"EVERY GOOD MAN IS A QUAKER, AND THAT NONE BUT GOOD MEN ARE

QUAKERS": TRANSATLANTIC QUAKER HUMANITARIANS,

DISABILITY, AND MARKETING ENLIGHTENED REFORM,

1730-1834

by

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Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Arlington in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

December 2015

Acknowledgements

I initially began work on my doctorate in 2009 as a way to keep myself out of trouble and intellectually engaged. To those ends, I certainly succeeded! This project has been at times challenging, exhausting, and overwhelming—especially as my wife and I have welcomed two children into our lives and moved 1200 miles from our Texas home since I first began this project. Ultimately, however, it has been fulfilling and I'm thrilled to be able to thank those who have helped it come to fruition.

I'm immensely grateful to my committee members, Sarah Rose, John Garrigus, Elisabeth Cawthon, and Michael Goode. I particularly thank Sarah for her patience (especially with Skype) and her constant encouragement of my research. Drs. Garrigus, Cawthon, and Les Riding-In at UT-Arlington all helped secure support for my studies and research travels that have made it possible to complete this degree. Thank you!

At my wonderful school community of Rowland Hall-St. Mark's, I'd like to thank Dr. Fiona Halloran and Dr. Kathryn Taylor for their constant encouragement and support of my research and helping me appreciate the value that this process of dissertating brings not only for ourselves, but more importantly, for our students.

I'd like to thank all those who hosted me during my research journeys: Florence and Michael Mini, Marcus and Brenda Webb, and Ben Metcalf and Melissa Garcia. You all helped make my time away from home (and sometimes family) warm and welcoming.

Finally, I'd like to thank my wonderful and amazing wife, Anna, whose love and support throughout this marathon project has been unwavering.

February 1, 2016

Abstract

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This dissertation explores how Quaker humanitarians in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries actively absorbed and employed emerging Enlightenment discourses

about "disability" and human dependency as a means to build support for, fund, and

market their reform activities.

Beginning in the eighteenth century in their abolitionist advocacy, Quakers

harnessed Enlightenment rhetoric about disability and public displays of aberrant bodies

and minds in order to raise attention to the plight of various marginalized groups and also

to raise funds to support these causes. This emerging concept of disability, which was

very individualized, cohered nicely with Quakers' central theological tenet of the "Inner

Light," which holds that there is that of God in all individuals. Rooted in these earnest

religious convictions and their embrace of Enlightenment progress, Quaker humanitarians

absorbed the dualistic Enlightenment notion that disabilities constituted a marginal form of humanity, but one that an individual could overcome.

Methodologically, this dissertation takes a cultural approach by closely examining how Quaker reformers both adopted and adapted an Enlightenment-forged rhetoric of disability to market their reform endeavors, pursue their humanitarian goals, and define their sect as leaders in transatlantic philanthropy. Through this analysis, this dissertation highlights how Quaker reformers embraced an Enlightenment-forged concept of disability that was at once pejorative and celebratory. As philanthropic Friends marketed their own reform institutions and initiatives, they furthered this dualistic notion of disability. Defining institutional success through the medicalized language of "cures" and "restoration," these philanthropists reinforced Enlightenment hierarchies of disability. As a result, Quaker reform institutions actively sought out those aberrant people who could be "cured" and return to "normal" society, whom they felt constituted a higher form of humanity, while they sought to exclude those whose aberrance was permanent and not "bettered" by medical interventions or education. This dissertation focuses on the ways various Quaker reformers harnessed these ideas about disability to advocate for abolition, create more "humane" insane asylums, and influence the establishment of deaf education in Philadelphia.

Finally, this dissertation also uncovers the active role that many people with disabilities played both in the conceptual construction of disability in this era as well as in active resistance to the marginalization or exploitation that many institutional administrators tried to impose on them.

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Introduction

In 1809, John Haslam, the apothecary at London's Bethlem Hospital, published a wide-ranging book on madness, which sought to both define the condition and explore its causes, symptoms, and treatments. Working within Bethlem—one of the most notorious and reviled public asylums, famed for its overcrowding and harsh treatment of residents—Haslam had the opportunity to empirically observe and carefully note how "insanity" manifested itself amongst thousands of patients. As he investigated the various causes of insanity perceived at that time, Haslam concluded that it was "sinful to accuse RELIGION, which preserves the dignity and integrity of our intellectual faculty, with being the cause of its derangement." Surveying various religions' impact on the stability of the human mind, Haslam concluded that "[t]he decorous piety, and exemplary life of the quaker [*sic*] has signally exempted him from this most severe of human infirmities."[1]

Ironically, as one of the reviewers of Haslam's book commented later that year, such a remark was "not quite correct, because we have seen several quakers [*sic*] as completely deranged as persons of other sects; and we know that the society of quakers have established an asylum at York, which is supplied with patients almost exclusively from their own body." The reviewer concluded that Haslam likely made such an erroneous conclusion because Quakers were largely absent from the population of Bethlem Hospital. Rather than leaving their fellow Friends who had been declared

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[1] John Haslam, *Observations on Madness and Melancholy* (London: J. Callow, 1809), 264, 265; For wider context on the conditions and public reputation of Bethlem Hospital, see Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 70–74; Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 67–70; Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 14–18.

"insane" to receive treatment in this publicly funded institution, English Quakers instead created an "admirable institution for lunatics at York," thereby furthering the sect's reputation as the "pre-eminent example of maintaining and providing for their own poor."[2] Although these medically trained professionals disagreed over the prevalence of "insanity" amongst Quakers, their clashing comments also revealed an underlying agreement about the fact that Quakers in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries had established a reputation as outstanding, kind-hearted philanthropists. One of the key ways that Quakers had forged this identity was through their work with individuals perceived to be "disabled" or otherwise aberrant.[3]

Roughly forty years later, this reputation for humanitarian generosity on behalf of marginalized groups continued to feature prominently in public perceptions of Quakers. In the midst of the Irish Potato Famine in the late 1840s, Quakers created a Central Relief Committee that collected funds and distributed food to the starving population on that island. As a population effectively colonized by the English, the Irish shared other colonized groups' experience of being marginalized and deprived of full rights.[4] To help

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[2] "Review of Observations on Madness and Melancholy, by John Haslam," *The Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal: Exhibiting a Concise View of the Latest and Most Important Discoveries in Medicine, Surgery, and Pharmacy* 5 (October 1809): 453.

[3] Although "disability" did not exist in the same way during the eighteenth century as it does contemporarily, individuals in that era used a host of terms to indicate one's ability to labor and provide for oneself. "Able-bodied" and "not able-bodied" helped define where people fell on the spectrum of economic productivity, whereas more specific terms such as "lame" and "cripple" identified individuals with specific bodily aberrations. The term "disabled" did appear during the eighteenth century, however, but it could indicate a range of infirmities, not all of which were physical: injury in military combat, old age, financial destitution, drunkenness, or temporary exhaustion all fell under the umbrella of this term. For details on the changing language of eighteenth-century disability, see David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), chap. 1.

[4] For an overview of how the English treated Ireland as an internal colony, see Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1999); For recent monographs and articles on the intersection of colonialism and

this subjugated and starving population, American social reformer Asenath Nicholson worked alongside and sometimes with the Quaker Central Relief Committee. During this charity work, Nicholson noted the recipients' almost-universal admiration for the Quakers. When she asked: "in a school or soup-shop […] Who feeds you? or, who sends you these clothes? the answer was: 'The good Quakers, lady, and it's they that have the religion entirely.'"[5] Although many non-Quakers provided relief during the Famine, Nicholson's anecdote points to the importance of Quaker relief efforts during the Irish famine and how positively the Irish viewed their assistance.

These two examples of non-Quakers commenting on the work done by members of the Religious Society of Friends (the official name for the Quakers) highlight the positive reputation that members of this sect had developed by the mid-nineteenth century. Quakers were pious and religiously devoted; they were charitable and at the forefront of humanitarian crises; and they engaged in reforms, such as with insane

disability, see Jonathan Sadowsky, *Imperial Bedlam: Institutions of Madness in Colonial Southwest Nigeria* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1999); Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005); Richard C. Keller, "Pinel in the Maghreb: Liberation, Confinement, and Psychiatric Reform in French North Africa," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79, no. 3 (2005): 459–99; Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). For an example of how English politicians perceived the Irish as inherently lazy and dependent because of their reliance on "easy" potato cultivation, see John Kelly, *The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2012), 154. For a comprehensive survey on the role of Quakers in the relief efforts during the Irish Potato Famine, see Helen E. Hatton, *The Largest Amount of Good: Quaker Relief in Ireland, 1654-1921* (Montreal, Quebec; Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993); For more recent scholarship from a disability history perspective on the construction of Irish people as "disabled," see Sarah M. Gray, "Irish Disability: Postcolonial Narratives of Stunted Development" (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011), http://hdl.handle.net/2142/24252; Oonagh Walsh, "'The Designs of Providence': Race, Religion and Irish Insanity," in Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe, eds., *Insanity, Institutions, and Society, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1999), 223–242.

[5] Maureen O'Rourke Murphy, "Nicholson, Asenath Hatch (1792–1855)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://libproxy.uta.edu:2422/view/article/52713, accessed October 05, 2012; Asenath Nicholson, *Annals of the Famine in Ireland in 1847, in 1848 and 1849* (New York: E. French, 1851), 297.

asylums, where superintendents used the Enlightenment values of empiricism and reason served to help them "restore" people back to society and "full" humanity. In all these endeavors, Friends took a profound and consistent interest in groups of people who many perceived as inferior humans because they had some "natural" deficiency or deviancy in their bodies or minds.

Some aspects of the Quakers' reputations initially seem at odds with each other, such as being religiously pious but also absorbed in progressive Enlightenment philosophy. This apparent contradiction raises questions about how Quaker humanitarians managed to fuse these identities in their philanthropic work and market them to a transatlantic audience. Rather than solidify these dichotomies and place Quaker humanitarianism either firmly in the camp of spiritual religion or the secular Enlightenment, this dissertation seeks to challenge such binaries and help incorporate Quaker reformers and philanthropists of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries into broader narratives about Enlightenment discourse about disability, transatlantic humanitarianism, and the marketing or self-fashioning both of Quaker religious identity and their reform endeavors. To what extent did Quaker philanthropists draw on their theological beliefs as well as ostensibly secular empirical, scientific, and Enlightenment methods to inform their reform activities and institutions? How did religiously devoted Quakers whose belief of "that of God" within all people engage with and employ emerging Enlightenment ideas about human variation and "disability" proffered by Deist *philosophes*? How did these Quaker reformers market and frame their humanitarian

achievements through both spiritual and Enlightenment lenses, often fusing the two, in

order to solidify their glowing reputation as vanguard philanthropists?

As Quakers' immersion in and embrace of secular Enlightenment philosophy

raised questions, so too does the phenomenon of how the concept of "disability"

developed during the Enlightenment. How did Enlightenment thinkers help create the

intellectual construct of "disability"? How did the empirical method cause the concept of

"normal" to emerge from the Enlightenment? Why did humanitarians, philanthropists,

and reformers find these concepts of "disability" so appealing and invoke them in the

process of founding and marketing their initiatives and institutions? What role did

disabled people themselves play in defining, challenging, or modifying these concepts of

"disability" during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

This dissertation will argue that Quaker humanitarians in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries actively absorbed and employed emerging Enlightenment discourses

about "disability" and human dependency as a means to build support for, fund, and

market their reform activities. Beginning in the eighteenth century in their abolitionist

advocacy, Quakers harnessed Enlightenment rhetoric about disability and public displays

of aberrant bodies and minds in order to raise attention to the plight of various

marginalized groups and also to raise funds to support these causes.[6] This emerging

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[6] Although Meranze did not use a disability history method to approach how Philadelphians, including a number of prominent Quakers including Roberts Vaux, reformed public punishment and the prison system in Philadelphia, his discussion of the underlying assumptions that drove these reforms applies equally well to the Quaker-specific focus of this dissertation. See, Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996). In summarizing these reformers' assumptions about social problems and their methods to solve them, Meranze writes: "Whether the target was poverty, criminality, delinquency,

concept of disability, which was very individualized, cohered nicely with Quakers'

central theological tenet of the "Inner Light," which holds that there is that of God in all

individuals. Rooted in these earnest religious convictions and their embrace of

Enlightenment progress, Quaker humanitarians absorbed the dualistic Enlightenment

notion that disabilities constituted a marginal form of humanity, but one that an

individual could overcome.

Methodologically, this dissertation takes a cultural approach by closely examining

how Quaker reformers both adopted and adapted an Enlightenment-forged rhetoric of

disability to market their reform endeavors, pursue their humanitarian goals, and define

their sect as leaders in transatlantic philanthropy. Through this analysis, this dissertation

highlights how Quaker reformers embraced an Enlightenment-forged concept of

disability that was at once pejorative and celebratory. As philanthropic Friends marketed

their own reform institutions and initiatives, they harnessed and often employed these

Enlightenment ideas and rhetoric, thereby furthering this dualistic notion of disability.

Defining institutional success through the medicalized language of "cures" and

"restoration," these philanthropists also helped reinforce Enlightenment hierarchies of

disability. As a result, Quaker reform institutions actively sought out those aberrant

people who could be "cured" and return to "normal" society, whom they felt constituted a

higher form of humanity, while they sought to exclude those whose aberrance was

permanent and not "bettered" by medical interventions or education. This dissertation

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prostitution, or idleness, reformers and officials believed that social problems could best be contained
through the transformation of individuals characters, that individual character could best be transformed
trough the careful supervision of individual regimen, and that the supervision of individual regimen could
best take place within an environment where time and space were carefully regulated" (p. 4).

focuses on the ways various Quaker reformers harnessed these ideas about disability to

advocate for abolition, create more "humane" insane asylums, and influence the

establishment of deaf education in Philadelphia.

Moreover, this dissertation places Friends within their transatlantic context and

works to tie together the ways this dualistic Enlightenment concept of disability

influenced their humanitarian work in England, North America, and the Caribbean.[7]

Given the strong institutional and cultural network that bound Quakers together across

the ocean, these reformers frequently exchanged ideas and strategies about how best to

administer and market their institutions in a way that cohered with Quaker values via

their extant transatlantic religious networks.[8] Rather than see their philanthropy as a

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[7] For a broad introduction to the field of transatlantic history and some of the methods used by scholars in that field, see Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, First (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); For examples of books that explore the philanthropy, social policy, intellectual transfers, and other phenomena that occur below and beyond the level of the nation-state, see Thomas Adam and Uwe Luebken, eds., *Beyond the Nation: United States History in Transnational Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2008); Thomas Adam, *Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Urban Society in Transnational Perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); Although Tyrell argues for the extra-American influences in the creation of the United States, he nevertheless recognizes the importance of the nation-state as a political entity, as it creates important policies which influence the way in which transnational forces reshape the national identity. See, Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Much of the scholarship done in transatlantic history focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; for an article that explores the transatlantic dynamics of eighteenth century humanitarianism, see Huw T. David, "Transnational Advocacy in the Eighteenth Century: Transatlantic Activism and the Anti-Slavery Movement.," *Global Networks* 7, no. 3 (July 2007): 367–82, doi:10.1111/j.1471-0374.2007.00174.x; For a transatlantic perspective on the Age of Revolutions and how the developments of the French Revolution reverberated in the Caribbean, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2004); For a comparative overview of Atlantic revolutions in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, see Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World : A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

[8] For a discussion of how Quakers, Mennonites, and Pietists established transatlantic institutions (such as Friends' London Meeting for Sufferings) and communications networks to provide assistance to persecuted co-religionists, see Rosalind J. Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and

reflection of their withdrawal from secular society, this dissertation contends that Quaker humanitarians very consciously self-fashioned and projected an image of their faith and philanthropy. This transatlantic marketing illustrates that Quakers actively participated in the very prominent and competitive marketplace of philanthropic reforms during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. In other words, Friends did not isolate themselves in a sectarian world of reform where theological beliefs alone informed their work in abolitionism, insane asylums, and deaf education; rather, their work in these fields engaged with, embraced, and modified emerging ideas about disability that Enlightenment thinkers circulated throughout the Atlantic world.

Finally, this dissertation also uncovers the active role that many people with disabilities played both in the conceptual construction of disability in this era as well as in active resistance to the marginalization or exploitation that many institutional administrators tried to impose on them. The Quaker abolitionist Benjamin Lay used his short stature and bodily aberration to draw public attention and sympathy to enslaved

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European Migration, 1660-1710," in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L Denault, eds., *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), chap. 6. Beiler goes on to argues that these networks transformed from ones focused on aiding the persecuted to ones that helped establish migration patterns and New World settlements. For a Quaker-centric analysis of how Friends' transatlantic network enabled them to exchange print materials, participate in the traveling ministry, and solidify the transatlantic Quaker community in the mid-seventeenth through early-eighteenth century, see Jordan Landes, *London Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World: The Creation of an Early Modern Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); For focused, though nation-centric discussions of Quaker reformers and the interconnection between their humanitarian activities, see Ann Maree Jones, "Quakers and Social Reform in England 1780-1870" (Murdoch University, 2010), http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/5811/; Margaret Morris Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World: The Humanitarian Activities of Philadelphia Quakers, 1790--1820" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9227678; More contemporary scholarship has argued that the Quakers' transatlantic networks during the Age of Revolutions helped them forge a distinctive identity as a "Holy Nation," placing them outside of, and often in opposition to, the secular nation-states being forged in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. See, Sarah Crabtree, *Holy Nation: The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Africans. The English Member of Parliament William Hay volunteered to posthumously donate his "deformed" body to advance scientific knowledge. Mary Lippincott and her sister Hannah colluded to help Mary escape Friends Asylum outside of Philadelphia. The deaf student-*cum*-teacher William Darlington felt empowered by his education and therefore demanded better compensation from the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. In all these cases, disabled people acted as active agents in forming ideas about the meaning of their own disability and challenging those imposed by others.

The Changing Historical Meaning of Disability

As is true for concepts of race, gender, class, and national identity, disability, too, is historically constructed and shaped by its particular context.[9] Only recently have scholars begun critically examining how disability has been constructed and changed over time both as a lived experience and as an analytical concept. In fact, contemporary statistics for the United States estimate that roughly twenty percent of people fall into the category of "disabled," indicating not only this minority group's numerical prominence in

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[9] The scholarship that explores the historical construction of these various identities remains ever-expanding and is too wide for a thorough discussion here. In lieu of a comprehensive treatment, however, see some of the following sources for representative examples. For an analysis on the construction of race see, Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in J. Morgan Kousser and James M McPherson, eds., *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143–177; Barbara Jeanne Fields, "Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181, no. 1 (1990): 95–118; For the seminal essay analyzing the historical construction of gender, see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–75; The standard place to begin any analysis of class and its historical construction remains the work of Karl Marx. For a broad overview of his writing, see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978); For a classic interpretation of the construction of class identity, see E. P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964); The most transformative work in re-interpreting the historical construction of the "nation" and national identity remains Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

the present, but also suggesting its omnipresence in the past.[10] That is not to say that

disabled people have been wholly excised from the historical record; there is a long

history of writing about people with disabilities. In these traditional historical accounts,

however, scholars have rendered the disabled people as passive actors. They are generally

subject to the expertise and interventions of professional physicians, philanthropists,

legislators, and educators. They are associated with dependency and are consistently

presented as the recipients of medical care, charity, or government assistance—outside

experts who will help them "overcome" their individual deficiency. Given these narrative

emphases, this early strain of writing about disability tended to focus on the histories of

specific impairments, such as blindness, deafness, or insanity, or on the histories of

institutions that treated these individuals. As actors and self-directed agents, people with

disabilities only gained a voice in the historical record with the advent of the disability

rights movement in the 1970s and 1980s.[11]

    With the growth of the disability rights movement in those decades, however, also

came the scholarly growth of Disability Studies. Bolstered by the political triumph of the

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[10] Catherine Kudlick, "Comment: On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (2013): 540, fn. 2. Kudlick draws on U.S. Census Bureau data in presenting these statistics on people with disabilities: http://www.census.gov/people/disability/methodology/acs.html.

[11] For a cogent overview of the development of the "New Disability History," see Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, "Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream," in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 1–29. In describing these traditional approaches to writing about disabled people before the rise of disability history, Longmore and Umansky cite some of the following texts on p. 8, fns. 11 and 12: John Vickrey Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch, *A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1989); Deborah A. Stone, *The Disabled State* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Edward D. Berkowitz, *Disabled Policy: America's Programs for the Handicapped* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); For another older, pre-Disability Studies monograph on the life of a prominent individual with a disability, see Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985).

U.S. Congress' passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, this interdisciplinary movement focused on challenging and historicizing the "medical model," which viewed disability as an individual pathology located in some defective physical or mental characteristic and limited individuals with this label from living their life as "normal" people did. Instead of this medicalized approach that treated disability as something to overcome, scholars working in Disability Studies sought to reframe the identities and experiences of people with disabilities in the past through the lens of the "social model," which explored how social attitudes and values constructed disability.[12] Scholars who embraced the social model of disability harnessed it to achieve normative goals for people with disabilities: helping foster a greater sense of agency, empowerment, and inclusion.[13] These methods, moreover, also led scholars to more closely examine how language—both contemporary and historical—played a role in forging stigmas around disability and creating narratives of "overcoming" and "pity" that reinforced the medical model and its attendant social marginalization of people with disabilities.[14]

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[12] For analysis of the medical model and its impact on individuals with disabilities, see Sayantani DasGupta, "Medicalization," in Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, eds., *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 120–121; For a clear overview and analysis of the "Social Model," see Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 197–204.

[13] For examples of scholarship that firmly embraces both the methods and goals of normative advocacy embraced by scholars who use the "Social Model," see Joseph P Shapiro, *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Times Books, 1993); Liz Crow, "Including All of Our Lives: Renewing the Social Model of Disability," in *Encounters with Strangers: Feminism and Disability*, ed. Jenny Morris (London: Women's Press, 1996), 206–26.

[14] Foremost among the scholarship that critically dissects the way contemporary language constructs negative social ramifications for people with disabilities is Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); For the critical scholarship that examines the ways that literary rhetoric around disability has made it "the master trope of human disqualification," see David Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

Emerging out of Disability Studies in the mid-1990s through early-2000s,

Disability History has continued the work of challenging and uncovering the historical

construction of the medical model, but has complicated this interpretive framework by

examining the ways in which ideas about and the lived experience of disability has been

contingent on and shaped by the intersection of wider social, political, and cultural

factors. Much of the work done in Disability History has focused on historical

developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Topics such as rehabilitation for

disabled veterans, the presentation of disability in freak shows, eugenics, industrial

workers and disability, and the creation of disability rights movement have all featured

prominently in this more recent scholarship.[15] As an example of a vital contribution to the

field, historian Douglas Baynton has persuasively illustrated how marginalized groups in

the mid-nineteenth through early-twentieth centuries—women, black people, and

immigrants—used disability as an concept to demand expanded political and social

equality. By juxtaposing themselves with people whose bodies and minds deviated from

norm, these groups gained access to citizenship and voting rights by arguing that they

existed at a higher level on the human hierarchy than those deemed "disabled."[16]

Although this scholarship has varied widely in terms of its thematic emphases, historians

working in this field have sought to illustrate the normality, diversity of life, and

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[15] Because of the diverse nature of Disability History and the absence of ample monographs in the field, anthologies provide an excellent introduction into the range and variety of scholarship in this field. See, Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*; Lennard J. Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013); Susan Burch and Michael A Rembis, eds., *Disability Histories* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Jeffrey A Brune and Daniel J Wilson, *Disability and Passing: Blurring the Lines of Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013).

[16] Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 33–57.

flexibility of what constitutes a "disability" in the past.[17] Rather than assume all people

with a particular medical diagnosis or pathology have the same experience throughout

history, disability historians have embraced the concept of "intersectionality" and instead

uncovered the ways in which class, gender, race, sexuality, geographical context, and the

like all play a vital role in shaping both ideas about and the lived experience of

disability.[18]

This dissertation seeks to build on this work by examining the historical and

intersectional constructions of disability, but focusing this analysis on a group—the

Quakers—and an era—the eighteenth century—that has appeared only minimally in the

historiography of disability history. This dissertation will chronologically push back

much of the scholarship on disability into the eighteenth and early nineteenth century,

effectively writing about disability history before the concept of "disability" coalesced.

This task of uncovering this prehistory proves complicated because those in the Atlantic

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[17] To this point, Kim Nielsen writes: "Although the definition [of disability] has theoretically been based on bodies, the categorization of bodies as disabled has been shaped by factors such as gender, race, sexuality, education, levels of industrialization or standardization, access to adaptive equipment or privacy, and class. With age and medical care, as well as the vagaries of life, or simply daily context, one can move in and out of the category of 'people with disabilities.' One can be temporarily disabled due to accident or illness. Disabilities can be easily 'read' by others (signified by the presence of a wheelchair or the sounds of a speech impediment), or more difficult to discern (such as some psychological disabilities or neurological disabilities)." See, Kim E Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), xiv–xv.

[18] Catherine J. Kudlick, "Disability History: Why We Need Another 'Other,'" *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 3 (June 1, 2003): 763–93; Susan Burch and Ian Sutherland, "Who's Not Yet Here? American Disability History," *Radical History Review*, no. 94 (Winter 2006): 127–47; Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States*, xi–xv; Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein & Pieter Verstraete, "The need for imperfection: Disability histories in Europe," in Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein, and Pieter Verstraete, eds., *The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 8–10, http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1400888; For a fascinating exchange about the potential intersections between medical history (and more traditional medical model approaches) and disability history, see Beth Linker, "On the Borderland of Medical and Disability History: A Survey of the Fields," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 4 (2013): 499–535; Kudlick, "Comment"; Susan Burch and Michael Rembis, "Re-Membering the Past: Reflections on Disability Histories," in Burch and Rembis, *Disability Histories*, 2–5.

world used a constellation of constantly shifting language and terminology that described what we now call "disability." In the eighteenth century the term "disability" did not refer to the contemporary sense of the term to mean "a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities [or] the fact or state of having such a condition."[19] That sense of the term disability emerged in the wake of World War I and came to subsume a range of more impairment-focused terms such as "handicapped," "crippled," "feeble minded," and "disabled veteran." This sense of "disability" became widespread after the United States Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.[20] Given the ahistorical nature of this term for the eighteenth century, this dissertation will instead use the term to explore how Enlightenment thinkers coalesced a constellation of ideas about normalcy, dependency, and mental and physical aberrance into a concept that would eventually become "disability." Building on this intellectual framework, Quaker humanitarians reformers in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries marketed their reform endeavors as both congruent with their faith's belief in the "Inner Light" and with the dualistic Enlightenment notions about "disability."

Prior to this key transitional moment in the eighteenth century, medieval Europeans at times interpreted "disabilities" through the lens of religion, but these physical aberrations, monstrosity, or signs of "madness" could have either negative connotations, indicating sin or God's curse, as well as positive ones, demonstrating

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[19] "Disability, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed December 29, 2015, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/view/Entry/53381.

[20] For an overview of the changing meaning and construction of this concept, see Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, "Disability," in Adams, Reiss, and Serlin, *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 5–11.

spiritual purity or a closer connection to God. With the transition into the early modern

period, thinkers of the Scientific Revolution began to empirically evaluate and classify

"monsters" and other non-conforming humans in order to distinguish them from

"normal" people.[21] Enlightenment thinkers further transformed disability from the realm

of religion to that of empirical evidence and quantitative science. In this process they also

forged a dualistic notion of disability: it was a lesser, marginal state of humanity, yet one

that could be overcome.[22] Such philosophical speculations led Enlightenment thinkers to

forge hierarchies of disabilities that downgraded *all* disabled people as lesser types of

humans, but created a pecking order amongst these marginalized individuals: those who

had permanent, intellectual, and congenital disabilities tended to be perceived as worse

and lower than those who had ephemeral, sensory, or disabilities acquired in one's

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[21] Exploring this transition constitutes the focus on Ch. 1, but for additional depth on medieval notions of disability, see Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment in the High Middle Ages, C. 1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2010); For insight into the growth of Baconian science and its impact on how Europeans understood monsters, see Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past & Present*, no. 92 (August 1, 1981): 20–54, doi:10.2307/650748; Andrew Curran and Patrick Graille, "The Faces of Eighteenth-Century Monstrosity," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21, no. 2 (May 1997): 1–15.

[22] For the dominant interpretation of how "normal" became a dominant concept thanks to the work of philosophers and statisticians, see Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), chap. 2; For an analysis of how western cultural products employed disabilities as a rhetorical signifier of marginal status and "human disqualification," see Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; While the specific arguments from these Enlightenment thinkers will be discussed in Ch. 1 of this dissertation, see the following works for publications where these philosophers worked through and began to articulate what constituted a "full" human, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Awnsham and John Churchil, 1700); Denis Diderot, "Imperfect," Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2013, trans. Sophie Bergelson, *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, accessed April 3, 2014, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/d/did/did2222.0002.904/--imperfect?rgn=main;view=fulltext;q1=monster; Margo CE, Harman LE, and Smith DB, "Blindness and the Age of Enlightenment: Diderot's Letter on the Blind," *JAMA Ophthalmology* 131, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 98–102, doi:10.1001/jamaophthalmol.2013.559; Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments, or an Essay towards an Analysis of the Principles by Which Men Naturally Judge Concerning the Conduct and Character, First of Their Neighbours, and Afterwards of Themselves, to Which Is Added, a Dissertation on the Origin of Languages*, 4th ed. (London: W. Strahan, J. and F. Rivington, and W. Johnston, 1774).

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lifetime. This notion offered a modicum of hope to those individuals with more "overcomeable" disabilities because they could theoretically be restored to their "full" humanity through empirically-grounded treatment methods and institutions.[23]

l characterized many Enlightenment thinkers' faith that one could use reason, science, and empiricism to make purposeful progress in society. This progressive vision proved particularly appealing to humanitarians and philanthropists who sought to help individuals whose poverty, state of servitude, or mental or sensory impairments made them objects of charity and potential overcoming. The famed English Quaker prison reformer, Elizabeth Fry, even conceived of her calling toward humanitarian work through the lens of overcoming disability; through her philanthropy she would be "[a] light to the blind; speech to the dumb; and feet to the lame."[24] Because Enlightenment thinkers had categorized and sorted humans into "natural" hierarchies, it thereby provided these idealistic humanitarians with a framework to create specialized institutions, asylums, and

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[23] For an analysis of how Classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle developed "the Great Chain of Being" concept that created a rigid hierarchy amongst all elements in the world—beginning with God and working all the way down to inanimate objects such as minerals—see Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936). Lovejoy addresses the way "the Great Chain of Being" influenced eighteenth-century optimists of the Enlightenment in Chs. 7-8. For a concise treatment of the negative construction of intellectual disabilities and their marginal place in relationship to other disabilities, see Mark Rapley, *The Social Construction of Intellectual Disability* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 2.

[24] Michael N. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011), 21, 25, 51, 57; Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750–1807* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44–47; Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 418; Fry used this phrase twice to describe how her fellow Friend, Deborah Darby, had inspired her to consider philanthropic work as her calling: the first in her journal entry from September 4, 1798, and the second from her journal entry on March 16, 1799. See, Elizabeth Gurney Fry, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry: With Extracts from Her Journal and Letters*, vol. 1 (London: C. Gilpin, J. Hatchard, 1847), 60, 73–74. In this description, Fry paraphrased a passage from the Book of Job (29:15), thereby illustrating how these rhetorical uses of disability could fit simultaneously into Enlightenment and religious contexts. Fry made her most profound impact as a prison reformer in England, working with the women in Newgate Prison.

schools that they earnestly believed could address specific aberrations like blindness, deafness, and madness.[25] By expanding the chronology of disability back into the eighteenth century, this dissertation helps demonstrate that these dualistic concepts emerged from a transatlantic Enlightenment discourse, and not exclusively from medical experts in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

The Changing History of Friends, their Faith, and their Philanthropy

Quaker history has often been a narrowly defined and focused field marked by an exclusive focus on Friends and their networks of Meetings, traveling ministers, and correspondence that spans throughout the Atlantic world.[26] In terms of political

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[25] The scholarship on institutional histories of asylums and educational institutions is enormous and varied. For the classic interpretation of asylums and institutions as tools of oppression and surveillance, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965), chap. 2; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); For an American-focused analysis of how the asylum developed in response to Jacksonian-era concerns about social mobility and its threat to the established social order, see David J Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); For examples of institution-specific histories, see Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Charles L. Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989); Patricia D'Antonio, *Founding Friends: Families, Staff, And Patients at the Friends Asylum in Early Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2006); Benjamin Reiss, *Theaters of Madness: Insane Asylums and Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); More recent scholarship has explored the motivations—both religious, personal, and professional—that shaped the creation of institutions. For analysis of Samuel Gridley Howe's work with Laura Bridgman in the Perkins School in Massachusetts, see Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: The First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[26] The classic work of Frederick Tolles provides a strong representation of this historiographical focus. See, Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948); Frederick B. Tolles, "The Transatlantic Quaker Community in the Seventeenth Century," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (May 1951): 239–58; Frederick Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture.* (New York: Macmillan, 1960); For an example of more recent scholarship that has built on Tolles' foci, but brought the perspective of critical gender history to the Religious Society of Friends, see Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1999).

engagement, scholars of Quakerism have explored the sect's "separation" from mainstream Atlantic politics in the eighteenth century and on their internal struggles and sectarian rifts in the nineteenth century.[27] Historians of eighteenth-century Quakerism have focused on the sect's withdrawal from politics and their entry into a period of "Quietism"; this era (comprising the late-eighteenth century) brought about greater internal discipline and piety, but also, according to the standard narrative, a newfound venue for worldly engagement through their humanitarian work. In exploring this transition, scholars have clashed over whether Quaker quietism and humanitarianism emerged as a method for the British-founded sect to reintegrate into American society after the fissure of the American Revolution or whether it emerged before the Revolution, making their humanitarianism an outgrowth not of their desire to reintegrate into American society, but the product of their sectarian isolation from decades earlier.[28]

Whether one sees Quaker "Quietism" and its resultant humanitarianism as predating the American Revolution or a product of this upheaval, these narratives make

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[27] For the most important and thorough discussion of Quakers' 1827 "Hicksite Schism," which splintered the more traditional, Biblically-focused Orthodox Friends from the more evangelical and spiritually-focused "Hicksite" Friends, see Thomas D Hamm, *The Transformation of American Quakerism Orthodox Friends, 1800-1907* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

[28] For a concise and clear discussion of this historiographical debate, especially as it pertains to the history of Quaker abolitionism, see Peter Stamatov, *The Origins of Global Humanitarianism: Religion, Empires, and Advocacy* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 98–100. For a historical overview and concise definition of Quietism, see Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2013), 145–146. The authors of the entry on Quietism define it as a movement that "emphasized experience over dogma, lay spirituality, and openness to discerning and responding to God's will." For the traditional interpretation of Quaker humanitarianism, which situates it as the outgrowth of the isolation and ostracism Quakers experienced as a result of the American Revolution, see Sydney James, *A People among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). For the challenge to Sydney James, which contends that Quaker sectarianism and the "quietist" isolation that gave rise to their humanitarian endeavors had developed decades prior to the American Revolution, see Jack Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 125–125, 273.

the history of Quakerism and Friends' philanthropy an isolated and sectarian-focused one. As a result of this Quaker-centric historiography, scholars in broader fields of early American history or transatlantic humanitarianism have tended to isolate Quakers and make their story self-contained.[29] As a result, the work of Quaker humanitarians tends to be attributed solely to their theological beliefs and ignores the ways in which these Quaker humanitarians engaged with the broader intellectual currents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that reached beyond the sect and whose impacts were certainly not "quiet."

More recent scholarship has reassessed Quaker humanitarians as active, engaged, and prominent presences in the transatlantic world. These arguments have challenged the previously-dominant narrative that Quaker "Quietism" in the mid-eighteenth century isolated and separated the sect from mainstream political society, leading them to embrace philanthropy as their way to exert influence beyond the Society of Friends. Important monographs have explored the ways Quakers engaged "loudly" in Atlantic politics during the eighteenth century. Jane Calvert contends that Quakers played a crucial role in defining the political culture and constitutional philosophy of "civil disobedience" in the emerging United States. Rather than embrace revolution and political upheaval, Quakers advocated for systematic and steady reform that would

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[29] For examples for monographs that build on the work of Sydney James and isolate Quakers and make their humanitarian activities the product of unique sectarian isolation, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); For a work that culturally isolated Quakers in order to explore how they transferred their distinctive characteristics from England to North America in the process of late-seventeenth-century migrations, see David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1989).

respect established constitutional frameworks, thereby challenging the status quo while doing so in a way that protected the rights of dissenting groups like themselves.[30] Sarah Crabtree asserts that during the Age of Revolutions in the eighteenth century, Quakers forged themselves into a "Holy Nation"—a transnational community committed to Quaker theological values and to other members of this community. In creating this "Holy Nation," Quaker reformers very overtly and intentionally sought to critique and challenge the laws, policies, and military actions of the worldly governments under whose laws they lived. This oppositional stance, unsurprisingly, led to their persecution, but it also clearly reflected how transatlantic Quakers engaged with politics in public ways, thereby defying the "Quietist" label in yet another way.[31]

This dissertation builds on this recent scholarship about Quakers and their public engagement by exploring how Quaker humanitarianism in this era reflected transatlantic Quakers' awareness of, engagement in, and contributions to an emerging discourse about disability and human aberrance forged by Enlightenment thinkers. As both Calvert and Crabtree have done for Quakers and politics in the eighteenth century, this dissertation will do for Quaker reformers and intellectual history. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, philanthropic Friends focused their non-"Quietist" tendencies in a philosophical direction, especially as it pertained to "disabled" individuals; they used this awareness to create institutions and market their treatment methods as congruent with both the tenets of Quakerism and the values of Enlightenment empiricism.

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[30] Jane E. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chap. 1–5.
[31] Crabtree, *Holy Nation*.

Dissertation Structure and Chapter Overview

This dissertation begins by examining how Quakers engaged with Enlightenment philosophy and displayed an awareness of secular value systems to embrace emerging ideas about disability that they would employ for their own reform activities. Chapter 1 begins by tracing how "disability" *emerged* as a concept during the Enlightenment from strains of thought about human aberrance from the medieval, early modern, and Scientific Revolution periods. During the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke, Denis Diderot, and Adam Smith used empirical methods and reasoning to construct "disability" as a marginal, sub-human condition, but one that also offered a hope of "overcoming" for those individuals that fell into this emerging category. These notions traveled throughout the Atlantic world via the Enlightenment's "Republic of Letters," which intersected with the Quakers' own transatlantic networks, thereby shaping Friends' reform endeavors. Quaker philanthropists and intellectuals, such as Lindley Murray, embraced these notions because they cohered nicely with Friends' theological beliefs about the "Inner Light" and that of God within all people. Enlightenment ideas about disability and Quaker theology shared a focus on the individual and offered optimistic hope about the human potential for "overcoming" both bodily or mental aberrance and sin. Ultimately, these Enlightenment beliefs about "disability" spurred the creation of specialized institutions, asylums, and schools, leaving a complex and conflicting legacy for those deemed "disabled" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

These new concepts of disability, however, not only empowered institutional

administrators and elite Quaker reformers, but also individuals with disabilities to

actively reshape the meaning of bodily and mental aberrations. Chapter 2 examines the

life and activism of the short-statured (or as contemporary accounts classify him,

"dwarf") abolitionist, Benjamin Lay (1681-1759). This chapter redefines Lay's historical

significance as more than an early Quaker abolitionist whose dramatic anti-slavery

demonstrations paved the way for later, more politically astute, "Quietist" reformers like

John Woolman and Anthony Benezet. Instead, re-reading Lay's advocacy through the

lens of disability history, this chapter breaks his narrative out of the provincial and

positivist historiography of Quaker abolitionism and demonstrates that Lay did more than

exercise agency; he actively constructed and redefined eighteenth-century thinking about

disability.[32] Lay's self-conscious and public displays of his aberrant body served to

challenge and reveal the aberrant and abhorrent social values in the body politic amongst

mid-eighteenth century Quaker slaveholders. Finally, this chapter also highlights the

intersectional relationship between race and disability: Lay felt connected to and able to

serve as an advocate for enslaved African people because they both held marginal

positions within society.

Yet the cultural significance of Benjamin Lay and his aberrant body left a legacy

beyond his lifetime. Chapter 3 explores how the cultural meaning and significance of

Lay's disability, and disability more generally, changed for Quakers over the course of

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[32] For an article that offers a similar re-definition and re-examination of a related topic—the meaning of "slave resistance" in the antebellum United States—see Walter Johnson, "A Nettlesome Classic Turns Twenty-Five," *Common-Place* 1, no. 4 (July 2001), http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/cp/vol-01/no-04/reviews/johnson.shtml.

the nineteenth century as (re)-presentations of Lay and his body circulated throughout the Atlantic world via Quaker networks. Wider historical developments of the nineteenth century—first, the growing social currency of professional physicians and their medically-influenced presentations of disability; and second, the ultimate success of the abolitionism in Britain in 1833 and in the U.S. with the passage of the 13th-15th Amendments (1865-1870)—led Quaker humanitarians and abolitionists to reinterpret the significance of Lay's body and its connection to his abolitionism. In other words, the Enlightenment-forged categories of disability helped those in the nineteenth century construct Lay's aberrant body and mind as an interconnected whole. Only an individual with such a strange and non-conforming body, so the reasoning went, could have behaved so outlandishly and out-of-step with the dominant social values of his era. As the chronological gap continued to grow between Lay's death and successive nineteenth-century presentations of his life and body, so too did a gap develop between the "reality" of these biographical presentations and Lay's lived experience. Increasingly, Lay's disability became an analytical tool to explain his intellectual aberrance rather than something Lay self-consciously harnessed in the fight to expand human equality.

The last two chapters turn to examine the role that disability played in Quakers' founding, marketing, and operation of specialized institutions. Chapter 4 re-evaluates the traditionally laudatory and positivist histories of Quaker insane asylums by juxtaposing how their administrators rhetorically framed their treatment methods with the lived reality of the disabled individuals subjected to those "humane" treatments. The strong transatlantic network of Quaker Meetings, ministers, and reformers helped provide the

infrastructure for English and North American Quakers to create parallel insane asylums in York, England (The Retreat), and Philadelphia (Friends Asylum), respectively, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. In establishing these institutions, Quaker reformers displayed a thorough awareness of the contemporary enlightened reforms in other European insane asylums, notably the practice of Moral Treatment, which neatly cohered with their own theological beliefs about the "Inner Light" and spiritual equality of all human beings. This Enlightenment rhetoric provided a vital tool the Quaker administrators such as William and Samuel Tuke to market their institutions as empirically and scientifically-grounded. Employing the methods of Moral Treatment first in York and then in Philadelphia, the Quaker philanthropists who founded these institutions exclusively for members of their own sect, marketed the treatment methods— even the more retrograde ones that employed harsh restraints—as congruent with Quaker values and particularly suited toward helping Quakers deemed insane "overcome" their madness and return to their communities. Yet, the shared religious identity of the administrators and the residents did not guarantee compliance from those who were subjected to this regime of Moral Treatment. As a result, those deemed insane who lived at these two asylums challenged popular Enlightenment notions about "disability" and the empirical treatments of the Quaker humanitarians who employed them as they resisted treatment, fled the asylum grounds, and, in the most dramatic instances, took their own lives.

Even when Quakers did not exclusively administer reform institutions focused on disabled populations of their own sect, they nevertheless helped to infuse their cultural

values of "that of God in everyone" into the operation of these institutions. Chapter 5 examines the role played by Quaker administrators and the wider Quaker culture of Philadelphia in the founding, operation, and marketing of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The PIDD further reinforced the Quakers' deep transatlantic awareness and engagement with European reform institutions focused on disabled people as well as the Enlightenment rhetoric that helped make these institutions successful. While Deaf history has often been written as a separate phenomenon from other disability histories, defining the Deaf community in "national" terms rather than as a disabled group, this chapter helps illustrate that as Quakers helped found and administer this religiously heterogeneous institution, they invoked the same general Enlightenment framework of disability that shaped their insane asylum reforms. By focusing on this shared rhetoric, this chapter helps reintegrate the history of deaf education into a wider history of disability and its constructions in this era, illustrating that reformers perceived deaf people—and marketed their interventions to help deaf people "overcome" their physical impairment—in ways that closely paralleled how they treated other disabled people.

By pushing back the chronological boundaries of "disability" into an era before this concept coalesced into its modern meaning, we can more fully understand how intellectual developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries proved critical in establishing the medical model of disability. Forging this construct, moreover, involved those *beyond* medical professionals; Quaker humanitarians played a critical role in harnessing and publicizing these emerging dualistic and hierarchical ideas about

disability as they founded and marketed humanitarian reforms and institutions dedicated to improving humanity and the world around them. Incorporating the work of these religiously-inspired figures also helps us understand the ways in which Quakers (and members of other faith traditions) cannot be essentialized to their theological beliefs. Instead, these reformers drew widely on and helped further construct Enlightenment notions of "disability" that circulated throughout the transatlantic world. Finally, in expanding the chronology of disability, we also uncover the presence of people with disabilities and the active roles they played in the past. Not content to passively accept their newly-defined place at a lower rung of the Enlightenment's hierarchy of humanity, people with disabilities both challenged and redefined this concept of "disability," thereby demonstrating their "full" humanity at a moment when much of the wider Atlantic world sought to categorize them as "sub-human."

Chapter 1

The Enlightenment:

Intersections between Constructions of Disability and

Eighteenth-Century Quakerism

Writing in 1766 after his own sect, the Quakers, had barred slaveholding among

its members, Anthony Benezet published his influential attack on the institution of human

bondage: *A Caution and a Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*. Providing vivid

first-hand accounts of Caribbean slavery, Benezet made emotional appeals to his readers,

relying on descriptions of the brutal physical treatment that slaves endured at the hands of

their callous masters. "They beat them with thick clubs, and you will see their bodies all

whaled and scarred," wrote Benezet. He contended that slave owners "act as tho' they did

not look upon [the slaves] as a race of human creatures, who have reason, and

remembrance of misfortunes, but as beasts […] They won't allow [slaves] to have any

claim to human privileges, or scarce, indeed, to be regarded as the work of God."[1] This

passage revealed how Benezet employed Enlightenment influences—the use of empirical

evidence and emerging ideas about "disability" as a marginalized condition often

expressed in a striking or aesthetically unsettling manner—in his abolitionist work.[2] By

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[1] Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies, in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions. Collected from Various Authors, and Submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, More Especially of Those in Power* (Philadelphia: Henry Miller, 1766), 6–7.

