

Bleeding Humanity and Gendered Embodiments: From Antislavery Sugar Boycotts to Ethical Consumers

The origins of humanitarian narrative are closely linked with the British antislavery movement of the late eighteenth century, with all of the deeply problematic understandings of shared “humanity” that it entailed. In an influential essay, the historian Thomas L. Haskell argued that it was aspects of capitalism such as contract and individual responsibility that first shaped the emergence of a sense that one’s actions could have an effect on distant others, and hence (ironically) created the conditions of possibility for humanitarian sensibility.¹ Thomas W. Laqueur went on to show how “the humanitarian narrative relies on the personal body, not only as the locus of pain but also as the common bond between those who suffer and those who would help,” with detailed accounts of the suffering body eliciting “sympathetic passions” that could move a person from feeling to action.² Closer attention to such antislavery narratives has revealed, however, that they stood in precarious relation to any sense of universal human rights and in many cases actually reinforced forms of racism and disavowal of the humanity of the enslaved. Deirdre Coleman, in particular, pointed out the virulent racism and African “otherness” that existed within many antislavery tracts in this period (well before the rise of nineteenth-century scientific racism), as well as the ways in which white women advanced their own claims for emancipation at the expense of Africans. “The belief in a common humanity, the sentimental identification of the African as brother: these recuperative features of abolitionism always co-exist with a panicky and contradictory need to preserve essential boundaries and distinctions,” she writes.³ As a matrix for the birth of European humanitarianism, then, eighteenth-century abolitionism was extremely flawed.

Lynn Festa has also examined “the way eighteenth-century abolitionists used tropes and figures borrowed from sentimental literature to delineate the parameters of the human” and “excite the ‘humanity’ of metropolitan readers toward the suffering of enslaved people in distant climes.” She argues that sentimental abolitionism involves a “double movement of empathy and usurpation” in which “sentimentality generates a situation in which the subjects who sympathize and the objects who elicit sympathy confront one another across an affective and cultural divide in which one set of people feels *for*—has feelings about and instead of—another.”⁴ All of this work has crucial implications for how one thinks about humanitarian action in the world today, which arguably also “produces hierarchy and difference as much as it creates reciprocity and likeness.”⁵ Indeed, very similar critiques have been extended to showing how twentieth-century narratives of suffering, victimhood, and trauma also hinge upon problematic relations between victims and would-be saviors and between

sentiment and action. A number of feminist theorists especially have explored the limits of sentimental “sisterhood” established through forms of gendered embodiment that focus on injury, suffering, pain, and wounding, while ignoring race, class, and other forms of privilege.⁶ The fetishization of the wound, the commodification of suffering, and the mobilization of narratives of injury have all become powerful mechanisms for the distribution of power, as Sara Ahmed has shown, including the power to justify when and where to make humanitarian interventions, and who is deserving of the “gift” of rights.⁷

Drawing on this body of work and my own previous work on antislavery sugar boycotts, this article considers how specific historical examples of British and American antislavery activism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can alert us to the limits of contemporary humanitarianism and its problematic relation to human rights discourses. In particular, I explore how the emblems, slogans, and material culture of women’s antislavery movements, alongside visual representations of the act of emancipation, focus attention on the *gendered body* and the *consumption of food and drink* in ways that foreshadow certain contemporary versions of ethical consumption, fair trade, and gendered humanitarianism. The aim is not to draw a direct line of connection between the past and present, and certainly not to suggest an unchanging continuity between the two periods. Rather, the inquiry refers to the earlier instance as a sensitizing device, in order to raise questions around current humanitarian action through ethical consumption, and to problematize how such action is imagined, narrated, and represented. I also explore the special significance of materiality, in assumptions about which goods touch the body of the consumer, how consumption might redirect markets, and the more-than-human agency of things themselves. In view of recent “new materialist” geographies and corporeal feminism, I ask whether the antislavery recognition of the laborer’s “blood” in the commodity could (and did) give substance to alternative economies of ethical trade (in spite of the acknowledged disempowering effects of sentimental humanitarian narrative) and whether such acts of materializing the humanity of workers might still do so today.

At issue is a central current within contemporary humanitarian action that revolves around the mediation of consumption decisions in ways that knit together local bodily and domestic practices (e.g., what one eats, drinks, or wears) with concerns over global capitalism, social justice, and human rights.⁸ Such forms of ethical consumption have deeper historical roots that often go unrecognized, but these may also be indicative of both their limitations and their radical possibilities. First, I suggest that a closer examination of the genealogies of ethical consumption and representations of slave emancipation can tell us something important about how the gendered and racial positioning of both victims and humanitarians matters, including how such positions are narrated and visually represented. Second, these genealogies alert us to how narrative and visual representations of the humanitarian act (including ethical consumption) may uphold certain unequal embodied relations and distinctions, both in the past and today, even as they try to claim universal values. And finally, they show us how complicated the relation is between sympathy for the plight of others and actual forms of humanitarian action, which may attempt to address inhumanities while at the same time preserving the moral (and often racial) superiority of the humanitarian actor. Insofar as ethical

consumer movements today also problematically reproduce racial and gender hierarchies, we might subject them to the same critiques leveled against sentimental anti-slavery gestures; yet in both cases, I argue, there is a bodily and material undercurrent that opens up more radical possibilities of global connectivity through substantive acts that “humanize” market relations.

British Quaker women’s antislavery organizations in the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century were among the first social movements to organize national consumer boycotts of slave-produced commodities, including sugar and cotton, accompanied by marketing networks and public activities promoting “free produce,” as they called it at the time. This early ethical consumer movement, which had its basis in transatlantic networks of Quaker trade and familial ties, drew on a gendered discourse that connected the female consumer’s domestic realm and personal choices with dramatizations of the bodily suffering and immoral corruption of enslaved women. The antislavery movement’s visualizations and narratives of the enslaved woman as subjected to whipping, sexual abuse, and the perversion of maternal feeling played an important part in the antislavery mobilization of women by emphasizing shared gender identities, expressed as the “sisterhood” of all women, regardless of race or status. While in some respects this discourse was modeled on the ideals of republican “brotherhood” that underwrote notions of the universal “rights of man” in the Enlightenment era, the gendered inflection in this case drew more specifically on Quaker religious ideals of fellowship, as well as quite conventional middle-class gendered discourses of feminine virtue, piety, and domesticity, which were translated into consumer activism.⁹

Female embodiment influenced the invention of humanitarian movements for ethical consumption because women were especially associated with the domestic realm in which new modes of middle-class consumption of colonial goods (including tea, sugar, and cotton textiles) took place. Antislavery organizations mobilized women in particular around a moral economy that dramatically described slave-made products as “soaked in blood.” To remove the guilt of slavery from their homes, antislavery women organized free produce movements and stores and promoted symbolic practices such as wearing buttons or sashes, and sewing bags, quilts, and samplers, emblazoned with antislavery mottos. Beyond the kind of universal rights discourse associated with the French Revolution, it was also religious discourses of modesty, sobriety, piety, and morality (including the renouncing of worldly pleasures) that mobilized Quaker women in particular ways and implicated their bodies and feminine sensibilities in the nonconsumption of slave produce (especially the two major crops of sugar and cotton). Thus the humanitarian gesture of the female consumer became directly linked to undoing the injuries of enslavement by demonstrating her own humanity through intimate acts pertaining to what she put into and onto her body, acts that were closely connected to the domestic realm (through practices such as sewing and tea service) as a female sphere of influence.¹⁰

