[146] Edward Rushton, "West-Indian Eclogues", (London: W. Lowndes and J. Phillips, 1787) in *Verse*, 42.

My thirsty knife shall drink their streaming gore.[147]

Furthermore, by depicting a slave who called out to his indigenous God, Rushton criticised the kind of Christianity that prevailed among slaves:

> Come, swiftly come, and aid me to surprise
> These guilty lovers acting o'er their joys;
> Just then—great *Afric's* God!—to strike the blow![148]

James Montgomery's anti-slavery theme in "The West Wind" (1809) clearly presented his dissenting sensibility. In particular he condemned the greed of Anglican Christians, who believed they could profit from gold obtained through the slave trade:

> A Christian broker in the trade of blood;
> Boisterous in speech, in action prompt and bold,
> He buys, he sells,--he steals, he kills, for gold.[149]

While criticising the savagery of Christians, he represented the slave who had been converted by dissenting missionaries and who thanked his fate as a slave:

> Yet, while he wept, rejoiced that he was born.
> . . .
> Ennobling virtue fix'd his hopes above,
> Enlarged his heart, and sanctified his love:
> With humble steps the paths of peace he trod,
> A happy pilgrim, for he walk'd with God.[150]

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[147] Rushton, "West-Indian Eclogues", *Verse*, 53.
[148] Rushton, "West-Indian Eclogues", *Verse*, 53.
[149] James Montgomery, "The West Wind", *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Written by James Montgomery, James Graham, and E. Benger* (London: T. Bensley for R. Bowyer, 1809) in *Verse*, 313.
[150] Montgomery, "The West Wind", *Verse*, 323.

Montgomery, whose parents were Moravian missionaries in the West Indies, made it clear that missionary work on plantations had succeeded in making slaves obedient and civilised. It was, therefore, necessary for the poet to portray slaves as being innocent as well as good-natured. Montgomery represented slaves as noble savages: "In these romantic regions man grows wild:/Here dwells the Negro, nature's outcast child. . ."[151] This romantic image of slaves must have stimulated feelings of paternalism in Christian readers. In this sense, Montgomery's position was in line with the Eurocentric concept that slaves were inferior to white people. His racial consciousness was also revealed when he celebrated the abolition of the slave trade:

> Muse! Take the harp of prophecy:--behold!
> The glories of a brighter age unfold:
> Friends of the outcast! view the accomplish'd plan,
> The Negro towering to the height of man.[152]

Montgomery suggested that, at last, slaves were treated as human beings after the end of the slave trade. He also showed that slaves were taught how to live in civilised society by the European people who had freed them. Montgomery's anti-slavery stance was a complex one, in that it existed alongside his dissenting claim and his Eurocentrism.

Dissenters also showed their abolitionist attitude in their prose. Mary Wollstonecraft, another dissenting member of Johnson's circle, poignantly denounced the slave trade, claiming that it outraged "every suggestion of reason and religion"[153] in *A Vindication of The Rights of Men* (1790). She disputed Burke's logic of maintaining that slavery was necessary to secure British property:

> Allowing his servile reverence for antiquity, and prudent attention to

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[151] Montgomery, "The West Wind", *Verse*, 298.
[152] Montgomery, "The West Wind", *Verse*, 329.
[153] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of The Rights of Men/ A Vindication of The Rights of Woman/ Hints*, eds. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (London: William Pickering, 1989), 14.

> self-interest, to have the force which he insists on, the slave trade ought never to be abolished; and, because of our ignorant forefathers, not understanding the native dignity of man, sanctioned a traffic that outrages every suggestion of reason and religion, we are to submit to the inhuman custom. . .[154]

Wollstonecraft's abolitionism derived from her scepticism of the commercially-minded views of the British government in 1790s. Her revolutionary egalitarianism was driven by the fact that those who pursued financial rewards were depriving slaves of their liberty and basic rights. Wollstonecraft regarded the repressed situation of slaves as being similar to that of dissenters who suffered severe discrimination in eighteenth-century English society. Her claim for liberty and human rights was based on her expectation that every human being – including slaves and dissenters – should be able to live without restriction:

> The birthright of man, to give you, Sir, a short definition of this disputed right, is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is united in a social compact, and the continued existence of that compact.[155]

### (iii) Coleridge's Anti-Slavery Poems

It was in this context of Unitarian and other dissenting attacks, in prose and poetry, on the slave trade, and as a dissenting campaigner for religious and political rights, that Coleridge wrote his 1790s poetry.

In "Religious Musings" (1794), in "The Destiny of Nations" (1795), and in "Fears in Solitude" (1798) Coleridge showed his Unitarian theology in terms of the dogma of

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[154] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of The Rights of Men*, 14.
[155] Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of The Rights of Men*, 9.

apocalypse and millenarianism. He maintained that the sin of the slave trade heralded apocalypse before millennium. Particularly in "Religious Musings", Coleridge clearly indicated that the central theme of the poem was to describe millenarianism:

> I argued, I described, I promised, I prophecied: and beginning with the captivity of nations I ended with the near approach of the millennium, finishing the whole with some of my own verses describing that glorious state out of the Religious Musings:
>
> Such delights
> As float to earth, permitted visitants!
> When in some hour of solemn jubilee
> The massive gates of Paradise are thrown
> Wide open, and forth come in fragments wild
> Sweet echoes of unearthly melodies,
> And odours snatch'd from beds of Amaranth
> And they that from the chrystal river of life
> Spring up on freshen'd wings, ambrosial gales![156]

In this poem while Coleridge described the moment of apocalypse, he suggested the expectation of millenarian world. Coleridge referred to the evil of the slave trade in "groans" and "blood"[157] of human beings. Coleridge asserted that the Anglican Priest was guilty of supporting the "hideous" trade. Criticising the Church of England was typical in Unitarian discourses:

> The erring Priest hath stain'd with Brother's blood
> Your grisly idols, not for this may Wrath
> Thunder against you from the Holy One!

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[156] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), 181.
[157] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *Poetical Works 1*, ll. 301-2.

But o'er some plain that steameth to the Sun,
Peopled with Death; or where more hideous TRADE
Loud-laughing packs his bales of human anguish. . .[158]

Using the figure of an "erring" Priest, Coleridge alluded to the central systems of England including the institution of the Anglican Church and the English government. By revealing that the prosperity of English society had been gained through human suffering, Coleridge denounced, in both humanistic and religious terms, the hypocrisy of English "Christians" who promoted barbarism.

In keeping with his assurance of millennium, Coleridge suggested that the English war against France was another indication of a "blest future". He implied that they must be patient and tolerate the present "wrongs" to wait for "Retribution":

. . . Rest awhile,
Children of Wretchedness! More groans must rise,
More blood must stream, or ere your wrongs be full.
Yet is the day of Retribution nigh:
The Lamb of God hath open'd the fifth seal:
And upward rush on swiftest wing of fire
Th'innumerable multitude of Wrongs
By man on man inflicted![159]

By offering a premise for a "blest future", Coleridge hinted at some consolation for people who suffered from ruin and violence caused by evils such as the slave trade and war. The possibility of a prosperous future mitigated the fear of terror and chaos in human minds.

Coleridge as a Unitarian, believed that "the hour" would come soon when God was to save the world:

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[158] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *Poetical Works 1*, ll. 136-41.
[159] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *Poetical Works 1*, ll. 300-7.

. . . Rest awhile,
Children of Wretchedness! The hour is nigh:
And lo! the Great, the Rich, the Mighty Men,
The Kings and the Chief Captains of the World,
With all that fix'd on high like stars of Heaven
Shot baleful influence, shall be cast to earth,
Vile and down-trodden, as the untimely fruit
Shook from the fig-tree by a sudden storm.[160]

"Children of Wretchedness" may be referring to slaves who would let out "groans" in response to their predicament. In Coleridge's "conventional apocalyptic vision"[161], the hardships endured by slaves were an inevitable prelude to the millennial storm. It is a Unitarian understanding to regard the phenomenon in nature as the indication of the divine process to millennium. Priestley considered that the violence of the revolution "represented by *earthquakes*"[162] that brought millennium. Since he believed that the revolutionary power was necessary to renew society, he supported the French Revolution. Richard Price who influenced Priestley showed millenarian argument on revolutions in America and France. He wrote that the American Revolution represented that "the old prophecies be verified, that the last universal empire upon earth shall be the empire of reason and virtue, under which the gospel of peace (better understood) *shall have free course and be glorified*".[163] Price also insisted that both revolution in America and France would "illuminate" Europe.[164] Admiring the Unitarian theology of Priestley and Price, Coleridge was convinced that the storm was to shake off whole "vile" fruits from the trees. This belief of "pantisocratic paradise on earth"[165] was typically millenarian. Coleridge alluded to

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[160] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *Poetical Works 1*, ll. 307-14.
[161] Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 113.
[162] Priestley, *The Present State of Europe*, 6.
[163] Price, *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* (London: T.Cadell, 1784), 7.
[164] Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 50.
[165] Wylie, *Young Coleridge*, 114.

the Book of Revelation, and in the spirit of millenarianism, and assumed that glory, which was full of "Faith and meek Piety", would return when the "SAVIOUR" came:

> Return pure FAITH! Return meek PIETY!
> The kingdoms of the world are yours: each heart
> Self-govern'd, the vast family of Love
> Rais'd from the common earth by common toil
> Enjoy the equal produce.
> . . . .
> . . . such delights, such strange beatitude
> Seize on my young anticipating heart
> When that blest future rushes on my view!
> For in his own and in his Father's might.
> The SAVIOUR comes! While as the THOUSAND YEARS
> Lead up their mystic dance, the DESERT shout![166]

Coleridge's ideal image of society reflects Frend's principle of "universal benevolence". He explained that all people could enjoy equal benefits in the "kingdom", which was united by "the vast family of Love". According to Coleridge's Unitarian philosophical and religious convictions, Coleridge expected that the abolition of the slave trade would be realised through a divine plan.

In "The Destiny of Nations" (1795) Coleridge also showed his millenarian view through his anti-slavery message. Coleridge hinted that slaves in the "guilty islands" might expect Heaven's "vengeance":

> As when the mad Tornado bellows through
> The guilty islands of the western main,
> What time departing for their native shores,
> Eboe, or Koromantyn's plain of Palms,

[166] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 339-60.

The infuriate spirit of the Murdered make
Fierce merriment, and vengeance ask of Heaven.[167]

The "guilty islands of the western main" clearly meant the West Indies, where slaves were forced to work under the British planters. The "spirit of the Murdered" might imply the soul of slaves who had perished under the desperate conditions of hard labour. Since Coleridge had read Bryan Edwards's *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793-4) [168] before writing this poem[169], he was familiar with the fact that slaves could gain their freedom only by their own death. Coleridge even suggested that there were rebellious slaves who held the "infuriate" spirit to protest against their situation.

According to Coleridge's understanding of millenarianism, the ending scene of the poem could be interpreted as the prelude to millennium:

And first a Landscape rose,
More wild, and waste, and desolate, than where
The white bear, drifting on a field of ice,
Howls to her sundered cubs with piteous rage
And savage agony.[170]

The "savage agony" of the bear might allude to suffering of slaves as well as the dissenting abolitionists's frustration. The description of the wild landscape also suggests the repressed situation of all social reforms including the abolitionist movement. Similar to Priestley, Coleridge indicated that the destruction was followed by the appearance of the messiah. He expected that "Father of Earth and Heaven"[171] would come to the world. The Vice such as the slave trade would finally

[167] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 435-40.
[168] Bryan Edwards who was the "successful" West Indies merchant lived in Jamaica from 1759 to 1792. In this book he described closely the life of West Indies. (cf. *Verse*, 25.)
[169] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, l. 439, Mays's note.
[170] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 463-67.
[171] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, l. 461.

punished by God after apocalypse:

> NIGHT murmur'd, and the sound thro' Chaos went.
> Leapt at her call her hideous-fronted brood!
> A dark behest they heard, and rush'd on earth,
> Since that sad hour, in Campus and Courts adored,
> Rebels from God, and Monarchs o'er Mankind![172]

Coleridge's millenarianism was apparent from his assertion that all slaves finally attained Freedom, no matter how hard the process: "The Sun that rose on FREEDOM, rose in BLOOD!"[173]

In "Fears in Solitude" Coleridge also established a nationalist, anti-slave trade critique. This poem was published when France invaded Switzerland in January 1798. His nationalist stance was principally moral, and he indicated that the anti-slavery movement should prove the country's moral superiority. The Anglo-Africanist rhetoric was morally degrading for Coleridge; Britain itself was in this sense a target and ventured to blame it, not "playing tricks with conscience [and] dare[d] not look / At their own vices"[174]. By illustrating some of the historical details of the slave trade in Britain, Coleridge condemned the country's colonialist ambitions:

> Steam'd up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,
> Ev'n so, my countrymen! have we gone forth
> And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,
> And deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint
> With slow perdition murders the whole man,
> His body and his soul![175]

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[172] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 302-6.
[173] Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *Poetical Works I*, l. 443.
[174] Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 159-60.
[175] Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude", *Poetical Works I*, ll. 49-54.

The poet castigates the deeds of the British slave traders as "vices" to taint their bodies and souls. In Coleridge's opinion, the deeds of the British slave traders destroyed human dignity in both themselves and the slaves, not unlike the situation of the French invasion of Switzerland.

Thus, in anti-slavery poetry, Coleridge underlined his millenarianism theology combined with his radical ideas. His abolitionist stance, therefore, was different from other political radicals such as Paine and Thelwall who concentrated on claiming the social injustice of the slave trade. When the Abolition bill was passed by parliament in 1807, John Thelwall published "The Negro's Prayer". Thelwall was a member of the London Corresponding Society, which encouraged social reforms in England. Thelwall corresponded with Coleridge on the matter of their opposition to government policy, especially regarding the war against France, arguing that England repressed a principle of liberty.[176] Especially after Coleridge's political lecture in Bristol in 1795, they responded to each other's liberal views through lectures and pamphlets. Thelwall founded *The Tribune* to echo his support for William Godwin's radical politics. In this pamphlet, Thelwall argued that "there are certain *principles* of politics and morality upon which we are very well agreed, and particularly upon those maxims which define *justice* as the sole basis of *virtue*, and the promotion of the *general good*, as the sole criterion of justice."[177] Having denounced slavery in his writings, he now saw the abolition of the slave trade as justice for the general good. Thelwall intended this poem as a celebration of the freedom of slaves, the Negro slave rejoicing at his freedom by calling out to his native god, the "Great Spirit":

> If thou view'st me, Great Spirit! as one thou hast made,
> And my fate as dependent on thee;--
> O impart thou thy aid,
> That the scourge may be stay'd,

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[176] I analysed Coleridge's view on the English war against France in section (i) of this chapter.

[177] John Thelwall, *The Tribune*, 3 vols. (London: n. p., 1795-6), Vol. 3, 103, qtd. in Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 172.

> And the Black Man, at last, may be free.[178]

In the figure of the freed slave, Thelwall characterised his hopes and expectations for the success of social reforms.

Among such anti-slavery propaganda as Thelwall's, Coleridge's abolitionist poems strongly presented religious meanings. It is clear that Coleridge tried to circulate Unitarian dogma through his anti-slavery poetry alongside the dissenting movement for social reforms.

### (iv) Conclusion

Coleridge changed his attitude towards abolitionism during the period beginning around 1808. In the end he even criticised the behaviour of his fellow abolitionists as "frantic" in his discussion with Thomas Pringle (in June 1833), a member of the Abolition Society in England:

> . . . I utterly condemn your frantic practice of declaiming about their [colonisers'] Rights to the Blacks. They ought to be forcibly reminded of the state in which their brethren in Africa still are, and taught to be thankful for the Providence that has placed them within means of grace.[179]

Coleridge's assumption that slaves who had been brought to British plantations were happier than those in their homelands is obviously contradictory to his answers in his lecture on the slave trade in 1795[180]. The justification for slavery in terms of Christian discourse as "the process of Humanization"[181] is not groundless. His estrangement from the anti-slavery ideology became stronger around 1827 and reached

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[178] Thelwall, "The Negro's Prayer", *Verse*, 278.
[179] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), Vol. 1, 386.
[180] Cf. Chapter I of this thesis.
[181] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, Vol. 1, 386.

its peak in 1833. Coleridge read many publications on race theories, which were being produced in great numbers in Europe around the turn of the century[182]. Another obvious factor that influenced his change of heart was his reaction to the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Among the leading race theorists of the time, Blumenbach, whom Coleridge met in Göttingen in 1798-99, had an important influence on Coleridge's view of black people; particularly influential was the theory of race division that Blumenbach had set out in *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (1775). He divided the human species into five varieties according to his monogenist approach: Caucasian, Mongolian, Ethiopian, American and Malay.[183] He argued that the original race was Caucasian, and that all other races had "degenerated" from this norm into two extremes, the Ethiopian and the Mongolian, according to climate and environment. Blumenbach and his theory profoundly affected Coleridge, who wrote to Thomas Poole: "Nothing can be conceived more delightful than Blumenbach's lectures and in conversation he is indeed a most interesting man".[184]

Kant was another influence on Coleridge's newly evolving notion of racial differences. Kant's theory was also concerned with the effects of environmental factors on the development of races. The point of his "On the Different Races of Man" (1775) lay in the supposition that racial differentiation derived from climatic conditions and that Caucasian was the original race from which other races had descended. The striking similarity between Blumenbach and Kant is clearly no coincidence, since the same theory had also been examined extensively by a French anthropologist, George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. In his *Histoire naturelle* (*A Natural History*) (1749-1804)[185], Buffon argued that the human species "altered, or degenerated, according to physical, environmental factors"[186], Kant's essay being

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182 I analysed race theories published in Europe in detail in chapter II.

183 In the second edition of *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* published in 1781 Blumenbach added the racial grouping of Malay.

184 Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 494 (6 May 1799).

185 Buffon's work was translated into German in 1771-4 (*Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J.Kitson, Vol.8 of *Slavery*, xiv.)

186 *Theories of Race*, xiii.

intended as a response to Buffon's argument. Coleridge's idea of racial hierarchy was supported by European-centred race theories. The following illustration, from his *Table Talk* of 1827, shows that he was faithful to this view:

1

Caucasian or European

2 Malay =2 American

3 Negro =3 Mongolian=Asiatic[187]

Another factor that made Coleridge cautious about the idea of the emancipation of slaves was his fear of the potential change to the social order that the liberation of slaves would bring about. Coleridge saw the breaking down of idealism through a series of incidents in France following the French Revolution. The zest for freedom among people who supported the spirit of the French Revolution turned into depression and fear. Through his disappointment at the French Revolution, Coleridge tried to assess his idealistic sensibility in the 1790s. He had attempted to erase his Jacobin label, defying his "worst enemy to shew, in any of my few writings, the least bias to Irreligion, Immortality, or Jacobinism".[188] Coleridge even criticises himself for being enthusiastic about the movement for reform: "I was a sharer in the general vortex, though my little World described the path of its Revolution in an orbit of it own".[189] He continued to describe his belief as "air-built Castles" of the day and balloons of "youthful Enthusiasm".[190] This illustrates how Coleridge tried to distance himself, both ideologically and psychologically, from the idea of changing the social order. He feared the possibility of social chaos after the emancipation of slaves, who had languished for so long at the bottom of the social hierarchy. For Coleridge, slaves were basically barbarians who would have difficulty integrating themselves into

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187 Coleridge, *Table Talk*, Vol. 2, 55 (24 February 1827).

188 Coleridge, *The Friend*, 2 vols. ed. Barbara Rooke (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), Vol. 2, 25 (No.2).

189 Coleridge, *The Friend*, Vol. 2, 146 (No. 11).

190 Coleridge, *The Friend*, Vol. 2, 147 (No. 11).

civilised society once they were given freedom and a sense of equality. This notion is in keeping with his belief in the Christianisation of slaves.

The idea of civilising slaves (through de-barbarianism and Christianisation) was common to both pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions.[191] James Ramsay who presented his objections to the justification of slavery emphasized the necessity of a Christian education for slaves in "An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies" (1784).[192] On the same issue of the primal necessity of civilising slaves, the pro-slavery campaigner William Beckford Jr. also argued in *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica* (1788) that slaves should be educated through Christianity. Similarly, Edmund Burke asserted in his anti-slavery essay "Sketch of a Negro Code" that slaves should be civilised in "religion, morality and learning".[193]

Coleridge's view was clearly shown in his 1808 review of Thomas Clarkson's *The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*[194]; while asserting the essential evil of the slave trade, he showed rather more concern with the civilisation of Africans. Although Coleridge's argument—that slaves should learn European culture before gaining the freedom of civilised society—obviously differed from his initial abolitionist claims, it was not necessarily a de-humanised or a racial view. Rather, it had a religious basis and expressed his somewhat limited viewpoint and patronising stance of the superior, which highlights the practical limitations of the theories of Blumenbach and others.

Coleridge's criticism of the slave trade was primarily a political protest against injustice in society that was seen as a "vice" that brought about dishonour to the British nation. Coleridge's sensibility was essentially dissenting in religious terms; as a Unitarian, his anti-slavery campaign was in accord with other religious movements fighting for abolition. Nonconformist groups such as the Quakers and the Unitarians

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191 See the analysis on the religious aspect of abolition debate in chapter I.

192 See the rhetoric of abolition debate in chapter II.

193 Edmund Burke, "Sketch of a Negro Code", *Works*, Vol. 9 (London: n.p., 1818), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitosn, Vol. 2 of *Slavery*, 185.

194 Coleridge, *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 12, April 1808—July 1808 (Edinburgh: D. Willson, 1808), 355-79. See in detail in chapter I.

were active in this movement, since denouncing the slave trade as a social vice gave them a rare chance of a well-timed political appeal for dissenters in the late eighteenth century. Coleridge expected in this context the political and social reaction to his anti-slavery arguments and an enlightening of the British mind by humanistic sensibilities. However, the prospect of achieving the goal of equality between slaves and white people was unrealistic. Coleridge's awareness of this prospect stemmed from the ideological influence of late eighteenth- century humanism. Christian ethics and the intrinsic sense of order in the political and social systems were the basic standpoints that sustained the spirit of the British people and their society in this age.

Under these circumstances, Coleridge's religious belief swayed between Unitarianism and Trinitarianism. From 1804 to 1806 when Coleridge travelled among Mediterranean countries, he found the "practical and moral bearing"[195] of the Trinity that connected with the doctrine of Redemption. In February 1805, Coleridge clearly mentioned "the adorable Tri-unity of Being, Intellect, and Spiritual Action, as the Father, Son, and co-eternal Procedent, that these are God (i.e. not mere general Terms, or abstract ideas) and that they are one God (i.e. a real, eternal, and necessary Distinction in the divine nature, distinguishable Triplicity in the indivisible Unity)".[196] In his letter to George Fricker on 4th October 1806, Coleridge also revealed his scepticism of Socinianism and at the same time his approval of Trinitarianism:

> . . . I read the New Testament again, and I became fully convinced, that Socinianism was not only not the doctrine of the New Testament, but that it scarcely deserved the name of a religion in any sense. . . . still will the Trinity of the Deity, the redemption, and the thereto necessary assumption of humanity by the Word, 'Who is with God, and is God,' remain truth. . . Believe all these, and with the grace of the spirit consult your own heart, in quietness and humility, they will furnish you with

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195 J. Robert Barth, S.J., *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine* (New York: Fordham UP, 1987), 10.

196 Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957-61), Vol. 2, 2444.

> proofs, that surpass all understanding, because they are felt and known. . .[197]

Coleridge tried to find some certainty in the doctrine of the Trinity that was clarified by "the Word". Coleridge felt easier when he believed human redemption. In addition, since Coleridge had been suffering from "ill health and disappointment"[198] partly caused by taking opium, he felt some uncertainty about Unitarian optimism, in which people expected the coming millenarian world while at the same time facing an unknown future. The aftermath of the French Revolution and the following repression of social movements in England must have made Coleridge realise certain limitations of idealism. In the early 1800s Coleridge, who probably saw similarities between Unitarianism and the idealistic sensibility of the early 1790s, chose to distance himself psychologically from Unitarian beliefs.

Around the same time that his estrangement from Unitarianism began, Coleridge's enthusiasm for social and political reforms waned. After stepping out of the political arena, his association with social reformers also changed. For instance, Coleridge's relationship with Benjamin Flower, the publisher of radical works such as the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, and also with John Thelwall, began to focus more on "personal, religious and philosophical questions"[199] than on politics. Coleridge also broke up with Dyer, formerly a member of his circle of radical friends. In his letter to Dyer on 15th March 1804, Coleridge did not conceal his irritation with Dyer, who once criticised Coleridge's talents as a poet: "Dear Sir, if you *knew* me you would know that I am not of the genus irritabile: and must resign all claim to the poetic inspiration, if irritability be an essential character of it."[200] When Coleridge's enthusiasm for social reforms dwindled, he realised that his friendship with Dyer was not based on literary interest. Coleridge probably felt isolated from other friends, who mainly pursued

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197 Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 2, 1189-1190.
198 Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 2, 1189.
199 Frida Knight, *University Rebel: The Life of William Frend* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1971), 227.
200 Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 2, 1091.

social problems.

Thus, coinciding with the change of social climate in England from 1790s to 1830s, Coleridge also swayed in his religious and philosophical thinking, his shift in attitude towards abolitionism between 1795 and 1833 reflecting these changes in his sensibility. In conclusion, the conservative tendencies that characterised his later years made Coleridge realise that the establishment of an egalitarian society was not only unrealistic but also undesirable.

## Chapter IV

## Southey and the Slave Trade

### (i) Southey's Early Radicalism

To comprehend Robert Southey's attitudes to slavery we must first understand the context in which they arose—that of his radicalisation among dissenters in the years immediately after the French Revolution.

Southey's disposition to challenge established authority first became apparent during his time at Westminster School in 1788. With his friend Grosvenor Charles Bedford he started a periodical paper entitled *The Flagellant*, the purpose of which was to criticise the authoritarian approach in schools, arguing, for instance, in an article that "corporal punishment" was "an invention of the Devil".[1] His target was the English education system itself for the way it relied simply on flogging to maintain "law and order" of education.[2] Apparently as Southey's attitude was regarded as seditious and rebellious he was finally expelled from school in April 1792. The tone of this paper clearly reveals a revolutionary sentiment that developed in late eighteenth-century Europe during the aftermath of the French Revolution. In England, people who adopted the liberal slogan of the French Revolution went on to organise societies that supported revolutionary movements. For instance, in 1793, the London Corresponding Society celebrated the way France had escaped attack from the Duke of Brunswick, who had attempted to invade France in order to reintroduce the old system. Southey shared the republican spirit of the time. His liberal sensibility was apparent in his letter of 21st October 1792 from Bristol to Grosvenor Bedford. After mentioning a pamphlet printed in Bristol arguing for "the abolition of the cooperation"[3], Southey welcomed the republican movements:

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[1] Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age* (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1960), 16.
[2] Mark Storey, *Robert Southey A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 10
[3] Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 18.