[2] For an aesthetic analysis of how and why individuals with visible disabilities fascinate able-bodied people, see Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring : How We Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Garland-Thomson offers a brief historical overview of the history of "staring" and the changing aesthetic fascination with aberrant bodies in Ch. 1. Though focused on the mid- to late-nineteenth

using a first-hand account of a visitor to the Caribbean, Benezet bolstered his claims for African equality with experiential observations about the injurious and disabling conditions and treatment of slaves working on West Indian plantations.

Yet (and more subtly), the passage also reflected wider Enlightenment notions about perceived hierarchies amongst humans, suggesting an emergent eighteenth century definition of a "full" or "complete" human that was juxtaposed against those who were marginal in some way. Benezet viscerally described how slavery transformed the bodies of the enslaved, permanently disfiguring them in a way that further solidified their marginal social and economic status. Moreover, Benezet suggested masters abused their slaves so brutally was precisely because they perceived their human chattel as subhuman; ostensibly they lacked one of the traits that Enlightenment culture valued most dearly—reason. By positing that some humans lacked complete powers of reason, Benezet shed light on the perverse logic that slaveholders used to justify their abuse and he also suggested that mental aberrance existed in individuals and contexts *beyond* the slave plantation. In fact, it was precisely the slaveholders' perception of the slaves as sub-rational beings that validated the physical abuse that scarred the slaves' bodies. At the core of both Benezet's description of slave bodies and slaveholder abuse lay these emerging ideas of what later writers would call "disability." Benezet's account further

century, Susan Schweik argues that controlling the aesthetics of "unsightly" beggars in public spaces shaped legislation in various North American cities. See, Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Also focused on the late-nineteenth century, Baynton argues that immigration officials focused first and foremost on visual indicators of disability as a means of excluding immigrants, thereby reinforcing the central role aesthetics plays in defining disability. See, Douglas C. Baynton, "Defectives in the Land: Disability and American Immigration Policy, 1882-1924," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 2005, 31–44. Within this dissertation, Chapters 2 and 3, which focus on the eighteenth-century Quaker abolitionist, Benjamin Lay, explore the ways that his short stature and physical aberrations—often depicted visually in striking aesthetic ways—fascinated his contemporaries and later Quaker humanitarians who invoked his image in their fight against slavery.

reflects Quakers' deep immersion in Enlightenment culture and discourse. Although

Quakers as a sect in the eighteenth century generally withdrew from politics and focused

on internal discipline and piety, these sectarian developments did not serve to exclude

them from the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment and its emerging constructions of

disability and normalcy.[3] For Benezet, this transatlantic movement provided him with the

intellectual tools of empiricism and ideas about "full humanity" that he used to support

the sect's abolitionist goals. But, the Enlightenment introduced Quakers to emerging

concepts of "disability" that proved integral to their reform endeavors in the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries.

Although eighteenth-century intellectuals and those in popular culture did not use

the term "disability" explicitly, they invoked a host of terms that reflected a keen

awareness of how and why some humans were "deficient." In eighteenth-century

England, the term "disability" appeared frequently as the antithesis of "able-bodied," and

it referred to a host of characteristics, only some of which aligned with the later concept

focused on physical and mental differences. The term "able-bodied," which mid-

eighteenth-century dictionaries defined "as being 'strong of body,'" typically indicated an

individual that was male, capable of hard physical labor, often a member of the working

class, and perhaps most importantly for the British government, could serve in an army

regiment or aboard a navy vessel. For the most part, this category of "able-bodiedness"

implied an individual should be physically whole and free of defects in order to provide

the necessary manual or military labor required of citizens perceived as "productive." By

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[3] For details on the nineteenth-century process of how statisticians, physicians, authors, and other intellectuals constructed the concept of "normalcy," see Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, chap. 2.

contrast, "disability," then, often clashed with these notions of physical wholeness and strength to indicate individuals who could no longer work or serve the country because they were injured in military or naval service, experienced some "maiming, wounding, or other physical impairments," or grappled with the "infirmities of old age." These more physically-focused definitions, however, were not the exclusive ones, as English people also used "disabled" to indicate financial destitution, inebriation, or temporary exhaustion.

In describing physical characteristics, eighteenth-century English people used a wide variety of terms that "disability" would subsume in the nineteenth century. Samuel Johnson's 1755 *Dictionary* included separate entries for "lame" (a term that indicated both physical impairment and insufficiency or imperfection) and "cripple" (a term that denoted physical incapacity but connoted a pitiable and devalued social position), while slang dictionaries cataloged terms like "Ruffler," "Palliards," and "clapperdogeons" to identify those mendacious individuals who feigned their physical incapacity to cajole money from those who sympathized with their plight. The array of terms used in both high and popular cultural sources highlights the "shared language of bodily anomaly linked to the 'othering' of people with disabilities and disfigurements with broader systems of social […] differentiation."[4] Moreover, this evidence also reveals that physical and mental aberrance occupied the thoughts and cultural attention not only of Enlightenment thinkers steeped in the empirical methods of the Scientific Revolution, but

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[4] At present, David Turner's work is the most substantive and thorough investigation of cultural, religious, and literary attitudes toward disability during the Enlightenment era. See, Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 18–24, 31; For a cultural study focused on representation of disabled people in eighteenth-century humor, see Roger Lund, "Laughing at Cripples: Ridicule, Deformity and the Argument from Design," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 2005, 91–114.

also permeated the wider cultural concerns of English people of the middle and lower classes.

Some of the leading luminaries of Enlightenment thought—such as John Locke and Denis Diderot—challenged existing concepts of "disability" that explained individual aberrance through traditionally superstitious beliefs or as a manifestation of divine will. Instead, these thinkers grounded their explanations of "disability" in scientific evidence—rationally analyzed to make sense of seemingly non-conforming humans. Enlightenment thinkers developed this concept of human aberrance by first defining individuals whose the "natural" characteristics were "fully" human and then juxtaposing them with others who lacked some essential characteristic, thereby making them only "partially" human. To justify these innate differences in "complete" versus "partial" humans, Enlightenment thinkers grounded their claims in medical evidence and classification systems. Through this lens, which suggests an emerging form of what scholars refer to as the "medical model," disability began to become an individualized, medically diagnosable condition that emphasized an individual's aberrance.[5]

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[5] Sayantani DasGupta, "Medicalization," in Adams, Reiss, and Serlin, *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 120–121. DasGupta argues that as western economies transitioned from feudal to capitalist economic systems in the mid-nineteenth century, profit-minded employers began to classify and distinguish bodies that could be economically productive versus those that were not. This process of differentiation gave rise to the medical model of disability, which scholars generally agree became solidified in the wake of the First World War in 1919. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 184–194; As someone who argued that all knowledge comes from sensory experience and empirical observations, Locke took particular interest in the impact blindness had on an individual's understanding of the world. See, Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*; Ralph Schumacher, "What Are the Direct Objects of Sight? Locke on the Molyneux Question," *Locke Studies* 3 (2003): 41–61; Franklin Karelsen Wyman, "From Locke toward Liberation: An Intellectual History of Blindness and Enlightenment Thought from the 1690s to the Present" (Ph.D., Drew University, 2009); Denis Diderot, one of the compilers of the Encyclopédie, also expressed fascination with blindness and challenged the Cartesian notion that those who lacked sight also lacked the ability to reason as abstractly as those who could see. See, Margo CE, Harman LE, and Smith DB, "Blindness and the Age of Enlightenment: Diderot's Letter on the Blind," *JAMA Ophthalmology* 131, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 98–102, doi:10.1001/jamaophthalmol.2013.559.

As Enlightenment thinkers constructed this new category of disability, these developing ideas had a dualistic impact on individuals with disabilities and for the concept of disability. Optimistically, because disability applied only to a particular individual, Enlightenment thinkers implied that that individual could "overcome" or be "cured" through appropriate medical and rehabilitative interventions.[6] In this sense, the concept of disability created a sense of hope that aberrant individuals could, with appropriate interventions, elevate themselves and become more "fully" human in both secular and religious contexts. Over the course of the eighteenth century, moreover, an increasing number of thinkers embraced the idea that disability could be "a potentially 'virtuous' condition, which provided a test of faith but could intensify religious devotion and bring one closer to God."[7] Yet pessimistically, these emerging ideas about disability also created hierarchies amongst "normal" and non-conforming people; those individuals perceived as physically or mentally aberrant became "scientifically" and "objectively" classified as a subordinate forms of humanity.

Given their involvement in Enlightenment culture, Quakers gained exposure to and adopted many Enlightenment-forged ideas about disability and dependency. Especially amongst the elite Atlantic Quakers who helped catalyze, raise funds for, and politically agitate for reform for the enslaved, insane, criminal, deaf, and others, emerging concepts of disability proved useful in critical ways. By embracing empirically classified definitions of non-conforming humans, Quaker humanitarians felt they could

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[6] Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, "Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 7.
[7] Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 147.

better understand the perceived aberrant nature of those who they sought to help.

Moreover, these Quaker philanthropists were drawn to this emerging concept of disability because it paralleled their own theological belief in the "Inner Light"—the presence of God within all people. Both the "Inner Light" and the Enlightenment ideas about disability focused on and sought to improve the individual either spiritually or through empirical and scientific interventions. Drawing on these concepts of "disability," Quaker reformers created new asylums, developed methods to rehabilitate and attempt to "cure" the objects of their benevolence, and refined the rhetorical framework they used to present their institutions and methods to both Quaker and non-Quaker audiences. By employing these widely understood new concepts of disability (at least amongst Atlantic elites), Quaker reformers sought financial and cultural support for their ambitious attempts to better the world through reason in a way that would contribute to the Enlightenment's progressive vision for humanity. This chapter, then, will show how the Enlightenment provided the intellectual thread that connected two other phenomena from this same era: the construction of disability and normalcy *and* the rise of Quaker humanitarianism.

Sapere Aude!: The Foundations and Emergence of the Enlightenment

Writing less than twenty years after Benezet published his empirically grounded arguments for abolition, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant offered an explicit definition of this broad cultural and intellectual movement in his aptly titled 1784 essay, "What Is Enlightenment?" This essay argued that individuals must use their mind's

reason. "'Hav[ing] the courage to use [one's] own understanding,' is," Kant claimed, "therefore the motto of the enlightenment."[8] Kant argued, however, that "daring to know" (*Sapere Aude*) had its limits. One must not interfere with or challenge the traditional sources of authority, such as the government or religious institutions, which guaranteed order within society. Therefore, an individual, as a scholar (which Kant saw as a private pursuit), should be free to use reason to challenge existing dogmas; however, this intellectual quest must not allow that person to reject his or her duties as a citizen. This conservative interpretation of the Enlightenment naturally emerged from the militaristic and largely feudal Prussian context in which Kant lived.[9] Although Kant's essay captured how Enlightenment thinkers glorified reason, celebrated the power of the individual mind, and enthusiastically challenged traditional dogmas, its deference to political elites and religious institutions did not synecdochically capture the range and complexity of Enlightenment thought. As this chapter will explore, Enlightenment thinkers, including Quakers, "dared" to challenge existing concepts of "disability" and redefine those in ways that both empowered and marginalized those who fell into this new category of aberrant humans.

As an intellectual and cultural movement, the Enlightenment encompassed an enormous array of locations, individuals, areas of philosophy, and effects. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, the Enlightenment emerged out of the Scientific Revolution's emphasis on empiricism, and experimentation. Thinkers like Englishmen

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[8] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 203.
[9] Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 1–2.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Isaac Newton (1643-1727) relied on close observations of the physical world to challenge explanations of topics as wide-ranging as the functioning of the human body to the movement of the planets and the structure of the universe.[10] Bacon advocated that scientists embrace empiricism and inductive reasoning: a scientific method that relied on close, carefully recorded sensory observations of natural phenomena to then develop general laws and theories that would explain the natural world.[11] Collectively, the Scientific Revolution helped set the foundation for the Enlightenment; its key thinkers expressed a profound faith that human rationality could serve as the foundation to fully understand the physical world. In the next century, Enlightenment thinkers would not only adopt this notion but also apply it to rationally and purposefully improve human society.

While Enlightenment philosophers adapted their methods from Scientific Revolution thinkers, the political and social turmoil of the seventeenth century in Western Europe inspired them to develop their theories and identify the "natural laws" that governed individual humans and society. In 1685 King James II came to the throne in England and attempted to re-Catholicize the country and undercut Parliament's authority; simultaneously, his cousin Louis XIV in France passed the Edict of

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[10] For the foundational text that explains the process of how scientific paradigms emerge and displace old models, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[11] The experimentation, close observations, and mathematical proofs that scientists such as Bacon, Newton, and Galileo made of the movement of objects on earth and in the stars challenged, though did not immediately displace older, religiously-infused paradigms of the geocentric universe with sinful humans at its center. Humans, as a result, went from being condemned for original sin to being venerated for their ability to logically comprehend the universe and its laws. See, Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 15–16; For a concise overview of the Scientific Revolution and its challenge to Aristotelian and Ptolemaic understandings of the universe, see Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559-1715* (New York: Norton, 1979), 202–212.

Fontainebleau that removed the religious toleration that French Calvinists (or Huguenots) had enjoyed within that Catholic country since 1598. These Absolutist rulers (or in the case of James II, Absolutist-aspirant) sought to centralize all authority within the person of the monarch by creating bureaucracies to monitor, tax, and enforce laws throughout their territory. They also removed protections for religious minorities in order to eliminate any real or perceived threats to the state. Enlightenment thinkers, especially John Locke in England, vigorously attacked how these monarchs violated of their citizens' "natural rights" by arbitrarily stripping them of their political powers and religious freedoms. Arguing that all humans are imbued with the "natural rights" of "life, liberty, and property" in his *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690), Locke justified the overthrow of an Absolutist government that had usurped these rights from its citizens and broken the social contract. With the support of Dutch allies and many of the Huguenots that had fled to that country, the English Parliament forced James II to abdicate the English throne in 1688. This political upheaval created an environment that allowed Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers to write freely on a range of topics that challenged existing hierarchies and powerful institutions: the mutual obligations of rulers and their subjects, the importance of representative government, the best methods to educate children, and the inherent characteristics of the human mind.[12]

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[12] Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 7–15; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Whitmore and Fenn, and C. Brown, 1821); For details on Locke's through on education, and in particular his notion that the human mind is a "blank slate" (tabula rasa) shaped entirely by sensory experience, see Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*; For a thorough analysis of this "Glorious Revolution" and the ways in which it involved widespread violence and gave rise to a new and strong bureaucratic state, see Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

The most famous Enlightenment thinkers wrote about European affairs and responded to major European political developments; however, transatlantic exchanges, networks, and experiences fundamentally shaped this era as well. As European countries established colonies and conducted trade throughout the Atlantic basin, they created a "framework intrinsic to the articulation of the modern world as it was perceived and described by the major figures of that eighteenth-century world."[13] In this respect, the literal "nature" or physical, climatic, geographical, and demographic features of the Atlantic proved important for many Enlightenment thinkers who empirically mapped, described, and explored the new spaces and peoples they encountered.[14] Yet the Atlantic proved an important space for Enlightenment thinkers not only for its physical spaces, but also for the networks it helped to forge and expand. The bulk of correspondence within the famous "Republic of Letters," the long-distance intellectual community that exchanged writings on the ideal state over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, originated in Europe but circulated globally.[15] Thinkers in the British Isles and *philosophes* in France, especially, shaped the intellectual discourse on issues like religious toleration, free speech, and the abuses of Absolute monarchs. Recent digital humanities scholarship, such as Stanford University's "Mapping the Republic of Letters"

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[13] Susan Manning and Francis Cogliano, "Introduction: The Enlightenment and the Atlantic," in Susan Manning and Francis D. Cogliano, eds., *The Atlantic Enlightenment* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 1.

[14] Ibid., 4–5; Individuals like Swedish naturalist Peter Kalm or French diplomat Henry St. John de Crèveocoeur captured the Enlightenment emphasis on progress in their observations of the New World. In recording these objective accounts of the New World, Kalm and Crèveocoeur juxtaposed the decaying physical spaces of the "Old World" in Europe with the future-looking opportunities for expansion and progressive development in the "New World" of the Americas. See, Joyce Appleby, *Shores of Knowledge: New World Discoveries and the Scientific Imagination* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), chap. 4–5.

[15] Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 15.

project, has allowed scholars to more fully investigate the overarching structure of this network by mapping and graphing Enlightenment-era correspondents, recipients, dates, locations, and volume of letters exchanged in this period of intellectual efflorescence.[16] Exploring this vast repository of geographic, chronological, and epistolary data reveals that the intellectual strains of the Enlightenment crossed political and spatial boundaries with great frequency. Colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and even the Indian subcontinent played prominent roles in this epistolary network, reinforcing the importance of these non-European spaces in spurring Enlightenment thinkers to further ruminate on the structure of society, the place of religion in that society, the proper structure and rights of government, and the natural characteristics and rights of the varied inhabitant of these distant lands.

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[16] Meredith Hindley, "Mapping the Republic of Letters," *Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities* 34, no. 6 (December 2013), http://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/novemberdecember/feature/mapping-the-republic-letters.
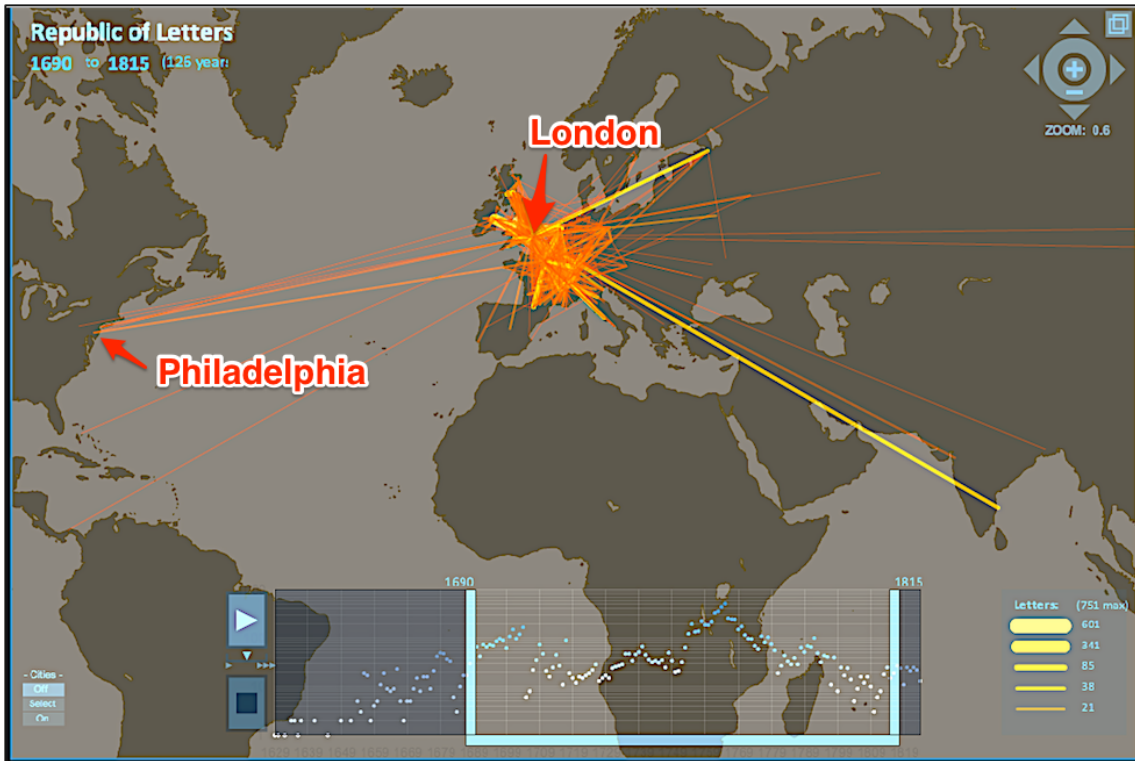
Figure 1.1. Annotated screenshot of the RPLVIZ tool used to visualize the exchange of correspondence within the Republic of Letters from 1690 to 1815; this map highlights the two major transatlantic cultural centers of Quakerism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—London and Philadelphia. This digital humanities tool can be accessed at http://web.stanford.edu/group/toolingup/rplviz/rplviz.swf
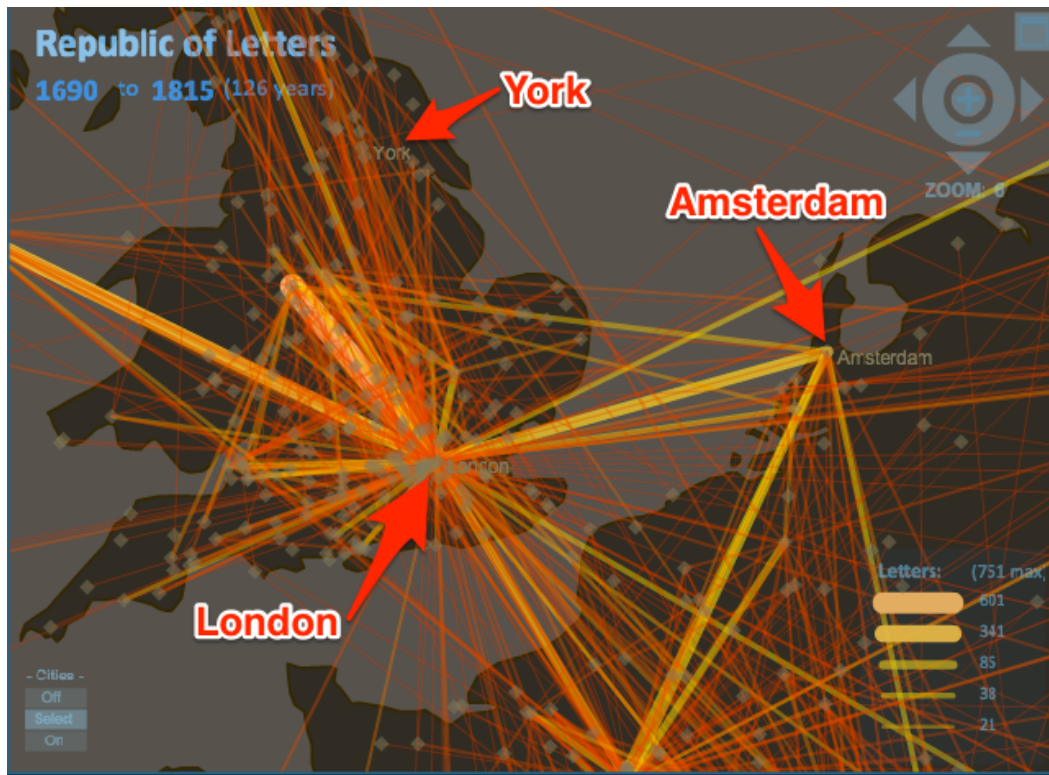
Figure 1.2. This annotated map, also from Stanford's Mapping the Republic of Letters RPLVIZ tool, highlights three major Quaker population and cultural centers during the Enlightenment—London, Amsterdam, and York. This digital humanities tool can be accessed at http://web.stanford.edu/group/toolingup/rplviz/rplviz.swf

Understanding the transatlantic nature of the Enlightenment and the networks that facilitated these exchanges provides fuller context for the traditional foci of Enlightenment thought and its impact. As Enlightenment philosophers exchanged ideas about social contract theory, religious toleration, and human nature through this transatlantic "Republic of Letters," their writings shaped the Age of Revolutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Because the central hubs of Quakerism—London and Philadelphia—played integral roles in the "Republic of Letters," it meant

that Quaker communities in these urban centers gained exposure and contributed to this exchange of Enlightenment ideas.[17]

In the realm of religion, many Enlightenment thinkers gravitated either toward anti-religious attitudes or an increasingly rational vision of God and God's place in the universe. The most emblematic strain of Enlightenment religious thought appeared in the development of Deism in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. This philosophical outlook viewed God as the "Great Clockmaker," who, as a supremely rational being, designed the universe in a mechanical and self-sustaining way, and then set it into motion. In contrast to the capricious or interventionist God that Absolutist monarchs used to justify their policies of intolerance or religious persecution, Deists saw God as remote and identified God's presence in the immutable natural laws that Scientific Revolution thinkers like Isaac Newton had articulated. As a result of this

[17] For insight on the impact of Enlightenment culture on Quaker physicians in London, see Robert Kilpatrick, "'Living in the Light': Dispensaries, Philanthropy, and Medical Reform in late-eighteenth-century London," in Andrew Cunningham and Roger French, eds., *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 10 Kilpatrick focuses his narrative primarily on Quakers John Coakley Lettsom and John Fothergill and the role these men played in the London General Dispensary and the founding of the Medical Society, which was open to physicians and scientists who were also members of dissenting Protestant groups, like the Quakers. For an analysis of how Enlightenment thought influenced the development of scientifically-focused culture in Philadelphia, especially the work of physician Benjamin Rush as well as Benjamin Franklin's founding of the Franklin Institute, see Nina Reid-Maroney, *Philadelphia's Enlightenment, 1740-1800: Kingdom of Christ, Empire of Reason* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001) One of the most prominent Quakers in Reid-Maroney's argument is the botanist John Bartram; For that author's earlier treatment of how Bartram fused his Quaker faith with Enlightenment philosophy by arguing that his ability to reason helped reveal God's divine construction of the universe, see Nina Reid, "Enlightenment and Piety in the Science of John Bartram," *Pennsylvania History*, 1991, 124–38; For an analysis of how Enlightenment thought, especially the writings of Cesare Beccaria and John Locke, influenced the developments of prison reform in Philadelphia during the late-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, see Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue*, 63–65, 88, 142, 164.

theological perspective, Deists rejected relying on the "revealed word of God" that came

from Biblical texts and that established churches relied on to enforce their authority.[18]

It may seem surprising on the surface, then, that the quintessentially Protestant

Quakers, who believed that the "Inner Light" of God in every person and allowed all

Meeting members to deliver ministry when moved by God to do so, would have

embraced strains of Enlightenment thought focused on reason and visions of a

mechanistic universe. In many ways, eighteenth-century Quaker theology was deeply

mystical, personal, and therefore, anti-rational. In that vein, the noted Quaker historian

Frederick Tolles argued that Quaker humanitarians, especially John Woolman and

Anthony Benezet, drew their inspiration from the "inherent emotionalism" of their

evangelical-tinged faith and that their "experiential" attitude toward Quakerism led them

to "depreciate reason as a trustworthy guide in religious matters."[19] Yet this focus on the

experiential and anti-rational elements of Quaker theology ignores the ways in which

well educated, cosmopolitan, and learned Quakers in both England and North America

learned about and employed Enlightenment concepts in their professional, personal, and

philanthropic lives. It also ignores the parallel foci on the individual present in both

Quaker theology of the "Inner Light" and in Enlightenment ideas about human aberration

and hierarchies.

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[18] Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 18–19; For an analysis of the strains of Deist thought in England, the German states, and France, see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, an Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 374–385; For an analysis of how the Enlightenment forged a strain of "Christian Deism," see Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 471–473.

[19] Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture.*, 107–108.

The wider context of English political developments of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries provided the background for the unique Quaker fusion of religion

and rationality. At the conclusion of the Glorious Revolution in 1690, the English

Parliament enacted both a Bill of Rights and the Toleration Act, which granted non-

Anglican Protestant dissenters, such as the Quakers, freedom of religion. As Roy Porter

argues, these legislative developments created legal protections and a culture in England

that fostered freethinking, which led "Enlightened minds" to view religion as "a matter of

private judgement [*sic*], for individual reason to adjudicate within the multi-religionism

sanctioned by statutory toleration."[20] Tolles' argument suggests that Quaker theology and

Enlightenment philosophy were mutually exclusive, when in fact, Enlightenment ideas

about limited government and religious toleration provided the context for Quakers'

mystical and individual spiritual beliefs to flourish. With these protections, Quakers

could follow their spiritual callings and seek out useful knowledge based on scientific

experimentation and empirical observations.[21] Humanitarian-minded Quakers pursued

this new knowledge with the hope that it would improve human society precisely because

all of its members had "that of God" within each of them.

Quaker humanitarian and benevolent organizing had its origins within the

Meetings for Sufferings conducted by Yearly Meetings in London and Philadelphia.

Founded immediately after an increase in anti-Quaker persecutions at the start of the

English Restoration in 1660, the Meeting for Sufferings collected funds, disbursed

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[20] Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 14, 99.
[21] Ibid., 146–147. Porter cites the example of Quaker physician John Lettsom, who developed new medical treatments, educational methods, and dietary guidelines.

money, and lobbied Parliament on issues impacting Quakers and their ability to practice

their religion freely and preserve their political rights. Corresponding across the ocean to

English colonies in North America and the Caribbean, the Meeting for Sufferings helped

tie the Quaker community together transatlantically and helped ensure the survival and

protection of the sect.[22] Yet concerns for the well-being of oppressed and marginalized

people within their own sect easily transferred to those beyond the Society of Friends.

Within Philadelphia, the hotbed of North American commercial and intellectual activity,

elite, well-educated, and worldly Quakers transferred English Enlightenment ideas to

other members of their sect who rallied around progressive, humanitarian causes. During

the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, members of this North American

Quaker elite sought to usefully apply their knowledge of Enlightenment ideas about

progress and human equality by creating organizations that would improve education,

prison discipline, conditions for the poor, and a host of other social ills through new,

rational policies grounded in empirical evidence.[23] This deep commitment both to "that

of God in all people," and to progressive Enlightenment ideas about improving the world

and humanity through reason, naturally led Quakers to take an interest in those

individuals whose perceived bodily or intellectual aberrance marked them as "disabled."

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[22] Landes, *London Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World*, 29–33.
[23] For a discussion of how Quakers played major roles in the American Philosophical Society, the Union Fire Company, the Philadelphia Hospital, and many other privately-funded benevolent institutions, see James, *A People among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America.*, Ch. 3, 199–215.

Medieval and Early Modern Notions of Disability

The medieval and early modern eras of European history interpreted disability in a host of divergent, and at times, contradictory, ways depending on the context. Disability could be a sign of divine wrath and God's displeasure, a reflection of an individual's spiritual purity, an indication of where one fell on "the Great Chain of Being," a means to distinguish aberrant from "normal" humans, as well as a source of humor and merriment.[24] One of the key features of the medieval outlook toward disability was the way religious and (proto)-medical thinkers interpreted physical aberrance in the same way. As disability historian Irina Metzler argues, "no significant difference in attitude was displayed by the medical and the religious discourses," meaning that attempting to impose contemporary concepts of the disciplinary boundaries between theological and medical approaches to disability on the Middle Ages creates false distinctions that did not exist in this era.[25] As a result, the power of religion and the Roman Catholic Church in medieval Europe profoundly, though not exclusively, shaped thinking about bodily and mental differences in this era. For some individuals, bodily aberrance or deformity

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[24] Underlying the religious interpretations of disability and where it placed one in the spectrum of life on earth was the "Great Chain of Being." This concept originated in the Classical Greek world with thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle and held that all creation fit into a clear and rigid hierarchy with God on the top and inanimate earth at the bottom. This concept helped validate and naturalize social hierarchies, such as that of feudal and early modern Europe where monarchs invoked the "Divine Right of Kings" to justify their superior position of aristocratic lords, knights, and serfs. Similarly, these notions helped shape European attitudes toward human variation and explain bodily and mental aberrations as both part of God's plan and a reflection of this divine hierarchy. See, Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*; For an analysis of how these Platonic and Aristotelian notions of the "Great Chain of Being" influenced the early Christian Church father, Augustine of Hippo, see Tim Stainton, "Reason, Grace and Charity: Augustine and the Impact of Church Doctrine on the Construction of Intellectual Disability," *Disability & Society* 23, no. 5 (August 1, 2008): 485–96, doi:10.1080/09687590802177056. Augustine articulated the concept of a "divine plan" for all people, which stressed spiritual equality, but solidified a lower place on the "Great Chain of Being" for those with disabilities.

[25] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 188.

corresponded reflected an unhealthy or sinful soul and an afterlife in hell, whereas a

healthy and whole body indicated spiritual purity and an afterlife in heaven. Some

interpreted these bodily aberrations, or "monstrous" characteristics, as an indication of

the parents' sins or some failing of the mother during pregnancy. Even into the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries, broadsides and pamphlets focused on monstrous births

interpreted these events as a sign of "divine disfavor" or "sinful conduct" that

disqualified the aberrant child from membership in the wider community.[26] Some of

these trends reached back all the way to the eleventh century where Anglo-Saxon culture

in England "consciously used" the body "as a legible sign for guilt, which was the end

result of sin."[27] Because bodily health and physical normalcy remained tenuous

throughout one's life in the Middle Ages, "every human life began with the potential for

physical and moral deviance and, perhaps inevitably, manifested it," making concerns of

sin and salvation a persistent presence in the lives of those with *all* types of bodies and

minds.[28] Although this narrative connection between disability and sin has appeared

frequently in much of the historiography, it is important to recognize that this view

appeared more frequently around narratives of "insanity" or "madness" than it did for

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[26] Kevin Stagg, "Representing physical difference: The materiality of the monstrous," in *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (London: Routledge/SSHM, 2006), 21.

[27] Asa Simon Mittman, "Headless Men and Hungry Monsters" (The Sarum Seminar, Stanford University Alumni Center, 2003), 8, http://sarumseminar.org/meetings/2003-03-Mittman-Headless-Men-and-Hungry-Monsters.pdf Mittman draws on the work of literary scholar Kathleen O'Brien O'Keeffe in making this argument.

[28] Sara Newman, "A 16th Century Portrait of Disability? Quentin Matsys' 'A Grotesque Old Woman,'" *Review of Disability Studies* 10, no. 3&4 (2014): 23.

physical aberrations and was by no means the exclusive mode for understanding

"disability" in the Middle Ages.[29]

Other religious responses to medieval disability also displayed a range of

complex, and at times contradictory, reactions to physical and mental aberrance in this

pre- and early-modern period. Firstly, the Biblical texts on which medieval theologians

based their reactions to human aberrance differed widely in their treatment of deformity

and its connection to sin. For the most part, Old Testament references to bodily deformity

did suggest that disabilities such as blindness, deafness, and lameness were a form of

divine punishment for sin or a metaphor for spiritual impurity. Yet, even this negative

outlook implied that if one were to become more faithful and obedient to God's laws that

such physical deformities or ailments could be overcome. In the thirteenth century, Pope

Gregory IX offered dispensations for individuals with "blemishes" that overrode the

prohibitions from Leviticus and allowed these people to serve in the priesthood. The New

Testament passages about disability, by contrast, focused more on Jesus' powers to heal

impaired bodies, which did not always result from an individuals' sin. The Fourth

Lateran Council of 1215 codified this ambiguous relationship between bodily aberrance

and sin when it declared, "'bodily infirmity is *sometimes* caused by sin...'," meaning that

"physician[s] ought to ensure [a] patient hears confession first before the[y] […] applied

medical treatment, so that the soul is 'cured' prior to the body."[30] Often this process

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[29] Trevor Engel, "Visualizing Madness in Medieval Art and Pilgrimage" (Conference Presentation, Society for Disability Studies Annual Conference, Atlanta, GA, June 2015), 10–12; Bianca Frohne and Klaus-Peter Horn, "On the Fluidity of 'Disability' in Medieval and Early Modern Societies. Opportunities and Strategies in a New Field of Research," in Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete, *The Imperfect Historian*, 18–19.

[30] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 39–41, 44, 46–47.

could happen in an entirely religious context, as many medieval clerics also worked as doctors and had access to medical texts.[31]

Some religious reactions to bodily deformity actually interpreted these characteristics positively. In the late medieval period, for instance, flagellants and mystics voluntarily marked or disfigured their bodies in imitation of Christ and as a way to gain spiritual fulfillment. For these individuals, their now-deformed bodies visually symbolized their religious devotion to the wider community, and as such, were reflective of their elevated spiritual status. By contrast, individuals whose bodies differed from birth or because of involuntary mutilation or injury *lost* social status in the wider community, as their bodily aberrance had no connection to the quest for spiritual purity. However, the ability to labor and contribute to their societies typically outweighed the marginalization physically aberrant people experienced in the Middle Ages.[32]

Medieval presentations of disability also reflected what we might perceive as more "modern" concepts of disability, especially the use of labels and names to categorize different forms of human aberrance, and in doing so, exerted superiority over those groups by separating them from "normal" humans. The eleventh century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, *Marvels of the East*, for instance, described and named a series of fantastical human, hybrid-human, and monstrous creatures. One of these, the *blemmye*,

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[31] Louise Elizabeth Wilson, "Hagiographical Interpretations of Disability in Twelfth-Century Miracula of St. Frideswide of Oxford," in Wendy J Turner and Tory Vandeventer Pearman, eds., *The Treatment of Disabled Persons in Medieval Europe: Examining Disability in the Historical, Legal, Literary, Medical, and Religious Discourses of the Middle Ages* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), 145–146.

[32] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 189; For an analysis of how disabled people remained integrated in medieval European society, see Peter Horn & Bianca Frohne, "On the fluidity of 'disability' in Medieval and Early Modern societies: Opportunities and strategies in a new field of research," in Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete, *The Imperfect Historian*, 17–40.

had "eyes and a mouth in their chest. They are eight feet tall and in a similar manner eight feet wide."[33] The *blemmye's* physical description and visual depiction in the manuscript, Asa Mittman argues, would have disgusted and repelled its Anglo-Saxon readers. In struggling with their own "anxieties of self-definition, [the Anglo-Saxon authors of *Marvel of the East*] invented and reproduced a whole host of monsters against which they might define their human identities."[34] This same audience would also have recognized the religious precedent that made naming such frightening creatures an act that provided power over them; in the Book of Genesis, Adam named all the creatures of the earth, thereby gaining control over them. In this way, Biblical texts also played a role for these medieval Anglo-Saxons, who used this religious precedent as a way to elevate their own culture and make it seem "normal" in contrast to the monstrous races that surrounded them—a pattern that recurred during the Enlightenment.

In a similar manner, medieval and early modern concepts of mental or intellectual aberrance revealed positive interpretations of those "disabled" individuals. The role of court jesters and "natural fools" in the English Tudor court, for instance, revealed that these otherwise marginal individuals could, in certain contexts, attain prominence and public praise. English law labeled "natural fools" with the term "*idiota*," which declared these individuals "incapable [and] insensible of their actions." This designation prevented an "idiot" from managing his own wealth and property for fear that it would "reduc[e]

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[33] Mittman, "Headless Men and Hungry Monsters," 7.
[34] Ibid., 17.

himself and his heirs to poverty and distress."[35] Yet in spite of the marginal legal status held by "natural fools," some prominent individuals, such as William Somer, nevertheless earned public praise for his clever wordplay and ability to amuse and uplift his patron, English King Henry VIII.[36] These positive connotations in regards to intellectual aberrance, moreover, had their roots in New Testament writings, which Desiderius Erasmus had popularized in his 1511 book, *The Praise of Folly*. Erasmus used sections from Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, such as, 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise' (1 Cor. 1: 27), to help elevate the concept of "Folly"—a term used in the Early Modern era to indicate the absence of intellect—as something inherently virtuous and good. "Fools," whether from nature, or, in Paul's case, from religious commitment, lacked awareness of social conventions and proper decorum that enabled them to "speak without reprisal" and critique prominent institutions and practices.[37] Instances such as these reinforce the fact that religious texts from the Medieval and Early Modern periods did not perceive all forms of aberrance and disability as inherently sinful, but in the right context could indicate a higher level of religious purity.

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[35] Suzannah Lipscomb, "All the King's Fools," *History Today* 61, no. 8 (July 15, 2011): 6; William Blackstone and William Cyrus Sprague, *Blackstone's Commentaries*, 9th ed. (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1915), 60.

[36] Lipscomb, "All the King's Fools," 6–7.

[37] Patrick McDonagh, *Idiocy: A Cultural History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 132–133; Louis C. Charland, "John Locke on Madness: Redressing the Intellectualist Bias," *History of Psychiatry* 25, no. 2 (2014): 139.

Disability in the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment

With the transition out of the early modern and into the modern era, disabilities became more frequently interpreted through scientific methods, although this era nevertheless preserved many of the conflicting and ambiguous understandings of disability that characterized the medieval notions. Beginning in the early seventeenth century, scientists and philosophers took an increasing interest in understanding the causes and effects of human aberrance through empirical observation and rational analysis. Thinkers like Francis Bacon, the English scientist most responsible for codifying the empirical method, reassessed the root causes of mental and physical aberrance and began to supplant some of the more religiously-rooted explanations that prevailed in the prior centuries.[38] Bacon took particular interest in bodily difference in his 1625 essay, "On Deformity," arguing that "it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign which is more deceivable, but as a cause which seldom faileth of the effect. Whosoever hath any thing fixed in his person that doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself, to rescue and deliver himself from scorn."[39] For Bacon, deformity inescapably shaped all aspects of that person's life experiences and character, making them vengeful, jealous, spiteful, and competitive. Within this largely negative interpretation, however, Bacon also implied that "deformed" individuals possessed agency and the capacity to elevate themselves within society. To illustrate this potential

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[38] Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World*, 131–132. Bacon's calls for progressive science driven the "inductive method and experimental investigation" gained additional cultural currency when adopted by the Royal Society of London during its founding years in the 1660s.

[39] Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon: Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England*, vol. 2 (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1819), 358.

for self-improvement, Bacon referenced Socrates as a "deformed" individual who overcame this "scorn" and ultimately "prove[d] [an] excellent person."[40]

Bacon's interest in the nature of deformity reflected the larger project of understanding and properly classifying the world into intelligible and logical categories pursued by scientific thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these texts, Bacon sought to define and categorize monsters as either "natural" or "supernatural." He established this classification schema in the ambitious program that he laid out in his 1605 book, *The Advancement of Learning*. In this text, Bacon created three distinct categories for natural history: "the regular, the preternatural, and the artificial." Placing monsters in the "preternatural" category of the "history of marvels," Bacon believed they revealed how nature had "erred." Scientists could, however, study them profitably to discover the underlying causes of natural anomalies.[41] By closely examining these natural aberrations, he hoped to gain more insight into what defined regular, or non-wondrous, phenomena and beings, thereby learning nature's fundamental laws. Furthermore, he also hoped to clearly distinguish his empirically rigorous study of monsters from earlier sixteenth century popular literature on monsters found in wonder books and religious pamphlets. He only included "monsters" for which he had documentary evidence and

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[40] Ibid., 2:359; Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 89–91. Mitchell and Snyder analyze the ways in which Nietzsche analyzed Socrates and the ways in which Socrates' deformed body played a critical role in how he challenged the standards of reason and classical beauty in the Athenian state. "Socrates' deformities," according to the authors, "exercised a fascinating pull upon Hellenes who had been schooled in classical ideals that reaffirmed a direct accord between physical appearance and interior disposition...[Socrates'] visage commands both repulsion and fascination for the standard-bearers of classical aesthetics."

[41] Park and Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions," 43.

testimony.[42] In this way, Bacon's classification system previewed a dynamic of the nineteenth century that validated disabled people's marginal status of as "natural." Bacon's schema of monsters helped scientists define and construct nature's proper function by emphasizing the ways it could go awry. Essentially, aberrant individuals, like those labeled "monsters," became essential in the quest to build and expand cumulative human knowledge. Similarly, empirically driven statisticians and evolutionary scientists in the nineteenth century solidified the category of "normal" by starkly juxtaposing it with and defining it against examples of disabled or aberrant people.[43]

The classification schema of monsters that Bacon established in the seventeenth century spread and gained legitimacy both in the English Royal Society, (founded by King Charles II in 1660), and across the English Channel in the French *Académie des Sciences*, (founded by King Louis XIV in 1666)*.* Over the course of the eighteenth century, members of both these institutions moved the study of monsters into the realm of medical and scientific professionals. The salaried professionals who worked within the *Académie des Sciences*, for instance, reclassified and studied monsters within each of their specialized fields—most frequently embryology and comparative anatomy—rather than as examples of the more sweeping category of "anomalies." These scientists, however, preserved Bacon's emphasis on thorough documentation and empirical investigations, such as dissections and detailed drawings, to support their conclusions about monsters. With this legitimating work of the English Royal Society and the *Académie des Sciences*, monsters and the systematic nature of their aberrance and

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[42] Ibid., 45.
[43] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, chap. 2.

"unnatural" characteristics both gained a foothold both in the British Isles and on the European continent.[44] The institutional sanctioning helped move studies of human aberrance further away from the realm of religion and divine explanations and more firmly into "objectively" scientific fields, like medicine.

Drawing on these concepts about human aberrance from the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment philosophers in the eighteenth century embraced empirical methods of close observation and categorization to more fully understand the nature of humanity and define who did or did *not* count as a complete human being. For instance, one variety of human aberrance that fascinated both Enlightenment philosophers and the wider reading public of the eighteenth century was deafness. While classification systems and definitions of "monsters" and other non-conforming humans began in elite scientific circles, they steadily spread over the course of the eighteenth century to reach a growing reading public. During this century Europeans of all classes began to consume information via silent reading as printed material became more widespread and affordable. This "reading revolution" made consuming printed material a more introspective rather than a social experience.[45] Beyond making reading an increasingly private experience, the "reading revolution" also increased interest in human aberration. In particular, hearing Europeans read and expressed more interest in deafness as they processed language in a non-verbal way "resembl[ing] the same thing deaf people were

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[44] Park and Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions," 23, 46–50, 51–52.

[45] Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14; James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86–104.

doing when they communicated through signing — reading a language without sound."[46]

Although the nature of the mind and the roots of human understanding had previously been thought only manifest through verbal language, Enlightenment thinkers and the wider European reading public began to reevaluate the nature of both language and the minds of deaf people.

This cultural obsession with deafness and the nature of language touched on major philosophical concerns about the characteristics that made humans *truly* human and explained the relationship between the origin of language and its relationship to full humanity. The French theater had a tradition of presenting deaf characters, *Le Sourd*, dating back to the sixteenth century; these characters, however, often spoke in the plays and frequently feigned deafness in pursuit of an unsuspecting lover.[47] French fascination with deafness continued into the mid- to late-eighteenth century, but became more earnest as an increasing number of scholarly publications focused on the nature of deafness and ways to educate deaf students. Denis Diderot, for instance, argued that gestural signs could be more eloquent than spoken language and might, in fact, serve as the foundation for a universal language. This fascination also continued in the theater as Parisians turned out in great numbers to see Jean-Nicolas Bouilly's 1799 play about the

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[46] Dwight Christopher Gabbard, "Disability Studies and the British Long Eighteenth Century," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 2 (2011): 85.

