T.C. KOCAELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI
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THE FEMININE ANTI-SLAVERY RHETORIC WITHIN HANNAH MORE'S POEM "THE SORROWS OF YAMBA; OR, THE NEGRO WOMAN'S LAMENTATION" AND ITS RADICALIZATION WITHIN ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S POEM "THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT"

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Danışman
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Serkan Ertin

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ABSTRACT

The following analysis of anti-slavery poems written by British female poets will demonstrate the distinctive 'feminine' anti-slavery rhetoric which was developed to justify the involvement of women in political matters such as the anti-slavery movement. This thesis focuses upon the poems of British female writer Hannah More who aided the conservative anti-slavery movement in Britain in the late eighteenth century, and the British female poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning who cooperated with the more radical anti-slavery movement in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The analysis of Hannah More's poem "The Sorrows of Yamba; a Negro Women's Lamentation," published on British Slavery, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "A Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," published on American slavery, will demonstrate how these British female poets engaged in two ideologically contrasting anti-slavery movements, employed the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and adopted varying approaches with regard to the separate-spheres ideology.

Key Words: Feminization of Poetic Discourse/ Anti-Slavery/ Separate-Spheres Ideology/ Maternalism/ Racial Ideologies

ÖZET

Bu tez, iki ingiliz kadın şairin yazdığı kölelik karşıtı şiirleri inceleyerek, kadınların kölelik karşıtı hareketler gibi siyasi meselelerde yer almasını meşrulaştıran ayırt edici kölelik karşıtı 'kadınsı' söylemleri ortaya koymaktadır. Tezin odağında iki İngiliz kadın şair vardır. Bunlardan bir tanesi on sekizinci yüzyılın sonlarında Britanya'da kölelik karşıtı muhafazakar hareketi desteklemiş olan Hannah More'dur. Diğer şair ise on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ortalarında Birleşik Devletler'de daha radikal bir hareketin içinde yer almış olan Elizabeth Barrett Browning'dir. Hannah More'un İngiliz köleliği hakkındaki "The Sorrow's of Yamba: a Negro Women's Lamentation" adlı şiiri ile Elizabeth Barrett'ın Amerikan köleliği hakkındaki "A Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" adlı şiirini inceleyen bu çalışma, ideolojik olarak birbirine zıt hareketleri benimsemiş olan bu iki İngiliz şairin, cinsiyet temelli tanımlanmış alanlar nedeniyle farklılaşan kölelik karşıtı "kadınsı" retoriği nasıl kullandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadınsı şiir söylemleri/ Kölelik Karşıtı Hareketi/ Toplumsal Cinsiyet Alanları/ Maternalizm/ Irksal İdeoloji

ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The words cotton plantations, lynching, chattel slavery, and dehumanization of man to property that can be sold and bought, most often, evoke images of slavery in the American South rather than slavery in the British Empire. It is the close association of slave plantations and the American soil which does not incite one to give a second thought to the British Isles and its geographically distanced colonies of the West Indies. Historical facts reveal that British settlers not only brought the first African slaves to colonial America under British rule (1607-1776), but also established slavery in their American and Caribbean colonies. These overseas possessions did not only contribute to Britain's wealth and growing imperial power but also evidently increased its involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. English slave traders travelled to Africa and kidnapped African men and women to transport them across the Atlantic Ocean in order to sell them to plantation owners who forced them to work under inhumane conditions and cruel treatment to grow crops and other slave-grown produce such as rum, sugar, cotton, tobacco, which were highly valued in England and Europe. The goods that were shipped back to be consumed in England were tainted with the blood of the thousands of slaves that were torn apart from their home and family to be kept under cruel bondage. Eventually, known as the Triangular Trade or Middle Passage, at least 12 million African slaves were forcibly transported across the Atlantic to America and the Caribbean colonies between 1525 and 1825 in order to grow the exotic goods for the European consumption.

However, the evils of slavery did not simply remain in the distanced colonies far away from Britain but also drew the attention of early abolitionists who questioned the morality of slavery. In contrast to the justifications of slave supporters to uphold the institution of slavery, early antislavery sentiment began to emerge among religiously motivated whites who heard and witnessed the evils of slavery. When the British Society of Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in 1787, the patriarchal society of England determined by the gender-based roles stressed the importance of male political and social leadership in the public and seated exclusively male members in the anti-slavery campaigns of the Parliament (Midgley, 1992: 15-16). Nevertheless, although female public activism was considered

improper and women were excluded “from positions of formal power in the national anti-slavery movement in Britain,” women developed a ‘distinctive female approach’ to justify their activism and voice the evils of slavery (2-4). Therefore, to obtain a complete picture of the anti-slavery movement it is necessary to go beyond the old patriarchal perspective of male dominated historical discourse, as it is reflected in the dedications of memorials to men. Turning the historians’ focus and the public eye to women’s diverse extra-parliamentary activities, memoirs; and publications, one will recognize that the anti-slavery movement became “the first large-scale political campaign by middle-class women” in which they aroused public opinion and, indeed, influenced parliamentarians (201).

Considering women’s involvement in the anti-slavery cause as an integral part, this study seeks to analyze the specific feminine rhetoric of British female poets within the national British anti-slavery movement in the late eighteenth century, and subsequently compares it to the female involvement in the American anti-slavery campaign in the mid-nineteenth century. This study intends to analyze the poem “The Sorrows of Yamba; or the Negro Woman’s Lamentation” (1797) written by late eighteenth century British female poet Hannah More to illuminate the formulaic feminine anti-slavery rhetoric, and compares it to the transatlantic poem “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point” (1848) written by the mid-nineteenth century British female poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, to show the influence of more radical ideologies of the anti-slavery movement in the United States of America.

CHAPTER ONE

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research professor in history Clare Midgley, in her book *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870,* emphasizes the importance to review women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement in Britain and explicitly demonstrates the pivotal role of the separate-spheres ideology which shaped the "distinctive female approaches to campaigning and their formulation of feminine perspective on matters of anti-slavery policy and ideology" (1992: 3). In addition to analyzing women's involvement and their feminine approach aiming to end Britain's colonial slavery, she also sheds light on British women's transatlantic links to American women campaigners. After anti-slavery campaign slowly began to wane down in England following the Parliament's proclamation of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, the abolitionist movement in the United States gained momentum and encouraged women to contribute to it (129-132). Midgley notes that women writers composed approximately one quarter[1] of the anti-slavery themed poems and tales which were widely circulated by abolition society and published in newspapers that supported the anti-slavery cause in the late eighteenth-century (29-30). Referring to Ross's observation that in the late eighteenth century "'discernible tradition of feminine poetry'" was emerging because "'women virtually took over, as writers and readers the territories most conceded to them, of popular fiction and fashionable poetry'", Midgley confirms that poetry was an obvious choice as anti-slavery medium by women during this period (Ross qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 31). Midgley provides an extensive and important analysis of a large quantity of anti-slavery history and "neglected sources which specifically relate to women campaigners" such as pamphlets, memoirs, reports, periodicals, etc., in order to explain the arising female approach to anti-slavery in Britain and America. Although Midgley mentions

[1] Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaign 1780-1870*, p. 29: "This estimate is based on the list of imaginative literature in Peter C. Hogg, T*he African Slave Trade and Its Suppression: a Classified and Annotated Bibliography* (London: Frank Cass, 1973), taking into account only those works for which the sex of the writer is know." See endnote 93, p. 214.

anti-slavery poetry and the 'feminization' of it by female poets such as Hannah More, she does not undertake an extensive study of individual poems (1992: 29-34).

Moira Ferguson contributes a more summarized version of Midgley's brilliant and comprehensive analysis with an article published shortly after in 1992, *British Women Writers and an Emerging Abolitionist Discourse*. Ferguson includes some discussion of Hannah More's "Slavery; A Poem" but she aims to focus on its socio-historical context in order to explain how Hannah More's environment engendered the establishment of her formulaic conservative anti-slavery language which became "a kind of abolitionist shorthand" that was copied by her contemporaries (1992: 3-4). She lists the reoccurring themes about slavery such as the atrocities, destruction of family life, and unchristian traders which had been popularized by male poets, and clarifies how they began to be viewed as specifically feminine after Hannah More's publication of her poem "Slavery" (Ferguson, 1992: 7). Although Ferguson's article offers an overview about the establishment of the formulaic feminine anti-slavery language, her article does not provide an in-depth analysis of Hannah More's poem to exemplify the feminine anti-slavery motifs and the expected conservative approach.

A more recent study undertaken in 2015 by Kathleen Campbell, "*Bid Us Rise From Slavery And Live": Antislavery Poetry And The Shared Language Of Transatlantic Abolition, 1770s-1830s,* analyses the shared transatlantic female abolitionist language. The primary source foundation for her thesis rests upon the poems of British and African-American female writers within the late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century which outlines a shared anti-slavery language that incorporates themes of separation of "family, assumed expectations of freedom, and legal references" (Campbell, 2015: 105). Focusing again on Hannah More's poem "Slavery: A Poem" and Ann Yearsely's poem as the British poets of the late eighteenth century, Campbell's comparative study highlights their similar conservative anti-slavery language which incorporates conservative ideals of family and liberty as a natural right, especially because of Hannah More's patronage of and support for Ann Yearsely's natural talent for poetry. Analyzing the American anti-slavery movement through the poems of African-American writers, Campbell draws greater attention to recounting historical freedom suits, legislations, and legal texts, and the American Revolutionary rhetoric, which are echoed within the poetic lines of

these African-American women writers and their claim for freedom and decrying the moral wrong of slavery (106). It can be said that Kathleen Campbell's analysis rest upon highlighting the conservative themes of family separation; however, the interaction between the anti-slavery poems and the law become the main aim of her study in order to construct the shared language of abolition.

Considering scholarship on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" published in the mid-nineteenth century on American abolition, the criticism of its feminine anti-slavery rhetoric is polarized. Sarah Brophy in her analysis, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point' and the Politics of Interpretation," argues that Elizabeth Barrett Browning's female speaker appeals to "the Pilgrim Father's and God as stable authorities" (1998: 278), and in doing so, reflects the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which idealizes "patriarchal relations and female subordination in British society" (Midgley, 1992: 91). Other critics focus on its polemic language due to its publication in *The Liberty Bell* and classify the poem as radical. John McNeill Miller in his study, "Slavish Poses: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Aesthetics of Abolition," asserts that "critics have mostly chosen to focus" on either the radical aspects or the conservative aspects of the poem rather "than tracing the relationships between the apparently disparate positions embedded within the poem" (2014: 639). Miller notes, "[a]s a result, the work[] experiments with conventional tropes of womanhood and religion in the service of radical abolitionism" (2014: 639).

These comprehensive works provide excellent information about historical and literary female contribution to the anti-slavery cause and the emergence of a feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which focuses on specific slavery motifs. However, the few in-depth literary analyses of other poems by Hannah More to delineate the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and approach and its radicalization within Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem provide a research area to dwell deeper into this topic.

1.2. PRIMARY SOURCE FOUNDATION AND ORGANIZATION

The two white female British poets, Hannah More (1745-1833) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) have been specifically chosen for this study because both were invited by the leaders of the British and American anti-slavery societies. While the conservative evangelical poet Hannah More was commissioned by the conservative leader of the English anti-slavery movement William Wilberforce, (Ferguson, 1992: 5-6), Elizabeth Barrett Browning was invited by the radical American Anti-Slavery Society under the leadership of William Llyod Garrison to make a contribution to *The Liberty Bell*, "an anti-slavery annual sold each year at the Christmas bazaar … to raise money for the abolitionist cause" (Stone, 2003: 34). Already the invitations of these two anti-slavery societies placed within distinct social and geographical location imply contradicting ideologies concerning the 'woman question,' i.e. the participation of women in the political affairs which were regarded as the male dominated public sphere (Midgley, 1992: 20-34, 91).

The primary source foundation for this paper rests upon the anti-slavery poems "The Sorrows of Yamba; or A Negro Woman's Lamentation" written by Hannah More, who fought British colonial slavery beginning in late-eighteenth century, and "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who engaged in the anti-slavery movement in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Hannah More's poem "The Sorrows of Yamba; or the Negro Woman's Lamentation," published in 1797, will be analyzed to illustrate Hannah More's formulaic conservative feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and feminine approach, which became crucial to legitimize women's involvement in the abolitionist movement. To show similarities and differences concerning the 'feminization' of anti-slavery poetry, Hannah More's poem will serve as a case study to show how British female poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her earliest published abolitionist poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," published in 1848, reinvents this feminine anti-slavery rhetoric in correlation with her involvement in the more radical American anti-slavery campaigns in the mid-nineteenth century (Miller, 2014: 638).

1.3. AIM OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to analyze Hannah More's poem to delineate the formulaic feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and feminine approach and show the similarities and differences concerning Elizabeth Barrett Browning's anti-slavery rhetoric as a British female poet in the services of the radical anti-slavery movement in the United States. A comparative study of these poems written by two female British abolitionists fighting slavery on a national and transatlantic level will demonstrate the similarities and differences of their feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and their approaches which were influenced by the gender-ideologies of each anti-slavery society. Moreover, the comparison will reveal in how far these two British women stepped outside the boundaries of the womanly sphere to influence public opinions in favor of the abolition of slavery in Britain and in the United States.

1.4. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

In order to understand literary reference of anti-slavery poetry, it is essential to reconsider how Africans were relegated inferior and perceived as insensitive with the beginning of slavery, and how the patriarchal society allowed women's involvement in a political matter such as anti-slavery activism. This terminology chapter will serve to familiarize the reader with racial ideologies which pathologized the African body and defined blackness as inferior. In addition, it delineates the women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement as guardians of morality, defines the 'feminization' of poetry, and the 'maternalistic' approach, and gives an overview of the radical American abolitionist movement under the leader of William Llyod Garrison.

1.4.1. Slavery: Defining Blackness as Inferior and Insensitive

The white settlers' first accounts of Africa contributed to the emergence of an inferior gaze upon Africa because it was described as being inhabited by heathen and savage tribes. Psychiatrist Thomas S. Szasz writes in his essay "Blackness and Madness: Images of Evil and Tactics of Exclusion" that "[in] the course of human history, men have created images of good and evil" which were used "as

justifications for . . . including some persons in the group and for excluding others from it" (1970: 74). Europeans' white skin was aligned with positive personality characteristics, even a blessing from God, and was denoted as the norm. On the basis of their "[b]lackness," Africans were considered not only as different, but as inherently "evil" (74). Racial ideologies were born which excluded blacks from the participation in western freedoms enjoyed by whites.

In the eighteenth century, physicians and philosophers also strengthened the idea of the black race to be different and "tended to pathologize the African body as insensible; and, therefore, immune to 'the physical, intellectual and spiritual pain felt by Europeans'" (Czechowski qtd. in Carey, 2010: 247). With these perceptions of the African people, some Europeans legitimized their absence of sympathy with the enslaved, and created a sense of justification of slavery and its cruel acts of the dehumanization of black people under slavery through the acts of kidnapping, selling, flogging, and neglecting their emotional and physical sensibility (Carey, 2010: 247). Slaveholders strongly believed, for example, that they would "hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child" if they separated infants less than a year old from their mothers who were then "hired out on some farm a considerable distance off" (Douglass, 1995: 2). In addition, property laws further dehumanized slaves and defined them as real estate who "shall be, as such, subject to be mortgaged, according to the rules prescribed by law, and they shall be seized and sold as real estates" (Morris, 1996: 74).

Slave owners also defended their negative portrayal of black people by citing passages from the Christian Bible which portrayed them as a cursed race (Bacon, 2007: 224). One frequently cited passage is chapter four in the book of Genesis which speaks of the so-called Curse of Cain. In this passage, God curses Cain, who kills his brother Abel because he is jealous of Abel whose offerings are more favored by God (Gen. 4:1-8). God puts a mark upon Cain to warn others that killing provokes the vengeance of God (Gen. 4:15). Because the Bible recounts that "Cain's Mark was black skin," by the eighteenth century European and American slavery-supporters extrapolated that the Africans they enslaved were the descendants of Cain (Mowla, 2008: 5). Another Biblical story that buttressed the oppression of black people under slavery was the "Curse of Ham" (Bacon, 2007: 224). In this passage, in the second

half of chapter nine in the book of Genesis, Noah "planted a vineyard" and "drank of the wine and became drunk" and fell asleep "uncovered within his tent" (Gen. 9: 20-21). When Noah's youngest son, Ham, "saw the nakedness of his father," he went outside to report this to his brothers, Shem and Japheth (Gen. 9: 22). Shem and Japheth responded by taking a garment and using it to cover their father (Gen. 9: 23). In doing so, Shem and Japheth walked backwards and averted their eyes, so that "they saw not their father's nakedness" (Gen. 9: 23). When Noah woke up, the Bible says that he became aware that Ham put him to shame. Therefore, he cursed Ham's son, Canaan, to perpetual slavery: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. . . .Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant" (Gen. 9: 25-27). Although neither the race nor the color of Ham is mentioned, nineteenth century racist biblical scholars asserted that "Africans were descendants of Ham" (Bacon, 2007: 224).