These little attacks upon the outworks sap the foundations of the citadel. If France models a republic and enjoys tranquillity who knows but Europe may become one great republic and Man be free of the whole?[4]

The zest for republicanism in England, however, cooled down under the repressive polity of Pitt's government during the period around 1792.[5] At that time, republicans and levellers were regarded as politically dangerous, and the conservative government tried to secure liberty and property against egalitarians. The climax of the repression against republicans was the introduction of Two Acts in 1795 that prohibited the voicing of any criticisms against the king and limited the size of social reform meetings. The time was becoming difficult to proclaim republican ideology in public. Although Southey's republican sentiments did not diminish, he did struggle with the hardships of being a republican. In his letter to Grosvenor Bedford on 30th Dec.1792, Southey lamented that Thomas Paine was found guilty of sedition for his *Rights of Man*. The outcome of Paine's trial was a shock to Southey for his firm reliance on Paine's argument (which he believed) was based on "Truth": "To hope that Truth would shelter me how vain / When Truth and Eloquence both failed for Paine!"[6]

Although the social situation in England became difficult for radicals to survive, Southey's radical politics was kept on always alive in his mind even after he began his studies at Balliol College Oxford in 1793. His enthusiasm for republicanism was obviously intensified in one of his letters to Bedford just before he began working at Oxford, in which he stressed that it was rather "disgraceful"[7] to study Euclid at a time when Europe was experiencing social and political upheaval.

Southey's rebellious ideology influenced his religious belief, expressing doubt as to whether he could accept the Thirty-Nine Articles, when he started university. His

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[4] Robert Southey, Bodleian MSS. Eng. Letters. c. 22, f. 27.
[5] See chapter III for a detailed discussion on the 1790's repression.
[6] Southey, Bodleian MSS. Eng. Letters, c. 22, f. 41.
[7] Southey to G.C. Bedford on 20th Nov. 1792, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey,* ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey, 6 vols. (London: n.p., 1849-50), Vol. 1, 169.

"religious unorthodoxy"[8] was exposed just after he had begun at Balliol:

> How very little have the doctrines of Christ been understood! We find neither bishops of 10,000 a year—jugged Jews or roasted heretics—or church and state—or test act in the whole gospel. . . . Those damned monks who smuggled and monopolized the scriptures for so many years—pieced them and patched them from the Alexandrian Platonists—the Oriental fictions and Jewish Cabbala—till we read of persecution—metaphysics—scarlet whore and eating books—in the book of life of benevolence and simple truth.[9]

Southey continued to show his anti-establishment attitude in the following year: ". . . the Test Act will be a stumbling-block to honesty."[10] Southey's heterodoxy was partly derived from his upbringing in Bristol where dissenting intellectuals surrounded him. For example, he had attended a school run by Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister[11] and in 1790s started to mix with dissenters such as "George Burnett, a minister of the Unitarian Congregation at Yarmouth"[12] and some Unitarians educated by Anna Barbauld. Although it is unclear which denomination Southey felt he belonged to, it is certain that he questioned the doctrine and rituals of Anglicanism. Southey's resistance to Anglicanism clashed with his uncle's intention to make him join the Anglican clergy. Southey's dissenting sensibility also made him "radical in politics"[13] and he became more isolated from his family who had hopes of his becoming a priest. Southey's aunt, Elizabeth Tyler, who for a long time had looked after Southey both psychologically and economically, put particular pressure on him with regard to his future. In the early 1790s, Southey entertained the idea of escaping

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[8] Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 25.
[9] Southey, Bodleian MSS. Eng. Letters, c. 22, f. 72, Southey to G. C. Bedford on 30th Oct. 1793.
[10] Jack Simmons, *Southey* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1948), 36.
[11] Southey, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey (London: n.p., 6vols), Vol. 1, 46.
[12] Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 157.
[13] White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, 155.

to America, so that he could leave behind his worries about money, "family commitments" and "his conviction that he was chained to the Church."[14]

Southey met Coleridge in Oxford in June 1794. In a letter to his friend Grosvenor Charles Bedford, he described the strong and positive impression he had of Coleridge's sensibility and intelligence: "He (Coleridge) is of most uncommon merit,--of the strongest genius, the clearest judgment, the best heart . . ."[15] Southey was interested in Coleridge's idea of republicanism, of a Utopian society and especially of Pantisocracy. The idea of establishing an ideal society in Pennsylvania where entire freedom and equality were possible was itself more practical than a mere fantasy for both of them. Not only by imagination but also by their intellectuality they both were well aware that inequality, inequity, poverty, restrictions of every kind and most evils that people suffer from in society were always social and political targets of reformation in the process of modernisation in human history. Southey was more intensive, and Coleridge more theoretical, in insisting that all evils people suffered should be "eliminated"[16] from society and that people live as part of a democratic society where all property would be held in common. The most important concept within a pantisocratic society was that of equal rights to property. In his 1795 lecture, Coleridge expanded his idea of property as involves an idea of power politics, saying that "Property is Power and equal Property equal Power. A poor Man is necessarily more or less a Slave. Poverty is the Death of Public Freedom."[17] This egalitarian ideology was derived from his philosophical thinking upon universal benevolence that in itself was based on his own understanding of Unitarianism. William Frend, Coleridge's tutor in Cambridge, maintained that "every Christian is bound to entertain sentiments of universal benevolence".[18] As a Unitarian, Frend claimed that the Unitarians, who suffered severe social discrimination, should be treated equally with

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[14] Storey, *Robert Southey*, 41.
[15] James Dykes Campbell, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge, A Narrative of the Events of his Life* (n.p.: n.p., 1894), 30.
[16] William Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey* (New York: Columbia UP, 1917), 129.
[17] S.T. Coleridge, *Lectures 1795: On Politics and Religion*, eds. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 126.
[18] William Frend, *An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge Against William Frend, M.A.* (Cambridge: B. Flower, 1793), 89. More details in chapter III.

other Christian believers. In this respect, Frend's faith in universal benevolence had a firm religious base. Coleridge followed Frend's philosophy and developed the concept of an ideal society in a real social context. He argued that every human was connected to the rest of humankind by bonds of affection and that all humans should enjoy equal happiness and freedom in society. The social aspect of Coleridge's pantisocracy was similar to George Dyer's idea of "primitive society". When Coleridge first met Dyer in the summer of 1794, he wrote to Southey saying that Dyer was "enraptured"[19] with Pantisocracy and that he would join it. Dyer was also a Unitarian thinker, who insisted that an ideal society would allow no possibility for "exclusive privileges":

> . . . there would be no opposition of interests; no exclusive privileges would be enjoyed; no invidious distinctions kept up . . . Primitive societies would naturally put this question, Are we not all brethren?[20]

Dyer responded positively towards Coleridge's Pantisocracy plan since its ideology coincided with his Unitarian love for all human beings.

Coleridge's enthusiasm for Pantisocracy was greatly strengthened by the fact that Joseph Priestley, the Unitarian scientist, whom he respected as much as he did Frend, had already emigrated to America in April 1794. What particularly excited Coleridge was that Priestley had settled near the Susquehanna, where Coleridge intended to try out his Pantisocracy. Therefore, when Coleridge met Southey for the fist time, his desire to go to America became yet more earnest. Coleridge showed his philanthropic ideal in his letter to Southey on 13th July in 1794:

> Philanthropy (and indeed every other Virtue) is a thing of *Concretion*—Some home-born Feeling is the *center* of the Ball, that,

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[19] Coleridge, *Collected Letters of S.T. Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1956), Vol. 1, 97-8.

[20] George Dyer, *An Inquiry into the Nature of Subscription* (London: n.p.), 13.

rolling on thro' Life collects and assimilates every congenial Affection.[21]

Coleridge found that Southey had a republican mind akin to his own, putting him in a position to truly understand Pantisocracy. Southey was much impressed by books written by authors who advocated social reforms[22] such as William Godwin's *Political Justice* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*; these works shared the theme that every human being should enjoy equal happiness and benefits in society. The concept of Pantisocracy was coincident with the Godwinian idea that "private considerations must yield to the general good".[23] In his letter to Bedford, Southey excitedly told that the plan of Pantisocracy gave him " a prospect of happiness":

> Never did so delightful a prospect of happiness open upon my view before. To go with all I love . . . to live with them in the most agreable and most honorable employment, to eat the fruits I have raised, and see every face happy around me. . .[24]

It is obvious that Southey supported the movement to develop an egalitarian society in 1790s. Following the French Revolution, he described republican heroes in several works such as *Joan of Arc* (1792), *Wat Tyler* (1794) and *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794). In *Wat Tyler* Southey demonstrated that it was necessary for those people who were exploited by their masters to rebel, in order to gain their just rights. According to Godwinian philosophy, Southey argued that to revolt against social injustice was justified by its cause. *The Fall of Robespierre* was a joint work by Southey and Coleridge, published by "the radical Cambridge printer"[25] Benjamin Flower just after the death of Robespierre. Robespierre, the main leader of the reign of terror in the early 1790s, was, in the eyes of Southey, a republican hero who carried out Godwinianism against oppression. Southey believed that Robespierre was

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[21] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 86.
[22] Storey, *Robert Southey*, 52.
[23] William Godwin, *Political Justice*, 2 vols. (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), Vol. 1, 165
[24] Southey, *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1965), Vol. 1, 67, Southey to G. C. Bedford on 5th Aug., 1794.
[25] Storey, *Robert Southey*, 60.

> the benefactor of mankind and that we should lament his death as the greatest misfortune Europe could have sustained. . . (Southey to Horace Bedford, 22 August, 1794)[26]

Southey dramatised the events in which Robespierre carried out his righteous vengeance against those who repressed the people of France. On the other hand, Coleridge's view of Robespierre's policies was more complicated than that of Southey. The difference between Southey and Coleridge on the issue of radicalism created a split between them and ultimately the collapse of Pantisocracy. Coleridge saw Robespierre as a Machiavellian figure whose "bad actions have cast a disastrous lustre on his name".[27] Coleridge considered that the tragedy of Robespierre was caused by his belief that he could justify murder as a means of establishing his ideals of equality and liberty. Coleridge describes how Robespierre had been provoked into violence by social pressures such as the war against France. During 1793, when war was spreading across the whole of Europe, France was experiencing serious financial problems as a result of keeping large armies. People suffering from rising prices and a shortage of goods felt frustrated and restless. In his lecture in 1795 Coleridge argued that this social situation was causing Robespierre's government to implement a radical revolutionary policy. Specifically, he claimed that Robespierre tried to strengthen his empire by repressing rebels whom he had branded as "counter revolutionaries".[28] Coleridge found that Robespierre's theology of terror was misled by rationalism, as was typically shown in Godwin's *Political Justice*. In the "Introductory Address" to his Lecture 1795 Coleridge summarised that Robespierre's "grand and beautiful" ideal turned into failure:

> I rather think, that the distant prospect, to which he was travelling,

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[26] Southey, *New Letters,* Vol. 1, 73.
[27] Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E.H. Coleridge, 2 vols. (Oxford:Oxford UP, 1912), Vol. 2, 495.
[28] Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 205.

appeared to him grand and beautiful; but that he fixed his eye on it with such intense eagerness as to neglect the foulness of the road.[29]

Coleridge considered that Robespierre made a mistake to use violence as a mean to establish the egalitarian society. He highlighted the contradictory element in Robespierre's arguments that claimed "peaceful enjoyment of liberty and equality"[30] while at the same time defending terror: "Terror is only justice that is prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is thus an emanation of virtue. . ."[31] Coleridge found that Robespierre's politics had much in common with Godwinian philosophy, in that it upheld terrorism as a weapon against reason and justice. Coleridge realised that Godwin's philosophy was too extreme and idealistic to carry out and he eventually dismissed Godwin's theory in 1796.[32]

Southey also felt sceptical about Godwin while he was studying his works. He confessed to Grosvenor Bedford that he found the error in Godwin's theory: " I have since seen his fundamental error—that he theorizes for another state, not for the rule of conduct in the present."[33] Southey, however, continued to support radical republicanism during early 1790s despite his belief in Godwinianism was not stable. His radicalism was shown in his contribution to the *Monthly Magazine* in which Godwin also published his works. Richard Phillips, who was later sent to jail for selling Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, started this magazine. The politics of the magazine was clearly liberal and it circulated among dissenters and political radicals. It is interesting to see that Southey's works that were published in this magazine were mainly "non-political" topics such as literature and history. It seemed that Southey somehow intended to avoid concentrating on the current political issues. Although he was an earnest republican, Southey's doubt about Godwin's philosophy may have

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[29] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion*, eds. Lewis Patton & Peter Mann (Princeton; Princeton UP, 1971), 35.
[30] P. Beik, trans. and ed. *The Documentary History of Western Civilisation: The French Revolution* (London: n.p., 1971), 278.
[31] Beik, *The Documentary History*, 283.
[32] Storey, *Robert Southey*, 37.
[33] Southey, Bodleian MSS. Eng. Letters, c. 22, f. 163, Southey to G. C. Bedford on 1st Oct. 1795.

made him discreet in proclaiming his political opinion.

While Southey and Coleridge planned Pantisocracy, the differences in their respective ways of understanding politics and social ideology became more obvious. In addition, both of them encountered the financial problem of how to buy land in America. Under these difficult circumstances, Pantisocracy was never realised. Southey's ambivalent republicanism was one of the reasons why his relationship with Coleridge eroded to nothing.

The energy of republicanism in 1790s, however, stimulated Southey's belief in human liberty. Since he was antagonistic to the established political order, which he saw, as did most dissenters, as a system for oppressing liberty of thought and body, he also supported abolitionism.

### (ii) **Southey and Anti-Slavery Poems**

Between 1794 and 1798 Southey wrote nine anti-slavery poems in which he often expressed his indignation against the social injustice of the slave trade. Southey contended that equality and liberty among human beings were being violently abused through the slave trade. In the sonnet "'Tis night, the mercenary tyrants sleep' (1797), Southey describes the tragic fate of slaves who could not return to their native land. The woman whose beloved is taken to the plantation laments that she would never see him ever again:

> She whom he loves far from the cheerful throng
> Stands sad and gazes from her lowly door
> With dim grown eye, silent and woe-begone,
> And weeps for him who will return no more.[34]

[34] Southey, "'Tis night, the mercenary tyrants sleep", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ed. Lynda Pratt, Vol. 5 of gen. ed. Lynda Pratt, *Robert Southey: Poetical Works 1793-1810*, 5 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), ll. 11-14.

In the poem, the weeping of the woman expresses the repressed sorrow and agony of individuals who are deprived of their human dignity. Furthermore, the sufferings of the woman and her beloved intensified because the burden of slavery seemed impossible to destroy. In "To the Genius of Africa" (1797) Southey also describes the evils of the slave trade. Since this poem was composed in conjunction with the anti-slavery lecture given by Coleridge in 1795[35], the heinous aspects of the slave trade were strongly emphasised for the sake of propaganda. Southey vividly illustrates how slaves have to endure hard labour and "deep distress" by being "imprisoned":

> By those who there imprison'd die
> Where the black herd promiscuous lie,
> By the scourges blacken'd o'er
> And stiff and hard with human gore,
> By every groan of deep distress. . . [36]

Southey denounces the way that European countries sacrifice the lives of slaves for the purposes of financial profit.

The critical tone of this poem coincides with that of Coleridge's "Lecture on the Slave Trade". In his lecture, Coleridge denounces as blasphemy the selling of human beings as if they were commodities:

> As you hope you live with Christ hereafter you are commanded to do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you! Would you choose that Slave Merchants should incite an intoxicated Chieftain to make War on your Tribe to murder your Wife and Children before your face and drag them with yourself to the Market...[37]

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[35] The lecture was "partly in the handwriting of S. T. C. & partly in that of R. S." (Coleridge, *Lectures* 1795, 233.)
[36] Southey, "To the Genius of Africa", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 38-48.
[37] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795*, 247.

Like Southey, Coleridge draws attention to the egotism of Christians who pursue happiness by destroying slaves' lives. Coleridge regards West India Commodities such as sugar and rum as being "useless" and "pernicious".[38] He indignantly criticises the way in which food sweetened with sugar is made from "Brothers blood":

> A part of that Food among most of you is sweetened with the Blood of the Murdered. Bless the Food which thou hast given us! O Blasphemy! Did God give Food mingled with Brothers blood! Will the Father of all men bless the Food of Cannibals—the food which is polluted with the blood of his own innocent Children?[39]

Coleridge makes the stark claim that people who are eager to have sugar are committing a sin of cannibalism. He regards sugar as one of the inventions of "luxury"[40] that are not necessary for daily life.

Southey also considers how West Indian products could be replaced by other things. For example, in the preface of his poems on the slave trade he suggests the introduction of East Indian or Maple Sugar could be a possible alternative to West Indian sugar. He proposes that avoiding the use of West Indian products would be "a slow but certain method"[41] of destroying the slave trade. In fact, as an alternative to cane, he asked Bedford to buy "sugar beet"[42] which came from the East Indies. In his anti-slavery sonnets, Southey repeatedly describes the barbaric and violent conditions on sugar plantations. In "Oh he is worn with toil! The big drops run", Southey illustrates that people who enjoy the benefits of the slave trade would "sip the blood-sweeten'd beverage".[43] Southey claims that people who take sugar in their beverages were exploiting slaves' energy to fulfil their desire for luxury. He criticises capitalism, which supports the slave trade, as being the vice that forces people to

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[38] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795*, 248.
[39] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795*, 248.
[40] Coleridge, *Lectures 1795*, 236.
[41] Southey, *Poetical Works*, Vol. 5, 49.
[42] Storey, *Robert Southey*, 112.
[43] Southey, *Selected Shorter Poems*, l. 10.

pursue their own indulgent desires. Like Coleridge, Southey portrays the cannibalistic nature of capitalism as if it were "a devourer".[44] Southey shows that slaves are the victims who have to endure hard labour, pain and an agonising death. He stresses that slaves are commodities consumed to satisfy the selfish desires of Europeans: "High in the air expos'd the Slave is hung/ To all the birds of Heaven their living food!".[45] The image of the living sacrifice is echoed in the passage in "Hold your mad hands! for ever on the plain". In this sonnet slaves are described as "prey" who are traded for cannibalistic purposes:

> Plunge ye yon bark of anguish in the deep;
> For the pale fiend, cold hearted Commerce there
> Breathes his gold-gender'd pestilence afar,
> And calls to share the prey his kindered Daemon War.[46]

Southey's implication is that the slave trade is stained with the sins of greed and egotism stemming from European imperialism.

Southey depicts the mercilessness of the slave trade using an image of the heat of Sun; the "scorching Sun" causes slaves to groan in unjust burden:

> . . . The scorching Sun
> As pitiless as proud Prosperity,
> Darts on him his full beams. . .[47]

By highlighting the hardships to be endured in the hot climate of the plantations, Southey criticises pro-slavery arguments that insist that slaves are by nature suitable for hard labour and heat. In fact some of the eighteenth and nineteenth- century race

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[44] Timothy Morton, "Blood Sugar", *Romanticism and Colonialism*, eds.Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 100.
[45] Southey, "High in the air expos'd the slave is hung", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 1-2.
[46] Southey, *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 11-14.
[47] Southey, "Oh he is worn with toil! The big drops run", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 4-6.

theorists such as James Prichard argued that African people were adapted to the wild and savage state of life because of their darker colour.[48] In the pro-slavery camp, the plantation owner William Beckford and the journalist William Cobbett justified the slave trade by claiming that African people were physically suited to a savage environment. Their arguments closely reflected the Euro-centric ideology of the eighteenth century. Consider, in particular, Beckford's analysis of African people, in which he upheld the typical pro-slavery claim that slaves were happier than the poor in England:

> The situation of a good negro under a kind owner or a benevolent overseer is not to be pitied, indeed it is very superior in many respects. . .to those of the generality of labouring poor in England. . .[49]

From that quarter there was little sympathy for the sufferings of slaves. Indeed, for those supporting slavery, the first priority was to gain mercantile profits.

Southey, who felt strongly opposed to this colonialist sensibility, described a sailor who was agonised by his guilt in "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade" (1799). This poem was based on the story that Joseph Cottle's mother heard from a dissenting minister.[50] The sailor, who a minister had met, was agonising over his involvement with the slave trade. During the middle passage, when slaves were being transported to the plantations, the sailor was ordered by the captain to flog a female slave who was "sulky":

> The Captain made me tie her up
> And flog while he stood by,

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[48] Cf. James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1816), I analysed race theories in detail in chapter II.

[49] William Beckford Jr., *Remarks Upon the Situation of Negroes in Jamaica, impartially made From local Experience of nearly Thirteen Years in that Island* (London: T. & J. Egerton, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 253.

[50] Southey, *Selected Shorter Poems*, 288.

> And then he curs'd me if I staid
> My hand to hear her cry.[51]

He realised what "wicked thing" he had done during the voyage, the sailor's sin being represented as a serious, recurring moaning: "Oh I have done the wicked thing!"/ "O I have done a cursed deed".[52]

By revealing the inhumane aspect of the middle passage, abolitionists often made appeal to the sympathy and sense of guilt of white readers. For instance, the prominent abolitionist, Thomas Clarkson, in "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species" (1788), reported how badly slaves were treated in the slave ships. Southey met Clarkson at Keswick in 1803, and admired him as the person "who has laboured more earnestly than all others, for the good of his fellow creatures".[53] In his essay, Clarkson described how the sick slaves were merely thrown overboard like unnecessary commodities:

> The tyrant of the ship, to rid himself of the burthen, ordered the woman to be taken also, and to be thrown overboard, though alive, at the same time. . .[54]

Clarkson criticised the way in which those involved in the slave trade were consuming human beings. The bloodied woman illustrated in the poem was regarded as a sacrifice to English capitalism: "She twisted from the blows—her blood / Her mangled flesh I see—"[55] As was shown in Clarkson's essay, it was the cruelty of the slave trader that was being highlighted. Southey depicts how the sailor could only pray to God, which suggests that his sense of guilt almost overpowers him. The sailor's feelings of agony and desperation are yet heightened on his conscience by the fact that

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[51] Southey, "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 73-76.
[52] Southey, "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade", *Selected Shorter Poems*, l. 25, l. 53.
[53] Southey, *Annual Review* (1806), 595 qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His age*, 74.
[54] Thomas Clarkson, "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species" (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of *Slavery*, 60, cf. chapter II.
[55] Southey, "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade", *Selected Shorter Poems*, l. 81-82.

he must remain silent:

> I have no place to pray on board
> So I came here alone,
> That I might freely kneel and pray,
> And call on Christ and groan.[56]

In fact it was dangerous to express any anti-slavery sentiment whilst in the company of slave merchants, especially at the time when the slave trade prospered in England. For instance, Clarkson encountered unpleasant treatment in Bristol when he carried out initial enquiries for slave merchants in Bristol[57]: "I shall never forget the savage looks which these people [slave merchants] gave me".[58] Using the figure of the sailor, Southey tried to demonstrate how tenacious the British mercantile sensibility was and how difficult a task it would be to put an end to the slave trade.

Southey suggests that slaves would eventually avenge social injustice. As a supporter of the American and French revolutions, he considered that the oppression which brought suffering to so many people should be ended through revolutionary means. In "Why dost thou beat thy breast and rend thine hair", Southey indicates that the "God of Justice" would bring Liberty to slaves who sacrifice their lives:

> But may the God of Justice bid the wind
> Whelm that curst bark beneath the mountain wave,
> And bless with Liberty and Death the slave![59]

Southey hints that vice is destined to be punished by God. In "Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword", Southey also depicts the slave who killed a tyrant lord with his

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[56] Southey, "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade", *Selected Shorter Poems*, l. 29-32.
[57] Clarkson was summoned to London by William Wilberforce in order to gather information about the slave merchants. cf. Robin Furneaux, *William Wilberforce* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 75.
[58] Clarkson, "An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce", *The Abolition Debate*, 359-61.
[59] Southey, "Why dost thou beat thy breast and rend thine hair", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 12-14.

sword:

> Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword
> Of Vengeance? drench'd he deep its thirsty blade
> In the cold bosom of his tyrant lord?[60]

A more provocative tone is taken in the poem "To the Genius of Africa", which bitterly condemns Europe's guilt over the continuance of the slave trade: "By Africa's wrongs and Europe's guilt, /Awake! Arise! avenge!"[61] Southey strongly believes that human liberty should be retained at all costs. Using millenarian rhetoric he hints that the oppressed would be saved in the near future. By painting an apocalyptic image of the revolt of slaves, Southey attempts to tap into readers' feelings of guilt over the continuance of the slave trade. Southey's predictions concerning acts of revenge by slaves are to some extent borne out by events in St. Domingo, where slaves revolted in 1791 and, as a result, Haiti finally won its independence in 1804.

For Southey, therefore, the decision of the English government to create a free state in Africa may be seen as one of the millenarian goals. In "On the Settlement of Sierra Leone" (1798), he referred to the establishment of a free state for emancipated slaves in Sierra Leone in 1787. The Sierra Leone plan was carried out alongside Clarkson's abolitionist campaign, and the British government agreed to pay the costs of transport. On 8th April "the first 290 free black men and 41 black women, with 70 white women, including 60 prostitutes"[62] left London for Sierra Leone. Southey celebrates the fact that slaves could now enjoy "peace and happiness" in a place of freedom, stressing that the future prospects of slaves have been granted by the "sons of England":

> The sons of England leap to land,

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[60] Southey, "Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 1-3.
[61] Southey, "To the Genius of Africa", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 46-47.
[62] Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* (London: Papermac, 1998), 496-7

Joy echoes from the blameless band,
They come not to oppress;
These shall their countries shame efface,
And greet at length the injur'd race,
With peace and happiness.[63]

While Southey sympathises with slaves who had suffered oppression over a long period, he admires the English people for their wisdom in introducing the Sierra Leone plan. Southey praises not only the English abolitionists but also the English government for seeing the plan through. When Southey wrote this poem, on the other hand, England still continued its involvement with the slave trade. So tenacious were mercantile forces in England that the government would not put an end to this profitable trade. The Sierra Leone plan was a tactical move on the part of the English government to avoid further criticism from the anti-slavery movement.