Although these narratives of female “sisterhood” and ethical consumption were very powerful, they also pivoted on distinctive gendered and racialized inter-embodiments, which placed white women in positions of superiority over black women and

men. As Deirdre Coleman has argued of the late eighteenth-century narratives of abolitionism,

While these late eighteenth century women both anticipate and confirm Frederick Douglass's claim, in mid nineteenth-century America, that "the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman's cause," their writings also reveal clearly why any political link between white women and black people was doomed to be a bitter misalliance. As bell hooks has argued, in an essay on the history of racism and feminism in America, the analogy between white women and blacks is a deeply conservative one, concerned to uphold and maintain the racial hierarchy that grants white women a higher status than black people.¹¹

By comparing the embodied forms of humanitarian sentiment displayed in visual images, textual exhortations, and practices such as boycotting slave-grown produce, one can begin to see how the encodings of race and gender in these images, narratives, and material practices of humanitarianism produced both distinction and solidarity, sameness and difference, empathy and distance. Sara Ahmed theorizes such "inter-embodiments" as "sites of differentiation," asking: "How do 'bodies' become marked by difference? How do bodies come to be lived precisely through being differentiated from other bodies, whereby the differences in other bodies make a difference to such lived embodiment? Such questions require that we consider how the very materialisation of bodies in time and space involves techniques and practices of differentiation."¹² So we might say that the making of the female ethical consumer as a humanitarian actor involved techniques of differentiating the white woman from the enslaved woman, remaking (rather than dislodging) the very forms of difference that enslavement pivoted upon.

Yet through the material practices organized around sugar specifically, but also other foods, drinks, and commodities, we can also detect an instability or slippage in such inter-embodiments, holding out the possibility of radically undoing them. In spite of their ideological limitations and deployment of highly problematic humanitarian narratives, the material practices of antislavery movements nevertheless enabled the emergence of alternative economic circuits and spaces where freed people could speak and act for themselves. Thus I focus here less on much-discussed written texts and more on the circulation of representations and objects and actions involving material substances, both of which have received less attention. In conclusion, I explore what we might learn from such an analysis for thinking about contemporary humanitarian discourses and practices as embodied relations of material exchange.

Gendered and Racialized Scenes of Emancipation

Let us begin with a representation of emancipation not grounded in sentimental identification with injured humanity. In the first, a white queen wearing classical robes with Bourbon *fleurs de lis* and a crown is depicted among Caribbean palms and sugar cane, freeing a group of slaves, who kneel before her gratefully (fig. 1). The luxurious clothing of the noble liberator sets her clearly apart from those who are being freed. A kneeling black man clasps her hand, as the manacle falls from his wrist, with a woman and small child beside him in a kind of familial assemblage, all gazing up at

her as she gestures with her left hand over their heads. With the caption “Soyez libres et citoyens” (Be free and citizens), she looks benevolently upon them, a symbolic embodiment of the liberty promised by the French nation. The caption captures the moment of the humanitarian gesture, performatively producing her spoken words, which seem to engage the emerging discourse of republican citizenship despite her royalist garb. The subjunctive tense of the French verb “soyez” (better translated as “may you be,” or “would that you were”) leaves it slightly uncertain, however, whether this is a *fait accompli* or a wish for the future. It also leaves an uncertain gap between being free and being a citizen, a gap into which political subjecthood could fall. Certainly we know that the abolition of French slavery played out along far more tortuous pathways than was foreseen by abolitionists in 1789, with false starts in Guadeloupe and Martinique, where freed people were re-enslaved by Napoleon Bonaparte, and of course in Haiti, where a bloody revolution brought slavery to a dramatic end.¹³

British abolitionism was beset by fears of revolution, whether the taint of French Jacobinism or the nameless terror of the disavowed Saint Domingue Revolution.¹⁴ The ensuing fear of Republican ideologies and slave uprisings perhaps encouraged a more pietistic and feminized abolitionism in Britain and parts of the United States, at least among whites.¹⁵ Both British and American female abolitionists sometimes used a white female figure holding scales, symbolizing Justice, reaching out her hand to a kneeling black woman with shackled hands (fig. 2). But rather than the dangerous Republican discourses of universal citizenship or the rights of man associated with the French Revolution, or the even more terrifying assertion of the rights of the enslaved associated with the Haitian Revolution, they instead accompanied this image with the less incendiary biblical phrase from Hebrews 13:3 which served as an abolitionist motto: “Remember those in bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body.”¹⁶ While both the visual emblems and the Bible verse attempt to draw an identification between the bodies of the enslaved and the free, the black and the white, they nevertheless maintain clear distinctions and hierarchies between them. The white woman stands while the black woman kneels; the black woman is sexually vulnerable, while the white woman appears in safe modesty



Figure 1: “Soyez libres et citoyens,” line engraving by Charles Boily after Pierre Rauvier, in Benjamin Frossard, *La cause des esclaves nègres et des habitants de la Guinée* (Lyon, 1789), frontispiece. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

and morality. Thus even as this emblem attempts to “make bodies the common ground of humanitarian sensibility,” as Thomas Laqueur observed of the narratives in this period, it still suffers from the gap of sentimentality Festa identifies.¹⁷

One of the most compelling images produced by the abolition movement, and reiterated in many forms and versions, was the figure of the kneeling slave supplicant imploring a benefactor for emancipation.¹⁸ In her important analysis of such images, Jean Fagan Yellin traces the most widely distributed and commonly reproduced version of this emblem as one first used by the British Committee to Abolish the Slave Trade in 1787. It depicts a kneeling man, with shackles chained to both feet and wrists, wearing a simple loincloth, gazing upward with clasped hands, encircled by the words “Am I not a man and a brother” (fig. 3). Popularized by Josiah Wedgwood, the emblem was mass-produced in fired jasperware, struck on coins and medals, and painted onto flags or dinnerware, including “commercially produced and marketed crockery in England, France, and America. The kneeling slave also decorated needlework made by women who organized themselves into antislavery sewing circles and sold the products of their labor at fairs to raise money for the cause.”¹⁹ The image therefore circulated among a wide public, on both sides of the Atlantic, in many different forms. Yet it remains curiously awkward in its meaning and interpretation, as Deirdre Coleman notes:

Janus-faced, the motto stands curiously open to a positive or negative response, a reflection perhaps of the white racist spectre that often underlies sentimental ideals of equality between white and black: the spectre of too close a blood kinship, the

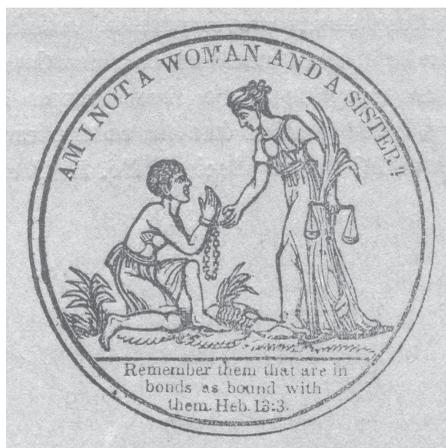


Figure 2: “Am I not a woman and a sister,” cover of Lydia Maria Child, *Authentic Anecdotes of American Slavery*, 2nd ed. (Newburyport, Mass., 1838). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, African-American Pamphlet Collection.