Such messages of oppression, sanctioned allegedly by God, were used by slave holders as a biblical justification to oppress Africans and their descendants, and were also preached from pulpits, especially throughout the American slave south, both to whites and blacks.

1.4.2. Abolition: The Beginning of Women's Involvement

From the 1780s onwards women's extra-parliamentary involvement included the abstaining from slave-grown produce, inviting friends to their house to discuss the issue of slavery, and organizing dinner parties to ignite their husbands to foster the sympathy of family friends in the anti-slavery cause (Midgley, 1992: 9). In doing so, women remained in their domestic spheres as the "shadowy private figures hidden behind the public men" who had the decision making power to legislate and sign petitions to the end of slavery (16). Being viewed as the guardians of religion and morality, women were assigned with the duty to arouse the sympathy of their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons to the suffering voices which they could not hear due to "the uncaring pursuit of profit" (22). Especially religiously motivated people who began to question the immorality of the slave trade acknowledged the importance of women's sentimental nature to aid the anti-slavery movement as a

moral obligation (Midgley, 1992: 14). Putting the stress on the moral qualities, which laid the foundation for the Abolition Committee, as "especially 'feminine' in nature," i.e., the qualities of sensibility, humanity, benevolence, and compassion which were often attributed to females and the rougher sex seemed to lack (20), provided a "means of justifying the formation of ladies' anti-slavery associations in the face of opposition from conservative evangelical male leaders, such as" the leader of the English abolitionist movement, William Wilberforce (91). Thus, the representation of "slavery as a religious and moral rather than political issue," created a loophole for "women to assert that anti-slavery lay within the sphere of religiously inspired philanthropy" (91).

As soon as the campaign against the slave trade was launched in 1787, abolitionist newspapers such as the *Manchester Mercury*[2] decided to "*publicly* appeal" to British women "to help to cover the costs of petitioning 'for some Parliamentary interference in favor of the oppressed (20). Soliciting female charity to aid male politicians who had the right to sign petitions was one way of women's involvement in the abolition cause (20). In addition, newspapers, and cartoons such as "Captain Kimber, who flogged a young black woman to death for refusing to dance naked for him on deck," aroused public horror at the physical and sexual abuse of enslaved women. Other articles portrayed the male brutalities and "delineate[d] the sufferings of the female slave and the violation of family life under slavery," a theme that would soon "dominate woman's writings throughout the history of the anti-slavery movement" (20).

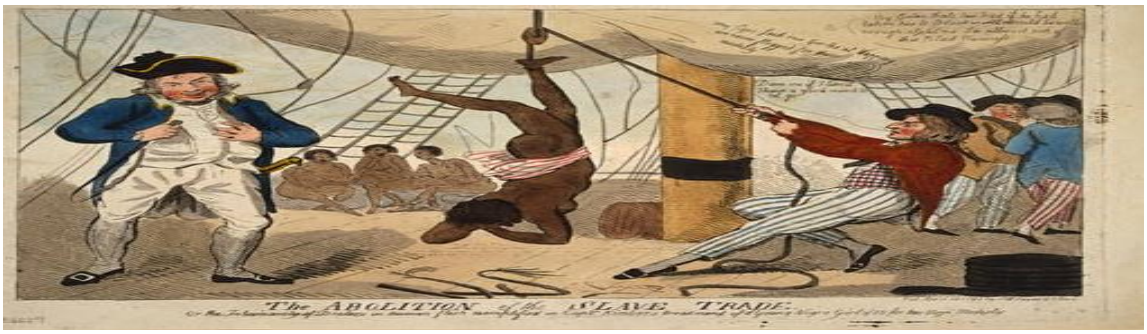

Figure 1. *The Abolition of the Slave Trade*. Cartoon, London, 1792.

[2] Spencer, Jane. *Aphra Behn's Afterlife*. New York: UP Oxford, 2000. p 258: J. Spencer explains that Manchester was one of the first cities which began to organize "the first of the many petitions that made Parliament begin to consider measures against the trade" shortly after the foundation of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787. The Manchester Mercury was a weekly abolitionist paper that campaigned against the slave trade.

Portraying these immoralities of white men, abolitionists stressed their moral commitment and appealed to women to campaign against the slave trade because of their virtuous feminine nature, as stated in the following article in the *Manchester Mercury*, November 6, 1787:

> If it be just and right; if it be what Nature requires, and what Mankind expects, that Women should sympathize with Women; that if the Brutality of Male should at any Time reverse in his Practice the Obligation of his Species, a Female may meet, from the Pity of her own Sex, that assistance which the inhumanity of the other may deny.
>
> (qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 20)

This article identifies sympathy as a 'feminine' characteristic which necessitates and justifies female involvement in the anti-slavery cause to fight the 'male brutality' towards enslaved women (20). It is this importance which abolitionists and "evangelicals attached to women's role as guardians of religion and morality," which gave women writers the power to arouse public feeling, and influence men and events in the Parliament "from which they were excluded by their sex" (16, 32).

1.4.3. Feminine Sentimental Anti-Slavery Rhetoric

In the eighteenth-century it was believed that sentimental literature was a powerful persuasive tool to call for sympathy with those in distress (Carey, 2005: 2). Professor Brycchan Carey in his book, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807*, argues that "during the middle to late eighteenth century, many writers and public speakers," who were, for example, engaged in the abolition debate, used a recognizable sentimental rhetoric (1). Central to the "sentimental rhetoric," or the "rhetoric of sensibility," Carey explains, "is a belief in the power of sympathy to raise awareness of suffering, to change an audience's view of that suffering, and to direct opposition to it" through emotional persuasion, because the "[e]ighteenth-century sensibility was a discourse which celebrated the passion over the intellect" (1-4). To do so, poets of the sentimental rhetoric employed the "technique of emotional subversion of the intellect" which is the poet's intention to quickly raise emotions and encourage the reader "to adopt political positions on the strength of those emotions" (73).

Considering two keywords, ‘emotion’ and ‘intellect’, from the previous assertion of Carey, one can simply distinguish female and male characteristics which were reinforced by the separate-spheres ideology. Men were expected to be present in the public world because they were “assumed to be rational, worldly, aggressive, sexual, voters, property owner; they lived in public life” (Strong, 2008: 12). On the contrary, “[w]omen were emotional, spiritual, submissive, asexual, non-voters, non-property owners;” therefore, expected to remain in the private domestic sphere (12). The patriarchal society of England considered these “differences …divinely ordained and immutable” (12). Hence, in the eighteenth century, the sentimental rhetoric became fashionable among abolitionist writers to bring home the evils of slavery and emphasize the sufferings of slaves which took place in the distanced colonies far away from Britain (Midgley, 1992: 34).

However, among women anti-slavery writers the sentimental rhetoric had to undergo another transformation. Midgley writes that “[i]ndeed the stress by Hannah More and other evangelicals on the especial sensitivity of women encouraged female contribution to the anti-slavery literature to take the form not of tracts directed at the intellect but of poetic appeal to the heart” (1992: 29). Katherine Rogers explains “that in the late eighteenth century women writers were expected to write in a ‘feminine’ way, demonstrating delicacy of feeling, dealing with emotional distress rather than political problems, and abstaining from radical social criticism and political discussion” (qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 34). Hence, the female writers’ call for sympathy was expected to be achieved through deliberately voicing the grief and the suffering of female slaves in order to remain within their womanly sphere and establish their respectability and “acceptance of such public and political action in the exceptional case of the anti-slavery cause” (94-95).

Several male writers such as “Hugh Mulligan, Samuel Jackson Pratt, William Roscoe, and William Cowper” had incorporated popularized themes about slavery such as “disgusted incredulity at human bondage, split families, atrocities, [and] unchristian traders” in their poems to address the Parliament and make “appeals to philanthropy or ‘social love’” (Ferguson, 1992: 7). However, following the publication of Hannah More’s poem “Slavery: A Poem” in 1788, upon her invitation from the Abolition Committee, the sentimental approach and motifs about slavery began to be considered as feminine and definitely belonging to the “female terrain”

(9-10). “Pamphlets, parliamentary speeches, testimonies to the privy council, histories, reports, and scriptural treaties more accurately represented the country’s idea of male anti-slavery literary provenance;” and male sentimentalism, at that moment, was viewed as “‘tainted’ as a woman’s thing” or rendered men to subjects to “wry comments among male contemporaries” (Davidoff qtd. in Ferguson, 1992: 10).

Ferguson explains that the reason for this abrupt shift was grounded in white middle-class women’s ability to associate with the motifs of “powerlessness, bereavement, deracination, sexual degradation, and whippings of slaves,” because they themselves experienced “forced marriages, abuse, and family separation” (1992: 9). The evangelical male leaders of the anti-slavery campaign, more importantly, believed that “women had a natural empathy with their own sex” and encouraged them to specifically “focus on enslaved women” to foster sympathy and contribute to the abolition movement (Midgley, 1992: 93). In “need to justify stepping outside the domestic sphere,” women writers adopted this particular focus which visualized “three main aspects of female sufferings under slavery: flogging, moral degradation, and violation of familial life and separation of mother from her children” that soon dominated women’s writings throughout the history of the anti-slavery movement (Midgley, 1992: 95, 20). In contrast to women, “men, having no need to justify public and political activism, were less self-conscious about defining their role in the movement” (93). Thus, the feminization of anti-slavery rhetoric draws specific attention to the immoral suffering of female slaves within literary works and “demonstrates that women found a way to voice social and political criticism through the acceptable ‘feminine’ means of poetic sentiment and appeals to the emotions” (34).

Thus, adopting this distinctive feminine anti-slavery rhetoric, which focuses on female suffering to call for sympathy and also appeals to the religious sentimentalities, women’s public activism was agreed upon because it was considered to be consistent with their feminine character and their role as the Guardians of morality and religion (94-93). Clare Midgley explains that the emphasis on morality and religion “made it possible for women to assert that anti-slavery lay within the sphere of religiously inspired philanthropy, an arena of public activity which [women] had by the 1820s established as an acceptable extension of their domestic” and religious

duties which were defined by the prevalent and mutually reinforcing ideologies of 'separate spheres' and evangelicalism (91-92, 154).

1.4.4. Maternalism and Black Passivity: 'Am I Not a Woman and a Sister'

White British women's concern to uphold their respectability by remaining within their proper social role was also reflected in the way they tended to portray black slave women as passive victims (Midgley, 1992: 202-203). Clare Midgley further asserts that the image of black passivity was derived from the famous jasper cameo of 1787, manufactured by Josiah Wedgewood, which depicts a kneeling slave, his hands in chains praying, and calling on the brotherhood of man: "Am I not a man and a brother" (37).

Figure 2. ***Josiah Wedgwood's 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother' Jasperware Cameo.***

This image was widely adopted for decorating "men's snuff boxes and ladies' bracelets and hairpins," and abolitionist pamphlets in order to make people conscious of the callous acts of slavery (Midgley, 1992: 37). These images distributed by abolitionists were later adopted by British female abolitionists who replaced the man with a kneeling woman in chains who also calls for black acknowledgement, sympathy, and perhaps even empathy, with the enslaved woman: "Am I not a woman and a sister" (203). "This assertion of sisterhood paralleled that of brotherhood" and conveyed "women's particular identification with the sufferings of their own sex" (96). The message implies an existing equality or sisterhood between the enslaved and the white woman which rests upon the "shared humanity" and "shared femaleness" (Midgley 2001: 19-20). "This was articulated particularly around

women's shared experience of motherhood" which acknowledged that black women loved and bonded as strongly with their children as white women would do (19-20).

Figure 3. "Am I not a woman and a sister," Cover of Lydia Maria Child *Authentic Anecdotes of America Slavery,* Newburyport [Mass.]: Published by Charles Whipple, 1838.

However, the image of a kneeling, enchained, and praying slave woman who looks up to receive the white woman's help resembles more to a helping cry to be "recognised as equal rather than an assertion of equality ('I am a woman and a sister'), whereby this image undermines the egalitarianism of the motto" (Midgley, 2001: 19). Accordingly, the white woman viewer of the image is addressed as one with the ability to assist with help and "bestow[] freedom on the grateful kneeling slaves" (Midgley, 1992: 29). Such images, which unequally positioned the whites and the enslaved, "conveyed the powerlessness of black men and women to overthrow slavery and their dependence on white men and women to grant them freedom" (203). The focus on the suffering of a passive and helpless slave who depends on the white British women, also evokes the relationship between a "mother and a child, an image which portrayed white women as the protectors of powerless black people" (203). In doing so, white middle-class British women idealized their "own social role" and affirmed that they were acting on behalf of helpless and submissive slave women who needed their female protection because slave women were "deprived of male protection" (100).

Portraying themselves as benevolent protectors of the "passive victims" (100), Midgley describes it as "maternalism [which] becomes the female equivalent of paternalism" (203). "Such maternalism fits with the more conservative,

evangelical strand in anti-slavery which surfaces in the approach by middle class white women involved in both domestic and imperial philanthropy" (Midgley 2001: 20). In other words, the focus on maternal instincts explicitly echoes the feminine sensitivity to justify women's involvement in the anti-slavery movement (Midgley, 1992: 33).

1.4.5. Anti-Slavery Movement in America and *The Liberty Bell*

In 1833 the Slavery Abolition Act was passed, which gave slaves in the British Empire their freedom but transformed them into apprentices who continued to work for their old master for low wages with the belief to gradually adjust them to the newly gained freedom (Midgley, 1992: 43). With the end of the Apprenticeship system in 1838, slaves eventually gained their true freedom (43). In 1839, the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society, shortly BFASS, became "the only national anti-slavery society to continue its activism throughout the 1840s and 1850s" to aid the abolition movement in America (119-120). When in 1840, the BFASS organized the first Anti-Slavery Convention in London, "a transatlantic convention of British and American abolitionists," they refused the admission of a group of American woman abolitionists to the Convention in the Exeter Hall in London (121). Events at this convention, especially, the BFASS's refusal "to accept the credentials of a group of women delegates sent by Garrisonian society" caused disputes within the British and American anti-slavery movements (121).

The convention's disagreement on the 'woman question' caused major deputes within the American anti-slavery movement, which had started a month prior to the convention (Midgley, 1992: 120-121). Eventually, Garrison's call for women to receive important roles split the American movement into two: William Llyod Garrison took control of the American Anti-Slavery Society, and his "evangelical opponents, led by Lewis Tappan, seceded to form a new society, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society" which aligned itself with the conservative BFASS (120-121). However, the BFASS and the Tappanites, suffered from a major decline of male contribution to the anti-slavery cause in England because local men believed that any anti-slavery activism was irrelevant since the "British Government had no jurisdiction" over foreign countries; and, by 1850 "women's societies had to come to

outnumber men's groups for the first time in the history of the anti-slavery movement" (123). In contrast, William Llyod Garrison, who combined the anti-slavery movement with a "number of radical causes, especially women's rights, non-resistance, . . . and unconventional religious beliefs," furthered the American Anti-Slavery Society's persistence through formal contacts and friendships that were established especially during the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention between female British and American abolitionists (Midgley, 1992: 121-122). Whereas women who supported the "Tappanites had much more limited contacts with American abolitionists" since male correspondence with the BFASS was preferred (130), the correspondence between British and American women activists among supporters of William Llyod Garrison continued to nourish the transatlantic network of abolitionism, and created a sense of "transatlantic sisterhood of abolitionists" (125).

William Llyod Garrison "offered women a channel for their energies" either in form of donations, to inform their British sisters about developments in America, or publish works written by women activists on both sides of the Atlantic in his anti-slavery newspapers (130-132). *The Liberty Bell*, for example, was an anti-slavery annual published by "William Llyod Garrison and his co-workers in the American Anti-Slavery Society," that sold each year at the Christmas bazaar which was organized by the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society to raise money for the abolition cause (Stone, 2003: 34). It gave radical abolitionists the chance to combine "a call for immediate abolition with 'other radical causes, especially women's rights'" and their critiques of orthodox clericals, and redefine the "issue of women's proper sphere" within the anti-slavery movement (42, 44). In 1845, Elizabeth Barrett Browning received issues of *The Liberty Bell* and was invited to make a contribution to the abolitionist journal. Majorie Stone points out, that "in contributing to *The Liberty Bell*, [Elizabeth Barrett Browning] was aligning herself with the Garrisonians and a position on women's rights that had been explicitly rejected by most official abolitionist organisations in England" (2003: 46). To analyze Elizabeth Barrett Browning's progressiveness which radicalizes the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric redefining race and gender-roles it is important to consider her transatlantic correspondence to the radical American abolitionists.

CHAPTER TWO

2. HANNAH MORE: FEMININE SENTIMENTAL RHETORIC OF ANTI SLAVERY POETRY

The Abolition Committee commissioned English conservative evangelical writer Hannah More (1745-1833) to write poems to "sensitiz[e] as many as people possible to the barbarities of slavery" and turn their "gaze upon the powerless unfortunate" slaves (Ferguson, 1992: 3-4). Hannah More was a member of the informal Bluestocking Society which referred to a group of middle and upper-class "women intellectuals in England during the late 18th and early 19th century" who continued to stress their virtue and feminine sensitivity" (Bassett, 2009: 77-78). Nevertheless, while stressing their intellect as equals to that of men, they did not call for political and social equality, which would violate their conservative separate spheres ideology (77-78). The female members of this organization stressed their literary interest and, especially, writing became a powerful tool for women writers whose work had the "potential of arousing public feeling to the extent of influencing events in the Parliamentary sphere from which they were excluded by their sex" (Midgley, 1992: 32). With regard to this, Hannah More focuses on the stress that was put onto the sensitivity of women by evangelicals and fulfills to write in the expected 'feminine' way and maintains her evangelical conservative ideal of gender and duty as demanded from her societal role as a female poet.