Southey's attitude towards abolitionism was a complex one, torn as it was between his humanistic sensibilities and the respect he felt for his own nation. In this poem Southey suggests that freed slaves owed their change in fortune to the benevolence of the English people. In this respect Southey attempts to make the political statement that it is the English people who have the right to control the lives of former slaves especially in Sierra Leone. Southey's nationalistic sensibilities are shown in the following lines:

They come to break the oppressive chain,
The generous effort bless!
They come to bid injustice cease. . .[64]

Southey declares that England has a power to break "the oppressive chain" and "injustice" on slaves. He dares to insist that England is the saviour for slaves.

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[63] Southey, *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 5-10
[64] Southey, "On the Settlement of Sierra Leone", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 16-18.

Southey appears to claim that the sins of the English people engaged in slavery would be forgiven through their good deeds. He also suggests that the society created by English people is a civilised one. Southey obviously took the stance that black slaves were "savage" and should be enlightened by civilised people such as the English. It can be said that his anti-slavery standpoint mingled with his euro-centric vision and his nationalistic sensibilities.

Southey's complex attitude was not unusual among the abolitionist discourses of late eighteenth-century England, at a time when black people were basically regarded as inferior to white people.[65] In fact, Sierra Leone was controlled continually by English governors until 1808, when it became independent from England.[66] It may be suggested, however, that Southey indicated the possibility of slave rebellions in his anti-slavery poems. In "On the Settlement of Sierra Leone", Southey asserts that slaves would revolt against the social injustice that caused them suffering:

> If still the wretched race must know,
> The crimes that spring from want and woe,
> And earth has no redress,
> Genius the fond attempt repel,
> And let thy sable children dwell,
> In savage happiness.[67]

Southey suggests that slaves would gain freedom through rebellion, but indicates that slaves would live in a "savage" state without outside assistance. By stressing the primitive form of liberty that slaves would manage to procure by themselves, Southey tactically praises the civilised system that the English people set up in Sierra Leone. While Southey shows his sympathy towards a slave revolt, he still believes in the

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[65] In much of the anti-slavery discourses produced between 1780s and 1800s, such as that of James Ramsay and Edmund Burke, slaves were regarded as savage people who should be civilised by Europeans. See chapter I for a detailed analysis.

[66] Thomas, *The Slave Trade*, 497-98.

[67] Southey, "On the Settlement of Sierra Leone", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ll. 25-30.

superiority of white English people over slaves. Southey's complex view of slavery and imperial sensibility is shown in his epic poem *Madoc*.

### (iii) *Madoc*

Southey began writing his epic poem *Madoc* in 1794, but did not complete it until 1805. The story is based on the legend of the Welsh Prince Madoc in the twelfth century. Madoc was the son of Owen Gwynedd, and he went to sea with his followers in order to avoid a conflict over rights of succession between his brothers. He discovered America and established his country there. This story was revived in the 1790s when the Welsh Jacobins looked to America "for the establishment of a republic of Wales".[68] The revival of the Madoc myth was an important factor in the strengthening of Welsh nationalism. This movement coincided with the "Welsh Renaissance", which was "a revival of interest in the history, antiquities, language, and literature of Wales".[69] Southey was interested in the Welsh Renaissance and knew William Owen who edited a Welsh-English dictionary in 1793. Southey admired the way that Owen's translations "would convey the full manner of the original".[70] Southey's enthusiasm towards Welsh literature was often expressed in his letters to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, the son of a Welsh baronet, whose grandfather was a collector of Welsh manuscripts. Southey was keen to learn about the poetry, the ancient history and the language of Wales. Since Southey wanted to learn more about old Welsh poetry, he asked Wynn to suggest "what manners or superstition of the Welsh would look well in blank verse."[71]

The plot of *Madoc* reflects the nature of the Welsh Renaissance in terms of the revival of Welsh nationalism and the introduction of Christianity. While writing the

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[68] Jared Majeed, *Ungoverned Imagining* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 59.
[69] Majeed, *Ungoverned Imagining*, 59.
[70] Southey, *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. John Wood Warter, 4 vols. (London; Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1856), Vol. 1, 278, Southey to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn on 16th of June, 1804.
[71] Southey to Wynn, on 21st Feb. 1801, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Revd Charles Cuthbert Southey, 6 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849), Vol. 2, 133-4.

1797-1799 version of *Madoc*[72], Southey modified the history of Madoc through ideas taken from works which told of the Inca hero Manco Capac, the first Inca ruler of Peru. Southey became interested in Manco after writing *Madoc* in 1796. The myth of Manco, who established an egalitarian society in Peru around the thirteenth century, greatly inspired Southey, who showed enthusiasm for a Pantisocratic scheme in 1790s. It may be speculated that Southey associated Manco's career with Madoc's accomplishment because he had read John Williams's *Natural History of the Mineral Kingdom* (1789), which was the main source of the legend of Madoc circulated in 1790s.[73] In *Natural History*, Madoc claimed that he aimed to be the ideal ruler as Manco Capac. In 1796 Southey wrote to Horace Walpole Bedford, relating how Inca Peru (pre-Hispanic) was divided and ruled:

> . . . the whole country was divided into three parts. The King & the Priest had one each. The remaining part. . . was the property of the nation—they cultivated it by their common toil—the produce was laid up in common storehouses—& enjoyed by all according to their respective wants. Individual property thus annihilated—all motives for vice necessarily ceased. This system was established by Mango Capac. . .make Mango Capac—Madoc & you see the main design of the poem.[74]

While Southey was writing the 1797-1799 version of *Madoc*, it is obvious that Southey saw Manco as the model for Madoc.

Southey's quest for Manco is also found in his reading of two poems on Manco;

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[72] This version was a "semi-public existence", which was admired by Coleridge. The detail of this version is closely discussed in Lynda Pratt's "Revising the National Epic: Coleridge, Southey and *Madoc*", in *Romanticism*, 2.2 (1996), 149-63.

[73] Nigel Leask suggests that Southey might have read Williams's work in "Southey's *Madoc*: Reimagining the Conquest of America", in *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, ed. Linda Pratt (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006), 138.

[74] Southey, Bodleian Library, MSS. Eng Letters. c.22, f.191, Southey to Horace Walpole Bedford on 12th of June 1796, qtd. in Pratt, "Revising the National Epic", in *Romanticism*, 2.2 (1996), 157. Southey often wrote Mango for Manco.

Rev. J. L. Moore's *The Columbiad: An Epic Poem, on the Discovery of America and the West-Indies by Columbus* (1798) and John Barlow's *The Vision of Columbus* (1787). In 1798 Southey reviewed Moore's *The Columbiad* by comparing it with Barlow's *The Vision* in the *Critical Review*.[75] In it, Southey explained how he preferred Barlow's *The Vision* over Moore's work: ". . . though Joel Barlow is not a great poet, yet, when compared with Mr. Moore, he rises into respectability".[76] Southey sympathised with the character of Manco that Barlow described. In *The Vision*, Manco influenced "the interest and happiness of mankind" and "the progress of society",[77] which coincided with Southey's pantisocratic sensibility in 1790s. The figure of Manco closely reflects the social ideology that Barlow himself held in the late eighteenth century. Barlow was a "leading American radical"[78] who supported Thomas Paine and published the "controversial"[79] political pamphlet entitled *Advice to the Privileged Orders* (1792), which was eventually banned by Pitt's government. *The Vision*, which was published while Barlow was actively engaged in radicalism, obviously showed his sense of liberty and equality among people. In this poem, the society that Manco had established was described as an ideal and peaceful society:

> There [Peru] reigns a prince [. . .]
> Where the brave roll of following Incas trace
> The distant father of their realm and race,
> Immortal Capac. He, in youthful pride,
> With fair Oella, his illustrious bride,
> . . .proclaim'd their birth begun,
> From the pure splendours of their God, the Sun;
> With power and dignity a throne to found,

[75] Southey, *Critical Review*, 2nd series 23 (1798), 68, qtd. in Pratt, "Revising the National Epic", 157.
[76] Southey, *Critical Review*, 2nd series 23 (1798), 67, qtd. in Pratt, "Revising the National Epic", 157.
[77] Joel Barlow, *The Vision of Columbus: A Poem, in Nine Books* (London: C. Dilly and J. Stockdale, 1787), xix
[78] Pratt, "Revising the National Epic", 157.
[79] Pratt, "Revising the National Epic", 157.

Fix the mild sway and spread their arts around;
Crush the dire Gods that human victims claim,
And point all worship to a nobler name [. . .]
Succeeding sovereigns spread their bounds afar,
By arts of peace and temper'd force of war;
Till these surrounding realms the sceptre own,
And grateful millions hail the genial sun.[80]

What was illustrated here was the comparison between peaceful Incas and violent Aztecs. By destroying the Aztec empire, whose culture was barbaric and aggressive, Inca Manco strove to create a harmonious world.

The Incas, whose empire was destroyed by Spanish imperialism, were often portrayed as tragic figures in literary works, as in John Dryden's *The Indian Emperor* (1665). On the other hand, the Aztecs were known historically as one of the Mexican tribes seen as barbaric, who had "a priest-ridden militaristic society dedicated to human sacrifice and idolatry".[81] Southey describes two American Indians; Aztecs and Hoamen in *Madoc* (1805). While the Aztecs are described as barbarous, civilised, and militant, Hoamen are obedient, peaceful, rural, and "vulnerable to the corrupting influence of others".[82] When Southey characterised these two American Indians, he must have been influenced by his reading of American history books such as Francisco Clavigero's *The History of Mexico, Collected from Spanish and Mexican Histories, from Manuscripts and Ancient Paintings of the Indians*, trans. Charles Cullen (1787).[83] According to these writings, certain stereotypes emerged for indigenous people in America such as the "diabolically bad" Aztecs and the "helplessly good"[84] Incas. In *Madoc* Southey must have imagined "good Incas" in Hoamen who were willing to

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[80] Barlow, *The Vision*, 43-4.
[81] Leask, "Southey's *Madoc*", *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, 139.
[82] Tim Fulford, *Romantic Indians* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 133.
[83] Leask, "Southey's *Madoc*", *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, 139. Southey borrowed this book from the British Library in 1795.
[84] Gordon Brotherston, *The Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americans Through their Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 5.

accept the Welsh Madoc and his men.

Although in 1799 Southey finally abandoned the parallel between Madoc and Manco because of the difficulty of the Peruvian setting,[85] his pantisocratic sensibility remained in the characterisation of Madoc in the 1805 version. After Madoc arrived in America, he freed Hoamen who had been enslaved by the Aztecs. The Welsh and the Hoamen were united, and together destroyed the Aztec empire. Since the Aztecs were finally forced to escape to Mexico, Madoc succeeded in building his own colony in the new settlement of America. Although Madoc's destination switched from Peru to North America (supposedly Mississippi), America was still an ideal place for Madoc to establish a society as peaceful as his beloved Wales:

> I love my native land; with as true love
> As ever yet did warm a British heart,
> Love I the green fields of the beautiful Isle,
> My father's heritage! But far away,
> Where Nature's booner hand has blest the earth,
> My heritage hath fallen, beyond the seas
> Madoc hath found his home, beyond the seas
> A country for his children hath he chosen,
> A land wherein their portion may be peace.[86]

Here Madoc resembles the pantisocrats: just as they had a utopian dream for the village of Susquehanna in Pennsylvania, Madoc holds out strong hopes for the new land. Southey's pantisocratic ideal was also shown in the innocent friendship between Madoc and the Native American, the Hoamen. When Madoc first arrived in America, the Hoamen warmly welcomed his fellow men as if they were their family:

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[85] Southey, *New Letters*, Vol. 1, 196, Southey to Charles Wynn on 8th of July, 1799.
[86] Southey, *Madoc*, ed. Lynda Pratt, Vol. 2 of *Robert Southey: Poetical Works*, Part 1 Book VIII, ll. 286-94. Hereafter the citations from the text are from this edition.

. . .they eyed us wondering,
Yet not for wonder ceased they to observe
Their hospitable rites; from hut to hut
They spread the tale that strangers were arrived,
Fatigued, and hungry, and athirst; anon,
Each from his means supplying us, came food
And beverage, such as cheers the weary man.[87]

In his note on this passage Southey suggested the Stranger's House[88] in Susquehannah Indian villages where the native people took care of travellers. The image of kind Native Americans was encouraging for Pantisocrats who tried to emigrate to America. Southey hints at his pantisocratic ideals in Madoc's encounter with the Hoamen who seem to be friendly and to cope with the Welsh.

Although Southey's practical scheme to emigrate to America collapsed around 1795 because of the financial problems and family pressure, his "fundamental ideas of pantisocarcy" continued years later.[89] Madoc's emigration to America reflects Southey's unrealised dream to escape to a foreign country to make a utopian community.

In fact, Southey intended to describe Madoc as a pantisocratic hero who tried to set up the country of liberty and peace with the native people. When Madoc first arrived in America, the Hoamen were enslaved by the Aztec. Lincoya, the young Hoamen, asked Madoc to emancipate his tribe from the Aztec burden since they had been killed as sacrifice for the Aztec God. Southey's pantisocratic sensibility and his anti-slavery stance are shown in Madoc's insistence on equal property and the emancipation of the Hoamen. After the first defeat the Aztecs Madoc speaks to the king of Aztlan that the Hoamen should be free from slavery and that everybody should

[87] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 1 Book V, ll. 199-205.
[88] Southey read the Stranger's House in Benjamin Franklin's *Two Tracts: Information To Those Who Would Remove To America. And, Remarks Concerning The Savages Of North America* (1784).
[89] Haller, *The Early Life*, 166.

share property in his or her land. At this time Madoc's attitude towards the Aztec is fairly friendly:

> Let them be free!
> . . . I come not from my native isle
> To wage the war of conquest, to cast out
> Your people from the land which time and toil
> Have rightly made their own. The world is wide:
> There is enough for all. So they be freed
> From that accursed tribute, and ye shed
> The life of man no more in sacrifice, . . .
> In the most holy name of God I say,
> Let there be peace between us![90]

The fact that Madoc conquered America is mitigated by his pantisocratic statement. It might be Southey's intention not to create an antagonistic relationship between Madoc and the Native Americans since he wants to illustrate that Madoc heroically defeated the Aztecs to save the Hoamen. Southey's humanistic indignation against slavery justifies Madoc's destruction of Aztec society.

However, there is no denying that Madoc's settlement in America resulted in the colonisation and destruction of the Native American society. Particularly the relationship between the Hoamen and the Welsh people alludes to that of colonised and the coloniser. The Hoamen soon accepted Madoc's leadership over them. Madoc succeeded in making the Welsh influence prevail the new land. The Aztecs, on the other hand, are finally chased into Mexico by Madoc after the second war against the Welsh. In this respect, the two American tribes are finally conquered by the Welsh. Southey's ambivalent ideology between his republicanism and nationalist-imperialistic stance was apparent in Madoc's "heroic" career.

The description of the Native Americans reveals Southey's imperialistic notions

[90] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 1, Book VIII, ll. 50-59.

about race. The Hoamen were described as the typical "noble savage" in eighteenth-century Europe. Madoc gives his own impression of the Hoamen:

> I see with what enquiring eyes you ask
> What men were they: of dark-brown colour, tinged
> With sunny redness; wild of eye; their brows
> So smooth, as never anxiety,
> Nor busy thought, had made a furrow there. . .
> . . .
> Their loins were loosely cinctured, all beside
> Bare to the sun and wind; and thus their limbs,
> Unmanacled, displayed the truest forms
> Of strength and beauty. . .[91]

What is stressed here is the darker skin of the Native Americans and their uncivilised mentality. Hoamen's "dark-brown" skin is clearly distinguished from the Welsh "so white" appearance and they have no "anxiety" and "busy thought". The savageness of the Hoamen accords with the analysis proposed by race theorists in the late eighteenth century. For instance, Blumenbach in "On the Natural Variety of Mankind" (1775) categorised the American as follows: "*The copper colour*. . . or dark orange, or a sort of iron, not unlike the bruised bark of cinnamon or tanner's bark. . ."[92] In race theories, a race with darker skin was generally regarded as mentally inferior to one with paler skin. The typical analysis of the association between darker skin and savagery was seen in Edward Long's argument about black people. He declared that black people "are void of genius, and seem almost incapable of making any progress in civility or science."[93] The hypothesis that dark skinned races were of lower intellect

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[91] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 1, Book V, ll. 19-29.

[92] Johan Blumenbach, "On the Natural Variety of Mankind" (1775), in *The Anthropological Treatises of Johan Friedrich Blumenbach*, trans. and ed. Thomas Bendyshe (London: The Anthropological Society, Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts & Green, 1865), in *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 8 of *Slavery*, 145.

[93] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774, rpt. Montreal:

than whites obviously supported the justification of slavery. Although it is not certain that Southey read these race theories, the image of the Hoamen is certainly derived from the stereotypical notion of the darker skinned people in late eighteenth- century Europe.

Southey reveals his prejudice against black people when discussing the Pantisocracy scheme. The differences between Southey and Coleridge on the notion of the servant were one of the reasons for the collapse of Pantisocracy. While Coleridge insisted that Southey's family's servant, Shadrach Weeks and his wife, should join them to America in an equal position to them, Southey argued that they should still work as servants there: "Let them dine with us and be treated with much equality as they wish but perform that part of Labour for which their Education has fitted them".[94] Here Southey revealed his prejudice against black people at the very time that he had just finished a series of anti-slavery sonnets. It is clear that Southey thought that black people were less civilised than white Europeans.

Southey's controversial race view shows how it was difficult to carry out the egalitarian ideology in reality. Southey's typical Euro-centric vision on race exposes the ideological fragility of eighteenth-century egalitarianism, a fragility which led to crucial discord between Southey and Coleridge. Coleridge expressed his grief about Southey's view of the servant: "*Southey* should not have written this sentence. My friend, my noble and high-souled friend. . . . Is every family to possess one of these unequal equals, these Helot Egalité-s?"[95] Coleridge could not conceal his surprise with Southey's immature understanding of the ideology of Pantisocracy. The internal conflict between Southey and Coleridge eventually left Pantisocracy stuck. Southey's confusion on the status of black people shows that within eighteenth -century egalitarianism there remained an assumption of the superiority of whites and white civilisation.

In *Madoc* Southey's belief in the superiority of white civilisation is shown in the

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McGill-Queen's UP, 2002), Vol. 2, 353.

[94] Coleridge quoted Southey's remark in his letter to Southey, October 21, 1794 (S.T. Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 114).

[95] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 114, Coleridge to Southey on 21st of Oct, 1794.

clear contrast between the innocence of the Hoamen and the intelligence and the strength of the Welsh. The Welsh Madoc who represents British civilisation educates the Native Americans who are ignorant of the Western culture. Southey illustrates that the Hoamen should be educated in the British way. The process of the conversion of the Hoamen is similar to that of the missionary work in the eighteenth century in European colonies. Southey was particularly interested in Quakerism that he believed was the "true system of the Gospel".[96] He favourably reviewed a Quaker pamphlet on the missionary work on the Native Americans. In this review, by quoting the passage of the conversion of the Hoamen in *Madoc*, Southey pointed out the "excellent effects"[97] of the missionaries:

> It is absurd to go to savages with tales of mysteries, the true method of converting them is by showing them, like the old blind man in Madoc, how little difference there is in the basis of our faith.
>
> 'Know ye not him who laid
> The deep foundations of the earth. . .?
> '. . . We also know,
> And fear, and worship the Beloved One.'
> '*Our God* ', replied Cynetha, '*is the same*,
> *The Universal Father*.'[98]
>
> Such language the Quakers may hold with perfect truth: in fact, it is the language which they have held to the Indians and which the Indians understand. Let them go on in doing good to them, and time and example, and the Universal father, will bring about the rest.[99]

Southey clearly justified the conversion of the Native Americans to Christianity. By arguing that all of the religions lead to one belief in the universal God, Southey seemed

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[96] Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 77.
[97] *Annual Review* (1806), 593, qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 78.
[98] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 1, BookVIII, ll. 138-53.
[99] *Annual Review* (1806), 593, qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 78.

to assert that there were not so many differences between Christianity and other religion. He, however, maintained that Christianity was the most beneficent religion since he was particularly convinced that the theology of Christianity would "produce the greatest possible good".[100] The conversion of the Hoamen shows Southey's firm belief of the benefit of Christianity as well as the superiority of British civilisation. In this respect, the heroic action of Madoc is derived from a sense of British imperialism.

Madoc's imperialist nature is seen in his treatment of the Native Americans. Madoc tries to save the Hoamen from the influence of the snake-God on his second visit to America. Madoc's action to save the Hoamen seems to be a knightly action to guard the weaker people. In other words, Madoc follows his paternalism that reflects his sense of superiority to the Native Americans. The indulgence of the Hoamen who returned to the Aztec religion stresses the feeble mentality of the Native Americans. Madoc who saw the suffering and sorrow of Erillyab, the Hoamen's queen, tried to save the Hoamen from the Aztecs again. Madoc speaks to the Hoamen that they should awake from the evil control by the snake God:

> Hoamen, said Madoc, hear me!.. I came here,
> . . .
> I found ye an oppressed wretched race,
> Groaning beneath your chains; at your request,
> For your deliverance, I unsheathed the sword,
> Redeemed ye from your bondage, and preserved
> Your children from the slaughter . . .
> This traitor hath conspired, against yourselves,
> Your Queen, and me your friend; the solemn faith,
> Which in the face of yonder sun we pledged,
> Each to the other, this accursed man
> Hath broken, and hath stained his hands this day

[100] *Annual Review* (1802), 207-18. qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 78.

With innocent blood.[101]

By declaring that he helped the Hoamen from slavery's "bondage" by his "sword", Madoc clearly presumes that he is the saviour of the Hoamen. Madoc's address to the Hoamen is derived from his conviction that he is already accepted as a leader of the Hoamen. Madoc's statement as a commander demonstrates that the relationship between Madoc and the Hoamen is already constructed as that of the ruler and the ruled. Here Southey clearly shows Madoc's overwhelming influence on the Hoamen.

In the process that Madoc makes the Hoamen free from the Aztec religion, he earnestly insists that the Aztec God is "false". While insisting on the evilness of the snake God, Madoc is ready to introduce Christianity to the Hoamen. Southey tactically made it natural for the Hoamen to convert to Christianity:

> . . . If ever more
> Ye bow to your false Deities the knee;
> If ever more ye worship them with feast,
> Or sacrifice, or dance; who so offends
> Shall from among the people be cut off,
> Like a corrupted member, lest he taint
> The whole with death. . .[102]

In the above passage, Madoc provokes the fear of the snake-God among the Hoamen. He tells the Hoamen that to offer human sacrifice is a savage ritual. Instead of the snake-God, he presents Christianity. The holiness of Christianity obviously contrasts with the bloody image of Aztec God:

> . . . From this pure law
> Hath all proceeded, . . .wisdom, power, whate'er

[101] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 2, Book VII, ll. 31-44.
[102] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 2, Book VIII, ll. 74-80.

Here elevates the soul, and makes it ripe
For higher powers, and more exalted bliss.
Share then our law, and be with us, on earth,
Partakers of these blessings, and, in Heaven,
Co-heritors with us of endless joy.[103]

Madoc underlines the civilisation of his culture that consists of "pure law", "wisdom", and "power". Then Madoc effectively suggests that the Hoamen should "share" the Welsh law. He earnestly suggests that the Hoamen could enjoy the blessings within the institution of Christianity. This scene shows that Madoc is trying to conquer the Hoamen by preaching the benefit of the Welsh civilisation and religion. The Hoamen who are obedient and respect Madoc for his power to destroy the snake God soon assent to convert to Christianity. Madoc's success in making peace with the Hoamen without any conflict seems to be the idealistic union which Madoc hopes to make. The peaceful harmony between the Welsh and the Hoamen seems to reflect Southey's pantisocratic desire to make an egalitarian society. The power relationship between the Welsh and the Hoamen is, however, not equal. The Hoamen are clearly controlled by the Welsh. Converting the Hoamen into Christianity is particularly important for Madoc since it is easier for him to make them "civilised" in the Welsh way.

Madoc's colonisation of the Hoamen is completed when Erillyab willingly agrees with Madoc's offer to unite together:

Dear friend, and brother dear! Enough for me
Beneath the shadow of thy shield to dwell,
And see my people, by thy fostering care,
Made worthy of their fortune.[104]

Erillyab hints that she and her fellowmen would live under the "shield" of the Welsh.

[103] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 2, Book VIII, ll. 94-100.
[104] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 1, Book XXIV, ll. 39-42.

Erillyab's reply to Madoc's request uncovers that she already admits the Welsh superiority to the Hoamen. By illustrating that the Hoamen voluntarily accepts to be in a subordinate position to the Welsh, Southey justifies that the excellence of the Welsh culture. Through Madoc's victory in America, Southey maintains that the civilisation of the Welsh (the British) should be the norm for the savage society.

Madoc's imperialistic act of conquest over the Aztecs is, however, justified by the liberation of the Hoamen. Neolin, the Aztec priest, is described as the devil who caused the degeneration of the Hoamen. Nevertheless, Madoc's conquest of the Aztecs strongly reflects Southey's Euro-centric nationalism. Southey argued that the barbaric Aztec empire should be terminated by the civilised British. In this respect Southey's justification of the destruction of the Aztecs was similar to that of the eighteenth- century American history books. Those books argued that the destruction of the Aztec society by Christians (i.e. "the Spaniards") was a "providential judgement"[105] upon them.

Southey justified the destruction of the Aztec empire by stressing its barbarity. The cruelty of the Aztec religion that requires human sacrifice also reveals Southey's prejudice against paganism:

> Whereat, from that dark temple issued forth
> A Serpent, huge and hideous. On he came,
> Straight to the sound, and curled around the Priest
> His mighty folds innocuous, overtopping
> His human height, and, arching down his head,
> Sought in the hands of Neolin for food. . . [106]

The grotesque appearance of the snake-God reinforces its evil nature. In addition, the close relationship between Neolin and the snake-God denotes that Neolin has a power to control people.

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[105] Leask, "Southey's *Madoc*", *Robert Southey and the Contexts of English Romanticism*, 139.
[106] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 2, Book VI, ll. 207-12.