[47] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Body Talk: Deafness, Sign and Visual Language in the Ancien Régime," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25, no. 4 (1992): 570, doi:10.2307/2739313. Mirzoeff cites Jean de Bigot Palaprat (1650-1721) and David-Augustin de Brueys' Le Muet as a prime example of a French comedy that employed a deaf character in this manner.

Abbé de l'Epée, the founder of the first deaf school in France.[48] Yet, this increased focus

on deafness had dualistic effect: for some like Diderot, the experience of silent reading

(or consuming a text in the same way as deaf people) revealed that lacking hearing did

not indicate an intellectual incapacity on the part of deaf people. At the same time,

however, other prominent intellectuals, such as Dr. Samuel Johnson, argued that deaf

people *lacked* language unless they were taught to either write or speak by someone who

had hearing. Accordingly, Johnson responded enthusiastically to his visit to the

Braidwood School in England, which taught deaf students via oralism, helping them learn

to lip-read and articulate vocally. Most deaf people in the Atlantic world had their

economic opportunities constrained by beliefs like these, which made them reliant on

guidance and education from hearing people. With the exception of those few born into

wealthy aristocratic or bourgeois families, most deaf people in eighteenth-century Europe

occupied the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder, as those who held these

marginalizing attitudes consigned most deaf individuals to careers of menial (and poorly

compensated) labor.[49]

    As one of the earliest and most catalytic thinkers of the Enlightenment,

Englishman John Locke's writings on blindness and madness helped codify both the

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[48] Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Signs and Citizens: Sign Language and Visual Sign in the French Revolution," in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption Of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 275; Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 53–55.

[49] Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 56–57, 63–65; After his visit to the Braidwood School, Johnson explained that "it was pleasing to see one of the most desperate of human calamities capable of so much help," quoted in Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 71; These concerns about economic productivity and finding the best way to integrate deaf people into the larger society would drive the growth of oralist deaf education in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. For more on the role of Samuel Gridley Howe and Horace Mann in these developments, see R. A. R Edwards, *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth-Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), chap. 5.

empirical foundations for human anomalies and helped define "normal" human beings.

Locke, in the second edition of his groundbreaking work, *An Essay on Human Understanding* (1694), used blind people as an ideal test case to define the limits of humanity by exploring what individuals who lacked a central sense could understand of the world. To reason through this problem, Locke responded to a question he had received in 1688 in a letter from the Irish politician and scientist, William Molyneux. Could, Molyneux wondered, an individual who had been born blind and only knew the world through a sense of touch successfully associate the appearance of those objects he or she knew tactilely with their visual appearance upon suddenly regaining the ability to see? In responding to Molyneux, Locke argued that blind people could come to associate visual descriptions with other physical sensations like touch or sound, but he believed that in Molyneux's scenario the formerly blind individual would *not* be able to visually distinguish these shapes by sight alone. With corroboration from touch, however, this person could quickly come to recognize the differences of these shapes visually.[50] Locke then asserted that sight was "the most comprehensive of all our Senses" because it processed information quickly and allowed humans to perceive phenomena like movement, color, and light. Because "Perception […] puts the distinction betwixt the animal Kingdom, and the inferior parts of Nature" and serves as the way all creatures

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[50] Catherine Packham, "Disability and Sympathetic Sociability in Enlightenment Scotland: The Case of Thomas Blacklock," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (2007): 430–431; Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 67–68; Schumacher, "What Are the Direct Objects of Sight?"; Recent medical research has confirmed that Locke was correct in his response to Molyneux: "The brain cannot immediately make sense of what the eyes are taking in, and the blind man given the ability to see cannot distinguish the two objects. But he can very quickly learn to do so." Nicholas Bakalar, "In Study of Eye Surgery, an Answer to Molyneux's Problem," *The New York Times*, April 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/26/health/research/26blind.html.

acquire knowledge, Locke concluded that "the fewer Senses any Man, as well as any other Creature, hath; and the fewer and duller the Impressions are […] the more remote are they from that Knowledge, which is to be found in some Men."[51] In reasoning through this thought experiment based around blindness, Locke essentially concluded that humans who lacked any of their senses also lacked the ability for a full and comprehensive understanding of the world, thereby placing them at a lower rung of humanity. In other words, Locke invoked the concept of disability both to understand the nature of human perception and to define how having *all* of those senses served as a prerequisite to being *fully* human.

Locke also prefigured the "medical model" by classifying individuals who displayed the characteristics of "madness" as less than fully human. As a trained physician, Locke brought an empirical and medically focused perspective to his writings about madness, thereby grounding his evaluation in the methods of the Scientific Revolution and interpreting it as an individualized condition. In the same *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Locke presented madness in two distinct ways: the first as an intellectual aberration where an individual wrongly associated ideas and, as a result, drew inaccurate and irrational conclusions; the second as disordered affective and emotional states that spurred more primordial reactions and could have deleterious effects on one's physical health.[52] To illustrate this first version of madness, Locke offered an example of an individual who wrongly supposed himself to be a king, but from this irrational premise behaved as one would expect of royalty, demanding "Attendance,

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[51] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 68–69.
[52] Charland, "John Locke on Madness," 146–150.

Respect, and Obedience." Within this example, Locke conveyed his belief that intellectual madness only constituted the *temporary absence* of reason, suggesting that the "mad" nevertheless remain fully human and could overcome this aberrant intellectual state to regain their natural reason.[53] Via this intellectualist definition of madness, Locke implied that madness could be present in even the slightest disordered ideas or misconstrued thoughts. Locke recognized that this sweeping definition of madness might seem hyperbolic, as it implied that "all are mad to some degree," yet he argued that only this all-encompassing outlook on madness would allow him and other interested scientists and philosophers to fully understand madness and its origins. In this sense, Locke's assessment of madness echoed the growing chorus of Enlightenment thinkers who approached disability through an empirical lens. This individualized approach to understanding madness also prefigured the "medical model" in two distinct ways: first, it marginalized those people perceived as "mad"; and second, but more optimistically, it provided a glimmer of hope for those same individuals to overcome the conditions and regain their "full" humanity.

This practice of using emerging concepts of disability to classify and define humanity appears too in that most famous of Enlightenment compendia of knowledge, Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.[54] A number of entries in the

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[53] Ibid., 137–142.

[54] Inspired by Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, first published in 1697, Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* contained over seventy-four thousand entries written by over one-hundred-thirty contributors on topics ranging from abstract notions like that of the soul to more tangible concepts like types of plants and animals, as well as the characteristics of major cities and countries. This ambitious project, published between 1751 and 1772 over the course of twenty-eight volumes, sought to amuse its readers with scathing criticism of religious institutions and the dominant political leaders of the eighteenth century; many of the entries focused their barbs at the Catholic Church and the Bourbon monarchy of France. Some of these

Encyclopédie, such as those on "imperfect," "monster," and "prodigy," revealed its

contributors' intense interest in, and disagreements over, how to define the characteristics

of humans considered aberrant, dependent, or disabled. Although these entries lacked

Locke's emphasis on how aberrant individuals could overcome their marginalizing

condition, they nevertheless shared some of his optimism. In his entry on "monster," for

instance, Diderot took a measured and dispassionate tone, describing them as "animal[s]

with parts of a structure very different than those that characterize the species of animals

from which [they] came."[55] Diderot's willingness to challenge the prevalent (though not

exclusive) early modern and medieval notions of monsters as foreboding omens of God's

wrath led them to offer surprisingly celebratory presentations of human aberrance in

these entries. Rather than presenting "monsters" as failures of nature's perfection,

Diderot instead suggested that such aberrant humans revealed that nature lacked a norm

of perfection against which all humans are measured.[56] Like all humans, monsters were

products of nature; therefore, they deserved the same accord and recognition as other

humans. In making this optimistic argument, Diderot challenged older, Neo-Platonic

notions of "perfection," and instead began to articulate a coalescing framework that

distinguished "normal" from "abnormal" humans.[57] At the same time, however, these

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entries, in fact, led Diderot's publishers to temporarily suspend the publication of the *Encyclopédie*. This repression, however, did not thwart Diderot, but instead led him to find another publisher in the Netherlands unchecked by absolutist French authorities. These scandals surrounding the *Encyclopédie* increased publicity about the project, spurred more translations of it throughout Europe, and led to a wider dissemination of its ideas. See, Jacob, *The Enlightenment*, 53–55.

[55] Curran and Graille, "The Faces of Eighteenth-Century Monstrosity," 2. Curran and Graille provide the original French text for both these entries in their article, and it is from these excerpts that I have translated the quotations.

[56] Ibid., 9–10.

[57] This intellectual movement away from "ideals" and toward a "normal/abnormal" binary became the dominant framework to understand disability by the mid-nineteenth century. See, Davis, *Enforcing*

entries lacked the optimism of some of the other Enlightenment notions of disability. For Diderot, monstrosity remained an individual condition; one that did not offer a hope for overcoming or a cure as Bacon and Locke suggested. While the content and tone of *Encyclopédie* entries rejected the previously dominant negative associations with human aberrance, they also revealed that Enlightenment thinkers did not all share the same idealistic notions of human perfection.

Further complicating the landscape of Enlightenment era concepts of disability were Scottish Enlightenment contributions that focused on the powerful emotional reactions "normal" people experienced when witnessing disabled individuals. Scottish thinkers such as David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith argued that disabled individuals played a crucial role in society by serving as objects of compassion and sympathy for able-bodied or sane people. As historian Catherine Packham argues, these Scottish moral philosophers believed that properly participating in "the social acts and sentiments which both respond to and articulate" human "defects" marked an individual as fully human and distinguished him or her from "disab[led], defect[ive], monstro[us], [or] abnormal" individuals.[58] Adam Smith argued in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that physically aberrant or otherwise abnormal people provided an opportunity for individuals to express their full humanity by acting humanely toward the disabled person. In this respect, the disabled subject, rather than being a burden on society or an outward

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Normalcy, chap. 2; Enlightenment thinkers also debated and challenged Neo-Platonic concepts of "gender complementarity" in the eighteenth century. Philosophers such as Voltaire and Montesquieu grappled with the contradictory notions of women as inherently weak and subordinate to men, while also serving as vital facilitators of mixed-gender intellectual exchanges in French Salons. See, Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, 6–8.

[58] Packham, "Disability and Sympathetic Sociability in Enlightenment Scotland," 424.

expression of sin, became "a socially valuable object of abjection," and provided "a useful occasion for a morally invigorating performance of sympathy."[59] By observing or interacting with individuals distinguished by their physical or mental otherness, these Scottish thinkers believed that one would experience sympathetic emotions and come to more fully appreciate their own full humanity and normalcy. This perspective elevated the role disabled people played in society and helped spur humanitarian concern and benevolence among those "fully human" individuals who had the financial and social capital to dedicate themselves to improving the plight of "unfortunates." While this notion of "disability" differed from other Enlightenment concepts of disability that prioritized the visually "defective" qualities of these individuals, it nevertheless marginalized those perceived as aberrant by making them passive subjects whose social value only became apparent in helping "normal" people cherish their own completeness.

Blindness was one of these human "defects" that most fascinated and elicited compassion from Scottish Enlightenment philosophers, yet it also revealed the persistent social marginalization that commenters argued came with all forms of aberrance. Hume, Henry Mackenzie, and Joseph Spence, for instance, marveled over how the eighteenth-century blind poet, Thomas Blacklock, could render such visually vivid imagery in his writing without the sense of sight. Spence highlighted Blacklock's ability to craft such striking scenes in his poetry by arguing that the absence of one sense led to an individual's remaining senses to become more acute. Through this explanation, Spence both echoed the Lockean interpretation of blindness that emphasized the compensatory

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[59] Ibid., 426.

powers of other senses and simultaneously elevated Blacklock's literary achievements as

the product of this overcoming process.[60] Blacklock's blindness, however, also had

negative social ramifications. As a widely read poet, Blacklock could participate in the

intellectual milieu of his sighted literary colleagues. His blindness, however, rendered

him an object of sympathy and prevented his peers (and the wider Enlightenment culture)

from understanding his poetry without referencing this characteristic. The fact that

Blacklock rarely wrote about his blindness in his poetry, and when he did referenced it

obliquely, struck commentators as further evidence of Blacklock's strong and stoic

character and his ability to withstand the "misfortune or malady" nature had thrust upon

on him.[61]

One could observe similar praise for the "sympathetic" disabled figures

contemporaneously in England. Popular portrayals of mendacious and conniving disabled

figures, such as imposter beggars, contrasted with sentimental portrayals of disabled

individuals intended to indicate their worthiness for compassion and care. The *London*

Evening Post published occasional appeals for financial assistance for families whose

children were "crippled" or experiencing "wasting disease"—an ailment that would likely

lead the child to lose limbs. The most prominent sympathetic narratives, however,

focused on disabled servicemen. Typically, these accounts, such as one published in the

British Magazine in 1760, related the tale of a former serviceman whose arduous personal

and physical struggle evoked both sadness for his current impoverished condition and

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[60] Ibid., 430–431.
[61] Ibid., 434–435.

admiration for his military bravery and stoic endurance.[62] This trope repeated in mid- to late-eighteenth century publications throughout England and Scotland, revealed how Scottish Enlightenment concepts of sympathy and compassion for disabled people expanded beyond elite philosophers (and their fascination with Thomas Blacklock) and into mainstream society through the popular press. The increasing popularity of these narratives further indicated how disabled individuals (and disability more generally) served to distinguish able-bodied people from the aberrant and remind those who fell into the "normal" category that they should be grateful for their status as "full" human beings.

The Enlightenment, therefore, left a profound legacy for the concept of disability and made those who failed to meet scientific, quantifiable, or empirical measures of "normalcy" marginal figures because of their aberrance. The emerging notion of "normalcy"—one that became the dominant paradigm to understand human aberrance by the mid-nineteenth century—began to reshape how intellectuals and reformers thoughts about what constituted a "complete" member of society. In defining a full citizen in a democratic society, "Enlightenment writers like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, Adam Smith, and Thomas Jefferson […] favor[ed] […] a representative government that postulated individuals who were equal to all other individuals." In order to outline how to achieve this notion of equality, Enlightenment thinkers embraced the ideology of "normalcy" that defined an "average" citizen in a "quasi-scientific" manner. Rather than embrace the ethical notion that *all* citizens constituted equal parts of the social contract and therefore held an equal amount of power and influence over the sovereign, this

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[62] Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, 73–77.

"quasi-scientific" concept instead quantified the "average" citizen as one with a body capable of physical labor that would ensure economic contributions.[63] This scientific vision of "equality" provided intellectual justification for excluding individuals whose "disability" and aberration from this bodily norm marked them as lesser citizens. Furthermore, labeling these non-conforming individuals as "abnormal" also justified both Quaker and non-Quaker reformers' desires to help rehabilitate or restore them to a condition of "full" citizenship—a characteristic that now had both corporeal and legal aspects.

Similarly, Enlightenment thinkers like Adam Smith who sought to define what constituted a productive worker in a capitalist system transferred these notions into the realm of the free market. Arguing that just as citizens had equality in relationship to the sovereign, so too did workers have equality of opportunity to compete and labor in the free market. Smith's concept prefigured a number of economic and social dynamics surrounding disabled workers that came to fruition in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As employers began to perceive of all workers as interchangeable laborers with interchangeable bodies, then those with non-conforming bodies became problematic for a competitive market that prioritized physical strength, capability, and

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[63] Lennard J. Davis, "Bodies of Difference: Politics, Disability, and Representation," in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Brenda Jo Brueggemann, Sharon L. Snyder, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (New York: Modern Language Association, 2002), 100, 102, http://moodle.fhs.cuni.cz/pluginfile.php/19121/mod_resource/content/0/Davis_Bodies_of_difference.pdf; Lennard Davis, "The Rule of Normalcy: Politics and Disability in the USA [United States of Ability]," in Melinda Jones and Lee Ann Basser Marks, eds., *Disability, Divers-Ability and Legal Change* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1999), 41. Davis explains this "quasi-scientific" equality with the following syllogism: "If all workers are equal, and all workers are citizens, then all citizens must have standard bodies to be able to fit into the industrial-political notion of democracy, equality, and normality. Clearly people with disabilities pose problems to work situations in which work is standardised and bodies are conceptualised as interchangeable."

physical wholeness.[64] Pessimistically, aberrant physical conditions marginalized disabled

individuals by preventing them from participating in this market economy and often

making them dependent on charity or state support. Yet because these disabilities were

also perceived as individual conditions, they optimistically provided hope that with

proper help and "rehabilitation" one could "overcome" this marginal status and be

restored to full participation in both the society and the economy—a pattern particularly

evident in the twentieth century.[65]

How did these various constructions of "disability" impact the lives and shape the

thinking of individuals who fell into this emergent category and lived during the

Enlightenment? While voices from disabled people in the historical record remain scarce,

we do have great insight into this question from William Hay, a member of English

Parliament who served in the House of Commons representing Seaford, and who, by his

own account, had a disability. In 1754, Hay published a short treatise on disability

entitled, "Deformity: An Essay." With this title, Hay's treatise recalled earlier Scientific

Revolution-era works, such as Sir Francis Bacon's 1625 essay, "On Deformity." Hay

stood roughly five feet tall, had a bent back, and wrote very directly about his experience

of living with a non-conforming body. "On Deformity," then, constituted an important

work within the eighteenth-century writing disability as it encapsulated the dualistic

effects of the Enlightenment's definition of disability—a definition that simultaneously

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[64] Sarah Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1850-1930* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), chap. 4; Davis, "Bodies of Difference," 105.

[65] K. Walter Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare: The Politics of Disability Compensation for American Veterans of World War I," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 236–267; David Serlin, "Engineering Masculinity: Veterans and Prosthetics after World War Two" in Katherine Ott, David Serlin, and Stephen Mihm, eds., *Artificial Parts, Practical Lives: Modern Histories of Prosthetics* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 45–74.

marginalized and empowered individuals with disabilities as citizens, as medically "abnormal," as subjects of education, and as subjects of rehabilitation.

As an individual with a non-conforming body in the eighteenth century, Hay experienced many educational and social situations that made him feel ostracized. In his youth, Hay's caretakers first sought to "correct the errors of Nature" that defined his body. When this proved unsuccessful, his caretakers then "endeavoured to conceal them: and taught me to be ashamed of my Person, instead of arming me with true Fortitude to despise any Ridicule or Contempt of it."[66] Hay also acknowledged that because "Bodily Deformity is visible to every Eye," his unique body led him to be mocked and publicly insulted when he got "into a Mob; where Insolence grows in proportion, as the man sinks in position."[67] In this respect, Hay's experiences of being mocked for his disability fit with larger European cultural patterns of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries that treated physical aberrance as the proper subject for humor and ridicule.[68]

Hay's elite status as a Member of Parliament, however, empowered him to claim his physical aberrance as a positive identity. Working to redefine earlier cultural associations between disability and sinfulness, Hay firmly rejected any connection between his own deformity and that of the famous Shakespearean villain, Richard III, asserting, "I do not claim [him] as [a Member] of our Society."[69] Instead, Hay emphasized the positive impact his deformity had on his life; he felt that his physical

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[66] William Hay, *Deformity: An Essay* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1754), 6–7.
[67] Ibid., 2, 9.
[68] Lund, "Laughing at Cripples"; Anu Korhonen, "Disability Humour in English Jestbooks of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Cultural History* 3, no. 1 (2014): 27–53.
[69] Hay, *Deformity*, 5.

non-conformity pushed him to "stimulate the individual's pursuit of physical and moral health."[70] Moreover, Hay also argued positively that his physical limitations did not prevent him, or other people with "deformed" bodies, from becoming school-masters, playwrights, merchants, military planners, poets, historians, or writers. "A Man, that cannot shine in his Person," Hay argued "will have recourse to his Understanding: and attempt to adorn that Part of him, which alone is capable of Ornament"—the mind.[71]

Hay also embraced the Enlightenment's optimism in social and scientific progress by treating himself as a physical specimen whose inspection could help further human knowledge. In the eyes of Enlightenment thinkers, studying human aberrations, argues disability historian David Wright, would "contribute to a positive feedback loop—the systematic study of human behavior would lead to better and new interventions that would lead to social progress, enhanced political freedoms, and better health and education."[72] Hay adopted this Enlightenment ethos; he described his own physical suffering from kidney stones and copiously detailed his medical regimen in the hope that his experience would benefit others. In the post-script, Hay hoped that once he died his "Carcass may be of eminent Service to mankind" and requested that "[his] Body may be opened and examined by eminent Surgeon; that Mankind may be informed of its Effect."[73] By writing honestly and openly about his physical ailments, Hay expressed faith that empirical observations of aberrant bodies, like his own, could usefully increase

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[70] Kathleen James-Cavan, "'[A]ll in Me Is Nature' The Values of Deformity in William Hay's *Deformity: An Essay*," *Prose Studies* 27, no. 1–2 (2005): 34.
[71] Hay, *Deformity*, 68.
[72] David Wright, *Downs: The History of a Disability* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 32.
[73] Hay, *Deformity*, 75.

human knowledge.

Even though Hay rued the way in which his deformity led others to marginalize him, he nevertheless embraced the hierarchical understanding of disability forged by Enlightenment thinkers. For Hay, his physical deformity constituted a superior form of human aberration, especially when compared to those with intellectual disabilities. Writing about proper clothing for physically aberrant individuals, Hay argued that they should dress simply to avoid looking "doubly ridiculous." If he, as a deformed individual were to wear "Lace or Embroidery," his friends would have justifiable cause to "assign […] a Commission of Lunacy" against him and have him institutionalized amongst other insane people.[74] In making this claim, Hay revealed his own complex relationship with these emerging concepts of disability that simultaneously empowered and debased individuals who fell into these categories. On the one hand, Hay referenced lunacy to build a well-structured, empirical, and rational argument for treating individuals with physical deformities better. These people were, in spite of their bodily differences, nevertheless able to develop their rational faculties and contribute to the world intellectually—prime Enlightenment values. Yet at the same time, to make this positive argument Hay further marginalized those individuals with disabilities that he perceived as *worse* than deformity. In this respect, Hay followed in a long western tradition of viewing those individuals who had their full intellectual and rational capacities as inherently superior to those who were deficient in this respect.[75]

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[74] Ibid., 61.
[75] C. F. Goodey, *A History of Intelligence and "Intellectual Disability": The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011), 296–304.

Most immediately, however, Hay's argument conjured John Locke's theories

about natural human hierarchies from his seminal *Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding. Because all humans were born with minds that were *tabulae rasa*—blank

slates with no innate ideas—Locke contended that humans had to build knowledge

through sensory experiences and then use reasoning and observations to create an

understanding of the world. As a result, individuals with mental deficiencies (who he

termed "idiots") had a lesser form of the human mind, as they were incapable of

reasoning from or building knowledge based on these sensory perceptions. Locke likened

these people with "beasts" and "non-humans" for their inability to think abstractly.[76]

Building on Locke, later Enlightenment thinkers continued to construct clear hierarchies

(such as those based on race, class, and gender) and present them as "natural."[77] Given

the widespread acceptance of these hierarchies, Hay could not escape incorporating the

popular idea that individuals with physical aberrations were superior forms of human

beings than those with psychosocial aberrations.[78]

How was it that Hay, a person *with* a disability, asserted his superiority over other

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[76] Wright, *Downs: The History of a Disability*, 30.

[77] Scott David Foutz, "Ignorant Science: The Eighteenth Century's Development of Scientific Racism," *Quodlibet Journal* 1, no. 8 (1999), http://www.quodlibet.net/foutz-racism.shtml.

[78] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 3; Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of inequality in American History," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 33–57. In this essay, Baynton illustrates how the citizenship debates and expanded rights for women, African-Americans, and immigrants relied on arguments that marginalized disabled people as "naturally" inferior. In their quest for expanded rights, these subaltern groups further oppressed disabled people throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, relying on the unquestioned assumption that disabled people were naturally inferior and deserving of their marginal status while these other groups lacked such "disabling" conditions and therefore deserved improved treatment. With this argument, Douglas Baynton has provided compelling examples from the nineteenth and twentieth century United States of David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's assertion that in the modern era disability serves as the "master trope of human disqualification." It appears as if Hay's essay, albeit subtly, can reinforce that same claim for the mid-eighteenth century.

individuals with mental aberrations by using the same marginalizing cultural categories

that others employed to disparage him? While it might strike one as surprising that a

disabled person would marginalize those with other disabilities in order to advance his

own cause, this apparent irony in fact reveals just how omnipresent and pervasive the

Enlightenment-era notions of "natural" hierarchies were.[79] Those at lower levels of these

hierarchies, like Hay, could embrace calls for "progress" and selectively invoke the idea

that some humans were inherently superior to others as a means to serve their own ends.

These ideas of "natural" hierarchies marked a slow transition over the course of the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as empiricism and scientific thinking gained

predominance over (though never fully displaced) older, religiously inspired explanations

for understanding the causes and categories of human aberrance.

These new notions of normalcy, then, profoundly influenced Quaker reformers in

the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries who had read and embraced many

strains of Enlightenment thought. Influenced by Enlightenment thinkers who had

humanized disabled people as products of nature who could be understood empirically,

Quaker reformers sought out deviant or aberrant populations to help for both theological

and Enlightenment-inspired reasons. Believing that all individuals had "Inner Light" of

God within them, Quakers articulated a very individualized notion of the human soul that

paralleled the individualized focus Enlightenment thinkers posited about disabled groups:

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[79] Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), chap. 6. Baynton argues that advocates of both oralist and manualist education for deaf people also used the concept of "natural" hierarchies to justify the rightness of their particular methods—a conflict that took place most prominently in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This evidence highlights the ways in which concepts of "natural" human hierarchies spread well beyond the Enlightenment itself and continued to infuse debates about the capacities and rights of all disabled people.

both viewed uplift and overcoming (sin or the limitations created by disability, respectively) as a central goal of life. Quakers' outreach to disabled groups, therefore, fit into their long legacy of shaping the world around them to adhere to Quaker values thereby making society better for all.[80] From an Enlightenment perspective, disabled people also individual had internal or external characteristics that marginalized them made and them fall outside of the "norm." By grounding their approach to disabled people in empirical methods and focusing on non-conforming individuals *as individuals*, Quaker reformers could then play a crucial role in this narrative of "overcoming" for those who they treated and worked to cure through their range of humanitarian endeavors.

Quakers and the Enlightenment

By the early nineteenth century, Quaker grammarian and writer, Lindley Murray, could claim much of the credit for disseminating Enlightenment ideas and philosophy throughout much of North America. Murray gained initial success as an author of a school reader, the *English Grammar*, which he first published in 1795. In addition to grammatical exercises and rules, Murray filled this anthology with excerpts from prominent Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, such as Hugh Blair.[81] The *English Grammar*

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[80] Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson*, 9–10, 139–140.
[81] Lyda Fens-de Zeeuw, *Lindley Murray (1745-1826), Quaker and Grammarian* (Utrecht: LOT, Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics, 2011), 166–167, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/17835. Following this first publication, Murray went on to write and publish a book of English exercises in 1797, a collection of poetry and prose and 1798, and two separate English readers filled with selections, as the subtitle stated, that were "Designed to Assist Young Persons to Read with Propriety and Effect; to Improve Their Language and Sentiments; and to Inculcate Some of the Most Important Principles of Piety and Virtue."

and its successors gained such a wide readership in part because their genre—definitive,

objective guides to proper language use—echoed the objective, empiricist goals of many

other Enlightenment projects, most notably the Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopedia*,

and spoke to the appeal for such authoritative, omniscient guides within the Atlantic

world of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In England, the *English Grammar*

went through 65 editions by 1871. Murray's books were even more popular in the United

States where they went through 259 editions between 1815 and 1836.[82] In the late

nineteenth century, American "scholars" still expressed fondness for Murray's books and

could "remember [them] with great pleasure," spurring a Pennsylvania publisher to

reprint them roughly one hundred years after their first appearance. Similarly, the Iowa

public schools continued to use the *English Reader* in their curriculum in 1894.[83] With 11

million copies of his works appearing between 1800 and 1849, Murray became the

second-most published author in the United States, placing him second only to Noah

Webster.[84]

So how was it that Lindley Murray, a Quaker whose theological beliefs focused

on the inward, spiritual, and (perhaps) anti-empirical experience of God, came to play

such a large role in disseminating strains of Enlightenment thought about disability in the

early nineteenth century? In many respects, Quakers were unlikely candidates to

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[82] Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, "Murray, Lindley (1745–1826)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19640.

[83] William Henry Egle, *Notes and Queries, Historical, Biographical and Genealogical, Relating Chiefly to Interior Pennsylvania*, vol. 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Harrisburg Publishing Company, 1894), 30; Iowa Historical Department, *Biennial Report of the Historical Department of Iowa* (Des Moines: G.H. Ragsdale, 1894), 67.

[84] Charles Monaghan, "Lindley Murray and the Enlightenment," *Paradigm*, no. 19 (May 1996), http://faculty.education.illinois.edu/westbury/paradigm/monaghan2.html. Webster sold 15 million copies of his text in this same time period.

embrace, let alone spread, Enlightenment thought during the eighteenth century for both

theological and internal sectarian reasons. Transatlantic political tensions between the

British and French over control of western territories in North America and voting to

fund British troops in defense of their colonies, for instance, led Quakers to withdraw

from Pennsylvania politics in the 1750s to avoid violating their peace testimony. As they

withdrew from political life, North American Quakers pursued a program of internal

transformations that culminated with the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776

and which might easily have cut the sect off from the intellectual currents of

Enlightenment thought. As they separated themselves from politics, Quakers also

disowned increasing numbers of their co-religionists for marrying outside the Society of

Friends, drunkenness, indebtedness, and for other violations of discipline.[85]

Simultaneously, Quakers reemphasized the importance of the "Inner Light" in guiding

their lives, and philanthropists within the sect sought out and assisted other groups who

had also been marginalized by the wider American society, such as slaves, freemen, and

American Indians.[86]

This focus on internal disciple, however, did not lead Quakers to reject all strains

of Enlightenment thought. While the sect stressed "spiritual dependency on the Inner

Light," many philanthropic-minded Quakers also recognized the importance of "reason

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[85] For detailed statistics on the nature and volume of disownments in the eighteenth century, see Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, chap. 3.

[86] Ibid., 273; William C. Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment: Philadelphia Quakers and Charity Schooling, 1790-1820," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 118, no. 1/2 (January 1, 1994): 96, doi:10.2307/20092846. Kashatus focuses particularly on the role Quietist Quakers, such as Thomas Scattergood (who founded the Westtown School in the 1790s), played in reforming education in Philadelphia, as a way to reassert the importance of non-Evangelical Quakers in the history of Friends' philanthropic activities.

and scientific observation" in guiding and designing humanitarian institutions and activities.[87] Even at this moment of intense internal discipline and isolation from political activities, transatlantic Quaker reformers continued to draw on the wider intellectual currents of the Enlightenment to improve human society through the non-political methods of humanitarianism and philanthropy. Over the course of the eighteenth century, elite Quakers steadily fused the theological idea of the "Inner Light" with that of Enlightenment reason, allowing them to pursue scientific investigations, make calls for expanding human equality, and employ the methods of rational thought while strengthening their faith.[88] Moreover, as Friends traveled and preached throughout the Atlantic world, their missionary endeavors also served to spread not only Quaker theology, but also Enlightenment philosophy. In other words, Quakers' focus on sectarian discipline and spirituality in the eighteenth century *did not* exclude them from these philosophical currents rooted in secular reason, empiricism, and logic. Murray's background, education, and especially the fact that he would have been considered "disabled" because of his physical aberrations, make him a fascinating example of the ways Enlightenment-era Quakers engaged with this intellectual movement and its coalescing conceptions of disability.

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[87] Kashatus III, "The Inner Light and Popular Enlightenment," 102.

[88] In their scientific pursuits, Jane Calvert argues that Quakers adopted a Newtonian vision of inquiry, which argued that scientific discoveries were "done for the glory of God, and with his help." Making new discoveries about nature, moreover, shared the revelatory characteristics that Quakers embraced in their religious "seeking" and reflection. See, Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson*, 71–72; For insight into the ways Quakers clashed over the meaning of the "Inner Light," see Thomas D. Hamm, "The Problem of the Inner Light in Nineteenth-Century Quakerism," in Michael Lawrence Birkel and John W Newman, eds., *The Lamb's War: Quaker Essays to Honor Hugh Barbour* (Richmond, Ind.: Earlham College Press, 1992), 101–117; For a brief analysis of how the Quakers' religious tradition of egalitarianism and philanthropy merged with Enlightenment thought in Friends' abolitionist work in the 1750s-1780s, see Jonathan Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 472.

Born to a prominent Quaker family in central Pennsylvania, in his youth Murray encountered the writings and intellectual examples of prominent Enlightenment thinkers such as Benjamin Franklin and Voltaire. Murray admired Franklin's embrace of empiricist experimentation and as a Quaker found Voltaire's writings on his own sect fascinating.[89] As an adult, Murray practiced law in Pennsylvania and New York until his poor health spurred him to move from New York to Holgate, a small village near York, England, in 1784. As he experienced "progressive muscle weakness, severe fatigue, and pain in [his…] joints," Murray found himself unable to pursue a career that involved much physical movement or travel.[90] Working exclusively from his home, Murray shifted his intellectual efforts to writing these English grammar texts and readers—a genre he pursued after three teachers from the Quaker-run Trinity Lane School for girls near York asked him to write a grammar book that would address the shortcomings of their previous texts. Striving to make the text both more substantial to please the teachers, Murray filled the *English Reader* with excerpts that expressed the Quaker values of "propriety and purity."

Yet Murray also included excerpts in his readers that explored how interacting with individuals perceived as "disabled" served to simultaneously objectify and humanize

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[89] Monaghan, "Lindley Murray and the Enlightenment."

[90] Lyda Fens-de Zeeuw, *Lindley Murray (1745-1826), Quaker and Grammarian* (Utrecht: LOT, Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics, 2011), 82–83, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/17835. Fens-de Zeeuw speculates on the particular nature of Murray's physical debility, using his letters of description of the difficulty and pain that walking caused him, as potential evidence of him having postpoliomyelitis syndrome. While attempting to diagnose Murray's physical condition is well beyond the scope of my argument, it is interesting to note that Murray's own experience with disability might have inclined him to embrace the writings of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers who emphasized the sympathetic emotional impact sometimes brought by interacting with people with disabilities. As I will explore later, these notions may also have led Murray to generously support the founding of the York Retreat by his friend and fellow York resident, William Tuke.

them. Murray included examples of the Scottish Enlightenment's sympathetic portrayal of disability and people with disabilities in his excerpt from Dr. Hugh Blair's "Benefits to be derived from scenes of distress." In this text, Blair, a Scottish Presbyterian minister and rhetorician, argued that people become more fully human and appreciative of their own lives only "[w]hen some affecting incident [...] rouses our sensibility to human wo [*sic*]" and "we behold those with whom we had lately mingled [...] sunk by some of the sudden vicissitudes of life into the vale of misery." It is at this moment, Blair argued, that the "world begins to appear in a new light; […] the heart opens to virtuous sentiments, and is led into that train of reflection which ought to direct life." Given that Blair believed seeing humans in these low states (many of which echoed contemporary eighteenth-century descriptions of disabled servicemen) would "in the end fortify th[e] spirit," he argued that "men should be obliged to enter into the house of mourning, in order to recover a proper sense of their dependent state!"[91] In essence, this poem helped convey Adam Smith's notions of sympathetic sociability by making people with disabilities valuable solely because they led the "normal" and able-bodied to more fully appreciate their bodily wholeness.

Murray also included an excerpt from George Crabbe's 1783 poem, "The Village," in his *English Reader*, which similarly explored how observing people with disabilities simultaneously evoked pity for them and gratitude for one's own "normalcy." Murray selected only a portion of the larger poem, the "Description of a Parish poor-

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[91] Lindley Murray, *Sequel to the English Reader: Or, Elegant Selections in Prose and Poetry : Designed to Improve the Highest Class of Learners in Reading, to Establish a Taste for Just and Accurate Composition, and to Promote the Interests of Piety and Virtue* (Boston: T. Bedlington, 1825), 78–82.

house," which sketched the tragic characters of "children […] who know no parents'

care," and "Forsaken wives, and mothers never wed," but then went on to directly

address physical and mental aberrance as the Parish poor-house also included "crippled

age," "The lame, the blind, and, far the happiest they! / The moping idiot, and the

madman gay."[92] These particular lines focused on the aberrant (and not merely suffering)

denizens of the poorhouse had powerful emotional effects on many who read Crabbe's

poem at the time. Prominent British politicians and poets, such as Edmund Burke, Sir

Walter Scott, and William Wordsworth all found these particular lines from "The

Village" to convey a profound emotional resonance. As a young man, Wordsworth

memorized the couplet beginning with "The lame, the blind," and he wrote that they

"struck [his] youthful feeling particularly," although he had observed that in Northern

England these disabled people had not been institutionalized "but were mostly at large,

and too often the butt of thoughtless children"—a trend supported by current scholarship

on insanity and institutionalization in Great Britain.[93] Not only were these lines about

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[92] Ibid., 189.

[93] George Crabbe and John Crabbe, *The Poetical Works of the Rev. George Crabbe: With His Letters and Journals, and His Life*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1834), 83–84, fn. 1; A great deal of current scholarship has helped substantiate Wordsworth's observation that many "disabled" people remained integral and prominent parts of the local communities in which they lived. Rather than all "disabled" people being institutionalized in the eighteenth century, as Foucault argued, scholars such as Joseph Melling, Leonard Smith, and David Gladstone have illuminated the ways that insane asylums, particularly, had residents and families move fluidly in and out of institutional care based on individual "progress," family evaluations, and financial pressures for both the families and for the institutions. See, Joseph Melling, Leonard Smith, and "Accommodating Madness: New Research in the Social History of Insanity and Institution," in Melling and Forsythe, *Insanity, Institutions, and Society, 1800-1914*, 1–30; Leonard D. Smith, "The County Asylum in the Mixed Economy of Care, 1808-1845," in ibid., 33–47; David Gladstone, "The Changing Dynamic of Institution Care: The Western Counties Idiot Asylum, 1864-1914," in Anne Digby and David Wright, eds., *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency Historical Perspectives on People With Learning Disabilities.* (London: Routledge, 2002), 134–160; For an example of the traditional historiography of how absolutist monarchies helped create totalizing institutions that isolated, ostracized, and hegemonically controlled all disabled people, see Foucault's discussion of the "Great Confinement," in Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 38–64.

"disabled" individuals the most memorable for Wordsworth, but they also led him to grapple with and feel pity for those disabled individuals in his own community whose aberrance marginalized them and led others to mistreat them. As someone who had become disabled with increasing age, Murray selected excerpts like Blair and Crabbe's that likely captured his own experience of remaining "fully human" intellectually while also adapting to becoming an object of pity to his friends because he struggled with the chronic pain of his physical condition.[94] Wordsworth's reaction to this poem clearly revealed how Murray's excerpts focused on disability evoked the sympathetic response that Enlightenment thinkers like Adam Smith argued "complete" individuals expressed when they encountered human "otherness."

Quaker missionaries played a crucial role in disseminating and articulating the Enlightenment concept that disabled people served to evoke sympathy from "normal" people during their transatlantic travels. The London Meeting for Sufferings—the organization charged with lobbying Parliament and collecting funds on behalf of persecuted Quakers throughout the Atlantic world—sent copies of Murray's *English Grammar* alongside other distinctively Quaker theological texts like Robert Barclay's *Apology* and William Penn's *No Cross, No Crown* with William Allen and Stephen Grellet as they went on a missionary trip throughout Europe between 1814 and 1816. During their extensive (and sometime arduous) travels in the waning years of the

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[94] When visiting Murray at Holdgate in 1805, Benjamin Silliman, an American friend of Murray's, commented that "at times," Murray's physical pain left him "unable to utter even a whisper, and is compelled to decline seeing his friends." Yet in spite of the sympathy this clearly evoked, Silliman nevertheless concluded that one "would not judge from his appearance that he is an infirm man, for his countenance is rather ruddy and fair, and it is animated with a strong expression of benevolence." Fens-de Zeeuw, *Lindley Murray (1745-1826), Quaker and Grammarian*, 82–83.

Napoleonic Wars, Allen and Grellet distributed Murray's *English Grammar* during

religious meetings in the sovereign German republic of Bremen as well as Marseilles,

France.[95] On a later missionary trip to Scandinavia, Allen and Grellet echoed Hugh Blair

and George Crabbe's sympathetic outlook toward aberrant and marginal individuals in

their personal correspondence. Writing to the Queen of Denmark, the two Quaker

missionaries stressed that they "feel deeply for suffering humanity, and take much

interest in every benevolent exertion to ameliorate the condition of man and diminish

crime and misery in the great human family, our minds are often drawn to visit Prisons,

Hospitals, Poor Houses and Schools for the education of that class of our fellow men."[96]

Their belief in the "Inner Light" and the spiritual equality of all people undoubtedly

inspired Allen and Grellet in their proselytizing and reform work to help those who were

suffering or persecuted.[97] Yet their emphasis on direct personal experience with the

aberrant as a means to "ameliorate the[ir] condition" and restore these individuals to full

humanity also suggests that Enlightenment texts, like those compiled by Murray, shaped

their outlook toward these marginal individuals as well.

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[95] London Meeting for Sufferings, "Books Sent to the Continent – on Behalf of the Meeting for Sufferings," August 1814, MS BOX C3/2, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

[96] Stephen Grellet and William Allen, "To the Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings in London on the Subject of Those Who Profess Our Principles in Norway," November 21, 1818, Casual Correspondence, YM/MfS/CAC/1, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

[97] For an analysis of how these notions of the "Inner Light" inspired William Allen in his prison reform activity, which focused on eliminating physical punishments that would create aberrant bodies (that could be read as disabled), see Randall McGowen, "The Well-Ordered Prison: England, 1780-1865," in Norval Morris and David J. Rothman, eds., *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 86–88; Similarly, a mixture of religion and Scottish Enlightenment philosophy also played a critical role for Samuel Gridley Howe, who served as the first directors of the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts. Howe's work with Laura Bridgman, the first blind and deaf person to learn language, allowed him to implement Scottish Enlightenment teachings about humans' inherent sociable nature and Unitarian-influenced teachings about the natural moral goodness of all people in his early work with Bridgman in the 1830s and 1840s. Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman*, chap. 5–6, passim.

As was certainly true for Murray, Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic were drawn into Enlightenment intellectual circles as a result of their social milieu and education. Elite Quakers who became involved in philanthropic and humanitarian activities engaged with "enlightenment values and rationality, if only by reaction. The Quaker community was highly literate; wealth, access to books and enquiring minds, together with practices of self-review and scrupulous truth-telling inevitably informed their natural curiosity." Amongst European Quakers, their educational backgrounds and scientific and medical professions meant that many of those individuals encountered Enlightenment ideas and methods while studying at prominent non-English universities like Edinburgh, Leiden, or Trinity College in Dublin; schools like Cambridge or Oxford excluded Quakers on religious grounds. Similarly, Quaker scientists such as John Fothergill, Peter Collinson, and John Coakley Lettsome, who specialized in natural philosophy and medicine, also participated in the intellectual exchanges of the Enlightenment by reading and contributing to the publications of the Royal Society.[98]

The most important Enlightenment value and approach adopted by these scientifically minded Quakers was that of Baconian empiricism. Quakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conducted scientific experiments in a variety of fields that added to the cumulative science of Enlightenment intellectuals. While just a small sample of Quaker intellectuals and scientists working from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, the work of John Rutty, William Allen, and Luke Howard provides a sense of the ways scientifically-minded Quakers embraced and fused

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[98] Richard S. Harrison, *Dr. John Rutty (1698-1775) of Dublin: A Quaker Polymath in the Enlightenment* (Dublin: Original Writing, 2011), xviii, xix–xxi.

Baconian and Quaker practices in their efforts to rationally understand, classify, and improve the world around them.

The Dublin-based physician and polymath John Rutty (1697-1775), for instance, drew on Baconian methods in his projects to rationally order and understand the world by classifying diseases, weather patterns, and plants. According to his biographer, Richard Harrison, "Rutty...was eminently reasonable, and equable, in his nature, with an almost naïve belief that the world was capable of being rationally grasped." Rutty's Quaker faith and culture directly informed his scientific work, fitting rather than clashing with his embrace of empirical methods. Rutty's methodical, deliberative approach to classifying scientific specimens suggests the influence of silent reflection and recollection seen in Quaker worship practices. Similarly, his assiduous observational records echoed the precise bookkeeping of Quaker merchants whom he lived alongside in the eighteenth century.[99] Rutty's fusion of Quaker religious practices with the scientific and intellectual methods of Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment thinkers revealed the some of the ideological affinities between these communities.

In the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries, William Allen (1770-1843), the renowned English Quaker philanthropist, displayed a similar omnivorous intellectual appetite to that of Rutty. Allen began his career as a chemist and pharmacist and engaged in scientific inquiry throughout his life. Allen's journal revealed his probing mind; he made weekly observations of astronomical patterns as well as conducted experiments on

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[99] Ibid., 231, 231–235.

creating batteries out of copper, zinc, and sulfuric acid.[100] Similarly, his close

acquaintance and friend Luke Howard (1772-1864) worked with Allen as a pharmacist

and chemist and shared membership in a number of philosophical and scientific societies

in London. Howard's most significant intellectual contributions, however, came in the

field of meteorology. Drawing on his membership in the Linnean Society—a scientific

organization founded in 1788 that used the classification and taxonomical methods of

Swedish botanist Carl von Linné to study "the Natural History of Great Britain and

Ireland"—Howard developed a system for identifying and labeling cloud formations.[101]

In 1802, Howard presented a paper on his findings to the Linnean Society and later

published this material, along with an extensive set of urban meteorological observations,

in his two-volume work, *The Climate of London*, from 1818-1820. Howard's terminology

for clouds (which remains in use today) arose out of a typically Scientific Revolution and

Enlightenment practice of close empirical observations and using those to accurately

define and understand the natural world.[102]

Even Quakers famed for their preaching and piety nevertheless employed the

argumentative and empirical methods of Enlightenment philosophers. John Woolman, for

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[100] William Allen, "Diary of William Allen" 1815, passim., TEMP MSS 57/13, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London. The specific dates for each of Allen's entries in this diary are, unfortunately, absent, as many of the pages have been cut out of the original bound journal and are now missing. The clearest method to approximate specific dates for these entries is to cross-reference them with his commentary about the developments surrounding Napoleon's Hundred Days, when the French leader returned from exile on Elba to briefly reclaim control before ultimately being exiled to St. Helena. Given these summaries, we can conclude that Allen wrote most of these entries between March 20 and July 18, 1815.