2.1. THE BROKEN HEART AND DESTRUCTION OF FAMILY LIFE

Hannah More opens her poem with Yamba, the slave woman, who yearns for her beautiful country from which she was forever torn apart:

> In St Lucie's distant isle,
> Still with Afric's love I burn;
> Parted many a thousand mile,
> Never, never to return.
> . . . .
> Born on Afric's golden coast,
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 1-4, 13)

In these very first lines, Hannah More appeals to the readers' intellect and prompts them to distance themselves from the Anglo-Saxon gaze upon Africa, i.e. the white man's depreciation of Africa and their belief to claim it to be inferior in contrast to Christianized and civilized Western countries. Instead, she encourages the reader to adopt the perspective of Yamba who contradicts the biased gaze of Europeans upon Africa by emphasizing Yamba's love for Africa, which she praises as a "golden coast" (More, 1823: l. 13). The color gold evokes the rich and warm light of the sun which makes the Coast an appreciated homeland for Yamba. However, the gold in this stanza has an ambiguous meaning. While Yamba ascribes the beauty of the coast to the sun, the white man's eye was not caught by the sunlight but by the actual gold they found in Africa, which initially attracted the first European colonizers in the late fifteenth century. Through the invocation of 'gold,' Hannah More attempts to appeal to the reader's intellect to remind him of the reason behind the beginning of slavery; when white colonizers not only took hold of the gold in Africa which helped the British Empire to grow its wealth and colonies, but also "[p]arted many" Africans from their loved country to which they could "[n]ever, never . . . return" (l. 3), because colonists depended on their labor to work the soil and grow the crops in the colonies that were then sold to Europe.

Giving a glimpse of the economic and political reason behind the trans-Atlantic slave trade, i.e. the gold which then turns into "filthy gold" a symbol for white man's material obsession and greed − "All for the love of filthy gold" (l. 29) − Hannah More quickly subverts the reader's intellect by drawing attention to the emotional suffering of the slave woman. As Brycchan Carey explains that much of the sentimental literature is "devoted to the stories of woe and moments of distress, and the quintessential sentimental moment is when one or more of the characters begin to weep," which Hannah More clearly implements in the opening stanzas (2005: 18). After having voiced the wrenching apart a female slave forever from her country, her home and her family in order to transport her "thousand mile" (More, 1823: l. 3) across the Atlantic to the colonies, Hannah More heightens the reader's emotional impact and calls for sympathy by portraying Yamba as a weeping character who strongly yearns for "kind death" to come and "give [her] rest" and "ease [her] throbbing breast," because she is a "prisoner" seeking to be free again (ll.

5-8). To trigger an emotional response from her British reader, she continues to vividly describe the psychological and physical brokenness of the enslaved woman:

> Down my cheeks the *tears* are *dripping*,
> *Broken* is my *heart* with grief;
> *Mangled* my poor *flesh* with whipping,
> Come kind death! and bring relief.
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 9-12, *emphasis added*)

As given in the above lines, the sentimental rhetoric appears to be simple and establishes the "sentimental hero," in this case heroine, "more quickly and with greater economy of language; for this reason, tears, sighs, and other indictors of sensibility appear" (Carey, 2005: 73). The broken heart of Yamba not only symbolizes the evils of slavery, but it is also a central theme of the sentimental rhetoric because the "hearts that were meant to be broken were not those of the slaves but those of the middle and upper-class readers of poetry in Britain," explains Brycchan Carey (74). This effort to break the reader's heart is often expected at the moment when the character weeps, and Hannah More, as the sentimental poet, "put[s] a great deal of effort into bringing this about" (18) by depicting Yamba and weeping whose tears are 'dripping' down her 'cheeks' (More, 1823: l. 9).

After Hannah More achieves to soften the reader's heart in order to call for sympathy, she continues to voice her 'femininity' as an anti-slavery campaigner by focusing on the destruction of family life and female suffering under slavery as central themes. Kathleen Campbell asserts that the "theme of the slave family appears throughout the poem in order to strike a resonating emotional chord in a conservative society that highly esteemed the family as a source of affection and education in society" (2015: 22). Hannah More reinforces her femininity through Yamba's following exclamation: "Once I was as blest as you; / Parents tender I could boast, / Husband dear, and children too" (1823: ll. 14-16). The past tense indicates that Yamba compares her former life to that of the British women who are still blessed to have the privilege to enjoy to be with their 'parents,' 'husbands' and 'children.' With the comparative phrase "as you" (More, 1823: l. 14), Hannah More prompts the reader to imagine the very same situation of losing one's own family in order to elicit empathy to feel the pain of losing the loved one which slave women, such as Yamba, have to endure. Therefore, through the description of being a wife and mother as a blessing− "blest as you" (l. 14) −which compares Yamba's former

life to the existing blessed and privileged life of British women as wives and mothers, Hannah More ardently celebrates and upholds the conservative ideals of the proper female roles.

Having the reader engaged with the awareness of possessing and valuing the importance of family and "patriarchal protection" (Midgley, 1992: 201-202), Hannah More continues to focus on the destruction of family life and the separation of a mother from her children. Yamba reports the cruel and criminal moment when "[w]ith no thought of danger nigh // From the bush at even-tide / Rush'd the fierce man-stealing crew" to seize Yamba and her three children when "in [her] hut [she] sat at rest" at night (More, 1823: ll. 21-28). Here, the emphasis is put on the separation of a family which is described as an unexpected action by the slave traders who surprisingly and recklessly kidnap the mother "with the baby at [her] breast" and the "Other two were sleeping by" (ll. 21-22). Hannah More vividly portrays the destruction of a mother-child bond caused by the slave traders who snatch the youngest child away from the mother's breast. The sudden appearance of the slave traders contributes to the complete loss of existence because not only is the mother, Yamba, torn away from her children and her loving husband but also from her house which symbolizes one's own existence, i.e., her comfort, security, and shelter in which love and beliefs are shared by each family member. Eventually, the whole family is completely wrenched apart from each other; Yamba is no longer "blest as you," i.e. the white women (l.14) because she has now lost her parents, her children, and her loving husband (ll. 13-16). By deliberately depicting Yamba as a daughter, wife and mother, Hannah More emphasizes the "shared femaleness" of white women with the enslaved woman (Midgley, 2001: 19-20); and in doing so, she carefully upholds "the ideals of domesticity to compound to the wrongfulness or criminality of slavery as it would rend asunder that which held social life together: family" (Campbell, 2015: 23).

In addition to the invocation of 'shared femaleness' with British women, which emphasizes the close ties between a slave mother and wife to her children and her husband as natural and self-evident, Hannah More attempts to defy the pathologization of the African body. In other words, Hannah More contradicts the commonly held belief of white pro-slavery activists who disregarded African family ties and insisted to pathologize Africans allegedly claiming that they would not feel

the pain of losing family members and their home country in the same way as the Europeans would. The Europeans' indifference concerning the familial lives of Africans was previously voiced in former slave narratives. With regard to this, the sudden act of kidnapping Yamba and her children, echoes the experience of a former slave Olaudah Equiano who recounts the act of being kidnapped and torn away from his family in his narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, the African:*

> One day, when *all our people were gone* out to their works as usual, and only I and my sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and *in a moment seized us both*; and without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they *stopped our mouths,* and ran off with us into the nearest wood. Here they tied our hands, and continued to *carry us as far as they could,* till night came on […] the only comfort we had was in being in one another's arms all that night, and bathing each other with tears. But alas! we were soon deprived of even the small *comfort of weeping together*. The next day proved one of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay *clasped in each other's arms*: It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I *cried* and *grieved* continually; and *for several days* did not eat anything but what they forced into my mouth.
>
> (1815: 37-38*; emphasis added*)

Equiano's first person account of how the slave traders took every possibility to capture African people without giving them a final opportunity to see their parents, husbands, or relatives suggests that Hannah More relied on this previously published slave-narrative in 1789, which became a central document to influence the sentiment of public and politicians who should be sincerely moved to campaign against colonial slavery (Carey, 2010: 230). By relying on a true slave experience and evoking them within her poem, Hannah More establishes her credibility as an anti-slavery campaigner who reminds and awakens readers to see the devastating impact of the British slave trade on the lives and families of the slaves. Within her poem, she also attempts to fulfill the pivotal purpose of such slave narratives within which slaves such as Olaudah Equiano explicitly voiced their feelings in order to show that they, like any other human, naturally felt the 'grief,' had the need to 'cry' and to be 'comforted' when confronted with emotional distress (Equiano, 1815: 37-38).

Hence, as a conservative British writer and female guardian of morality, Hannah More articulates the most feminine suffering at the beginning of her poem: the destruction of the bond between a mother and her children, "a theme that

dominated women's anti-slavery writings throughout the history of anti-slavery movement" (Midgley, 2001: 20). By stressing the emotions of her female slave who grieves for the loss of her children and husband, Hannah More employs the rhetoric of feminine sensitivity which establishes a 'shared femaleness' between the slave and the white women based on traditional female gender-roles as mothers and wives. Ultimately, in the closing lines of the poem, Hannah More empathically proclaims patriarchal protection as a privilege that every woman should enjoy, white and black, as given in Yamba's final desire to be reunited with her husband in her afterlife:

> Still shalt see the man I love;
> Join him to the Christian band,
> Guide his Soul to Realms above
> . . . . . .
> There they dwell with him for ever
> There '*the weary are at rest*'
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 182-184, 187-188)

Thus, throughout the poem, Hannah More establishes her respectability as a female writer in the male dominated anti-slavery movement by voicing and extending the domestic duties of British women to female slaves because slavery destroys and hinders them to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers to take proper care of their children and enjoy the protection of their husband.

2.2. FEMALE FLOGGING AND DEGRADATION

Besides the separation of a mother from her children and wrenching apart slave families caused by the reckless pursuit of profit, Hannah More focuses on two other main aspects of sufferings of their own sex which encapsulate the rhetoric of feminine sensitivity, i.e. female flogging, and moral degradation. Yamba vividly recounts every instance of physical suffering and moral degradation aboard the slave ship where slaves were "[s]hrieking, sickening, fainting, dying" because slave traders treated them similar to live stock that could be"[c]ramm'd […] down a Slave Ship's hold, / Where were Hundreds stow'd like [Yamba]. // Naked on the platform lying" (More, 1823: ll. 31-35). Their situation was worsened by reluctant overseers who solely tried to save their cargo of slaves and make them look strong and healthy for the awaiting slave auctions. Slaves who refused to eat, because they felt sick from the sea voyage and the putrid air below deck, were whipped with the "Cat" or the

"Cat O'Nine Tails" ─ a type of whip with nine chains or straps with pieces of sharp metal on the ends which was used to implement extreme physical punishment (Spikes, 2014: 16) ─ in order to be forced to eat:

> Nauseous horse-beans they bring nigh,
> Sick and sad we cannot eat;
> Cat must cure the sulks, they cry,
> Down their throats we'll force the meat.
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 41-44)

Another instance, when slaves were whipped and morally degraded, is given through Yamba's recollection of the practice of making the 'sad' slave women dance on shipboard as a form of exercise and an attempt to portray a merry picture to the captain and the slave traders: "Now, like brutes, they make us prance; / Smack the cat about the deck / And in scorn they bid us dance (More, 1823: ll. 38-40). By aligning dancing with the act of smacking the cat, Hannah More echoes the notorious incident of Captain John Kimber who on board of a British slave ship flogged a young slave woman to death because she refused to dance. Hannah More employs these overt descriptions of the physical and mental abuse by the overseers who viewed slaves as cargo that could be 'cramm'd' down or as 'brutes' that needed to be whipped, in order to voice the feelings of despair of Yamba and to dramatize the themes of female flogging and moral degradation (More, 1823: ll. 31, 38-39).

Yamba's unbearable physical and emotional pain peaks when she, eventually, praises death as the only escape for a slave to gain freedom: "Come, kind death! and bring relief!" (l. 4). The wish for death among slaves was common and often tried to be achieved by any chance possible. It is known that some Africans who were brought upon deck to get some fresh air and forced to exercise tried to escape by jumping into the sea because they "prefer[ed] death to such a life of misery" (Equiano, 1815: 57). Enduring the hardship of slavery, Yamba's desperate situation drives her to celebrate death as a means to achieve happiness, as she voices in the following lines when she sees her "poor child" who "was cold and dead" (More, 1823: l. 48):

> Happy, happy, there she lies;
> Thou shalt feel the lash no more
> . . . . . .
> Thee, sweet infant, none shall sell;
> Thou hast gain'd a wat'ry grave;
> Clean escap'd the tyrants fell,
> While thy mother lives a slave. (More, 1823: ll. 49-56)

While Yamba celebrates death as a path to happiness and freedom, the water, which unfortunately transports the slave vessels, becomes the only means for many Africans to gain freedom by leaping overboard into the water and escape the tortures and diseases that regularly plagued the slave ships. Moreover, the dispatchment of Yamba's child's dead body over the side of the vessel, just like many other slave bodies, into the "wat'ry grave" without a proper ceremony "ere [they] reached the destin'd shore" suggests, once more, the slave traders' lack of respect and the ultimate humiliation of slaves who were merely considered as cargo (ll. 51- 54).

This humiliation and suffering make Yamba "[p]oor and wounded, faint and sick" and drive her also to yearn for death (l. 65). She recalls that "mourning" her "wretched state," she "[o]nce in dusk of evening late / Far from home [she] dar'd to stray" (ll. 73-76) because her master lashes her and leaves her back "scarr'd" (l. 62), provides "bad and stinted" (l. 63) food, and demands her to work under the scorching sun: "All expos'd to burning sky / Massa bids me grass to pick / And I now am near to die" (ll. 65-67). When she arrives at the "roaring sea" (l. 78) with "impious haste" (l. 77) she "[l]ong'd to cast [herself] in to die" for "Death itself [she] long'd to taste (ll. 79-80).

Throughout the first part of the poem, Hannah More's feminine rhetoric illustrates female suffering ─ violence, despair, pain and the moral degradation of a slave woman, mother and wife to property ─ as unethical in order to foster the sympathy of the British men and women readers for the abolition of slavery. By emphasizing the slave woman's brokenness and despair, Hannah More also attempts to fulfill a didactic purpose within her poem to defeat the stereotypical representation of Africans as lacking emotional and physical sensibility, which legitimized the Europeans' absence of sympathy with the enslaved and created a sense of justification of slavery and its cruel act of dehumanization.

2.3. WOMEN'S ANTI-SLAVERY ACTIVISM A RELIGIOUS PHILANTHROPY

In addition to focusing on female suffering, the distinctive feminine anti-slavery rhetoric also required women campaigners to promote anti-slavery as religious mission, which needed to reform white men's anomalies and "support black Christian education" in the colonies, in order to reconcile their public activism with their role as guardians of morality (Midgley, 1992: 199). This "provided a way of distancing anti-slavery from politics at a time when political activism by women was considered improper" (91). Hannah More also adheres to this ideology of male leaders within the anti-slavery moment and shows in her poem that her female anti-slavery activism was "a religious and moral rather than a political issue" (91).

2.3.1. Female Concern with the Anomalies of Professed Male Christians

Although Hannah More alludes to the economic spirit of expansion and material obsession, she explicitly criticizes the slave-traders who directly inflict the cruelties upon the slaves. Midgley quotes an appeal from the female abolitionist campaigners to the professed Christian planters, in which they voice their concern with the oppression and treatment of slave women by European men as a 'horrific anomaly'; "in Countries which acknowledge British Laws, which are governed, not by some-half-wild, benighted native Race' but by *Christian men* 'connected with us by the closest ties'" (Townshed qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 97; *emphasis added;* Midgley, 2001: 12). With regard to this assertion, Hannah More exhibits a concern regarding Christian men within her poem. Interpreting the stanzas in the poem, one can see that in addition to the depiction of the slave woman's despair and grief, Hannah More attacks the hypocritical slave-traders and slave holders who are responsible for the immoral and callous acts, such as the moral degradation of the enslaved women's soul and body.