There is another element at work in Southey's portrayal of the Aztec priests: Southey's anti-clericalism. In Neolin's treachery, Southey describes the clerical hypocrisy that he finds in Anglicanism and Catholicism. Although Southey became an Anglican around 1810, he was in favour of dissenting Christianity such as Unitarianism and Quakerism while he was writing *Madoc*. In this respect Southey's criticism against pagan priests in *Madoc* is derived from his Protestant dissent. By showing his detestation of pagan God, Southey condemns the dogmatic and ritual aspect of Catholicism and Anglicanism. Southey especially feared the "fanaticism" that the dogma of Catholicism represented:

> Armed with historical narratives about Aztec religion, confronted by the religions of Catholicism and Jacobinism, Southey wrote ancient America in the image of his fear of the fanaticism that seemed to be spreading over modern Europe.[107]

Madoc, therefore, is a Protestant hero who destroys superstitious religion that the Native Americans follow blindly. For Southey, as a Protestant Christian, Madoc's destruction of the pagan religion is religiously and politically right.

Madoc's righteousness as a Protestant hero also vindicates the violent massacre of the Aztec priest. Southey shows that Madoc kills the snake-God to free the Hoamen who had to give their lives for human sacrifice. Neolin is called "the accursed" criminal who is avenged by Madoc:

> . . .and the Prince
> Smote Neolin; all circled as he was,
> And clipt in his false Deity's embrace,
> Smote he the accursed Priests; the avenging sword
> Fell on his neck; through flesh and bone it drove,
> Deep in the chest: the wretched criminal

[107] Fulford, *Romantic Indians*, 136.

Tottered. . .

. . . while Madoc struck

The Serpent: twice he struck him. . .[108]

The overwhelming strength of Madoc over the Aztecs suggests Southey's belief in the superiority of Christianity. The defeat of the pagan God could be easily accepted by the early nineteenth-century Christian readers in Britain.

Madoc's successful conquest of the Aztecs shows the victory of Christian God. Southey maintains the goodness of Christianity by destroying the evilness of the Aztec religion. Southey suggests that the nature of Madoc's war against the Aztecs is mainly derived from religious indignation. In other words, Southey tries to convey that the British culture that reflects dissenting Protestant, anti-clerical Christianity should prevail over the savage society. The Aztecs who resisted being Christian should inevitably leave their country.

Emphasising the barbarity of the Aztec religion is important for Southey for political as well as religious reasons. Southey shows that Pantisocrat Madoc should demolish the Aztec tyranny. Southey saw that the Aztecs repressed human freedom. Southey who had been a "vehement opponent"[109] of Britain's war with revolutionary France from 1794 to 1795 demonstrated that the defeat of the Aztecs was a step towards establishing a society of liberty and equality.

Thus, In *Madoc* Madoc's pantisocratic ideal seems to be carried out in America by harmonising with the Hoamen. The peaceful future of the Hoamen contrasts with the predicaments of the Aztecs. Southey showed that Madoc's excursion to America resulted in a successful cooperation with the Native Americans who were friendly to the Welsh. Madoc, however, eventually ruled the Hoamen and deprived the Aztecs of their land.

For Southey, Madoc's success in America was important and necessary in his republican ideology. Since Southey supported the social reforms to make a better

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[108] Southey, *Madoc*, Part 2, Book VII, ll. 94-102.
[109] Fulford, *Romantic Indians*, 135.

society for the oppressed people, the release and the civilisation of the Hoamen symbolised the republican ideal. The Hoamen who used to be slaves to the Aztecs enjoy the civilised life under the Welsh/British government. Nevertheless, the Hoamen's submission to Madoc, uncovers Southey's limited idea of egalitarianism. As was argued in much eighteenth- century anti-slavery discussion, slaves should be free, subject to certain limitations. Since Southey's anti-slavery position incorporated considerable uncertainty on the complete equality between former slaves and masters, it is not surprising that his vision of equality of between the Hoamen and Welsh also contained contradictions.

The triumph of Madoc also demonstrates Southey's strong attachment to Britain and nationalism. Southey's nationalism was partly reinforced during the Napoleonic war. The military expansion of Napoleon gradually became a threat of a French invasion in England. British journalists mostly criticised Napoleon's military action:

> We know what his Liberty and Equality would be, the subjection and ruin of every country, to extend the controul and raise the greatness of France; the slavery and ruin of France, when they are necessary to exalt his power and diffuse his glory.[110]

Southey, who would have read these articles in the newspaper, confessed to Wynn in October 1802 that his nationalist enthusiasm was increasing: "I grow more John-Bullish every time I look into a newspaper."[111] Southey's anger against the Napoleonic imperialism was strengthened because he considered that Napoleon would destroy liberal ideology in France. In addition, the fear of Napoleon's invasion of Britain made his love for his country deeper. Although his nationalism became temporarily visible and zealous at this time, it is certain that his belief in the excellent nature of the British culture never swayed. Through the figure of Madoc Southey shows the goodness of the British civilisation.

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[110] *Morning Post*, 9 Aug, 1802, qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 58.
[111] National Library of Wales MSS. 4811 D 92, qtd. in Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age*, 59.

### (iv) Conclusion

Southey's view of republicanism fluctuated throughout his life. He expressed his disappointment at French republicanism when Napoleon Bonaparte came to power in 1799, as Napoleon's military power became an immediate threat to England's security. When the French constitution Abbé Sieyès was published, it was "brutally reviewed"[112] by Coleridge in *Morning Post* in December. The constitution was clear in giving Napoleon absolute control of the country. Southey's reaction to Napoleon's creed was shown in his letter to Grosvenor Bedford on 1st of January in 1800: " Damn the French!—that came heartily from the depths of a Jacobin heart."[113] On the other hand, Southey still regarded Napoleon as a republican hero, by virtue of his past behaviour: ". . . in reviewing his past conduct—what I privately know of his youth. . . the views he entertains as a philosopher—the feelings which made him in the career of victory, the advocate of peace—I do not hesitate in pronouncing him the greatest man that events have called into action since Alexander of Macedon."[114] Southey's tenacious radicalism was also shown in his letter to Coleridge around the same time: "Sieyés and the Corsican have trod upon my Jacobin corns—and I am a thorough English republican."[115]

Coleridge detected Southey's ambivalent sensibility. Since Coleridge found that it was becoming politically dangerous to profess republicanism in England, especially after the reign of Napoleon, he expressed his concern over Southey in his letter to T. Wedgwood. Coleridge supposed that the political climate in England had become difficult for Southey to deal with:

> Poor Southey, from over great Industry, as I suspect, the Industry too of solitary Composition, has reduced himself to a terrible state of weakness--& is determined to leave this Country as soon as he has

[112] Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Life*, 55.
[113] Southey, Bodleian MSS. Eng. Letters. c. 23, f. 80.
[114] Southey, *New Letters*, Vol. 1, 221-2, Southey to Thomas Southey, on 2nd of February, 1800.
[115] Southey, *New Letters*, Vol. 1, 215, Southey to Coleridge on 16th of January, 1800.

> finished the Poem on which he is now employed. 'Tis a melancholy thing—so young a man & one whose Life has ever been so simple and self-denying![116]

Coleridge feared that Southey's political anxieties might affect his health as well as his career as a poet. As Coleridge guessed, Southey left England for Portugal to concentrate on his works, *Thalaba*, and *Madoc*. To earn his living, it was necessary for Southey to produce some literary work. The period between 1797 and 1800 proved a hard time for Southey. He was not only criticised as a Jacobin poet but also ridiculed for his poetic talents in *Anti-Jacobin*. In addition, his financial situation was miserable. He asked Joseph Cottle to lend him money since his expenses had "exceeded"[117] his income. It appears to have been damaging for him to be marked as politically dangerous by the press. He revealed his disgust against the repressive attitude of ministers: "I think its liberties are destroyed, and hope one day to chuse [choose] a better. To take away the liberty of the press was the last stroke."[118] Southey had become disillusioned with the political climate in England, and eventually this led him to leave the country. In a conversation with James Losh on 3rd of April in 1798, Southey declared his intention to emigrate: "Our conversation turned principally upon the invasion of liberty. I started the probability of a stop being put to Southey's *Joan of Arc*, in that case he declared his intention of leaving his country."[119] Despite the practical difficulties of his financial circumstances, Southey's pantisocratic sensibility was still very much in his mind. It could even be said that his republicanism was strengthened by his decision to escape in late 1790s.Southey felt his democratic ideology challenged when the government chose to support the Convention of Cintra during the war between Portugal and France. Following the success of the Spanish revolt against French domination in 1808, Portugal declared war against

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[116] Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, Vol. 1, 558, Coleridge to T. Wedgewood, on 2nd of January, 1800.
[117] Southey, *Cornell University Library Wordsworth Collection* (Ithaca, N. Y.:, Cornell UP, 1950), Southey to Joseph Cottle on 9th of December, 1797.
[118] Southey, *Keswick Museum* (Thurnam & Sons: Carlisle, 1870), Southey to Thomas Southey on 12th of March, 1798.
[119] Diaries of James Losh, qtd. in E.P. Thompson, *The Romantics* (n.p.: Woodbridge, 1977), 58.

France in order to oust Marshal Junot. The British army fought alongside Portugal to defeat French troops on 21st of August in 1808. The Convention, in which France took their property with them, was enacted between Britain and France. Although this Convention was strongly criticised in England as "a supine concession to the French,"[120] the Whig polity encouraged the Convention. Southey condemned the Whig policy for proceeding with the Convention, since he earnestly supported the revolutionary spirit of Portugal. Southey regarded this event as a "grievous national disgrace"[121] and proposed to call a meeting for a "formal protest"[122] along with Coleridge, Wordsworth, and other friends in Cumberland. Although the public meeting did not take place owing to social pressures, it is certain that Southey somehow cooled down his Whig-like enthusiasm for social reform.

Around 1810, the politic power of Tory became strong especially after the event of the Convention of Cintra. Unlike the Whigs, the Tory party was against the Convention of Cintra since it backed the war against Napoleon. Southey was offered the opportunity to present his opinions on foreign policy in the journal entitled *Quarterly Review*. This newly published journal was edited by William Gifford, though ironically Gifford had also edited *Anti-Jacobin* in the 1790s, in which Southey was criticised for his radicalism. Gifford was asked to be the editor of the new journal by George Canning, the foreign secretary. Although both Canning and Gifford had formerly denounced Southey's republicanism in 1790s, they found that his views on the democratic revolution in Spain and Portugal coincided with theirs. Southey consented to submit his work to *Quarterly Review*. His letter to Grosvenor Bedford on 9th of November 1808 was noteworthy since it revealed that Southey's ideology wavered between conservatism and republicanism:

> I am an enemy to any further concessions to the Catholicks. I am a friend to the Church establishment—*not as a Churchman, for I am almost*

[120] W. A. Speck, *Robert Southey* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 127.
[121] Southey, *New Letters*, Vol. 1, 484, Southey to Humphry Senhouse on 19th of October, 1808.
[122] Speck, *Robert Southey*, 128.

> *a Quaker*—but because an establishment is now and long will be necessary—and the one we have secures toleration to such hereticks as myself. I wish for reform because I cannot but see that all things are tending towards revolution, and nothing but reform can by any possibility prevent it.[123]

His favourable comments about the Church establishment, which represented the polity in England, showed that he had sympathy with government opinion over the Portugal affair. On the other hand, Southey tried to maintain a distance from the government by insisting on his dissenting belief as well as his republicanism.

Around 1809, however, Southey gradually became less interested in political writing. After he agreed to submit his work to *Quarterly Review*, he professed that he would like to "contribute review of books"[124] rather than to contribute to a political pamphlet. Southey's estrangement from politics strengthened when he started the historical review in *Edinburgh Annual Register* in 1809. He expressed his satisfaction at being able to write on non-political topics in his letter to Walter Savage Landor on 27th of September in 1810: ". . . there is some satisfaction in keeping up the heart of the country, in acquitting one-self of any participation in national guilt or national folly."[125] In *Edinburgh Annual Register for 1809* in 1811, Southey demonstrated that the present system made them "the prosperous, the powerful, the free, the happy people"[126] that they were. It seemed that Southey had shifted from being a radical protester to being a peaceful conservative. Southey probably realised that it was difficult to maintain a radical position because of the changing climate for republicanism in Europe at that time. Especially for supporters of the French Revolution, the aggressive behaviour of Napoleon seriously damaged the spirit of liberty. The collapsed image of France, formerly an icon of republicanism, certainly

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[123] Southey, Bodleian Library, MSS. Eng. Lett. c. 24. f. 82.
[124] Speck, *Robert Southey*, 129.
[125] Southey, *Selections from Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. John Ward Warter, 4 vols. (London: n.p., 1856), Vol. 2, 203.
[126] *Edinburgh Annual Register* (1809), 288, qtd. in Speck, *Robert Southey*, 142.

undermined the enthusiasm of the social reformers.

Southey undoubtedly became less politically active in his later years. Nevertheless, he retained a liberal sensibility and a belief in human liberty. His strong support for the French Revolution is still shown after 1809, which suggests that Southey believed that the revolution brought true liberty to the people. In his letter to John Rickman on 30th of November 1813, Southey argued that the French Revolution was necessary in order to destroy the old system: " I see as you do, and surely have often expressed, that whirlwind of the Revolution was necessary to clear away the pestilence of the old Governments. . ."[127] This remark reveals that Southey's mind was basically revolutionary.

Southey's attitude towards the slave trade in his later years reflects his ambivalent sensibility between liberalism and conservatism. Around 1810 Southey's political stance became one of pro-government, which was much strengthened by his patriotism. His love and belief for his nation eventually led him to support the British imperial polity. In *Tale of Paraguay* (1825) based on the story of the Jesuit missionary and the American Indians shows the mixture of his Euro-centric vision and his anti-slavery ideology. In this poem Southey's criticism against slavery was mitigated by his imperialistic sensibility as well as Christian paternalism.

Southey's anti-slavery message shows its straightforwardness, although metaphorical, in the beginning of the poem. He argued that tropical disease, which spread through the Western Europe, was the sign of the guilt of slavery. He regards the disease as the slaves' "vengeance":

> One dire disease ... the lamentable pest
> Which Africa sent forth to scourge the West,
> As if in vengeance for her sable brood
> So many an age remorselessly opprest.[128]

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[127] Southey, *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, Vol. 2, 337.
[128] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay* (London: Longman, 1825), I, 1.

The disease is the smallpox that expanded "from Africa to America via the European colonists and the African slaves they imported."[129] Southey suggested that European countries were punished by smallpox for their sin in pursuing human trafficking. He also argued that the missionary indirectly caused the smallpox that spread in Europeans colonies in America. In the poem, Southey particularly introduced that the Indians who were taken to the Reduction by the Jesuit priest were suffering from the disease. Southey discusses that the Indians became sick because they were seriously affected by the sudden change of surroundings. The poet's sympathetic tone towards the ill Indians reveals that he regarded Indians as victims of the expansion of European colonies:

> All thoughts and occupations to commute,
> To change their air, their water, and their food,
> And those old habits suddenly uproot
> Conform'd to which the vital powers pursued
> Their functions, such mutation is too rude
> For man's fine frame unshaken to sustain.[130]

Southey questioned whether it was good for Indians to live in the Jesuit Reduction. Since Southey admired the value of the Indian society based on "peace and love", he was afraid that the Christian system would damage their happiness. For Southey, the Indians were idealistic "pantisocrats":

> Such hope they felt, but felt that whatsoe'er
> The undiscoverable to come might prove,
> Unwise it were to let that bootless care
> Disturb the present hours of peace and love.

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[129] Tim Fulford, "Blessed Bane: Christianity and Colonial Disease in Southey's *Tale of Paraguay*", *Romanticism On the Net* 24 (Nov. 2001), 28.
[130] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, IV, 28.

For they had gain'd a happiness above
The state which in their native horde was known. . . .[131]

By emphasising the harmonious life of the Indians, Southey asserted that the life in the Reduction would damage the freedom of Indians.

Southey's sympathy with the Indians was derived from his anti-slavery philosophy since he regarded the Indians as the victims of the Spanish colonial slavery. He points out that both of slaves and people who are engaged with the slave trade are "miserable":

In woods and swamps, by toil severe outworn,
No friend at hand to succour or to mourn,
In death unpitied, as in life unblest.
O miserable race, to slavery born!
Yet when we look beyond this world's unrest,
More miserable then the oppressors than the opprest.[132]

Southey poignantly claimed that European "oppressors" who exploited lives of slaves were morally degenerated. His criticism against slavery became much stronger when he accused that England continued the slave trade as Spain and France did:

O foul reproach! but not for Spain alone
But for all lands that bear the Christian name...
Hear, guilty France! and thou, O England, hear!
Thou who hast half redeem'd thyself from shame,
When slavery from thy realms shall disappear,
Then from this guilt, and not till then, wilt thou be clear.[133]

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[131] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, I, 35.
[132] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 7.
[133] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 9.

Here Southey emphasises the bitterness of hypocritical sentiments of the Christian countries that are engaged in the slave trade. He knew well that hypocritical sentiments could often neglect moral duties. For him the only fact is that the complete abolishment of slavery is the sole way for England to purify its moral guilt. Although in 1807 England had officially abolished the slave trade, the institution of slavery in the British colonies continued until 1834. What Southey tries to convey in this context is that England could gain moral or, perhaps political profits, in the prospects of time, by showing the firm will to abolition.

Southey continuously portrayed the Indians in the images of the "noble savage". Although Southey basically adopts the view that black Indians are intellectually inferior to the European whites, they cannot necessarily be without nobleness and beauty. When the Jesuit missionaries encountered the Indian girl named Mooma, her singing voice attracted them. Southey compared her voice with that of a nightingale or a lark:

> All eyes are turn'd in wonder, not dismay,
> For sure such sounds might charm all fear away.
> No nightingale whose brooding mate is nigh,
> From some sequester'd bower at close of day,
> No lark rejoicing in the orient sky
> Ever pour'd forth so wild a strain of melody.[134]

The impression of Mooma was exotic and stimulated the curiosity of the white Europeans. Southey represented her as an innocent child as if she was not civilised and vulgarised enough:

> Mooma it was, that happy maiden mild,
> Who in the sunshine, like a careless child
> Of nature, in her joy was caroling.[135]

[134] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 35.

However, Southey's repetitive illustrations that the Indians were "the gentler children of the land"[136] rather reveal his subconscious prejudice against the coloured people. The passage seems to tell as if the Indians were too ignorant to understand the benefit of their "quiet" life in the wood. When they were taken to the Reduction, the Indians left their home "without cares"[137]:

> Day comes, and now a first and last farewell
> To that fair bower within their native wood,
> Their quiet nest till now. The bird may dwell
> Henceforth in safety there, and rear her brood,
> And beasts and reptiles undistrub'd intrude.
> Reckless of this, the simple tenants go,
> Emerging from their peaceful solitude,
> To mingle with the world. . .[138]

Southey stressed that the Indians were "reckless" of their situation. Southey illustrated in lamenting and sympathetic tone that the Indians left their "native wood". He, however, suggested that the Indians were less civilised. Although Southey regarded that the Reduction was the place where the Indians were controlled by Christian institution, he assumed that the Indians were happy enough to be educated by the European civilisation. Southey describes that the Indians are obedient and submissive in the Reduction:

> . . . The bliss is theirs
> Of that entire dependence that prepares
> Entire submission, let what may befall:
> And his whole careful course of life declares

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[135] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 38.
[136] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 10.
[137] Fulford, "Blessed Bane", *Romanticism On the Net* 24, 23.
[138] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, III, 51.

That for their good he holds them thus in thrall,
Their Father and their Friend, Priest, Ruler, all in all.[139]

The Indians were content to be ruled by Christian "Father" and "Priest". They obeyed the Jesuit priest "like children under wise parental sway."[140] Southey showed the paternalistic relationship between the Jesuit priest and the Indians.

Southey even maintained that the Christianised Indians were satisfied with their 'enlightenment' since they were convinced that their blissfulness was promised after death. The baptised Indian mother, Monnema, who was dying, was happy since she believed that she could rest in a Christian blessing:

Yet happy in her children's safe estate
Her thankfulness for them she still exprest;
And yielding then complacently to fate,
With Christian rites her passing hour was blest,
And with a Christian's hope she was consign'd to rest.[141]

The innocence and obedience of the Indians are stressed here. The Indians were willing to accept Christian dogma without any serious struggles. The submissive Indians remind one of "the Hoamen" in *Madoc* who were easily converted to Christians. Southey undoubtedly believed that the Indians, similar to the Hoamen, should be enlightened and protected by the Europeans who were much superior to them.

Southey introduced that Monnema's children, Mooma and Yeruti, were the models of the ideal converts. Instead of feeling sorrow for their mother's death, they expected that they could see the holy "sphere" because of her death:

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[139] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, IV, 7.
[140] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, IV, 8.
[141] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, IV, 29.

They would have heard the summons not with dread,
But in the joy of faith that knows no fear:
Come Lord! come quickly! would this pair have said,
And thou O Queen of men and Angels dear,
Lift us whom thou hast loved into thy happy sphere![142]

It is obvious that the Indian children literally believed Christian theology. Here Christianity is the medium to control the Indian people in the way of the West European civilisation. While insisting the innocence of the Indian people, Southey certainly supported religious imperialism upon Indian's society. Southey assumed that it was much better for Indians to become civilized through Christianity than to be ruled by the other institution such as slavery by the Spanish Empire. He admired the value of the Jesuit Reduction by arguing that the missionary established "a perfect commonwealth".[143] Southey was against the Spanish imperialism in South America since the Spanish forcibly made the Indians slaves.[144] Southey emphasised the benefit and the necessity of conversion of savage people by arguing that Christianised people could gain their peaceful wealth. This justification of conversion was not exceptional for Southey. Converting slaves was commonly encouraged by both anti and pro slavery campaigners. While the pro-slavery party insisted that slavery brought Christian civilization upon savage people, the abolitionists claimed that Christianising slaves was the better substitution for slavery to control savage people. An insistence on ruling slaves through religion did not necessarily contradict the eighteenth-century anti-slavery argument that assumed Christian superiority. Similar to the Indians in *Tale of Paraguay*, the slave woman, Yamba, in Hannah More's "The Sorrows of Yamba" (1795) [145] was converted by a missionary priest just before she died. She

[142] Southey, *Tale of Paraguay*, IV, 34.
[143] Southey, *History of Brazil*, 3 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1810-18), Vol. 2, 361.
[144] After the Jesuit missionary was forcibly expelled from Paraguay by the Spanish crown in 1767, the Indians had to suffer from the enslavement until they were against the Spanish government in 1814.
[145] I discussed anti-slavery poems by dissenting poets in chapter III.

thanked for her fate since she could receive the benefit of Christianity. It cannot be denied that maintaining the importance of Christianising slaves was mainly derived from imperialistic ideology in early nineteenth-century England. When Southey wrote *Tale of Paraguay*, England experienced its most prosperous time in its Empire. It was natural for Southey to regard the Indians as the target to be protected by the superior European people. Southey's imperialistic sensibility which became stronger in his later years made his anti-slavery attitude more complicated. His humanistic indignation against repression of human liberty was obviously modified into more theoretical or ideological one.

This complicated fabrication of Southey's ideology made his egalitarian view more ambiguous. The complexity of his egalitarianism might suggest his conflict between his tenacious republicanism and his potential superiority as a white European.

Southey's equivocal liberalism was more conspicuous in the 1830s. His interest in the slave trade was rekindled around the time when West Indian slaves were emancipated in 1833. In his letter to John Murray on the topic of emancipation, Southey revealed his sceptical attitude towards abolitionism by arguing that abolition of slavery would not be a "cure" to purify the vice that slavery produced:

> Slavery would hardly be an evil if this were corrected: alas, I am far from thinking the abolition of slavery would be a cure for the depravity which slavery has produced.[146]

Through this rhetorical questioning of slavery, Southey deliberately avoided the argument that questioned the justification of slavery. He demonstrated that immorality of slavery was too serious to be corrected by any solution. In fact, in the beginning of this letter, he mentioned that he was not sure which party ("the planters, or the emancipators") were most "unfavourable". Southey's discreet argument on slavery showed that he knew the difficulties to establish the complete human equality in society dominated by European perspective. In addition, it might suggest that

[146] Southey, *New Letters*, Vol. 2, 381, on 25th of August in 1832.

Southey's moral struggling as a republican humanist who could not ignore his intrinsic Euro-centric nature.

## Chapter V

## Wordsworth and the Slave Trade

### (i) Wordsworth's Radical Years

Wordsworth showed a keen interest in the abolitionist movement from the late 1790s to the early 1800s, maintaining a close relationship with the eminent abolitionist Thomas Clarkson and also producing several anti-slavery poems. This period of earnest involvement with abolitionism also coincided with Wordsworth's radical years. He considered the slave trade to be a symbol of mercantile exploitation, regarding slaves as victims exploited by the capitalist system that supported British imperialism at that time. Wordsworth's sympathy towards slaves reflects his concerns for the welfare of the poor in English society, such as beggars, discharged soldiers, and vagabonds. He argued that the social institutions responsible for the oppression of human lives should be reformed. Since Wordsworth was influenced by the liberal ideology of the French Revolution, he believed that all human beings should have the right to enjoy liberty and equality. His abolitionist attitude partly derived from his radicalism and his sympathy towards people at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Wordsworth's radicalism was founded mainly on his humanistic ideology, and it gained strength through his contact with English pro-revolutionary supporters such as William Godwin, George Dyer, and William Frend and with the social reform movement in England in 1790s following the French Revolution. At that time he felt encouraged in the belief that his interest in social reforms could improve the situation of the repressed. Through his visits to France after the French Revolution, Wordsworth witnessed at first hand the plight of the poor, which made him realise the necessity of saving these victims of social injustice. Wordsworth's sense of duty to save these people was greatly strengthened by learning of the humanistic principles and activities of French republicans such as the politician Jacques Pierre Brissot and the soldier Michael Beaupuy. In this way, Wordsworth naturally became concerned

with the abolitionist issues that were the focus of enthusiastic debate among social reformers in England during the 1790s.

It was in 1795 that Wordsworth entered the most radical period of his life. In that year he first met Godwin in London with George Dyer at William Frend's house. Godwin's circle of friends belonged to groups that promoted social reforms; among them were John Thelwall, a radical political lecturer, John Binns, a labourer, Thomas Holcroft, an atheist, and Coleridge. Wordsworth may well have made contact with them at radical meetings held by political societies such as the London Corresponding Society. William Godwin's *Political Justice* had already been published by then, and Wordsworth showed support for Godwin's brand of radicalism. In a letter to his friend William Mathews on 8th of June 1794, Wordsworth earnestly professed that the principle of "political justice" should be diffused among "every enlightened friend of mankind".[1] As he was influenced by the radical ideology of the Constitutional Society and the London Corresponding Society, he planned to publish jointly with Mathews a political journal entitled *The Philanthropist*. Wordsworth proposed that this journal should "inculcate principles of government and forms of social order".[2] Around that time, a number of young radicals attempted to publicise their political opinions; Thelwall published *The Tribune* and Coleridge intended to start *The Watchman*, though their views on *Political Justice* differed. Although *The Philanthropist* was never published because of its impracticality,[3] Wordsworth's radicalism was shown in his prose and poems from 1793 to 1807.