[101] Linnean Society of London, *Charter and Bye-Laws of the Linnean Society of London: Together with a Patent of Armorial Ensigns, and a List of the Society* (London: Wilks and Taylor, 1802), 1.

[102] Jim Burton, *"Howard, Luke (1772-1864)," The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/templates/article.jsp?articleid=13928&back=#cosubject_13928 .

instance, a deeply spiritual North American Quaker preacher, gained fame for wearing distinctively unadorned outfits made from natural, un-dyed white cloth. To many who encountered him in North America in the 1760s and when he visited England in 1772, Woolman's appearance conveyed a sense of his moral purity, spiritual discipline, and rejection of materialism. Woolman himself "saw his clothing as a manifestation of his lowliness […] and his ultimate devotion to God."[103] Although Woolman's outward appearance suggested a rejection of the elite, worldly, and rationalist values of the Enlightenment, he nevertheless relied on Enlightenment language and empirically-based arguments to persuade the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to officially condemn the slave trade and slavery in the 1750s.

Successfully fusing his inwardly spiritual and outwardly rational self by employing strains of eighteenth century rationalist religion, Woolman downplayed original sin in favor of the values of charity, universal benevolence, abiding by the Golden Rule. Early Quaker theologians, such as Robert Barclay, William Penn, and George Keith had helped to set the theological foundation for Woolman's Quaker-Enlightenment fusion with their assertions that "God's divine reason" appeared "throughout all creation."[104] Woolman buttressed this rational vision of religion with Enlightenment philosophy from John Locke, whose book, *Some Thoughts on Education*, Woolman owned and lent to others.[105] From this text, Woolman adopted Locke's notion

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[103] Geoffrey Gilbert Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 210, 155.

[104] J. William Frost, "John Woolman and the Enlightenment" in Michael Alan Heller, ed., *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman, in Honor of Sterling Olmsted & Phillips P. Moulton* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 169–171.

[105] Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 78.

of the human mind as a *tabula rasa* that derived all its understanding of the universe from empirical observation and lived experience; some even suggest that he used it to help inform his own child rearing.[106] This concept of the human mind and Locke's emphasis on practical learning, moreover, appealed to Woolman's Quaker religious perspective because it rejected original sin and reinforced the idea that all children are inherently innocent.[107]

Furthermore, Woolman's widely published tracts against slavery and the slave trade invoked the language and argumentative frameworks that characterized Enlightenment thought. Some scholars have argued that Woolman's writing should not be classified as Enlightenment-influenced because his *Journal* featured a very spiritual, inward-looking devotional tone and discussed "reason" with a tone of scorn and suspicion.[108] That interpretation, however, ignores the many tracts that Woolman intended for both a Quaker and a non-Quaker audience. In 1754, he published his landmark essay "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," noting in the subtitle that this tract was "Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination." Writing to a religiously diverse audience, Woolman invoked Enlightenment language and argumentative structures. Throughout the essay, for instance, Woolman acknowledged the pro-slavery argument and gave voice to his opponents, revealing his measured and equitable approach to alternative perspectives. Woolman ultimately rejected the pro-slavery arguments, concluding with a rhetorical

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[106] Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 78–79.
[107] Heller, *The Tendering Presence*, 172.
[108] Ibid., 184.

question that invoked powerful Enlightenment concepts: "If I purchase a man who hath never forfeited his *liberty*, the *natural right of freedom* is in him [emphases mine]; and shall I keep him and his posterity in servitude and ignorance?"[109] When reaching beyond his fellow Quakers, even the self-abnegating and spiritual Woolman could harness the Enlightenment language that appealed to "reason," "rationality," and "natural law." In this regard, Woolman shared argumentative methods with his fellow Friend and contemporary abolitionist peer, Anthony Benezet.

Benezet, even more thoroughly than Woolman, embraced the values, philosophies, and habits of mind of the Enlightenment—especially those that focused on aberrant or disabled bodies—in both in his anti-slavery advocacy and in his personal life. A noted educator in Philadelphia who opened schools to teach black children, Benezet gained transatlantic renown for his many publications attacking slavery and the slave trade. The first of these that he published, the 1760 book *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes*, revealed his use of Enlightenment empiricism in building an argument against slavery. Benezet used travel accounts from Africa as empirical evidence to reveal the horrors, inhumanity, and ultimate immorality of the slave trade.[110] In his 1766 attack on slavery, *A Caution and a Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*, moreover, he drew on the writings of Quaker founder George Fox, as well as the Enlightenment thinker Montesquieu. In his *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu grounded part of his anti-slavery critique in the disabling effects the human bondage had

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[109] John Woolman, *The Works of John Woolman: In Two Parts*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1806), 233, 241.

[110] Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 55, 72.

on slaves' bodies. Montesquieu summarized, and in the process harshly critiqued, many

of the traditional justifications for slavery, which themselves were grounded in the idea

that aberrant bodies and minds denoted inherently inferior humans:

> "These creatures are all over black, and with such a flat nose that they can
> scarcely by pitied. / It is hardly to be believed that God […] should place a soul,
> especially a good soul, in such a black ugly body. […] / Weak minds exaggerate
> too much the wrong done to the Africans."[111]

Although Montesquieu reasserted these negative associations between aberrant bodies

and justifications for slavery as a way to undermine them, his use of this evidence

revealed how disability and the existence of aberrant bodies and minds served as a way

for those throughout Atlantic society to think about human hierarchies, either justifying

or challenging these "natural" human inequalities.

Montesquieu's critiques and their argumentative structure profoundly shaped

Benezet's approach to persuading a non-Quaker audience of slavery's immorality.

Similarly, Benezet grounded his political antislavery message in the language of natural

law; he argued that "liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes

the vital air […] [N]o human law can deprive him of the right, which he derives from the

law of nature." At the same time, Benezet reinforced the inherently religious aspect of

these natural laws by emphasizing that "Government was an 'ordinance of God,' and

[that] 'no legislature on earth can alter the nature of things, so as to make that to be right

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[111] Charles de Secondat baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, vol. 1
(New York: Colonial Press, 1900), 238–239; For an analysis of Montesquieu's wider attack on slavery, its
rationale and logic, and its impact on other Enlightenment thinkers, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of
Slavery in Western Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 402–409.

which is contrary to the law of God.'"[112] To persuade as wide an audience as possible of slavery's wrongness, Benezet thereby fused Quaker moral arguments against slavery with those of Enlightenment thinkers who appealed to natural law and reason.

In drawing on these Enlightenment moral thinkers and attacking slavery philosophically, Benezet also fought against some of the other powerful currents of Enlightenment thought that viewed racial inferiority as natural and evident in inferior bodies. Two of the champions of this racist Enlightenment perspective were Voltaire and George-Louis Buffon. Voltaire, in essays from both 1734 and 1756, had offered vigorous arguments in support of the theory of polygenism, claiming that Africans descended from an entirely different species than did white people. Buffon advanced the concept of "degeneration" in 1749, which challenged Voltaire's idea of polygenism and instead posited that all humans were from the same species, but that some "varieties" descended down the human hierarchy—expressed bodily through the presence of dark skin— because of their inherently inferior tropical climate. Similar wider Enlightenment ideas about disability, however, Buffon's ideas about "degeneration" also offered hope that black people could adapt back up the ladder and return to humanity's "original" light-skinned "variety."[113] Scientifically minded thinkers like Carl Linnaeus built on these notions to create a taxonomy of human beings in 1758 that classified black Africans

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[112] Maurice Jackson, "Anthony Benezet Working the Antislavery Cause Inside and Outside of 'The Society,'" in Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, eds., *Quakers and Abolition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 109–110.

[113] For a thorough explanation of Buffon's ideas of "degeneration," see Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), chap. 2. For insight into Voltaire's racial attitudes, see Léon Poliakov, "Racism from the Enlightenment to the Age of Imperialism," in *Racism and Colonialism* (Springer, 1982), 55–56, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-94-009-7544-6_4; Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 86.

(along with "yellow Asians [and] red Americans") as a distinct and subordinate species from white Europeans.[114] By challenging these titans of Enlightenment thought on issues of race and slavery, Benezet made a radical argument in support of the inherent equality of all humans regardless of race and bodily appearance. This stance placed the Quaker reformer at the epicenter of the growing transatlantic abolitionist movement.[115]

Benezet's Enlightenment and Quaker-derived ideas about the natural equality of all humans not only reshaped thinking about slavery in North America, but also helped catalyze antislavery activism in Britain and France. Through his writings and advocacy, Benezet gained important North American allies whom he helped convert to the antislavery cause: his fellow Philadelphians Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush. Indeed, Benezet transformed Franklin's attitude toward Africans and slavery by helping him understand that the perceived inequality of black slaves came not from innate racial characteristics but rather originated in the institution of slavery itself. Franklin borrowed Benezet's arguments against slavery in a 1772 article for the London *Chronicle* where he decried the "constant butchery of the human species by this pestilent detestable traffic in the bodies and souls of men."[116] Furthermore, Benezet also linked Franklin with the transatlantic community of antislavery reformers, putting him into correspondence with Granville Sharp, the Anglican activist who helped bring about the abolition of slavery in

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[114] Jonathan M. Marks, "Scientific and Folk Ideas about Heredity," in Raymond A. Zilinskas and Peter J. Balint, eds., *The Human Genome Project and Minority Communities: Ethical, Social, and Political Dilemmas* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 57–58.

[115] Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 64, 69; J.R. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pt. 1, *passim*; Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 239–240.

[116] Anthony Benezet quoted in Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 269.

England and founded the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Through Benezet's influence, Franklin became a committed anti-slavery activist and served as the president of Pennsylvania Abolition Society.[117] Likewise, Benjamin Rush, the noted Philadelphia physician, author, and educator, developed his antislavery stance by reading Benezet's writings on Africa and the effects of the slave trade. These texts inspired Rush to contribute to Benezet's African Free School in Philadelphia. Benezet also personally persuaded Rush to write his own antislavery tract—*An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, upon Slave-Keeping*—an unsigned text intended to build support for a 1773 Pennsylvania law that would make slave importation prohibitively expensive.[118] In this publication, Rush borrowed Benezet's use of Scottish Enlightenment philosophers and his argumentative technique of employing statistical evidence. Philosophically, Rush appealed to "men of Sense and Virtue," imploring them to "rouse up and espouse the cause of Humanity and general Liberty. Bear a testimony against a vice which degrades human nature, and dissolves that universal tie of benevolence which should connect all the children of men together in one great Family." Quantitatively, Rush impressed the importance of immediate action by providing his readers with the startling statistic "that there are not less than one hundred thousand [Negro slaves] imported into America every year"; in 1768 alone there were 104,000 slaves imported to the continent.[119] The combination of these approaches allowed Rush to illustrate to a non-

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[117] Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 110–117.
[118] David Freeman Hawke, *Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Gadfly* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 104–105.
[119] Benjamin Rush, *An Address to the Inhabitants of the British Settlements in America, upon Slave-Keeping. To Which Are Added, Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled, "Slavery Not Forbidden by*

Quaker audience the devastating effects of the slave trade not only on enslaved Africans, but also on the white slave-owners and the white workers who had to compete with black slave labor.[120]

Ironically, many of the concepts of disability that the Enlightenment forged profoundly shaped Benezet's embrace of Enlightenment values in his personal life. Because he experienced illness throughout much of his youth and early adulthood, Benezet used Enlightenment empirical methods in an effort to learn about and ameliorate his ill health. Benezet's exact appearance and the particular nature of his health conditions are not vividly described in his memoir, though his biographer, Roberts Vaux, noted that he was physically "small," that he had experienced an "infirm state of health" in his youth and old age, and that he considered himself "ugly."[121] A French military officer in the United States after the American Revolution confirmed this assessment, describing "the most zealous Quaker of Philadelphia," as "small, old, and ugly, but his countenance wears the stamp of a peaceful soul and the repose of a good conscience."[122] Along with these hints at Benezet's apparent physical aberrance, we also know that

Scripture ; Or, A Defence of the West-India Planters." (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1773), 28, 27, http://opac.newsbank.com/select/evans/12994.

[120] Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 117–126.

[121] Roberts Vaux and Anthony Benezet, *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet* (York: W. Alexander, 1817), 101, 146, 138; Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests that the seventeenth and eighteenth-century developments of "rationalism and scientific thought" spurred a secular form of "staring" that made aberrant humans into objects that could be studied, ranked, and the socially marginalized depending upon one's aberration. Within these cultural developments surrounding the Enlightenment, Benezet's choice to characterize himself as "ugly" thereby illustrated the ways staring and observing human variations could make those who did not appear "normal" adopt this marginalizing language in describing themselves. For a discussion of how western "staring" transformed during the early modern era, see Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 27–29; Concerns about "ugliness" and how best to regulate individuals with aberrant physical forms in public became the focus on a series of "Ugly Laws" passed throughout North American cities in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. See, Schweik, *The Ugly Laws*, chap. 1–2, passim.

[122] Jean S. Straub, "Anthony Benezet: Teacher and Abolitionist of the Eighteenth Century," *Quaker History* 57, no. 1 (April 1, 1968): 16.

Benezet owned over one hundred texts on medicine and science in his personal library, and he closely annotated that material that he felt would help him improve his health.[123] Inspired in part by George Cheyne's 1753 medical treatise, *The Natural Method of Curing the Diseases of the Body*, Benezet adopted a vegetarian diet. In his personal copy of this text, Benezet underlined the passage that argued, "One great advantage a vegetable Diet has over an animal one is that in the weakest Digestions […] the Patient may always fill his Belly and satisfy his Hunger without Fear, Remorse or Suffering."[124] As Benezet revealed through his critical engagement with this text, he both drew on scientific writings from the Enlightenment thinkers and desired to use this empirical evidence to help improve his own physical condition and health. This dietary change, moreover, empowered Benezet to integrate his anti-slavery philosophy in all parts of his life by avoiding any slave-produced foods. Furthermore, given his own familiarity with physical illnesses, Benezet incorporated lectures on both anatomy and physical activities into the curriculum he taught his students.[125] The sum of these details indicate that Benezet understood the Enlightenment-forged notions of bodily normalcy and standard health, such that he studied empirical evidence to help ensure physical progress for both himself and for his students.

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[123] Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 19.

[124] Donald Brooks Kelley, "'A Tender Regard to the Whole Creation': Anthony Benezet and the Emergence of an Eighteenth-Century Quaker Ecology," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 1 (1982): 82–82, fn. 29.

[125] Vaux and Benezet, *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet*, 26; Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 19.

Conclusion

Traditional histories of both the Enlightenment and Quaker humanitarianism have presented them as distinctly different transatlantic intellectual communities, with at times seemingly diametrically opposed values. While scholars have often portrayed Enlightenment thinkers as rational, empirical, and profoundly secular, Quaker ministers and humanitarians have, by contrast, been depicted as spiritual, inward looking, and religiously-devoted.[126] These broad brushstroke presentations have a grain of truth; however, this chapter has sought to illuminate many of the overlapping values and interconnections that existed between Enlightenment and Quaker thinkers. In terms of social milieu, elite, well-educated individuals who corresponded across and traveled throughout the Atlantic world comprised the core of both these groups. These cosmopolitan Quaker and Enlightenment intellectuals, moreover, shared a desire to improve the world around them; they believed that human intellect and agency made this progressive goal attainable.

Furthermore, Quakers and Enlightenment thinkers shared a fascination with the coalescing concepts of disability and disabled people that emerged during the eighteenth century. Quakers' theological concept of the "Inner Light" and Enlightenment thinkers' notions of disability were both focused on individuals and how one could uplift and

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[126] For examples of monographs that emphasize the secular (and at times anti-clerical) aspects of Enlightenment thought, especially among French Philosophes, see Gay, *The Enlightenment*; Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 29–37; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, chap. 33; For the work that helped set the foundational narratives about Quakers as profoundly pious, see Thomas Clarkson, *A Portraiture of Quakerism: As Taken from a View of the Moral Education, Discipline, Peculiar Customs, Religious Principles, Political and Civil Economy and Character of the Society of Friends*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1808); For more contemporary presentations of Quakerism as a religiously-devoted sect, see James, *A People among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America.*; Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Thomas Hamm, *The Quakers in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

improve the lives of individuals either through religion or empirically grounded interventions. Given this shared desire to improve the world around them, Quaker humanitarians and Enlightenment thinkers both sought to understand and work to ameliorate human aberrance. Drawing on empirical methods from the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution, both groups began to embrace an understanding of disabilities as a form of human aberration that simultaneously marginalized and provided an opportunity to uplift those who fell into this category. Eschewing supernatural and superstitious explanations for the causes of "disabilities," Enlightenment thinkers instead relied on close observations and the power of human reason to describe, classify, and evaluate those individuals now considered "abnormal." Quaker humanitarians in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century would adopt many of these classification schema and hierarchical concepts of different disabilities as they designed and marketed reform institutions that targeted specific forms of human aberrance.

Yet such marginalizing labels did not inherently condemn those perceived as "disabled" to a life of mistreatment, isolation, and social ostracism. Scottish Enlightenment philosophers such as Hugh Blair and Adam Smith argued that interacting with disabled people and ruminating on the nature of their aberrance could, in fact, lead those who were "whole" of body and mind to better appreciate what it meant to be "fully human." Similarly, individuals such as William Hay and Lindley Murray demonstrated that being perceived as aberrant did not preclude one from making intellectual or political contributions to one's community. The fact that both Hay and Murray came from elite families whose wealth enabled them to obtain an education and pursue intellectual

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endeavors as their livelihood certainly made them exceptional in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, their lives' work and their writings about human aberrance challenged the notion that being a "disabled" person in the past was an unmitigated tragedy; in fact, Enlightenment thinkers' faith in human progress and potential made possible their empirically-grounded, yet optimistic evaluations of disability.

These extensive interconnections between Quaker humanitarians, Enlightenment thinkers, and these coalescing concepts of disability helped establish the foundation for Quaker philanthropic endeavors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The next chapters will explore how Quaker philanthropists embraced this intellectual fusion of Enlightenment thought, emerging concepts of "disability," and their own distinctive theology to create and market their reform activities on both sides of the Atlantic in the arenas of abolition, insane asylum reform, and deaf education.

Chapter 2

Aberrations in the Body and in the Body Politic:

The Eighteenth-Century Life of Benjamin Lay, Disabled Abolitionist

In 1782, the year he founded and opened the United States' first natural history museum in Philadelphia, Pierre Eugène Du Simitière received a curious gift from his friend and noted Philadelphia printer, John Dunlap: an engraving of the noted (or perhaps notorious) Philadelphia Quaker Benjamin Lay, who had died in 1759.[1] In some ways, Lay was a surprising candidate to be memorialized in an engraving or included in a museum of natural history only a few decades after his death. During the time Lay lived in and around Philadelphia, he gained notoriety for his outlandish and unconventional public attacks against slavery. In one of these instances, Lay kidnapped a neighbor child whose parents owned a slave. When the frantic parents came to Lay seeking information and help about their child's whereabouts, Lay took the opportunity to first reassure them that "Your child is safe in my house," and then to impress upon them "the sorrow you inflict upon the parents of the negroe [*sic*] girl you hold in slavery, for she was torn from them by avarice."[2] During his lifetime, heavy-handed tactics like this one alienated Lay from both his neighbors and the larger Philadelphia Quaker community, which did not yet share his anti-slavery views.

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[1] John C. Van Horne, *Pierre Eugene DuSimitiere: His American Museum 200 Years After* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), sec. 9:10.

[2] Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford: Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1815), 28–29, http://archive.org/details/memoirsoflivesof00vaux.

Why, then, would a local museum want to memorialize him? This decision most likely stemmed from the fact that by the late eighteenth century both Quaker and non-Quaker Philadelphians perceived Lay as a catalyst for humanitarian change. In 1758—a year before Lay's death—the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting strongly cautioned against slave trading amongst its members.[3] This decision not only reflected the efficacy of Lay's activism but also cemented Lay's legacy as a vital figure in the trajectory of Quaker abolitionism and humanitarianism.[4]

Yet in other ways quite apart from his anti-slavery work, Lay's engraved likeness seemed a logical fit for Du Simitière's collection. Physically, both those who encountered him during his life and those who viewed his likeness posthumously likely saw him as aberrant. The engraving made clear that Lay was quite short, had a hunched back and extremely skinny legs, walked with a cane, and seemed to live an austere existence as it presented him outside his cave-like home. In 1815, Lay's biographer Robert Vaux described him as:

> only four feet seven inches in height; his head was large in proportion to his body; the features of his face were remarkable, and boldly delineated, and his countenance was grave and benignant. He was hunch-backed, with a projecting chest, below which his body became much contracted. His legs were so slender as to appear almost unequal to the purpose of supporting him, diminutive as his frame was, in comparison with the ordinary size of the human stature. A habit he had contracted, of standing in a twisted position, with one hand resting upon his

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[3] The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting took the final step to officially make slaveholding a disownable offense in 1776. Between 1758 and 1776, however, Philadelphia Quakers disowned fourteen members who had committed an additional offense in addition to slave owning. See Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, 120.

[4] For contemporary scholarship that stresses the importance of Benjamin Lay to the narrative of Quaker abolitionism, see Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 48–57; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 83, 100–101, 106; Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), chap. 4.

left hip, added to the effect produced by a large white beard, that for many years
had not been shaved, contributed to render his figure perfectly unique. It is
singular, that his wife very much resembled him in size, having a crooked back
like her husband.[5]

Within the larger context of Du Simitière's museum, where he also displayed "flora and
fauna, about 2000 prints and drawings, a collection of Indian and African antiquities,
hundreds of issues of various Colonial newspapers and among many others, a special
collection of books relating to the history of America," Lay's historical significance and
his physiological uniqueness thus made him as a natural fit for this diverse collection.[6]
Although neither Dunlap nor Du Simitière was a Quaker, the gifting of this engraving
also indicates that both men found the image compelling and reflected the importance of
Benjamin Lay as a retrospective symbol of Philadelphia and abolitionism to Quakers and
non-Quakers alike. Du Simitière's and Dunlap were far from the only humanitarian and
scientifically minded people to find Lay's life story and his body fascinating.

Indeed, the engraving was just one of the dozens of textual and visual
representations of Lay that circulated throughout the Atlantic world from the late
eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth century, nearly all of which referenced his stature
and physical "deformity." The omnipresent references to Lay's height, his crooked back,
the relative length of his arms, the frailty of his legs, and his other physical traits, suggest
that Lay's disability signified more to his contemporaries and later biographers than
merely serving as an interesting side-note.[7] In fact, posthumous representations of Lay

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[5] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 1815, 20–21.

[6] Martin Levey, "The First American Museum of Natural History," *Isis* 42, no. 1 (April 1, 1951):
10, doi:10.2307/226659.

[7] Vaux's emphasis on Lay's hunched-back and "twisted position" suggests that he may have also
lived with scoliosis. For a fuller description of the varieties of scoliosis and its contemporary medical

and his body abound with vivid descriptions of his strikingly unconventional body and vitally connect those attributes with his strident moral stances and confrontational anti-slavery tactics.

Although Lay's striking behavior and bodily difference make him an interesting subject in and of himself, Lay's disability merits scholarly attention precisely because it proved central to his activism as an abolitionist in the eighteenth century. During his lifetime, Lay harnessed his bodily difference to advocate on behalf of the enslaved. His own first-hand experiences with human bondage in the Caribbean exposed Lay to the ways in which that institution marginalized, enacted violence on, and often physically deformed African slaves. Although Lay lived and wrote at a moment before Enlightenment ideas about the dualistic and hierarchical nature of disabilities had been thoroughly articulated, these observations nevertheless led him to perceive and recognize his own aberrant body as a personal characteristic that marginalized and ostracized him from the larger body politic. Lay shared the experience with enslaved Africans of being categorized as physically and socially deviant; this enabled him to empathize with and publicly demonstrate on the slaves' behalf. Lay recognized that this emerging, quasi-scientific classification schema marked aberrant bodies—both his and those of black Africans—as inherently inferior. Yet he refused to passively acquiesce to such pejorative and circumscribed notions. Embracing and redefining this emerging Enlightenment-era

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treatments, see Mayo Clinic Staff, "Scoliosis - MayoClinic.com," *Mayo Clinic*, February 3, 2012, http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/scoliosis/DS00194, accessed April 14, 2013. For an example of a work that plays up Lay's quirks for their own sake, see Carl Sifakis, *American Eccentrics: One Hundred Forty of the Greatest Human Interest Stories Ever Told* (New York: Facts on File, 1984), 15–18, http://archive.org/details/americaneccentri000198mbp.

construction of disability, Lay harnessed his aberrant, active, and activist body to condemn slaveholding Quakers without fear of losing his (non-existent) social status.

Yet as a profoundly spiritual and mystical person, Lay most often framed his abolitionist arguments and references to his aberrant body in religious terms. Clearly expressing a self-awareness about his non-conforming body and the ways in which it empowered him to call for abolition, Lay articulated an aggressive call for ending slavery in his 1737 book, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates*. Often citing Biblical passages or the writings of Quaker and non-Quaker theologians, Lay contended that eradicating slavery would spiritually elevate both the slaveholder and the enslaved. This narrative of spiritual uplift and overcoming the sin of slavery targeted slaveholders as individuals and, as a result, cohered nicely with the emerging Enlightenment discourse around disability that marked mental and physical aberrance as an individualized deficit to be overcome. Shortly after Lay's death in 1759 (and the triumph of having the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting strongly caution against slaveholding), images of Lay's body began to circulate throughout the Atlantic world that prominently displayed his non-conforming body; these images began to establish an association between Lay's unconventional abolitionist activism and his unconventional body. At this mid-eighteenth-century moment, such images forged a positive connection between Lay's strange body and his abolitionist triumph and spoke powerfully to others (both Quaker and non-Quaker) who shared his hatred of human bondage. Yet such celebratory associations proved fleeting as dualistic Enlightenment notions of disability as a marginal but overcomeable condition gained ascendance in the nineteenth century.

Beginning with a brief biographical overview, this chapter will first establish the historical context Benjamin Lay's life and transatlantic travels to explain the roots of his abolitionist advocacy. Then, this chapter will analyze Lay's radical abolitionism both within the context of eighteenth-century Quaker antislavery and through the lens of disability history. This methodological approach will reveal that Lay displayed a clear awareness of his non-conforming body and the ways that its marginalizing effects empowered him to radically challenge the Quaker slaveholding establishment. The chapter will then analyze Lay's *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* and argued that Lay rhetorically constructed his own disability in this text through both a religious lens and through the emerging Enlightenment concept of human aberrance and hierarchy. Finally, the chapter will conclude by analyzing some of the earliest visual representations of Lay's strange body and contend that context in which they were commissioned and circulated forged a positive connection between Lay's disability and his abolitionist accomplishments.

Benjamin Lay, Barbados, and the Emergence of Anti-Slavery Advocacy

Understanding how Lay forged a historical legacy that made him image of fascination amongst Quakers and the wider Philadelphia community from the late-eighteenth century onwards – both for his body and his anti-slavery advocacy – first requires understanding how Lay developed his strident anti-slavery views. In many respects, Lay's background made him an unlikely candidate to become so intimately connected to the fight against slavery. An English Quaker from modest means, Lay was

born in Colchester, England, in 1681.[8] His family, being poor and unable to provide him

with an education, had him apprenticed to a glovemaker, where he worked until he turned

18. He then worked on his brother's farm and then proceeded to become a sailor. During

his time on a sailing vessel, Lay traveled throughout the Mediterranean, allegedly visiting

a number of holy sites in present-day Syria. While the "hardships and perils of life as a

sailor," as Vaux put it, might seem surprising for an individual of Lay's physical stature,

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker argue that sailing ships in the seventeenth and

eighteenth century Atlantic were sites of vast diversity and mixing – racially,

linguistically, nationally, and bodily. Pirate ships in particular were defined by their

"motley crews" composed of "freebooters." These men, who often had "a patched eye, a

peg leg, and a hook for a hand [suggest] an essential truth: sailoring was a dangerous line

of work. Pirates therefore put a portion of all booty into a common fund reserved for

those who sustained injuries of lasting effect, whether the loss of eyesight or of any

appendage."[9] Although Lay did not serve on a pirate ship, the dangers of sailing in

general created an array of bodily forms. Simon Newman's research suggests that 86% of

sailors suffered bodily injury of some form in the course of their work, with limbs and

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[8] There is some dispute as to when precisely Benjamin Lay was born. According to the Colchester Register of Births and the Essex Quarterly Meeting Birth Digest, Lay was born on January 26, 1681. For sources that use this date, see C. Brightwen Rowntree, "Benjamin Lay," *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* XXXIII (1936): 4; Andreas Mielke, "'What's Here to Do?': An Inquiry Concerning Sarah and Benjamin Lay, Abolitionists," *Quaker History* 86, no. 1 (1997): 22; J.R. Oldfield, "Lay, Benjamin (1681-1759)," ed. H.G.C. Matthew and Brian Howard Harrison, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press), accessed March 24, 2013, http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/view/article/16216; By contrast, other sources cite the date 1677 as the date for Benjamin Lay's birth, which first appeared in Vaux's biography (without a citation) and has since been repeated by later sources, see Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 1815, 13; Blanche Day, "The Disquieting Quaker," *American Heritage*, April 1962.

[9] Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 164.

appendages the most-frequently disfigured parts of the body.[10] While the historical record

does not indicate whether Lay's time as a sailor created or exacerbated his disability, the

omnipresence of these injuries and their permanent aberrations to the body indicate that

Lay's unique body would not have been out of place on a sailing vessel. In fact, Lay may

have in fact been more socially integrated there than he was back in Colchester.

In 1710, Lay returned to England and settled in London, where he courted Sarah

Smith, a well-respected Quaker minister who was also of short stature. During this

period, Lay began to develop a reputation as a troublemaker for his frequent and

vociferous public denunciations. He directed these outbursts against his fellow Quakers

for delivering "false ministry" (speaking in Meeting for Worship without the guidance of

the "Inner Light") or behaving hypocritically in their personal conduct.[11] Encountering

conflict in his native England, Lay began his transatlantic travels in the late 1710s, when

he briefly traveled to Boston and requested a certificate to marry Sarah in 1717 from the

Quaker meeting in Salem, Massachusetts. Lay may have traveled this great distance to

request a marriage certificate because the Salem Meeting knew less about his disruptive

behavior and would have been more likely to grant approve his marriage to Sarah.

Benjamin and Sarah then returned to England, but before officially requesting a

certificate to marry from the Devonshire House Monthly Meeting in England, Benjamin

made a number of outbursts and verbal attacks toward fellow Friends that led the Meeting

to delay their wedding. Finally, after a complex appeal process to the London and

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[10] Simon P. Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 111.
   [11] J. William Frost, "Quaker Antislavery: From Dissidence to Sense of the Meeting," *Quaker History* 101, no. 1 (2012): 24–25, doi:10.1353/qkh.2012.0004.

Middlesex Quarterly Meetings, Lay received approval to wed Sarah in 1718.[12]

Immediately after their marriage, the Lays moved to Barbados, where they opened a

small shop and store that sold food and other supplies.

The few years that the Lays spent in Barbados proved the most important in

forging and cementing Benjamin Lay's virulent hostility toward the institution of slavery.

Founded in the early seventeenth century as a proprietary colony under the direct control

of English aristocrats, Barbados attracted a range of English migrants during its first

century of settlement. Many English people arrived on the island as indentured servants,

while others moved to the island to pursue new economic opportunities and, potentially,

amass great wealth through the manufacture of sugar: the primary and most lucrative of

the island's products. By 1650, the island's English-born population stood at 44,000; part

of this population came from those displaced by or fleeing the upheaval of the English

Civil War in the 1640s.[13] The Quakers were one of those groups of religious dissenters

who experienced persecution during and in the wake of the English Civil War and,

therefore, migrated to Barbados for both religious and financial reasons. By 1680, the

Barbadian census indicates that the roughly 170 Quaker families on the island held a total

of 3,254 slaves, revealing both the growing size of their community and their increasing

involvement in the immensely profitable production of sugar.[14] These financial and

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[12] Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," 24–26. Mielke's chronology of Lay's life is very thoroughly documented and reconstructs much of the generalized (and undated) biography that Vaux and those who followed him repeated.

[13] Carla Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[14] Larry Dale Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 124–125; For an anthropologically-influenced interpretation of the interactions between Barbadian Quaker masters and their slaves, see Kristen Block,

migratory trends amongst all English people continued into the eighteenth century, when, in 1718, Benjamin and Sarah Lay, arrived on the island.

Living in Barbados from 1718-1720 transformed Benjamin Lay's worldview and reshaped his life's work—a dynamic that paralleled other early antislavery writers.[15] The Lays encountered an island where black slaves comprised the overwhelming majority of the population: numbering roughly 76% of the islands' inhabitants. Since sugar cultivation served as the island's primary production activity, slaves' work was both extremely difficult and dangerous.[16] Running a small general store on the Caribbean

"Quaker Evangelization in Early Barbados: Forging a Path toward the Unknowable," in Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*, 89–105. Block argues that Quaker slaveholders rarely heeded calls from prominent Quakers, such as George Fox and William Edmundson, to integrate enslaved people into their "family order" and eventually manumit them. Moreover, Block creatively explores how the enslaved Africans might have perceived Quaker religious communities and practices to contend that while Quaker worship might have paralleled African religious traditions thereby making African slaves feel a sense of kinship with their Quaker masters, that the slaves "would have known that in the British colonial world, racialized thinking meant that African initiates would forever remain at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy" (p. 96).

[15] Drawing on the dates in Lay's own writing, historian Andreas Mielke concludes that Benjamin and Sarah Lay lived in the Caribbean during the last few years of the 1710s, see Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," 27–28; Benjamin Lay, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates*, ed. Joe Lockard (Philadelphia: Printed for the author, 1737), 32, http://antislavery.eserver.org/religious/allslavekeepersfinal/; Though Quakerism's founder, George Fox, did not call for abolition or express an explicitly antislavery message when he visited Barbados, he did call for slaveholders to consider their human chattel as part of their spiritual family and care for them accordingly. See George Fox, *Gospel family-order*, English (Philadelphia: Reinier Jansen, 1701); Thomas Tryon, a seventeenth-century Puritan visitor to Barbados, was also influenced to adopt and antislavery position based on his experience in Barbados. For an analysis of his antislavery message and the ways in which it was influenced by his time in the Caribbean, see Philippe Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2004): 609–42, doi:10.2307/3491423.

[16] Jerome S. Handler, Frederick W. Lange, and Robert V. Riordan, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 28, 17–18. My estimates for the demographic composition of the island are extrapolated from the authors' conclusion that in 1715-1716 there were 52,856 black slaves on the island, which constituted 76%. The number increased to 81% by 1757 and 82% by 1802-1803. For a description of the difficult and dangerous labor involved in sugar cultivation, see Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), 63–66; David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 107–111; For the most important and groundbreaking commodity history on sugar and its role

island with his wife, Sarah, gave Benjamin his first direct experience with slavery's brutality and catalyzed his virulent hatred of the institution. While running their store, the Lays met many slaves who came to them for food. Determined to remain both charitable and profitable, Sarah Lay gave these slaves "something or other; stinking Biscuits which sometimes we had in abundance, bitten by the Cockroaches; or a rotten Cheese, stinking Meat, decayed Fish, which we had plenty of in that hot Country." In spite of the fact that the Lays had given these slaves food that the island's white inhabitants would no longer purchase, he reported that these "poor Creatures would come running, and tearing, and rending one another, to get a part in the scramble of that which I am sure some Dogs would not touch, much less eat of, their poor Bellies were so empty, and so ravenous were they, that I never saw a parcel of Hounds more eager about a dead Carcase, than they always were." Emphasizing the slaves' deplorable living conditions and treatment, Lay recalled that the slaves occasionally stole from their store, and in response he would run after them, catch them, and "would give them Stripes sometimes."[17] These experiences of having to protect their property by further abusing the already-exploited slaves led Benjamin and Sarah to consider how the institution debased the entire society and threatened their spiritual health.[18]

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as a culture and world-transforming food, see Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985).

[17] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 35. 40.

[18] Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," 27–30. Interestingly, Mielke posits that the slaves in Barbados may have been more tempted to steal from the Lays because their short stature made them seem more susceptible. Mielke notes, "the thieves must have felt invited by their generosity, and perhaps by their diminutive physical statures" (29). Given the absence of slave voices on this topic, however, it remains unclear as to how these Caribbean slaves viewed the Lays' short stature.

Benjamin and Sarah Lay's experience in Barbados fits into a larger pattern

amongst early Atlantic antislavery activists. Particularly in the seventeenth century,

Quakers, Anglicans, and Puritans who saw slavery first-hand were moved to write

condemnations of human bondage.[19] For example, George Fox, Quakerism's founder,

found his outlook towards slaves and slavery transformed after he visited Barbados in

1671. Fox accepted the legitimacy of African slavery based on Biblical and Aristotelian

justifications, but when he visited Barbados in person, he was shocked by the promiscuity

and disorderliness amongst the slaves.[20] Five years after returning from Barbados to

England, Fox delivered a sermon that castigated the slaveholders for allowing this

behavior because he felt it degraded the spiritual purity of both Quaker and non-Quaker

slaveholders. Fox proposed slave conversions as a remedy for this problem. By

converting slaves, Fox hoped that itinerant Quaker ministers and Quaker slaveholders

could improve the moral condition of the island, help create ideal Christian households,

and ameliorate the living and working conditions for slaves. Fox's vocal advocacy for

bringing Christianity to slaves also served as a means to critique the Anglican Church,

which refused to convert slaves. The radical content of his message, though it did not go

so far as to suggest abolition, nevertheless earned Fox and other Quakers the enmity of

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[19] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 43. Brown references Thomas Tryon, Morgan Godwyn, and William Edmundson as examples of this dynamic. Many of the narratives of these missionary visits to Barbados emphasize the themes of promiscuity and disorderliness that George Fox expressed after his visit to the island. For analysis of how these themes are present in the work of the Puritan visitor, Thomas Tryon, see Rosenberg, "Thomas Tryon and the Seventeenth-Century Dimensions of Antislavery."

[20] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 304; Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chap. 2. Davis places particular emphasis on Aristotle's ideas about the duality of the "free" versus the "slave" soul and in the Biblical "Curse of Ham" justification.

the island's planter class.[21] Given Fox's experience, Benjamin Lay's observations of slavery and the radicalizing impact of those experience on him and his wife were not *sui generis* for English Quakers whose transatlantic travels led them to advocate abolishing slavery.[22]

The Lays returned to England in 1720, but the experience stayed with Benjamin. Almost two decades later, Benjamin reflected on the physical punishments he inflicted on those slaves who attempts to steal from his store: "I have been sorry for it many times, and it does grieve me to this Day, considering the extreme Cruelty and Misery they always live under. Oh my Heart has been pained within me many times, to see and hear; and now, now, now, it is so."[23] Lay wrote these words long after his time on the island and, as we will see, in the service of his antislavery advocacy, where his presentation of slavery's disabling effects helped make his appeal to *pathos* more poignant.[24]

Yet for all the negative reminiscences Benjamin Lay had about his time in Barbados, he nevertheless discovered an unlikely connection with this subjugated population. Lay recalled that the Barbadian slaves had a special affinity with him and his

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[21] For a thorough analysis of George Fox's evolving attitudes toward slavery in his writings from 1657-1676, including a very detailed rhetorical analysis of his most strident antislavery statement in Gospel family-order, see Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 43–58; Katharine Gerbner, "Antislavery in Print: The Germantown Protest, the 'Exhortation,' and the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Debate on Slavery," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 3 (2011): 558–559, doi:10.1353/eam.2011.0025; Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, 111.

[22] Only a few voices, notably those of William Edmundson and George Gray, followed the lead of George Fox in speaking out against the present conditions of slavery. Yet the more meaningful change in attitude amongst Quakers in Barbados toward slavery is reflected in their wills, where an ever-increasing number manumitted their slaves upon their death. See Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, chap. 7; Edmundson and Lancashire Quaker, Alice Curwen, also visited Barbados and followed in the path of antislavery rhetoric set out by George Fox. See Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 58–69.

[23] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 33–34, 35, 39–40.

[24] Dea H. Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800-1860*, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 124.

wife, "for the [slaves] seem to love and admire us, we being very much alike in Stature

and other ways."[25] In this brief reference, Lay employs both the descriptive and the

metaphorical meanings of "stature." Certainly, Lay acknowledged that his aberrant body

rendered his physical appearance dissimilar from the vast majority of those who

encountered in England and Barbados. Lay also observed how slaveholders justified

brutally subjugating and (in some cases) physically deforming their human chattel based

on religious and quasi-scientific notions of Africans as having less racial or social

"stature" than white Europeans.[26] Recognizing that his physical short stature socially

marginalized and excluded him from the larger body politic in a similar manner to that

experienced by African slaves, Lay gained empathy for enslaved people and became

empowered to make dramatic calls for social justice on their behalf. In this respect, Lay's

recollection of the common "stature" that he and Barbadian slaves shared—both of which

were rooted in bodily difference—also sheds light on an aspect of his life and identity

that many scholars have noted, but few have analyzed with depth: his disability.

Benjamin Lay, Disability, and Eighteenth Century Antislavery Activism

Benjamin Lay's oblique reference to his own bodily difference—what his later

biographers and contemporary medical designations would label as "dwarfism" or a

"person of short stature"—highlight the ways in which his physical distinctiveness

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[25] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 32.
[26] For a concise synopsis of the varied religious justifications for New World slavery, see Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, chap. 3. For an analysis of the emerging and competing Enlightenment-era notions about blackness and its place in the human hierarchy, see Andrew S. Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

shaped his perspective toward slaves and slavery.[27] Lay's physical disability led him to

his abolitionist advocacy and this calling guided the final twenty-five years of his life.

After their return to England, the Lays settled first in London for two years, but

then moved to Colchester as a result of Benjamin's disturbance of and his subsequent

disownment from Meetings in London. This first instance of disturbance and disownment

established a pattern that would be repeated on both sides of the Atlantic. From 1722 to

1732, Benjamin continued to disrupt Meetings in Colchester and struggled with the

leadership of a number of the local Meetings. Weighty Friends from the Colchester and

Devonshire House Monthly Meetings requested he apologize for his behavior and public

condemnation of other Quakers. During these years, Benjamin remained at a distance

from the local Meetings while Sarah traveled throughout Great Britain with other female

Quaker ministers. The Lays began making arrangements to move to North America in

1731. Before this could happen, the Lays needed approval from the Colchester Monthly

Meeting to migrate. The official approval came after Benjamin granted a legacy of £100

to the Quarterly Meeting of Coggeshall, Essex. Lay's gift was earmarked toward helping

other Quakers "of sober life and sound mind…transport themselves to America."[28] This

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[27] The first biographical overview of Lay appeared in 1790 and asserted that he stood "not much above four feet," see "An Account of Benjamin Lay," *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* 4, no. 3 (March 1, 1790): 133; Most references to Lay's stature, however, assert that he was 4'7", which is a height drawn from Roberts Vaux's 1815 joint biography of him and his fellow early eighteenth century Quaker abolitionist, Ralph Sandiford, see Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 20, accessed September 23, 2012. For the contemporary medical definition of "Dwarfism," which applies to any adult under 4'10" in height, see Mayo Clinic Staff, "Dwarfism," *Mayo Clinic*, August 27, 2011, http://www.mayoclinic.com/print/dwarfism/DS01012/DSECTION=all&METHOD=print, accessed February 10, 2013. Contemporarily, "person of short stature" is the preferred term for individuals with these characteristics.

[28] Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," 31–36; Rowntree, "Benjamin Lay," 11. Neither Mielke nor Rowntree mention the source of Lay's income and why he is able to bequeath such a generous amount of money in his will. It is possible that his wealth came from his business success during his time in Barbados

generous bequest gained Benjamin official membership in the Colchester Monthly Meeting, which then granted him and Sarah a certificate to migrate to Pennsylvania. In the summer of 1732 Benjamin and Sarah traveled across the Atlantic for the last time.

Once in Pennsylvania, the Lays settled first in Philadelphia, and then moved outside the city to the town of Abington. Both Benjamin and Sarah applied for membership in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, but only Sarah was granted a certificate in Philadelphia and Abington; she died shortly after gaining official membership in 1736. These Meetings, having learned about Benjamin's disruptive behavior from the Meetings in England refused to grant him a certificate of membership, and he remained marginal to the Quaker body politic for the remainder of his life in North America.[29] Illustrating this ostracism, in February 1737, the Abington Monthly Meeting "ordered that Benjamin Lay be kept out of our Meetings for Business, he being no member but is a frequent Disturber thereof."[30]

His official status as a disowned religious outsider, however, allowed Lay to aggressively pursue his abolitionist message. Lay spoke and behaved dramatically at various Meetings in and around Philadelphia and publishing a scathing screed in 1737, *All Slave-Keepers That Keep Innocents in Bondage, Apostates*, condemning Quakers for holding or tacitly supporting slavery and slave labor. The most famous (and oft-

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or perhaps from money inherited from his brother, who owned a farm. "Benjamin Lay: Excerpts from Colchester Two Week Meeting, 1705-1741 and from Colchester Monthly Meeting, 1718-1755" various dates, +BX7795.L44 B4, Friends Historical Library, http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/find/Record/.b1821242 This source contains excerpts of all the pertinent excerpts related to the Lays during their time in England from 1722 to 1732. For the sake of simplicity, the above account omits much of the back-and-forth between Lay and the English Meetings. Mielke coves these exchanges in considerable detail.

[29] Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," 36–39.