The slave traders' greed for profit during slave auctions turns them into a "fierce man-stealing crew" (More, 1823: l. 26) and "tyrants" (l. 55) with a "love of filthy Gold" (l. 29) who dare to treat humans of the darker race like a commodity that can be "stow'd" (More, 1823: l. 32) and "cramm'd down on a slave ship" (l.31). Their insensitivity towards Africans allows them to drive them "like cattle to a fair"

(l. 57) to “sell [them] young and old” (l. 58), and even to tear “[c]hild from Mother” (l. 59) for the mere purpose to make profit. The description of the slave traders and slaveholders as “tyrants” (l. 55) in relation with denouncing adjectives for their characters such as “fierce” (l. 26) “filthy” (l.29) and “savage” (l. 37) shows Hannah More’s concern for the ‘anomalies’ of the white slave holders in the colonies who share their roots and the Christian faith with the non-slave holding people in England. Hence, whereas the Africans were usually viewed by the Europeans as savage, or, “some-half-wild, benighted native Race’” (97) because they lacked the knowledge of the Christian faith, Hannah More explicitly attacks these white Christian men as hypocrites who do not act according to Christian law and morality but rather exhibit actions and behaviors similar to those “heathen” Africans and their inferior culture (54). The denunciation of the inhumanity of slaveholders and slave-traders is given through Yamba’s remarks of them as “Whity men” (More, 1823: l. 17) and “tyrants” (l. 55) whose practices are “Savage murder” (l. 70) and a “Deed of shame” (l. 36) which have to be brought to an end through reinstating true Christian moral values:

> Cease, ye British sons of murder!
> Cease from forging’s Afric’s chain
> Mock your Saviour’s name no further,
> Cease your savage lust of gain.
>
> (ll. 161-164)

Through the accusation and the advice of Yamba to restore the Christian belief system among those slave traders, Hannah More not only distinguishes herself and her readership from those unethical and unchristian men, but she also establishes her anti-slavery activism as a Christian mission that has to reform those slave traders’ behavior against women slaves.

With regard to this, Hannah More’s political attack is solely directed at the colonial British Laws abroad which permitted slavery within the colonies up until 1833, when Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act. The slave woman’s criticism of the colonial British Laws shows its racially unjust protection of the people within the colonies: While the laws protect the master who will find himself easily acquitted under British laws of murdering slaves (Ferguson, 2014: 218), it reduces slaves to property and does not protect them from the inhumane cruelties as voiced by Yamba:

> What, and if to death he [the master] send me
> Savage murder tho' it be
> British laws shall ne'er befriend me,
> They protect not slaves like me.
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 69-72)

Such inhumane conditions and slave laws did not grant any protection to the slaves but, instead, legally dehumanized Africans who in the eyes of their slave owners had only a monetary value similar to that of livestock. Nevertheless, since Yamba was transported across the Atlantic to a colony far away from England, Hannah More laments the colonial British Laws which are unfortunately governed by the professed Christians who are far away from England and, therefore, estranged from the Christianity as it exists among the conservative evangelical people in England.

Although Hannah More voices a brief political criticism concerning the British Laws abroad, she quickly yields back to her religious rhetoric towards the slave drivers who are advised to "[m]ock [their] Saviour's name no further" (1823: l. 163). In doing so, Hannah More proves her commitment to her Christian faith and her attempt to reach out to these white European-men who lack true Christian values. Through the accusation of the "British sons of murder!" (l. 161) and their "savage lust of gain" (l. 164), Hannah More takes a religious approach in order to persuade her reader that "a combination of legal reform and the spread of Christianity" was needed "in order to eradicate the barbaric practices" (Midgley 2001: 11) of these Christian men who were connected to the British people "by the closest ties" (Townshed qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 97).

Thus, in her poetic lines Hannah More voices the slave holders' failure to fulfill their patriarchal roles as protectors of women. Correspondingly, Midgley explains that slave holders were deliberately "represented as anomalies who must be reformed because they stand in the way of the missionary project, and principles of anti-slavery and of white racial superiority are combined" (97). Hence through the representation of slaveholder as anomalous whites who need to be reformed, Hannah More establishes her anti-slavery activism as a missionary project which needs to promote Christianity among these slave holders because they abuse and mistreat women; and in doing so, they do not act as good Christian gentleman.

2.3.2. White Superiority: The Christian Missionary and Hope for Freedom

While the first half of the poem focuses on the feminine rhetoric of sensibility to portray the three main sufferings of women under slavery, the separation of a mother from her children, flogging, and moral degradation which were attributed to the unchristian behaviors of European men, Hannah More subsequently draws the reader to a good "English Missionary" (More, 1823: l. 82) man who saves Yamba's life in the moment when her master's cruel and inhumane treatment goad her to attempt suicide. The Christian missionary who saves Yamba from this sinful death enables Hannah More to use this moment of Yamba's distress as the key moment to reinforce "Christian signification onto the slave's story" (Miller, 2014: 642).

Just when Yamba "[l]ong'd to cast [herself] in" (More, 1823: l. 80) "[t]ow'rds the roaring Sea" (l. 78) to die, she meets this "English Missonary Good" (l. 82) man who has the "Bible book in hand" (l. 83). The contrast between the good Christian and the professed Christian is clearly given in the lines when Yamba praises the missionary who is "*[l]ed by pity* from afar / He had left his native ground; / Thus if *some inflict* a scar, / *Others* fly to *cure* the wound" (ll. 85-88; *emphasis added*) of slaves such as Yamba: "Strait he pull'd me up from the shore, / Bid me no self-murder do" (ll. 89-90). This description of the missionary coming from England reverberates and contradicts the former description of the "Whity Man" (l. 17) who comes "from far" (l.17) and "with the help of British Tar / Buys up human flesh and blood" (ll. 19-20) to "inflict the scar" (l. 87) on slave women. In contrast to the unsympathetic slave drivers, Hannah More ascribes the feeling of 'pity,' which the supporters of slavery lack, to the good missionary man in order to appeal to benevolent Christian readers to be "[l]ed by pity" (l. 85) and be impelled to advocate missionary works and consider the abolition of slavery as a Christian duty.

After the missionary rescues Yamba, he leads her to "his cot" (l. 93) where he "[s]ooth'd and pity'd all [her] woe" (l. 94), and advises her to continue her life until the end even if she has to continue to suffer under slavery: "Told me 'twas Christian's lot / Much suffer here below" (ll. 95-96). Within these poetic lines, Hannah More evokes the Biblical figure Daniel who with other Israelites was taken into exile to serve the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1: 1-6). Despite persecution and oppression that he and his people should suffer, Daniel maintains his

faith which gives him hope that God will bring relief. God speaks to him as follows: "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12: 13). Analogically, Yamba internalizes the missionary's Christian teachings and submissively accepts to endure the sufferings under slavery until the end because she begins to believe that once she dies she will rise to heaven where she will receive what God has appointed for her: "Worn, indeed, with grief and pain, / Death I now will welcome in: / O, the heavenly prize to gain! / O, to 'scape the power of Sin!" (More, 1823: ll. 145-148). In doing so, the missionary through teaching her "to pray and praise" (l. 142) draws Yamba's hope for relief to the afterlife "when life is o'er" (l. 91):

> There no fiend again shall sever
> Those whom God hath join'd and blest;
> There they dwell with Him for ever,
> There '*the weary are at rest'* "
>
> (ll. 185-188).

While Yamba previously lamented her slave status, her "grief is turn'd to rapture" (l. 127) when she begins to bless her "cruel capture" (l. 125) as a vehicle for her introduction to "Christianity and hence to a life of salvation" (Ferguson, 1992: 218): "Now let Yamba, too, adore / Gracious Heaven's mysterious plan; /. . . // Now I'll bless my cruel capture / (Hence I've known a Saviour's name)" (More, 1823: ll. 121-126). After becoming acquainted with God and Jesus, she forgives her "Massas' sin" (l. 116) in her hope to receive God's "Mercy sweet" (l. 115). She then advises slaveowners to repent their sin in order to be offered God's "pardon" and his divine Grace, i.e. to be regenerated through God into a virtuous Christian: "E'en to Massa pardon's offer'd:/ O, if Massa would repent!" (ll. 107-8). Forgiving her master's sins and proclaiming "God for Grace divine," Yamba internalizes Christianity and celebrates herself as a "convert" (l. 129) which she gained through the missionary's teaching as follows (ll. 129-130):

> now baptiz'd am I
> By good Missionary Man;
> . . . . . .
> Teach me now to pray and praise;
> Joy and Glory in my Lord,
> Trust and serve him all my days.
>
> (ll. 137-138, 142-144)

Yamba's celebration of her Christian faith is further emphasized through her wish that her "native home" (l. 177) should also have the "chance" (l. 179) to be Christianized by "[s]ome dear Missionary good" (l. 180). Yamba wishes that these missionaries go to her country and "publish '*Peace on Earth*'" (l. 171) in order to reform the professed Christians, who inflict the cruelties upon slaves so that "*Afric might be free*" (l. 160). She also expresses a desire that her people and her "spouse" whom she left "behind" (l. 155) should be Christianized:

> Go proclaim "*good-will to men*."
> Where ye once have carried slaughter,
> Vice, and Slavery, and Sin;
> Seiz'd on Husband, Wife, and Daughter
> Let the Gospel enter in.
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 172-176)

Having her husband converted, Yamba aspires that his "soul" will be guided to "realms above" (l. 184) where she will be able to "[j]oin him to the Christian band" in the afterlife (l. 183). Hence, by calling on the "British Sons of murder!" (l. 161) to "[c]ease from forging's Afric's chain" and to"[c]ease [their] lust of gain" (ll. 162, 164), and instead putting an emphasis on the necessity to let "the Gospel enter in" (l. 176) as epitomized in Yamba's celebration of Christianity, Hannah More creates a religious appeal to motivate the British readership to take up the anti-slavery cause as their religious duty. In doing so, she establishes within her poem the sense that anti-slavery as a religious duty lies within the womanly sphere; therefore, enables women to engage in the cause against slavery and believe that African people are in need for them and their Christian religion which gives hope for freedom.

Following this, Hannah More deliberately employs a religious rhetoric which depicts a "good Missionary Man" (More, 1823: l. 138) who saves Yamba, the enslaved woman, and turns her grief into rapture and herself into a grateful convert who worships the Christian faith (ll.137-138, 142-144). Thereby, Hannah More, like many other Britons, expresses the "virtue of colonialism," observes Ferguson, which "[u]nlike slavery, . . . is a desirable institution" which christianizes Slaves and provides them with hope for spiritual freedom (Ferguson, 1992: 14). Within the poetic lines, Hannah More reverberates her evangelical faith by going into "detail of religion, mentioning the Bible, the missionary, Jesus, and heaven" (Kroubo, 2010: 7)

in order to appeal to the religious sentimentality of the reader and to align her public activism with her traditional role as a Guardian of morality and religion. Hence, Hannah More as a female anti-slavery poet successfully establishes her anti-slavery activism as religiously and morally inspired and reassures that she writes within the secure bounds of her womanly sphere.

2.3.3. Hannah More's 'Maternalistic' Approach: Black Inferiority and the Passive Slave

Hannah More's effort to advocate the anti-slavery issue as religious philanthropy in order to support missionary work in the colonies and in Africa strongly relies on stressing the passivity of the inferior 'heathen' African culture, which is reflected through Yamba's celebration and submissive acceptance of Christianity. With regard to this, although the missionary gives Yamba a sense of recognition, shows his sympathy, and evokes a feeling of spiritual equality in the afterlife, "the assertion of black humanity and spiritual equality, however, [goes] hand-in-hand with a belief in white cultural superiority and support for the imperial Christian mission" (Midgley,. 1992: 98).

Hannah More elicits this superiority of the white culture through Yamba's description of good Christians and their religion in laudatory terms, as follows: "good Missionary man" (More, 1823: l. 138), "Bible good and true" (l. 92), "Lord of Glory" (l. 100) "Gracious Heaven" (l. 122), "Joy and Glory in my Lord" (l. 143), "Trust" (l. 144). In contrast to the good Christian who can read the Bible, Hannah More portrays Yamba as uneducated who does not know to speak proper English, nor can she read or understand the Bible. Hannah More uses stylistic devices such as apocopes: "Mass*a*" (More l. 61), "Afric's" (l. 2), "thr*o*' the guilt" (l.124); and syncopes: "*E'en* to Massa" (l. 187), "Sooth*'d* and pity*'d*" (l. 94), "Tow*'*rds" (l. 78), in order to reproduce the broken English of Yamba which becomes an indicator of her inferiority (Kroubo, 2010: 7). Along with the use of such broken syntax and dialect, a more obvious indication of Yamba's inferior intellectuality and her poor abilities to understand the Bible is given in the following lines: "English Missionary Good / He had Bible book in hand, / Which poor me no understood" (More, 1823: l. 83-84). Hence, Hannah More intentionally uses this 'exotic' diction to emphasize the "alleged 'stupidity' of slaves", as Moira Ferguson says it, in order to portray African

people as inferior people who cannot speak properly on their own behalf and, therefore, rely on the help of British intervention (qtd. in Kroubo, 2010: 11). Instead of displaying Africans as independent and intellectual equals, Hannah More focuses on the suffering and 'stupidity' of her female slave and upholds the stereotypical image of African men and women as racially inferior, "weak and helpless…which was predominant in British society" (Midgley, 1992: 95). In addition to reinforcing Yamba's 'stupidity' to emphasize her cultural inferiority, and her dependence on British intervention, Hannah More envisions the slave woman as a passive and helpless victim who silently endures her suffering as a 'sad wrong' like Jesus, as given in the following lines: "Told me then of God's dear, / Strange and wond'rous is the story)/ What sad wrongs to him done" (More, 1823: ll. 97-100).

The illustration of Yamba as a passive and suffering slave reflects the conservative anti-slavery approach which associated the physical suffering of the slave with "Christian patience and . . . Christ-like self-sacrifice" (Midgley, 1992: 144). This image of the passive slave also correlates with Josiah Wedgewood's famous jasper cameo featuring a fettered and kneeling slave in prayer that became the "emblem of the fettered victim of slavery used by the British anti-slavery movement since the 1780s" (144). With the evocation of Yamba as a 'kneeling' slave crying for help, Hannah More employs a 'maternalistic' approach which visualizes black women as submissive and powerless victims unable to overthrow slavery (201-202). This image underscores slave women's dependency on white female philanthropists as their maternal protectors, in this case Hannah More as the poet, and empowers them to speak on behalf of these black women who lack male protection and are unable to speak for themselves.

Thus, the image that arises within the poem "The Sorrows of Yamba, Or the Negro Woman's Lamentation," concerning the relation between Hannah More as the free empowered female poet and Yamba as the enslaved inferior dependent victim, is not that of sisters but rather that of a "mother and child" (Midgley, 1992: 203). Moira Ferguson, accordingly explains that:

> the author-narrator turns a dominative gaze upon these powerless unfortunates in what amounts to a paradigmatic first encounter between a female author, handpicked by the Abolition Committee, and the construct of a depersonalized, homogenized slaves. Charitably motivated, the genealogist of the new motifs pronounces what 'the slave' is, since slaves cannot speak or act on their own behalf. This distillation and visibility of the representative slave attracts supports to a now identifiable, worthy cause. In political

> terms the strategy is sound. The attitudes such a strategy propagates, however, reinforces traditional perspectives on Africans. What is said about 'the slave' becomes what the slave is − a non-sovereign, passive, alien individual in desperate need of European allies.
>
> (Ferguson, 1992: 4)

In other words, Hannah More creates a paradigmatic image of a passive slave and establishes through her poetic 'dominative gaze' "white women as the protectors of powerless black people" who have the power to bestow the "blessings of freedom, Christianity and western civilisation on her enslaved colonial offspring" (Midgley, 1992: 203). Through the deliberate depiction of Yamba as passive and submissive slave women, Hannah More empowers herself to participate in the anti-slavery campaigns but, simultaneously, she consciously justifies her public activism as the result of white middle-class women's moral and religious mission to help those suffering passive women slaves. Adopting a 'maternalistic' approach which rests upon the inferiority and passivity of women slaves, Hannah More not only maintains a white cultural superiority in support for the Christian mission, but she also reinforces female submissiveness by reassuring that white middle-class women's public activism adheres to their role as Guardians of morality and religion that seeks to relief slave women's suffering.

2.4. CONCLUSION: HANNAH MORE'S HIERARCHAL FREEDOM

Hannah More's fear of the revolution spreading to England after the French Revolution, her loyalty to her evangelical faith and the patriarchal society of Britain creates a rather grateful and passive slave woman. She employs a 'feminine' sentimental anti-slavery rhetoric to show her concern for female suffering and aims to appeal to the emotions and religious sensibility of the readers in order to establish female anti-slavery activism as a Christian mission and "as the product of women's desire to extend to enslaved women their own 'privileges' as British women whose 'proper' place was in the home" under the protection of their husband (Midgley, 1992: 199).