Wordsworth revealed his sympathies with republicanism after the French Revolution and argued the need for social reforms in *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (1793)[4]. This letter was Wordsworth's response to *Sermon to the Stewards of the*

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[1] William Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. De Selincourt, 2nd edn., *The Early Years, 1787-1805*, rev. C. L. Shaver (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1967), 124.
[2] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 119, Wordsworth to William Mathews, on 23rd of May 1794,
[3] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 134.
[4] This letter was actually composed in 1793 but remained unpublished until 1876. Jane Worthington Smyser suggested in her introduction to "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff" that Wordsworth's publisher Joseph Johnson might have advised him not to publish the work. Following a proclamation against seditious writing enacted in May 1792, Thomas Paine was found guilty of sedition in his *The Rights of Man, Part Second*. Johnson, although he published

*Westminster Dispensary* (1793) written by Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff. Watson, a former fellow of Trinity College Cambridge and Frend's colleague, once took a "progressive and liberal attitude"[5] towards dissenters and social reforms. Nevertheless, in *Sermon*, he maintained his conservative policy of supporting the establishment. He, in particular, criticized the execution of Louis XVI as a political failure. On the other hand, in *A Letter* Wordsworth justified the death of the king by arguing that "the blind fondness of his people had placed a human being in that monstrous situation which rendered him unaccountable before a human tribunal".[6] He also cited the anti-monarchist speech of the Constitutional Bishop of Blois, Henri Grégoire, at the National Convention on 15th November 1792. By calling Grégoire "a man of philosophy and humanity", Wordsworth claimed the French Revolution to have been a success:

> . . . a man of philosophy and humanity . . . declared at the opening of the national convention. . . that there was not a citizen on the tenth of August who, if he could have dragged before the eyes of Louis the corse of one of his murdered brothers, might not have exclaimed to him, 'Tyran, voilà ton ouvrage'.[7]

Grégoire, president of the revolutionary club Les Amis de la Constitution, earnestly

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the work of many dissenting radicals such as Priestley, Godwin and Paine, might have become cautious about being arrested. Smyser also suggested that Wordsworth, mindful of the widespread insurrection and civil war in France, decided not to publish the work. (cf. *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds.,E. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Vol. 1, 23-5.)

[5] Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, rpt. 2003), 111.

[6] William Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. 1, 32.

[7] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works*, Vol. 1, 32. cf. Grégoire addressing the Convention, ". . . Is there a parent, or a friend of one of our dear brothers who sacrificed his life on the frontier, or on the journée of 10 August, who would not drag his corpse to the feet of Louis XVI and exclaim: Voilá ton ouvrage!" (*Réimpression de l'Ancien Montieur ; seule historie authentique et inaltérée de la Révolution Française, depuis la Réunion des États-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat* (Mai 1789-November 1799) 31 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1840-7), Vol. XIV, 492.

promoted the abolition of the monarchy in France. His republican ideology accorded with the revolutionary sensibility of the young Wordsworth before he had read Godwin's *Political Justice*.

Wordsworth's republicanism, which was strengthened by his Godwinian philosophy, was evident in *A Letter* when he argued that the revolution would bring "the general good" for all human beings. Wordsworth considered that equality combined with liberty was a perfect state for human beings: "Equality, without which liberty cannot exist, is to be met with in perfection in that state in which no distinctions are admitted but such as have evidently for their object the general good" [8]. Wordsworth insisted that liberty must be established even by "violence" when necessary, while he criticized Watson for claiming that the revolution was "stained with blood"[9] of many people:

> What! Have you so little knowledge of the nature of man as to be ignorant, that a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty. . . the obstinacy and perversion of men is such that she is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence.[10]

Wordsworth's support for reform of the social system was obviously influenced by Godwin's radical ideology. Godwin claimed that "revolution" was necessary for the "important change of the social system."[11] According to Godwin's theory, society must preserve individual independence as much as possible in order that the government may be "introduced as sparingly as possible".[12] This concept reflects Godwin's hypothesis that the government was "in all cases, an evil".[13] Like Godwin,

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[8] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 42.
[9] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 33.
[10] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 33.
[11] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 281.
[12] Godwin, *Political Justice*, 556.
[13] Godwin, *Political Justice*, 556.

Wordsworth viewed the government as being "at best, but a necessary evil."[14] Wordsworth, who strongly believed in Godwin's radicalism, claimed that tyranny must be destroyed: " . . .as soon as tyranny becomes odious, the principal step is made towards its destruction."[15] Wordsworth obviously assumed that republican polity was a necessary step in establishing human happiness.

Wordsworth's radical republicanism was also influenced by his experience in France from 1790 to 1792. Having passed through France when travelling with Robert Jones in 1790, Wordsworth described in *The Prelude* (1805) how French people rejoiced in the achievements of the revolution:

> . . . every tongue was loud
> With amity and glee: we bore a name
> Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
> And hospitably did they give us Hail
> As their forerunners in a glorious course. . .[16]

Wordsworth remembered with affection the way in which the French people welcomed him and Jones as the "forerunners" of the revolution. Wordsworth must have believed that the revolution in France was a successful reformation such as the glorious revolution of 1688 in England. He continued to illustrate how the French people were joyful at the anniversary of the revolution: ". . .and there we saw/ In a mean City and among a few,/How bright a face is worn when joy of one/Is joy of tens of millions."[17] His sympathetic tone denotes his excitement at seeing France just one year after the revolution. Wordsworth asserted that the revolution had given the French, a nation that had endured social oppression, the "joy" of liberty and justice.

Wordsworth's enthusiasm for republicanism was still evident when he returned to

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[14] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 42.
[15] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 36.
[16] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Volume II, ed. Mark L. Reed (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), Book VI, ll. 408-12.
[17] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book VI, ll. 357-60.

France again in late 1791. He arrived in Paris in November of that year and travelled around France until October of 1792. During that period Wordsworth apparently made contact with radical political groups and attended their meetings. This had the effect of strengthening his republican ideology. It may be the case that on 19th December 1791 Wordsworth met with Jacques Pierre Brissot. Wordsworth wrote to his brother Richard from France that he was "introduced by a member" at the national assembly.[18] The member was "quite possibly"[19] Brissot, leader of the Gironde. At that time, Brissot was trying to bring calm to a conflict that was raging in the French colony of St. Domingo. In St. Domingo, black slaves were rebelling against white planters because they wanted to protect the rights (equal to those of white people) that had been granted to them by the Constitutional Assembly in earlier 1791. Since Brissot promoted the liberation of black slaves in colonies by establishing a society called *Amis des noirs*, he affirmed on 1st and 3rd of December 1791 that there would be no colour discrimination in France and its colonies. [20] The opportunity of meeting Brissot, who was willing to take action for the sake of an egalitarian ideal, may well have strengthened Wordsworth's concerns about human liberty and equality.

In his second visit to France, Wordsworth came to know the social activity of two people who had a profound influence on his political ideology in the early 1790s: Grégoire, president of Les Amis, and Michel Beaupuy, a French soldier. They worked to change the social system to benefit the people who were socially repressed. Wordsworth's humanistic concern with the oppression of human beings was strongly influenced by their examples while he knew their activity as social reformers. Wordsworth may have contacted Les Amis while he was in Blois in 1792. Wordsworth's sympathy with Grégoire's republicanism was apparent from the way he expressed similar political principles in *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. As is clear from *A Letter*, and as Grégoire had claimed, Wordsworth firmly believed that the revolutionary movement was necessary in order to improve the social system.

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[18] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 71.
[19] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 71 note.
[20] Brissot's speeches and proceedings at the Legilative Assemly, *Montieur*, X, 515-52, qtd. in Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 43.

While Grégoire's ideology stimulated Wordsworth's republicanism, it was Beaupuy, who actually fought in revolutionary France, who was the republican hero for Wordsworth. Wordsworth found that he and Beaupuy had in common a sense of duty to release the poor people from oppression. Beaupuy had played an active part in the revolution since 1789, and he publicly criticized the corruption of the royal court.[21] He had been in the army since 1771 and died in a battle in 1796. Wordsworth described Beaupuy as "One whom circumstance/ Hath call'd upon to embody his deep sense/ In action. . ."[22] Wordsworth recalled that Beaupuy was a man who tried to embody the humanitarian ideal:

> . . . so Beaupuis (let the Name
> Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)
> Fashion'd his life, and many a long discourse
> With like persuasion honor'd we maintain'd,
> He on his part accounted for the worst.
> He perish'd fighting, in supreme command,
> Upon the Borders of the unhappy Loire,
> For liberty. . .[23]

Beaupuy was described as a hero who sacrificed his life for the cause of liberty.[24]

Wordsworth found that Beaupuy's political indignation against the problems in society was fundamentally similar to his sympathy and interest in the "social outcast". He managed to capture the ideology he shared with Beaupuy when they came across "a hunger-bitten girl" one day:

> One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl

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[21] Georges Bussiére and Émile Legouis, *Le Général Beaupuy* (Paris: Périgueux, 1891), 18.
[22] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book IX, ll. 407-09.
[23] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book IX, ll. 426-33.
[24] Nicholas Roe suggests that Wordsworth misunderstood the date of Beaupuy's death. Although Wordsworth believed that Beaupuy died in the Vendée in 1793, he was actually killed at Emmendingen in 1796. cf. Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 58 note.

Who crept along, fitting her languid self
Unto a Heifer's motion. . .
. . .while the Girl with pallid hands
Was busy knitting, in a heartless mood
Of solitude, and at the sight my Friend
In agitation said, "There is it, there,
That which we fight against,". . .[25]

The life of the girl was harsh and impoverished. The unconscious movement of her hands represented her continuous and monotonous work. In her "languid" appearance, Wordsworth must have imagined that the girl's consciousness was already paralysed by the severity of her circumstances. The solitude of the girl brought her predicament to the fore. The girl's situation was not unusual for French farming communities in rural areas following the revolution. Since the civil government in France was still struggling to establish its new system in the early 1790s, people in rural villages were forced to endure poverty and hunger. Furthermore, "the high price of flour and grain"[26] brought uneasiness among people and even caused rioting. Beaupuy had an opportunity to calm an uprising that had occurred when villagers hijacked a consignment of grain in the village of St Dyé in March 1792.

Although Wordsworth's belief in republicanism sometimes swayed, it nevertheless remained during the early 1800s. He had a strong conviction that liberty for all human beings would establish itself through republican policy. Wordsworth's hopes of establishing an ideal society for human beings were so tenacious that they were not destroyed even after he witnessed the radical violence that took place in Paris. Certainly, Wordsworth felt uneasy about terror, and became fearful of the French government's gradual move towards violence. As for the September massacre, Wordsworth was obviously agitated by the cruel nature of the tragedy. He confessed

[25] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book IX, ll. 512-20.
[26] Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, 59.

to suffering from insomnia and sensed a cry of "Sleep no more!"[27] like Macbeth after killing Duncan. Wordsworth's fear of the terror in France did not completely destroy his belief in republicanism, however. In *A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* written after the September massacre, he expressed his hope that the revolution would bring a "fairer order of things".[28] Wordsworth believed that republicanism was something that would come about when social improvements were introduced in the aftermath of social unrest. He imagined himself taking an active role in French republican society. When Wordsworth returned to France in 1792, he was excited to see "a new transition" in the polity of France:

> --The state, as if to stamp the final seal
> On her security, and to the world
> Shew what she was, a high and fearless soul,
> Or under rash resentment and in pride
> Of spiteful gratitude to the baffled League
> Who had stirr'd up her slackening faculties
> To a new transition, having crush'd the King
> Spared not the empty throne, and had assum'd
> The body and the venerable name
> Of a Republic.[29]

Wordsworth celebrated the establishment of the French republic on 22nd September, optimistic that people could live as a civilized society under the republican government. In the 1790s Wordsworth certainly held aspirations for a republic that would create an enlightened society based on egalitarian ideology.

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[27] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book X, l. 77
[28] Wordsworth, "A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff", *The Prose Works,* Vol. 1, 34.
[29] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book X, ll. 24-31.

### (ii) Wordsworth and Anti-Slavery Poems

For Wordsworth, the problem of the slave trade represented the most shameful aspect of mercantile society. His interest in the slave trade was shown in *The Prelude* (1805), in which he alluded to the life of John Newton, a former captain of a slave ship:

> And as I have read of one by shipwreck thrown,
> With Fellow-sufferers whom the waves had spared,
> Upon a desert coast, who, having brought
> To land a single Volume and no more—
> A Treatise of Geometry, was used. . .
> . . .
> To spots remote and corners of the Island
> By the sea-side, and draw his diagrams
> With a long stick, upon the sand, and thus
> Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
> Forget his feeling. . . [30]

Wordsworth described how a shipwrecked man tried to forget his "sorrow" and "feeling" by concentrating on drawing pictures in the sand. Here Wordsworth was portraying a man who agonised over his feelings of guilt for being a slave trader, especially given his own hardships. Evidently, Wordsworth had read Newton's *An Authentic Narrative of some Remarkable and Interesting Particulars in the Life of*. . .(1765),[31] since the description of the man who drew the diagram in the sand resembled Newton himself. Newton showed how he had managed to ease his feelings of depression at the shock of the shipwrecked sailors by reading

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[30] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book VI, ll. 160-74.

[31] Mary Jacobus suggested that Dorothy had copied the book into a notebook "sometime between 1799 and 1880". *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference:Essays on The Prelude* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), note 79.

"mathematical studies": "I had brought *Barrow's Euclid at Plymouth*; it was the only volume I brought on shore; it was always with me, and I used to take it to remote corners of the island by the sea-side, and drew my diagrams with a long stick upon the sand."[32] Wordsworth's interest in travel books relating to the slave trade was shown in his letter to James Tobin, the son of a Nevis Planter: "If you could collect for me any books of travels you would render me an essential service. . ."[33] The book which Wordsworth mentioned might be Newton's book.

Newton was eventually converted to become an evangelical preacher, and became an abolitionist after experiencing the hardships of a voyage. He confessed his growing doubt about the slave trade and revealed the evils of the slave trade in two books: *An Authentic Narrative* and *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (1788)[34]. Newton regarded the slave trade, which went against any "feeling of humanity", as a "stain"[35] on Britain. He stressed that the sin of the slave trade was deep and formidable:

> God forbid, that any supposed profit or advantage, which we can derive from the groans and agonies, and blood of the poor Africans, should draw down his heavy curse, upon all that we might, otherwise, honourably and comfortably possess.[36]

Here Newton aroused people's guilt about the inhumane nature of the British slave trade by pointing out that the British people enjoyed possessing the products that were made by slaves' labour. Newton warned that God would punish the sin of the trade since it only caused "groans and agonies" of slaves. Newton's belief in God was strengthened by his disgust at the evils of the slave trade. Wordsworth, who had an

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[32] John Newton, *An Authentic Narrative of Some Remarkable and Interesting Particulars in the Life of. . .*, 6th edn. (London: n. p., 1786), 63.
[33] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 212, Wordsworth to James Webb Tobin, 6th of March in 1798.
[34] More details about Newton's *Thoughts on African Slave Trade* was discussed in chapter II.
[35] John Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Phillips, 1788), *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 77.
[36] Newton, *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*, in *The Abolition Debate*, 84.

interest in the relationship between human morality and abolitionism, must have felt sympathy towards Newton's life, which drifted between the roles of slave trader and man of religion.

Wordsworth himself had friends who were involved in the slave trade, including John Pinney, the son of a prominent Bristol sugar merchant, and James Tobin. It was in Pinney's house that Wordsworth first met Coleridge, who was playing an active part in the anti-slavery campaign. At Eusemere in November 1799 Wordsworth met Thomas Clarkson, marking the beginning of a long friendship; they shared "many qualities, in manner and appearance."[37] Both were educated at St. John's Cambridge and both had first-hand experience of France in revolutionary time. They were also "enthusiastic over"[38] revolutionary sensibility. Clarkson had an interest in poetry, and had read Wordsworth's works, interpreting them as "instructive".[39] At the time when Wordsworth developed his friendship with Clarkson's family, Coleridge and Southey were also in the Lake District. Clarkson naturally became close to this circle of poets, with whom he had shared interests. Since Clarkson was already known as a famous abolitionist at that time, Wordsworth and other poets came to realise precisely how actively Clarkson was working for the abolitionist cause. This was noted by Dorothy:

> Mr and Mrs Clarkson came to dinner, and stayed with us till after dinner on Monday. Mr Clarkson is the man who took so much pain about the slave trade. . .[40]

Clarkson's enthusiasm for the abolitionist movement was also expressed by Southey in a letter to his friend, Danvers: "if you do not find him a very pleasant man I am sure

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[37] Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), 100.
[38] Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, 100.
[39] Thomas Clarkson, *Portraiture of Quakerism as Taken from a view of the Moral Education, Discipline, Peculiar Customs, Religious Principles, Political and Civil Economy, and Character of the Society of Friends*, 3 vols. (London: n.p., 1806), Vol. 2, 142-50.
[40] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 300, Dorothy Wordsworth to Mrs John Marshall, 13th of August 1800.

you will be interested with him on this account. It agitates him to talk upon the subject—but when he does—he agitates every one who hears him."[41] Through their relationship with Clarkson, poets in the Lake District took the opportunity to learn about the slave trade in some detail. It must have been an exciting experience for young romantic poets who were influenced by revolutionary sensibility to meet the man who had devoted his life to a liberal cause.

In 1807, when the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act was passed in Parliament, Wordsworth dedicated to Clarkson one of his sonnets entitled "To Thomas Clarkson, on the Final Passing of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade" (1807). The joyous tone of the poem showed that Wordsworth was also pleased with the realization of abolitionism. Wordsworth praised Clarkson as the leader of a "pilgrimage sublime" who succeeded in the difficult task of abolishing the slave trade as if climbing an "obstinate Hill", which summarized the obstinacy of proslavery interests in the national parliament:

> Clarkson! It was an obstinate Hill to climb;
> How toilsome, nay how dire it was, by Thee
> Is known,--by none, perhaps, so feelingly;
> But Thou, who, starting in thy fervent prime,
> Didst first lead forth this pilgrimage sublime. . .[42]

It is stressed that Wordsworth shared Clarkson's sense of duty to abolish British slavery. And in this poem he expresses his sincere joy at the realisation that the slave trade had finally been brought to an end, since he knew that Clarkson was earnestly engaged with abolitionism through their long-term friendship. Furthermore the poem represents Wordsworth's liberated sense of duty as a humanitarian who hoped to release the repressed slaves from their burden.

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[41] Robert Southey, *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1965), Vol. 1, 335, Southey to C. Danvers, 7th November 1803.

[42] Wordsworth, "To Thomas Clarkson", *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1983), ll. 1-5.

Wordsworth's celebration of the enactment of the abolition act demonstrates his awareness of the difficult and sensitive nature of the slave trade debate in England that had gone on for almost twenty years. After Wilberforce submitted the anti-slave trade propositions to Parliament in 1789, his offers were neither agreed nor turned down; instead, they were carried over for further discussion for almost the next eighteen years.[43] The inordinate length of the slavery debate is an indication of the political and economic complexities of the slave trade itself. Wordsworth alluded to his concerns about the politics of the slave trade in a letter to Wilberforce. The tone of the letter was at times ambiguous and metaphorical. Wordsworth did not express his abolitionist stance explicitly probably because the social atmosphere against abolitionism was so strong at that time. Nevertheless, he described Wilberforce and himself as fellow-labourers in the vineyard of the abolitionist movement, united by this common cause:

> Indeed had I not persuaded myself that in the composition of them I had been a Fellow-labourer with you in the same Vineyard, acting under the perception of some one common truth and attributing to that truth the same importance and necessity. . .[44]

Although the expressions are figurative, Wordsworth managed to convey emphatically his belief that the abolition of the slave trade was a "common truth".

Before Wordsworth had written a sonnet to Clarkson, he produced two other anti-slavery poems: "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803) and "The Banished Negroes" (1803)[45]. He composed these sonnets to protest against Napoleon's re-establishment of slavery in 1802. The slave revolt in St. Domingo had continued since 1791. Francois Dominique Toussaint, the governor of Haiti, the eminent abolitionist and son of a Negro slave, protested against the French policy especially when Napoleon

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[43] For more details, see chapter I.
[44] Wordsworth, *The Early Years,* 685, The letter was revised in various parts by Coleridge.
[45] In its 1820 version the title of this poem changed to "September 1st 1802 ".

re-introduced slavery in 1802. He was finally arrested by the French government and died in prison. In "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" Wordsworth's sympathy towards him and his criticism against slavery were clearly shown. By calling Toussaint "the miserable Chieftain", Wordsworth demonstrated his regret for the death of a man who worked to establish an egalitarian society for slaves. He believed that Toussaint's admirable behaviour should be marked and preserved in history:

> . . .Thou has left behind
> Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
> There's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee. . .[46]

Wordsworth asserted that Toussaint's ethical action was supported by the powers of nature, his sympathy with Toussaint's rebellion against white colonists reflecting his republican ideology. Clearly, Wordsworth recognised the social and political value of Toussaint's revolt against the European imperial power, and supported this revolutionary movement against the repressive social system. Wordsworth's support for the revolt led by black people is indicative of the radical egalitarian sensibilities he held at a time when the British government did not admit the social rights of slaves. For instance, with regard to the war in the West Indies, the MP Henry Dundas stated in the House of Commons that he opposed the abolition of slavery and did not admit the rights of slaves.[47] However, the liberation movement led by Toussaint was eventually followed by the independence of "the Negro state"[48] of Haiti after the defeat of Napoleon's expedition in 1803.

Wordsworth's admiration for Toussaint was based on his understanding of Toussaint's fortitude in devoting himself to working for his nation under such difficult circumstances. The political situation surrounding the slave revolt in St. Domingo

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[46] Wordsworth, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 9-12.
[47] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin, 2001), 163.
[48] James, *The Black Jacobins*, xviii.

was complicated, since it involved imperial intrigue among European countries such as France, England and Spain. Pitt's government sent a fighting force to the West Indies in order to protect their slave trade territory. But while European countries fought against each other to seize the island, Toussaint tried to sweep them out of his country. The British army finally withdrew from St. Domingo in early 1797 after suffering heavy losses both military and financial. For example, by the end of 1796, "the British had lost in the West Indies 80,000 soldiers including 40,000 actually dead".[49] The expense of the war in St. Domingo was "£300,000 in 1794, £800,000 in 1795, £2,600,000 in 1796, and in January 1797 alone it was more "than £700,000."[50] Although the British army had all but left the country, Toussaint still had to fight the French. His arrest and subsequent death at the hands of the French government were "a cold shock"[51] to the whole nation of St. Domingo. Wordsworth had found true republican sensibilities in Toussaint's efforts to protect liberty.

The decision to represent revolutionary black people was a radical one among the anti-slavery poets, who typically described the helplessness of slaves. Illustrations of subservient black people were not uncommon in the abolitionist poems in Britain from 1770 to 1837[52]. In those poems slaves often killed themselves or were killed by white Europeans as a punishment for rebelling, which stressed the unbalanced power relationship between the exploiters and the exploited. One such work by Ann Yearsley, "A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade" (1788), depicted a slave who committed suicide out of despair: "She seeks the cold embrace of death; her soul/ Escapes in one sad sigh."[53] Yearsley also described a rebel slave who was burned to death by white planters. By showing that slaves were victims of torture at the hands of white people, Yearsley highlighted the sheer brutality of slavery:

The planters, conscious that to fear alone

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[49] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 164.
[50] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 164.
[51] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 271.
[52] More in detail in chapter III.
[53] Ann Yearsley, *A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave-Trade* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1788), in *Verse*, ed. Alan Richardson, Vol. 4 of *Slavery*, 141.

They owe their cruel pow'r, resolve to blend
New torment with the pangs of death. . .
Luco is chain'd
To a huge tree, his fellow-slaves are ranged
To share the horrid sight. . .[54]

Yearsley described the desperate situation of slaves who were not able to escape from slavery despite their daring resistance. She provoked in white readers a sense of guilt towards the "cruel power" of planters over slaves.

Bryan Edwards depicted a slave who failed to revolt against planters in Jamaica in "The Negro's Dying Speech on His Being Executed for Rebellion in the Island of Jamaica" (1777). In this poem the rebel slave was sympathetically portrayed as dying in "Freedom's cause", devotedly parting from his wife, and stoically anticipating his death by fire in the faith that his spirit would return to Africa. Edwards showed the tragic fate of the slave who died hoping that freedom would befall him in the afterlife:

O Death, how welcome to th'opprest!
Thy kind embrace I carve;
Thou bring'st to Mis'ry's bosom rest,
And Freedom to the Slave![55]

Like the rebel slave depicted in Yearsley's poem, it is stressed that there was no way for slaves to gain freedom other than by sacrificing their lives. The weakness of slaves was set starkly against the vile bloodshed of slavery: "No Christian Tyrant there is known/ To mark his steps with blood"[56]. In fact, criticising the cruelty of slavery proved effective in making white readers feel some guilt towards slaves. At the same

[54] Yeasrley, *A Poem on the Inhumanity*, *Verse*, 146.
[55] Bryan Edwards, "The Negro's Dying Speech on His Being Executed for Rebellion in the Island of Jamaica", *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, 61 (London: n.p., November, 1777), *Verse*, 26.
[56] Edwards, "The Negro's Dying Speech", 26.

time, however, describing slaves who eventually lost or gave up their fight against enslavement ironically suggests the unconquerable power of European imperialism. Many anti-slavery poems carried the proposition that even rebellious slaves were not able to overpower white people, who had a right to control them.

Edward Rushton's "West-Indian Eclogues" (1787) and William Roscoe's "The African" (1788) also showed pitiable slaves. Rushton depicted a slave who took his life in order to bring an end to his sorrows: "Sure we can bid our various sorrows cease/ By quitting life. . ."[57] An image of suicidal slaves was more comfortable for white English readers to imagine than one portraying their murder by white planters. The popular theme of suicidal slaves easily provoked the white audience into sympathising with slaves. Roscoe showed the slave who chose to die to be free from enslavement:

> To-morrow the white man, in vain,
> Shall proudly account me his slave;
> My shackles I'll plunge in the main,
> And rush to the realms of the brave.[58]

The tragic figure of the slave had the effect of stimulating in Christian readers a feeling of paternal love towards the repressed.