[30] Abington Men's Monthly Meeting Minutes, 11th mo., 30th day, 1737, in "Abington Monthly Meeting Records," 1682-1746, RG2/Ph/A2 1.1, Friends Historical Library.

described) incident of Lay's abolitionist career took place the following year, in 1738 at

the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Lay entered the Meeting House dressed in military garb

with a sword and carrying a hollowed-out Bible in which he concealed a bladder of

pokeberry juice. In the midst of the meeting, Lay delivered a dramatic and stinging

condemnation of his co-religionists who held slaves. He concluded by declaring that "It

would be as justifiable in the sight of the Almighty, who beholds and respects all nations

and colours of men with an equal regard, if you should thrust a sword through [the

slaves'] hearts as I do through this book."[31] Having finished his oration, Lay then thrust

the sword into the book, bursting the bladder of pokeberry juice, and splattering those

sitting near him with the faux-blood. Although many of the antislavery arguments Lay

advanced in this speech had been articulated by noteworthy Friends, such as George Fox,

this incident nevertheless earned him public condemnation and further alienated him

from his fellow Quakers.[32]

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[31] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 27.

[32] Roberts Vaux was the first of Lay's biographers to write about this noteworthy incident, though he had reports of it third-hand from Dr. John Watson of Bucks County, who learned about the event from Jonathan Ingham, Esq., who witnessed it personally. Nevertheless, this anecdote remains a prominent one in biographical overviews of Lay's life. For a brief sampling, see ibid., 25–27; Lydia Maria Child, *Memoir of Benjamin Lay: Compiled from Various Sources* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1842), 15–16; Blanche Day, "The Disquieting Quaker"; Oldfield, "Lay, Benjamin (1681-1759)"; Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Men's Minutes, 16th to the 20th, 7th Mo., 1738, "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1681-1746" n.d., 411, 1250/A1.2, Haverford College Quaker Collection, http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/jnt/pymannses.xml. The minutes from the 1738 Yearly Meeting do not directly describe or confirm Benjamin Lay's "pokeberry juice" (or as some sources call it, the "bladder of blood") demonstration, but the sequence of that year's minutes suggest Lay made his famous speech on the September 18 or 19, 1738. The minutes for that day are very standard and catalog a series of business items until the tone of the minutes changes sharply and notes that the Meeting Clerk, John Kinsey, "is ordered to draw an Advertisement to be printed in the newspapers at Philadelphia in order to inform all whom it may concern that the Book lately published by Benjamin Lay Entitled &c. was not published by the approbation of Friends, that he is not in unity with us, and that his Book contains false charges as well against particular persons of our Society as against Friends in general." After this item in the Meeting minutes, the agenda returns to normal and proceeds to a warning against "spiritous liquors," a topic frequently addressed by the Yearly Meeting. For a close rhetorical analysis of this speech, which contends

After his dramatic attacks and publications against slavery in the late 1730s, Lay

spent the remainder of his life living simply outside of Philadelphia while he continued

working to persuade his co-religionists of the inherent evils of slavery. A year before he

died in 1759, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting officially condemned slaveholding and

voted to exclude any members who held or sold slaves. While this official change in

policy chronologically aligns with the more gentle persuasion and less vituperative

writings of John Woolman and Anthony Benezet in the 1750s, Lay's fiery rhetoric

condemning slavery cohered with the general antislavery sentiment building in the

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as early as the late 1730s.[33] When he learned of this

antislavery triumph in 1758, Lay, who was quite frail at this time, allegedly arose and

shouted: "Thanksgiving and praise be rendered unto the Lord God…I can now die in

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that its contents very much follow in the early eighteenth-century tradition of Quaker antislavery rhetoric that focused on the ways slavery caused suffering, violated the Peace Testimony, and rejected the "Golden Rule," see Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 166–167.

[33] For more on these two very important and influential Quaker abolitionists, see Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008); Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, 111–121; Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, chap. 2; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 213–214, footnote 1. In spite of the important role Woolman and Benezet played in this process, Davis makes clear that the Quaker movement toward antislavery was not a linear and teleological one that began with George Fox and ended with Benezet. Davis offers a number of explanations for the triumph of Quaker antislavery that complicate that oversimplified narrative. For example, Davis notes that Quakers in the West Indies only attempted to Christianize their slaves. Furthermore, the Quaker-controlled government of Pennsylvania enacted a harsh slave code and Quaker merchants there continued buying and selling slaves until the 1730s. In Rhode Island, Quaker merchants there continued participating in the slave trade into the 1760s. Finally, Davis explains how the Seven Years' War spurred increased demand for slaves in Pennsylvania that did not subside until the mid-1770s. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting began issuing, and continued issuing, cautions against slave trading as early as 1735—two years before Lay published All Slave-keepers, Apostates. The PYM published similar cautionary messages in 1739, 1741, and 1742, which meant that Quakers who were buying and selling slaves in the early 1740s would have had to endure public disapprobation from their fellow Friends for rejecting the official recommendations of their sect's central religious body. For details on this chronology of Quaker antislavery that challenges the overly-celebratory narrative of Woolman and Benezet's peaceful persuasion, see Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 172–176.

peace!"[34] In the span of roughly 20 years, therefore, Quakers underwent the transition from widespread hostility toward Lay's message to, by the time of his death, sectarian acceptance of the very demands that earned him the opprobrium of his fellow Friends decades earlier.

Lay's advocacy and scathing condemnations of Quaker slaveholders also encapsulated a broader transition in which disparate "antislavery" voices gained strength and eventually cohered into a widespread "abolitionist" movement. Traditionally, historians have taken "antislavery" to indicate a type of negative advocacy that sought to wall off a particular society or community from the impact of human bondage. By contrast, "abolitionism" is perceived as a positive moral force that seeks to eliminate slavery for the greater benefit of humanity. These traditional definitions imply that antislavery advocacy tends to be more disparate and isolated, whereas abolitionism constitutes a clearly organized and active form of humanitarianism.[35] Working within this general paradigm, historian Christopher Leslie Brown contends that British antislavery sentiment existed without a staunch abolitionist agenda until the late eighteenth century. Essentially, individuals could hold "antislavery" beliefs, but that those did not become "abolitionist" until a society widely adopted them. For Brown, the 1787 founding of the

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[34] Blanche Day, "The Disquieting Quaker," 103.

[35] For a concise and lucid summary of the historiography of these terms, which Davis contends began with Albert Bushnell Hart in 1906, see David Brion Davis, "Antislavery or Abolition?," ed. Gerald Sorin, *Reviews in American History* 1, no. 1 (1973): 95–99, doi:10.2307/2701691; Peter P. Hinks and John R. McKivigan define "antislavery" as a movement "animated by a systematic and ardent opposition to slavery and intended to mobilize large numbers of people to attack and end the institution" (p. xiii). By contrast, they designate "abolition" as acts that are "largely state-sponsored through legislative or juridical decision" (p. xiv). For this purpose of this argument, I will not embrace such a neat dichotomy and instead see "abolitionism" in more sweeping terms that are more akin to Hinks and McKivigan's definition of "antislavery." Peter P. Hinks and John R. McKivigan, *Encyclopedia of Antislavery and Abolition*, vol. 1 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), xiii–vx.

Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade marked the critical moment when English antislavery sentiment coalesced into abolitionism. This transition became possible for Britain only after losing its North American colonies, thereby enabling them to construct their national identity around abolitionist opposition to the slave-holding Americans.[36] According to Brown's chronology, the publication of his 1737 abolitionist tract, *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, would mark Benjamin Lay as clearly fitting within this earlier period of "antislavery" advocacy.

Yet, Lay was an abolitionist as he very much sought to eliminate slavery amongst his fellow Friends and forge a path of moral good for the whole society. John Donoghue has provided a more-encompassing definition of "abolitionism" that avoids making that movement a teleological outgrowth of "antislavery" and, as a result, allows historians to identify abolitionist advocacy as early as the seventeenth century. Defining abolition as "an organized attempt to outlaw or otherwise end the institutions of slave-trading and/or slavery," Donoghue contends that this movement emerged in the wake of the imperial crises caused by the English Civil War and the political upheaval of Cromwell's Protectorate.[37] By using this definition of "abolitionism" instead, we can understand that Lay wrote at a moment when abolitionist activism had already begun over concerns about the conditions and morality of human bondage for forced laborers from African, Native American, *and* white English backgrounds. This chronological reframing allows us to see Lay's sweeping demands as "abolitionist," but still recognize that they fell outside the

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[36] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 17–22.
[37] John Donoghue, "'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 2010): 945–947, doi:10.1086/ahr.115.4.943.

mainstream of the wider Atlantic society's attitudes toward slavery in the mid-eighteenth century. Because Lay sought to effect such dramatic social change at a moment when the English Atlantic was *not* experiencing an imperial crisis, his radical abolitionist message further isolated and ostracized him from the Quaker communities in which he lived.

In fact, Lay was one of many abolitionists before the eighteenth century whose calls for moral change received a frigid reception. European contact with the New World initiated newfound concerns about slaves and slavery beginning in the sixteenth century. A number of individuals from the Iberian Peninsula, such as the priest Tomas de Mercado, the jurist Barolome de Albornoz, and two Capuchin missionaries to Cuba who insisted that slaves had the right to be paid for their labor writing in the sixteenth century, provide examples of these early critics of slavery. These disparate voices, however, did nothing to stem the increasing tide of the transatlantic slave trade.[38] Given these facts, Brown admonishes historians and other progress-focused individuals to "resist the inclination to view the antislavery movements of the late eighteenth century as the working out of cultural trends," and instead acknowledge that "the history of antislavery sentiment before the 1760s is the history of isolated moralists."[39] Although one could interpret early slave revolts assisted by poor white settlers, such as Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, as antislavery activism (albeit a dramatic one), most antislavery advocacy before the mid-eighteenth century took the form of pamphlet writing and appeals to emotion.[40]

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[38] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 37–42; For analysis of how the transatlantic slave trade shaped the culture and intellectual productions of the black diaspora, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[39] Brown, *Moral Capital*, 40.

[40] Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, chap. 1; Frost, "Quaker Antislavery," 14–21; For a parallel analysis that re-reads the American Revolution as a slave revolt (and one that ultimately sought to achieve

Quakers, too, moved in a piecemeal manner from diverse positions against slavery toward a coherent and sectarian embrace of abolitionism – a process in which Lay played an important role. The first recorded Quaker publication challenging slavery appeared in 1688 in Germantown, Pennsylvania, authored in part by a German pietist named Francis Daniel Pastorious. This singular protest, which the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting ultimately rejected, did not invoke scriptural justifications, references to Christ, or traditional Quaker salutations. Instead, the Germantown Quakers called on their co-religionists to uphold their ethical embrace of equality, arguing for the abolition of slavery on what might be seen as early human rights grounds. Within the context of late-seventeenth-century Philadelphia, a port city where many merchants owned slaves or profited from their sale, the Germantown Quakers' condemnation of the institution put them out of step with the broader imperatives of Pennsylvania's colonial economy.[41]

Those few Quakers who condemned slavery in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries rarely did so out of concern for the cruelty that it inflicted on the slaves themselves. Rather, as Margaret Abruzzo argues, early Quaker "denunciations of slavery's cruelty rested on the immoral purposes that inflicting pain served. Antislavery Friends worried more about the worldliness and sinfulness of slaveholders than the pain endured by the enslaved laborers."[42] In fact, Benjamin and Sarah Lay expressed this

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freedom for enslaved Africans), see Walter Johnson, "A Nettlesome Classic Turns Twenty-Five," *Common-Place* 1, no. 4 (July 2001), http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-01/no-04/reviews/johnson.shtml.

[41] Katharine Gerbner, "We Are Against the Traffik of Men-Body: The Germantown Quaker Protest of 1688 and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Pennsylvania History* 74, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 149, 151–154.

[42] Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 17; Contemporary scholarship is beginning to

mindset when they decided to migrate back to England in 1720 because of the deleterious

spiritual effects they felt in Barbados. But by the time Lay had moved to Pennsylvania

and had begun agitating extensively amongst the Philadelphia Quakers, he viewed the

essential wrong of slavery as the violence it enacted on slaves' bodies. Lay's advocacy,

therefore, challenged Quaker thinking about the fundamental reasons for slavery's

immorality, though its effect (if measurable at all) took decades to take hold.

Lay's experience and awareness of his own distinctive body played a central role

in his opposition to slavery. Through his vivid, visceral language that described how

slaves endured "Starving, Whipping, Racking, Hanging, Burning, Scalding, Roasting,

and other Hellish Torments," Lay made slavery's violence and attendant physical pain

the root of its immorality.[43] In using this language and making this argument, Lay, whose

own non-normative body experienced pain as a result of his twisted spine and hunched

back, rejected wider Quaker attitudes that slavery's immorality existed in the moral taint

that it imputed to those who owned slaves. Literary scholar Elaine Scarry argues that the

experience of pain constitutes an all-consuming one for the sufferer, preventing that

person from thinking about anything else and simultaneously rendering him or her unable

to articulate those feelings through language. Those in pain, therefore, must have others

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challenge the interpretation that violence toward slave bodies was not a concern for slaveholders. For an example of scholarship that works to highlight the importance of concerns about violence in Quaker theology and politics, see Michael J. Goode, "Gospel Order among Friends: Colonial Violence and the Peace Testimony in Quaker Pennsylvania, 1681-1722" (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012), http://hdl.handle.net/10027/9283. Similarly, recent academic conferences, such as "The Spectre of Peace in Histories of Violence," held at the Tanner Humanities Center at the University of Utah, August 14-15, 2015, have also explored the "theme of peace as it relates to the negotiation of violence, the legitimation of authority, and the racial and gendered ordering of the early American frontier."

[43] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 127; For an analysis of recent scholarship that places the role of violence more centrally in histories of slavery, see Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231–49.

speak and advocate on their behalf because "the person in pain is ordinarily so bereft of the resources of speech."[44] By taking up the cause of articulating the slaves' pain, Lay sought to speak on behalf of those who had been doubly-silenced: first by their enslaved status and secondly by the pain inflicted upon them by their work and their masters. Furthermore, Lay's condemnation of slavery gained additional power and poignancy because it came from an individual whose own unique body and twisted spine meant that the author intimately knew physical pain himself.

Benjamin Lay's Rhetoric of Disability

Benjamin Lay himself forged a connection between his bodily difference and his abolitionist advocacy in his writings. The origin of his most famous antislavery screed, *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, reflected Lay's marginal status amongst Philadelphia Friends. Written between 1736 and 1737 after his wife's death, when he had been living in Abington, Pennsylvania, for roughly four years, *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* offered an extensive and passionate attack against Quakers who held slaves personally or condoned the slave system through their purchase of slave-produced products. Lay persuaded his acquaintance and noted Philadelphian, Benjamin Franklin, to publish this book.[45] Although Franklin was not listed as the publisher of *All Slave-Keepers,*

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[44] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 9–13, 6.

[45] Drawing on the Devonshire House Monthly Meeting records, Andreas Mielke has revised much of the previous chronology surrounding Benjamin and Sarah Lay's life. Amongst some of the most important corrections to the previous biographies, Mielke documented that the Lays lived in Barbados for only two years from 1718-1720, and then spent from 1720-1732 back in England, living first in London and then in Benjamin's hometown on Colchester before finally migrating to North America and settling outside of Philadelphia in 1732, see Mielke, "What's Here to Do?," *passim*.

Apostates, Franklin confirmed his role in printing this book in a letter he wrote to John

Wright, a Quaker living in London, on November 4, 1789. In that letter, Franklin

explained that in "about the year 1736, I printed another book on the same subject [anti-

slavery] for Benjamin Lay, who also professed being one of your Friends, and he

distributed the books chiefly among them."[46] Apocryphal accounts of the publication

process recount that when Lay presented him with his book, Franklin found it "deficient

in arrangement," to which Lay responded that Franklin could "print any part thou pleasest

first."[47] Although *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* does not read as a smooth, coherent

narrative, Franklin published this text not for its literary merits or because he agreed

wholeheartedly with its abolitionist message; in fact, Franklin published many notices for

slave sales and began to own slaves himself in the 1730s and 1740s. Instead, Franklin

admired many of the values and intellectual influences that shaped Lay's attack on the

social order and its immorality. He also firmly believed in the values religious pluralism

and a free press. By publishing Lay's book, Franklin could both bring an unpopular

abolitionist message into the marketplace of ideas and also personally profit from doing

so.[48] The Quaker Overseers of the Press, who vetted publications from members of the

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[46] Benjamin Franklin, *Life of Benjamin Franklin, Written by Himself*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1875), 445.

[47] "Order," New-York Mirror, XII (July 5, 1834), 8, reprinted in "'Order,' New-York Mirror, XII (July 5, 1834), 8, Reprinted in," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 41, no. 2 (April 1955): 158.

[48] David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005), 80–83. Franklin did not become devoted to an antislavery position until the late 1780s, when he served as president of Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.

Religious Society of Friends, did not preview the book before Franklin published it, as Lay's attacks against fellow Quakers would have assuredly prevented its publication.[49]

As anticipated, the content of *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* angered the leaders of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and solidified Lay's marginal status amongst his co-religionists. Fulfilling his charge from the Yearly Meeting, in mid-October 1738, John Kinsey, the Clerk of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting published a notice in *The American Weekly Mercury*, claiming that Lay's book "contains gross Abuses […] against the whole Society [of Friends]: That the Author is not of their Religious Community, and that they disapprove of his Conduct, the Composition and printing of his Book; and therefore are not to be accountable for its Contents."[50] The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting also published a similar notice in Benjamin Franklin's *Gazette* on November 2, 1738, noting that it had not authorized Lay to publish his book.[51] Such public condemnations was not surprising since Lay had staged his most famous and dramatic "pokeberry juice" anti-slavery demonstration at the Yearly Meeting in Burlington, New Jersey, just one month earlier.

Throughout *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* Lay included biographical details and carefully selected words and phrases that alluded to his own physical form and disability. Lay began the preface in an apologetic tone, imploring his "impartial reader" to

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[49] Mark Kaharas, "Benjamin Lay," Online exhibit sponsored by Friends Historical Library and the Haverford College Special Collections, *Quakers & Slavery*, (2010), http://trilogy.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/quakersandslavery/commentary/people/lay.php, accessed February 10, 2013. Woolman pursued a similar strategy in 1762 when he sought approval of the Overseers of the Press, but did not allow the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting to pay for or distribute his antislavery pamphlet. By rejecting this financial support, Woolman avoided the risk of having slave owning Friends seize his publication or attack his argument on the grounds that their contributions to the Meeting had helped sponsor the publication, see Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 152–154.

[50] William Nelson, *Extracts from American Newspapers, Relating to New Jersey. 1704-1775: 1775*, vol. 11 (Paterson, NJ: The Press Printing and Publishing Co., 1894), 551.

[51] John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1884), 1249.

understand why he felt he must express the truth of slaveholding's immorality for the benefit of his fellow Quakers. Nevertheless, Lay acknowledged that making such statements to further "Truth's cause, which is God's cause," gave him "some fear and trembling" as he had grown accustomed to "being and seeing [him]self so very unfit almost everyway, as a Man." Lay further described himself as "so very mean and contemptible in the sight of Men, almost in every respect, […] but shall leave that to the Lord, to whom faithfulness and obedience is required."[52] Lay employed many phrases in his introduction that served dual rhetorical purposes: they alluded to how God imbued him with an earnest faith and a bodily difference, both of which empowered him to rail against slavery.

The phrase "mean and contemptible" would certainly have registered amongst a knowledgeable Christian reading audience and revealed Lay's impressive grasp of critically important Christian texts. Thomas à Kempis, the famous German Catholic theologian and ascetic, first used the phrase "mean and contemptible" in his devotional manual, *Imitation of Christ,* written between 1418 and 1427. Many scholars consider this work the most important Catholic text; it was the second most-widely read and translated Christian work after the Bible.[53] In the *Imitation of Christ*, à Kempis wrote, "Love is swift, sincere, kind, pleasant, and delightful. […] Love is subject and obedient to

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[52] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 4; given its prominent origin in Thomas à Kempis's work, the phrase "mean and contemptible in the sight of men" appears contemporaneously in the writings of other religious thinkers and writers. In particular, Baptist theologian John Gill's exposition of the Bible, which Gill began publishing in 1746, nine years after Lay's work appeared, includes that phrase in reference to 1 Samuel 3:13, see Matthew Henry, John Gill, and Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of I & II Samuel* (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2001), 40.

[53] "Catholic Encyclopedia: Imitation of Christ," *New Advent*, 2009, http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674c.htm.

superiors. It is mean and contemptible in its own eyes, devoted and thankful to God; always trusting and hoping in Him even when He is distasteful to it, for there is no living in love without sorrow."[54] Lay, in spite of his insistence that he was merely "a poor common sailor, and an illiterate man," read widely in Christian literature and in fact referenced à Kempis by name in *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*.[55] Furthermore, Lay embraced aspects of à Kempis's teachings about asceticism in his own lifestyle, which was remarkably spartan. Living in a cave, growing and harvesting his own food, and spinning his own clothes from flax and linen so as to avoid those made with slave labor, Lay absolutely embraced early Quakers' calls to embrace "plainness" and purge oneself of luxury and other worldly items that would distract from the Inner Light. In these respects, Lay also established himself in a line of religious mystics who both experienced direct spiritual connection to God and, as a result, existed on the margins of society. Margaret Abruzzo makes clear that à Kempis deeply influenced these Quaker ideals in his calls "to 'Subdue your Body *now* by Mortification and Self-denial' and 'raise your Affections up to nobler Enjoyments.'" These ideas led à Kempis' Quakers readers in the eighteenth century, of which Lay was one, to see "bodies–and the world of flesh–as distracting the soul from its inward life."[56]

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[54] Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ: In Three Books*, trans. John Payne (Dutchess County, NY: Daniel Lawrence, 1803), 98–99.

[55] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 31; Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 125.

[56] Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain*, 22–23; For a synoptic overview of Christian mystics and the mystical tradition amongst both Catholics and Protestant, see Steven Fanning, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2005). Fanning cites numerous examples throughout his book of mystics' bodily transformations and often overcoming the pain or limitations of the physical world in the process of directly connecting with God and the spiritual world. St. Teresa of Ávila's spiritual autobiography (1567) and Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture of her first transformative spiritual vision (1647) both provide clear examples of the bodily experience of mystics.

Given that Lay shared a range of attitudes about luxury, asceticism, and the unimportance of the corporeality with à Kempis, we can further understand his use of the phrase "mean and contemptible" to also allude to his own marginal status both physically and socially. In terms of thinking about bodies, in *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, Lay urged his readers to reject the "vain Notion" that Christ existed "in Heaven with a carnal Body," as this "Vail of Flesh" so "limit[ed] the blessed eternal Maker and Saviour of Mankind." Believing that the physical world served only to distract from the quest for spiritual purity (as indicated by Christ's own incorporeality), Lay made clear that because the "Vail of Flesh" is insignificant, his bodily difference would not prevent him from working to simultaneously improve the lives of slaves and the spiritual status of his fellow Friends. Similarly, Lay labeled "all Sin," and especially slavery, as "Deformity," furthering the idea that any corporeality in any form is insignificant in the quest for spiritual purity.[57] Although Lay did not directly address or describe his unique body and short stature in these passages or in conjunction with these Biblical allusions, his general de-emphasis on the importance of the body nevertheless tacitly recalled his own distinctive physical form.

Lay further reinforced his marginalized self-image by presenting himself as someone of low social status and education. To convey this message, Lay described himself as "a Man of so very mean a capacity, and little Learning."[58] Yet, as J. William Frost notes, these proclamations of inadequacy run counter to the fact that Lay quoted extensively from noted Christian texts like à Kempis's, as well as little known works by

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[57] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 251, 192, 194; Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain*, 24.
[58] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 18–19.

early Quaker theologians like George Fox and George Keith.[59] Frost claims that Lay was

a unique "autodidact" who may have "had a better library of early Quakerism than any

other Pennsylvania Quaker," owning over 200 books.[60] Moreover, Lay gifted his own

copy of á Kempis's *Meditations* to a friend when her husband died.[61] Yet in spite of his

extensive learning and thorough scriptural knowledge, Lay persisted in downplaying his

own expertise—a common characteristic amongst mystics—and instead attributed his

stinging critique of Quaker slaveholders to his faith and the tradition of Biblical prophets

who had earlier delivered God's truth. With this line of argumentation, Lay conceded

elite social status through education in exchange for an elevated spiritual status. By

making religion the driving force of his attack on his fellow Quakers, Lay placed himself

in a long tradition of Biblical figures and religious mystics who critiqued societal

practices. By fashioning himself as part of this spiritual lineage, Lay legitimized his

attack on slavery. Furthermore, in positioning himself alongside earlier prophets, Lay

gave himself the rhetorical upper-hand against his critics, as anyone who spoke publicly

against his advocacy would be attacking someone who had been called by God to convey

this message.

    In the Introduction to *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, Lay used the term "unfit" to

provide Biblical support to his anti-slavery argument and subtly allude to his disability

and accompanying social marginalization. In the Biblical context, the term "unfit" had

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Frost, "Quaker Antislavery," 22–23.

[61] By the early twentieth century, Lay's copy of this book was owned by a man named Charles F. Jenkins, who lived in Germantown, PA, which was near Lay's home in Abington in suburban Philadelphia, see "Exhibits Shown at the Annual Meeting, 11 Mo., 29, 1920," *Bulletin of the Friends Historical Association* 10, no. 2 (May 1921): 58–59.

often been associated with individuals from humble origins who heeded God's call to effect dramatic change in the world around them. From the New Testament, Lay's use of the term "unfit" recalled Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."[62] To reinforce this association with social marginalization and bodily aberration, Lay immediately followed this allusion to Corinthians with a direct reference to the Old Testament prophet, Moses. Lay likely chose Moses as a Biblical antecedent because they both came from modest social backgrounds and both had a disability; for Moses it was the speech impairment of stuttering.[63] Nevertheless, in the Book of Exodus, Moses served God by speaking directly to Pharaoh and successfully freeing the Jews from their bondage in Egypt. This Biblical story of Moses' triumph over his speech impairment suggests an early example of an "overcoming narrative" where an unlikely individual completes God's work against overwhelming odds. The narrative reinforced God's omnipotence as the provider of all human faculties and illustrated how God empowered people to transcend social and bodily limitations.[64] Lay also saw parallels between himself and Moses because both individuals relied on direct connections with God to help them use their bodies in the cause of ending slavery. Not only did Lay reference Moses eight times throughout *All*

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[62] 1 Corinthians 1:27 (King James Version).

[63] Fidias E. Leon-Sarmiento, Edwin Paez, and Mark Hallett, "Nature and Nurture in Stuttering: A Systematic Review on the Case of Moses," *Neurological Sciences* 34, no. 2 (February 1, 2013): 231–37, doi:10.1007/s10072-012-0984-2.

[64] Judith Z. Abrams, *Judaism and Disability: Portrayals in Ancient Texts from the Tanach Through the Bavli* (Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1998), 112; Saul M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 10.

Slave-keepers, Apostates, but he also explicitly drew inspiration from "Moses's prayer […] when the Lord was about to send [hi]m to deliver his people from Captivity."[65]

Lay also employed rhetoric that displayed an awareness of how emerging Enlightenment discourses surrounding disability empirically categorized his non-conforming body as a sign of social marginalization. To reinforce this point, Lay added the modifier "as a Man" to the phrase "being and seeing myself so very unfit almost everyway." Even within Lay's own era, writers used the term "unfit" to describe a variety of physical, moral, or mental aberrations and cast them in a negative light. In 1736, one year before Lay published *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, the noted Anglo-Irish Catholic theologian George Berkeley wrote an essay where he likened those who had never learned proper societal attitudes as akin to "monsters, utterly unfit for human society."[66] Within this early Enlightenment context, Berkeley's connecting the term "unfit" with the concept of "monstrosity"—a notion which had antecedents in the Classical world with Aristotle, amongst early Christian thinkers with St. Augustine, and in early modern Europe amongst scientific thinkers like Francis Bacon—would have evoked notions of physical deformity and social marginality.[67] Lay subtly acknowledged that Enlightenment thinkers were using disability to craft hierarchies of humanity; bodily and mental aberrance served as an empirical marker allowing one to distinguish between the "fully"

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[65] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 4–5.

[66] George Berkeley, *The Works of George Berkeley, D. D. Formerly Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), 413; OED Online, "Unˈfit, Adj. (and Adv.)" (Oxford University Press, March 2013), http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/view/Entry/213361?rskey=m5JYmT&result=1&isAdvanced=false, accessed April 01, 2013.

[67] Rosemarie Garland–Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 19–20; Henri Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), chap. 5, esp. pp. 92–104.

human and he "sub"-human. These quasi-scientific attitudes, however, freed Lay to agitate aggressively against slavery as most of his fellow Friends already viewed him as a marginal figure, meaning that he had little social status to lose.

Yet Lay did not confine his Enlightenment awareness to his own body, but also displayed subtle awareness of these emerging definitions of disability in writing about others. In writing about his fellow Friend and early abolitionist, Ralph Sandiford, he explained that after Sandiford published his 1729 attack on slavery, *The Mystery of Iniquity*, experienced "great Perplexity of mind; and having oppression, which makes a wise man Mad, by which he was brought very low, with many Bodily Infirmities." Lay also recalled that shortly before Sandiford died " he fell into a sort of Delirium" that was caused by "his sore Affliction of mind, concerning Slave-keeping [….] and Infirmity of Body."[68] In describing Sandiford's experience, Lay employed some of the emerging Enlightenment understandings about disability. For instance, he framed Sandiford's deteriorating mental condition as reflective of individual weakness and marginalization. Moreover, Lay suggested that one can empirically observe causal connections between aberrations in the mind and the body. In Sandiford's case, according to Lay, as his mind became more "afflicted," his body also lost strength, perhaps explaining his relatively

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[68] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 20–21; For Sandiford's attack on slavery, which Benjamin Franklin also published, see Ralph Sandiford, *The Mystery of Iniquity in a Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times, by the Foregoing and the Present Dispensation: Whereby Is Manifested How the Devil Works in the Mystery, Which None Can Understand and Get the Victory over but Those That Are Armed with the Light ... Unto Which Is Added in the Postscript, the Injury This Trading in Slaves Doth the Commonwealth, Humbly Offer'd to All of a Publick Spirit.* ([Philadelphia]: Printed [by Benjamin Franklin] for the author, 1730), http://opac.newsbank.com/select/evans/3349; For a close rhetorical analysis of Sandiford's text, see Carey, *From Peace to Freedom*, 155–164. Carey suggests that Sandiford's mental states may have been exacerbated in part by the public attacked he endured from slaveholding Friends, though he argues more forcefully that Sandiford's revision of the book after these initial critiques demonstrated his strengthened resolve to persuade others to the abolitionist cause rather become marginalized and silenced by them.

early death at the age of forty. Lay concluded, however, on a tone of optimism, asserting that "I do believe if [Sandiford] had lived he would have overcame [his Delirium]."[69] This hopeful hypothetical anticipated the Enlightenment belief that many disabilities and human aberrations (especially those of the body or of "temporary" insanity), clearly reflected an individual marginal state, but nevertheless offerred the possibility of being termporary—a turn of events that would restore that individual back to their "full" humanity. Ironically, as we will see in the next chapter, many nineteenth-century commentators on Lay's body borrowed this Enlightenment notion of a mind-body connection to argue that Lay's "twisted" body shaped both his the unconventional (for the eighteenth century) abolitionist beliefs and his dramatic public displays against human bondage.

As Enlightenment thinkers crafted these hierarchical definitions of humanity, they focused on categories of humans—such the "dwarf" category into which Lay eventually fell—that helped define normalcy by analyzing those who were "unfit." Deborah Armintor reinforces and more broadly contextualizes how dwarves became associated with concepts of "unfit" and "monstrosity" by noting that "English literature and art of the eighteenth century abounded in miniature men of diverse kinds," and that "dwarfs (defined rather vaguely both then and now as people significantly below average in height, typically with normal-size head and torso and disproportionally short arms and legs, 'whose short stature involves a medical condition')" played a prominent role in

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[69] Lay, *All Slave-Keepers*, 21.

these cultural products.[70] Given this literary context, Lay clearly used the Introduction to *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* to establish his Christian humility and solidify his religious devotion. Yet Lay also made his disability evident to the reader by using phrases such as "mean and contemptible," "unfit," and a host of other allusions to the body, which evoked emerging Enlightenment concepts of disability and also indicated that his unique body and spiritual stridency were expressions of God's will.

Eighteenth-Century Visual Representations of Benjamin Lay

While Benjamin Lay made only oblique and passing references to his own distinctive physical form in *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, this aspect of his identity spawned a multitude of presentations of him and his unique body beginning before his death in 1759. These depictions appeared in both North America and England and took the form of painted portraits, extensively reproduced prints, short biographical summaries, and full-length biographies.

The first presentation to suggest a link to between Lay's body, mind, and the space he occupied in the body politic, was a portrait commissioned by Deborah Franklin, the wife of Benjamin Franklin. Mrs. Franklin hired William Williams, a renowned Philadelphia-based painter, to create this portrait sometime between 1750 and 1758.[71]

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[70] Deborah Needleman Armintor, *The Little Everyman: Stature and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), x. Armintor explores works like Jonathan Swift's, *Gulliver's Travels*, the memoirs of the Polish court dwarf, Józef Boruwlaski, and various writings from Alexander Pope.

[71] William Williams, *Benjamin Lay*, Oil on mahogany panel, 1750-1758, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Williams is an interesting figure in and of himself, as he was an early teacher of the great American artist, Benjamin West, and was also a migrant from England in the 1740s. For a thorough overview of his career and evolving artistic styles, see E. P. Richardson, "William Williams: A

Figure 2.1. William Williams, *Benjamin Lay*, oil on mahogany panel, 1750-1758, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Although her husband had published Lay's *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* twenty

years earlier in Philadelphia, Deborah Franklin found a renewed interest in the aged anti-

slavery advocate because of her family connection to the widely celebrated Quaker

Dissenting Opinion," *American Art Journal* 4, no. 1 (April 1, 1972): 5–23, doi:10.2307/1593917; The history of Williams' painting itself marks an interesting story in and of itself, as the portrait was lost from the mid-nineteenth century in the late 1970s, when two antiques dealers bought it as part of a lot of frame for $4 and then discovered that one of the frames contained this Williams portrait, which had long been assumed destroyed or lost. For more on this rediscovery, see Karen M. Jones, "Collectors' Notes: A Long-lost Portrait of Benjamin Lay," *The Magazine Antiques* 144, no. 1 (January 1979): 194–196; Lita Solis-Cohen, "He Paid $4 for a Treasure of Americana," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, n.d. The clipping of this article in Haverford College Special Collections includes in the page numbers of the article, but does not include the date. The article was originally sent attached to a memorandum from Stephen Cary to Dave Fraser on January 5, 1978, clearly indicating that the article was published before that date.

abolitionist, Anthony Benezet, who many historians view as one of the two major Quaker

figures who carried on Lay's antislavery work into the late eighteenth century.[72] While

scholars have not found a definitive account or explanation of what Deborah Franklin

hoped to communicate by commissioning this painting of Lay in her home, presumably

she sought to establish her abolitionist *bona fides* by investing in and prominently

displaying the portrait of such a unique (and in the late 1750s in Philadelphia, notorious)

individual.

The rendering of Lay and the symbols within the composition conveyed a tone of

empowerment and self-sufficiency, but also a recognition that Lay's beliefs and

behaviors placed his non-conforming body on the margins of the body politic. In the

portrait Lay stands rigidly upright and displays an expression of seriousness and focus.

The image also suggests that literacy brings empowerment, as Lay prominently holds a

copy of "Tryon on happiness." The text inside the front cover of this book referred to a

seventeenth-century treatise by the English Quaker, Thomas Tryon, which presented

guidelines for healthful living and included a section on vegetarianism, which Lay

practiced.73 Given the content of Tryon's book, the basket of fruit, and the backdrop of

the cave, this portrait reiterated Lay's uncompromising attitudes regarding slavery,

healthful living, and general asceticism.

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[72] Nash suggests that this interest likely came about because Deborah Franklin's second cousin, Elizabeth North, was married to Anthony Benezet's brother, see Gary B. Nash, "Franklin and Slavery," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 150, no. 4 (2006): 627; Scholars cite John Woolman as the other major anti-slavery advocate to follow in Lay's footsteps. For one example of this oft-repeated narrative, see Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, 48–57.

[73] Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," 39–40.

Furthermore, Lay's physical proportions—skinny legs, long arms, hunched shoulders and back, as well as the cane in right hand—confront the viewer directly and clearly communicate his aberrance, yet these bodily characteristics pose no impediment to Lay's self-sufficiency and control over his environment in the portrait. Williams prominently placed Lay standing outside of his cave holding a book and standing next to a basket of fruit, a woman's bonnet, some vegetables, and what appears to be a vessel to hold liquid. The inclusion of these objects in the image alluded to Lay's strident moral commitments to avoiding slave produced goods, which he did by growing his own food and making his own clothes. From the Enlightenment perspective that contends disability is an aberrant individual state to be overcome, Williams's reference to Lay's agricultural and sartorial self-sufficiency stressed that Lay's bodily difference did not make him infirm. Rather, the image reminded the viewer that Lay remained an independent figure in spite of his physical form and the effects of old age. From the other side of this dualistic definition of disability, however, Lay's isolation and physical separation from the larger Quaker body politic reinforced the marginal position he held both because of his non-conforming body and strident abolitionist beliefs.

Shortly after Lay's death, this visual presentation of Lay and its connotations began to spread throughout the Atlantic world after the William Williams portrait became the subject of an engraving done by Henry Dawkins.

Figure 2.2. Henry Dawkins, "Benjamin Lay," etching and engraving on laid paper, c. 1760, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

The details surrounding Henry Dawkins's life are less clear than those of William Williams, and he seemed to lack the same personal connection to the subject matter as Williams, who embraced anti-slavery sentiment in both England and North America. Instead, Dawkins worked as a professional engraver and created images for a variety of clients in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania between 1754 and 1780, when he helped engrave the official continental currency. However, scholars know nothing of his work after this date and all his plates were auctioned off in 1786—a date that likely

coincided with his death.[74] Though estimates of when precisely Dawkins made the copperplate engraving of Lay vary, most scholars assume that it immediately followed Lay's death, when interest in his life, work, and legacy would have been at a peak. Likely, Dawkins engraved the image in 1760 or 1761; historian Gary Nash suggests that Anthony Benezet commissioned the engraving as a way celebrate Lay's life work and his accomplishment in getting the Society of Friends to forcefully condemn slaveholding as a practice.[75]

Though neither these first two presentations nor those that followed definitively described Lay as "disabled" or used contemporary terminology to diagnose or label the particular nature of his aberrance, a close examination of these early presentations reveals that Lay's disability was central to narratives of his life and proved critical in how authors and artists understood his anti-slavery activism. In general, these mid-eighteenth-century presentations of Lay conveyed a positive tone about his abolitionist work and his physical aberrance, yet they still encapsulate the dualistic Enlightenment attitudes toward disability. In emphasizing Lay's strength and dignity, these portraits celebrated the ways Lay challenged his local Quaker community and the wider Atlantic society to end their deep dependence on slave labor and slave-produced goods. Reminding the viewers that Lay transformed the Quaker body politic by writing about slaves' bodies and displaying his own non-conforming body, these images helped forge the "overcoming" narrative of Lay's abolitionism. Yet at the center of these presentations remained Lay's awkward,

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[74] Wilford P. Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," *Winterthur Portfolio* 4 (January 1, 1968): 40–41.

[75] Horne, *Pierre Eugene DuSimitiere*, sec. 9:10; Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," 43; Nash, "Franklin and Slavery," 628, footnote 26.

non-conforming, and isolated body, reinforcing the Enlightenment's more pejorative associations with disability. Although Lay's aberrant body empowered him to champion an anti-slavery message in ways inaccessible to able-bodied Friends, it ultimately ostracized him and ensured that he, and the abolitionist message he championed during his lifetime, would remain outside of the Quaker body politic until after his death. As we will see in the next chapter, posthumous presentations of Lay's body became thoroughly integrated, and in fact vital, into the abolitionist activism of Quaker humanitarians in the nineteenth century.

Conclusion

By re-reading Benjamin Lay's eighteenth-century life and writings through the lens of disability history, we gain a number of important insights about the role his body, his faith, and his experiences with other marginalized people played in shaping his abolitionist work. Both Lay and his contemporaries recognized his body as unconventional, non-normative, and something that set him apart from the larger Quaker body politic both in England and in Philadelphia. These characteristics, while marginalizing Lay socially, also empowered him to empathize with and then fight to change the extreme marginalization of enslaved Africans. Conducting his activism from this outsider position, Lay then made radical, religiously-grounded calls to end slaveholding amongst the Religious Society of Friends in his 1737 book, *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*. Although Lay grounded his attack on human bondage in Biblical texts and the writings of early Quaker religious leaders, his book also reveals an

awareness of his own and others' disabilities at a moment in the eighteenth-century when such ideas about marginalization, the potential for individual overcoming, and natural hierarchies of humanity were coalescing. Uncovering the presence of Enlightenment-influenced ideas about disability in the life and writings of this profoundly pious individual further reveals that Quaker humanitarians, like Lay, grounded their activism both in their faith and in these emerging quasi-scientific notions.

Within this context of isolation from his religious community, Lay nevertheless found ways contribute to society by making his disfigured body the centerpiece of his "able-bodied" work on behalf of the enslaved. Lay's emphasized his own self-sufficiency by living as a religious mystic, conducted many dramatic demonstrations, and vociferously attacked slavery; all these characteristics highlight the agency that Lay—and more broadly those with bodily aberrations—could exert in the eighteenth century. Moreover, in Lay's case, his physical otherness helped him build and exercise this agency and redefine the meaning of his disability. Rather than an objective indicator of his marginal social status and place outside of the body politic, Lay recognized that he could harness his body both rhetorically and physically as a vital tool in his fight to eliminate slaveholding amongst his co-religionists. When the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued an official caution against slaveholding in 1758, it seemed to validate Lay's corporeal methods for effecting change on behalf of enslaved Africans. This humanitarian triumph within the Quaker body politic spurred the first artistic commissions and rendering of Lay—images that enshrined the distinctive body of this abolitionist right before he died in 1759.

As we will see in the next chapter, these initial images spawned a host of other visual and written presentations of Lay's body, which circulated throughout the Atlantic world after his death. These presentations spurred many nineteenth-century Quaker abolitionists and humanitarians to forge a narrative connection between Lay's visually striking body and his abolitionist beliefs and behaviors. The authors who constructed and built on these narratives invoked Lay's body to explain his fight for expanding human freedom; they then used these narratives to market and build support for their own nineteenth-century abolitionist purposes. The process of crafting and disseminating these images and biographies of Lay would ultimately strengthen the dualistic Enlightenment notions that disability was a fundamentally marginal, but potentially overcomeable human (or subhuman) condition.

Chapter 3

The Strange Career of Benjamin Lay:

The Nineteenth-Century Legacy of a Disabled Icon

In 1758, the then-seventy-seven-year-old Quaker abolitionist Benjamin Lay

witnessed the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issue an official caution against slaveholding

amongst his fellow Friends. This policy change led to an increase in discipline amongst

the Religious Society of Friends and marked an important triumph in Lay's moral

crusade on behalf of enslaved Africans—a mission that he had aggressively pursued since

the 1720s. Yet during his lifetime of abolitionist advocacy, Lay had been reviled and

ostracized by his co-religionists because his attacks on the Quaker body politic were

harsh, direct, and shocking. Lay castigated slaveholding Friends in his 1737 book, *All*

Slave-keepers That Keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates, and throughout the late

1730s he performed dramatic acts of physical confrontation that he hoped would rouse

Friends from their slaveholding torpor. Because Lay both actively used and wrote about

his non-conforming body as a vital element in his abolitionist advocacy, the first artists

and authors to construct presentations of Lay (even before his death in 1759) naturally

made his body a centerpiece of their narratives.

After his death, Lay spawned a rich representational legacy that both became a

key part of the rhetorical and visual narratives surrounding him and highlighted how the

Enlightenment transformed thinking about and the significance of disabled individuals

and their bodies in the Atlantic world. Dozens of later transatlantic Quaker reformers

invoked images and descriptions of Lay's unique body and used it in their own

antislavery advocacy. Reproducing and displaying portraits of Lay, republishing

extensive descriptions of his body, and connecting Lay's abolitionist advocacy to the

later work of John Woolman and Anthony Benezet and the ultimate triumph of

abolitionism amongst Quakers, nineteenth-century Quaker abolitionists further solidified

the importance of Lay's distinctive body. These visual and written presentations of Lay's

unique bodily form, and its link to his abolitionism, indicate the powerful effects of

Enlightenment-era notions about the nature of the human mind and its connections to the

body's physical abnormalities.

Yet over the course of the nineteenth century, two contemporaneous historical

developments influenced those who wrote about Lay to present and interpret his physical

form and what it implied about the condition of his mind in increasingly negative ways.

First, as the medical profession and its scientifically grounded interpretations of the body

and mind ascended to a position of dominance, it further popularized empirical and

Enlightenment-influenced explanations for human aberrance.[1] These explanations

reinforced the Enlightenment's dualistic understanding of disability and tended to classify

non-conforming bodies such as Lay's as inherently inferior and sub-human, but capable

of overcoming this marginal status. Such understandings of aberrant bodies, however,

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[1] For an overview of the medical profession and its increasing use of technology and empirical methods in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Roy Porter, *Blood and Guts: A Short History of Medicine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004), 21–52; Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity (The Norton History of Science)* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 348–396; For analysis of how nineteenth-century medical diagnoses of disability determined granting of veteran's and worker's compensation benefits, see K. Walter Hickel, "Medicine, Bureaucracy, and Social Welfare: The Politics of Disability Compensation for American Veterans of World War I," in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 241–244.

reached well beyond the scope of physicians and scientists and became widely adopted into the visual and rhetorical narratives surrounding Lay's life.[2] Simultaneously, antislavery beliefs, which were marginal in the eighteenth century, became increasingly prominent and more widely adopted on both sides of the Atlantic in the nineteenth century. Culminating with the British Parliament abolishing slavery throughout its Empire in 1833 and the United States adopting the Thirteenth through Fifteenth Amendments, which ended slavery and granted citizenship rights to freedmen, from 1865 to 1870, abolition went from being a radical political belief to being the law of the land throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic.[3] As Benjamin Lay's life work became both the *de jure* practice and a culturally-dominant value, especially in the Quaker strongholds of England and North America, the meaning of his abolitionism and the central role that his body placed in this advocacy lost its urgency. In essence, Lay's disability began to

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[2] David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative Prosthesis," in Lennard J. Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 223–224. Disability studies scholars David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue, "disability perpetually serves as the symbolical symptom to be interpreted by discourses on the body. [...] [L]iterary narratives revisit disabled bodies as a reminder of the 'real' physical limits that 'weigh down' transcendent ideals of the mind." Mitchell and Snyder's theoretical approach informs the argument in this chapter by exploring how these evolving depictions of Lay's body illustrate the on-going social construction of disability in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

[3] The historiography of abolitionism in the Atlantic is too sweeping and varied to thoroughly recap here; nevertheless, for some of the most important works in the field, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975); David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Seymour Drescher, *From Slavery to Freedom : Comparative Studies in the Rise and Fall of Atlantic Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 12–15; Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); For an additional useful overview of this historiography with a brief explanation of some of the major interpretive contours and conflicts in this field, see John Donoghue, "'Out of the Land of Bondage': The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 2010): 946, fn. 11, doi:10.1086/ahr.115.4.943.

transform from vital eighteenth-century abolitionist tool to quirky nineteenth-century anecdote.