Figure 3: “Am I not a man and a brother,” British antislavery icon from J. G. Whittier, *Our Country in Chains!* (New York City, 1837). Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

term “brother” reading literally rather than figuratively in a nightmare confusion of the races through interracial sex.²⁰

We can build on and extend Yellin’s and Coleman’s analyses of this motivational yet problematic imagery by asking in what ways it produced and performed gendered and racialized narratives of humanitarianism.

By the 1820s, if not earlier, the Birmingham Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves created a parallel version with a kneeling black woman in chains with the words “Am I Not a Woman and a Sister,” an image that was soon being reproduced in America. George Bourne’s *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects upon Woman and Domestic Society* (1837), for example, used the figure as a frontispiece, along with this quote attributed to Lydia Maria Child: “By virtue of special contract, Shylock demanded a pound of flesh cut nearest to the heart. Those who sell mothers separately from their children, likewise claim a legal right to human flesh; and they too cut it nearest to the *heart*” (fig. 4). While

possibly addressed to the absent slaveholder or to the abstract figure of Justice, the question “Am I not a woman and a sister” seems also to be more pointedly aimed at the wider female public.

Women who see the image are enrolled in the abolitionist cause through a claim of universal womanhood and an affective call on the mother’s love of her children. The bodily identification of the white female humanitarian with the enslaved woman was predicated on their shared female embodiment, as women, as mothers, and hence as symbolic sisters.

Yet as Festa argues, this kind of claim hinges on a sentimentality that denies the enslaved agency:

Sentimentality cannot envision rights as something that must be declared or enacted by the parties in question, inasmuch as the very structure of sentimental description produces subjects whose suffering victimhood renders them incapable of making a performative declaration. Inasmuch as one cannot declare rights for another, that is, the ventriloquizing structure of the sentimental traps the slave in a structure of grief that cannot be converted to grievance, of complaint that never leads to vindication.²¹

Moreover, by visually representing and verbally inscribing a gendered difference between man and woman, brother and sister, the twin emblems also establish a complex interplay between gender, race, and agency within antislavery discourse. Yellin argues that in depicting the kneeling slave in these dual gendered forms, “the antislavery emblems encoded a series of contradictions . . . alternately addressing and



Figure 4: “Am I not a woman and a sister,” in George Bourne, *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects upon Women* (Boston, 1837). Courtesy of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

avoiding issues of race, sexual conformity, and patriarchal definitions of true womanhood.”²² They also stand in sharp contrast to the more militant imagery of slave revolution and uprising associated with the Haitian Revolution and the many other slave rebellions that were common in this period, in which men (and sometimes women) violently took emancipation into their own hands.

The suffering of women in particular became a central motif in abolitionist discourses, which highlighted the whipping and flogging of female slaves, and the potential for their sexual abuse, as *prima facie* evidence of the immorality of slavery. But this left it ideologically murky whether enslaved *men* could legitimately be bought and sold as part of a free market economy. Even plantation owners could call for “amelioration” policies that would allegedly make slavery acceptable. Furthermore, in reaction to the Haitian revolution many proslavery writers inflamed fear and horror by invoking the rape and killing of innocent white women and children at the hands of the bestial black rebels.²³ This image of slaves exacting revenge on “white womanhood” became the standard fare of proslavery forces because it so effectively undermined white women’s sympathy for the enslaved by playing upon sexual and racial difference rather than solidarity of free and enslaved women across racial lines. The white female humanitarian breaking the chains of a kneeling slave thus served as a safe alternative to more dangerous images of black masculine self-liberation through violent action. Yellin notes that the enslaved women in the abolitionist images were often referred to as supplicant *mothers*, sometimes shown with children, emphasizing their recuperation into the family and the emerging feminine cult of domesticity.²⁴ Images of prostrate women disturbed Christian morality and provoked many white women to take a stance against slavery, yet at the same time such imagery also reinforced ideas of white femininity as virtuous, sentimental, domestic, and pious.

Most analyses of abolitionist discourse stop at this point, at the surface of the text or visual representation and its modes of address and subject positioning. It is my contention, however, that we need to go a step further to follow the materiality of practice in the ethical consumer movements that arose out of abolitionist polemics. Here the body comes to the fore in a different way, in quite literal forms that are lodged in substances or objects that mediate between bodies (blood, sugar, tea, cotton, quilts, buttons, badges, sugar bowls, tea sets); and these substances and objects are part of wider networks of alternative trade within the “free produce” movement. Interpreting this phase of abolitionism requires somewhat different tools of analysis, for the bodily relations are no longer solely at the symbolic or narrative level but are viscerally lodged in the gut, in the flesh, and in the blood. While it is through such assemblages of materiality, bodies, and space that race gets made, it is also at this level that the possibility of its unmaking begins to be radically conceivable.²⁵

In the Body: Sugar Boycotts and the Blood-Sugar Trope

In Britain, Quaker women’s abolitionist societies spearheaded the antislavery sugar boycotts, beginning in the 1790s, rekindled in the 1820s, and taken to new lengths with the Free Produce Movement of the 1850s. This is an early example of an “ethical trade” movement, with surprisingly close parallels to contemporary fair trade and social justice movements, as well as notable ties to nascent vegetarian and animal rights

movements. Here the bodily narrative turns not so much on identification with the enslaved woman but on issues of what pious and moral women would allow to enter into their own homes and bodies. Food and drink mediate an intimate relationship toward others, passing from producer's hand to consumer's mouth, which comes to be recognized as an embodied *ethical* relationship. Sugar played an especially fraught and overdetermined role in imaginaries of bodily corruption and the power of substances to transform bodies.²⁶ Edible substances could materialize the contradictions of the system of slavery by materially and sensuously linking the suffering bodies of enslaved producers directly with the satiated bodies of consumers of slave-made products, from hand to mouth. Thus eating and drinking brought home the contradictions of slavery and empire by bringing them directly into the home, and into the body.