On the other hand, in "Toussaint L'Ouverture" Wordsworth admired the courage of Toussaint for his rebellious behaviour in regaining human rights for slaves. Unlike the image of the suicidal slaves in other anti-slavery poems, the heroic figure of Toussaint strongly suggested that it was a duty for human beings to abolish the slave trade. Wordsworth's anti-slavery message in this work was similar to that of Southey's in "To the Genius of Africa" (1797) and "On the Settlement of Sierra Leone" (1798) [59] in the sense that he treated the slave revolt as a welcome event. Rather

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[57] Edward Rushton, *West-Indian Eclogue* (London: W. Lowndes and J. Philips, 1787), *Verse*, 40.
[58] William Roscoe and James Currie, "The African", *The World* (n.p.: n.p., 1788) in *Verse*, 100.
[59] For more detail in chapter IV of this thesis.

than focusing on the death of the rebellious Toussaint, Wordsworth strongly supported Toussaint's liberal sensibilities and his fight for human rights. In his sonnet on Toussaint, Wordsworth not only showed his indignation for the slave trade but also revealed his sympathy with the cause of the slave revolt. Wordsworth's egalitarianism derived from his deep understanding of the psychological torment endured by those suffering repression.

Likewise, in "The Banished Negroes" [61] Wordsworth showed his humanistic sympathy with black people as well as his radical revolutionary sensibility. In the final version of the poem Wordsworth most explicitly expressed his liberal ideology in the anger of a black woman. "The Banished Negroes" was based on the poet's experience of seeing a black woman on board a ship when he returned from France. In the preface to the 1827 version, Wordsworth criticized the law that expelled all Negroes from France as one of the "capricious acts of tyranny"[62]. The decree that Wordsworth referred to was enacted on 2nd July 1802. The ordinance forbade "all people of color from entering the continental territories of France" and declared that "any people of color currently residing there who did not have government approval would be expelled"[63]. In the 1803 version, Wordsworth's sympathetic tone towards a Negro woman was depicted in her "meek" attitude:

> We had a fellow-Passenger who came
> From Calais with us, gaudy in array,
> A Negro Woman like a Lady gay,
> Yet silent as a woman fearing blame;
> Dejected, meek, yea pitiably tame[64]

The helplessness of the black woman was emphasized in the ironic contrast between

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[61] This poem was revised seven times (in 1820, 1827, 1836, 1838, 1840, 1843 and 1845), cf. Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, notes on 161-2.
[62] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, note on 161.
[63] Judith W. Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 69.
[64] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 1-5.

her subdued expression and her rich attire. And the silence of the woman effectively stressed the unjust nature of the discrimination decree: "This the poor Out-cast did to us declare,/ Nor murmur'd at the unfeeling Ordinance."[65] Thus, in the conclusion of the 1803 version, Wordsworth showed his disappointment at the damage inflicted on the spirit of liberty and equality that France had upheld in the 1790s as its national slogan.

In the 1827 version of "The Banished Negroes" Wordsworth focused on the indignation of black people who endured slavery and on the dignity of their minds. The female subject was no longer portrayed as a victimized, powerless woman but as an indomitable figure of pride and independence with "tropic fire" in her eyes. The poet recognised that the black female had a "burning" that was "independent of the mind":

> . . .those eyes retained their tropic fire,
> Which, burning independent of the mind,
> Joined with the lustre of her rich attire. . .[66]

This "tropic fire" of the Negro female may indicate the possibility of rebellion by slaves who had long been repressed by white Europeans. In the anger of the female we see traces of Wordsworth's republican sensibility that claimed human independence and liberty. The concluding lines "O ye Heavens, be kind! / And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race!"[67] reveal the poignant overtones of a protest against slavery and the poet's earnest hope for the spiritual and moral liberation of the human mind itself.

Wordsworth regarded slavery as a system that morally degraded the human soul, since it deprived human beings of their dignity and independence. His criticisms of slavery were related directly to his doubts about capitalist ideology. And he regarded the system of capitalism as a relationship between the exploiters and the exploited,

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[65] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 13-14.
[66] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 10-12.
[67] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, ll. 13-14.

with slavery representing the ultimate in the exploitative nature of capitalism. Wordsworth showed how human minds were contaminated by economic greed in "The world is too much with us" (1807). In this poem Wordsworth criticised the way in which British imperialism maintained its pursuit of economic profit by sacrificing others such as slaves:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours;
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon![68]

Wordsworth's lamenting tone showed his moral indignation against capitalism that destroyed human mental independence. What Wordsworth deplores is the barbarism of human egotism that is found in the "consuming violence"[69] of British imperialism.

### (iii) Wordsworth and Social Outcasts

In his poetry, Wordsworth often described social outcasts whose lives had been damaged by the exploitive system of mercantile society. He saw the slave trade as an unfair social system in which some people were forced to work to give financial benefit to others. Wordsworth considered that social poverty was a result of the malfunction of this social system. He argued that poor people such as beggars, discharged soldiers and vagrants were all victims whose energy had been sapped by the capitalist social system. He regarded their situation as being similar to that of slaves who were forced to work without any reward.

Wordsworth's interest in the victims of society also had an artistic cause, since he saw a moral message in the way the lives of social outcasts appeared to preserve

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[68] Wordsworth, "Miscellaneous Sonnets", *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems,* No.18, ll. 1-4.

[69] Jacobus, *Romanticism Writing*, 83.

simplicity and spiritual strength. He had an artistic vision that simplicity, hardship and poverty retained a moral value that almost equated with human dignity and sublimity. Wordsworth's respect for the moral values of the poor mirrored his criticisms of the social system in which the poor were neglected and abused, both economically and socially. By stressing the dignity of the minds of social outcasts, Wordsworth revealed the moral degradation of capitalist society.

Through the figure of the discharged soldier, who had come down with yellow fever and was discarded by the government, Wordsworth revealed the inhumane side of capitalist principles. In the episode of "The Discharged Soldier" (1788), the soldier's symptoms clearly indicated yellow fever, which was rife among slave traders and soldiers deployed in the West Indies in the late eighteenth century:

> His arms were long and lean; his hands were bare;
> [His visage, wasted though it seem'd, was large
> In feature, his cheeks sunken, and his mouth]
> Shewed ghastly in the moonlight. . .[70]

The deathly appearance of soldiers may allude to the guilt felt by the British empire over its continued involvement with the slave trade. From the late eighteenth century until the early nineteenth century, yellow fever particularly affected white people in the West Indies as well as in plantations in America. In fact the death rate among British soldiers suffering from yellow fever in Jamaica from 1817 to 1836 was 12.13% per year, this figure rising to 30.7% at its highest level.[71] Slave owners in Jamaica and doctors in America often drew attention to the serious effects of yellow fever. Matthew Gregory Lewis, novelist and plantation owner in Jamaica, showed how his plantation had been ravaged by this highly contagious disease. In his *Journal of a*

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[70] Wordsworth, "The Discharged Soldier", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), ll. 48-51.

[71] Peter Burroughs, "The Human Cost of Imperial Defence in the Early Victorian Age", *Victorian Studies*, 24 (1980-81), 7-32 (pp. 14-15, 17), cited in D. L. Macdonald, "The Jamaican Journal of M. G. Lewis", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, eds. Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 203.

*West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (1834) Lewis described Jamaica as the island of "yellow Plague":

> Let not thy strange diseases prey
> On my life; but scare from my couch away
> The yellow Plague's imps. . .[72]

The yellow fever epidemic was believed to have spread from Caribbean countries to America, where there was an outbreak of the disease. Robert Jackson and John Redman, who were both "prominent"[73] American doctors, supported the claim that yellow fever must have reached America's shores from the West Indies through goods or persons originating from there.[74]

It became a popular theme in anti-slavery poetry to regard yellow fever as a sign of God's punishment for allowing the slave trade to thrive. In "Slavery" (1788), Hannah More used the image of death from yellow fever to illustrate the moral damage caused by the slave trade: "Convulsed . . . and pestilent her breath, / She raves for mercy, while she deals out death."[75] More expressed her belief that the pestilent air brought by the slave trade would contaminate liberal sensibilities in England. And in "Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade" (1788), Helen Maria Williams suggested that the "guilty man" who was supposedly a slave trader inflicted the disease upon the entire nation that held the system of slavery. She claimed that slavery was shed by the "fury of contagion".[76] Meanwhile, in "The West Indies"

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[72] Matthew Gregory Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor, Kept During a Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (London:n.p., 1834), 23, qtd. in D.L. Macdonald, "The Isle of Devils: the Jamaican journal of M. G. Lewis", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 202.

[73] Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 61.

[74] Redman referred that yellow fever was derived form "the neighbourhood of shipping or among persons connected with vessels". John Redman, *Proceedings of the college of physicians of Philadelphia relative to the prevention of the introduction and spreading of contagious diseases* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1789), 30, qtd. in Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination*, 61.

[75] Hannah More, "Slavery", rpt., in *Women Romantic Poets, 1785-1832: An Anthology*, ed. Jennifer Breen (London: Everyman, 1992), 11, ll. 37-38.

[76] Helen Maria Williams, "Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave Trade" (London: T. Cadell, 1788) in *Verse*, 88.

(1809) James Montgomery suggested that yellow fever brought a scourge to Britain because of her sinful involvement in the slave trade:

> The Eternal makes his dread displeasure known;
> At his command the pestilence abhorr'd
> Spares the poor slave, and smites the haughty
> lord;
> . . .
> Now frenzy-horrors rack his whirling brain,
> Tremendous pulses throb through every vein;
> The firm earth shrinks beneath his torture-bed,
> The sky in ruins rushes o'er his head;
> He rolls, he rages in consuming fires,
> Till nature, spent with agony, expires.[77]

In describing with such vividness the suffering brought on by this disease, Montgomery denounced the immorality of the slave trade as vengeance from God.

Wordsworth described the moral degradation of the British slave trade by stressing the sickness of the soldier who fought for the expanding British Empire. He also suggested here that the soldier was only one of the tools used to cultivate British colonies in the West Indies. Soldiers who had been away fighting for their country often returned home in bad health or became "disabled"[78]. He bitterly denounced the policy that left those soldiers all but abandoned by society. In *The Prelude* (1805) Wordsworth depicted the helplessness of a sailor who had no shelter in London. The sailor was lying

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[77] James Montgomery, "The West Indies", *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; written by James Montgomery, James Graham, and E. Benger* (London: T. Bensley for R. Bowyer, 1809) in *Verse*, 317-18.

[78] Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 114.

at length beside a range
Of written characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones. . .[79]

Wordsworth ironically revealed that the prosperity of the British Empire produced human misery and poverty on one side. Britain nurtured the idea not only of developing commercialism but also of justifying the exploitation of the socially disadvantaged — such as black slaves from Africa and British soldiers who had been used as a means of bringing about territorial expansion.

Wordsworth depicted more social victims in the narrative poem "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" (1795-c1799). In this work he expressed his anti-imperialistic views by describing the predicament of two families, one being that of a female vagrant and the other of a sailor, whose lives had been drastically affected by the imperial policies of the British government. Wordsworth described the disease-ravaged voyage to the West Indies and the war that deprived the sailor's family of everything including their house and children. The poem focuses on the story of the female vagrant who roamed the plains. By describing the many deaths which resulted from the perilous journey to the West Indies that the female vagrant had undertaken, Wordsworth hinted at the most negative aspects of British colonial expansion. The female vagrant describes how the ship on which she and her family were carried to the West Indies became stuck on the seacoast for months, causing disease to spread rapidly:

There foul neglect for months and months we bore,
Nor yet the crowded fleet its anchor stirred.
Green fields before us and our native shore,
By fever, from polluted air incurred,
Ravage was made, for which no knell was heard. . .[80]

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[79] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book IV, ll. 221-23.
[80] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, ed. Stephen Gill (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1976), ll. 361-65.

The image of the disease-ridden "polluted air" is similar to that of yellow fever that caused the deaths of many British people at that time. The female vagrant eventually lost her family through the plague:

> "The pains and plagues that on our heads came down,
> Disease and famine, agony and fear,
> . . .
> All perished—all. . ."[81]

By revealing that human lives were sacrificed in the cause of British colonial expansion, Wordsworth emphasized how ordinary people in England, just like the slaves working on plantations, had become victims of the social pressures of the imperial system.

Through the figure of the sailor who became a vagabond like the female vagrant, Wordsworth reinforced his protest against an exploitative system in which people from the lowest levels of society were forced to continue living in misery. Wordsworth claimed that one of the themes in "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" was to show his criticism against a social system which brought misery to individuals, as was noted in his letter to Francis Wrangham: "Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals."[82] The sailor and his family were very poor, and since the sailor wanted to save his family from starvation, he enlisted to fight in the war that was originally intended to rid the country of "want and pain"[83]. Ironically, the ongoing war brought only disease and famine, which the sailor's family also had to endure. Besides, the sailor was discharged from military service without obtaining the earnings that he wanted to bring back to his family. The sailor was desperate, because he could not ease the misery that his family had put up with for so long. He at last assaulted and killed a traveller near his home, then ran away:

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[81] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", ll. 388-92.
[82] Wordsworth, *The Early Years*, 159, Wordsworth to Revd, Francis Wrangham, 20th of November 1795.
[83] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, l. 355.

. . .towards his home return'd,
Bearing to those he loved nor warmth nor food,
In sight of his own house, in such a mood
That from his view his children might have run,
He met a traveller, robb'd him, shed his blood;
And when the miserable work was done
He fled, a vagrant since, the murderer's fate to shun.[84]

Following his crime, the sailor had no choice but to roam the country as a criminal; and as a consequence, his family returned to the same wretched life again without any sign of escape. The plain, which offered no shelter to the sufferers, suggested the mercilessness of commercial society:

No tree was there, no meadow's pleasant green,
No brook to wet his lips or soothe his ear. . .
. . . no smoke upwreathed his sight to cheer.[85]

Wordsworth denounced the way in which British commercialism drove men to put profits before any consideration of the conditions and suffering of those exploited. It could be argued that the tragedy of the sailor and his family represents the situation of victims who were destroyed by society. Wordsworth expressed his protest against society by claiming that criminal behaviour was the product of circumstances in the end. In this respect, his position was similar to that of Godwin, who concluded that people who were repressed by poverty were more likely to commit a crime:

A numerous class of mankind are held down in a state of abject penury, and are continually prompted by disappointment and distress to commit

[84] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", ll. 93-99.
[85] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, ll. 55-8.

violence upon their more fortunate neighbours.[86]

Godwin believed that criminal behaviour was mostly due to the unfair economical structure of society. Like the soldier in "The Discharged Soldier", the sailor in "Adventure on Salisbury Plain" lost his family and job as a result of his service to the British government. Wordsworth showed how those who had become socially impotent were deprived of their human rights.

Wordsworth criticised the cruelties of a social system that ignored the plight of the poor. The predicament of the beggar was highlighted by the contrast between the mental dignity of the beggar and the severity of his situation. Wordsworth evidently had a keen insight into the inner strengths of people enduring an impoverished life, and this strengthened his sympathy towards beggars as social victims.

In "The Old Cumberland Beggar" Wordsworth clearly expressed his criticism of government policy for the poor as well as his sympathy with them. In his preface to the poem, Wordsworth argued that beggars would become soon extinct around the neighbourhood. He criticised the Poor Law of 1796 that required the poor to be sent to a kind of labour camp called the "workhouse"[87]. The workhouse was originally established in the sixteenth century in order to provide jobs for poor people who had no means of earning a living. However, this facility gradually evolved into a place where vagrants and the mentally ill on the streets were forcibly detained by the government.

In contrast, Wordsworth assumed that all human beings had the right to a decent lifestyle. Since he believed that poverty was inevitably caused by malfunctions in society, he considered it natural for the poor to be guaranteed a civilised life through the law:

> . . .all persons who cannot find employment, or procure wages sufficient to

[86] Godwin, *Political Justice*, 87.

[87] Wordsworth was interested in the Poor Laws, the terms of which had often been changed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. cf. T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead* (London: Oxford UP, 1970), 276-81.

support the body in health and strength, are entitled to maintenance by law.[88]

Here Wordsworth demonstrated his belief that the government should protect the happiness of the nation. In "The Old Cumberland Beggar" Wordsworth showed his indignation at the practice of statesmen who tended to regard the poor as "nuisances":

> . . .Statesmen! ye
> Who are so restless in your wisdom, ye
> Who have a broom still ready in your hands
> To rid the world of nuisances. . .[89]

Wordsworth revealed his dissatisfaction with a society driven by commercialism that caused the poor to be abandoned because of their lack of productivity. He regarded the Poor Law as typifying capitalist sensibilities. On the other hand, he suggested that the old beggar could survive in a village where people showed their sense of charity towards him. The horseman-traveller, the woman who managed the toll-gate, and the post boy took care of him with obvious affection. The moral value of their kindness was strengthened by the fact that the beggar lived in solitude:

> He travels on, a solitary man,
> So helpless in appearance, that for him
> The sauntering horseman-traveller does not throw
> With careless hand his alms upon the ground,
> But stops, that he may safely lodge the coin
> Within the old Man's hat. . .[90]

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[88] Wordsworth, "Postscript (1835), Part I", *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 240.
[89] Wordsworth, "The Old Cumberland Beggar", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ll. 66-9.
[90] Wordsworth, "The Old Cumberland Beggar", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ll. 24-9.

By portraying a favourable relationship between the beggar and the villagers, Wordsworth claimed that society should be capable of saving social outcasts.

Furthermore, Wordsworth finds a strong moral principle in the simple, monotonous life of the beggar. The beggar is observed to spend his life in the remote countryside. It is in this poor and unsophisticated lifestyle that the poet sees a sense of simplicity and stability:

> Bowbent, his eyes for ever on the ground,
> He plies his weary journey, seeing still,
> And never knowing that he sees. . .[91]

The repetitive lifestyle in the same condition gave Wordsworth a sense of moral strength. Phrases such as "for ever" and "never" suggest decisiveness in the beggar's attitude towards his life, in spite of his blindness. Wordsworth conveys the beggar's resoluteness rather than the misery of his situation.

Through his description of the mental dignity shown by social victims, Wordsworth emphasized the moral value of their lives. A kind of solemnity is also impressively depicted in the speech of the discharged soldier in "The Discharged Soldier", who keeps his proud demeanour in the harshest of conditions. Like the leech gatherer's talk, the soldier's language is in this context described as "unmoved" and with "quiet, uncomplaining voice"[92]. While Wordsworth suggests a certain resignation in the subdued tone of the soldier's voice and in his indifferent attitude towards his situation, he conveys a spiritual maturity in the soldier who dared to accept the severity of his life. The soldier could only pray to God: "My trust is in the God of Heaven/ And in the eye of him that passes me."[93] Although these words themselves are rather simple, they can be deep enough to suggest a life's truth. In the language of the discharged soldier, Wordsworth showed the ironical contrast of an invented situation in which a helpless

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[91] Wordsworth, "The Old Cumberland Beggar", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ll. 52-4.
[92] Wordsworth, "The Discharged Soldier", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ll. 95-6.
[93] Wordsworth, "The Discharged Soldier", *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, ll. 162-3.

man in a social sense can be a man of philosophical insight. He believed that the language of ordinary or even poor people was "emphatic"[94]. In this respect, the silence of the black woman in "The Banished Negroes" also suggests a strong sense of calmness in accepting her fate. Wordsworth certainly saw a solemn nobleness in the black woman who felt proud of her identity. Wordsworth's artistic stance in choosing socially repressed people as his poetic subjects reveals his true understanding of human nature.

Since Wordsworth tried to understand the psychological situation of "social victims", he could observe not only their indignation but also their pure spirit based on the sense of goodness. Wordsworth realised that the discovery of a moral value in lives of social outcasts had an important meaning to support his own artistic principle to find human "maturity" and "the elementary feelings"[95] in them. The poetical subjects which Wordsworth chose kept their spiritual fortitude and dignity in extremely hard and unfavourable social conditions. Wordsworth concludes the "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" with the illustration of "clear and open soul"[96] of the sailor and his wife. They continue to preserve tender feeling in spite of their severe life. The sailor's wife still maintains her affections towards her husband although her life has become much harder because of the sailor's crime. The sailor's wife forgives her husband's crime because she knows that he is naturally kind and good. The sailor rediscovers his own humane spirit when he encounters his wife's death:

> His hand had wrought, and, in the hour of death,
> Saw her lips move his name and deeds to bless,
> At such a sight he could no more suppress
> The feelings which did in his heart revive;
> And, weeping loud, in this extreme distress
> He cried, "O bless me now, that thou should'st live

[94] Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads " (1800), *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, 743.
[95] Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800), *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, 741.
[96] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, l. 549.

I do not wish or ask: forgive me, now forgive."[97]

At the most tragic moment, the sailor retrieved his affection towards his family. Since the sailor recognised the serious damage caused by his crime, he confessed in public that he was a murderer. Consequently the sailor was executed. The moral quality of the sailor suggested Wordsworth's belief in the nature of humanity. At the same time he argued that the misfortune of the sailor's family was caused by the failure of the policies of the government. Wordsworth showed that the goodness of human beings was all the more valuable when it was shown that people were suffering from social vice.

### (iv) Conclusion

Like other Romantic poets who were active in the abolitionist movement, Wordsworth's anti-slavery ideology was coincident with his republican sensibility in early 1790s. While he criticised the social problem of the slave trade, he also focused on describing the human nature of the sufferers, as in "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" and in "The Banished Negroes". These anti-slavery poems that highlighted the mental dignity of black people were outstanding among abolitionist poetry. Particularly in the sonnet on Toussaint, Wordsworth's passion for liberation was expressed by attributing heroic qualities to Toussaint. Wordsworth argued that Toussaint's death was a step towards the creation of an egalitarian society for black people. By concluding the poem by hinting at the possibility of a prosperous future for black people, Wordsworth poignantly showed his radical egalitarianism. His support for the slave revolt in "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" was significant when considered against the prevailing view that slaves were regarded as inferior to white people. Even in abolitionist poems, celebrating the revolution by slaves was seen as a disturbing theme. To accommodate the feelings of white readers, it was important to suggest some punishment for the rebel slaves, as was shown in Yearsley's "A Poem on the

[97] Wordsworth, "Adventures on Salisbury Plain", *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, ll. 768-74.

Inhumanity" and Edwards' "The Negro's Dying Speech". To provoke paternalistic feelings in white readers, it was necessary to portray slaves as helpless individuals rather than as the potential victors of a slave revolt. This may imply certain limitations of the eighteenth -century Euro-centric egalitarianism based on the concept that white people should have control over coloured people. In this respect, by praising Toussaint's revolt, Wordsworth dared to challenge an established eighteenth-century European ideology.

Wordsworth's sympathetic attitude towards the indignation of a black female in "The Banished Negroes" also suggests his radical republicanism. The black woman with "tropic fire" in her eyes represents the profound feelings of frustration experienced by black people who had long endured repression at the hands of white people. The contrast between the silent demeanour of the black woman and her passionate eyes exaggerates the strength of her revolutionary sensibility. Wordsworth's support for the slave revolution and his respect for the mental dignity of black people are impressively demonstrated in this poem.

It is Wordsworth's poetic stance as a humanist to demonstrate human dignity and spiritual strength, especially in social victims. Wordsworth's fundamental belief in human goodness and his humanistic love derived from his understanding of the moral value of nature with which human beings daily communicated.

Wordsworth's respect for the value of nature clearly contrasts with his critical view of the chaotic nature of life in the city. His criticism of the evils of the city derived partly from his anti-colonialist sensibility. Wordsworth considered that the prosperity of London derived from the profits of colonial trade. He regarded London as representing imperial Britain, where trophies from all over the world were collected and displayed. It was with bitterness that he portrayed the nature of imperialism by illustrating the grotesque London exhibitions of items collected from abroad:

> . . .What a shock
> For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din
> Barbarian and infernal. . .

. . .

The silver-collar'd Negro with his timbrel,
Equestrians, Tumblers, Women, Girls, and Boys,
Blue-breech'd, pink-vested, and with towering plumes.
--All moveables of wonder from all parts
Are here. . .[99]

The critical tone of this passage shows Wordsworth's scepticism at commercial power and its values. He claimed that capitalist sensibility only produced "blank confusion":

O, blank confusion, and a type not false
Of what the mighty city is itself
To all, except a Straggler here and there,
To the whole swarm of its inhabitants;
An undistinguishable world to men,
The slaves unrespited of low pursuits. . .[100]

Wordsworth saw the psychological hollowness of people who strove for success in the capital city. He drew attention to the chaotic nature of London, and warned that in London people were deprived of their freedom to think since he knew that human greed had "no law, no meaning, and no end".[101]

Wordsworth assumed that human vice brought moral chaos to society. Compared with the confusions of city life, Wordsworth found simple values in nature where everything was connected "with order and relation":

The mountain's outline and its steady form

[99] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, Book VII, ll. 659-81.
[100] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book VII, ll. 696-701.
[101] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book VII, l. 705.

Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
The measure and the prospect of the soul
To majesty: such virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less,
The changeful language of their countenances
Gives movement to the thoughts, and multitude,
With order and relation.[102]

Wordsworth discovered the simple but powerful value of nature in the unchanging form of mountains and hills. His respect for the steadiness of the nature suggests an inherent appreciation of stable values. Furthermore, he believed that those people who lived close to nature enjoyed independence of mind and psychological strength. Wordsworth believed that the certain and concrete values of life could not be found in the arbitrary commercialism of the city. It was Wordsworth's poetic ideal to show "the essential passions of the heart" in "low and rustic life"[103] as he suggested in his preface of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).

[102] Wordsworth, *The Thirteen-Book Prelude,* Book VII, ll. 723-30.
[103] Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads " (1800), *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, 743.

## Chapter VI

## Blake and the Slave Trade

### (i) Blake and Republicanism

In *The French Revolution* (1791)[1] Blake clearly expressed his pro-revolutionary thinking, claiming that the destructive power of the revolution would bring the world of "heaven"[2]. Through the apocalyptic image of a collapsing old system, Blake emphasised the positive energy of revolution, focusing on the dynamism of destruction rather than on the terror of disorder:

> And Nobles and Clergy shall fail from before me, and
> my cloud and vision be no more;
> The mitre become black, the crown vanish. . .
> . . .
> And the sound of the bell, and voice of the Sabbath, and
> singing in the holy choir,
> Is turned into songs of harlot in day, and cries of the
> virgin in night.[3]

Blake described "Nobles and Clergy" being broken down and Christian rituals falling into chaos. While Blake depicted the destruction of the Church and the aristocracy through rebellion, he also illustrated the clash of power between the King and rebels. Clearly he envisaged a disruptive force which had the strength and power to create the new system:

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[1] This poem was never published, perhaps because Joseph Johnson, who was to publish it, resolved not to print any radical material. cf. David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 152.