With regard to this, Yamba's final wish to be reunited with her husband and live together with God in heaven where "*the weary are at rest"* (More, 1823: l. 188) reinforces female submissiveness:

> Still shalt see the man I love the man
> Join him to a Christian band
> Guide his soul to realms above.
>
> There no Fiend again shall sever
> Those whom God hath join'd and blest;
> There they dwell with him for ever,
>
> (More, 1823: ll. 182-186)

Similar to the beginning of the poem when Yamba laments her loss of family and husband ―"I was blest as you; / Parents tender I could boast / Husband dear, and children too" (More, 1823: ll. 14-16) ― Hannah More reverberates the importance of familial life and women's dependence on patriarchal protection at the end of her poem through Yamba's wish to be reunited and rest with her husband as Christian converts in heaven. Through this hierarchal vision of freedom at the end of the poem, Hannah More idealizes the figures of God and husband; whereby she, once more, confirms that her public activism rests upon her desire to act on behalf of slave women in order to extend them white women's privilege to live as Christians under the patriarchal protection of a husband. Accordingly, Clare Midgley observes that the vision of emancipation of conservative female abolitionists emphasizes the separate-spheres ideology rather than challenging male domination or women's rights to equality:

> British women expressed their desire to emancipate enslaved women so that they were free to fulfill their domestic roles and duties as wives and mothers, living as Christians in nuclear families under the protection of their husband. This is what they meant they talked of extending their privileges as British women to enslaved women.
>
> (2001: 17)

The freedom that Hannah More grants to the grateful and passive woman slave is a hierarchal freedom which reinforces female social submissiveness to men and also upholds traditional gender-roles. With regard to this, reverberating Hannah More's following utterance that "Christianity had exalted women to true and undisputed dignity; in Christ Jesus, as there is neither 'rich nor poor', 'bond nor free,' so there is neither 'male nor female,'" buttresses Hannah More's hierarchal vision of freedom because she, as an evangelical, believed in spiritual rather than earthly equality (More qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 29).

Thus, promoting this hierarchal vision of freedom in combination with her 'maternalistic' approach to anti-slavery, Hannah More fulfills a didactic purpose

within her poem which expresses slave women's dependency on British female philanthropists to advocate anti-slavery as a Christian mission which seeks to reform and civilize the colonies and promote family life and gender roles. Hannah More's feminine anti-slavery rhetoric revolves around the sufferings of Yamba, a woman and mother slave, the disruption of family life under slavery, the appreciation of the Christian faith, and the idealization of patriarchal protection. Considering this, it can be inferred that Hannah More maintains the inferiority of both women and blacks within her poem as the result of her conservative belief in the separate-spheres ideology. Hence, adopting a conservative feminine anti-slavery rhetoric Hannah More appears to be very self-conscious about defining her role as a woman within anti-slavery movement because she repeatedly justifies her public activism as an extension of her traditional gender-role as Guardian of morality and religion.

CHAPTER THREE

3. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING: THE RADICALIZATION OF THE FEMININE ANTI-SLAVERY RHETORIC

Elizabeth Barrett Browning within her poem evokes the image of the 'kneeling' slave woman at Pilgrim's Point who addresses the Pilgrim-spirits and God. This 'kneeling' of the slave woman underneath the paternalistic figures made some critics such as scholar Sarah Brophy argue that she through "[t]he presentation of the Pilgrim Fathers and God as stable authorities also suggests that 'The Runaway Slave' engenders a conservative politics" (Brophy, 1998: 278). However, while Hannah More's 'maternalistic' approach to anti-slavery invokes the image of a passive female slave, a conventional feminine anti-slavery trope within literary works to justify women's involvement in the politically male dominated anti-slavery cause, Elizabeth Barrett Browning ignites a "renewed political vigor" within her poem by presenting an eloquent and insurrectionary slave woman 'kneeling' underneath the Pilgrims and God (Miller, 2014: 641).

3.1. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S EGALITARIAN APPROACH: 'CURSING' THE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL STATUS QUO

Barrett Browning opens her poem by positioning her runaway slave at Pilgrim's Point which is the "mark besides the shore" (Browning, 1900: l. 1) where the "first white pilgrim[s]" (l. 2) arrived in 1620, in America, after being religiously persecuted by the Church of England in their attempt to purify it from Roman catholic influence. As indicated in the title "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in contrast to Hannah More's tile "The Sorrows of Yamba; or the Negro Woman's Lamentation," does not immediately feminize her poem by introducing a female slave character, but rather attempts to show her political concern for the denial of freedom to all the slaves. This political implication is epitomized by placing a "Runaway Slave" at the symbolic birth place of American freedom, the Pilgrim's Point in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It is not until stanza nine

that she establishes the speaker of her poem as a woman slave: “once, I laughed in girlish glee” (Browning, 1900: l. 58). In addition, as already indicated in the title of the poem, in depicting a “Runaway Slave,” Elizabeth Barrett Browning implies through the ‘fugitive status’ the slave woman’s rebellious potential to act towards racial injustices; thereby, she does not evoke Hannah More’s conservative feminine image of the slave woman Yamba who solely laments her sorrows.

At Pilgrim’s Point, the runaway slave woman recalls the historical significance of the mark as the beginning of American freedom where the pilgrims “bended knee, / Where exile turned to ancestor / And God was thanked for liberty” (ll. 2-4). These lines evoke a period of time when the exiled Pilgrims from England sailed to America where they founded the first permanent colony in Plymouth, Massachusetts, based on the principles of liberty and, thus, became the ancestors of the American people and their freedom as voiced by the runaway slave as follows: “this land / Ye blessed in freedom’s evermore” (ll. 20-21). Similar to the first pilgrims, the female runaway slave re-enacts their arrival through aligning her posture to that of the pilgrims by “bend[ing] [her] knee down on this mark” (l. 6), but, instead of gaining liberty, the runaway slave reports that she is being hunted down by the Pilgrim’s descendants:

> O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
> . . . . . .
> O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
> All night long from the whips of one
> Who in your names work sin and woe
>
> (ll. 8, 12-14)

She then voices that the sole reason for her persecution and confinement to slavery is her blackness: “I am black, I am black” (l. 57).

By using the apostrophe “O pilgrim souls,” Elizabeth Barrett Browning demonstrates that the pilgrims are absent spirits whose morality and ideal of liberty no longer continue to exist in their descendants, especially the slaveholders and the bounty hunters; who “work in [the pilgrims’] names sin and woe” (l. 14). Nevertheless, while Hannah More presents Yamba as inferior to the Christian missionary who is culturally superior to her, Elizabeth Barrett Browning portrays her runaway slave woman to be equal to the absent religious pilgrim-spirits. To do so, Barrett Browning depicts the pilgrim-spirits as seemingly deracialized and absent spirits who lack a body to be punished by the slaveholders which enables the

runaway slave to establish a communal bond with them (Walker, 2007: par. 14). This bond between the pilgrims and the runaway slave "undermines the tenets of institutional slavery" and provides another source of sympathy besides God because they "hear the woman's plea" (Walker, 2007: pars. 13-14). Walker writes that "she is no longer on a solitary journey. Simultaneously, in the pilgrims, the runaway slave has new modes of communal identification and a precedent of a marginalized people removing their fetters in the north" (par. 14). By aligning her posture to that of the pilgrims and addressing them as kindred spirits who listen to her story about being hunted down with the whip, she "attests to [the pilgrim's] kinship with tales of persecution" (pars. 14, 16): "O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you! /. . . / O Pilgrims, I have gasped and run" (Browning, 1900: ll. 8, 12). Hence, when compared to Hannah More's 'maternalistic' approach to anti-slavery which establishes an unequal position between the civilized missionary and Yamba who together with the other 'heathen' slaves and the savage professed Christian slaveholders need to be Christianized, Elizabeth Barrett Browning adopts an egalitarian approach and elevates her 'kneeling' slave woman to form a solidary union with the Pilgrims "that is not predicated upon racial identification" and considers her "as a modern version of a pilgrim seeking spiritual and political deliverance in unfamiliar territory" (Walker, 2007: pars. 14, 16). Acknowledging the Pilgrim-spirits' "political idealism" and regarding the slave woman "as a modern version of a pilgrim" (par. 16), the runaway slave woman is depicted as an equal who emphasizes the political idealism of freedom as an unalienable right.

In addition to repositioning herself "literally and figuratively . . . closer to the values and venues of freedom than her oppressors," the fugitive slave woman's "rendition of events attempts to disrupt the 'direct lineage' between the master and their ancestors" who share "common race and national heritage" (par. 17). This said, Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses the pilgrim-spirits as the slave woman's focus to underline the pilgrims as the founders of freedom which has been corrupted by their descendants' racial ideologies which repress slaves and deny them freedom, as expressed in the following lines: "But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away / Through the earliest streaks of morn: / . . . / Ha! − in their stead; their hunter sons / Ha, ha! they are on me − they hunt in a ring" (Browning, 1900: ll. 200-201, 204-205). Slinn explains that "[s]eparately, the two sets of figures," i.e. the pilgrims and hunter sons,

"represent the inheritance of freedom the speaker [of the poem] should have received and the inheritance of slavery she actually received (2003: 81). Hence, through evoking the arrival of the pilgrims at Pilgrim's Point by depicting a 'kneeling' slave woman, Elizabeth Barrett Browning draws the focus to freedom as the cornerstone of American history and shows its corruption by racial ideologies.

After the runaway establishes herself as the "true descendant of [the pilgrims'] religious community" (Walker, 2007: par. 16-17) who evokes and seeks to perpetuate the pilgrims' idealism of freedom, the second purpose of 'kneeling' down is to oppose in the names of the pilgrims her 'curse' against their blessing: "And lift my black face, my black hand, / Here, in your names, to curse this land / Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore" (Browning, 1900: ll. 19-21). Although Elizabeth Barrett Browning depicts a 'kneeling' slave woman who emulates the pilgrims' arrival in the opening of the poem, she modifies this historical repetition through a fugitive slave who has the power to 'curse' America for its corrupted racial ideologies. With regard to this, Slinn argues that "[t]his slave's genuflection is an act of bitter accusation. It is hardly supplicatory and certainly not performed in humble obedience", but it rather introduces the "poem's obvious protest theme about freedom and slavery" (2003: 57, 59). Similarly, Miller writes that the 'kneeling' slave woman's 'curse':

> is radical in the purest sense of the word: it is 'relating to a root or to roots.' It casts off the contemporary status quo in search of a purer exemplar, in this case embodied by the lost meaning of the pilgrim fathers' names. The slave's act is also revolutionary, it involves the 'recurrence ... of a point or period of time' from which American society has departed, the turn to a prior and higher authority that, Raymond Williams has argued, has historically divided truly revolutionary movements from mere rebellions.
>
> (2014: 641)

In other words, the 'curse' represents Elizabeth Barrett Browning's political rhetoric intended to embarrass Americans about the failure to uphold their ideals of freedom.

In addition, Elizabeth Barrett Browning places the 'curse' within a religious framework and evokes the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which views anti-slavery as a religious issue. Hereby, she draws the reader's attention to the pilgrims, "a point or period of time" when a "purer exemplar" of authority existed (Miller, 2014: 641). Historically, pilgrims "believed that the worship of God must progress from the individual directly to God" ("Faith of"). To establish this direct worship of God, the pilgrims attempted to purify religious beliefs and practices in the Anglican Church

which they regarded as corruption such as “candles, incense, altars, priests, prayer-books,” vestments, stained glass windows, the organ, and “anything else borrowed from the Catholic church” (Bauer, 2004: 38). Analogically to the pilgrims, the fugitive slave’s genuflection at Pilgrim’s Point and her subsequent enunciation of her ‘curse’ encapsulates Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s political attempt to make Americans aware of the status quo in America which is corrupted by racial ideologies. Thus, the slave woman’s ‘curse’ calls for a similar purification, i.e. revolutionary changes which eliminate racial ideologies within the Christian religion and America’s laws and grant slaves their right to equality and liberty.

The ‘kneeling’ female slave and her ‘curse’ in this poem demonstrate Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s innovative progressiveness of the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which praises a rather liberal Christian religion and aligns itself with the radical rhetoric of American abolitionists to whom “the pilgrim was a symbol of the liberty they felt was a universal right” (Walker, 2007: par. 12). Praising liberty as a universal right and cursing the status quo, Elizabeth Barrett Browning adopts the egalitarian approach of William Llyod Garrison, who believed that it was necessary to expose the flaws and ambiguities within the American Constitution and that the only solution for renewed political vigor was the application of moral and political pressure “to operate upon public sentiment” (qtd. in Osborn, 2010: 71). Garrison declared that “[m]oral influence, when vigorous exercised . . . is irresistible” and will lead to the amending of the Constitution and grant slaves their unalienable rights to life, liberty and, pursue of happiness (qtd. in Osborn, 2010: 71).

3.1.1. Defying the Inferior and ‘Stupid’ Slave Image: Inverting Black and White

After kneeling down and asserting the runaway slave woman’s equality to the pilgrim-spirits and regarding the slave’s right to liberty as an unalienable right endowed by God, the runaway slave addresses God and questions the racial ideologies which allegedly claim that black people are inferior to the “white creatures”:

> I am black; I am black;
> And yet God made me *they say,*
> But if he did so, smiling back
> He *must* have cast His work away
> Under the feet of His white creatures;

With a look of scorn, − that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

(Browning, 1900: ll. 22-28; *emphasis added*)

The runaway slave's repetition that she is "black" resonates with the man-made images of good and evil which were created through the first settlers' account of Africans as 'heathen' and 'savages,' which were later often used by pro-slavery activists. Psychiatrist Thomas S. Szasz in his essay "Blackness and Madness" explains that "Americans have thus used blackness and madness as their standards and transcendent symbol of evil, and whiteness and sanity as their standards and transcendent symbols of good" (1970: 74). On the basis of their 'blackness,' Africans were associated with inferiority, madness, and evil (74). Since these images were created solely on the basis of the white man's speech act, Elizabeth Barrett Browning echoes this assumption through the fugitive slave's remark of "they say" (Browning, 1900: l. 23), which serves as a reference to the white man's act of speaking to define the darker race. In addition to these man-made images, the invocation of "they say" also refers to the historical fact that slave supporters relied on the negative portrayal of black people by preaching and citing passages in the Christian Bible, such as the Curse of Cain and Curse of Ham, which allegedly viewed blacks as a cursed and inferior race in order to maintain their enslavement (Bacon, 2007: 224).

Whereas Hannah More maintains a belief in the inferiority of the African culture and associates black suffering with piety in order to establish the anti-slavery cause as a Christian mission to educate the heathen women ─ "All from Bible good and true. / . . . / Much suffer here below" (More, 1823: ll. 91-96) ─, Elizabeth Barrett Browning adopts an egalitarian approach which views slaves as equals and denounces slavery as a moral sin against God and that any perpetuation of the slaves' suffering furthers this sin. Accordingly, while Yamba naively blesses her "cruel capture" and "adore[s] / Gracious Heaven's mysterious plan" which predestines her to suffer until her "[g]rief is turn'd to Rapture" in the afterlife (More, 1823: l. 122, 125, 129), the runaway slave woman voices her disbelief in such a 'mysterious plan' which assigns her to a life in bondage and suffering. Instead she infers that God by no means could have claimed the black race to be inferior and ordained them to suffer by "cast[ing] His work away / under the feet of His white creatures, / With a look of scorn" (Browning, 1900: ll. 25-27). Using a modal verb in her exclamation

that God "must have cast His work away" also indicates a probability or a mere assumption rather than a true fact (l. 25). Elizabeth Barrett Browning demonstrates the runaway slave woman's reasoning and questioning of the Christian religion as an attempt to expose the unfounded immoral intervention and interpretation of the Bible by Christians to either perpetuate slavery or view slaves' suffering as Christ-like. In doing so, she, as a poet, seeks to fulfill a didactic purpose with her poem which despises racial ideologies and aims to equally grant earthly liberty to everyone regardless of race.

After voicing her disbelief in the existence of such an unjust God, the runaway slave woman turns to the untouched nature devoid of moral taint: "And yet He has made dark things / To be glad and merry as light" (Browning, 1900: ll. 29-30). Here, she begins to emphasize that God also created beautiful and benevolent dark creations (ll. 29-30): "There's a little dark bird sits and sings," "dark stream," "dark frogs chant in the safe morass / And the sweetest stars are made to pass / O'er the face of the darkest night" (ll. 29-35). The personification of the dark "bird, frog and the night" which "sing, chant, and have human attributes" explicitly combines blackness with "human-like activities" (Walker, 2007: par. 28). Walker explains that in doing so "[t]hrough Mother Nature, the bondswoman asserts her humanity and vicariously unites with God. . . . The woman aligns with other living beings and rejects property status. . . . Revealing her affinity to the Lord's dark creations, the runaway slave affirms her blackness as benevolent and shifts from a creature of 'dusky features' to a creation full of goodness" (Walker, 2007: par. 28). Here, the "poet appears to retrain the possibility of nature . . . as 'morally neutral' and as 'a potential refuge from human evil'" (Winter qtd. in Slinn, 2003: 72). Following the acknowledgement that God has no racial distinction, the runaway slave concludes that God created blacks equal and makes them feel in the same way as whites would do because:

> The great smooth Hand of God stretch[es] out
> On *all* His children fatherly,
> To save them from the dread and doubt
> . . . .
> God's sunshine and His frost
> They make us hot, they make us cold,
> As if we were not black and lost
>
> (Browning, 1900: ll. 44-46; ll. 50-53)

In contrast to Yamba, the slave woman achieves to "separate the unnatural blackness of her acculturated condition," which views her blackness to be inferior and condemns it to slavery, "from her natural blackness" which affirms her goodness and equality before God (Slinn, 2003: 72). This shows that the runaway slave independently asserts her black humanity and equality, and insists to separate her blackness from the white cultural perception, which linked blackness with madness, as given in her final affirmation: "I am not mad: I am black" (Browning, 1900: l. 218). Hence, by portraying a 'kneeling' slave who questions and disapproves the possibilities of a God that should despise his own work for its blackness, Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not only dramatize the inequalities towards the runaway slave's race based upon her black skin, but she also radicalizes the conventional anti-slavery trope of the 'kneeling' inferior and 'stupid' slave. This 'kneeling' slave woman refuses to believe in black racial and intellectual inferiority; because she, like any other human being, has the common-sense to question the political idealism within the American Constitution and the injustices towards her race with regard to true Christianity and God's creations.