In the 1790s the British antislavery movement latched onto the increasing consumption of tropical plantation commodities as a way to personalize responsibility for the enslavement of other human beings. They used sugar, in particular, as an inroad into people's hearts and into the privacy of their homes, where much consumption took place. The conjoining of the embodied experiences of female consumers and Caribbean slaves through the mobility of the sweet commodity of sugar allowed moral blame for slavery to be pinned on anyone and everyone who consumed its products. Quaker antislavery activists especially targeted women, who bought the products of slavery and brought them into the intimate space of their homes and ingested them directly into their bodies. Social movements began to call attention to the ways in which consumption patterns caused distant suffering, using public lectures, political pamphlets, personal testimony, and peer pressure. The politicization of issues of consumption depended on an explicit recognition of personal responsibility for colonial relations of domination, which came to be powerfully framed by the antislavery movement. Female consumers in particular began to call into question the sugar on their tables and the cotton on their backs and became concerned with the ways in which slavery poisoned their own bodies and tainted their homes.

This new culture of ethical consumption emerged initially during the first major abolitionist campaign of the 1790s, where it was propounded by men but often addressed to families, and within the family women. Pamphlets published by Thomas Cooper (1791), William Allen (1792), and William Fox, founder of the Sunday School Society, called for abstention from slave-grown sugar as a means to ending the slave trade.²⁷ Cooper's 1791 pamphlet, for example, argued that

the consumption of Sugar in this country is so immense, that the quantity commonly used by individuals will have an important effect. A family that uses five pounds of Sugar *per week*, with the same proportion of Rum, will, by abstaining from the consumption 21 months, prevent the slavery, or murder, of one fellow creature; eight such families in nineteen years and a half, would prevent the slavery, or murder, of 100; and 38,000 would totally prevent the Slave Trade, by removing the occasion to supply our island—A French writer observes “That he cannot look upon a piece of Sugar without conceiving it stained with spots of human blood.”²⁸

The pamphlet then goes on to describe the hundreds of thousands of Africans murdered, whipped, and mutilated in the regular course of the slave trade. Reaching a crescendo, it argues: “If sugar were not consumed it would not be imported—if it were not imported it would not be cultivated, if it were not cultivated there would be an end of the Slave Trade, so that the consumer of sugar is really the prime mover—the grand cause of all the horrible injustice which attends the capture, of all the shocking cruelty which accompanies the treatment of the wretched African Slave.” This is more gothic than sentimental, but certainly emotionally moving.

The most compelling aspect of these arguments was the imagery of sugar soaked in blood. In his famous 1791 “Address to the People of Great Britain, on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum,” which reached twenty-six editions by 1793, William Fox argued that

the laws of our country may indeed prohibit us the sugar-cane, unless we will receive it through the medium of slavery. They may hold it to our lips, steeped in the blood of our fellow-creatures; but they cannot compel us to accept the loathsome portion. With us it rests, either to receive it and be partners in the crime, or to exonerate ourselves from guilt, by spurning from us the temptation . . . if we purchase the commodity we participate in the crime. The slave-dealer, the slave-holder, and the slave-driver, are virtually the agents of the consumer, and may be considered as employed and hired by him to procure the commodity.²⁹

Indeed, “so necessarily connected are our consumption of the commodity, and the misery resulting from it,” Fox argues, “that in every pound of sugar used . . . we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh.” Stories circulated that planters sometimes entombed a slave in each sugar cask to impart a better taste to it. Eating sugar was envisioned as eating human flesh and blood in a high-impact campaign with extensive national publicity.³⁰ The imagery of women sweetening their tea “with the blood of their fellow creatures” was picked up on in more sarcastic terms by Benjamin Flower’s *The French Constitution* (1792) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “A Lecture on the Slave Trade, and the duties that result from its continuance” (1795), texts that are expertly picked apart by Deirdre Coleman to show their tortuous sexual and racial politics.

Nevertheless, it is the physical revulsion elicited by such imagery that sets it apart from sentimental narrative or rhetorical arguments against slavery. Timothy Morton refers to this as the “blood sugar *topos*,” by which the “sweetened drinks of tea, coffee, and chocolate are rendered suddenly nauseating by the notion that they are full of the blood of slaves.”³¹ He links this blood-sugar discourse to wider developments in Romantic aesthetics and ethics, including the movements of vegetarianism and concern for animals. “The rhetoric of mangling flesh,” he observes, “was a feature of antislavery and animal rights rhetoric, often found together in the same work.”³² Thus the sugar boycotts were part of a wider culture of “radical food,” which has close connections to the contemporary resurgence of ethical consumer movements promoting veganism, animal rights, and Fair Trade. Romanticism, Evangelical Christianity, and incipient feminism all contributed to this newly embodied sense of proximity to the enslaved not simply via feelings of pity for the downtrodden and weak



Figure 5: Sugar bowl, England, 1825–30. On the other side is a slogan used by the abstention campaign: “East India Sugar not made / By Slaves. / By Six families using / East India, instead of / West India Sugar, one / Slave less is required.” Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Acc. #1998–37.

but through literally infusing their suffering into the commodity. By refusing to let the bloodstained, slave-produced sugar pass their lips, these earnest antislavery activists (despite the knowing jibes of Coleridge or the satirist James Gillray, who charged the “anti-saccharites” with hypocrisy) dramatized their own moral subjectivity and their feeling of proximity with the enslaved through relations of tasting and not tasting particular commodities that directly flowed from one body into another body.³³

The imagery of blood-soaked sugar made even more direct and immediate the biblical injunction to “remember those in bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer adversity as being yourselves also in the body,” for it literally put the slave’s body *into* the consumer’s body. The abolitionist Thomas Clarkson computed that there were approximately 300,000 people abstaining from West India sugar during the 1790s campaign, quite a significant number for the period. And it involved not just a negative abstention but also a positive choice of nonslave produce; besides resorting to bitter drinks, some tried to redirect the world economy toward free labor. China-makers introduced East India sugar basins labeled in gold letters: “East India Sugar not made by Slaves” (fig. 5). The idea that some free-produce sugar was unsullied by blood extended into the idea that the humanitarian body could enact morality by not ingesting such blood-stained produce. The campaign entered the private realm of tea service, by which women could politicize the domestic realm through the choice of material objects and commodities that constituted this everyday ritual. Ethical eating was thus performed and enforced within the bosom of the family. Although this was easily parodied as a kind of tyranny of moralistic women by satirists

like Gillray, it nevertheless instigated direct action by those women, which exceeded mere sentimentality or empathic feelings.³⁴ Their bodies were at stake.