[2] Blake, "The French Revolution", *Blake: The Complete Poems*, ed. W. H. Stevenson (Harlow: Longman, 1971, 3rd edn. 2007), 237.

[3] Blake, "The French Revolution", *The Complete Poems*, 143-47.

. . . O King, and send forth thy generals,
the command of Heaven is upon thee;
. . .
Let thy soldiers possess this city of rebels, that threaten
to bathe their feet
In the blood of nobility, trampling the heart and the
head; let the Bastille devour
These rebellious seditious; seal them up. . .[4]

Blake prophesied that the King's army would happen to fight against the rebels, which would seem to contradict his republican stance and his support for the revolution. Nevertheless, Blake tried to convey the significance of the human energy that fuelled the violence and the bloodshed. It was probably more important for Blake to highlight revolutionary power than to emphasize his own political views. For Blake it was crucial to argue that millenarian society would be established after the chaos had ended.

In the latter part of the poem, Blake predicted the coming "new Jerusalem"[5]. The work tells of how long-suffering soldiers, repressed slaves, and war-torn nations would celebrate the creation of a peaceful and heavenly world:

Strength maddened with slavery, honesty bound in the
dens of superstition,
May sing in the village, and shout in the harvest, and
woo in pleasant gardens
. . .
Then hear the first voice of the morning: "Depart, O
clouds of night, and no more
Return; be withdrawn, cloudy war, troops of warriors

[4] Blake, "The French Revolution", *The Complete Poems*, 153-57.
[5] Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, 165.

depart, nor around our peaceful city
Breathe fires, but ten miles from Paris, let all be peace,
nor a soldier be seen!"[6]

Blake expected that "the Sun of democracy"[7] would rise after the old system had faded, and expressed his republican ideal that every human being would enjoy the fruits of a peaceful and egalitarian society. The moral value of happiness in a millenarian world was strengthened since it was achieved by defeating a stubborn conservative force.

Blake's radical republicanism and his belief in the power of revolution were more clearly revealed in "A Song of Liberty" of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1791-3)[8]. "A Song of Liberty" was written after "the final collapse of the French monarchy"[9] in June 1792, the tone of the poem celebrating the fall of the King and welcoming a new society founded on freedom. Blake's excitement at the establishment of a republican society was expressed by his joy at seeing an empire broken down: "Empire is no more! And now the lion & wolf shall cease."[10] Here the "lion" and the "wolf" allude to the monarchy that is now "ruining"[11]. As "the gloomy king" was demolished, "the son of fire" that represented the energy of the revolution appeared like a rising sun:

. . .the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while the
morning plumes her golden breast,
Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony
Law to dust, loosing the eternal horses from the dens of night. . .[12]

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[6] Blake, "The French Revolution", *The Complete Poems*, 228-40.
[7] Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, 165.
[8] The publication date of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is not clear, though one copy claims that it was published on June 5th 1793. A series of short pieces was successively published between 1790 and 1792. (cf. Blake, *The Complete Poems*, 106-7.)
[9] Blake, *Blake: The Complete Poems*, 106.
[10] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Complete Poems*, 129.
[11] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", *The Complete Poems*, 129.
[12] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", *The Complete Poems*, 129.

The "eternal horses" suggest liberty for those that had been released from their burdens. It was in this way that Blake illustrated his liberal sensibility in the glorious victory of the revolution.

Blake's expectation for "the advent of a New Age"[13] was effectively shown in his hope that all members of the human race should be free to pursue their own lives. And he distinctly expressed his humanistic sympathy about the racial discrimination suffered by certain groups in society such as the Jews and black people:

> Look up, look up. . .
> O Jew, leave counting gold! Return to thy
> oil and wine, O African, black African! (Go, winged
> thought, widen his forehead!)[14]

Blake maintained that those who were the targets of discrimination should take responsibility for destroying the stereotypical racial views others held against them, and that they should be actively involved in regaining their rights. Blake's view of black people, however, seemed to be influenced by eighteenth-century race theories that argued inferiority of black people by analysing their physical appearance. In those theories black people were often compared with apes on the basis of a supposed resemblance of their physical features[15]. For instance, Charles White maintained that Europeans whose skulls were the most balanced and beautiful belonged at the top of the race hierarchy while affirmed that African people whose skulls resembled to those of apes were at the bottom of hierarchy. Particularly the narrow forehead of black people was considered to relate to the lack of intelligence[16]. Nevertheless, Blake's interest in black people was derived from more humanistic concerns. What he

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[13] Blake, *The Complete Poems*, 109.
[14] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", *The Complete Poems*, 128.
[15] The relationship between prejudice against black people and the race theories was analysed in detail in chapter II.
[16] Charles White, Pieter Camper, and George Cuvier anatomically analysed the size of the skulls and facial angle of human race. Cuvier clearly argued the direct relationship between the narrow forehead of Negroes and their savagery. More detail was discussed in chapter II.

suggested here was the repressed situation of black slaves. Particularly around the time when the abolitionist issue had come to a head in England in the early 1790s, Blake steered white readers' minds towards the plight of black slaves. By encouraging the view that black people should freely "widen" their self-consciousness, Blake strongly implied that the emancipation of black people could become a reality. He saw the revolution as an ideal means of releasing oppressed human minds.

### (ii) Blake and Abolitionist Poems

In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), Blake criticised the social injustice that repressed people's minds through exploitation and tyranny. In particular, the power relationship between Oothoon and Bromion alluded to the exploited and the exploiter in the slave trade. The rape of Oothoon by Bromion had left Oothoon and her lover Theotormon in a dilemma. Oothoon, who was regarded as a female slave, was raped by Bromion, who was depicted as "no simple rapist but the slaver"[17]. The violent description of Oothoon's rape demonstrates the inhumane nature of enslavement, her virginity reinforcing the cruelty of slavery: " . . .the terrible thunders tore/ My virgin mantle in twain."[18] The violence with which Oothoon's virginity was taken from her can be seen as a reference to the tyranny of depriving human beings of their dignity.

It seems that Blake got his inspiration for *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* from Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and John Gabriel Stedman's *A Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam, in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America; from the year 1772 to 1777* (1796). Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* focused on the relationship between the repression of women and eighteenth -century British society. Blake and Wollstonecraft belonged to the "liberal coterie"[19] of Joseph Johnson[20], a group which

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[17] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 236.
[18] William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Complete Poems*, 181.
[19] Nelson Hilton, and Thomas A. Vogler, eds., *Unnam'd Forms: Blake and Textuality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 70.

included Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Henry Fuseli, Thomas Paine, and William Godwin. Johnson published all of Wollstonecraft's works and some engravings and poems by Blake. The relationship between Wollstonecraft and Blake seemed to be close since he engraved six illustrations for Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories from Real Life* (1791). The feelings of frustration felt by women in eighteenth -century British society that Wollstonecraft criticised were similar to those of Oothoon, who became impotent in her enslavement. Wollstonecraft drew a clear parallel between denial of rights to women and the vice of African slavery:

> Is sugar always to be produced by vital blood? Is one half of the human species, like the poor African slaves, to be subjected to prejudices that brutalize them, when principles would be a surer guard, only to sweeten the cup of man? Is not this indirectly to deny woman reason?[21]

Oothoon was portrayed as a victim to satisfy Bromion's pleasure, as if she were sugar to sweeten "man's bitter cup"[22]. Like the African slaves, Oothoon was ignored and her views repressed by the ruling figure, Bromion. Her appeals to the creator Urizen showed the unfair relationship between women and men: "O Urizen! Creator of men! Mistaken Demon of heaven/ Thy joys are tears, thy labour vain, to form men to thine image."[23] When we see "men" referred to as "males", the characterisation of Urizen could be understood as a demonic figure that mistook "patriarchal social structures"[24]. In a system where patriarchal ideology prevailed, the status of Oothoon was at the very bottom of the structure that was destined to be utilised by males such as Bromion and Urizen. In other words, as Steven Vine observes, it shows "how Urizen's rational

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[20] The relationship between Johnson and the Unitarian circle was discussed in detail in chapter III.

[21] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Miriam Brody (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 257.

[22] Steven Vine, "'That Mild Beam': Enlightenment and enslavement in William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*', in *The Discourse of Slavery: Aphra Behn to Toni Morrison*, eds. Carl Plasa and Betty J. Ring (London: Routledge, 1994), 47.

[23] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 114-15.

[24] N. M. Goslee, "Slavery and Sexual Character: Questioning the Master Trope in Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*", *English Literary History*, 57 (1990) 101-28, 120.

singleness is founded on a politics of male narcissism in which the world becomes the passive reflection of his tyrannous and totalising self-image."[25] Blake's Oothoon, in fact, partly symbolised the womanhood that was inevitably subjected to male-dominated society. Moreover, as for the relationship between enslavement and the repressed human mind, Blake tried to signal his condemnation of the moral issue of slavery in the relationship between Oothoon and her surroundings.

When Blake completed *Visions*, the abolitionist debate in England had reached its height. And the motif of slavery in *Visions* strongly reflected the conflict between pro- and anti-abolitionists in Britain. William Wilberforce's abolitionist propositions were submitted to Parliament in 1789 and his introduction of the abolition bill was turned down in 1791. The argument between pro- and anti-slavery parties continued until 1807 when the abolition bill was enacted in Britain[26]. During that time, the slave revolt in St. Domingo had a significant impact on the movement of liberalism that expanded in European countries and their colonies following the French Revolution. The supporters of slavery claimed that the slave rebellion underlined the savagery and barbarity of slaves, and that therefore it was dangerous to grant slaves their liberty. Attacks against abolitionists accelerated in and out of Parliament, criticising them as "Jacobins" who encouraged destruction and anarchy in society[27].

On the other hand, the slave revolution stressed the importance of human dignity and a sense of liberty, which stimulated the egalitarian minds of romantics. In his sonnet dedicated to Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader of the slave revolution, Wordsworth celebrated his courageous behaviour to protect human liberty[28]. Through the character of Oothoon, Blake demonstrated the desire of the repressed to escape from their burden:

> ". . . I am pure:
> Because the night is gone that closed me in its deadly

[25] Vine, "That Mild Beam", in *The Discourse of Slavery*, 48.
[26] I discussed abolition debate in detail in chapter I.
[27] I discussed the slave revolt in St. Domingo in chapter V.
[28] See in detail in chapter V.

black."
They told me that night and day were all that I
could see;
They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up,
And they enclosed my infinite brain into a narrow circle
And sunk my heart into the abyss. . ."[29]

The purity of which Oothoon speaks here refers to her spiritual strength, which was never broken by any form of repression. Blake underlined the way that nothing could control the freedom of the human mind. Like rebel slaves in St. Domingo, Oothoon revived her energy to gain her freedom despite her predicament. The "night" referred to the limitation and the oppression that restricted Oothoon's body and mind. Blake suggested that Oothoon's suffering would soon be over since the "dawn of freedom"[30] was approaching. This was the time when Oothoon's "infinite brain" which was enclosed in a "narrow circle" would be set free. Blake implied that Oothoon learned to claim her rights and freedom when her consciousness was enlightened. Blake's sympathy with the indignation of enslaved people showed his support for the slave rebellion as a means of regaining their human rights. This view was a radical one, given that English society was at the time becoming less and less tolerant of social reform movements[31]. Especially after the execution of Loius XVI in 1793 followed by the Reign of Terror in France, liberal ideology was regarded as something socially dangerous in England. Nevertheless, Blake strongly maintained the importance of human liberty and freedom in his poems as well as in some engravings on the theme of the slave trade.

Blake's egalitarian ideology and his sympathy towards the repressed were seen in his sixteen plates for Stedman's book from 1792 to 1793[32]. Stedman was a Scottish

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[29] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 51-56.
[30] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 239.
[31] As discussed in detail in chapter I, Pitt enacted two laws to repress the social movements.
[32] For discussions of the link between *Visions* and Stedman's *Narrative* see Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 230-42, Debbie Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 66-119, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel*

officer in the Dutch Army. He went to Surinam to settle a slave revolt in a Dutch Colony, and also worked to find "maroon groups"[33] there and return them to slavery. Stedman's *Narrative* was also sold by Johnson, so without doubt Blake must have known the book. Its contents must have conveyed to Blake a specific image of slavery and the European plantation when he tried to complete *Visions*. In *Visions*, particularly, the characterisation of Theotormon reflected aspects of the life of Stedman, who had a slave lover named Joanna[34]. Like Theotormon, Stedman could not set Joanna free, and she was returned to slavery when he went back to Europe. In *Visions*, although Theotormon loved Oothoon, he could not bring himself to free her as she was enslaved by Bromion. Theotormon cried beside Oothoon, who was bound with Bromion:

> At entrance Theotormon sits, wearing the threshold hard
> With secret tears; beneath him sound, like waves on a
> desert shore,
> The voice of slaves beneath the sun, and children bought
> with money. . .[35]

The slaves depicted here represent the enslaved Oothoon as well as the African slaves who were forced to work by their white European colonial rulers, while the inability of Theotormon to free Oothoon alludes to the magnitude of the abolitionists' task. Blake realised that the difficulty of abolishing the slave trade was partly caused by the Euro-centric sensibility prevailing in eighteenth- century European society. Through the figure of Theotormon, who would not dare to help Oothoon break free from enslavement, Blake revealed the hypocrisies of European civilisation. Stedman's statements regarding slavery must have offered Blake a clear insight into how

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*Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 90-102.

[33] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 91.

[34] The story of Stedman and Joanna is discussed in detail in Erdman's *Prophet Against Empire* 232-3.

[35] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 29-31.

European planters regarded slaves and slavery.

Stedman's stance towards the slave trade divided between the pro- and anti-slavery camps. The complexity of his position came as a result of his pseudo-humanitarian sensibility that reflected a sense of European superiority. Although he recognised the barbarous aspects of slavery, he basically supported the pro-slavery ideology that slaves should enjoy a civilised existence under the European system. Stedman maintained that life for slaves in plantations was civilised:

> Under Such a Mild Government no Negroes work is more than a Healthy Exercise, which ends with the Setting sun, Viz at 6. O'Clock & When the Rest of the time is his Own, Which he employs in Hunting, And Fishing. . .[36]

From this it is obvious that Stedman regarded black people as savages who lived in a primitive society. Although Stedman was ideologically against the slave trade, he inevitably revealed his prejudice against black people.

Blake's engravings for Stedman's descriptions sometimes poignantly revealed his criticisms of the imperial system. Blake's engraving for the conclusion of *Narrative* exposed the unbalanced power relationship between Europe and its colonies, which contradicted Stedman's optimistic tone. Stedman indicated his hopes for an egalitarian society in the future by introducing the scene "with an Emblematical picture of *Europe* Supported by *Africa & America*":

> Going now to take my last Leave of *Surinam* after all the Horrors & Cruelties with which I must have hurt both the Eye& the heart of the Feeling reader, I will Close the scene with an Emblematical picture of *Europe* Supported by *Africa & America*. . . we All only differ in the

[36] John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, eds. Richard Price and Sally Price (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 534.

Colour but we are Certainly Created by the same hand & After the Same Mould. . .[37]

The rhetoric of Stedman's discourse was similar to that found in some anti-slavery poems that tried to mitigate the cruel image of slavery by suggesting hope for a millenarian future. For instance, Charles and Mary Lamb's "Conquest of Prejudice" (1809) expressed their belief that mutual understanding between Europeans and black people would be established when racial discrimination disappeared:

. . .both glad
To hear of human voice the sound,
The Negro and the English lad
Comfort in mutual converse found.[38]

For white readers it was much easier to accept the utopian image of harmony between black people and white people than to face the reality of the slave trade.

By contrast, in his engraving for the conclusion of *Narrative* Blake indicated how Africa and America were a colonial burden to Europe. As Steven Vine suggests, Blake's picture "undercuts" Stedman's egalitarian vision with its female images representing America, Africa, and Europe. America and Africa are seen to be tied by a string and to wear "slave-bracelets"[39] while Europe stands tightly grasping them both, thereby demonstrating her power over them. Blake's engraving on the subject of the relationship between Europe and its colonies clearly illustrates the absolute hierarchy of an imperial system. The gap between Stedman's description and Blake's engraving exposes the ironic contradiction of "humanists" who condemned the cruelty

[37] Stedman, *Narrative*, 618.
[38] Charles and Mary Lamb, "Conquest of Prejudice", *Poetry for Children, Entirely Original. By the Author of 'Mrs. Leicester's School'*, Vol.2 (London: M. J. Godwin, 1809) in *Verse*, ed. Alan Richardson, Vol. 4 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* , 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 336. Chapter III provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between millenarianism and the abolition poems.
[39] Vine, "That Mild Beam", in *The Discourse of Slavery*, 54.

of slavery but at the same time benefited from it.

Blake's critical view of slavery in *Visions* seems to have been much strengthened by his artistic work of producing pictures about the lives of slaves for Stedman's *Narrative*. For instance, in "The Execution of Breaking on the Rack" and "Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave", Blake vividly demonstrated how slaves were tortured or killed by white planters. According to Stedman's text, these slaves were punished for "arbitrary reasons"[40]. By depicting the mixture of resignation and sorrow in the slaves' expressions, Blake provoked a sense of guilt in white readers. What Blake attacked was the European sense of superiority which led them to treat black people as a commodity. The injustice of owning human beings was bitterly denounced in the plate entitled *Family of Negro Slaves from Poango* in *Narrative*. Blake described how a black man had a stamp on his breast, the inscription on the stamp showing the owner's initials to "ascertain his property"[41]. Although the slaves in the engraving are shown as being happy and peaceful, Blake disclosed the arrogance of European planters who saw black people merely as objects.

Bromion in *Visions* is a typical representation of the imperial ideology of pro-slavery parties. His dictatorial discourse symbolised the power of Europe over her colonies, and he called Oothoon a "harlot", whom he was able to overcome and take possession of:

> . . . 'Behold this harlot here on Bromion's bed,
> And let the jealous dolphins sport around the lovely maid!
> Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine they north
> and south.
> Stampt with my signet are the swarthy children of the
> sun:
> They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the
> scourge;

[40] Lee, *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination*, 112.
[41] Stedman, *Narrative*, 280.

Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.[42]

Bromion claimed that Oothoon belonged to him, as she was a slave inscribed with his name. His imperial ideology developed from the argument that the obedient preferred to be controlled by those with greater power, and that they were satisfied with their humble position. This ideology was not unlike the pro-slavery discourses that assumed slaves were glad to be civilised through the imposition of Christian principles[43]. Here Blake underlined the absurdity of an imperialist approach that ignored human dignity and the rights of the exploited. After Bromion had forced himself upon Oothoon, he called her a "harlot" to further degrade her status. Bromion's rhetoric was no different from the pro-slavery discourses that declared how slaves should be ruled by white people because of their inferiority. The myth that slaves were savages, however, was a product of white European prejudices against black people. This racist view was utilised as a means of advocating the system of colonisation. Here Blake revealed that European imperialism was supported by a selfish and self-indulgent ideology, and he regarded slavery as the worst atrocity to have been brought about by this Euro-centric way of thinking.

Blake's consciousness of racial discrimination is seen in his argument between purity and skin colour. Oothoon's skin was in fact described as "soft snowy"[44], though her enslavement rendered her image non-white. She stressed her own purity, yet Theotormon doubted that this purity was real and hesitated to accept her. Blake illustrated Oothoon's conflict between her belief that she was pure and the prejudice against her as a slave. An agitated Oothoon asked Theotormon for a definition of purity:

How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?

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[42] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 18-23.

[43] For instance, James Ramsay in "An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies" (1784) insisted that Christianity made slaves more intelligent. Chapter I contains a detailed discussion on the discourse of slavery.

[44] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 35.

Sweetest the fruit that the worm feeds on, and the soul
preyed on by woe,
The new-washed lamb tinged with the village smoke, and
the bright swan
By the red earth of our immortal river. I bathe my
wings,
And I am white and pure to hover round Theotormon's
breast.[45]

What Blake emphasised here was the connection between the image of purity and the colour white. Oothoon tried to "bathe" herself in the "immortal river" to become white. The whiteness that Oothoon was eager to regain was associated with Theotormon's ideal vision of Oothoon, who believed that she could reflect Theotormon's image of her on her "pure transparent breast"[46]. Here Blake keenly showed how the Christian symbolism of purity was carefully and intentionally constructed by white European ideology. In other words, the sacred image of the colour white was a convenient way for white Europeans to argue for a racial hierarchy with white people at the top. The struggle faced by Oothoon alluded to the discrimination that those at the bottom of Christian hierarchy, such as slaves, could hardly overcome. Blake described Oothoon as a tragic victim who was trapped by Christian dogma.

Blake's criticism of Christianity, along with his egalitarianism, was shown in a more complex way in "The Little Black Boy" of *Songs of Innocence* (1789). Like Oothoon the little black boy insisted on the pureness of his soul. Through the little black boy's discourse, Blake demonstrated that the dignity of the human mind was equal within every human being, in spite of differences in skin colour: ". . . I am black, but oh, my soul is white;/ White as an angel is the English child. . ."[47] Here too the

[45] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 77-81.
[46] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 39.
[47] Blake, "The Little Black Boy", *The Complete Poems*, 2-3.

purity of the human soul was associated with whiteness, and Blake showed the irony of a black boy who was urged to approach a created image of purity idealised as the whiteness of an English child.

The little black boy's view of the relationship between purity and whiteness suggested an influence from the Christian theology introduced by white Europeans through slavery and missionary activities. Blake's interest in the influence of Christianity on slaves was probably stimulated by his reading of the poem written by Phillis Wheatley, the African American who was kidnapped and taken to America as a slave[48]. Blake must have read Wheatley's "An Hymn to the Morning" (1773) when he read Thomas Clarkson's *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1788), in which Clarkson analysed Wheatley's poem.[49] In "An Hymn to the Morning" Wheatley showed a religious faith which involved "sun worship"[50] — supposedly the origin of African religion and Christianity. Through his friend, the painter Richard Cosway, Blake also had a chance to know James Albert Gronniosaw's book entitled "A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, and African Prince, as Related by Himself" (1770) [51]. Cosway had a servant Ottobah Cugoano who was "one of the leaders of Britain's black abolitionists"[52]. Cugoano mentioned Gronniosaw's work in his anti-slavery propaganda published in 1787. Blake might have read Gronniosaw's narrative when he visited Cosway's house. Gronniosaw wrote on the subject of the relationship between conversion and his own religion. These resources, which addressed the ways in which African people dealt with their religious beliefs, must have given Blake food

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[48] The relationship between Wheatley's poem and Blake's "The Little Black Boy" was closely analysed in Lauren Henry's '"Sunshine and Shady Groves': what Blake's 'Little Black Boy' learned from African writers"', in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830*, eds., Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, rpt., 2000), 67-86.

[49] D.L. Macdonald, "Pre-Romantic and Romantic Abolitionism: Cowper and Blake", *European Romantic Review*, 4 (1994), 163-82, 178.

[50] Henry, "Sunshine and Shady Groves", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 75.

[51] The relationship between Blake and Gronniosaw's narrative is discussed in detail in Paul Edwards, 'An African Literary Source for Blake's "Little Black Boy"?', *Research in African Literatures*, 21, (1990), 179-81 (cf. Henry, "Sunshine and Shady Groves", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 83-86).

[52] Henry, "Sunshine and Shady Groves", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 83.

for thought when writing "The Little Black Boy".

The location of the poem was either Africa or the European colonies, as the mother suggested she held religious beliefs influenced by Christianity. In the figure of the mother who taught her child about God and the Christian Church, Blake stressed his criticism of how Christianity could be used to influence and control the minds of black slaves. The mother believed that they would be in God's favour after they had been freed from their skin colour:

> . . .these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
> Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.
>
> 'For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
> The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice. . .[53]

It is Blake's egalitarian philosophy to regard skin colour just as "a cloud". He demonstrated that "any skin colour" should not "obscure"[54] the equal brotherhood of human beings. On the other hand, Blake revealed how converted black people were made to believe that their skin colour deviated from the normal human colour of white, ironically suggesting that there was no other way for black people to erase their black colouring and achieve true equality with white people. The mother's devotion to Christianity showed her blind belief in the superiority of Christianity. And Blake poignantly highlighted the imperial nature of conversion as a means of turning slaves into obedient followers of European rules.

In the concluding part of the poem Blake gives a subtle indication that the establishment of an egalitarian society is genuinely possible, thereby demonstrating his desire for an enlightened future. The little black boy said that he would rejoice when both he and the English boy were free from their racial differences:

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[53] Blake, "The Little Black Boy", *The Complete Poems*, 15-18.
[54] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 239.

And thus I say to little English boy:
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy. . .[55]

The tone of the poem is pessimistic, however, since Blake suggests that the black boy would be able to experience a utopian society only in heaven. In other words, Blake was fully aware that stubborn prejudice against black people still held strong in European society.

In the closing lines of the poem, Blake shows the tragic traces of Christian influence which dwell in the black boy's mind, the boy being influenced by a belief in the superiority of whiteness. The little black boy wished that he could be loved by the English boy if he were to become "like" him: ". . .I'll stand a stroke his silver hair,/ And be like him and he will then love me."[56] This part has often been criticised as it shows Blake's "imperialist implications"[57]. In fact, the black boy's subordination seems to be encouraged here. Nevertheless, it strongly demonstrates Blake's critical attitude towards the Christian hypocrisy of making black people obedient through conversion. Blake was keen to point out the contradictory nature of Christianity, the Church's claim for equality among human beings coexisting with its will to maintain slavery. In the little black boy's discourse, Blake demonstrated the "confusion"[58] felt by slaves who unconsciously sensed the difficulty of seeking Christian redemption in the real world. Although converted slaves were taught that they would be happy in heaven, their earthly lot as slaves did not change. The tragedy of the little black boy was that he could only imagine a situation in which he remained a servant of the white English boy.