Moreover, Elizabeth Barrett Browning continues to radically protest the ideology of white cultural superiority by inverting the image of evil and good which was respectively closely associated with black and white. Whereas the runaway slave is blessed to establish an equal bond with the pilgrims and God, the former based upon their "common ideal of liberty," and the latter based upon the "potential to provide lasting liberation", the white race is depicted as condemned because their wrong-doings have caused the moral-divide between God and themselves (Walker, 2007: par. 23). The runaway slave narrates the instance when the slave owners grasped away her lover and killed him for committing to a relationship with her: "They wrung my cold hands out of his / They dragged him − where? I crawled to touch / His blood's mark in dust" (Browning, 1900: ll. 95-98). These lines echo the religion of the South which views blacks as a cursed race whom God allegedly places "under the feet of His white creatures / . . . that the dusky features / Might be trodden again to clay" (ll. 27-28), just as it is the case with lover and his "blood's mark in the dust" (l. 98). Resting upon such alleged religious claims, Elizabeth Barrett Browning also exposes the inhumane and unchristian behavior of the slave holders who pathologized slaves as insensible; and, therefore, could not have feelings

of love and pain. If these feelings did occur among the slaves, slave owners felt urged to 'strangle' them by any means necessary as encapsulated in the following cry of the fugitive slave woman:

> Mere grief's too good for such as I:
> . . . . . .
> To strangle the sob of my agony.
> They would not leave me for my dull
> Wet eyes! − it was too merciful
> To let me weep pure tears and die.
>
> (Browning, 1900: ll. 100-106)

With regard to this, when the runaway slave woman realizes her human qualities and feelings that "once, [she] laughed in a girlish glee" (l. 58), when another slave recognized her as a worthy being "[a]s free as if unsold, unbought" (l. 65), and when her lover "said 'I love you' as he passed" (l. 72), the slave drivers feel urged to expunge these qualities by killing the male slave and raping the slave woman (Slinn, 2003: 74). Patterson establishes that "clearly the rape is an act of power, aimed at total humiliation in order to repress all signs of human dignity and to restore the white ideology that black slaves are quintessentially 'without honor'" (qtd. in Slinn, 2003: 74).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning effectively mentions the violent act of raping a slave woman in order to emphasize the white man's abusive and unchristian behavior in the ungodly South. When the slave woman and her lover attempt to seek God, he does not respond: "We were two to love, and two to pray: / Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee, / Though *nothing didst Thou say*!" (Browning, 1900: l. 86-88; *emphasis added*). Walker asserts that Elizabeth Barrett Browning suggests with "God's lack of a response to the lovers" the absence of God; and "this claim undermines faith-based justifications for bondage and implies that the Supreme Being disapproves of the system" (Walker, 2007: par. 24). By invoking an absent God, Elizabeth Barrett Browning represents slave holders and hunter sons as evil whose immoral behavior has driven out the dominance of God from the south, because "the higher power could not reside in the same region as slavery" (Walker, 2007: par. 29). Portraying the south under the guidance of the devil, Elizabeth Barrett Browning continues to explicitly "distinguish[] the master class from God" based upon the atrocities they inflict upon the black slaves and the wrongful suffering of them (par. 30):

> The seven wounds in Christ's body fair;
> . . . . . .
> Our *wounds are different*. Your white men
> Are, after all, not gods indeed,
> Nor able to make Christ again
> Do good with bleeding. *We who bleed . . .*
> (Stand off!) *We help not in our loss!*
>
> (1900: ll. 238-243; *emphasis added*)

Indeed, the runaway slave unveils the lack of divinity of the slave holders and denounces that although whites dominate the lives of the slaves, they "are not gods indeed" and cannot "make Christ again" because they are unlike God who shows his glory of grace by sacrificing and making his son, Jesus Christ, suffer to forgive the sins of man and redeem mankind. While God has a purposeful plan in the suffering of Jesus, the runaway slave "makes a distinction between the suffering of the slave and Christ" (Walker, 2007: par. 30). Unlike the Son of God, the fugitive slave exclaims that their suffering "wounds are different" and "help not" to redeem the sins of man. Instead, their bleeding stresses the endless infliction of atrocities of physical pain and emotional distress on slaves by southern oppressors and the "hunter sons" (Browning, 1900: l. 204) who, in doing so, generate "the moral divide between themselves and the savior" (Walker, 2007: pars. 29-30).

Hence, with regard to the absence of God in the slave-owning South and the moral divide between the whites and God, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as a British female poet, employs a "faith-based condemnation [which] demonize[s] the master-class," and follows radical American abolitionists who in newspapers "railed against slaveholders as agents of the devil" and portrayed slaves in ally with God in order to evoke the religiosity within the anti-slavery movement (par. 22-23). Following this this religious iconography, which was previously used by slave owners to justify the enslavement of the allegedly claimed 'cursed' race, Elizabeth Barrett Browning within her poem inverts the image of blackness as being inherently evil and whiteness as being inherently good. The runaway slave woman has the ability to initiate a true moral and spiritual union between herself and God and the Pilgrims, and slave supporters are guided by the devil; thereby, as Walker notes, they "disregard[] the desires of the divinity" (par. 29).

Following the rhetoric of the radical American abolitionist William Llyod Garrison, who strongly demonizes slavery, as given in his exclamation: "My singularity is that when I say that freedom is of God and slavery is of the devil, I mean just what I say" (1854), Elizabeth Barrett Browning elevates the slave woman and envisions her as spiritually and morally superior to the professed Christian and unlawful master class. In doing so, she deliberately defies the conventional anti-slavery trope of the inferior and submissive 'stupid' slave which would perpetuate a belief in white cultural superiority and undermine slaves' equality. Thus, the depiction of a superior slave woman echoes William Garrison's radical and egalitarian claim that "blacks and whites were by nature *fully* equal and that there was only one human race" (Osborn, 2010: 71).

3.1.2. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Egalitarian Approach

Both female poets employ a religious rhetoric by evoking the image of a 'kneeling' slave who establishes a bond with God in order to appeal to the religious sensibilities and to affirm their female involvement in the anti-slavery cause a religious issue; however, they differ in their approaches. Hannah More's 'maternalistic' approach praises the Christian faith as given through the exclamation of Yamba which affirms that "Missionary Good / He had Bible book in hand / Which poor me no understood" (1823: ll. 79-80). Elevating the white Christian missionary and using stylistic devices such as broken syntax and dialect to indicate the alleged 'stupidity' of her slave woman, Hannah More conveys a Eurocentric point of view which stereotypes slaves as racially and intellectually inferior who are in need for British female intervention to advocate anti-slavery as a religious issue. In contrast, Elizabeth Barrett Browning depicts an eloquent slave woman who reasonably establishes her equality before God and the Pilgrim spirits and defies the belief in cultural and intellectual inferiority of slaves. Elevating the runaway slave's physical and mental ability to speak for herself, Elizabeth Barrett Browning exerts political and moral pressure to acknowledge slaves as equal human beings entitled to liberty. Walker explains that:

> in the context of the tradition of British women's antislavery verse, the runaway slave's engagement with God speaks to a liberal political posture. Although this is a gesture of moral conservatism, it does not exclude the progressive stance of a slave establishing equality to fellow human beings through the dominion of the Supreme Being.

(2007: par. 29)

Hence, with the portrayal of black superiority, Elizabeth Barrett Browning demonstrates her "desire to link forms of conventional anti-slavery tropes with progressive possibility" (Miller, 2014: 640-641); in this case, she emulates William Llyod Garrison's radical approach promoting the equality of slaves. Based on this egalitarian approach, it can be inferred that Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not depict the runaway slave woman as inferior who subordinates herself 'kneeling' "underneath the Pilgrim Father's and God as stable authorities", as Sarah Brophy argues (1998: 278). Instead, she radicalizes the conventional anti-slavery trope of the 'kneeling' slave woman and reinvents her as an eloquent and equal slave who refuses any further subordination or suffering, and shows her determination to act on behalf herself.

3.2. FEMALE SUFFERING: EMPOWERMENT AND STEPPING BEYOND THE ROLE OF SUBMISSIVE SLAVE MOTHERS

Elizabeth Barrett Browning reflects the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric of Hannah More by drawing the attention to the shared feminine experience of white and black women as mothers. However, in the case of the enslaved runaway woman, the motherhood becomes a burden and a source of pain which generates her potential to resist any further enslavement and dehumanization. This chapter discusses how Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses the runaway slave woman's suffering as a possibility of transformation and to develop the slave woman's personal and political agency to resist the abusive and violent domination of the paternalistic slave-system. Thereby, she establishes her slave woman's radical potential to act and go beyond the conservative image of the passive slave woman Yamba and her idealistic complaints.

3.2.1. Transformation through Motherhood: Personal Agency and Self-Consciousness

Elizabeth Barrett Browning evokes the conservative feminine rhetoric of Hannah More, which focuses on the suffering and degradation of female slaves and represents the destruction of motherhood. Similar to Hannah More who scorns the "fierce-man-stealing crew" to evoke the criminality of slave kidnappers tearing the

child away from Yamba's "breast" (More, 1823: ll. 21-22), Elizabeth Barrett Browning portrays the rape by the patriarchal figures, i.e. master-class, as a crime against motherhood and human affection. The sexual exploitation of her runaway slave, i.e., the rape which becomes an act of power to obliterate the slave woman's humanity and to remind her of her powerless state, and also restricts her self-actualization as a mother. This means that as an enslaved woman she is forced to nurture the resulting child: "Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!" (Browning, 1900: l. 99). Following the wrongful rape, the 'deeper wrong' is the whiteness of the child which is "too white for [her]" (l. 116) as the result of the rape by the white masters:

> I am black, you see,
> And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
> Was far too white, too white for me;
> . . . . . .
> My own, own child! I could not bear"

(Browning, 1900: ll. 114-116, 120)

However, observing the whiteness of the child and looking at his face, the child becomes a constant reminder of her enslavement recalling the cruel treatment of the master-class and her subjugation to them. Accordingly, the slave woman feels that the baby with his "little feet" (l. 128) intentionally wants to "beat" (l. 127) "[a]gainst [her] heart to break it through" (l. 130) and "lash" (l. 145) her soul when she looks at "his face" (l. 121) which discourages her from establishing a loving and motherly bond with him:

> Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
> I saw a look that made me mad!
> The *master's* look, that used to fall
> On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!"

(ll. 142-145).

Within these lines, Elizabeth Barrett Browning as a female writer, like Hannah More, draws the attention to female suffering and the separation of mother and child under slavery. Nevertheless, while Hannah More's conservative feminine sentimental anti-slavery rhetoric intentionally voices the broken heart of Yamba, who laments the loss of her children and husband in order to idealize the womanly roles as wives and mothers (More, 1823: ll. 9-16), Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric as given the runaway slave's histrionic outburst — "My own, own child!" (Browning, 1900: l. 120) which "lay[s] on her bosom" (l. 115) — to specifically sustain the attention on the runaway slave woman whose role as a mother

of a fairly white child becomes a constant reminder of the white man's dehumanization and oppression. Through focusing on the slave woman's motherhood, Elizabeth Barrett Browning intends to expose the political point of the narrative, which is the double burden of gender and ethnic exploitation that physically and mentally breaks the slaves and their hearts (Slinn, 2003: 56). Slinn explains that the slave woman is reduced to "the consciousness of bondage, to the identity of an enslaved subject, both subject of (her feelings as mother) and subject to (the control of the master-right)" (75). With regard to this, within her poetic lines, Elizabeth Barret Browning epitomizes how the runaway slave woman is not only racially exploited by being reduced to mere property of the master but also sexually exploited by being reduced to her gender-based role as a mother, who is expected to breed and nurture the child who she conceived in rape by the slave owners.

Consequently, after the runaway has voiced her motherhood as a constant reminder of her oppression, she refuses to take up her motherly duty and "dare[s] not sing to the white-faced child" to "ma[k]e him mild" (Browning, 1900: ll. 131-132). Instead, she decides to murder it:

> And so, to save it from my curse,
> I twisted it round in my shawl
>
> And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
> He shivered from head to foot;
> Till after a time, he lay instead
> Too suddenly still and mute.
> I felt, beside, a stiffening cold:
>
> (ll. 146-152)

Considering the infanticide, at the time of the poem's publication, slave women's effort to resist slavery, for example, through self-mutilation, committing suicide or infanticide "were not so widely known, at least not in print; yet . . . in the abolitionist annual *The Liberty Bell* (1848), Elizabeth Barrett Browning released a poem about slavery that dramatized this resistance" (Slinn, 2003: 56). Depicting the infanticide, Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not attempt to foster the readers' sympathy by drawing their attention to the destruction of a mother and child bond but rather wants them to understand the driving force behind the murder of her child, which is the white slave masters' oppression (63, 67-68).

The child which results from the white man's rape as an "act of power" is founded upon the oppressive ideology which "insists that all slaves are inhuman" and

lack any emotions, and enables whites to racially and sexually exploit female slaves (Slinn, 2003: 58). The runaway slave disapproves this alleged racial ideology and shows her feelings as a mother and her desire to be reconciled with her black child by "sav[ing] it from [her] curse" (Browning, 1900: l. 146), "from being condemned and hated by its mother" (Slinn, 2003:76), so that they "[i]n the death-dark . . . may kiss and agree" (Browning, 1900: l. 251). To do so, following the murder, the runaway slave "scoope[s] a hole beneath the moon" (l. 179) and buries the "little corpse" (l. 214) in the "black earth" (l. 185) and begins to sing the name of her lover as she once used to do (l. 192). The "more melodious" (l. 193) she sings it to "[t]he white child" (l. 191) the more he rises "from the grave whereon [she] sate!" (l. 194) and, subsequently, "[a]ll, change[s] to black earth,— nothing white,—/ A dark child in the dark! — ensue[s]" (ll. 185-186) who begins to sing "[t]o join the souls of both of [them]" (l. 196), i.e. her mother and her former lover who should have been the father instead of the white slave-owner. Thus, through the infanticide, the black female slave "retrieves the black child from its white father and at the same time restores her earlier identity as a black lover, singing again the song of her lover's name" (Slinn, 2003: 79). Slinn further explains that:

> [t]he smothering of her child constitutes the act whereby her figurative role as cultural womb, perpetuating through breeding the system that enslaves her, transforms into a literal role as cultural transgressor. As transgressor, she attacks the slaveowning system at the heart of its oppression and contradictory ideology — an ideology that insists that all slaves are inhumane, and yet not so inhumane that they cannot bear the children of their masters.
>
> (58)

Retrieving her black child as a cultural transgressor, Elizabeth Barrett Broning defies the pathologization of the African body and demonstrates that slaves do have the feelings to love their own 'blackness' and to feel attracted it, and that women slave have a desire to bond with their children as long as they are conceived in loving relationship. Hence, through the infanticide the runaway slave achieves to psychologically release herself from her master's domination and reclaims her humanity which gives her the freedom to actualize herself and to be her own master of her feelings. This close association of the runaway slave woman's motherhood with the oppressive act of rape resulting in the infanticide demonstrates Elizabeth

Barrett Browning's effort to "show how repression generates resistance and how resistance generates the potential for personal agency" (Slinn, 2003: 56-57).

Following the murder of her child as a step towards personal agency, she represents the female speaker of her poem as an insurrectionary fugitive slave who resists any further subordination. When the runaway slave is hunted down and encircled by five "hunter sons" (Browning, 1900: l. 204), she confronts them with her black face that "glares with a scorn" (l. 202) and verbally attacks and threatens the male hunter sons to "throw off" their aggressively "stingy" eyes which view her like mere property: "I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!" (l. 207). Refusing their "objectifying look, their superior and stinging gaze" (Slinn, 2003: 77), which classify slaves as subservient and degraded beings, the runaway slave "moves toward personal agency" through which she strives to "affirm an independent … personal dignity" (73-74). Slinn explains that "[i]f looking is the act of being a subject, to be looked upon is not only to be an object of someone else's gaze but also potentially to be recognized (73). Referring to Hegel's account of 'lordship and bondage' dialectic, Slinn continues that "'recognition' is the basis for achieving . . . self-consciousness, or social subjectivity," because, according to Hegel, "self-consciousness is merely pure self-existence, being-for-itself" (qtd. in Slinn, 2003: 72-73, 78). This moment of recognition occurs when the hunter sons and the slave woman look at each other and she exclaims that she realizes their acknowledgment of her: "I see you staring in my face −/ I know you, staring, shrinking back" (Browning, 1900: 219-220). Following the recognition through the hunter sons' staring, the slave woman affirms and presents herself as a 'self-existing being' who confronts them and "speak[s] for herself as a separate subject," which epitomizes her "freedom of independent self-consciousness" (Slinn, 2003: 78).