Why should it take revulsion at the *taste* of blood-infused sugar to move middle-class consumers to action, rather than simply revulsion at the inhumanity of slavery? Rather than offering a radical critique of slavery, Morton argues, “the bourgeois discourses of prudence, economy, and temperance [were precisely] the discourses that supported the plantations.”³⁵ The moral economy of humanitarianism, following Haskell’s original argument, was closely allied with the market economy of rationalized productivity, self-restraint, and prudent investment. Yet it was also these same forms of subjectivity that made it possible to envision alternative economic networks, with free workers living in free families, settled in free villages or settling free colonies like Sierra Leone. The disgust at eating blood-sugar pushed consumers to promote other forms of production, in which both consumers and producers would be pious, prudent, and above all, mutually human in their striving to be humane. This appears as a powerful precursor to more recent movements against sweatshop labor and in favor of fair trade, which also locate prime agency in the act of consumption, the decision to boycott particular products or brands, and the effort to thereby put economic pressure on producer markets to change their practices. Of course, just as with fair trade today, such experiments turned out to be imperfect; but for all their shortcomings we should not read them simply as racist failures of sentimental humanitarian narrative. Further historical research (which I only begin to touch upon below) would help us to better understand the role of women, their gendered sense of embodiment, and the making of a politicized domestic realm, in the free produce movements.

Female Consumers and the Free Produce Movement

The ending of Britain’s slave trade in 1807 was one of the first successful humanitarian campaigns waged on behalf of “the other.” Nevertheless, slavery remained in place in the British colonies until 1834, when it was replaced by an “apprenticeship” system that finally ended in 1838. Thus following a brief hiatus, the campaign to boycott slave produce resumed in the 1820s (a period during which sugar from the East Indies was also increasingly available as a “free produce” substitute). In 1825 the Birmingham Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves was founded by a prominent group of Quaker women with the following resolution:

That this Society, convinced that abstinence from the use of slave cultivated sugar, is one of the best modes to which recourse can be had to express its abhorrence of the system of Colonial Slavery, and that the exclusive consumption of the produce of free labour is the most effectual means of annihilating the existence of that scourge of humanity, not only in our West India Colonies, but also in other parts of the World,—earnestly desires, that its members will endeavour by their influence, as well as by their example, to promote the exclusive use of the productions of free labour in the neighbourhoods in which they reside.³⁶

On the cover of their first report, published in 1826, they employed the female version of the supplicant slave emblem with the motto “Am I not a woman and a sister.”

Thus we find a direct connection between the visual and verbal expression of gendered solidarity and the exhortation to abstain from slave-cultivated sugar. Both moves pivot around the imagining of a direct connection between the body of the enslaved black woman and the body of the free white woman, while simultaneously reproducing (in problematic ways, as we have seen above) feminine domesticity and bourgeois propriety.

Gendered narratives of morality and humanitarianism not only became crucial to these campaigns but operated through the direct implication of *female* consumer's bodies in the practice of slavery. Middle-class women were perceived as moral arbiters and guardians of their families, and their consumption habits were also linked to broader temperance movements, which urged restraint. As Paul Glennie argues,

All nascent capitalism in the early-modern West did experience tensions between increasing commodification, and discourses about consumption's destructive moral and corrosive social effects. . . . In each case, consumption was made morally legitimate through notions of responsible consumption, which defined socially appropriate styles, timings and settings for consumption, and were inflected particularly through moralising about women's roles.³⁷

It was women who presided over the taking of tea, who purchased the sugar that would sweeten it, and the china in which it would be served, such as the already noted example from England in the 1820s. As Anne McClintock has argued for a slightly later period, "the mass-marketing of empire as a global system was intimately wedded to the Western reinvention of domesticity, so that imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space and its relation to the market."³⁸ It was the women's antislavery movement that first highlighted these connections and mobilized around them.

Up to 20,000 families were called on to join the boycott from 1825 to 1828 in the Birmingham region alone, and it was also promoted in Nottingham, Leicester, and Brighton.³⁹ Meanwhile, prominent antislavery activists including Brougham, Buxton, Lushington, and Sturge formed a Free Labour Company to establish free-labor sugar plantations in India.⁴⁰ In their publications, aimed at a female reading public, the Birmingham society argued,

Is it for Christian females to be bribed by the greater *cheapness* of this, or the other article of daily consumption, to lend themselves to the support of a flagrant system of blood-guiltiness, and oppression, which cries to heaven for vengeance? . . . The influence of females in the minor departments (as they are usually deemed) of household affairs is such that, it rests with them to determine whether the luxuries indulged in, and the convenience enjoyed, shall come to them *from the employers of free men, or from the oppressors of British slaves*. When the preference is given to the latter, we see, therefore, with whom the responsibility must mainly rest;—we see at whose door the burden of guilt must lie.⁴¹

Thus the guilt for slavery and the means of overturning it were placed explicitly in women's hands, in the day-to-day decisions they made in the consumption practices of their households. This was a powerful moral discourse of abstention and restraint

from luxury, linking women to a world market and to economic matters of great import.⁴² It also represents a crucial antecedent to contemporary discourses (equally problematic) concerning Western women's moral and political responsibility for protecting human rights, and especially women's rights, around the world.

Even after slavery was finally abolished in the British colonies in 1834, sugar was still being imported for British consumption made by enslaved workers on plantations in Cuba and Brazil. The 1846 Sugar Duties Act equalized duties on British free-labor sugar and foreign slave-labor sugar (with full effect in 1854). Between 1845 and 1851 the increase in British sugar imports was made up entirely of foreign sugar, while West Indian free-labor sources declined. In a petition presented to Parliament in July 1846, Lord Brougham argued that "the poor man should have plenty of sugar, cheap sugar, and sugar of the most exquisite quality too, but it must be lawfully and honestly come by; and above all, he must not have slave-made or slave-supplied sugar, which he must know is crimsoned with the blood of the African."⁴³ In order to avoid this inevitable ethical failure, British antislavery activists renewed their efforts to promote free produce, in association with projects to export free produce from the West Indies and the free states of the northern United States.⁴⁴ The free-produce movement was closely allied to schemes to employ emancipated slaves in new productive activities, leading into problematic postemancipation projects of moral uplift of the freed population. Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, for example, were committed to founding "free villages" in which nuclear households would own land and farm small export crops; there were also emigration projects, including not only to Sierra Leone but also of African Americans to the Republic of Haiti in the 1850s.⁴⁵

Following slave emancipation, the Birmingham Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves became the Ladies' Negro's Friend Society. It continued its work both by rejecting sugar grown in the booming slave plantations of Brazil and Cuba and by promoting free-produce cotton (in place of that from the American South, where slavery would continue until the end of the Civil War in 1865). They supported the Free Produce Association and called on Queen Victoria to exclude slave-grown produce from her household and to encourage the growth of free produce cotton in British India.⁴⁶ By 1851, there were twenty-six free-produce societies in Britain.⁴⁷ "Free-produce" stores were set up in cities like London, Manchester, and Birmingham, much like "fair-trade" stores today, selling not only sugar but also calicoes and other sewn products made from free-produce cotton. Thus the movement went beyond a strategy of boycott by actually imploring consumers to support an alternative trade network that was envisioned as eventually supplanting all slavery-based produce. The supporters of this movement argued on moral grounds for "non-consent to the consumption of this [slave] produce," based on the logic that "demand creates supply" and that each consumer has a "personal responsibility" for the continuation of slavery.⁴⁸ By creating demand for free produce and advancing access to such products, they sought to directly undermine the profits of slavery and hasten its demise.