As the nineteenth century progressed and Enlightenment notions of disability and abolitionism both gained wider cultural acceptance, Lay's disability became the alpha and omega of his identity. Over time, Lay's physical stature became equated with his social status and his work on behalf of enslaved Africans. These written and visual narratives suggest a common pattern whereby Lay's short stature indicated his marginalized, outsider status, which was further illustrated by his hermit-like existence in a cave. Although these authors and artists often treated Lay's unique body and lifestyle as evidence of personal eccentricity or a profound commitment to virtuous living, they also suggested that Lay used his position of social marginalization and aberrance to effectively advocate on behalf of the enslaved. Because of his bodily difference, nineteenth-century artists and authors helped make Lay and his abolitionism intelligible for its eighteenth-century context: Lay safely adopt the then-unpopular stance against slave holding as his fellow Quakers could not ostracize him from a position of political and social power that he never held. Taken collectively, these depictions forged a standard trope for Lay's life by making his disability his defining characteristic: only a person with such a strange outer shell could have such a eccentric mind as to engage in such bizarre behavior. In other words, Lay was a twisted individual. His weird body inevitably produced a weird mind, and from this mind-body connection came his indisputably strange, but very strident abolitionism.

Although these different tropes (which persist even in contemporary historians'
analysis of his life work and its legacy) overlapped chronologically, this chapter will
address each in turn and explore how many of these visual presentations traveled
transatlantically. The movement and republication of these images helped establish a
number of common tropes that used Enlightenment-inspired concepts of disability not
only to define Lay's life and his abolitionism, but also to reinforce the wider cultural
notions of disability as a marginal, but overcomeable individual condition. The first
section will explore authors' and artists' fascination with Lay's strange body and how
their impressions circulated in the Atlantic world; the second section will examine
presentations that connected Lay's body with his strange ideas and suggested that he had
a warped mind; finally, the last section will dissect how other presentations used this
connection between Lay's strange body and mind to make sense of and explain his
abolitionist work. As the chronological gap widened between Lay's mid-eighteenth-
century life and his nineteenth-century afterlife, it also transformed his disability from
something that he self-consciously harnessed to advance the cause of abolitionism to
something that simply explained his aberrant mind and unconventional behavior.
Ultimately, the frequent and prominent appearances of Lay's aberrant body and mind
within presentations of his life reveals how disability served a critical function in how
those from the early nineteenth century through the present understood his abolitionist
advocacy.

Presentations of Benjamin Lay's Strange Body

Although presentations that focused exclusively on Lay's strange physical form were not the first to appear chronologically, they arrived in rapid succession in conjunction with the transatlantic publications of Roberts Vaux's biography of Lay.[4] This book, first published in Philadelphia in 1815 at a moment when many of that city's reform movement focused on disciplining and reforming bodies that existed outside of or in opposition to the body politic, spurred greater interest in all aspects of Lay's life, particularly in his non-normative body.

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[4] Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford: Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1815), http://archive.org/details/memoirsoflivesof00vaux; Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford: Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans* (London: Philadelphia printed, London reprinted by W. Phillips, 1816).

Benjamin Lay.

Figure 3.1 – William Kneass, "Benjamin Lay," frontispiece in Roberts Vaux, Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford: Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1815).

A large part of this fascination with Lay's body stemmed from the engraving that served as the frontispiece of the biography—an image rendered by William Kneass, but modeled on earlier engravings and portraits of Lay. Kneass had a distinguished career well beyond this work for Vaux's book. He served as a partner in two engraving firms in Philadelphia from 1804 to 1824, publishing both individual prints and creating images for illustrated books. The United States government recognized his prominence and success

as a printer and engraver when, in 1824, it appointed Kneass to succeed Robert Scot as the chief engraver at the United States Mint – a post he held until his death in 1840.[5] Kneass's engraving of Lay stripped away virtually all of the background detail that appeared both in the William Williams portrait and in the Henry Dawkins engraving that had communicated additional information about Lay's life and values. Rather than situating Lay in front of a cave surrounded by his books, vegetables, and other personal possessions, Kneass placed Lay on a blank background and labeled him with only his name beneath his likeness. Furthermore, the inscription inside the book Lay held now read "African Emancipation," which marked a change from the Williams and Dawkins portraits where his book read, "Tryon on happiness." This changed frontispiece downplayed Lay's vegetarianism and self-sufficient lifestyle and instead cast him figure first and foremost as an abolitionist.[6] In spite of these changes, Wilford Cole argues that Kneass undoubtedly used Dawkins' portrait as the basis for his own, as Lay has an "identical […] pose, costume, and proportion." By eliminating these background details and rendering Lay in a cruder stipple-engraved style, Kneass heightened the focus on Lay's bodily difference. In this portrait, Lay's eyes, for instance, appear even more asymmetrical and misshapen than they do in either Williams' or Dawkins' portraits. Moreover, Kneass's presentation of Lay also drew readers' attention to his physical form more intensively than had been the case prior to 1815. Without the background details of

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[5] Wilford P. Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," *Winterthur Portfolio* 4 (January 1, 1968): 44; John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1884), 1057.

[6] Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," 44; Thomas Drake made this same suggestion to Henry Cadbury, noting that the Kneass engraving had "special modifications to suit the antislavery purpose of the biographer" see Thomas E. Drake, "Letter to Henry J. Cadbury," August 26, 1935, Collection 1121, Box 29, No. 46, Correspondence: Jan.–Dec. 1935, Haverford Special Collections Quaker Collection.

the vegetables, Lay's cave, and the reference to Thomas Tryon in Lay's book, the image

makes Lay's body, especially his skinny legs and long arms, the most visually arresting

aspects of this image. Furthermore, Kneass rendered the cane in Lay's right hand as

larger and more visually distinct than it had been in the earlier portraits. This

compositional arrangement emphasized Lay's bodily difference as directly connected to

his mobility challenges.

Vaux's biography and Kneass' engraving of Lay and his distinctive body

appeared in Philadelphia at a moment when concerns about public punishments and how

best to discipline criminal bodies occupied that city's reform-minded community.

Philanthropists—such as Roberts Vaux, who in addition to authoring the biography of

Benjamin Lay also played a prominent role as a member of the Philadelphia Society for

Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons—worked to establish new styles of prisons and

new forms of punishments that would reform the soul of the criminal by disciplining their

bodies in new, and ostensibly more humane, ways. In these reformed Philadelphia

prisons, which appeared as early as 1773 with the opening of the Walnut Street Jail and

culminated with the opening of the Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829, penitentiary

managers separated, isolated, examined, and instilled labor regimes that controlled and

surveilled prisoners.[7] Bodies stood at the core of these reforms: philanthropists sought to

understand and then corporeally discipline those who had violated the norms and laws of

the body politic.

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[7] Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 1–4, 15–16, 173–213.

This wider cultural concern about bodies that fell outside of the body politic helps

further illustrate why early nineteenth-century readers of Vaux's book perceived Lay's

bodily difference as one of the most compelling aspects of his identity. Among the

notable individuals who owned Vaux's book and commented on Kneass' engraving was

Timothy Matlack. Known as the "Fighting Quaker," Matlack served as a colonel in the

United States' war of independence and helped found the Religious Society of Free

Quakers comprised of individuals disowned by the Religious Society of Friends for their

participation in that conflict. Within his copy of this book, which Vaux personally gifted

to him, Matlack wrote, "On the portrait of Lay many remarks on his personal appearance,

correcting the drawing in some respects."[8] Matlack, who had likely met, or at least seen,

Lay during his youth, offered an assessment of Kneass's presentation of both his beard

and his body. Determining that Kneass made Lay's beard shorter than it should have

been, Matlack nevertheless thought that the engraver had done a good job presenting his

body: "His features, his countenance, and the <u>bend</u> of his body to the right, are all

correctly shown. One of his legs was shorter than the other, and they were extremely

small, even smaller than here shown, and his arms were extremely long."[9] These

annotations provide valuable insight into how Matlack perceived the vanguard

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[8] John Greenleaf Whittier, *Catalogue of Manuscripts, Books and Autographs from the Library of the Late John Greenleaf Whittier, Comprising Original Manuscripts ... Autograph Letters of the Highest Literary Interest; Works Hitherto Undescribed: Mr. Whittier's Own Copies; Author's Presentation Copies, Etc., Etc., To Be Sold at Auction ... February 6th, 1903 ... John Anderson, Jr. Auctioneer ...* (New York: Douglas Taylor & Co., 1903), 29 Interesting, this copy of Vaux's book, which was originally owned by Matlack, was later owned by the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier, who advocated aggressively for abolition in from the 1830s through 1865.

[9] Timothy Matlack's copy of Roberts Vaux's biography of Lay and Sandiford is cited in Chris Coelho, *Timothy Matlack, Scribe of the Declaration of Independence* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 208, fn. 9. Many thanks to Chris Coelho for providing me with photographs of Matlack's annotations on Kneass' frontispiece engraving for Vaux's book, which is housed in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

abolitionist and confirm that Lay's distinctive physical form constituted a central part of his identity.

For others, the fascination with Lay's unique body was rooted in their medical training and desire to understand the world empirically. Thomas Pole, a Philadelphia-born Quaker minister and physician who studied medicine in England and Scotland and eventually settled with his family first in London and then in Bristol, wrote a series of letters to Vaux after reading about Lay's life.[10] Beginning their correspondence in 1817, Pole informed Vaux of the book's transatlantic distribution, noting that the biography was "being reprinted in this country, which is a proof of [it] being well received, which must afford thee a degree of satisfaction."[11] Pole also excitedly explained to Vaux that he had made a portrait of the tiny abolitionist that he planned to send to Vaux as a gift. Although Pole was a talented draughtsman who specialized in anatomical drawing, he apologized to Vaux for his amateurish rendering of Lay's figure and unforeseen delays in completing the portrait.[12] Pole's expression of disappointment at the lack of sophistication in his painting suggests that he found rendering Lay's unique body a

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[10] Pole had a medical specialty in obstetrics, served as a member of the American Philosophical Society, and had an interest in painting and etching. In fact, he used his artistic skill to illustrate his 1790 book, Anatomical Instructor, with images that showed "the approved methods of preparing and preserving parts of the human body for purposes of study." See Edmund Tolson Wedmore, "Thomas Pole," *Friends' Historical Society Journal Supplement*, no. 7 (1907): 1–53; E.T. Wedmore and Philip Carter, "Thomas Pole (1753–1829)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/view/article/22459.

[11] Thomas Pole, Letter to Roberts Vaux, January 19, 1819, Collection 684, Box 2, Folder 1, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[12] Thomas Pole, Letter to Roberts Vaux, November 8, 1817, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Thomas Pole, Letter to Roberts Vaux, August 9, 1819, Collection 684, Box 2, Folder 3, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Thomas Pole, Letter to Roberts Vaux, April 6, 1820, Collection 684, Box 2, Folder 6, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For examples of Thomas Pole's artistic work, including forty-eight silhouettes, portraits, and landscape paintings, see Wedmore, "Thomas Pole," 1–53.

vexing challenge. For an artist like Pole, whose expertise centered on accurately rendering the human form, painting a portrait of Lay proved particularly difficult precisely because his subject did not conform to the bodily norms with which he was well-versed.

Unfortunately, Pole's portrait of Lay has been lost, leaving us unable to judge Pole's presentation and interpretation of Lay's body. Nevertheless, the letters between Vaux and Pole allow for some speculation about the latter's perception and rendering of Lay's disability. Given how enthusiastically Pole received Vaux's biography, it seems most likely that Kneass's frontispiece print of Lay served as the basis for Pole's painting. Moreover, given Pole's interest in anatomy and physiology as a physician, Benjamin Lay would have proven fascinating to him precisely because Lay's body was so strikingly aberrant compared to the textbook examples that Pole specialized in creating. Writing to assuage Vaux that the portrait would soon be on a ship bound for Philadelphia, Pole urged him to not "despair of ever seeing the painting of poor B. Lay," as he would send it as soon as its varnish dried.[13] Characterizing Lay as "poor" here emphasized the reactions of sympathy and pity that his bodily appearance evoked in Pole. Much as Lay purposefully goaded his fellow Quakers into feeling sympathy for their enslaved Africans by displaying his body publicly, Pole's comment illustrates that the legacy of Lay's body into the nineteenth century fit into broader Enlightenment attitudes toward disability that viewed people of short stature and with hunched backs as lamentable and pitiable individuals. If Pole's reaction to Lay's body can be taken as emblematic of wider

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[13] Pole, Letter to Roberts Vaux, January 19, 1819.

reactions to Lay's appearance, then it is safe to conclude that Lay's disabled body struck many who encountered textually and visually as his most notable attribute. Yet reactions to Lay's body were not confined to fascination with its otherness, but more frequently sought to understand how his non-normative physical form shaped his mind and beliefs about religion and slavery.

Presentations of Connections between Lay's Mind and Body

The Williams and Dawkins images of Lay from the 1760s helped set the precedent for representations that suggested a causal connection between Lay's strange body and his mind and behavior. Tracing the exact circulation of these images, how widely they were disseminated and how they traveled transatlantically, remains difficult—precise records about such transatlantic movement do not exist. Yet there are records of John Dunlap giving Dawkins' engraved plate as a gift to Du Simitière in 1782 for his museum of natural history. Within this context of late eighteenth century exhibitions, Du Simitière's decision to present the image of Lay's body reflected the growing fascination with displays of human variation and physical deformity on both sides of the Atlantic. This fascination with physically non-conforming humans saw its apogee in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century freak shows. Presentations like Du Simitière's conveyed an "ideology of form" where displaying the aberrant bodies

helped clarify nature's hierarchy and the superior place of the non-aberrant within that order.[14]

Even after Du Simitère acquired the original engraved plate, copies of the Dawkins engraving continued to circulate amongst prominent figures in the Philadelphia and in doing so further cemented the association between Benjamin Lay's antislavery lifework with his other strong moral stances. A number of sources describing Lay's life assert that "the print of him" can "be seen in many houses in Philadelphia," indicating that the image was a popular one within the context of this heavily Quaker city—an ironic development given that he had been disowned from this same Quaker community roughly sixty-years earlier.[15] One piece of evidence corroborating the image's omnipresence comes from Ebenezer Hazard, a native Philadelphian and member of the

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[14] Nadja Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 3–4; For an analysis of the ways in which individuals who worked within freak shows expressed agency and established self-directed careers, see Robert Bogdan, "The Social Construction of Freaks," in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Freakery : Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 23–37; For a challenge to Bogdan's argument that emphasizes the limited social options and continued marginal living conditions experienced by those who worked in freak shows, see David A. Gerber, "The 'Careers' of People Exhibited in Freak Shows: The Problem of Volition and Valorization," in ibid., 38–54; For a theoretical approach to understanding the visual, aesthetic, and cultural fascination with aberrant bodies, see Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring : How We Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[15] "An Account of Benjamin Lay," *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* 4, no. 3 (March 1, 1790): 135; Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* (Philadelphia: Thomas and William Bradford, 1806), 299; In addition to the primary sources from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century that assert the widespread circulation these engravings of Benjamin Lay's portrait, contemporary secondary source scholarship repeats these claims, see Gary B. Nash, "Franklin and Slavery," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 150, no. 4 (2006): 627–628; Similarly, Sifakis claims that "There are many Quaker families today who own heirloom portraits of Lay; for fifty years after his death few Quaker households were not so graced." Unfortunately, Sifakis provides no citation for this claim of Lay's omnipresent image in late eighteenth century Philadelphia, though the hyperbole does reinforce Lay's cultural centrality during this period. See Carl Sifakis, *American Eccentrics: One Hundred Forty of the Greatest Human Interest Stories Ever Told* (New York: Facts on File, 1984), 15, http://archive.org/details/americaneccentri000198mbp; In addition to these early claims that the image of Lay appeared throughout Philadelphia homes, this letter implies that Henry Cadbury made the "suggestion that the caricatures of Benjamin Lay existed in Philadelphia homes prior to 1815." Drake, "Letter to Henry J. Cadbury."

American Philosophical Society who went on to become Postmaster General under the

Continental Congress from 1782-1789. Hazard owned a Dawkins' portrait of Benjamin

Lay that he donated to the Massachusetts Historical Society in October 1804, along with

some other prints of prominent figures from the early republic.[16] Because this print

placed Lay in front of his cave and included the surrounding symbolism of the "Tryon on

happiness" book and the fruit basket, it would have conjured up Lay's moral stridency—

his vegetarianism, healthful living, asceticism, and of course, abolitionist advocacy.[17]

Dawkins' print and its imagery, however, read quite differently in an early

nineteenth-century context than it did immediately after Lay's death in 1759 because

Quaker attitudes and policies toward slaveholding had become uniformly abolitionist.

Because Dawkins' image of Lay recalled the origins of this moral certitude, it still carried

some resonance for Friends, who, by the early 1800s, had established strong a sectarian

stance against slavery and the slave trade.[18] Yet precisely because these views had

become both the official policy of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and widely accepted

culturally in Philadelphia, the image also suggested that the aspects of Lay's life that

enabled him to bring about this change amongst Friends—his vegetarianism, hermetic

existence, and his distinctive bodily difference—while worthy of admiration, did not

need to be emulated. In other word, because Lay's abolitionist views had gained

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[16] Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1835*, vol. 1 (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1879), 168.

[17] Cole, "Henry Dawkins and the Quaker Comet," 39–40.

[18] For discussion of the process and stages by which Quakers had eliminated slaveholding amongst the sect by the early nineteenth-century, see Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); For a biography and analysis of the role Quaker abolitionist Anthony Benezet played in the process of pushing Quaker abolitionism forward, see Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

widespread acceptance in Philadelphia by the early nineteenth century, the setting and symbols within Dawkins' portrait began to lose their rhetorical power and instead transformed into objects that suggested Lay's eccentricity.

Over time, Dawkins' print lost its ability to communicate the link between Lay's unique body and his firm moral commitments and instead became noteworthy simply because it depicted Lay's bodily difference—a characteristic that became increasingly medicalized and marginalized. A 1916 catalog of rare Quaker books and manuscripts labeled Dawkins' work as a "remarkable Copperplate Etching either intended as a caricature or the result of bad perspective ideas of […] W. Williams." Furthermore, in assessing Dawkins' oeuvre, the catalog characterized this piece as "probably the most pretentious of any of the rare engravings made by that Philadelphia artist," and then went onto describe Lay's appearance in the image as someone whose "head is large, features distorted, hair and beard long and unkempt and his legs remarkably short and puny."[19] The frequent remarks this image elicited about Lay's body speaks to the noteworthiness of Dawkins' presentation of his unique physical composition. The pejorative descriptions of Lay as "distorted," "unkempt," and "puny," further reveal the widespread adoption of medical notions of human "normalcy" by the early twentieth century. At that historical moment, individuals with aberrant bodies were in the process of being excluded from the labor force and classified—by both legal and medical "experts"—as deficient.[20] This

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[19] Samuel N. Rhoads, *Americana Curiosa et Quakeriana: A Remarkable Collection of Printed and Manuscript Archives Relating to the Colonization and Religious History of the United States. For Sale by the Franklin Bookshop. Samuel N. Rhoads, Proprietor ... Philadelphia, Pa.* (Philadelphia: The Franklin Bookshop, 1916), 53, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL6600985M/Americana_curiosa_et_Quakeriana.
[20] For context on the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century rise and dominance of medical professionals, seen especially in their formation of professional organizations and societies, see Porter, *The*

wider context of professional medicine's ascendance and cultural dominance helps us understand how this engraving, which initially appealed to the abolitionist values of early nineteenth-century Friends in Philadelphia, ultimately became image most noteworthy for the strange body it contained.

In the 1790s, once abolitionism had become central to the Quaker body politic, more comprehensive narratives about Lay connecting his non-normative body and his anti-slavery beliefs began to proliferate. In that decade, at least three different publications produced brief biographies of the vanguard abolitionist. The profile of Benjamin Lay that appeared in the March 1790 issue of the *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* helped establish a number of the common conventions that later authors would expand on in writing about the origins of Lay's abolitionism. That article led in the first paragraph with a description of Lay's physical form, describing "His size, which was not much above four feet, his dress, […] consisting of light-colored plain clothes, a white hat, and half-boots; – his milk white beard, which hung upon his breast, and above all, his peculiar principles and conduct, rendered him to many, an object of admiration, and to all, the subject of conversation."[21] By beginning the narrative of Lay's life and work with a description of his bodily form, the text led readers to anticipate and forge a connection in their own minds between his distinctive body and his surprising

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Greatest Benefit to Mankind, 525–560; For analysis of how nineteenth-century intellectuals and statisticians forged the category of "normal," see Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), chap. 2; For an analysis of how late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century changes in the industrial capitalist labor market and new workers' compensation legislation in the United States transformed disabled individuals into "unproductive citizens," see Sarah Rose, *No Right to Be Idle: The Invention of Disability, 1850-1930* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[21] "An Account of Benjamin Lay," 133.

actions. Yet, the author didactically presented Lay's short stature as positive attribute rather than as a sign of his eccentricity, indicating the perceived connection between his strange body, unpredictable mind, and striking actions.

Throughout the article, the author employed Enlightenment ideas about the connection between the body and the mind to make Lay's dramatic abolitionist protests intelligible over three decades after his death. First describing his body, the author then explained that Lay conducted his protests with "so much indiscreet zeal, as to give great offence" as a way to identify the common thread within all of Lay's demonstrations. Intriguingly, the first anecdote in this article recounted that often these demonstrations ended with Lay "carried out of the meeting house, by two or three friends." In another instance, Lay protested slavery by lying "down at the door of the meeting house, in a shower of rain," where he remained until "the whole congregation had stepped over him in their way to their respective homes."[22] By placing these first two anecdotes of his protests—both of which involve his fellow Quakers confronting Lay's body directly— immediately following the description of his body, this initial biography worked within the Enlightenment tradition of mind-body dualism and forged an association between his misshapen body, his outlandish behavior, and others' ability to disrupt his demonstrations because of his disability. Once having clearly established the connection between his body and mind, the author then suggested that Lay's disabled body served as the pre-requisite for his catalytic role in helping to change the moral outlook toward slavery, musing that "Perhaps the turbulence and severity of his temper were necessary to rouse

[22] Ibid.

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the torpor of the human mind, at the period in which he lived."[23] In other words, the

author hinted that Lay's distinctive physical form served a critical function in leading his

mind and character to develop a morally laudatory position that could be followed by

both Quakers and non-Quakers. This presentation of Lay and its attendant ideas about the

connection between his mind and body were not confined to North America, as the

Dublin-based publication *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* republished this exact article

verbatim later that year. The relatively fast transfer of this biography to a British audience

solidified these same associations and attitudes about connections between Lay's mind

and body and revealed how he remained a compelling figure in Europe well after his

lifetime.[24]

Benjamin Rush, the prominent Philadelphia physician and scientist, also became

fascinated with the connection between Lay's unique body and his firm moral beliefs.

Given Rush's medical background, his embrace of the Enlightenment's empirical

methods, and his reformist-impulses, Rush crafted a more clinical understanding of Lay's

bodily difference.[25] Rush first made brief mention of Lay in his 1805 book, *Medical*

Inquiries and Observations, where he attempted to deconstruct the relationship between a

patient's temper and the progress of his or her disease. Believing that "[t]he debility

induced by disease is often removed by a sudden change in the temper," Rush posited

that "peevishness acts as a gentle stimulus upon the system in its languid state, and thus

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[23] Ibid.

[24] "An Account of Benjamin Lay, One of the People Called Quakers.," *Walker's Hibernian Magazine, or Compendium of Entertaining Knowledge, May 1785-Dec. 1811*, August 1790, 105–6.

[25] For biographies of Rush, see Alyn Brodsky, *Benjamin Rush: Patriot and Physician* (New York: Truman Talley Books, 2004); David Freeman Hawke, *Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Gadfly* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971); For analysis of Rush's role in the reform of Philadelphia prisons—an area where he worked closely with Roberts Vaux—see, Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue*, 121–126, 132–137, 168–169.

turns the scale in favour of life and health." To substantiate this thesis, Rush cited "The famous Benjamin Lay, of this state, who lived to be eighty years of age, was of a very irascible temper."[26] Although Rush did not directly describe Lay and his "disease" or "debility" in this passage, his use of Lay as an example of this dynamic reveals that Rush categorized him as ill.

Given how images of and writings about Lay that prominently displayed or described his non-normative body circulated widely in Philadelphia at this time, Rush must have viewed Lay's short stature and twisted spine as examples of these illnesses. The next year, Rush included a more extensive biography of Lay in his *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* that reproduced verbatim the account published sixteen years earlier in the *Universal Asylum and Columbia Magazine*.[27] Understanding Rush's medical training and perspective, his inclusion of this text about Benjamin Lay reflected his clinical interest both in Lay's disability into the connection between the mind and the "diseased" or "debilitated" body. In making this connection, Rush expressed a generally positive outlook toward Lay and the impact of his disability on his activism. Lay's disabled body, in Rush's view, became an asset that gave him a tempestuous attitude and spurred him forward in his advocacy even late into his life. Moreover, Rush's long-held negative attitudes toward slavery and North Americans' hypocrisy of calling for freedom while continuing to hold slaves, led him to interpret the root causes of Lay's antislavery advocacy as all-the-more laudatory.[28] Even though Rush celebrated Lay's

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[26] Benjamin Rush, *Medical Inquiries and Observations*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: J. Conrad & Company, 1805), 392.
[27] Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical*, 296–301.
[28] Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 145.

accomplishments and shared his abolitionist sentiments, his framing of Lay through the

lens of medicalized understandings of disability would lead later presentations of Lay to

focus only on his physical aberrance and disconnect it from his abolitionist work.

As abolitionists continued to fights slavery's westward spread in the 1840s and

1850s, they invoked Lay and his body as a type of marketing tool to illustrate the moral

righteousness of their cause. As a result, the tropes and descriptions of Lay from the first

two decades of the nineteenth century—the connection between his strange physical

appearance, his eccentricity, and his foresight in anticipating the rising tide of mid-

nineteenth-century abolitionism—began to recur with greater frequency as sectional

tensions in the United States increased over slavery's westward expansion.[29] In 1842, the

American Anti-Slavery Society published a condensed biography of Lay's life written by

Lydia Maria Child. Involved in a range of humanitarian activities, including women's

rights, abolitionism, and Indian rights, Child's personal sentiments led her to write

sympathetically about the pioneering work philanthropic work of Quakers.[30] In compiling

this work, Child drew almost exclusively from Vaux's biography, but also added some

anecdotes from the "Notices of John Hunt" that appeared in *Friends' Miscellany* as well

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[29] For analysis of the anti-slavery, but deeply racist, Free Soil Party that emerged in the United States in the 1840s, see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). For a discussion of the political and cultural crises leading up to the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War in 1861, see David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). For a concise narrative of the rise and activity of abolitionism in the U.S., see Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 250–267. For other recent and pertinent scholarship in this field, see Beth A Salerno, *Sister Societies: Women's Antislavery Organizations in Antebellum America* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Andrew Delbanco, *The Abolitionist Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[30] In addition to her biography of Lay, Child also wrote a biography of Isaac T. Hopper, a prominent Philadelphia Quaker deeply involved in prison reform (and with whom she stayed while living in New York in the early 1840s), see Lydia Maria Child, *Isaac T. Hopper: A True Life* (Boston: J.P. Jewett & Company, 1854).

as from stories she heard from prominent Quaker Isaac T. Hopper, at whose New York

home she lived while she wrote this book.[31] Child's publication connected Lay's story

with the more vocal advocacy and prominent leadership of the American Anti-Slavery

Society based in New York. A reproduction of Kneass' print of Lay began the book and

Child's introduction offered some brief commentary about this image: "The engraving

certainly looks as the imagination of olden time pictured ogres to frighten the nursery, or

those ugly burrowing fairies called gnomes."[32] This characterization, which Child

included to juxtapose Lay's ostensibly frightening appearance with the triumphal

narrative that followed, cast Lay as abnormal, monstrous, and sub-human to create a

sense of overcoming in Lay's life story. With this description of the engraving appearing

at the outset of the text, Child presented Lay's life and his abolitionist work as

inseparable from his disability and aberrant appearance.

In the narrative of Lay's life, Child suggested that Lay's bizarre (and perhaps

frightening) physical form both molded his mind and behavior, which then shaped his

outlook toward slavery. Given the pressing abolitionist context in which she wrote, Child

excused Lay for his bizarre behavior and dramatic writings, treating these as the

inescapable result of his profound desire to eradicate slaveholding amongst his fellow

Quakers. "Some will alledge [*sic*], and none can doubt," Child wrote, "that [Lay]

occasionally manifested symptoms of derangement; yet all must acknowledge that

'*oppression will make a wise man mad*.'" Similarly, Child described Sarah Lay as

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[31] Patricia G Holland, Milton Meltzer, and Francine Krasno, eds., *The Collected Correspondence of Lydia Maria Child, 1817-1880: Guide and Index to the Microfiche Edition* (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Microform, 1980), 30.

[32] Lydia Maria Child, *Memoir of Benjamin Lay: Compiled from Various Sources* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1842), chap. Introduction [unpaginated].

constantly supportive of Benjamin and his abolitionism, as she "contributed all in her power to support of his mind under the trials which it suffered."[33] In essence, Child's narrative contended that the dominant challenges of Lay's life—his physical form, his own personal turmoil over slavery, and his later anti-slavery work amongst his fellow Quakers—emanated from Lay's disabled body. This physical precondition first shaped Lay's allegedly "deranged mind," and Child then hinted that this mental state then manifested itself in all the dramatic and socially upsetting demonstrations that Lay staged to eradicate slaveholding amongst his co-religionists. In essence, Child marketed Lay and his behavior as suitable for her abolitionist political agenda by drawing on the ascending medical belief that individuals with aberrant bodies inevitably had strange minds and behavior. This rationale both served to naturalize Lay's strange behavior, but in the course of doing so, reinforced the notion that *all* individuals with aberrant bodies also thought and acted in ways that excluded and marginalized them from "normal" society.

Publications about Lay in the 1850s began to present and interpret his body with increasingly medicalized terminology, continuing to market his vanguard abolitionism while also indicating the rise of the medical profession and its desire to clinically categorize the abnormality of both Lay's body and his mind. In 1856, the Philadelphia-based journal, *The Friend*, included Lay in its multi-issue profile in "Early Anti-Slavery Advocates." The anonymous author of this article drew heavily on the records from Colchester, Devonshire House, and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings to establish (and, as the author makes clear in a footnote, correct) much of the faulty chronology from Vaux's

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[33] Ibid., 35, 20.

1815 biography. Similarly, the author also quoted extensively from *All Slave-Keepers,*

Apostates to further establish Lay's chronology, display his perspective on false ministry,

and document his rivalry with Friends in Philadelphia who prevented him from receiving

a certificate of membership. This article also substantiated details about Lay's life by

including previously unpublished correspondence between Lay and some of his

acquaintances, as well as the recollection of Lay's "pokeberry juice" protest from

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting clerk, John Kinsey, who characterized Lay as "a little

whimsical fellow."[34]

Yet along with these areas of greater chronological precision and reliance on

primary sources, this profile sought to definitively label Lay and explain his behavior as

the product of a distinct mental disorder. The first paragraph of this biography warned the

reader that Lay's "mind was not well balanced," and that "his zeal kindled into fierceness

and sometimes into frenzy." Similarly, in describing his upbringing in England, the

author speculated that the reason Lay left his apprenticeship with a glove-maker

"probably grew out of the infirmity of his own temper."[35] Further summarizing Lay's life

in England and his travels to Barbados, the author then prefaced the extended quotation

from Vaux's biography that described Lay's body by declaring, "The outward person of

Benjamin Lay was very peculiar."[36] Moreover, the article solidified Lay's "eccentric"

character, as this word appeared five times over the course of its six serialized entries.

"The eccentric actions of Benjamin Lay can hardly be accounted for in any other way,"

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[34] "Early Anti-Slavery Advocates: Benjamin Lay," *The Friend* 29, no. 28 (March 22, 1856): 220.
[35] "Early Anti-Slavery Advocates: Benjamin Lay," *The Friend* 29, no. 23 (February 16, 1856): 180.
[36] Ibid.

the author declared in the article's fourth installment, "than by supposing him to have laboured under partial insanity. His zeal against slavery, against drinking tea, and smoking tobacco, was exhibited in a variety of ways, more or less manifesting aberrations of intellect."[37] Concluding with a tone of pity, the author absolved Lay from a negative legacy because "[h]is eccentricities, without doubt, often were the product of insanity, and therefore furnish no proper cause for censure."[38]

Given the structure of the article and its arrangements of descriptions and anecdotes about Lay, the author reinforced Lay's bodily and mental aberrance as the core elements of his identity by frequently referencing both his diseased mind and his misshapen body. By the 1850s, psychiatry and medicalized diagnoses of insanity began to gain more credence and the public cachet that came with perceived scientific validity.[39] As a result, labeling Lay as "insane" in this article made his demonstrations and outlandish actions, which were unintelligible to his contemporaries who lived alongside him in the eighteenth century, the product of a diagnosable medical condition. Whereas earlier presentations of Lay and his life alluded to his bodily aberrance and the potential connections it may have had on his mind and behavior, this later presentation gave cohesion to Lay's life by bookending it with his physical and mental otherness. In essence, the author's ability to persuasively diagnose Lay as "insane" was made easier

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[37] "Early Anti-Slavery Advocates: Benjamin Lay," *The Friend* 29, no. 27 (March 15, 1856): 212.
[38] "Early Anti-Slavery Advocates: Benjamin Lay," *The Friend* 29, no. 29 (March 22, 1856): 230.
[39] Benjamin Reiss, *Theaters of Madness: Insane Asylums and Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), chap. Introduction; Sayantani DasGupta, "Medicalization," in Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, eds., *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 120–121; Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 175–266; Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 156–182.

because all aspects of his life fell outside the bounds of mid-nineteenth-century notions of "normal": it began with his non-conforming body, then chronicled his dramatic demonstrations, and concluded by labeling his mind as medically diseased.

As other British publications reprinted his life story, Lay's associations with eccentricity and aberrance were further solidified on both sides of the Atlantic. Anecdotes about Lay's anti-slavery work and legacy appeared less frequently in British publications than they did in North American publications after 1833 since the British Empire had abolished slavery throughout its territories in that year, which made rousing narratives of abolitionist triumphs less culturally resonant and marketable. Nevertheless, Lay appeared in an 1859 article in *The British Friend* about the prominent late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Quaker minister and reformer, Thomas Scattergood. This article presented an anecdote about Lay verbally sparring with a group of men on horseback drawing on *The Friend*'s 1856 profile by identifying Lay's antagonist as the noted privateer, Captain McPherson. In the course of providing these greater details, the article also characterized Lay as "so peculiar, that it was almost impossible for any one who had once seen him, to forget him. This occasioned him to be known to almost every inhabitant of Philadelphia." In relating this story, the author made clear that McPherson likely chose to address Lay because he "wish[ed] to have some sport with the diminutive and deformed philanthropist."[40] When this article appeared in 1859, increasing numbers of Britons satiated their curiosity in "freaks of nature" by reading about aberrant humans and visiting freak shows to gawk, laugh at, and be entertained by the displays of human

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[40] "Anecdotes of Thomas Scattergood, &c.," *The British Friend* 17, no. 8 (August 1859): 202.

oddities.[41] Within this cultural context, these comments about Lay's body and mind further cemented him in the public consciousness as distinctive for his bodily difference and normalized the idea that his unique appearance naturally made him the subject of persecution and ridicule.

This same dynamic of drawing attention exclusively to Lay's non-conforming body also appears in an unsigned British portrait of Lay from the 1850s that clearly drew inspiration from William Williams' precedent-setting 1750s portrait (Fig. 3.2).[42]

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[41] Lillian Craton, *The Victorian Freak Show: The Significance of Disability and Physical Differences in 19th-Century Fiction* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009); Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, 4–14; Marlene Tromp, ed., *Victorian Freaks: The Social Context of Freakery in Britain* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015).

[42] Unsigned after William Williams, *Portrait of Benjamin Lay*, Oil on panel, 1853-1858, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/display.php?irn=117172.

Figure 3.2. Unsigned after William Williams, *Portrait of Benjamin Lay*, Oil on panel, 1853-1858, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, http://museums.bristol.gov.uk/display.php?irn=117172.

While Lay's body position mimics that Williams' portrait almost identically, the background scenery, accompanying symbols, and even the text in Lay's book, have been eliminated in favor of a stark black backdrop. By omitting other visual elements, this portrait heightened the focus on Lay's aberrant body and the accompanying isolation it created for him during his lifetime. Overall, these presentations, which bookended Lay's life story with his bodily difference, created a vivid image of him that influenced both the presentation and the interpretation of his entire biography.

Presentations of Lay's Advocacy as the Outgrowth of his Otherness

While many presentations of Lay's life in the eighteenth and nineteenth century

focused on him as a unique figure for his unique body and strange beliefs, some of the

earliest presentations of Lay used these distinctive characteristics to explain the striking

nature of his anti-slavery demonstrations. One of these earliest presentations came from

John Hunt, who wrote his recollection of Lay in 1785. This account, which was not

published, nor widely distributed until 1833, when it appeared in the Philadelphia-based

journal *Friends' Miscellany*, emphasized Lay's bodily difference and made clear that his

unique form registered prominently in Hunt's perception of him. In this excerpt, Hunt

summarized conversations he had with John Forman and Abraham Matlack, older

Quakers who knew Lay personally (and whose anecdotes likely served as an important

source for Vaux in his writing of Lay's biography).

Matlack's recollection focused explicitly on how Lay used his diminutive body in

a demonstration condemning slave labor. In March 1742, Matlack recalled that after

Sarah Lay's death, Benjamin went out into the streets with her tea set, "mounted a Stall,

on which he placed the Box of Ware," and then smashed it publicly to protest both tea's

addictive qualities and the slave labor involved in harvesting and processing the sugar

consumed with it. This event received brief attention in the British press, which noted

that before Lay could demolish all of his wife's fine china, he "was interrupted by the

Populace, who overthrew him and his Box to the Ground, and scrambling for the

Sacrifice, carry'd off as much of it whole as they could get."[43] Abraham Matlack, whose

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[43] "Plantation News," *London Evening Post*, July 6, 1742.

father saw this event first-hand, recollected "that Benjamin being a very little, light man, the boys of the town gathered round, and not willing to see the tea cups broken, one of them went behind him, stuck his head between his legs, took him up on his shoulders, and carried him off, whilst the others of the tea tackling."[44] The details of this incident remain consistent in both the newspaper report and the personal recollection, though Matlack's description provides a more vivid image of the physical confrontation that took place. Emphasizing Lay's short stature by calling him a "little, light man," Matlack specified that it was *children*, who were little and light themselves, that removed Lay from his demonstration, almost comically hoisting him up and ushering him away from the public square. Yet, this anecdote also confirms that Lay himself made his short stature prominent in this demonstration, elevating himself above others in the market by climbing up on a stall before proceeding to destroy the china. Similarly, his short stature registered prominently in the minds of those who witnessed the event; those who wanted to stop him and profit from Sarah Lay's valuable china succeeded by taking advantage of Lay's tiny physique and forcibly seizing the remaining tea service.

Presentations that connected Lay's physical form and his abolitionism appeared not only in personal recollections about Lay, but also in more general anti-slavery texts. Published in 1790 in Philadelphia, *A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans*, first gave an overview and brief history of transatlantic slavery and then emphasized the critical role that Quakers and Moravians played in converting African slaves to Christianity. The introductory narrative of this text closed by triumphantly noting that Quakers had finally

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[44] John Hunt, *Friends' Miscellany*, ed. John Comly and Isaac Comly, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: J. Richards, 1833), 275–276.

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chosen to disavow slaveholding in 1758 before providing brief overviews of some of the

key individuals who helped drive this moral transformation.[45] The poem itself situated

Lay in a line of Quaker reformers, suggesting that each individual's anti-slavery

advocacy built on the work of those who came before. In particular, the stanza describing

Lay followed that of Ralph Sandiford and read:

> To wasting zeal and sympathy a prey,
>
> Methinks I hear the venerable *Lay,
>
> Now, at distress and wrong for pity sigh,
>
> And now, "All Slave-Keepers, Apostates," cry;[46]

In many respects, the discussion of Lay in the footnote proves more compelling

than his brief appearance in the poem itself, as the footnote gave a brief biography of Lay

and reinforced the connection between his bodily form and his behavior that had

appeared earlier that year. The footnote characterized *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates* as

filled "with genuine effusions of intemperate zeal," and as "an incoherent medley of

sympathetic descriptions, angry exclamations, pious rhapsodies, and unjustifiable

surmizes respecting the conduct of his own Friends." A few sentences later, the footnote

described Lay's bodily form: "In person he was rather under size, but remarkable for […]

his animated manner, especially when declaiming against slavery" and confirming that

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[45] [Joseph Sansom], *A Poetical Epistle to the Enslaved Africans, in the Character of an Ancient Negro, Born a Slave in Pennsylvania: But Liberated Some Years Since, and Instructed in Useful Learning, and the Great Truths of Christianity. With a Brief Historical Introduction, and Biographical Notices of Some of the Earliest Advocats for That Oppressed Class of Our Fellow-Creatures ...* (Philadelphia: Joseph Crukshank, 1790), 3–7, 8. In order, the individuals included in the poem as catalysts of abolition are: George Fox, Richard Baxter, Morgan Godwyn, William Burling, Judge Sewall, Ralph Sandiford, Benjamin Lay, John Woolman, and Anthony Benezet.

[46] Ibid., 16.

"The print we have of him is said to be a striking likeness."[47] Although this summary of Lay's life and work did not lead with a description of his body and its uniqueness, the overview nevertheless linked his striking behavior, writings, and temperament with his aberrant appearance. Moreover, by confirming the existence of his disability by referencing the Henry Dawkins print, this account also bolstered the legitimacy of the visual depictions of Lay. Later overviews of Lay's life would build upon and solidify this connection between his strange body and unconventional abolitionism by taking portraits of him as accurate presentations of his non-normative body and using that visual validation to bolster claims that his warped mind and outlandish behavior resulted from this combination of disabilities.

In stark contrast to Benjamin Rush's positive presentation of Lay and his disability from 1805, Thomas Clarkson, the prominent English abolitionist, presented Lay's aberrance as a factor that thwarted his anti-slavery work. In this 1808 book, Clarkson generally framed Lay in positive terms, calling him "a man of strong understanding and of great integrity," but noted that Lay's time in Barbados proved catalytic for him in a negative way. The scenes of cruelty toward slaves that Lay witnessed on the island "greatly disturbed his mind" and "unhinged it," leading to an "eccentricity of character" that "prevent[ed] others from joining him in his pursuit, lest they should be thought singular also."[48] Although Clarkson did not physically describe Lay in this passage, he made clear that Lay did not fit into societal norms. His aberrant

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[47] Ibid., 116, *footnote. Given the historical context of when this poem was published (1790), the print referred to was the Dawkins engraving based on the original William Williams painting.

[48] Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, Progress, & Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade, by the British Parliament* (Philadelphia: James P. Parke, 1808), 122–123.

behavior, which Clarkson implied stemmed from a disturbed mind, isolated Lay from his co-religionists. Fellow Friends' unwillingness to support Lay's abolitionist advocacy further revealed how his non-conformity (both physical and mental) stigmatized him and, as Clarkson put it, "diminished in some degree his usefulness to the cause which he had undertaken."[49]

Roberts Vaux: Forging and Marketing the Legacy of Benjamin Lay

Roberts Vaux's thorough biography of Lay further developed and expanded on the connection between Lay's physical otherness and his bizarre activism. In large part, Vaux's interest in Lay stemmed from his admiration for Lay's precedent-setting opposition to moral abuses in the eighteenth century and from his own increasing involvement in humanitarian activities in Philadelphia, many of which were infused with Enlightenment optimism about the ways human reason could bring progress to all members of society. During the time he wrote this biography, Vaux worked to reform prisons and schools and also established schools for the blind and deaf.[50] In his prison reform work, Vaux emphasized the ways slavery abused and deformed the body as a way to build his argument to eliminated public executions and other forms of punishment in

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[49] Ibid., 123.

[50] For biographical overviews of Vaux and his reform activities, especially those focused on education, see Joseph McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania, 1801-1835, and Its Debt to Roberts Vaux* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937); Roderick Naylor Ryon, "Roberts Vaux: A Biography of a Reformer" (Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 1966); Roderick N. Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania from 1818 to 1834," *Pennsylvania History* 34, no. 3 (July 1, 1967): 240–49; Roderick N. Ryon, "Moral Reform and Democratic Politics: The Dilemma of Roberts Vaux," *Quaker History* 59, no. 1 (April 1, 1970): 3–14.

favor of new labor, organizational, and isolation regimes.[51] Yet Vaux's interest in Lay also had to do with his aberrant body. Roberts Vaux and Benjamin Lay shared the belief that the disciplinary method of whipping debased the morals of slaveowners, slaves, and society as a whole. Because the corporeal aspects of both slavery and criminal punishment featured so prominently in his mind, Vaux likely found Lay a fascinating subject because Lay's unconventional body served as a crucial tool in fighting to end the bodily and morally destructive practice of slaveholding.