Thus, the runaway slave's motherhood gives her the potential to commit the infanticide which becomes actually a means to "symbolically kill[] her master who dominates her" (Slinn, 2003: 77). This means that the slave woman's motherhood represents the final act of repression which triggers the desire for personal agency and to destroy the racial ideologies in combination with oppressive gender ideologies of the master-class. Committing the infanticide she achieves her independent self-consciousness and presents herself as a free human being who has the desire to take control of her own life and decisions. As an agent of her own, she no longer accepts

any further subordination and shows this determination by commanding the hunter sons to "keep off" of her: "Keep off! I brave you all at once, / I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting! /. . . / (Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!)" (Browning, 1900: ll. 206-207, 211).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as a female poet, focuses on female suffering and uses the conventional anti-slavery trope of motherhood to defy the pathologization of slaves and to establish them as equally feeling humans. When compared to Hannah More's feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which deliberately rests upon the poet's intention to idealize woman's role as a daughter, wife, mother, and Christian, as voiced in Yamba's reminiscence about her former life when she was once blessed to have "[p]arents tender. . . / Husband dear, and children too" (More ll. 14-16), the depicted infanticide in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem does not aim to idealize female gender-roles. Instead the runaway slave woman's motherhood reveals the oppressive patriarchal ideologies and the slave system which deny personal agency and expect female slaves to remain submissive and to fulfill their roles as mothers. The motherhood stands in close relation with the infanticide in order to illuminate the runaway slave woman's repression which generates her desire for personal agency to gain liberty and dignity, as given in the following quote by Slinn:

> Through the very weariness of degradation and what Patterson calls social death (the denial of human identity or status), slaves have developed 'a passionate zeal for dignity and freedom.' Barrett Browning's poem is consistent with this view in the sense that it dramatizes a moment when a female slave – alienated by both her color and gender – enacts an utterance, performs an identity, through which she affirms an independent … personal dignity."
>
> (2003: 74)

Thus, it can be said that through the runaway slave's motherhood, brought about by the rape, Elizabeth Barrett Browning attempts to illustrate female slaves' desire to become a 'self-existing being' with personal agency, i.e. to gain self-control over their own lives and to have the freedom to make decisions.

3.2.2. Empowering the Slave Woman: Political Resistance and Independence

After the runaway slave presents herself as an independent human being who has the potential to act on behalf of herself enacted through the infanticide, she

confronts the hunter sons with the "illogic of allowing the enslavement of others yet demanding freedom for oneself" (Campbell, 2015: 75):

> I am not mad: I am black
> . . . . . .
> Ye are born of the Washington-race,
> And this land is the free America,
> And this mark on my wrist—(I prove what I say)
> Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.
>
> (Browning, 1900: ll. 218-224)

By describing America as the land of the free and associating it with the name of George Washington, the persona highlights that the inherent freedom is only granted to those "born of the Washington race" (l. 221), i.e. whites, whereas blacks are condemned to slavery. Through the evocation of George Washington's name, Elizabeth Barrett Browning gives a sense to how deeply the contradictory understanding of liberty and racial ideologies are rooted within America's history. George Washington, who after his years as a military General became the first president of the United States of America, strongly believed in the unalienable rights to life and liberty, but, at the same time, continued to keep in bondage the few slaves which he inherited from his deceased father at the age of eleven and only freed them shortly before his own death (Philway, 2012: np). While keeping his own slaves, George Washington and other revolutionary men equated the American colonies dependency upon England as slavery which they no longer could bear. The American colonies eventually viewed it necessary to call for their independence and defend their rebellious actions towards their oppressive English Master based upon the natural rights philosophy. The Declaration of Independence was a formal explanation of the Congress to the English King George III of why the thirteen American colonies had to declare their independence on July 4th, 1776, as given in the following excerpt:

> But when a *long train of abuses and usurpations*, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them *under absolute Despotism*, it is their right, *it is their duty, to throw off such Government*, and to provide new Guards for their future security.— Such has been the *patient sufferance of these Colonies*; and such is now the necessity which *constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.* The history of the present King of Great Britain is a *history of repeated injuries and usurpations*, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

(US, 1776: par. 2; *my emphasis added*)

Similar to the revolutionary rhetoric within the Declaration of Independence, which aligns England's control over the American colonies to slavery, making them patiently suffer "repeated injures and usurpations" under "the present King of Great Britain" and his "absolute," despotic, and tyrannical form of Government, the runaway slave woman also uses the very same revolutionary rhetoric to draw attention to her enslavement by those "born of the Washington-race" (Browning, 1900: l. 221). She shows her "marks on [her] wrist" (l. 223) caused by the physical abuse by her master on the "flogging-place" (l. 224): "You think I shrieked then? Not a sound! / I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun; / I only cursed them all around" (ll. 225-227). Voicing her suffering which she patiently endured without shrieking a sound, the runaway slave woman attempts to equal her enslavement to that of the former American colonies in order to bring to mind their "history of repeated injuries, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny" which they now establish over the lives of the slaves and obstruct slaves' "right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (US, 1776: par. 2).

Following the indictment against the "Washington-race" (Browning, 1900: l. 221) for oppressing her and obstructing her unalienable right[3] to "life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," the runaway slave woman also proclaims that her "sufferance . . . is now the necessity which constrains [her] to alter" and throw off a government which permits the enslavement of black people (US, 1776: par. 2):

> My very own child: from these sands
> Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
> O slaves, and end what I begun!
> Whips, curses; these must answer those!
>
> (ll.229-232)

The runaway slave's cry "[m]y very own child!" followed by her call for rebellion, demonstrates how her motherhood, which results from the central act of oppression, the rape, "produce[d] a node of power that introduce[d] the potential for resistance," which she enacted through killing her child (Slinn, 2003: 85). Historically, within the context of American slavery, slave women were often sexually abused by their

[3] Unalienable rights as stated in The US Declaration of Independence, 1776: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness … That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government. . ."

masters who intended to impregnate them as an inexpensive alternative to slave auctions in order to grow their number of slaves on a plantation and contribute to the master's work force and wealth. Slinn verifies that "some slave women . . . did kill their children (or themselves) as acts of resistance" (67). Hence, in killing her child and calling upon other slaves to join her rebellion: "O slaves, and end what I begun!" the runaway slave exposes her political power to harm the master's property and turn herself into a threat to the master's household (Browning, 1900: l. 231). In addition to the slave's political potential to resist and to harm the master's property, the runaway slave's infanticide subverts her dependency on the master class and "enacts the classical reversal of lordship and bondage" (Slinn, 2003: 77-78).

While earlier white middle-class British anti-slavery campaigners like Hannah More distanced "themselves from . . . black resistance" (Midgley, 1992, 91), Elizabeth Barrett Browning depicts an "insurrectionary and articulate fugitive black woman" (Stone, 2003: 47). Hannah More within her poem maintains the conservative image of the passive and grateful convert slave woman through depicting Yamba as a submissive and obedient slave woman who forgives her master's violent behavior and bears her suffering −"As ye hope for mercy sweet, / So forgive your Massas' sin" (More, 1823: ll. 115-116) ─ and solely laments the colonial laws which "shall ne'er befriend [Yamba]. / They protect not Slaves like [her]" (More, 1823: ll. 69-72). In contrast to this powerless victim, Elizabeth Barrett Browning depicts a rebellious and eloquent fugitive slave woman who emphasizes the lack of divinity in the Christian slaveholders and does not forgive their sins because slaves' suffering and bleeding stresses the wrongdoing of southern oppressors who misuse the Christian belief system. Through emphasizing the immorality in combination with the natural rights philosophy, Elizabeth Barrett Browning legitimizes her slave woman's attack against the established authority of America which needs "whips" and "curses" (Browning, 1900: l. 232) and retaliation to grant slaves their inalienable rights. The emerging slave image represents a strong and brave woman who like a hard-shelled "gourd" endures the physical pain without "shriek[ing] . . . a sound!" (l. 225) until the point when she runs away from the plantation to murder her own child as an act of rebellion against the system of oppression.

Acknowledging the runaway slave woman's infanticide and call for resistance as a self-defense resulting from the most debasing and intolerable oppression which denies slaves their right to agency to control and protect their own lives, Elizabeth Barrett Browning explicitly eschews the conservative interpretation of the suffering of slaves as Christ-like. Within the poem she strives to eliminate any justifications that could be found for the perpetuation of the suffering of slaves which in turn would perpetuate the enslavement and inferiorization of African slaves. In contrast to Hannah More who conveys "the idea that slavery is wholly compatible with Christianity which gradually has to educate and Christianize slaves to extend them their female privileges as wives and mothers ("The Sorrows of": np). Unlike Hannah More, Elizabeth Barrett Browning echoes the radical mindset of William Llyod Garrison who declared that there is "no compromise with slavery!" and that the prolonged attempt to grant slaves their "sacred unalienable right" is a crime against God (1854). Observing the slave woman's desire for personal agency and liberty, Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her poem justifies a political slave rebellion as a self-defense which could only be avoided through the immediate emancipation slaves.

3.2.3. The Rebellious Slave Woman and the Influence of *The Liberty Bell*

Reading "The Runaway Slave" within it's *The Liberty Bell* context, Stone asserts that "[n]either the chain of curses nor the call for insurrection seemed out of place," (Stone, 2003: 34), but they rather prove the formative influence of the "political rhetoric of the Garrisonian abolitionists" on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem (39). By the mid-1840s, when Elizabeth Barrett Browning was invited by *The Liberty Bell* to contribute a poem, the radical American abolitionists "had become more outspoken in their attacks on slavery" (44). "In an article on 'Hard Language'" in the 1848 issue, William Llyod Garrison expresses his conviction that "'[s]oft phrases and honied accents were tried in vain for years' against the 'leviathan, SLAVERY'" and that it was time to turn "to increasingly heated language" in order to exert moral influence (qtd. in Stone, 2003: 44-45). Accordingly, this polemic language is reflected in the slave woman's call for "[w]hips, curses; these must answer those" immoral slave drivers who "after all, are not gods indeed" because they inflict the slaves with wrongful suffering (Browning, 1900: ll. 232, 240). In

addition, after analyzing the 1844 and 1845 issues of *The Liberty Bell*, which Elizabeth Barrett Browning received upon invitation, Stone affirms that she assimilated her poem to the "standard topoi and rhetoric of anti-slavery poetry in *The Liberty Bell*" (38-44):

> In the 1848 issue, prepared for sale at the December 1847 bazaar, EBB's poem was immediately preceded by a lead article, 'The Insurrection and Its Hero', celebrating the heroic black leader of a Southern slave uprising. [. . .] Charles K. Whipple's 'Clerical Influence', presenting Moses as a prototype of 'Nat Turner and of Toussaint L'Ouverture'; Frederick Douglass' 'Bibles for the Slaves', a sardonically eloquent denunciation of those who feared black literacy; and Caroline Healey Dall's 'Annie Gray', the story of a fugitive slave on her deathbed in Canada.
>
> (34)

Similar to *The Liberty Bell*'s appraisal of insurrectionary, "heroic," "eloquent" slaves as "black leader" who had the divine potential to lead like "Moses" other slaves out of suffering, Elizabeth Barrett Browning also portrays a superior slave in alliance with God who fights the slave owners who are in alliance with the devil.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, like the radical American abolitionists, relies on the political and revolutionary rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence to declare the fugitive slave woman's equality and her right to liberty as a God-given right. She also seeks to legitimize the empowerment of her runaway slave by giving her political agency to overthrow "any Form of Government [that] becomes destructive of these ends" (US, 1776: par. 2), as given in the fugitive slave's call for rebellion and her imperious "command rather than persuasion" against the hunter sons to "[s]tand off" and to "[k]eep off!" as Slinn observes within Browning's poem (qtd. in Slinn, 2003: 87). Considering these characteristics of the female slave, Elizabeth Barrett Browning abstains from depicting a passive and submissive female slave, but instead "experiments with the conventional trope of womanhood and religion in the services of radical abolitionism" (Miller, 2014: 639), and proves the formative influence of *The Liberty Bell* on her poem and the construction of her rebellious slave woman (Stone, 2003: 38). It is the very role of the runaway slave as a mother which Elizabeth Barrett Browning uses to "attack[] assumptions of motherhood at the very heart of patriarchal ideology" (Slinn, 2003: 67-68). With regard to this, Slinn further argues:

> The role of this black woman as mother thus becomes the paradoxical means of her rebellion: it is a dialectical paradox insofar as the mother's conventional status as nurturer and protector of life generates also its opposite − the taker and destroyer of life. Insofar as infanticide is an apparent opposition to everything that was assumed by patriarchal capitalism about the natural protectiveness of motherhood, the murder of her child becomes the means of empowering the female slave . . .
>
> (2003: 85)

By using the runaway slave's motherhood as a potential source to overthrow her master's domination through committing the infanticide, Elizabeth Barrett Browning contradicts the separate-spheres ideology, which assigns women with the conservative role of wives and mothers. Instead, she establishes her female slave as an independent and equal being who exhibits her potential for resistance towards further injustices and oppressions.

Thus, instead of idealizing women's domestic roles, Elizabeth Barrett Browning establishes and emphasizes the runaway slave woman's 'subjectivity' to act as an individual on behalf herself and "sustains a view of motherhood as private and subjective" (Slinn, 2003: 63). Thereby, she attacks assumptions about female submissiveness and subordination in a patriarchal society and reinvents the conventional motherhood by constructing the runaway slave woman "as a model for slave rebellion" who insists on her personal and political agency to act for herself in killing the white child and shows the way for other slaves (87). Elizabeth Barrett Browning's insurrectionary slave woman corresponds with the appraised black leaders within *The Liberty Bell*, within which radical abolitionists favored and fervently spoke out for the immediate emancipation. In doing so she shows the ideological influence of the radical American abolitionist who promoted the immediate emancipation of slaves because it was considered "more wise and rational─ more politic and safe, as well as more just and humane" (Heyrick qtd. in Midgley, 1992: 103-104).

3.3. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S IMMEDIATE AND EGALITARIAN FREEDOM

Looking at the final stanza of the poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," some scholars have argued that "the previously rebellious slave literally falls back

into the passivity of a feminine swoon" (Miller, 2014: 643) because she leaves the white men "curse-free":

> I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky
> The clouds are breaking on my brain;
> I am floated along, as if I should die
> Of liberty's exquisite pain.
> In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
> White men, I leave you all curse-free
> In my broken heart's disdain!
>
> (Browning, 1900: ll. 246-253)

Within these lines, it seems that Elizabeth Barrett Browning evokes a feminine anti-slavery rhetoric by expressing the runaway slave woman's desire to be reunited with her child and leaving the "[w]hite men . . . curse-free" (Browning, 1900: l. 251) similar to Hannah More who ends her poem with a passive and forgiving slave woman who celebrates her status as a Christian convert and accepts to bear her Christ-like suffering until she is reunited with her husband in heaven (More, 1823: ll. 182-184). Miller proposes, that "[p]olitically, it appears that we are back where we started, trapped in a narrative that—despite a brief flirtation with violent rebellion — re-imposes conventional discourses of Christian passivity on the formerly subversive heroine" (2014: 643). Focusing solely on these final lines, some critics have agreed to the possibility that:

> in one sense, for all her fury, [Elizabeth Barrett Browning] thus performs, (albeit in admittedly brutal, monitory fashion), the classical poetess's role of domesticating and spiritualizing the 'heart' of the nation-state. On the verge of this speaker's grave, . . . political conflicts seem to be overborne by feminine loyalty to the claims of transcendent, unearthly law.
>
> (Lootens, 2008: 31)

However, in doing so, Miller argues that those critics disregard textual complexities and misleadingly fail to see that the slave woman's 'fall' and final refusal to 'curse' do not represent a figure of Christian patience and passive suffering, which would recall the emblem of the fettered kneeling slave (2014: 639).

Considering the dramatic content of recounting the runaway slave woman's suffering and infanticide as a means to psychologically release herself from the fetters of slavery and to develop the her personal agency, Elizabeth Barret Browning continues to sustain the slave woman's rebellious spirit in the final stanza through her 'fall,' i.e. her death. Slinn explains that "death is inevitable for what someone with her status has done within this coded world. . . . This slave may well die ('I fall,

I swoon'), but her death is not the death of a redeeming Christ, saving others from their sin" (2003: 89). This means that the slave owners' sinful acts of domination which cause "countless wounds" that "bleed" among the slaves are "too heavy" to be forgiven and ensure the growing potential for slaves to retaliate:

> Our countless wounds that pay no debt
> . . . . . .
> Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
> (Stand off!) We help not in out loss
> *We* are too heavy for our cross,
> And fall and crush you and your seed.
>
> I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
>
> (ll. 238, 242 -245, 246)

Combining these textual reference, the runaway slave woman's 'falling' in the opening of the final stanza "following closely upon the warning that slaves 'fall and crush you and your seed' marks a *culmination* as well as a *collapse*," interprets Lootens (2008: 31; *emphasis added*). A culmination in the sense that the slave woman once more poses a threat by evoking her and other slaves' potential to rebel against the master as the result of their wrongful bleeding, i.e. the repression of the darker race, which will generate slaves' desire for personal and political agency to attack the oppressive masters. In proclaiming that slave masters and their seed will be crushed, the runaway slave woman awakens white men to the lurking threat of a slave rebellion, because she has already "crushed the master's seed quite literally by killing his child" (Slinn, 2003: 87-88). In doing so, she has become "an agent in this process, she acts both on behalf of black dignity and freedom, showing the way for other slaves" (87). It can be said that the runaway slave derives her political power from her humiliation and repression which is symbolized through her motherhood. Hence, as a response to this oppression, she attacks slavery not only by murdering the master's child but also dying at the end as another means of political resistance to bring an end to slavery (58): "I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky. / The clouds are breaking on my brain; / I am floated along, as if I should die" (Browning, 1900: ll. 246-248). Hence, the runaway slave woman's "falling heralds the empowerment of slaves, which in turn heralds the threat to all slaveowners," (Slinn, 2003: 89).