The Ladies' Negro's Friend Society also continued to correspond with Quaker abolitionist women in the United States and encouraged them in the cause of ending slavery in that country. American women formed local antislavery sewing circles, such as one in Bart, Pennsylvania, called the "Herrick Antislavery Sewing Circle," probably

named after the English Quaker and radical abolitionist Elizabeth Heyrick, which made quilts with antislavery messages.⁴⁹ Textiles, buttons, and quilts became another symbolically feminine way of keeping the antislavery cause close to one's bosom, so to speak, refusing to wrap one's body in slave-grown cotton and proclaiming such a commitment in word and deed. In Britain, unlike the United States, "ladies'" antislavery societies were always separate organizations from men's (who often met in all-male taverns or coffee houses). One of the earliest known antislavery societies in the United States to count both men and women as members was the Clarkson Antislavery Society, founded in Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1832. In an organizational call published in a Philadelphia newspaper in 1837 and signed by both men and women, the society addressed women to join their cause in these terms:

Where is there a more appropriate sphere for the exercise of your influence, even under the most fastidious construction of the rules of propriety, than in pleading the cause of your degraded sisters? When *American Women* are scourged and trafficked, like brute beasts, may not American Women ask the reason, the why and wherefore? When the loftiest affections of woman's heart are barbarously plundered of their dearest objects may not Woman enquire at what sacrifice of principle such dark deeds are done? . . . To women, then, we look with unswerving confidence, for assistance, aid, and counsel; and when was *woman* ever appealed to in vain, on behalf of bleeding humanity?⁵⁰

Such images of "bleeding humanity," the scourge of the whip upon female bodies, and the ripping apart of mothers and children were used to promote immediate emancipation, as seen for example in Heyrick's 1824 tract "Immediate not Gradual Abolition," which was not only read and discussed throughout the network of English women's antislavery societies in the 1820s (despite William Wilberforce's efforts to suppress it) but also influenced the American antislavery movement in the 1830s. This was particularly effective in Quaker communities in Pennsylvania, whose members often lived side-by-side with free people of African descent, whether in the city of Philadelphia or in more rural areas like Lancaster and Chester counties. Members of the same community were more likely to see themselves as sharing a common humanity, being friends and neighbors rather than simply distant objects of pity. Yet as the call from the Clarkson society suggests, women were understood to play a special role in defending the rights of enslaved women, throwing themselves more whole-heartedly into campaigning for the most disempowered, their "degraded sisters."

American Quaker women were more likely than their British counterparts to become involved in antislavery societies with mixed male and female membership, an issue that split the American Antislavery Society in 1839–40, when the Garrisonians refused to exclude women. The World Antislavery Convention held in London in 1840 excluded women delegates who had come with Garrison from the United States. As is well known, these battles over women's role in the antislavery movement helped instigate the American women's suffrage movement. The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention was held in 1848, followed by the founding of the National American Woman's Suffrage Association by many active abolitionists, including Eliz-

abeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. However, at the women's rights convention held in Akron, Ohio, in 1851 the only black woman in attendance was Sojourner Truth, who gave her famous speech challenging the precepts and privileges of white femininity:

Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! I have ploughed, planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have born thirteen children and seen most all sold into slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?⁵¹

Truth's speech suggests an alternative female embodiment from the sexually vulnerable kneeling supplicant, and a very different gendered narrative of black women's rights. She emphasizes her physical labor, her strength, her appetite, and her reproductive capacity, all without the support of a man and under conditions of enslavement. She invokes the intersectionality of race, class, and gender (and the simultaneity of production, reproduction, consumption) as empowering rather than disempowering. The white women in the audience reportedly hissed in disapproval and whispered that they didn't want the cause of women's rights mixed up with "abolition and niggers." The material specificity of Truth's strong arms, her plowing and planting, and gathering and eating are all too much for these women. Her birthing, her crying out, and her drawled ain't's are all too visceral, impolite, unfeminine.

Conclusion

Recent work on gender and emancipation emphasizes the centrality of racial, sexual, and gendered constructions of the embodied person in shaping both cultures of enslavement and postslavery moral orders, legal systems, state practices, and everyday interactions. Recent historical studies of emancipation around the Atlantic world suggest that ideas and practices "of masculinity and femininity [not only] shaped slaves' and abolitionists' understanding of the wrongs of slavery, [but also] consolidated notions of contract and liberalism, contributed to the organization of postemancipation wage labor and political economies, and influenced freedpeoples' dreams of freedom and family in racially charged postemancipation landscapes."⁵² Saidiya Hartman, for example, has explored the fashioning of a kind of indebted servitude in the postemancipation United States, which pivoted on the transformation of former slaves into "a rational, docile, and productive working class—that is, fully normalized in accordance with standards of productivity, sobriety, rationality, prudence, cleanliness, responsibility, and so on."⁵³ Thus emancipationist discourses were suffused with ideas of gender distinction, feminine propriety, and the reproduction of deeply gendered "moral orders." These traveled differently around various parts of the Atlantic world, encountering different local moral orders.

An 1834 commemoration of British emancipation (painted by Alexander Rippingille and engraved by David Lucas) has the caption "To the Friends of Negro Emancipation" and depicts a smiling man standing upright, his arms outstretched in

celebration, as a group of children bury the chains and shackles, while a smiling neatly dressed woman seated next to a bible holds her baby aloft and gazes directly at the viewer. The man, still wrapped in the simple cloth of a slave, gestures toward a palm tree on which the emancipation notice is posted, the palm being a symbolic liberty tree in the Caribbean. The image encodes the familial ideology that Catherine Hall and Diane Austin-Brooks refer to as the “Christian Black Subject,” which dominated emancipationist narratives in this period of transition. Thus, while the man takes a more active posture of self-determination than was seen in the kneeling slave emblem, the woman remains by his side in a position of respectable domesticity (and clothing), supporting reproductive heteronormativity. As Hartman observes, “The articulation of black politics at the site of the family is often consistent with the regulatory efforts of the state. Therefore, the domestic articulation of a politics of racial uplift risks displacing the political, endorsing a repressive moral economy, and privileging the family as a site for the reproduction of racial values.”⁵⁴

From the abolitionist imagery of the supplicant slave to the postemancipation commemorations of liberation, we can see how complex inter-embodiments of gender, race, and sexuality surface in these images of slave emancipation in nuanced ways. It is important to read these images in relation to the exhortations and collective actions that surrounded them, in order to fully understand the implication of different bodies in performing humanitarianism. Ethical interventions in the economics of slavery and global trade were achieved by the framing of moral economies of the body in which the female humanitarian subject was produced via a direct identification with the suffering body of the laboring enslaved woman, a “woman and sister” whose blood, sweat, and tears are imagined as literally infusing the commodity. What can contemporary humanitarian movements learn from this analysis?