When Vaux wrote his biography, a number of images and narratives of Lay's life were already circulating in Philadelphia, so distinguished his biography by emphasizing his thorough and empirically grounded research methods. To these ends, Vaux explained that he made "visits […] to most of the oldest inhabitants in the neighbourhoods where they had lived. The combined ages of ten of those persons amounts to eight hundred and twenty-one years, and it is remarkable, that all these ancient people appeared to enjoy unusual health and strength; and in most instances their faculties were unimpaired."[52] In other words, Vaux sought out people who actually knew Lay during the mid-eighteenth century. This early allusion to his familiarity with Enlightenment empiricism would recur throughout the text as Vaux also invoked the Enlightenment notion of disability—a marginal, sub-human condition, yet one that could be overcome—to frame his narrative of Lay's life. Having thus established the credibility of his research, Vaux then thoroughly recounted Lay's life, making reference to his actual and perceived disability throughout the book.

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[51] Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue*, 296–300.
[52] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 1815, viii.

With its greater depth and synthesis of earlier sources, Vaux's 1815 biography of Lay established a number of tropes about Lay's life and its impact on his abolitionist advocacy that Lay's later biographers would adopt. Vaux offered his fullest description of Lay's bodily form, (the one that appeared at the opening of this chapter), seven pages into his book, establishing the centrality of Lay's bodily form to his life's work. This visual image of Lay's short stature, misshaped head, spindly legs, and curved spine recurred subtly throughout the rest of the biography and at times played a central role in Lay's abolitionist demonstrations. Vaux reiterated Clarkson's assessment of Lay's personality and began to connect his physical form with his mental state by noting that on Lay's "arrival in Pennsylvania, it was soon discovered that his character was eccentric." Vaux presented this assessment as coming from Lay's contemporaries, but by the end of the book, Vaux had solidified this characteristic as integral to Lay's legacy in 1815. Vaux concluding by offering the medical assessment that Lay "occasionally manifested symptoms of derangement" and that although "his eccentricity was remarkable […] in the main, it subserved the purposes of utility." Yet Vaux implored his readers to assess Lay favorably by declaring, "all must acknowledge that 'oppression will make a wise man mad.'"[53] By invoking language that suggested empirical and scientific reasons for Lay's aberrant mind and behavior, Vaux helped cement Lay's eccentricity in the popular imagination as grounded first and foremost in his non-conforming body.

Throughout the biography, Vaux recounted multiple instances of Lay's dramatic abolitionist performances to reinforce their histrionic character and illustrate how Lay

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[53] Ibid., 21, 54.

placed his body at the center of these protests. Vaux described one of Lay's protests that took place in the winter, where Lay stationed himself in front of a Meeting House entrance "when a deep snow was on the ground […] having his right leg and foot entirely uncovered." As Friends stepped over him on their way into the Meeting House, many "reasoned with him for thus exposing himself, and cautioned him against the danger of contracting disease by such conduct," to which Lay vociferously chastised his co-religionists for treating their slaves similarly by forcing them to labor outside in the wintertime without proper clothing.[54] Because his spindly legs were one of the bodily features specifically described at the outset of the book, Vaux lent this scene more vividness in the readers' mind. With this demonstration, Lay forced his fellow Friends to visually confront his physical aberrance and, as a result, evoke their pity. Through this anecdote, Vaux made clear that although Lay's co-religionists pitied him and expressed sympathy because of their concern for *his* physical well-being, this public display of his tiny legs served as a means to deliver his indictment against slavery, re-directing the Friends' pity away from him and toward their slaves.

Vaux noted that even when Lay did not place his non-conforming body at the center of his anti-slavery protests, his actions still suggested that his mind was also "deranged." According to Vaux, Lay's consistent brashness was "so extravagant as to induce the belief that his intellect was partially diseased," and that "persons, who were not acquainted with him, often deceived themselves by supposing him to be destitute of

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[54] Ibid., 27–28.

common understanding."[55] As a result of these associations, Vaux suggested that Lay became the subject of persecution for both his distinctive bodily form and for the mind-body connection that led others to perceived his mind as "ill." In essence, according to Vaux, Lay experienced persecution because he body and behavior struck others in ways that suggested he objectively belonged on a lower-rung of the Enlightenment's hierarchy of humanity.

Even when he faced persecution for his non-conforming body, Vaux explained, Lay found ways to overcome and challenge these marginalizing perceptions by demonstrating his moral superiority. To illustrate this dynamic, Vaux recounted the story of a time when Lay "was met by several persons on horseback, who unwisely expected he would afford them diversion." Vaux then described how Lay subverted their expectations by quoting scripture and proving his religious righteousness. As a result, those who thought that Lay would make an easy target for harassment instead "left him, evidently mortified at their impotent efforts to produce idle merriment."[56] In the context of Vaux's earlier descriptions of Lay's physical form, his outlandish protests, and the centrality of his body to these demonstrations, the likely source of the "merriment" these men sought stemmed from the fact that Lay's body marked him as a marginal outsider who no one would rush to defend. With this anecdote, Vaux established a recurrent overcoming narrative whereby Lay consistently thwarted the adversity he encountered as a result of his non-normative body.

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[55] Ibid., 24, 35.
[56] Ibid., 36.

Vaux framed the final years of Lay's life through the Enlightenment lens that focused on how individuals could overcome their marginalizing conditions. In spite of his increasing age and physical frailty, Vaux contended that Lay remained active and self-sufficient until his death because of the unique character of his mind. Emphasizing that Lay's "advanced age might be supposed sufficient to have abated the ardour of his mind, and disqualified him for active exertion," Vaux reminded his readers that "Lay was no ordinary man. He rose superior to the influence of such causes and resumed his labours of benevolence with augmented assiduity."[57] Among other impressive feats, in 1757 Lay attempted to emulate Jesus by fasting for forty days, but became so weak and close to death after 24 days that his friends had him eat again and regain his strength.[58] Furthermore, Lay provided for himself by growing his own food, sewing his own clothes, and tending his own home during the entire period he lived in Philadelphia and environs—characteristics suggested by William Williams's portrait of 1758. Given his remarkable self-sufficiency in spite of his social ostracism and his physical frailty that increased with age, Vaux noted that Lay lacked tolerance for those who were dependent. In particular, "Lay had no compassion for vagrant mendicants," and "asserted that 'anyone who is able to go abroad and beg, can earn four-pence a day, and that is enough to keep a person above want or dependence in this country.'"[59] Moreover, Lay gave charitably to educational causes as well as including bequests for the Devonshire House Monthly Meetings and Abington Monthly Meeting in his will. By including an array of

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[57] Ibid., 34.
[58] Benjamin Lay, "Benjamin Lay Memorandum" September 23, 1757, AMs 1078/8, Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, PA.
[59] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 1815, 43.

evidence about how Lay, in spite of a host of physical and social obstacles in his own life, constantly advocated for the unfortunate, Vaux made this narrative more triumphal and helped him publicize Lay as an imminently admirable vanguard philanthropist in whose tracks Vaux himself strove to follow.[60]

Furthermore, these anecdotes also suggested that Vaux viewed Lay as physically and mentally aberrant, but not infirm. Given his extensive involvement in charitable endeavors in Philadelphia, Vaux would have been sensitive to the distinction between the "able-bodied" who had the potential to work and provide for themselves, and the "infirm," who could not find paid employment. Within the context of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, therefore, physical deformity did not inherently prevent one from providing for oneself.[61] By including this anecdote, Vaux made clear that Lay deserved admiration because he overcame his "objective" disability and instead displayed the characteristics of being able-bodied.

Through this biography, Vaux successfully marketed Lay on both sides of the Atlantic by emphasizing Lay's unique body and the role it played in his abolitionism. Vaux worked as a tireless promoter of his book, distributing it to individuals and institutions in North America and England.[62] Many of those who read Vaux's biography

[60] Ibid., 38–39 footnote. This note cites Lay's prescient work regarding prison reform and notes that Vaux continues this work by advocating for the reform of the penal code throughout the United States. This note (along with the fact that he wrote this biography and one of Anthony Benezet) makes clear that Vaux viewed himself as the legatee of these early Quaker humanitarians.

[61] Durbach, *Spectacle of Deformity*, 18–19; On the varied terms used in England to refer to disabled people, as well as some of the nuances between terms like "infirm" versus "able-bodied," see David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 18–24.

[62] Richard M. Smith, Letter to Roberts Vaux, May 17, 1816, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 13, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; B. Williams, "Memorandum from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery" December 28, 1815, Collection 684, Box 5, Folder 18, Historical

of Lay felt compelled to write to him with their reactions. Vaux received a letter from

West Chester, Pennsylvania, to tell him how popular the biography was in that town,

assuring Vaux that he "would smile to see the eagerness to get hold of Benj. Lay. It has

not been at home a week since I published a few extracts. When it gets into a

neighbourhood, it goes through. And one or two are anxiously waiting its return."[63] The

London printer W. Phillips reprinted the biography a year after its original publication,

thereby disseminating it to a British audience.[64] From there, the book traveled further east

into continental Europe; in 1821 Vaux received news that the Imperial Philanthropic

Society of St. Petersburg, Russia, planned to translate the *Memoirs of Lay and Sandiford*

into Russian.[65] Given that Vaux's 1817 biography of Anthony Benezet was translated

into French in 1824, it seems likely that Benjamin Lay's life story reached reading

audiences well beyond the Quaker stronghold communities in Pennsylvania and England,

filtering to both the western and eastern parts of continental Europe.[66] Furthermore, many

remembered this book as one of Vaux's most important contributions even after his

death. Thomas Pettit feted Vaux, his philanthropic work, and his historical research in an

1840 address to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania—an institution where Vaux had

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Society of Pennsylvania; Timothy Pickering, "Timothy Pickering Letter to Roberts Vaux," March 15, 1817, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Thomas James, "Thomas James Letter to Roberts Vaux," May 22, 1817, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. James served as the secretary for the American Philosophical Society and wrote this letter of thanks to Vaux for his gift of the Lay and Sandiford biographies to the Society's library.

[63] Charles Menci, "Charles Menci Letter to Roberts Vaux," April 14, 1818, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 15, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The handwriting on the signature is difficult to discern, but based on a close examination of two letters from this author, it appears that his last name is "Menci," though it could be Minei or Manei.

[64] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 1816.

[65] Peter S. De Ponceau, "Peter S. Da Ponceau Letter to Roberts Vaux," September 29, 1821, Collection 684, Box 2, Folder 9, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[66] Roberts Vaux, *Mémoires sur le vie d'Antoine Bénezet* (Londres: J.B.G. Vogel, 1824).

served as a vice president. In this almost-hagiographical address, Pettit argued that Vaux wrote biographies of Lay and Sandiford to "rescue from unmerited forgetfulness the names and services of men who, he thought, deserved to be held in honourable estimation," and that "this purpose was faithfully and agreeably accomplished" by his book.[67]

Even hostile reviewers of this biography found Vaux's Enlightenment-influenced presentation of Lay's physical form and its effects on other aspects of his life to be one of the book's most compelling aspects. In 1821 the English journal *Eclectic Review* extensively recapped Vaux's descriptions of Lay's many dramatic anti-slavery demonstrations. At the end of the review, the author described Benjamin as "low in stature, deformed in his proportions, and wore a 'large white beard.' His wife was cast in the same irregular mould, – was short and misshapen."[68] This reviewer's condensation of Vaux's physical description made both Benjamin and Sarah Lay's bodies seem more aberrant by using more overtly negative language like "deformed," "irregular," and "misshapen." This marginalizing and dehumanizing diction suggested that Lay's body constituted his defining characteristic, and in doing so, solidified the connection between his outlandish behavior and his disability.[69] Yet, in spite of this wider transatlantic

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[67] Hon. Thomas M. Pettit, *"Memoir of Roberts Vaux, One of the Vice Presidents of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," in Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, 1840), 121.

[68] "Art. IX. Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford; Two of the Earliest Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved: Africans," *The Eclectic Review* 15 (March 1821): 278–79.

[69] The reviewer's hostility toward Vaux's book and negative tone toward Lay might have stemmed from a conflict between the Eclectic Review's editors and those of the Philadelphia Register and National Recorder over a negative review the former published about Roberts Vaux's biography of Anthony Benezet. See "Anthony Benezet: Eclectic Review v. Roberts Vaux," *The Philadelphia Register, and National Recorder* 1, no. 16 (1819): 257–59. The Eclectic Review took issue with Vaux's suggestion that

context of competing British and North American publications, the more overtly judgmental words in this text made Lay's bodily abnormalities a more vivid part of his representation.

As the sectional crisis and tension of slavery deepened in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Benjamin Lay became increasingly marketable and symbolically significant for ardent abolitionists. For Benjamin Lundy, publishing material about Benjamin Lay in his journal, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, furthered his goal of immediate abolitionism. In 1830, Lundy wrote a profile of Lay and praised Kneass' engraving for giving a clear presentation of Lay's body because it helped his readers better understand Lay's abolitionist work. In fact, Lundy placed such trust in the accuracy of Kneass' portrait, he claimed that "the engraved likeness, ([…] is believed to be strictly correct.)"[70] Lundy felt it so particularly important to present any discussion of Lay's life alongside an image of him that in the month *before* he published his profile on Lay, he explained that he had delayed his "Biographical Sketches" feature because he had "not yet been able to procure the engraved likeness of Benjamin Lay. It will be prepared in season for my number, when the 'Biographical Sketches' will be resumed, and regularly continued."[71] Lundy's hesitation to talk about Lay without presenting his physical form (albeit without much commentary), reveals that by the mid-nineteenth century, Benjamin

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Benezet's anti-slavery writing formed the foundation of Thomas Clarkson's own anti-slavery advocacy in England. More generally, this article, in quibbling over something seemingly so minor as the origins of Clarkson's anti-slavery advocacy, highlights the transatlantic tensions between British and American literary communities – a dynamic likely exacerbated by the recently completed War of 1812 between the U.S. and Britain.

[70] Benjamin Lundy, ed., "Biographical Sketches: Benjamin Lay," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, Third Series, 1, no. 3 (June 1830): 39.

[71] Benjamin Lundy, ed., "The Biographical Sketches.," *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, Third Series, 1, no. 2 (May 1830): 23.

Lay's abolitionist work and his physical non-conformity had become inseparable and unintelligible without the other.

When Lundy finally published his profile of Lay, he presented Lay first and foremost as a prominent voice of anti-slavery protest—an identity that validated Lundy's own abolitionist agenda. Drawing on extensive extracts from Vaux's biography, Lundy's synopsis followed Vaux's organization by beginning with details of Lay's life in England, then detailing his move to Barbados, and then following that section with a brief mention of Lay's body. Lundy pointed the reader to the reproduction of Kneass' print at the beginning of the issue of the journal and the echoed Vaux's assessment that Lay's "'physical organization was not less remarkable than the qualities of his mind were rare and extraordinary.'"[72] Lundy then excerpted Vaux's descriptions of Lay's most famous anti-slavery demonstrations and his publication of *All Slave-Keepers, Apostates*, concluding the article with an assessment of the impact of Vaux's book. To these ends, Lundy confirmed the increasing interest that Vaux's biography had generated throughout the Atlantic world, noting, "since the publication of his memoirs, they have even been sought for by Europeans, and translated into foreign languages."[73] Lay took on an important symbolic significance within the immediatist context of Lundy's *Genius of Universal Emancipation*—a publication where William Lloyd Garrison wrote at the time of this article's publication in the early 1830s.[74] Thus, Benjamin Lay had become a figure whose strident abolitionism, catalyzed by the ostracism created by his non-normative

[72] Lundy, "Biographical Sketches: Benjamin Lay," 32, 39.
[73] Ibid., 40.
[74] Molly Oshatz, *Slavery and Sin: The Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism: The Fight against Slavery and the Rise of Liberal Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23.

body, anticipated the increasingly prominent and political calls for ending slavery in the United States that Lundy and Garrison championed.

After the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865, Benjamin Lay continued to appear in print; these biographical sketches, however, tended to highlight his aberrance and quirks rather than his anti-slavery work. These thematic emphases reflected the continued rise of the medical profession and its empirical, marginalizing approach to disability, as well as the emerging fascination with displays of freakish and aberrant bodies.[75] The first post-emancipation appearance Lay made in the United States happened in 1870 in the Philadelphia-based journal, *Friends' Intelligencer*. Similar to the profile of Lay published in 1856 in *The Friend*, this article included Lay as part of a series of biographical profiles of important Quakers "commend[ed] […] particularly to the attention of our younger readers."[76] Perhaps because it aimed to appeal to a younger audience that would likely be more interested in Lay's aberrant body rather than his strident anti-slavery advocacy, this article emphasized Lay's bodily difference right from the outset of the article and framed it in a more sensationalistic manner than any previous presentation. Reiterating Lay's increasingly common reputation as "one of the most eccentric individuals in appearance and action of whom we have any account," the author

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[75] On the burgeoning practice of exhibiting "freaks" and "human oddities" within the United States, see Eric Fretz, "P.T. Barnum's Theatrical Selfhood and the Nineteenth-Century Culture of Exhibition"; James W. Cook, Jr., "Of Men, Missing Links, and Nondescripts: The Strange Career of P.T. Barnum's 'What Is It?' Exhibition"; Bernth Lindfors, "Ethnological Show Business: Footlighting the Dark Continent"; Christopher A. Vaughan, "Ogling Igorots: The Politics and Commerce of Exhibiting Cultural Otherness, 1898-1913," in Garland-Thomson, *Freakery*, 97–107; 139–157; 207–218; 219–233. For analysis of the presentation of aberrant bodies in the medical context of anatomical museums, see Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Rina Knoeff and Robert Zwijnenberg, eds., *The Fate of Anatomical Collections* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015).

[76] "SKETCHES OF FRIENDS, Historical, Biographical, and Anecdotal: Introductory," *Friends' Intelligencer* 26, no. 24 (December 18, 1869): 664.

then referenced Kneass's print of Lay (though it was not republished along with the article) to compare him to Shakespeare's description of Richard III as "'Deformed, disfigured; sent into this breathing world scarce half made up.'" Following this literary allusion, the author provided a condensed description of Lay's physical form that drew from Vaux. To increase the sensationalism, however, this description added a number of adverbs to the description of his body that made Lay seem more bizarre and grotesque than he had come across in previous descriptions. Lay remained "A dwarf in stature with a hunch back and projecting chest," but despite his small size, he became massive in other ways. Lay's head became "disproportionately large," his face "exceedingly homely," his beard "hung profusely," and his legs "ridiculously thin." The profusion of modifiers in this description made clear that Lay fell well outside of the bodily norms; his physical aberrance was impossible to ignore both during his lifetime and over a century after his death.

Yet, in keeping with Enlightenment notions of the potential to overcome disability, the author offered a bit of redemption for Lay. "Although," the author conceded, Lay had been "'cheated of feature by dissembling nature,' this curious specimen of humanity was endowed with excellent good and strong natural abilities."[77] By framing Lay's positive personal characteristics as a type of redemption for his unappealing physical appearance, this author reinforced the established narrative that his bizarre body served as the catalyst for his vociferous anti-slavery advocacy. "Because of his singular appearance, and persistent labors among all classes of people," the author

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[77] "SKETCHES OF FRIENDS, Historical, Biographical, and Anecdotal: Benjamin Lay," *Friends' Intelligencer* 26, no. 46 (January 15, 1870): 721.

concluded, "it is probable that nearly every man and woman, and almost every child in the State, was familiar with Benjamin Lay, the friend and protector of the despised and oppressed."[78] Therefore, by contrasting this positive evaluation with the initially negative allusion to Shakespeare's *Richard III*, the author also implied that an individual's bodily, mental, or behavioral aberrance did not inherently prevent him or her from overcoming those characteristics and making valuable contributions to his or her society.

Benjamin Lay in Contemporary Historiography

In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the Enlightenment-inspired notion that Lay's aberrant body indicated his eccentricity had become solidified; since then, it has shaped (and continues to shape) narratives of his life. The one contemporary historical work to address Lay's bodily difference using the terminology and framework of disability is Betty Adelson's survey of dwarfs and their historical experience. Although Adelson straightforwardly treats Lay as a dwarf, her narrative contains echoes of the nineteenth-century accounts of his life that emphasize the ways in which Lay overcame the limitations of his bodily difference. Adelson treats Henry Dawkins' print of Lay as an objective presentation of his bodily form and interprets its many reproductions in etchings and engravings as a sign of Lay's popularity rather than as evidence of the social construction of his disability and how his bodily difference became fused with his abolitionist activity. Similarly, Adelson characterized Lay's anti-slavery demonstrations as "ingenious," recounting his protest of exposing his leg in the snow in front of the

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[78] Ibid., 725.

meetinghouse, but not addressing how this demonstration might have connected to his disability.[79] Within the context of her wider book, Lay becomes noteworthy simply because he is a dwarf and received contemporary and historical recognition for his anti-slavery work.

From the perspective of Quaker historians, Lay's disability also remains a prominent part of his identity, yet one that carries more negative connotations. For instance, J. William Frost declared "[t]hat Lay's antislavery writings and tactics were singular cannot be gainsaid," yet he wondered if this radical behavior indicated that Lay was merely "eccentric or mentally disturbed? After all, an unbalanced person can be very perceptive on moral issues."[80] Frost's question here points to the tacit issue of Lay's disability and what role, if any, it played in his abolitionism. Strikingly, in posing this question, Frost repeats and reinforces the connection between bodily difference and mental illness or imbalance, suggesting that regardless of whether Lay was "eccentric" or "mentally disturbed," he was unquestionably abnormal and an outsider.

This belief about the link between the mind and body, and the belief that a disabled body visually indicated the presence of a disabled mind, are ones that have shaped narratives about disabled people and bodies since the Enlightenment. The scientific and philosophical justifications of Enlightenment authors like John Locke, Denis Diderot, and Adam Smith lent validity to characterizing bodily and mental differences as "abnormal" and cast these aberrations as marginal conditions within

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[79] Betty M. Adelson, *The Lives of Dwarfs: Their Journey from Public Curiosity toward Social Liberation* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 55–59.

[80] J. William Frost, "Quaker Antislavery: From Dissidence to Sense of the Meeting," *Quaker History* 101, no. 1 (2012): 23, doi:10.1353/qkh.2012.0004.

society.[81] Yet, as this chapter has argued, Lay's distinctive body was not a mere side-note nor an indication of his imbalanced mind. Instead, Lay's disability played a central role in his abolitionism because it empowered him to proffer unpopular opinions during his lifetime and served as a definitive characteristic that his many biographers tacitly used as a means to make sense of his otherwise inscrutable and illogical behavior.

This fascination with Lay as a singular figure—bodily and behaviorally— continues into the present for the same reasons that he has attracted so much attention since his own lifetime in the eighteenth century. An aspiring screenwriter recently wrote a screenplay about Benjamin Lay's life, calling him "a zealous man" who "was impulsive and valued sticking firmly to what he believed God had told him." In spite of the fact that he "wasn't perfect," the screenwriter hoped that "should a movie ever be produced from this screenplay, that the Quakers will admire him as I do."[82] Similarly, an art student in 2012 selected Benjamin Lay as the subject of a portrait assignment to depict some important figure in Philadelphia history. Though not over-emphasizing the totality of Lay's body and connecting Lay with his abolitionist advocacy, the artist borrowed from the visual language surrounding Lay, particularly his face and beard, that had been established and filtered down from William Williams to Henry Dawkins to William Kneass.

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[81] C. F. Goodey, *A History of Intelligence and "Intellectual Disability": The Shaping of Psychology in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011), pt. 8. For the full elaboration of this argument, see Chapter 1 in this dissertation.

[82] Patricia Cotter, "Letter to David Wermeling," July 2010, Personal collection of Abington Monthly Meeting Overseer, David Wermeling, Abington, PA.

Figure 3.3. Kellian Quinn, "Benjamin Lay," 2012.
Available at http://kellianquinn.deviantart.com/art/Benjamin-Lay-306245500

The persistence of these images reflect a long-term historical fascination with Lay that has heretofore been treated as the product of his "eccentric" protests against slavery well before such advocacy became widely socially acceptable. However, at the root of this fascination lies Lay's bodily difference that has remained an undercurrent in the visual and written presentations of him and his life since he lived in the eighteenth century.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Benjamin Lay as a Disabled Activist

By bringing his bodily difference to fore of his life and legacy, we can more clearly see that Lay's disability functioned as a central part of his own and later abolitionists' methods to draw attention to their cause and work to ameliorate the plight of enslaved Africans throughout the Atlantic world. The significance of Lay's aberrant body and the role it played in his anti-slavery became more prominent as slavery declined in the Atlantic world during the nineteenth century. These constructions of his disability, however, also became clearer as notions of "normalcy" and sciences that aimed to understand the inner working of the mind became more prominent and widely accepted. Although later nineteenth- and twentieth-century presentations of Lay sometimes presented him as a "freak of nature" and fascinating for his unique body, many other presentations suggested that a non-normative body did not inherently disqualify someone from making a positive impact on the world. Such bifurcated interpretations of Lay's life and the significance of his body speak to the legacy that the Enlightenment's dualistic notions of disability have left to the modern Atlantic world.

As Lay made clear in his own lifetime and as those who wrote about him after his death echoed, he experienced intense social ostracism and marginalization because of his strange body and behaviors. The fact that Lay's own self-presentation established many of the tropes that later biographers would use to frame the trajectory and meaning of his life reinforced the fact that he had agency within his own lifetime. All those who wrote about or painted portraits of Lay in the late-eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries responded to, adapted, and reinterpreted the meaning Lay established about the

role his bodily difference played in his abolitionist work. Later presentations of Lay's body and its influence on his abolitionism became increasingly marginalizing and sensationalizing over time as his abolitionist crusade achieved fruition in the mid-nineteenth century and as Enlightenment notions of the "objectively" marginal status of people with disabilities became more widely embraced throughout Atlantic culture. Nevertheless, the omnipresence of Lay's physical otherness in these depictions speaks both to the ways his body empowered him to fight the immoral and destructive effects of Atlantic slavery as well as to the consistent (and consistently overlooked) ways those in the Atlantic world have used concepts about disability to understand the causes and meaning of dramatic historical change.

Chapter 4

'may we all my beloved friend be willing

to descend as into the Valley of pleading'[1]:

Rhetoric versus Reality at Quaker Insane Asylums in the Atlantic World

Writing within the first decade of the Retreat's operation in 1806, York resident

and Romantic poet Charlotte Richardson penned an ode about the new Quaker-run

asylum in her town. Richardson emphasized the institution's immediate beneficial impact

on patients, claiming that the Retreat had "Bid pensive Melancholy cease to mourn /

Calm Reason re-assume her seat; / Each intellectual power return."[2] Founded in 1792 and

opened in 1796 by William Tuke, a prominent Quaker from Yorkshire, the Retreat was a

direct response to the death of Hannah Mills, a Quaker widow from Leeds who had been

institutionalized at the York Asylum. In her last few weeks of life, members of the York

Monthly Meeting had been barred from visiting Mills and providing her religious counsel

during the last few weeks of her life.[3] In order to prevent such tragedies from recurring,

Tuke established an institution grounded in both Quaker doctrine and Enlightenment-

inspired, empirically grounded ideas about "moral treatment" from French psychiatrist

Philippe Pinel. Combined with minimal restraint and attention to the patients' emotional

states, this humane regimen of "kind and compassionate firmness," Pinel argued, would

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[1] William Forster Jr., Letter to Thomas Scattergood, November 21, 1803, Collection 1100, Volume 4, Number 73, Haverford College Quaker Collection`, Haverford, PA.

[2] Charlotte Richardson, "Ode on Visiting the Retreat near York, A House Erected by the Society of Friends for the Reception of Insane Persons," n.d., MS BOX 28/1, Book of Extracts compiled by Mary Andrews, 1812, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London

[3] Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 13–15.

dramatically improve the likelihood of curing people labeled insane.[4]

Yet at its core, the Retreat was a distinctively Quaker institution. In its first three decades of operation roughly 96% of all patients were either Quakers themselves or were closely connected with the Religious Society of Friends.[5] As a result of this demographic composition, Quaker theology about the "inner light" of God within all people played a major role in how Tuke structured the institution's treatment regimen and how he marketed it to a Quaker audience. Meeting for Worship played a central role in the lives of residents at the York Retreat and the institution's Annual Reports emphasized how the staff prioritized kindness and non-violence as the ideal methods to help those residents regain their sanity. The Retreat was the first Quaker-run insane asylum in the Atlantic world and spawned a near-replica in 1813 in Frankford, Pennsylvania: an institution that came to be known as the Friends Asylum.

Although both the Retreat at York and Friends Asylum outside Philadelphia gained renown for their use and successful publicizing of "moral treatment" within and without their walls, Quakers had expressed concerns about the well-being of their co-religionists' mental states since first establishing their sect in the mid-seventeenth century. George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, wrote in an epistle in 1669 that "Friends [should] have and provide a house for them that be distempered." This suggestion led members of the London Six Weeks Meeting in 1671 to declare that "The Friends do seek some place convenient in or about the City wherein they may put any person that may be distracted or troubled in mind, that so they may not be put amongst the world's people or

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[4] Ibid., 31.
[5] Ibid., 174, Table 8.1.

run about the streets."[6] While notions of "moral treatment" had not yet been articulated

and Fox did not make any statements about *how* Quakers should go about treating this

"distemper," a sense that Quakers should look out for the welfare of those perceived to

have mental aberrations had been forged by his writings and those of the Six Weeks

Meeting.[7] Moreover, Samuel Tuke, the grandson of the founder of the Retreat and a

major publicist for the institution, was well acquainted with Fox's cursory writings on

this topic, having compiled and published selections from Fox's *Epistles* in 1825.[8]

So once Quakers began to employ "moral treatment" in their institutions and

began to receive praise for their humane approach, what did that mean for those whose

bodies and minds were the subjects of these treatments? Scholarly debate over the

importance of the Retreat and Friends Asylum has centered on whether "moral treatment"

actually improved life for the patients or merely substituted physical repression for an

equally oppressive psychological form of punishment. Those who reject the celebratory

narrative of the Retreat's "moral treatment" and its sweeping influence have explored the

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[6] George Fox and Henry J. Cadbury, *George Fox's "Book of Miracles"* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 70; Fox frequently attended the Six Weeks Meeting, which were "strictly local business meetings [...] which met eight times a year on Tuesdays and according to Fox was 'the prime meeting of the city' [....] The Six Weeks meeting was a limited joint meeting of men and women which had important financial functions and still continues," see George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1924), 733.

[7] Amanda Lawrence, "Quakerism and Approaches to Mental Affliction: A Comparative Study of George Fox and William Tuke" (M.Phil, University of Birmingham, 2010), chap. 3, p. 68, http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/548/. Lawrence does not specify what particular type of mental aberration Fox might have been describing when using the term "distemper," other than to indicate some type of mental illness. However, Lawrence does suggest that Fox's desire to protect those displaying some type of "distemper" was likely intended to protect all Quakers whose public ministry and theological beliefs might have brought them persecution during the religious turmoil of Restoration era England.

[8] George Fox, *Selections from the Epistles, &c. of George Fox*, ed. Samuel Tuke (York: W. Alexander, 1825). The particular passage about "distemper" appeared in this edition of the book on p. 192.

ways patients resisted these allegedly ameliorative methods.[9] While scholars have

debated the extent to which these two groundbreaking Quaker-run insane asylums

actually adhered to their lofty goals, this chapter will place such developments in a wider

context and explore the transatlantic connections and exchanges between the Retreat and

Friends Asylum. Many scholars have noted that the Retreat served as the template for the

founding of a parallel institution outside of Philadelphia, yet studies have remained

[9] Foucault argued that the role of religion in the Retreat was especially repressive and served "to place the insane individual within a moral element," where "he will be kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression" (244-245). While this critique of the Retreat challenged the humane nature of "moral treatment," it treated religion very homogeneously and ignored the distinctively Quaker elements of the institution. See, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1965), chap. 9. Digby, whose monograph on the Retreat remains the definitive account of the institution, worked to correct Foucault's homogenizing view. She argues that "Foucault ignores his own warning 'let us not forget we are in a Quaker world' in failing to recognize that for Quakers It was part of normal life to accept a moral injunction to work. For Quaker patients the path to recovery and the resumption of the habits of the outside world might therefore include work." She did, however, prove very trusting of the Tukes' assertions that the predominantly Quaker composition of the institution made it more amenable to patients, asserting, "in this context alien values were not imposed on patients since they share the same assumptions as their therapists." See Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, 64. Porter rightly notes that while Foucault rejected the positive aspects of "moral treatment," he treated Tuke's claims too trustingly and based his arguments on the ideas that "the 'moral therapy' of the Tukes (kindness, humanity, reason) marks an authentic break in England, much as the reforms of Pinel in France. [...] I believe, however, that to see the Tukes as constituting a major discontinuity is uncritically to accept their own propaganda and that of nineteenth-century reformers who routinely blackened their predecessors." See, Roy Porter, "Foucault's Great Confinement," *History of the Human Sciences* 3, no. 1 (February 1, 1990): 50, doi:10.1177/095269519000300107. Given the wide chronological scope of her argument, Borsay touches on the Retreat on briefly. In her argument, however, she echoes much of the Tukes' own claims about the humane nature of their treatment in the institution. "This humanitarian prototype," Borsay asserts, "lay at the heart of the reform campaign, which in pressing for public institutions brought together Benthamite Radicals with their utilitarian goal of social order and Evangelical Tories with their paternalist interest in the welfare of the lower orders." See, Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 69–70. For a synoptic overview of "Madness" as a cultural construct, see Petteri Pietikäinen, *Madness: A History* (London: Routledge, 2015), chap. 5. Pietikäinen stresses the distinctive Quaker community that formed and constituted the Retreat during its earliest years. His account, however, uncritically emphasizes the positive aspects of "moral treatment," noting that " As a rule, patients were to be treated with kindness in humanity, even if there were also punishments for recalcitrant and disobedient patients. Compared to most other establishments, mechanical restraints for use less, and all drugs were prohibited at least during the early years of the Retreat. What surely have positive effects on the mental health of the patients was that they were offered different kinds of activities." Pietikäinen draws on some sources from "former patients," and notes that " they were often thankful for the humane care they received at the Retreat. [...] The Retreat was a rather luxurious madhouse in that it was purpose built in a well laid out the state of 11 acres. There were no window bars, no forbidding walls, no chains and restraints."

confined to the limits of each particular nation-state, either examining either the Retreat in the English context or studying Friends Asylum within the boundaries of the United States.[10] By examining the way that Friends Asylum and Retreat engaged in the wider transatlantic intellectual exchanges of the Enlightenment, this chapter will illuminate how dualistic Enlightenment notions of insanity as a marginalizing and pitiable, yet curable, condition informed the treatment regimen in York and Philadelphia. Administrators of both institutions corresponded regularly, sharing empirically grounded observations about how best to "manage" those perceived as insane. Through these exchanges, asylum managers learned from one another's successes and sought to avoid one another's errors.

This chapter will also illuminate how patient resistance impacted both the Retreat and Friends Asylum's public presentation and marketing of "moral treatment." In part, scholars have ignored this topic because sources from the patients themselves are quite scarce, making it difficult to access their voices. But by reading the correspondence and case files of the Retreat and Friends Asylum's administrators against the grain, we gain insight into the ways individuals confined in these institutions engaged with and challenged these treatment methods in order to preserve their autonomy and gain independence even in a rigidly structured asylum.

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[10] For the English national perspective, see Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*; Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750*. For an American perspective, see Charles L. Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 136. Cherry discusses the foundation of Friends Asylum within the context of the Burlington Monthly Meeting; For brief analysis of how the Retreat influenced Friends Asylum, see Patricia D'Antonio, *Founding Friends: Families, Staff, And Patients at the Friends Asylum in Early Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lehigh University Press, 2006), 34, 53–54, 57–58, 98, 131–132, 161. D'Antonio stresses only narrow aspects of influence and does not closely explore the ways the institutions corresponded. She does note, however, that the Retreat influenced Friends Asylum's philosophy, architecture, concepts of moral treatment, policies for families of residents, use of restraint, and eventual embrace of a medical model of treatment.

Driven by a desire to ensure the success of their institutions both financially and in terms of reputation, this chapter will argue that both the Tukes and the governors of Friends Asylum constantly struggled to balance the lofty, Enlightenment and Quaker-inspired ideals they used to publicly present their institutions with the messy realities of governing an insane asylum and its inmates. First, the chapter will dissect how the Tukes emphasized the benign, Enlightenment-inspired qualities of the Retreat to lure financial support and obtain public praise for their institution. This mission and its rhetorical framing proved hugely influential on the North American Quakers who would go on to found Friends Asylum in 1813. As both institutions sought to establish firm financial footing in their initial decades of operation, the administrators of Friends Asylum co-opted the fundraising and publicity strategies they saw at the Retreat. Second, the chapter will examine how the marketing of "moral treatment" within these insane asylums to an overwhelmingly Quaker audience on both sides of the Atlantic downplayed continuities with earlier "retrograde" methods, such as the use of physical restraints and cold-water baths. Finally, this chapter will explore the ways that residents in these asylums claimed agency by resisting purportedly Enlightened and Quaker-inspired treatment methods. Simply because the people in these institutions were overwhelmingly Quaker did not mean that they embraced treatment methods inspired by the Quaker practices of "laboring with" recalcitrant Friends or attending Meeting for Worship and practicing the "accustomed modes of paying homage to [their] Maker."[11] In all of these areas, the transatlantic network that bound these Friends together and introduced them to these

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[11] Samuel Tuke, *Description of the Retreat: An Institution near York for Insane Persons of the Society of Friends* (York: W. Alexander, 1813), 161.

coalescing Enlightenment notions about insanity also helped facilitate the transfer of information about publicity, fundraising, successful methods for "moral treatment," as well as ways to address the resistance put forth by those deemed insane.

Defining and Marketing Moral Treatment at the Retreat

From its inception, the Retreat's administrators, and the Tuke family in particular, strove to establish the institution's identity as solidly grounded in both empirical, "enlightened" science and in Quaker values. These characteristics, which appeared in correspondence to and from the Retreat as well as in official publications, would make the institution especially appealing to a transatlantic Quaker audience that was "more rational than mystical, more humanitarian than evangelical."[12] But before we can understand both why the Retreat and its use of "moral treatment" proved so appealing and led to its growing enrollment and reputation in its first few decades of operation, it is vital to understand the wider context of how those deemed "insane" were treated and cared for in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. This section explains how traditional European, particularly English, asylums operated in order to make clear how Tuke made the Retreat a distinctive institution through his fusion of Pinel's concepts and Quaker religious and cultural values. Examining Tuke's correspondence and marketing methods during the Retreat's early years, this section illuminates how Tuke played a catalytic role in popularizing moral treatment, and by extension, emerging Enlightenment concepts of insanity. Then, the next section illustrates how North American Quakers, in

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[12] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 201.

particular Thomas Scattergood, helped transfer the Retreat's institutional structure,

treatment methods, and advertising techniques across the Atlantic to create Friends

Asylum—an institution outside of Philadelphia that emulated the Retreat as its founders

and administrators worked to establish its reputation and solidify its financial footing.

Prior to the advent of moral treatment and the Tukes' successful popularization of

these more "humane" and "Enlightened" methods of caring for those labeled insane, most

individuals who fell into this category were cared for by their local communities; only a

small percentage of these individuals lived and receiving treatment in specialized insane

asylums. Michel Foucault provided the classic interpretation of the totalizing rise of

insane asylums in Louis XIV's absolutist France—a development he called "The Great

Confinement." In this process, vagabonds, beggars, paupers, as well as those deemed

insane and idiots, all became incarcerated within institutions, such as Paris' *Hôpital

Général* and others that sprang up throughout French provinces. The cultural impact of

this "Great Confinement" led individuals who fell into these marginalized groups to

become widely perceived as subhuman and portrayed in popular culture as animalistic

and barbaric; such sentiments further validated their continued imprisonment and the

attendant harsh treatments of isolating and shackling them.[13] Foucault's presentation of

this "Great Confinement," however, vastly oversimplifies and homogenizes the

multifaceted ways Atlantic societies cared for individuals perceived as "insane" within

their communities.[14]

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[13] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 38–64.

[14] Roy Porter succinctly highlights the array of responses European and North American nations had to insanity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In particular, Porter highlights Russia, which had no state-sponsored insane asylums until the 1850s, as well as England, which maintained a patchwork

In England specifically, insane asylums occupied a small fraction of how "insane" individuals received care in the early modern era. In the seventeenth century, English poor law created a system whereby local parishes provided financial support to families whose kin—whether they were blind, senile, physically aberrant, or considered insane—constituted part of the "needy and worthy poor" and therefore became eligible for "household relief." This decentralized approach toward charity for impoverished as well as physically and intellectually aberrant people meant that England developed over 15,000 separate administrative units that largely enabled those individuals to remain integrated within the community. As the seventeenth century proceeded, England saw the steady growth of almshouses, which began to centralize the distribution of funds to care for these indigent populations, but still largely allowed them to remain part of the community and live with their families.[15]

Only in the eighteenth century did England begin to experience the growth of public and private prisons as well as specialized hospitals focused on insanity; as these insane asylums became more numerous, so too did they develop a public reputation as sites of abuse, mistreatment, and immorality. In the first half of the eighteenth century,

system of local, parish-funded relief for the allegedly insane, and only passed national legislation that provided state funds for insane asylums in the early nineteenth century. See, Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 93–100; Gerald Grob provides a concise overview of the various ways North American colonies cared for individuals deemed insane. In the seventeenth century, families and religious organizations cared for their "insane" relatives and parishioners on the local level. It was not until the early eighteenth century that North American colonies began to develop specialized institutions for dependent individuals. Beginning with almshouses, which accepted a heterogeneous mix of aged, infirm, impoverished, and intellectually aberrant people, over the course of that century, places like Philadelphia (1742), New York (1771), and Virginia (1769) founded institutions that specialized in medically-focused care for people deemed "insane." See, Gerald N. Grob, *The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 12–21.

[15] Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 14–18.

England saw the establishment of seven new specialized hospitals, some of which, most notably Bethlem Hospital in London, began to make special provisions for those categorized as "insane." Many of these newly-established insane asylums occupied buildings that were not designed to treat those declared insane, meaning that some of the proprietors of these institutions resorted to "chains, manacles, and physical coercion to manage" their residents. However, these harsh treatments did not characterize all English madhouses of the eighteenth century, though this reputation for brutal treatment and cruelty became a leitmotif of literature and pamphlets that "repeatedly emphasized the sinister and corrupt possibilities offered by the secrecy of the madhouse, particularly for the illicit confinement of the sane." These public scandals spurred Parliamentary investigations into the conditions in London madhouses in 1763 and ultimately led to the passage of the 1774 Madhouses Act. This law required licensing for madhouse proprietors and allowed the Royal College of Physicians to inspect the madhouses, though this group had no enforcement power to sanction or punish those who they found to be mistreating the residents of their asylums. By the late eighteenth century, these insane asylums still constituted a small percentage of how those deemed insane received treatment (most still remained under the care of the local parish authorities).[16] In the eyes of philanthropists like the Tukes, however, the allegedly brutal and inhumane treatment in these madhouses provided a strong impetus to create an alternative institution grounded on principles and methods that would remedy these abuses—something moral treatment promised to accomplish.

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[16] Ibid., 21–25.

In the Retreat's earliest years, the institution forged its positive reputation as a welcome antidote to traditional asylums via word of mouth amongst the Quaker community and through the Quaker transatlantic network of correspondence and travelling ministers. In 1799, for instance, William Tuke received a letter from a man in Sheffield, England, who had heard a "favourable account of the management of the institution" from his sister's friends. They thought that the Retreat could alleviate her "low state of Mind."[17] Even when families occasionally found the results of the Retreat's treatment unsatisfactory, they did not opt for traditional asylum care, but instead worked to continue their connection with the institution and keep their kin under the watchful eyes of the asylum's staff. This situation was the case for John Gibbins, who thought that his sister's "complaint is by no means removed [n]or does she appear to have rec'd much real benefit from her confinement a the Retreat," noting despondently that "since her return the disorder has grown worse." In spite of that deterioration, Gibbins and his sister's friends thought "she must return to the Retreat and should be glad to be informed if there is now room for her."[18] Statistical evidence about the Retreat's admissions corroborated how the institution gained immense popularity in its first decade of operation. The Retreat had fifteen residents by the end of its opening year in 1796; by the time the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting approved the creation of Friends Asylum in 1813, the Retreat housed over sixty people.[19] "The Utility of this Institution, and the

[17] Joseph Frith, Letter to William Tuke, August 26, 1799, RET 1/5/1/4, Incoming Correspondence, August 1799, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[18] John Gibbins, Letter to William Tuke, July 16, 1799, RET 1/5/1/4, Incoming Correspondence, July 1799, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[19] Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, fig. 9.1, p. 203; Although Tuke did not update the precise number of discharged patients for 1813, he did note that from 1796 to 1811, a total of 68 residents

comfortable accommodation which it affords," noted the Directors of the Retreat in their 1804 minutes, "are now generally known and acknowledged." As a result they felt it "unnecessary to mark any additional observations to recommend the Institution to the attention of Friends."[20] The exponential growth in the number of admissions by 1813 corroborated the Directors' impressions from a decade earlier: the Retreat's methods were popular, which helped to both establish a positive reputation for the institution and solidify its finances.

After the Retreat's positive reputation had begun to spread locally, the Tukes then communicated their success to a broader (eventually transatlantic) audience by emphasizing empirical evidence that proved the Retreat's impressive rate of curing patients. In a 1799 letter to contributors, for instance, the Directors reported that the five patients discharged from the Retreat in the past year, "most of them […] cases of long standing," had reentered society because they were "so far recovered as to render confinement unnecessary."[21] Quantifying both the overall number of individuals receiving treatment as well as tracking how "moral treatment" affected their lives provided ostensibly tangible proof to families and potential donors that the institution had successfully helped "[p]ersons […] so deranged in mind […] as to […] truly [be] objects

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had been discharged or had died while at the Retreat. These attrition numbers contrast with the 149 patients admitted in that same time, giving a clear sense of the growing population at the Retreat. See, Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 201–202.

[20] Directors of the Retreat, "Directors' Meeting Minutes" June 28, 1804, RET 1/1/1/1, Directors' Minute Book, 1792-1841, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[21] Directors of the Retreat, "General Meeting Minutes for Subscribers of the York Retreat" June 27, 1799, RET 1/1/1/1, Directors' Minute Book, 1792-1841, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

of tender sympathy and compassion."[22] By 1810, the Retreat had admitted a total of 154

individuals over its first fourteen years of operation. In that year's annual report, the

administrators proudly noted that over those years the institution had discharged 53

people as "recovered" and another 20 as "improved."[23] Deliberately constructing

categories for their "patients" that omitted any potential for regression or stagnation, the

administrators used these empirical statistics present the Retreat's treatment regime as

one that would almost *inevitably* lead to ameliorating conditions.