In relation to her 'fall' as an empowerment and "having (somewhat mysteriously) overcome her initial conceptions of divine power as malignantly aligned with whiteness", the slave woman's choice to leave all white man curse-free

needs not to be understood as her forgiveness for the white man's sins (Lootens, 2008: 31). Instead, Elizabeth Barrett Browning once more evokes the slave woman's moral superiority and alliance with God, which gives her the ability to entrust her vengeance to him (31). While acknowledging God as a just judge who "sees gaping everywhere" and the slaves' "countless wounds" that wrongfully bleed (Browning, 1900: 237-238), the runaway slave woman self-consciously ends her life and leaves "all [whites] curse-free/ In [her] broken heart's disdain!" (ll. 252-253). Although, Elizabeth Barrett Browning awards her runaway slave with "the dignity of a 'curse-free' silence" in order to break the stereotypical formula of the cursing and revolting slave(31), she implicitly demonstrates the runaway slave woman's force of agency by speaking her 'disdain' against the American nation. "This final refusal to curse, to condemn those who have condemned her, with its implicit withdrawal into silence, proffers the paradoxical silence of a spoken 'disdain,' not the deathly silence of unspeaking submission" (Slinn, 2003: 79), in order to provoke the immediate emancipation of the morally good and equal slaves.

Voicing this "disdain" (Browning, 1900: l. 252), the runaway slave, for the last time, exhibits her power to "render citizenship a category of feeling" (Lootens, 2008: 31) and to evoke a national sentiment which exerts moral and political pressure to unanimously 'disdain' slavery. Her moral and political pressure unveils itself in the looming collapse of the American "UNION" (Browning, 1900: l. 233). So far, Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her poem addressed the ungodly south and slave owners' act of oppressing slaves, but by addressing the 'UNION,' Browning also attacks the prolonged attempt to immediately emancipate slaves because Northern states had adopted gradual emancipation laws after 1780, which provided that every child born to a slave mother would be free at a certain point of his life. However, from 1830 onwards, radical abolitionist William Llyod Garrison publicly proclaimed in his newspaper and during his speeches the demand to immediately free all slaves. He became the first and most outspoken immediatist who radicalized the abolitionist movement which began to face opposition from more moderate gradual abolitionists and led to tension within the northern states: "For in this UNION, you have set / Two kinds of men in adverse rows, / Each loathing each" (Browning, 1900: ll. 233-235).

By ending the poem with a spoken 'disdain' against all white men — "White men, I leave you . . . / In my broken heart's disdain" (l. 251-252), Elizabeth Barrett

Browning, once again, experiments with her feminine anti-slavery rhetoric in the services of radical abolitionism. On the one hand, Elizabeth Barrett Browning emulates William Llyod Garrison words that "[s]lavery is strictly a national sin" and that the northern states were "all alike guilty" (Garrison, 1829). For Garrison, the non-slave owning states in the north and abolitionists were as much guilty as the states in the slave holding south because of their compliance in the Fugitive Slave Act and abolitionists' prolonged inability to immediately emancipate slaves. Garrison fervently advocated that any perpetuation of slavery would bring about the "terrible judgments of an incensed God [who] will complete the catastrophe of republican America" (Garrison, 1829), because he believed that:

> all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are therefore before God utterly null and void; being an audacious usurpation of the Divine prerogative, a daring infringement on the law of nature . . . .and a presumptuous transgression of all the holy commandments — and that therefore they ought to be instantly abrogated.
>
> (1833)

Hence, in her final stanza Elizabeth Barrett Browning explicitly reinforces the runaway slave woman's alliance with God in order to call upon the immediate emancipation of slaves and as the only way to avoid God's vengeance and slave insurrections growing out of 'disdain'.

On the other hand, Elizabeth Barrett Browning radicalizes the 'broken heart' which was a central theme in the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric. In this case, the runaway slave's 'broken heart' is not full of grief like Yamba's — "broken is my heart with grief" (More, 1823: 9-12) — which Hannah More deliberately depicts in order to sensitize the readership and make them weep, but it is full of "disdain" (Browning, 1900: 253) which fuels the runaway slave's desire for personal agency and instructs whites about future resistances. Therefore, Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not confine, as Sarah Brophy argues, her feminine rhetoric to the "emotional effect her predicament might have on her male auditors" and emotionally persuade them to take up the anti-slavery cause; instead, she rather "instructs them about *their* predicament rather than to influence them about hers" (qtd. in Slinn, 2003: 87). More specifically, depicting the 'broken heart' of the slave, she shows how the exercise of oppression and infliction of suffering will inevitable ensure the growing 'disdain' among slaves which will generate their personal agency and authority to resist any further oppression and injustices, even if they have to 'fall' and die themselves as a

means of rebellion. With regard to this instruction about a future rebellion caused by the slaves' broken heart as the result of oppression, Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not aim to appeal to their hearts of the reader but rather aims to appeal to their reason to show them the "the paradox of power and resistance" (Slinn, 2003: 87).

Therefore, in her conclusion, Elizabeth Barrett Browning does not revise the poem's concerns for middle-class woman's public activism, nor does she reinforce female submissiveness or idealization of female roles like the conservative poetess Hannah More. Instead, she ends her poem by reinforcing the slave woman's agency with which she strives for the freedom to be the master of her own bringing about the political change to defy the slave-system. Although "the white men will control the final act" (79), the runaway slave woman achieves to establish her agency to act on behalf herself initiated by running away, asserts her equality through God, restores her humanity and dignity by committing the infanticide, and, eventually, speaks and acts as independent person through which she brings about her own death. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's runaway slave "may not achieve the victory of literal freedom, but she achieves" through her actions "that most prized of slave goals, human dignity and agency" (56).

Conclusively, Elizabeth Barrett Browning radicalizes the feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which focuses on the suffering and oppression of the runaway slave woman, epitomized through her motherhood; however, it becomes the means to construct the slave woman's personal and political agency. Supporting this, "the poem's dramatic content," notes Slinn, "is an example of agency" (87). Hence, by recounting the slave woman's terror of suffering and infanticide, Elizabeth Barrett Browning gives the slave woman the possibility to restore her dignity and humanity and to declare her independence — to act as a 'being-for-itself' —, rather than adopting the feminine sentimental rhetoric to support anti-slavery as a Christian mission and reinforce female gender-roles.

CONCLUSION

The comparison of the poems, “The Sorrows of Yamba; or A Negro Woman’s Lamentation,” written by Hannah More, and “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point,” written by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, shows that both British female writers share a feminine anti-slavery rhetoric which voices female sufferings, degradation and separation of mothers from children, themes which dominated women’s writings throughout the history of the anti-slavery movement. This study focused on the contribution of two white women poets to the anti-slavery movement through analyzing their feminine anti-slavery rhetoric and their different approaches, with respect to the existing gender ideologies within the two opposing anti-slavery movements, which were reflected in their portrayal of a passive versus a rebellious slave woman.

Hannah More, as the conservative female poet aiding the abolition movement in England towards the end of the 18th century, uses her feminine sentimental rhetoric in order to portray the wrenching apart of the family and kinship ties of the enslaved woman Yamba, who receives new hope through her introduction to Christianity. In ensuring that Yamba is a daughter, mother, wife and a grateful convert who forgives her master and wishes to be reunited with her husband in heaven, Hannah More upholds the ideals of domesticity and female submissiveness, and promotes anti-slavery as an imperial Christian mission. Her feminine rhetoric provides a common focus on female suffering in order to appeal to readers’ sensibilities and mobilize British middle-class females to engage in the anti-slavery movement as a religious mission and become the voice for these enslaved female victims.

Nevertheless, the emerging representation of the passive and culturally inferior slave woman is inseparable from Hannah More’s empowerment as the poet. Through her poetry she raises awareness of slave women’s suffering and acts on behalf of them who are unable to speak for and govern themselves. Such ‘maternalism,’ which visualizes Hannah More and the white women as the maternal protectors of these powerless black women, fits with the more conservative, evangelical strand in anti-slavery, because it acknowledges female public activism as

a result of white British middle-class woman's desire to spread the benefits of Christianity and emancipate slave women so that they were free to fulfill their domestic roles as wives and mothers taking care of their children and enjoying the privilege of patriarchal protection and Christianity. Revolving around traditional gender-roles and Christianity, Hannah More, as the 'maternalist' activist, seeks to justify her public activism by establishing anti-slavery "as an acceptable extension of [women's] domestic and religious duties" as the Guardians of morality and religion. (Midgley, 1992: 153). With regard to this, Hannah More promotes a hierarchal vision of freedom which reinforces patriarchal gender-ideologies and social relations expecting women slaves to remain subordinate and submissive.

Hannah More and other conservative British middle class female abolitionists tended to distance themselves from female resistance and agency viewing them as improper, and, instead, preferred to emphasize the passivity of slave women to reinstate female submissiveness. However, Elizabeth Barrett Browning acknowledges slave women's resistance to oppression and goes beyond her slave woman's role as a mother. Her poem, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," written upon her trans-Atlantic invitation in the mid-19th century, reverberates an alternative egalitarian approach rooted in the radical arguments for the natural rights of men. Adopting this egalitarian approach, she presents an eloquent runaway slave at Pilgrim's Point who questions racial ideologies and voices herself as an equal and contrasts it to the paradoxical denial of her unalienable rights and her suffering as a slave woman in the land that praises itself to be the "free America" (Browning, 1900: l. 222).

Although Elizabeth Barrett Browning focuses on three dominant forms of female suffering such as the dehumanization, flogging, and the destruction of the bond between mother and child, she uses the role of this black woman as a mother to empower and transform her by incorporating the depiction of infanticide and insurrection. In this poem, the suffering of this slave woman becomes the driving force behind her rebellious energy and determination to run away and commit the infanticide as a symbolic act to resist the double burden of sexual and racial oppression, which reduce her to merely a medium for reproduction denying her any form of self-actualization. Moreover, while Elizabeth Barrett Browning also considers the anti-slavery as a religious issue, she eschews the conservative

interpretation of the suffering of slaves like Christ, which leaves "the idea that slavery is wholly compatible with Christianity which gradually has to educate and Christianize slaves to extend them their female privileges as wives and mothers" ("The Sorrows of": np). Instead, she denounces slavery as a moral sin and stresses the slave woman's equality and insurrectionary spirit as a form of self-defense to resist racial and sexual exploitation by the oppressive gender-ideologies and the patriarchal slave system which could be brought to an end through the immediate emancipation of slaves.

With the depiction of the rebellious slave woman, who solely kneels down to expose the failure of America's promised freedom and to legitimize her empowerment, Elizabeth Barrett Browning radicalizes the conservative anti-slavery image of the passive 'kneeling slave' within her poem. The runaway slave woman within her poem no longer seeks to be recognized through her helping cry —'Am I not a woman and a Sister'—by white philanthropists, but rather has the power to act on behalf of herself because she insists that she is an equal human being with dignity who should not be defined by alleged racial ideologies. Such radicalization, as Miller points out, shows that Elizabeth Barrett Browning in her poem "experiments with the conventional tropes of womanhood and religion in the services of radical abolitionism . . . More specifically, it inaugurates her attempts to mobilize conservative discourses of bodily and social difference, especially with respect to motherhood and spirituality, in the service of progressive social change" (Miller, 2014: 655). Furthermore, Elizabeth Barrett Browning sustains the attention on a slave mother to voice her social and political criticism through the acceptable feminine sentimental rhetoric. With regard to this, her egalitarian approach to anti-slavery challenges patriarchal ideologies by presenting a self-conscious slave woman who has the power to act and speak for herself and to declare herself as an independent individual, defying the idea of female submissiveness and their conservative gender roles.

As a conclusion of this comparative study it can be said that the two contradictory emerging images of slave women epitomize each poet's gender-ideology and their involvement as females in the anti-slavery movement. Hannah More as the conservative female poet couples her feminine anti-slavery rhetoric with a 'maternalistic' approach, whereby, she maintains the stereotypical image of slave

women as passive and inferior in order to promote a conservative hierarchal vision of freedom which celebrates female domestic roles and subordination, and Christian religious beliefs. However, such 'maternalistic' approach leads to the "selfish obsession with the reader's sensibility" and the effect it has on the male authorities and implies that conservative British middle-class females were more "self-conscious about defining [her] role" within the anti-slavery movement (Midgley, 1992: 34, 93). Adopting this 'maternalistic' approach, Hannah More is more concerned about justifying her public activism and does not challenge the male domination of the movement. It can be said, that Hannah More within her poem maintains the inferiority of her black woman slave and her supposed Christ-like suffering and, in doing so, upholds traditional gender ideologies of female submissiveness and duties. Hence, she successfully establishes her voice on a political issue within the secure bounds of the separate-spheres ideology and evangelicalism, which mutually reinforce each other.

In contrast, Elizabeth Barrett Browning advocates the rights of her slave woman from an egalitarian perspective and declares a radical vision of freedom for personal agency and the right to equality. Such egalitarian approach fits with the more radical American abolitionists who "encouraged women to view themselves as the spiritual equals of men, and gave women the strength to follow the inner voice of their conscious regardless of male opinion" (200). Thus, Elizabeth Barrett Browning goes beyond the feminine sentimental rhetoric and conveys a "rhetoric of political intent" by establishing her poem's dramatic content of female suffering as a means to develop female agency with which she attacks "paternalistic superiority . . . combined with capitalistic values of property ownership" (Slinn, 2003: 56, 83). Hence, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem enhances the power and status of black women slaves and demonstrates their potential to challenge oppressive racial and gender ideologies to demand their right for equality and personal and political agency. Her poem illuminates the radical potential of anti-slavery as a movement for fundamental human rights to dignity and freedom regardless of race and gender.

This study aimed to provide an understanding of white British women's contribution to the anti-slavery cause as it underscores their feminine anti-slavery rhetoric influenced by their different approaches, i.e. the 'maternalistic' vs egalitarian approach, which were the result of the gender ideologies within the late 18th century

anti-slavery campaign in England, and the mid-19th century radical abolitionist campaign in America.

This study can also be used to draw further attention to the development of feminism. The more conservative political environment in the British anti-slavery movement encouraged 'maternalist activists' like Hannah More and other British females to adopt an "approach [that] may be described as feminine — self-consciously female — rather than feminist," asserts Midgley (1992: 153). The radical American abolitionist movement under the leadership William Lloyd Garrison, on the other hand, was less constrained by religious orthodoxy and strongly upheld egalitarian ideals which encouraged women to raise awareness of the subordinate position of white women within their patriarchal society and to challenge this social-political-status quo. Adopting an egalitarian approach and through her trans-Atlantic correspondence, Elizabeth Barrett Browning aligns herself with 'abolitionist-feminism'. This 'abolitionist-feminism' particularly began to grow in America from 1837 onwards, because American women, in contrast to British women campaigners, were inspired and encouraged by their involvement in the radical American abolitionist movement and, therefore, more openly demanded women's right (154, 175-176). Eventually, they organized *The Seneca Falls Convention*, in New York, in 1848, the first women's rights convention. The issue of immediate abolition, egalitarianism and the willingness to challenge male authority were key drives behind the growing feminist potential among American women, and also some British women who corresponded with them, such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in order to bring about the shift from anti-slavery to women's rights and their demand for equality. The question that arises for further studies would be in how far women's activism in anti-slavery campaigns effected the development of feminism in England and America. Here again, religious, social and philosophical, racial and class ideologies will serve as the key focus to obtain an answer.

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BIOGRAPHY

Cansu Küçük Tekin was born on February 26, 1988, in Rüdesheim am Rhein, a town in the Rhine Valley of Germany. She attended school in Germany. After her graduation from high school in 2007, she went to Atlanta, Georgia where she lived for two years. In Atlanta she volunteered for different non-profit organizations which supported various social projects that helped and supported children from low income neighborhoods. During this time, she also enrolled at Oglethorpe University and Georgia Perimeter College where she attended various freshman college classes. After returning to Germany, she graduated from the Johannes-Gutenberg University of Mainz in 2013, with a Bachelor Degree in American Studies as her major, and British Studies as her minor. She developed an interest in slavery and its legacy, gender and race studies which she furthered with a Master's Degree at Kocaeli University. In addition to expanding her academic knowledge, she helps running the *Ottoman Studies Foundation*, a Harvard and Koç supported summer school and non-profit organization, founded by her husband's parents.