Ethical consumer movements ranging from the sugar boycotts of the antislavery movement in the eighteenth century to current debates over global trade liberalization have attempted to bring the bodies of producers and consumers into closer proximity by reflecting on how they directly touch each other through the (defetishized) commodity. Nevertheless, there are limitations to the forms of agency, solidarity, and equality inherent in these humanitarian gestures, as Sojourner Truth made starkly evident. Certainly the humanitarian discourses of the antislavery sugar boycotts and the free-produce movement were conducive to familial reproduction, gendered moral orders, and the reproduction of heteronormative values, all of which were aligned to reproduce racial distinction and clear separation of white women from black and brown men, who were to be safely housed in the bosom of the black family, where they could become productive workers and patriarchal fathers. Yet the language of sisterhood also masked the separation between middle-class white women and working-class black or brown women. Independent black working-class women like Sojourner Truth did not fit easily into this vision of sisterhood, nor did the many women in female-headed households where there was not necessarily a single patriarchal figure of authority. This raises the question of who was envisioned as worthy of humanitarian outreach, and how such projects served to reinforce the values and moral superiority of the humanitarian. As the abolitionist movement peeled off into

the women's rights movement, these tensions came to the surface: which women (and which men) deserved political rights?

Yet there remains an irreducible radical truth to the invocation of "being yourselves also in the body" that we should not abandon too quickly. It opens up those in positions of relative privilege or security to a potential recognition of equality (or at least direct connectivity) with the less fortunate, the enslaved, the imprisoned, or any other example of "bleeding humanity." It offers a still relevant framework for thinking about how the protection of human rights is intertwined with humanitarian action, and how humanitarianism must come to terms with its relation to human rights. It demands that we ask the following questions in every instance. If we can cause the distant suffering of others, can we not also be the means for making ethical interventions from a distance? Do we need a concrete object or commodity to mediate between us in order to take responsibility for conditions of suffering found elsewhere? If we are in a situation of injustice, how can we best reach out to those who might be able to make a difference? How are different kinds of agency (including the agency of those whose human rights have been violated) crucial to solving problems based in unequal relations of power?

Quaker women antislavery activists, like some activists today, were quite aware of the limitations of their movement to overcome the powerful forces of capitalism or the ideologies that kept power structures in place. Nevertheless, they risked overturning norms of propriety, civility, gendered embodiment, cultured ritual, and domesticity in order to short-circuit the circulation of slave produce. They mobilized free produce as a powerful material force that could intervene in markets and do more than simply provoke disgust or guilt. It could literally move people, move goods, and move possibilities for freedom around the world. Whatever the limitations of anti-slavery sentimental narrative and representational practices, the free produce movement remains an inspiring example of the power of commodity consumption to expose the violence of market relations that are lodged in our bodies. If gendered understandings of food production and food consumption can be used to more effectively link together humanitarian action and human rights protection, then we shall all eat better for it. Fair Trade movements, despite their serious limitations, are significant in the contemporary Caribbean not only because they offer consumer-centered critiques of global capitalism that enact alternative trade networks, but also because they create the basis for economic democracy in which community-based organizations can have some influence over community development and decision-making, as Mark Moberg has shown in his study of banana politics in Saint Lucia. Just as in the struggle against slavery, supporting community mobilization and democratization is ultimately the best guarantee for the protection of human rights.⁵⁵

NOTES

1. Thomas L. Haskell, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 1," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 2 (1985): 339–61; and idem, "Capitalism and the Origins of Humanitarian Sensibility, Part 2," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (1985): 547–66.

2. Thomas W. Laqueur, "Bodies, Details and the Humanitarian Narrative," in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 177, 179.

3. Deirdre Coleman, "Conspicuous Consumption: White Abolitionism and English Women's Protest Writing in the 1790s," *English Literary History* 61, no. 2 (1994): 358–59.
4. Lynn Festa, "Humanity without Feathers," *Humanity* 1, no. 1 (2010): 9.
5. *Ibid.*, 17.
6. Denise Riley, "*Am I That Name?*" *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Lauren Berlant, "The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy and Politics," in *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism*, ed. Sarah Ahmed et al. (London: Routledge, 2000).
7. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 192–93.
8. I have in mind global consumer movements such as the Fair Trade network, Oxfam shops in the UK, the kinds of anti-sweatshop/anti-brand mobilizations depicted in Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999), and elements of the local foods, do-it-yourself, and slow movements, all of which offer "ethical" alternatives to the exploitative practices of global agro-industrial capitalism. On some of the problems of fair trade, see Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne, "Nourishing Networks: Alternative Geographies of Food," in *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, ed. D. Goodman and M. Watts (London: Routledge, 1997); and M. K. Goodman, "The Mirror of Consumption: Celebrityization, Developmental Consumption and the Shifting Cultural Politics of Fair Trade," *Geoforum* 41, no. 1 (2010): 104–16. On alternative food movements and the politics of race, see Rachel Slocum, "Whiteness, Space and Alternative Food Practice," *Geoforum* 38, no. 3 (2007): 520–33; Rachel Slocum, "Thinking Race through Feminist Corporeal Theory: Divisions and Intimacies at the Minneapolis Farmers' Market," *Social and Cultural Geography* 9, no. 8 (2008): 849–69.
9. On antislavery consumer movements in this period, see also Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery, 1713–1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); L. B. Glickman, "'Buy for the Sake of the Slave': Abolitionism and the Origins of American Consumer Activism," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): 889–912; and Carol Lasser, "Voyeuristic Abolitionism: Sex, Gender, and the Transformation of Antislavery Rhetoric," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no. 1 (2008): 82–114.
10. Philip Lawson argues that tea consumption transformed the forms of hospitality, civility, manners and habits, the uses and architecture of personal and public spaces, and women's lives in particular. In both aristocratic and later middle-class culture, drinking tea with sugar became an occasion for self-display closely related to new forms of embodied ritual and consumer practice. Thus, I would argue, to give them up was not simply a personal choice but a significant intervention in the new forms of embodied ritual, consumer practice, and middle-class civility. See Philip Lawson, *A Taste for Empire and Glory: Studies in British Overseas Expansion, 1660–1800* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1997).
11. Coleman, "Conspicuous Consumption," 341–42.
12. Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 42, 48.
13. On Guadeloupe, see Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787–1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

On the Haitian Revolution, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

14. Sybille Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004).

15. Mimi Sheller, "The 'Haytian Fear': Racial Projects and Competing Reactions to the First Black Republic," in *Research in Politics and Society*, vol. 6 of *The Global Color Line: Racial and Ethnic Inequality and Struggle From a Global Perspective*, ed. P. Batur-Vanderlippe and J. Feagin (Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 1999), 283–301.

16. Interestingly, more recent American translations of this biblical verse read, "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (New American Standard Version), suggesting a potential connection between the antislavery movement and the modern prisoners' rights movement.