Blake's resentment against social injustice was clearly shown in his depiction of the exploited and their daily struggle. Indeed, their suffering was rendered all the

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[55] Blake, "The Little Black Boy", *The Complete Poems*, 22-24.
[56] Blake, "The Little Black Boy", *The Complete Poems*, 27-28.
[57] Henry, "Sunshine and Shady Groves", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 85. Henry suggested that these assertions were seen in D.L. Macdonald, "Pre-Romantic Abolitionism", 168; and Ngugi wa Thiongo, *Writers in Politics: Essays* (London: n.p., 1981), 20.
[58] Henry, "Sunshine and Shady Groves", in *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 81.

more disturbing by the idea that they were innocent. In *Songs of Innocence* (1789) Blake described poor children as social victims who were forced to work. Like the theme in "The Little Black Boy", Blake revealed how mercantilism and Christianity had become interwoven. For example, the life of chimney sweepers is illustrated in "The Chimney Sweeper", which reflected a real social problem in eighteenth- century England. In 1788 a bill was proposed by "philanthropists"[59] to prevent small children from having to work as apprentices, although this act remained "virtually a dead letter"[60] for several years. Blake described how small chimney sweepers had to endure a life that lacked even basic standards such as being able to wash themselves after work, using the phrase "coffins of black"[61] to express their repressed existence. The "coffin" was full of chimney sweepers whose bodies were blackened by soot. In spite of their hardships, however, chimney sweepers looked forward to happiness in heaven as long as they could keep "their duty"[62]. It was an angel who instructed chimney sweepers to be good. By making an angel the holder of "a bright key" to heaven, Blake revealed how much he detested the exploitative nature of Christianity. This key in the hands of an angel showed how the God of the Christian Church controlled chimney sweepers' happiness:

> And by came an angel, who had a bright key,
> And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
> . . .
> And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
> He'd have God for his father and never want joy.[63]

In Christian theology, to "be good" means to be obedient to God. Like a little black boy chimney sweepers believed that they should adapt themselves in order to be

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[59] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 132.
[60] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 132 note.
[61] Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper", *The Complete Poems*, 12.
[62] Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper", *The Complete Poems*, 24.
[63] Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper", *The Complete Poems*, 13-20.

accepted by Christian society. Blake pointed out that the innocence of poor children was strategically utilised by Christian "righteousness" that justified the exploitation of the poor.

In "Holy Thursday" Blake also dealt with the relationship between feelings of charity and children of poverty. Blake argued that Christian institutions took advantage of the plight of poor children as a way of displaying their sense of charity. He saw the patriarchal nature of Christianity that inspired a sense of Christian superiority in showing compassion towards the poor under their care. The "aged men" who guarded poor children alluded to the Christian authorities that controlled the lives of the poor: "Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor:/ Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door."[64] Blake was of the view that the pity felt by Christians was ultimately for their own benefit, giving them license to go to heaven. The innocence of poor children was exploited by Christians in both physical and mental terms. Blake regarded poor children such as chimney sweepers and those under the care of charities as being slaves of society since their innocent souls were repressed and damaged by social burdens and Christian hypocrisy. Blake's interest in the clash between the purity of the soul and the evils of the real world is also revealed in *The Book of Thel*.

Unlike Oothoon, who endured the agonies of the physical world, Thel in *The Book of Thel* (1789) lived only in the "Innocence of Eternity"[65]. The young woman Thel was the personification of the innocent spirit, which suggests the pre-enslaved state of Oothoon. While Blake depicted Oothoon as a slave who had suffered the evils and the tyranny of society, he stressed the virginity of Thel, who had not yet experienced the true harshness of the world. Throughout the poem, however, it is suggested that Thel's pure soul would eventually be damaged by repression. Through the conversation between Thel and living things in the eternal world, Blake hinted at the difficulties that Thel would encounter as she matured.

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[64] Blake, "Holy Thursday", *The Complete Poems*, 11-12.

[65] S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), 75.

By describing how Thel was protected by the generosity of living things such as lilies, clouds and clods of clay, Blake contrasted the harmonious society where Thel lived and the land of terror that Thel dared not to enter. The voice from the pit that Thel heard outside the eternal gates was full of agony and pain. In the lamentations from the hollow pit, Blake depicted the misery and destruction of war arising from human vice:

> 'Why cannot the ear be closed to its own destruction,
> Or the glistening eye to the poison of a smile?
> Why are eyelids stored with arrows ready drawn,
> Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?[66]

These unanswered questions underlined the absurdity that dominated the world of experience. In repeated questions Blake suggested that cruelty and terror reigned in a society where human greed and hypocrisy circulated. Furthermore, Blake proposed that Thel was fated to struggle in a world of moral degradation and that Thel's purity would be soon damaged by human vice. It can be imagined that Thel's future might begin to look like that of Oothoon, who was victimised by Bromion. By showing that tyranny and repression existed just behind the world of innocence, Blake drew attention to the fragility of a happy and harmonious life.

The instructions that Thel received from living things indicate that she was possibly sacrificed for another. To Thel, who asked about the mysteries of life and death, they answered that the life of the living things was not only for themselves but also for future generations. The advice given by the lily, the cloud, and the clod of clay sounds simple and innocent, yet paradoxically it suggests a hypocrisy at the heart of a Christian dogma that justified the self-sacrificial life for another. Critically, Blake implied that the life of Thel was eventually utilised for the satisfaction of other lives. And his radical sensibility made him aware that the social system was basically exploitative, since the socially weak were inevitably exploited by the strong, who

[66] William Blake, *The Book of Thel*, *The Complete Poems*, 114-17.

wanted no more than to satisfy their happiness. In slavery, Blake saw what he believed to be the most abominable traces of materialism. In the discourses of the living things in *Thel*, Blake pointed out in particular the morally problematic relationship between Christianity and slavery.

In this respect, the faith held by living things in the eternal world emphasised a pathetic blindness towards hypocrisy in the divine theory. Following God's instruction, the lily was willing to sacrifice its life in order to feed another creature:

> Yet I am visited from heaven, and he that smiles on all
> Walks in the valley and each morn over me spreads his hand,
> Saying, "Rejoice, thou humble grass, thou new-born lily flower,
> . . .
> For thou shalt be clothed in light and fed with morning manna,
> Till summer's heat melts thee beside the fountains and the springs
> To flourish in eternal vales.[67]

In Christianity, everlasting life in heaven is promised to those who obey the word of God. This theme was often stressed in anti-slavery poems during the 1790s[68]. In those works, slaves were shown to believe that God in heaven would bless them. In the eighteenth-century abolitionist propaganda, anti-slavery messages were often intermingled with appeals to the missionary ideology of converting slaves. This is partly because abolitionism was mainly led by dissenting members of society who were active in missionary activities in the plantations. This anti-slavery discourse

[67] Blake, *The Book of Thel*, *The Complete Poems*, I: 19-25.
[68] See chapter I for a detailed discussion of the relationship between converted slaves and anti-slavery discourse.

was dominated by a Euro-centric vision maintaining that slaves were basically savage and that they should be educated in the ways of Christianity.

Converted slaves were associated with images of happiness rather than misery, which tactically mitigated the inhumane aspects of the slave trade and also satisfied white readers. In other words, slavery was ironically justified in anti-slavery poems by stressing the happy situation of converted slaves. For instance, in Hannah More and Eaglesfield Smith's "The Sorrows of Yamba; or, The Negro Woman's Lamentation" (1795), Yamba, at the time of death, showed her thankfulness for being converted and her belief in life in heaven:

> Duly now baptiz'd am I,
> By good missionary man. . .
> . . .
> True of heart, and meek, and lowly,
> Pure and blameless let me grow;
> Holy may I be, for holy
> Is the place to which I go.[69]

It is with sarcasm that Yamba admired the Christian beliefs of those who had enslaved her, the innocence of Yamba being used to justify slavery. The baptised American Indian family, depicted in Southey's *Tale of Paraguay*, also showed how they were satisfied with Christian dogma that promised them happiness in heaven[70]. This poem illustrates the complex blend of Southey's anti-slavery ideology and his imperialist sensibility. While Southey had sympathy with the American Indians who were colonised and enslaved by Spain, he maintained that slaves in the Jesuit Reduction benefited from Christian civilisation. Monnema, the baptised American Indian woman was not afraid to die as she believed that she would enjoy eternal life in

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[69] Hannah More and Eaglesfield Smith, "The Sorrows of Yamba; or, The Negro Woman's Lamentation" (London: n. p., 1795), in *Verse*, 230.

[70] I discussed in detail Southey and the *Tale of Paraguay* in chapter IV.

heaven: "With Christian rites her passing hour was blest,/ And with a Christian's hope she was consign'd to rest."[71] Like Monnema, her children Mooma and Yeruti even welcomed their mother's death because they were led to believe that their mother would enter the eternal world. Here, from a Blakean point of view, the European exploitation of American Indians was defended in the name of civilisation. In this respect the innocence of the American Indians was stressed to show European superiority.

In *The Book of Thel*, Blake revealed the cruelty of the real world by contrasting it with the peaceful utopia where Thel lived. Moreover, he suggested that the Christian ideology that was admired in Thel's world supported the system of exploitation that pervaded the real world. Through his critical view of established Christian dogma, Blake recognised the hypocrisy of a divine theory that vindicated the concept of a hierarchical system which exploited those at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Blake suggested that the world where Thel remained was a "pre-revolutionary humanitarian"[72] society based on the idealistic philosophy of perfect happiness. This ideology echoed Blake's republican beliefs as well as the social atmosphere that prevailed in England as the egalitarian forces of the French Revolution spread. On the other hand, in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, the predicament of Oothoon alluded to the struggle of egalitarian minds. Oothoon's agony was deep, yet she had the potential of spiritual fortitude, with which she overcame the difficulties surrounding her: "Arise, you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy!/ Arise and drink your bliss! For every thing that lives is holy!"[73] Oothoon's free will was never destroyed by any repression since she firmly believed in the strength of living things, including herself. Oothoon represented Blake's faith in the conviction that human freedom should not be burdened under any circumstances. As a liberal republican, Blake asserted that institutional slavery must be abolished to protect human liberty.

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[71] Robert Southey, *Tale of Paraguay* (London: Longman, 1825), IV, 29.
[72] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 132.
[73] Blake, *Visions*, *The Complete Poems*, 214-15.

### (iii) Conclusion

Blake regarded systems that restricted the freedom of the human mind as an abomination. The Church, the government, and the imperial polity damaged human beings both physically and mentally. Blake was specifically interested in the activities of human imagination since he was convinced that the power of imagination widened human thought and philosophical capacity. He assumed that human beings became free when they used their imagination. However, human imagination was often oppressed by social and political pressures of the kind suffered by Oothoon. Oothoon's soul was scarred by Bromion's tyrannical violence and Theotormon's prejudice against her purity. In addition, through enslavement Oothoon's independent mind was ignored and despised. In this respect, Blake bitterly denounced the entire system of power. In "London" of *Songs of Experience* (1794), he argued that political and religious authorities suppressed human happiness. He regarded London as the place where many suffered from their impotence because of irrational repression by society. Blake heard "the mind-forged manacles" in "every cry of every man"[74]. He described the sorrow of soldiers, chimney sweepers, and harlots:

> How the chimney-sweeper's cry
> Every blackning church appals,
> And the hapless soldier's sigh,
> Runs in blood down Palace walls;
> . . .
> How the youthful harlot's curse
> Blasts the new-born infant's tear. . .[75]

Blake showed that people in the lowest ranks of society had their energy and their lives exploited by the "Church" and the "Palace". By revealing the unfair relationship

[74] Blake, "London", *The Complete Poems*, 7,5.
[75] Blake, "London", *The Complete Poems*, 9-15.

between the exploiters and the exploited, Blake criticised the injustices of Christian society.

Blake's scepticism towards Christianity was demonstrated in "The Tyger". He pointed out the dichotomy in evidence in Christian theology such that tyranny and benevolence could coexist. He argued that Christian society showed a potential for despotism, illustrated by the "fearful symmetry"[76] of the tyger created by God who also made "the Lamb": "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"[77]

In the slave system Blake saw the most hypocritical aspects of Christianity. In his provocative abolitionist poems, he revealed the greed of white Christians who sacrificed black slaves for their own benefit. Blake particularly denounced the religious imperialism by which black slaves were converted to Christianity. Christianising slaves provided white colonialists with an ideal reason for continuing their exploitation, since they assumed that slavery had the benefit of enlightening the savage. It was Blake's keen insight into Euro-centric values that disclosed the moral problems of Christianity. His arguments for the innocence of human beings revealed his suspicions of the essential quality of Christian purity. The little black boy's appeal to the purity of his soul ironically suggested Blake's modernistic scepticism.

[76] Blake, "The Tiger", *The Complete Poems*, 4.
[77] Blake, "The Tiger", *The Complete Poems*, 20.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the Romantic poets and abolitionism is a significant and intriguing one in political, religious and philosophical terms, with Romantic discourses on the theme of slavery reflecting eighteenth-century rhetoric on abolition. In particular, Romantic poems on the issue of slavery made an impact on literary history because they introduced new themes into literature, casting black people as poetical subjects, and thus breaking new poetical ground since socially disadvantaged groups such as the poor and black slaves had long been neglected as the serious subject of poems. Indeed, in anti-slavery Romantic poems the plight of black slaves became a central theme.

The slavery debate also triggered innovations in literary form and style: many abolitionist poems were written using simple language following the ballad form. The Romantic poets opted for this simple form because they intended these poems to be circulated among ordinary people as a means of publicising the abolitionist cause. The work of the Romantic poets focused primarily on the question of liberty for human beings, and in their poetry we find bitter criticism of the repression of human rights through slavery. Nevertheless, while the Romantic poets showed a humanistic indignation through their protests against slavery, inevitably they also showed a Euro-centric vision regarding the racial issues surrounding black slaves. Accordingly, the Romantic discourse on slavery provides a sharp insight into the complexities of an eighteenth-century ideology torn between English imperial sensibility and humanism.

It was partly for political reasons that the Romantic poets became involved with the abolitionist movement. In politics, abolitionism was often linked to the fight for social change by dissenters who sought to expand their social rights through reform movements. The dissenters' protests targeted the Established Church and the measures imposed by government to restrict their rights. Since dissenters had sympathy with slaves, who had been deprived of their freedom, they developed abolitionism alongside their liberation campaign. In their anti-slavery propaganda the dissenting Romantic poets often employed rhetoric similar to that which was used to

criticise the hypocrisy of the Anglican Church and the British government. Coleridge's lecture on the slave trade was typical in that it drew on the arguments of abolitionist discourses. In his lecture, Coleridge criticised the greed and hypocrisy of the Established Church and of pro-slavery Anglican Christians who treated black people as commodities. At the time, it was seen as a radical move to show an overt anti-slavery stance such as this, particularly as the repression of the reform movement was strengthening in English society. Under the conservative polity of Pitt's government, abolitionists who aimed at establishing an egalitarian society were referred to as "the Jacobins".[1] And Coleridge's choice of Bristol as the location for his anti-slavery lecture was significant as well as controversial, because cities such as Bristol and Liverpool had prospered through the slave trade and as a result became focal points for strong anti-abolitionist feelings.

The ideological stance of abolitionists was based on egalitarianism — they longed for a world in which all human beings lived as equals in an ideal and happy society. Through millenarian theology the Romantic abolitionists also hoped for the creation of a new democratic society. Pursuing their essentially millenarian ideals, the Romantic poets believed that the destruction of the slave trade would herald a new social system in accordance with their religious convictions. In "Religious Musings" (1794), as well as in "Destiny of Nations" (1795) and "Fears in Solitude" (1798), Coleridge showed his revolutionary ideology through his millenarianism, suggesting that the vice of slavery would be punished by God. Coleridge clearly denounced European colonial exploits that sacrificed the basic human right to freedom. After the slavery system had been brought to an end, Coleridge wrote "The Destiny of Nations" in which he alluded to the creation of a utopian society and hinted that Heaven's "vengeance"[2] would fall upon slavery. He illustrated how a peaceful paradise would

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[1] *A Very New PAMPHLET indeed! Being the TRUTH addressed to THE PEOPLE AT LARGE containing some strictures on the ENGLISH JACOBINS and THE EVIDENCE OF LORD MACCARTNEY, and others, before the HOUSE OF LORDS, respecting THE SLAVE TRADE*, (London: n. p., 1792), in *The Abolition Debate*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 2 of gen.eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), xx.

[2] S.T. Coleridge, "The Destiny of Nations", *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Poetical Works I, Poems (Reading Text)*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), l.

be established by the "SAVIOUR"[3] after the apocalypse. Coleridge assumed that all human beings would be able to enjoy equal benefits from God in the coming millennium:

> Return pure FAITH! Return meek PIETY!
> The kingdoms of the world are yours: each heart
> Self-govern'd, the vast family of Love
> Rais'd from the common earth by common toil
> Enjoy the equal produce.[4]

Coleridge held the religious and ideological vision that a democratic society would be realised in the course of time.

Like Coleridge, Blake also demonstrated his millenarian hopes for the new age. Blake's millenarian theology, shown in *The French Revolution* (1791) and "A Song of Liberty" from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1791-3), reveals his aspirations for an egalitarian society, in which he believed that social vices would be destroyed through the creation of a "new Jerusalem"[5]. Blake expected that "the Sun of democracy"[6] and "the son of fire"[7] would herald a republican world following the defeat of the imperial system. The voice of "the son of fire" poignantly demonstrates Blake's hope for an egalitarian future: "Empire is no more! . . ."[8]

While claiming egalitarian idealism, it was necessary for abolitionists to stress the inhumane nature of the slave trade in order to provoke a sense of guilt in white readers. Therefore, it was natural for abolitionists to focus on the suffering of slaves in the middle passage and on colonial plantations. Anti-slavery parties such as John Newton and Alexander Falconbridge described their first-hand experiences of the slave

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[3] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *The Collected Works I*, l. 359.
[4] Coleridge, "Religious Musings", *The Collected Works I*, ll. 339-43.
[5] David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), 165.
[6] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, 165.
[7] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The Complete Poems*, *The Complete Poems*, 129.
[8] Blake, "A Song of Liberty", *The Complete Poems*, 129.

trade. On the basis of his investigations into the trade and the interviews he conducted with slavers, Thomas Clarkson revealed the extent to which slaves were ill-treated in the middle passage. The effect was to paint a realistic picture of the slave trade; and the figures of slaves described in the Romantic abolitionist poems largely echoed this image of slaves. To underline their abolitionist message, the Romantic poets cast slaves as their central figures.

It was not only black slaves but also the slavers who described their feelings about the inhumane trade. In particular, giving black people their own voice and identity had a significant impact on eighteenth-century artistic fashion since black people had never before been the subject matter of poems. In Cowper's abolitionist poems such as in "The Negro's Complaint" (1788) slaves revealed their sorrows and agony. Hannah More and Eaglesfield Smith's "The Sorrows of Yamba" (1795) showed that the female slave lamented her tragic destiny as a slave. The agony of a sailor illustrated in Southey's "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade" (1799) was heartbreaking as well as realistic. By focusing on the feelings of slaves and slave traders, the Romantic poets initiated a challenging new trend in literature that presented a realistic image of social outcasts.

Moreover, Romantic abolitionist poems were remarkable and significant in the way they developed the theme of rebellious slaves. Romantic poets understood slave resistance because they had liberal sensibilities and felt sympathy for the plight of slaves. In "September 1st, 1802" (1827) and "To Toussaint L'Ouverture" (1803), Wordsworth focused on the independent mind and the human dignity of slaves. In "September 1st, 1802" Wordsworth portrayed a black woman with "tropic fire"[9] in her eyes, the spiritual fortitude of the black woman indicating Wordsworth's radical liberalism. Meanwhile, his criticism of imperial ideology and his egalitarian sensibility were much in evidence in "To Toussaint L'Ouverture". By referring to Toussaint as "the miserable Chieftain"[10], Wordsworth showed his admiration for

[9] Wordsworth, "September 1st, 1802", *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1983), l. 10.
[10] Wordsworth, "To Toussaint L'Ouverture", *Poems, in Two Volumes*, l. 5.

Toussaint's heroic leadership. On the other hand, Southey stressed how slaves would revolt against the injustices of the slave trade in "Why dost thou beat thy breast and rend thine hair" (1797) and "To the Genius of Africa" (1797). Particularly in "To the Genius of Africa", Southey condemns European guilt over the slave trade and suggests that slaves would rise up in a bid to regain their freedom: "By Africa's wrongs and Europe's guilt, / Awake! Arise! Avenge!"[11]

Supporting the slave revolution was radical and politically challenging, especially after 1791, since society had become more alarmed about the violence that ensued from slavery. Britain, France, and Spain sent their armies to quell the St. Domingo revolution, these countries fighting to protect their own plantations without considering slaves' rights to freedom. Under these circumstances Wordsworth's celebration for the slave revolution and Southey's supportive stance for the slave rebellion stood out amid the anti-slavery propaganda that often described victimised slaves.

Another new element in Romantic abolitionist poems was their style. Many of the Romantic abolitionist poems were simple in both language and form, the ballad style making it easier for ordinary people to understand. Since the Romantic poets wanted above all to have their abolitionist poems circulated in society, they wrote them in such as way that helped to educate the masses about the abolitionist cause. Cowper was the first poet who employed the ballad style to convey the anti-slavery message. Besides, the basic ideology of Romanticism was that the "elementary feelings" of humans should be expressed in "plain"[12] language. This artistic belief accorded with the theme of anti-slavery propaganda. The theme of anti-slavery poems was, therefore, straightforward and comprehensible. The black boy depicted in Blake's "The Little Black Boy" (1789) addressed directly the racial problem between black and white society. In Southey's "The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade", the sailor was bitterly tortured by his sense of guilt. Their frank words expressed their

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[11] Robert Southey, "To the Genius of Africa", *Selected Shorter Poems*, ed. Lynda Pratt, Vol. 5 of gen. ed. Lynda Pratt, *Robert Southey Poetical Works 1793-1810*, 5 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004), ll. 46-47.

[12] Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800), *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems*, eds. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 743.

"emphatic"[13] feelings, making a direct, simple and forceful appeal for readers' sympathy. And this proved an effective means of spreading the anti-slavery theme in society.

Thus, the abolitionist discourses of the Romantics contain many challenging and radical points. The basic stance of the Romantic abolitionists was based on liberal sensibilities and a humanism that echoed the republican climate at the time of the American and French Revolutions. Nevertheless, it took more than forty years to abolish slavery in England and its colonies after Wilberforce introduced the twelve resolutions for the abolition of the slave trade in 1789. This fact indicates the extent of the ideological and financial questions that imperial Britain had to address before slavery could be brought to an end.

One of the issues that prolonged the process of abolishing the slave trade was racial discrimination against black people. According to race theories published from late eighteenth century to early nineteenth century in Europe, there persisted a stereotypical image of black people in which they were seen as basically savage and able to endure hard labour:

> The Negro is particularly adapted to the wild or natural state of life. His dense and firm fibre renders him much more able to endure fatigue...than the European . . .[14]

This view that black people were savage was used extensively in pro-slavery discourses. In these theories the slave trade was justified by asserting that slaves were innately suited to hard labour in plantations. In addition, the assumption that black people were inferior also strengthened arguments in favour of the civilisation of slaves through Christianity. In pro- and anti-slavery discourses it was common to

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[13] Wordsworth, "Preface", *Lyrical Ballads*, 743.

[14] James Cowles Prichard, "Researches into the Physical History of Man" (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1813), in *Theories of Race*, ed. Peter J. Kitson, Vol. 8 of gen. eds. Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* , 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 301.

claim that slaves in European plantations were happy to be enlightened by Western culture. Missionary activities in Africa and European colonies were promoted on the strength of this ideology. It was hard to deny that a sense of superiority among white Christians indirectly mitigated the feelings of guilt over slavery. The Romantic poets could not detach from this Euro-centric sensibility combined with racial prejudice, which made their abolitionist stance a complicated one.

The helpless and pitiable figures in abolitionist poems partly reflected racial discrimination against black people. Besides, it was easier for white readers to have paternalistic sympathy for black slaves who were considered to be inferior to them[15]. The paternalism held by white Europeans justified their desire to civilise slaves through Christianity. In fact, converting slaves became a popular Romantic theme. It may be said that, in their arguments on slavery, the Romantic poets unavoidably revealed their imperial sensibilities based on racial prejudice against black people. In the minds of the poets, however, no real conflict arose between their condemnation of the slave trade and their willingness to encourage the conversion of slaves. Since they believed in the values of British civilisation, they considered that it was necessary for slaves to be educated in their way.

Coleridge had concerns over the civilisation of slaves, which is evident from his 1808 review of Thomas Clarkson's *The History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*[16]. While asserting the essential evils of the slave trade, he argued for the necessity of educating slaves through European culture. And in 1833, Coleridge revealed his bold opinion that slavery was part of "the process of Humanization"[17]. His view towards the savagery of black people was partly influenced by race theories[18]. Nevertheless, what made Coleridge maintain his belief in the superiority of British culture was his religious convictions and his nationalist sensibility. In Coleridge's mind his trust in European civilisation was not necessarily contradictory to humanistic indignation

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[15] In chapter III the relationship between racism and the anti-slavery poems is analysed in detail.
[16] Coleridge's review is analysed in detail in chapter I.
[17] Coleridge, *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), Vol. 1, 386. This was discussed in detail in chapter III.
[18] Chapter III examines the relationship between the racial theorist Blumenbach and Coleridge.

against the slave trade. Coleridge presumed that the suffering and torture of slaves should be abolished, but at the same time he believed that slaves should be educated in the ways of European culture before being emancipated.

The complexity of Southey's stance also derived from a sensibility similar to that of Coleridge. In *Madoc* (1805) the Welsh Madoc ruled Hoamen by a system of Christianity and the Welsh culture. The description of obedient Hoamen who were happy to be Christianised was similar to that of the converted slaves featured in abolitionist poems. The obedience of Hoamen mitigated Madoc's colonial nature that reflected British imperialism. Moreover, by justifying the conversion of the Hoamen to Christianity, Southey's firm belief in the superiority of British civilisation is revealed. Madoc's colonisation of Hoamen shows Southey's nationalist sensibility as well as his paternalistic sympathy with savage people.

Thus the abolitionist work of the Romantic poets shows that their republican sensibilities coexisted alongside their nationalist ideology. The social and political climate that prevailed in England between the 1780s and the 1830s had a diverse influence on the liberal ideology of the Romantics. In addition, abolition discourses were complicated by eighteenth-century racial views and a sense of the superiority of white Europeans. Nevertheless, what made the Romantic abolitionists so significant is that they levelled poignant criticisms at the repression of human minds and actively protested against it. Furthermore, Romantic discourses on slavery had an intellectual effect on the artistic form of poems, leading them to represent social outcasts in plain and bold words and forms. They illustrated slaves as dignified human beings who had humane feelings as well as a sense of liberty. Through their humanitarian sensibilities, Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth and Blake demonstrated the ability to imagine what slaves were really like. They described the anger and sorrow felt by slaves, and achieved this using a simple style that was entirely appropriate for conveying human feelings. In conclusion, the work of the Romantic poets on the theme of slavery was able to represent the significant elements of Romantic sensibility in its political, religious and philosophical aspects. Most importantly, the Romantic poets stood firm in the belief that society would be improved through reform.

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