17. Laqueur, "Humanitarian Narrative," 182.

18. One of the earliest abolitionist images of a woman kneeling in a scene of emancipation occurs in a painting by the well-known American portrait artist James Peale depicting the manumission of Dinah Nevill, a woman of European, Native American, and African ancestry. The painting commemorates the group of Quaker men who formed the very first formal abolition society, the "Pennsylvania Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage," in 1775, specifically in order to file a lawsuit charging that Nevill and her three children were being held in illegal bondage. The painting is reproduced in Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking, 2005), 154. It is a fascinating staging of the humanitarian gesture as a scene of complex inter-embodiments, in which a sexually vulnerable multiracial woman kneels before a group of clothed white men, while from behind them a white female figure gazes down at Nevill with a complex expression, into which we might read benevolence, sympathy, pity, concern, or perhaps unacknowledged sisterhood and empathy. Thanks to Christopher Densmore of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College for bringing it to my attention.

19. Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 7.

20. Coleman, "Conspicuous Consumption," 342.

21. Festa, "Humanity without Feathers," 16.

22. Yellin, *Women and Sisters*, 25.

23. See Sheller, "The Haytian Fear."

24. For a similar point, see Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., *Gender and Emancipation in the Atlantic World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005); Mimi Sheller, *Citizenship from Below* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

25. See Rachel Slocum, "Race in the Study of Food," *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 3 (2011): 303–27.

26. This powerful effect of sugar to corrupt and transform was especially linked to white Creole anxieties and desires, but also extended to metropolitan space. Keith Sandiford suggests that sugar was represented "as matter and metaphysic, a substance potent enough to transform not only consumptive patterns but also to alter perceptions and invent new aesthetic and imaginative spaces." Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16.

27. Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950), 296.

28. Thomas Cooper, *Considerations of the Slave Trade and the Consumption of West Indian Produce* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1791). Cooper extracted this from his *Letters on the Slave Trade* (1787).
29. [William Fox], *An Address to the People of Great Britain on the Propriety of Abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum*, 10th ed. (Birmingham, UK: Swinney and Walker, 1791), 2.
30. On the wider tactics of the antislavery movement and its innovative role in developing new forms of publicity and national political campaigns, see Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). And on boycotts more specifically, Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*.
31. Timothy Morton, *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 173; Morton, "Blood Sugar," in *Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780–1830*, ed. T. Fulford and P. J. Kitson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 87–106.
32. Morton, *Poetics of Spice*, 197.
33. The personal relation to Christ emphasized in these pietistic religious movements had, of course, originated in the Eucharist in which the "body and blood" of the Savior were symbolically ingested in the wine and wafer of communion. Some scholars trace this practice back to the Jewish Passover Seder in which the tears and suffering of the Jewish people enslaved in Egypt are remembered each year by the dipping of bitter herbs in salt water, and the eating of a bitter horseradish mixture and unleavened bread. Ritual meals and the refusal of particular foods are a crucial means of reinforcing ethical and moral action, repeated in humanitarian interventions.
34. See Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 88–95, for further discussion. Gillray also contrasted their misplaced middle-class concern for slaves in the West Indies against the plight of the free English worker, John Bull, who was portrayed as the hard-working and deserving beneficiary of cheap sugar supplies. These are further inter-embodiments of class and nationalism that complicate the humanitarian gesture to aid far away "bleeding humanity" by raising issues of competing claims and gender identities.
35. Morton, *Poetics of Spice*, 200.
36. Birmingham City Archives, microfilm 96615, *The First Report of the Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves, etc., etc.* [1825–26], Resolution II. Founding members were from prominent Quaker families or had joined the Society of Friends, including Lucy Townsend, Elizabeth Heyrick, Mary Lloyd, Sarah Wedgwood, and Sophia Sturge. Far more radical than the men's Antislavery Society, to which the network of ladies' societies contributed one-fifth of the overall subscriptions, they campaigned for immediate rather than gradual abolition.
37. Paul Glennie, "Consumption within Historical Studies," in *Acknowledging Consumption: A Review of New Studies*, ed. Daniel Miller (London: Routledge, 1995), 181.
38. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 1995), 17.
39. Birmingham City Archives, microfilm 96615, *The Twenty-Eighth Report of the Ladies' Negro's Friend Society* [1853], 17.
40. Deerr, *The History of Sugar* 297.
41. Birmingham City Archives, microfilm 96615, *The Second Report of the Female Society for the Relief of British Negro Slaves, etc., etc.* [1826–27], 15–16; emphasis in original.
42. Claire Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties*.

43. William Edmonstone Lendrick, *Sugar-Trade and Slave-Trade: The West Indian Question Considered* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1853), 78–79, 30–31.
44. In 1847 the Quaker antislavery activist Joseph Sturge (1793–1859) contributed \$500 to the Philadelphia Free Produce Association, which promoted trade in goods that were guaranteed to not be made by slaves. Various Americans were dispatched to England to promote the association, including Samuel Rhoads, Elihu Burritt, and Frederick Douglass.
45. An interesting guide for free African Americans wishing to move to Haiti is found in James Redpath, ed., *A Guide to Hayti* (1861; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970). Family formation and the promotion of Christian marriage were central to abolitionist visions of the freed community but were also strongly articulated in the visions of freed people themselves, at times delimiting the radicalism of free subjectivities within specific moral orders that were themselves patriarchal, xenophobic, and heteronormative (see Sheller, *Citizenship from Below*).
46. Birmingham City Archives, microfilm 96615, *The Twenty-Fourth Report of the Ladies' Negro's Friend Society* [1849], 8–10; *The Twenty-Fifth Report of the Ladies' Negro's Friend Society* [1850]. In 1849 a massive “Antislavery Petition from the Women of Great Britain” was presented to the queen with 59,686 signatures, of which 9,393 were from Birmingham. It was presented on a mahogany roller with a velvet cover lined with calico made from free-grown cotton, thus materializing in substance the free produce it wished to promote.
47. Howard Temperley, *British Antislavery, 1833–1870* (London: Longman, 1972), 166; until Sussman’s *Consuming Anxieties*, one of the few works solely on the Free Produce Movement was Ruth K. Nuermberger, *The Free Produce Movement: A Quaker Protest against Slavery* (Durham, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), which was originally the author’s 1934 thesis at Duke University.
48. Anonymous, “*Bread Upon the Waters, or Letter, Illustrative, Moral and Practical, Addressed generally to the Women of Great Britain and Ireland* . . . (London: W. and F. G. Cash; Dublin: J. B. Gilpin; Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1853), 53, 89.
49. Personal communication with Christopher Densmore of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, April 2009.
50. “Antislavery County Convention: To the Friends of Immediate Emancipation, in Chester County and parts adjacent,” *National Enquirer* (Philadelphia), 4th Month 29, 1837. Thanks to Christopher Densmore of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.
51. See Shirley Yee, *Black Women Abolitionists: A Study in Activism, 1828–1860* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992).
52. Diana Paton and Pamela Scully, “Introduction: Gender and Slave Emancipation in Comparative Perspective,” in *Gender and Emancipation in the Atlantic World*, ed. Scully and Paton (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 1.
53. Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 127.
54. *Ibid.*, 157.
55. Mark Moberg, *Slipping Away: Banana Politics and Fair Trade in the Eastern Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).