Based on the experience of admitting and treating patients in these early years, the

Retreat's Directors also began to quantify how quickly families and friends of people

deemed to be insane should commit them in order to facilitate recovery. Not only did this

technique serve to validate the Retreat's treatment methods, but it also cultivated more

potential patients. In the 1803 General Meeting Minutes for Subscribers, the Retreat's

administrators advised that those perceived as insane should be placed under the care of

the Retreat in the "early stages of the disorder; as the probability of recovery greatly

depends on this circumstance."[24] Grounding the institution's efficacy in empirical and

quantifiable evidence lent the Tuke family and the Retreat's Directors a sense of

professional expertise and helped establish institutional cachet. This approach became a

standard strategy used by other asylums in the early nineteenth century and spanned

beyond not only Quaker-run institutions but also institutions that did not employ "moral

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[22] *State of an Institution near York, Called The Retreat of Persons Afflicted with Disorders of the Mind.* ([York?], 1796), A2.

[23] *State of an Institution Near York: Called the Retreat, for Persons Afflicted with Disorders of the Mind* (York: W. Blanchard and Son, 1810), 5. This statistical table also noted that 24 people had died during those years while another 57 residents remained in the institution.

[24] Directors of the Retreat, "General Meeting Minutes for Subscribers of the York Retreat" 1803, RET 1/1/1/1, Directors' Minute Book, 1792-1841, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

treatment" as their method of treatment or highlight it as part of their institutional

identity.[25]

How did these apparent successes in using "moral treatment" reach a broader

public and persuade them of the Retreat's vanguard humanitarianism? In part, the Tuke

family released carefully crafted institutional publications that demonstrated how patients

benefitted from "moral treatment." The Retreat's first annual report sought to create an

aura of expertise, organizational acumen, and confidence in their (as yet unproven)

mission and methods. Beginning with excerpts from the founding documents, the first

State of The Retreat then listed the rules and regulations of the institution, focusing on the

funding structure for annuities, donations, and subscriptions. After explaining how

subscribers to the Retreat would have their names published in these annual reports, the

document then went on to detail the costs of treatment for "pauper" patients, the structure

of annual meetings, the rules for the succession of Directors, guidelines for admission to

the Retreat, and finally a statement on the physical condition of the facility.[26]

Financial concerns featured prominently in the Retreat's first annual report.

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[25] For examples of other asylums that used empirical evidence to highlight the success rates of early admission for people viewed as insane, see Morrill Wyman, *The Early History of the McLean Asylum for the Insane: A Criticism of the Report of the Massachusetts State Board of Health for 1877* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1877), 3. In this source, the author speculated that "the earlier removal of the insane to asylum probably much diminished the number who fell into this dreadful condition."; Similarly, in an 1836 report from the Vermont Asylum for the Insane, the Trustees noted that "it should be borne in mind that in the first three month of insanity, the chances of recovery by proper treatment are vastly greater than at any subsequent period. Insane persons should therefore on the first appearance of the disease, be placed under curative treatment." They echoed this message in their 1837 report when speculating, "If the present insane asylum of this State had received the benefits of a well-regulated asylum, within six months from their attack, at least three-fourths of them would probably have been restored to reason and usefulness, but are now a burden to their friends and community," see Joseph Draper, *The Vermont Asylum for the Insane: Its Annals for Fifty Years* (Brattleboro, Vermont: Hildreth & Fales, 1887), 28, 35.

[26] *State of an Institution near York*, 5–11. Individuals or Meetings that contributed over £100 were entitled "to the privilege of nominating one poor Patient at a time, on the lowest terms of admission." The lowest terms of admission were set at eight shillings per week (where there were twenty shillings to the pound).

Carefully outlining the return on investment that subscribers would receive, this report

sought to encourage individuals and Monthly Meetings to donate generously. Individuals

and Monthly Meetings that contributed at higher levels would have "the privilege of

nominating one poor Patient at a time, on the lowest terms of admission."[27] Because the

Retreat had not yet established a track record of successful "cures" for its residents, it

could not promote these achievements in its first annual report. In lieu of that feature,

which would become a centerpiece of later annual reports, this first publication sought

first and foremost to disclose and then shore up the institution's finances by appealing to

local Quakers' desire for secure investments as well as their sense of humanitarian

concern. Contributors to the Retreat, whether they gave "on a principle of Charity to the

poor" or "even from compassion to those in easy and affluent circumstances," would

receive five percent interest after the institution's first three years of operation.[28] Offering

such a strong return on investment proved appealing, and ultimately successful, given the

Quakers' stellar reputation for honesty and scrupulousness in their business dealing—an

identity grounded in Quaker books of discipline and which dated back to the seventeenth

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[27] Ibid., 5. The right to send a poor individual to the Retreat was reserved for Meetings that donated £100, individuals who donated £25, and £50 for anyone who invested in an annuity.

[28] Ibid., 12; Fundraising proved difficult for the Retreat in its first decade of operation, as the institution raised £5,346 form 1792 to 1801, whereas the Quaker-run Ackworth School in York raised £10,000 between 1778 and 1780. Once in operation, however, the Retreat drew contributions at a much brisker pace, as they received £6,709 from 1802 to 1811, and then £9,704 from 1811 to 1821. Most of the operating expenses of the institution were paid with fees taken from families of "pay patients," who could afford the listed cost of treatment at the Retreat. With a large number of "pauper patients" as well as extensive investment in capital improvements and new buildings, it was not until 1802 that the Retreat could meet their expenses with the income from pay patients alone. Therefore, in the Retreat's early years, the institution relied on charitable donations from individuals and from Meetings to meet their operating and debt expenses. Many of the contributors in these early years donated money without any expectation of return on investment; however, by 1821, the Retreat's managers had invested one-quarter of their charitable contributions into a "life annuity" that paid 5 percent interest. This wider financial context suggests that while the return on investment for contributors was appealing to many who gave charitably to the Retreat, the bulk of the gifts were not invested in this interest-bearing annuity. For an overview of the early financial situation of the Retreat, see Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, 18–21.

century.[29]

The Retreat's most important piece of marketing, however, appeared in 1813 when Samuel Tuke, the grandson of Retreat founder William Tuke, published the 227-page book, *Description of the Retreat*, which became the institution's most notable and widely circulated publication.[30] Throughout this book, Tuke stressed the influence of Enlightenment thought and respect for the natural rights of all human beings. Writing about the Retreat's distinctive treatment methods, Tuke echoed Philippe Pinel and claimed that "Neither chains nor corporal punishments are tolerated, on any pretext, in this establishment." Tuke further established the medical and scientific *bona fides* of the Retreat by referencing a host of well-respected physicians and early psychologists such as Pinel, as well as Alexander Crichton, Thomas Monro, and William Battie.[31] By grounding his own treatment methods in the work of other medical experts, Tuke sought to build credibility for the Retreat among a non-Quaker audience who shared his progressive Enlightenment vision that appeals to reason could empower people deemed insane to overcome their illness.

This careful crafting of the Retreat's progressive and Enlightenment-influenced treatment methods had clear marketing purposes: first, to persuade other Quakers that

[29] Frederick Barnes Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 58–59.

[30] The prominent York-based publisher, W. Alexander and Son's, who printed and sold a wide array of Quaker-themed texts, published Tuke's *Description of the Retreat*. While the records do not indicate how many copies of this text the Tuke family purchased to distribute to interested visitors, physicians, and the like, we do know that W. Alexander and Son's sold this book for 12 shillings. For additional Quaker-themed texts and their prices, see *Catalogues of Books Relating to Friends, on Sale, at W. Alexander and Son's, Castlegate, York* (York, England: W. Alexander and Son's, 1825), 10; According to the National Archive's "Currency Converter" website, the book's 12 shilling cost in 1825 would be equivalent to a price of £25.15 in 2005. See The National Archives, "Currency Converter," accessed January 10, 2016, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid.

[31] Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, ix, 205, 217, 221.

they should choose the Retreat over public insane asylums, and second, to raise money for the institution. To accomplish these goals, members of the Tuke family had stressed the fact that Quakerism played a central role in the Retreat's identity and treatment regimen. Samuel's father, Henry Tuke, had responded to an inquiry in 1801 about admitting a non-Quaker, rejecting the application on the grounds that the Retreat "is intended for is 'Persons professing with us.'" Although the institution was "not strictly confined to membership, but th[os]e professing with us," Henry Tuke stressed, "thou will easily perceive [that this situation] does not apply to the Case thou mentions."[32] William Tuke wrote a similar rejection letter a decade later, explaining that "admission of a young woman at the Retreat" who was "not a member of our Society cannot be complied with"; he instead redirected the petitioner to seek out a private asylum five miles east of York operated by two former Retreat employees.[33]

In his *Description*, Tuke reinforced these policies by including excerpts from the Retreat's founding documents, which declared that the institution "should be formed, wholly under the government of Friends, for the relief and accommodation of such Persons of all ranks." Once at the Retreat, Tuke explained that "many patients attend[ed] the religious meetings of the Society, held" off the asylum grounds in York. "A profound silence generally ensues" at these meetings, leading those who might be "much disposed to action," to instead "restrain their different propensities" and move closer, in the eyes of the asylum administrators, to recovering their sanity. In one of the most striking examples

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[32] Henry Tuke, Letter to Samuel West, January 5, 1801, Folder SC 187, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

[33] William Tuke, Letter to Thomas Wilkinson, June 30, 1811, Add MS 60580, Thomas Wilkinson Papers, Vol. III, Miscellaneous correspondence and verses; 1782-1827, Western Manuscripts Collection, British Library, London, UK.

in the *Description,* Tuke recounted the "Herculean" sized patient whose violent impulses were quelled by the Retreat staff as they sat "quietly beside him" and induced him to "listen with attention to the persuasions and arguments of the friendly visitor."[34] Tuke framed this event in distinctively Quaker terms; the anecdote recalled the Quaker practice of "laboring with" fellow Friends to help them overcome some difficulty or correct their inappropriate conduct.[35]

Samuel Tuke's *Description* circulated throughout the Atlantic world, raising the reputation of the Retreat amongst Quakers and non-Quakers and helping to garner additional financial support. Prominent Anglican cleric Sydney Smith wrote a review of Tuke's *Description* in an 1814 edition of the *Edinburgh Review* that linked the humane character of the institution with its Quaker foundations. "The Quakers always seem to succeed in any institution they undertake," and in the case of the Retreat, Smith believed that "they have set an example of courage, patience, and kindness, which cannot be too highly commended, or too widely diffused, and which we are convinced will gradually bring into repute a milder and better method of treating the insane."[36] By 1820, at least 3,250 copies of an abridged version of Tuke's *Description* had been published in

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[34] Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 27, 161, 146–147.

[35] This practice originated with Quakerism's founder, George Fox, in the late seventeenth century as a way to discipline the "'disorderly walkers' (2 Thess. 3:6) who did not behave in a manner Friends saw as consistent with the Truth." Fox drew inspiration for this practice from Biblical sources, most notably, Matthew 18. For a concise explanation of this background, see "Margery Post Abbott et al., eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Friends (Quakers)* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 4. For an explanation of how North American Quakers practiced "laboring with" fellow Friends via subcommittees within Monthly Meetings, see William McEnery Offutt, *Of "Good Laws" and "Good Men": Law and Society in the Delaware Valley, 1680-1710* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 209. For the modern Quaker interpretation of this practice, see Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, *Faith and Practice: A Book of Christian Discipline.* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1972), 181.

[36] Samuel Tuke and Charles Tylor, *Samuel Tuke: His Life, Work and Thoughts* (London: Headley Brothers, 1900), 48, 50, http://archive.org/details/cu31924081814455.

Pennsylvania and distributed to Monthly Meetings all throughout the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.[37]

Some of the contributions and correspondence that flowed into the Retreat after Tuke's 1813 book came from those evidently moved by his text, further revealing its efficacy as a piece of marketing. One gift signed from the "Friend of Humanity" pledged one hundred pounds to the Retreat, while another from an individual who signed as "Recluse" gave an undisclosed amount "in consequence of the pleasure recd. from the perusal of S. Tuke's account of that humane establishment." Recluse hoped that with the small help of his gift the Retreat "may long continue to prosper under its promoters (who have so clearly proved that mildness is preferable to the former harsh and brutal modes of treating such unfortunates)."[38]

Moral Treatment Moves West:

The Transatlantic Links between the Retreat and Friends Asylum

The Retreat's positive reputation traveled across the Atlantic as a result of the work of Thomas Scattergood. A Quaker from Burlington, New Jersey, Scattergood visited the Retreat twice toward the end of his six-year itinerant ministry throughout Great Britain, which lasted from 1794 to 1800. Scattergood's observations of the Retreat and its treatment methods proved helpful for him personally and ultimately spurred him

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[37] Minutes from March 19, 1817, and March 15, 1820, in "Minutes of the Contributors to Frankford Asylum, 1812-1827" 1827 1812, Collection 975A, no. 15, Minutes of the Contributors vol. 1, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.

[38] "Friend of Humanity," "Letter to York Retreat," April 19, 1816, RET 1/5/1/21, Incoming Correspondence, April 1816, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England; "Recluse," "Letter to York Retreat," May 21, 1816, RET 1/5/1/21, Incoming Correspondence, May 1816, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

to propose the creation of a parallel institution outside of Philadelphia. As a prominent

Public Friend, one who traveled extensively throughout the Atlantic world visiting

Meetings and helping cohere the Quakers' transnational network, Scattergood

corresponded and stayed with other wealthy and noteworthy Friends.[39] During his time in

York in 1799, Scattergood visited the Retreat on two separate occasions: once in late

March and again in late September. On both these occasions, Scattergood stayed with his

friend and the famous Quaker grammarian and reformer, Lindley Murray, an individual

who happened to be disabled and took an interest in the philanthropic work of the

Retreat. After his first visit, Scattergood hardly commented on the experience at all,

noting that after having dinner at Murray's home he "visited the Retreat and boarding

school." His visit in September, however, drew more notice in his journal as he explained

that after "din[ing] with W. Tuke, [he] felt a concern to go to the Retreat, a place where

about thirty of our Society are taken in, being disordered in mind. We got most of them

together, and after we had sat a little in quiet, and I had vented a few tears, I was engaged

in supplication."[40] Although Scattergood's comments indicated the extent to which he

found the experience of visiting the Retreat and its residents personally moving, his

journal entries do not foreshadow the role Scattergood would play as one of the men who

would go on to found Friends Asylum outside of Philadelphia.

Critical to Scattergood's interest in the Retreat, and in the narratives of his role in

founding Friends Asylum, is the fact that much of his correspondence revealed an

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[39] Sarah Lelia Crabtree, "A Holy Nation: The Quaker Itinerant Ministry in an Age of Revolution, 1750-1820" (Ph.D., University of Minnesota, 2007), 1–17, 155–156.

[40] Thomas Scattergood, *Memoirs of Thomas Scattergood: Late of Philadelphia, a Minister of the Gospel of Christ* (London: Charles Gilpin, 1845), 348, 382.

awareness of his own mental state and a concomitant concern for those "disordered in mind." Scattergood's letters and journal entries often carried a melancholy tone, as when he wrote to his son from Edinburgh that "[t]he sorrow of [his] poor mind has been great" because he "did not receive a line from Any One" leaving him to feel that his "spirit was almost overwhelmed."[41] Other Friends who knew Scattergood from his travels throughout North America and England also commented on his state of mind and observed this melancholy aspect of his personality. James Bringhurst, a prominent Philadelphia businessman whose family had helped establish the Pennsylvania Hospital and the American Philosophical Society, described Scattergood as a person who "is at time apt to be very low and dejected himself and therefore can speak tellingly to the instruction and incouragement [*sic*] of others."[42] This feature of writing from, to, or about Scattergood has led some contemporary writers to diagnose his mental state as "depression." Although Patricia D'Antonio does not make any diagnoses about Scattergood's mental state in her monograph on Friends Asylum, more popular accounts of the institution do note that Scattergood "suffered bouts of depression" which made his visit to the York Retreat such an important catalyst.[43] Nevertheless, while at the Retreat,

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[41] Thomas Scattergood, Letter to Joseph Scattergood, August 1, 1799, Collection 1100, Volume 2, Number 70, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.

[42] James Bringhurst, Letter to Lydia Arnold, July 5, 1801, Collection of Bringhurst Family Correspondence/MSS 046, Box 2, James Bringhurst Letter Books, "1 mo. 26, 1799 – 12 mo. 9, 1805," Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

[43] Writing for a disability history perspective, this chapter does not attempt to determine or diagnose Scattergood's (or any other individual's) disability from the past; that task remains an especially difficult and fraught endeavor given the changing nature of medical knowledge, labels, and diagnostic methods. Instead, disability history explores how the construction of categories and experiences of individuals perceived as "disabled" were shaped by wider historical developments. In this case, disability history provides a useful lens to understand how the historical context of the Enlightenment and its coalescing ideas about insanity as both a marginalizing but conquerable condition influenced Scattergood and other transatlantic Quaker as they proposed and founded these insane asylums. See, Susan Burch and

Scattergood "was so impressed by the kind care that he saw in England" that he "brought the concept of moral treatment back to Philadelphia."[44]

These narratives suggest that a rhetorical emphasis on the direct personal experience with disability—either one's own or that of others—played a critical role in the establishment of Friends Asylum as well as in William Tuke's founding of the Retreat. For Scattergood, his own mental state allegedly made him more empathetic toward people with other perceived mental aberrations, thereby leading him to help create an institution that would alleviate their "low state of mind." Contrastingly, narratives about Tuke's mental state suggest that the opposite dynamic drove his decision to create the Retreat. "Though he possessed an uncommon degree of firmness of mind, and was favoured to rise, with singular fortitude above his own troubles and afflictions," Tuke nevertheless "knew and felt for the imperfections, trials, and infirmities incident to human nature," which "disposed him to cheer and strengthen the drooping and afflicted mind."[45] These two portraits created the sense that Scattergood and Tuke were diametric opposites in terms their personalities. Yet in spite of these differences, these narratives share a rhetorical emphasis on the power of personal experience with disability as the

Kim E. Nielsen, "History," in Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, eds., *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 95–98; For an excellent example of how class status and family dynamics can change the meaning of a "diagnosable" disability in the past, see P. L. Richards and G. H. S. Singer, "'To Draw Out the Effort of His Mind' Educating A Child with Mental Retardation in Early-Nineteenth-Century America," *The Journal of Special Education* 31, no. 4 (1998): 443–66. Richards and Singer highlight how Thomas Cameron's family, via their status as elite southern slaveholders, can afford to educate their son and provide him with employment opportunities typically considered unattainable for an intellectually disabled individual in the nineteenth century.

[44] Debbie M. Price, "For 175 Years: Treating Mentally Ill With Dignity," *The New York Times*, April 17, 1988, sec. U.S., http://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/17/us/for-175-years-treating-mentally-ill-with-dignity.html.

[45] Society of Friends York Monthly Meeting, *A Memorial of York Monthly Meeting: Held the 14th of 5th Month, 1823, Concerning William Tuke* (York: W. Alexander and Son, 1823), 8.

catalyst for creating these asylums. In both cases, each founder's personal characteristics—either Scattergood's own melancholy or Tuke's empathy toward those with mental aberrations—shaped his approach toward people labeled "insane" and drove each of them to help catalyze an institution to help these individuals.

Although Scattergood's visit to the Retreat in 1799 undoubtedly influenced him as he served on the committee that would establish Friends Asylum, this individualistic narrative of the institution's founding omits a number of important elements: the other people involved in proposing a North American Quaker asylum, the fact that Scattergood said so little about his experience at the Retreat in the immediate wake of his visit, and the large chronological gap between his visit and the eventual proposal. As D'Antonio notes, the founders of Friends Asylum included a number of prominent Orthodox Friends in Philadelphia: important committee clerks within Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, philanthropists and physicians who had helped treat those affected by Philadelphia's Yellow Fever outbreak in the 1790s, and noteworthy ministers such as Scattergood. By quantifying the percentages of merchants (25%), physicians (15%), farmers, teachers, and artisans (~20%) who served on the founding committee of Friends Asylum, D'Antonio has already provided an important corrective to the individualistic narrative of the empathetic, depressed Scattergood as the sole catalyst for this new insane asylum.[46]

Furthermore, beyond the two excerpts from his journals, Scattergood said nothing on his visit to the Retreat and the influence it had on his thinking about or concern for individuals perceived to be insane. In fact, a day after visiting the Retreat for a second

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[46] D'Antonio, *Founding Friends*, 43–44.

time, Scattergood wrote to his wife that in spite of the wonderful hospitality from Lindley

Murray while in York, he nevertheless felt extremely homesick and "hop[ed] it will not

be long before I may step foot on board some ship and leave this land."[47] Based on the

silences in his correspondence, Scattergood seemingly did not find the application of

"moral treatment" at the Retreat to be the most noteworthy aspect of his time in

Yorkshire.

Finally, Scattergood publicly raised his concern for a Quaker-run asylum over a

decade after originally visiting the Retreat at York, suggesting that his desire to create a

parallel institution in North America was not his first priority after returning from his six

years of spiritual sojourning in Great Britain. Scattergood first made his proposal at the

Burlington (NJ) Monthly Meeting on February 4, 1811, where the institution was

originally described as "a provision for such of our members as may be deprived of the

use of their reason." From the Monthly Meeting, Scattergood then brought the proposal

to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) on April 16, 1811, which discussed it again

the next day, and appointed Scattergood, along with four other Friends to compile a

report about such an asylum. The PYM ultimately decided to table Scattergood's

proposal until the next Yearly Meeting, where it again took up the issue of whether or not

to create an exclusively Quaker insane asylum, but ultimately decided, "it will not be

expedient for the Yearly Meeting, either to establish, or to have the superintendence of

such an Institution."[48] It took one more year for PYM to accept Scattergood's initial

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[47] Thomas Scattergood, "Letter to Sarah Scattergood," September 27, 1799, Collection 1100, Volume 2, Number 70, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.
[48] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 136; "Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes, 1799-1827," 198, 199, 202, 213, 1250/A1.5, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.

proposal, marking 1813 as the founding date for Friends Asylum—officially known as the "Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason." Even once approved, PYM did not directly oversee or govern this new Asylum; instead, the institution would be funded through direct contributions from individual Quakers and local monthly meetings.[49] This development only happened, however, with the assistance of other Friends throughout Philadelphia who took the initial report that Scattergood and his fellow committee members created in 1811 and distributed it throughout the area to other Monthly Meetings as a way of building both political and financial support for such an institution.[50]

So what factors explain the delay in Scattergood's bringing this proposal across the Atlantic to his local Monthly Meeting and eventually to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting? Biographical accounts of his life deal more cursorily with this period than they do with his travels throughout Great Britain at the end of the seventeenth century. Moreover, Scattergood wrote fewer memoranda and letters during this time in his life, mostly remaining at his home outside Philadelphia. In 1805-1806, however, he began to get involved in teaching and caring for students at the West-town boarding school as well as publicly advocating in 1807 for more widespread adoption of the Lancasterian method of education. Scattergood believed this system, which relied on older, more experienced students to teach younger ones, thereby reducing faculty costs and strengthening direct student-to-student connections, could help provide intellectual and spiritual uplift for

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[49] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 136.
[50] *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Asylum, Proposed to Be Established, near Philadelphia: For the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason : With an Abridged Account of the Retreat, a Similar Institution near York, in England.* (Philadelphia: Kimber and Conrad, 1814), 3–5, http://collections.nlm.nih.gov/muradora/objectView.action?pid=nlm:nlmuid-2546073R-bk.

poor children.[51] These other reform and spiritual interests perhaps explain some of the

reasons for Scattergood's delay in putting forth his proposal. It is also likely, given the

generally spiritually-focused content of his letters and memoranda, that Scattergood felt

religious education was a more pressing issue than was insane asylum reform, leading

him to put aside his concerns for replicating the Retreat in North America for over a

decade.

But it is important to also look for explanations beyond Scattergood and his

interest, or lack thereof, in creating an insane asylum modeled on the Retreat immediately

after his return to North America. We must also consider the fact that when Scattergood

visited York, the Retreat had only been open for three years. Given the youth and lack of

a track-record for the Retreat, it would have been difficult for Scattergood, or any other

benevolently-minded Quaker, to persuade local meetings to commit the financial

resources for what would have then been an unproven method for treating those deemed

"insane." As evinced by the fact that Scattergood worked with four other people on

generating a report about their proposed insane asylum, it is clear that the Philadelphia

Yearly Meeting required a critical mass of Friends to express a strong need for such an

institution. As a result, the successful pitch in 1813 (after two failed attempts) required

additional time and publicity material from the Retreat itself, including Tuke's

Description, that could prove the value of its system of "moral treatment" for those

"deprived of the use of their reason."

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[51] Thomas Scattergood, *Journal of the Life and Religious Labors of Thomas Scattergood: A Minister of the Gospel in the Society of Friends* (Philadelphia: Friends' Book-store, 1874), 445, 459–461; For an overview of the Lancasterian System, founded by prominent English Quaker educator, Joseph Lancaster, see Joseph Lancaster and Lancasterian Institute, *The Lancasterian System of Education, with Improvements* (Baltimore: Published for the author, and sold only at the Lancasterian Institute, 1821).

Once established and in the hands of a wider group of Philadelphia Quakers, the growth and ultimate structure of Friends Asylum displayed profound influences from both the strong transatlantic connections between Quaker reformers as well as the developing discourse around insanity forged by Enlightenment thinkers. Given their shared goal of creating an exclusively Quaker insane asylum, the founders of Friends Asylum drew heavily on the Retreat's models of how to publicize and raise support for privately funded institutions. Prominent Quaker philanthropists Caleb Cresson and Roberts Vaux, who served on the Board of Directors of Friends Asylum, studied Tuke's text closely as they raised funds for and prepared to open their own institution run by and marketed to Friends. Cresson and Vaux also played a vital role in disseminating Tuke's text in North America, publishing over two thousand copies of an abridged version of Tuke's *Description* between 1814 and 1817, all of which were distributed to Quaker Meetings throughout Philadelphia. Cresson and Vaux used these publications to both educate their fellow Philadelphia Quakers about the structure and treatment methods within Friends Asylum as well as attract additional financial support. After disseminating a series of these publications, members of the Friends Asylum Building Committee felt that "there is reason to believe that the publication[s] w[ere] usefull [*sic*]," and also that they had "had a good effect in spreading correct information relative to the views of this Institution."[52] In this sense, emulating the Retreat's major publications and Annual Reports, especially the ways those documents presented empirical evidence to raise the

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[52] Minutes of Building Committee, March 12, 1814; Minutes of Building Committee, March 15, 1815 "Minutes of the Contributors to Frankford Asylum, 1812-1827,"1812-1827, Collection 975A, no. 15, Minutes of the Contributors vol. 1, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA; For the condensed account of Tuke's book, see *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Asylum*.

institution's funds and profile, proved an essential strategy for Friends Asylum in its earliest years.

When publicizing their parallel institution nearly twenty years later, the Directors of Friends Asylum aped the financial structure of the Retreat and the language found in their annual reports. Friends Asylum raised funds through "legacies, donations, and subscription," set varying rates of membership for Meetings versus individuals, and allowed those who donated at certain levels to "recommend one poor patient […] on the lowest terms of admission."[53] By using verbatim language and parallel organizational structures in their first institutional publication, the Directors of Friends Asylum revealed both their debt to the founders of the Retreat and their belief that such an approach, which had successfully promoted and assured the financial stability of this Quaker-run institution in York, would work for Quakers outside Philadelphia as well. After only four years of operation in 1821, "[a] knowledge of the benefits experienced from the establishment of the Asylum [wa]s now so generally spread," claimed the very confident administrators of Friends Asylum, "that it d[id] not appear necessary to enlarge on the subject"—an assertion that echoed claims made by the Retreat's administrators during its first decade of operation in 1804.[54]

Friends Asylum also included empirical and quantifiable evidence about the effectiveness of "moral treatment" in their annual reports—a method they adapted from the Retreat. After opening its doors to patients in 1817, Friends Asylum began including

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[53] *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Asylum*, 5.

[54] Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.: Published by Direction of the Contributors, Fourth-Month, 1821.* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1821), 3; Directors of the Retreat, "Directors' Meeting Minutes."

similar statistical evidence about "patient" conditions in its 1820 and 1821 annual reports. In those years, administrators of Friends Asylum tracked how many individuals at that institution were either "cured," "much improved," "improved," or "consistent"/"no apparent improvement"—all categories that echoed those in the Retreat's publications.[55]

Administrators of both the Retreat and Friends Asylum also built legitimacy for their institutions by grounding their use of moral treatment in a professional medical context. While some scholars have stressed the Tukes' hostility toward medical approaches to treating insanity, the family nevertheless acknowledged the importance of physician expertise in publicizing and building the reputation of the institution.[56] Samuel Tuke, for instance, emphasized how his family and the Retreat's superintendent had studied a number of medical experts on insanity as they developed their treatment regimen. To validate the success of "moral treatment" at the Retreat, Tuke also included laudatory testimonials from physicians at the end of his *Description*; these excerpts extolled the excellent conditions and effectual treatments the Tukes used with the Retreat's residents.[57] As Friends Asylum moved closer to opening its doors, administrators for that institution began to learn about some of this same medical and psychological grounding from their colleagues in York. Caleb Cresson, for instance, who had served on Friends Asylum's Board of Directors since its founding in 1813, only

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[55] Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.: Published by Direction of the Contributors, Fourth Month, 1820.* (Philadelphia: Joseph R.A. Skerrett, 1820), 2–3; Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.: Published by Direction of the Contributors, Fourth-Month, 1821.* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1821), 2–3.

[56] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 148–149.

[57] Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 221–227.

received and read a copy of Pinel's seminal 1798 *Treatise on Insanity* in 1817—the same year the asylum opened.[58] Studying Pinel's foundational text on moral treatment proved important for Cresson and other Friends Asylum administrators who would later use his and Tuke's rhetoric of "moral treatment" in their own institutional publications.

In a similar vein, these asylum administrators also ensured that the process of admitting new residents to these institutions relied on medical expertise and validation. This practice occurred frequently amongst both publicly- and privately-funded insane asylums in the early nineteenth century.[59] In the Retreat's first annual report, the administrators included a copy of the medical certificate the asylum used to admit residents. This document required a physician to "certify, that A B of C, aged —— years, is in a State of Insanity, and proper to be received into a house provided for the relief of persons of that description," and then provide additional information about the duration of the condition, medical treatments used prior to admission, and attempts of the

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[58] Caleb Cresson, Letter to George Jepson, May 24, 1817, RET 1/5/1/22, Incoming Correspondence, May 1817, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England. Cresson received his copy of Pinel from William Alexander, the Yorkshire-based printer who was closely connected with the Tuke family.

[59] In the early nineteenth century, medical testimony from specially trained and credentialed psychiatrists gained credence in English courtrooms, where the diagnosis and evaluation of these medical witnesses played definitive roles in determining the status of a defendant as "sane" or "insane." Over the course of the first half of the nineteenth-century, medical witnesses and their "educated" opinions ended up displacing testimony from lay people as the most authoritative in the eyes of the courts. See, Joel Peter Eigen, *Witnessing Insanity: Madness and Mad-Doctors in the English Court* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), chap. 5; With Parliament's passage of the New Poor Law in 1845, medical officers gained greater power over evaluating the mental state of individuals within pauper asylums, and in 1853 gained the sole authority to sign certificates that would admit impoverished Britons to pauper asylums. See, Peter Bartlett, "The asylum and the Poor Law: the productive alliance," in Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe, eds., *Insanity, Institutions, and Society, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1999), 51; Physicians also played a key role in establishing and setting the terms and criteria for admission in asylums in the United States. Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts and the Bloomingdale Asylum in New York received substantial organizational support and advocacy from their first physicians, both of whom went on to become founding members of the American Psychiatric Association in 1844. See, Porter, *Madness*, 110–112.

allegedly insane person to injure him or herself.[60] The Directors of Friends Asylum

adopted this same system for admission, requiring families and friends of patients to first

undergo a medical examination and then apply to the managers of the asylum.[61] A year

after opening, the administrators of the Friends Asylum printed their own version of this

medical certificate, which required physicians to attest that they had "examined ——

together with the certificate produced, and find that —— is deprived of the use of ——

reasons, and that —— may, with propriety, be admitted as a patient into the Asylum."[62]

Once admitted, all documents about the residents in both the Retreat and Friends Asylum

referred to them as "patients," thereby rendering them passive objects of medical

treatment. By placing physicians in the position of gatekeepers to these institution, the

administrators of the Retreat and Friends Asylum displayed their faith in the medical

model of empiricism and their belief that such authorization from experts would lead

families and their public at large to more readily trust the treatments used in these

asylums.

These institutional publications also presented the residents of the Retreat and

Friends Asylum with a tone of pity and sympathy, thereby reinforcing the Enlightenment-

derived notion that those labeled "insane" constituted an objectively lesser form of

humanity. By constructing insanity as a lamentable condition, the administrators of these

asylums marginalized the residents and their agency as a way to place them in the role of

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[60] *State of an Institution near York*, 10.

[61] *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Asylum*, 9.

[62] Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *Further Information of the Progress of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason* (Philadelphia: John Richardson, 1818), 12, http://collections.nlm.nih.gov/muradora/objectView.action?pid=nlm:nlmuid-2554041R-bk.

"children" within the asylum "family," thereby validating their use of "moral treatment" within these institutions.[63] The founding documents, which Retreat administrators reprinted in the first annual report, made clear that the Retreat *exclusively* sought to admit those perceived to have insanity. Defining these individuals as those "who may be in a state of Lunacy, or so deranged in mind […] as to require such a provision," the Retreat's administrators later characterized this "malady" as "the most deplorable that human nature is subject to," which causes "human misery" and renders those who have it "lost to civil and religious Society."[64] In its first two major publications, Friends Asylum employed similar language about the pitiable and marginal conditions of those it sought to serve. These publications characterized insanity as "one of the most distressing maladies that human nature is subject to" and something that "afflicted" those perceived as laboring with these "agitated minds."[65] In the first major institutional history of Friends Asylum, written in 1825, Robert Waln, Jr., son of a prominent Pennsylvania

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[63] The metaphor of the asylum "family" also influenced asylum architecture and design in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Superintendents and administrators at the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, the Illinois State Hospital, and from institutions in New York argued that classifying and separating residents according to their behavior, propensity toward violence, and class background would create "a kind of family life," for those whose behavior enabled them to avoid being locked in isolated rooms. See, Lisa Hermsen, *Manic Minds: Mania's Mad History and Its Neuro-Future* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 54; The superintendent at Hanwell Asylum in England during the mid-nineteenth century also used the metaphor of the "family" to refer to his patients. Andrew Scull argues that this description of an "asylum family" proved increasingly inaccurate as the residents at the Hanwell Asylum grew towards 1,000, making it functionally impossible for the superintendent to know them personally let alone develop a sense of kinship with them. See, Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions*, 172; These metaphors that compared institutions and its resident to a "family," were not only used within insane asylums, but also appeared in workhouses, see R.A. Houston, "'Not Simple Boarding': Care of the Mentally Incapacitated in Scotland during the Long Eighteenth Century," in Peter Bartlett and David Wright, eds., *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community 1750-2000* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Athlone Press, 1999), 21–22.

[64] *State of an Institution near York*, A2, 12.

[65] *Account of the Rise and Progress of the Asylum*, 6, 4; Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *Further Information of the Progress of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason*, 15.

politician and prolific satirist and historian, declared that "Madness […] is one of the most afflicting dispensations that can befal [*sic*] human nature." Waln then explained that Friends Asylum was founded "[t]o mitigate the miseries of so deplorable a malady" and to restore "those who were lost to civil and religious society."[66] Waln's extensive use of verbatim phrases from the Retreat's publications revealed the debt Friends Asylum owed to their transatlantic predecessor, as its methods of framing both insanity and the institution's mission established a template for Friends Asylum's public face. Furthermore, by presenting insanity as something that incapacitated individuals identified as such and rendered them less mature and more dependent, these institutions also built support for the idea that using empirically-grounded moral and medical techniques could and *should* be used to restore that individual's adult self.

These publications also provided hope to those who might commit their kin, friends, or fellow Meeting members to these institutions by echoing the Enlightenment-inspired idea that insanity constituted a better form of intellectual aberration because it could be "overcome." In part, administrators for the York Retreat and Friends Asylum communicated this hopeful message by explicitly excluding those perceived as "incurable" or who had no hope for improvement — a regulation that explicitly targeted "idiots."[67] By disallowing individuals perceived as possessing a mental condition that

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[66] Robert Waln, Jr., *An Account of the Asylum for the Insane: Established by the Society of Friends, near Frankford, in the Vicinity of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Benjamin & Thomas Kite, 1825), 3, http://archive.org/details/68141100R.nlm.nih.gov; For a more detailed biographical overview of Waln, see William S. Hastings, "Robert Waln, Jr.: Quaker Satirist and Historian," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 76, no. 1 (January 1, 1952): 71–80.

[67] The founding documents of the Retreat explicitly noted that the institution would admit those "who may be in a state of Lunacy, or so deranged in mind (not Idiots) as to require such a provision." See, *State of an Institution near York*, A2; After only a few years of operation, the Retreat's administrators

was *more* marginal than insanity, the asylum administrators for both institutions sought to set themselves up for success by ensuring that they would only admit and treat those who could eventually be discharged. In other words, administrators at both institutions reified existing hierarchies of intellectual disabilities that Enlightenment thinkers had formulated in the previous century. By validating this Enlightenment hierarchy of mental aberrance—one which placed "idiocy" or "fatuity" at the lowest rungs of the human hierarchy—the York Retreat and Friends Asylum could build their humanitarian *bona fides* by publicizing how their enlightened use of "moral treatment" *successfully* alleviated suffering for those believed to be insane. This claim would then be borne out

quickly began to recognize that "some patients have Disorders unconnected with Insanity, which requires additional trouble and expense," leading them to determine what "additional charges or advance the terms as much cares may require." See, Retreat Committee of Management, "Committee of Management Minutes" April 30, 1798, Committee of Management Minutes, 1796-1825, Borthwick Institute For Archives; Samuel Tuke elaborated on this regulation by noting that it applied "to cases of original absence of intellect," but that even though "idiots" were not admitted to the Retreat, those "persons who sink into that are, are not necessarily discharged." For further explanation, see Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 212, 215; This same concern appeared for Friends Asylum in its first decade of operation as well. Because the constitution of the asylum directed that the institution serve "persons deprived of the use of their reason," this meant that some people had been admitted "whose complain partakes more of mental imbecility and idiocy, than of positive insanity." See, Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.: Published by Direction of the Contributors, Third Month, 1826.* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad, 1826), 3; In the process of both excluding and admitting residents, the administrators of the Retreat and Friends Asylum were very much in line with contemporary medical and cultural thinking of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Historian Anne Digby argues that such a negative outlook toward "imbeciles and idiots" stemmed from the fact that they "were not the easiest people for whom to claim recovery or rapid discharge rates, and hence to publicise a 'successful' establishment which could then gain additional funding from a credulous public." See Anne Digby, "Contexts and Perspectives," in Anne Digby and David Wright, eds., *From Idiocy to Mental Deficiency Historical Perspectives on People With Learning Disabilities.* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5; For contemporary medical perspectives see, Joseph Mason Cox, *Practical Observations on Insanity* (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1811), 20–21, 50. Cox characterized "idiotism" as "the most hopeless sequela of disordered intellect." British physician John Clarke sought to discover the origins of "idiotism" in children and believed that it often occurred "as the sequel of inflammation of the brain," which would then severely "weaken or annihilate the faculties of the mind." See, John Clarke, *Commentaries on Some of the Most Important Diseases of Children* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), 188; The British legal tradition similarly marginalized individuals identified as "idiots" by defining them as "one that hath had no understanding from his nativity; and therefore is by law presumed never likely to attain any" and by stripping them of their right to own private property. See, William Blackstone and William Cyrus Sprague, *Blackstone's Commentaries*, 9th ed. (Chicago: Callaghan and Company, 1915), 60–61.

by the institutions bullish statistics about "improvement" and "recovery/cure" rates, ultimately leading to greater fund-raising and financial stability.

In the wake of Tuke's widely published and well-received book, the Retreat encouraged more outsiders to see "moral treatment" in action and observe these Enlightened, empirically grounded methods in action. Further quantifying and objectively tracking their success in drawing outsiders to observe their methods, they even established a Visitors' Book in 1815 to track who came. As later humanitarian reformers would do, such as Samuel Gridley Howe at the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, the Tukes encouraged outsiders to witness the progress at the Retreat as a way to evoke their sympathy, thereby proving the success of "moral treatment" and ultimately garnering their praise and contributions.[68] Prominent Quaker visitors, such as famed prison reformers (and siblings) Elizabeth Fry and Joseph John Gurney, visited in 1817 and 1818. Gurney even noted that a fellow Friend from his hometown of Norwich, England, had been sent to the Retreat, and after seeing it in person, he found the institution to be "exactly the right place for [her] and after the pains and care and despair, which she has cost Friends at Norwich, it is […] comfort to be to have lodged her safely in such a situation."[69] Non-Quaker medical experts, Members of Parliament, and

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[68] Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: The First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 51; Benjamin Reiss, *Theaters of Madness: Insane Asylums and Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 13; Samuel Tuke, *Practical Hints on the Construction and Economy of Pauper Lunatic Asylums; Including Instructions to the Architects Who Offered Plans for the Wakefield Asylum, and a Sketch of the Most Approved Design* (York: W. Alexander, 1815), 28. Tuke argued that visitors also played a vital role in the rehabilitative aspects of "moral treatment," arguing that "the general effects of visitation on deranged persons [...] had materially promoted the comfort of the patients, many of whom have become acquainted with the visiters [*sic*], and express great pleasure on seeing them enter their apartments."

[69] Joseph John Gurney, Letter to Elizabeth Fry, July 31, 1817, TEMP MSS 434, 3/320, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

institutional reformers, such as Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet who founded the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, CT, also visited the Retreat as they sought to learn from and implement its methods throughout the wider Atlantic world. Unsurprisingly, the humanitarian-minded visitors who wrote in the Retreat's book left overwhelmingly laudatory messages. In 1815, for instance, J.W. Francis effusively "declare[d] that this Establishment far surpasses any thing of the kind he has elsewhere seen and that it reflects equal credit on the wisdoms and humanity of its conductors."[70]

Friends Asylum also began encouraging visitors shortly after its opening in 1817, though some of its administrators expressed early ambivalence, based on their own empirical observations, about the potentially deleterious impact of visitors. Most notably, Superintendent Isaac Bonsall felt unsure as to whether this aspect of running an insane asylum along the same lines as the Retreat ultimately served the residents' best interests. Fearing that the prying eyes of outsiders might inhibit the residents' treatment and recovery, Bonsall persuaded the Visiting Committee, a group made up of asylum administrators "to have a venitian [*sic*] blind put up" to provide a modicum of privacy to residents who had "been much exposed to the view of visitors to the Asylum by means of windows at the extreme end of the wing of the building."[71] Despite these reservations, Friends Asylum nevertheless began attracting prominent transatlantic visitors to see its progress, just as had happened at the Retreat. William Forster, Jr. and Stephen Grellet, who visited during an itinerant preaching trip to North America, spent a day seeing

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[70] J.W. Francis, November 30, 1815, in "General Visitors Book, 1798-1822," RET 1/4/4/1, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[71] Entry from July 11, 1817, in "Minutes of Visiting Committee, Vol. 1, 1813-1826" 1826 1813, Collection 975A, no. 31, Minutes of Visiting Committee, Vol. 1, 1817-1818, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.

Friends Asylum in 1820.[72] Yet by the middle part of that decade, Friends Asylum administrators had become reluctant to allow visitors, feeling that it was often "improper and injurious: patients never ought to be exhibited to gratify the curiosity of strangers." Instead, one had to be accompanied by a member of the Board of Managers in order to see the residents directly.[73] Weighty Friends, therefore, could still access the institution, as happened almost two decades later when English Quaker, Joseph John Gurney, came to Friends Asylum in 1838. Gurney, who had visited the Retreat in the late-1810s and went on to become a major transatlantic advocate for prison reform, spent a day at Friends Asylum during his three-year travels throughout the Americas. While there, he remarked that it was "very much after the plan of the Retreat," and he also held "a very comfortable meeting the crazy folks. Many of them were gathered into solemnity, and some seemed very tender in spirit."[74] Pessimistically, Gurney's comment revealed the generally dismissive, Enlightenment-forged attitude that many, even within the Society of Friends, held toward those deemed insane. But optimistically, his remark confirmed the extent to which Friends Asylum had succeeded in replicating the spaces, structure, and

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[72] Superintendent Isaac Bonsall, who held that post from 1817-1823, made note of these weighty Friends' visit on September 16, 1820. See Isaac Bonsall and Edward Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824" 1824 1820, Collection 975A, no. 3, Superintendent's Journals [Day Books], Vol. 2, 1820-1824, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA, http://triptych.haverford.edu/cdm/ref/collection/HC_DigReq/id/14784; That Grellet and Forster, Jr. visited the Retreat proved unsurprising as even though these men did not focus their reform activities on insane asylums and instead sought to improve prison conditions, interest in "social reform" writ large interested reformers like Grellet and Forster, Jr., who also advocated for abolition and reforming capital punishment. For additional context, see Ann Maree Jones, "Quakers and Social Reform in England 1780-1870" (Murdoch University, 2010), 154, http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/5811/.

[73] Waln, Jr., *An Account of the Asylum for the Insane*, 33.

[74] Joseph John Gurney, "Letter to His Children," April 28, 1838, TEMP MSS 434, 3/655, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London; For a concise overview of Gurney's life, see Edward H. Milligan, "Gurney, Joseph John (1788–1847)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, Online Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.uta.edu/view/article/11771.

treatment regiment of the Retreat.

By 1825, Samuel Tuke felt strongly that other asylum administrators and the Enlightened, humanitarian-minded public had embraced moral treatment, and his family's pioneering work in this arena, as *the* correct method to treat those deemed insane. Writing to his friend, the Quaker editor A.R. Barclay, who proposed to create a society to publicize mistreatment in insane asylums, Tuke asserted that the question of whether asylums should employ "gentleness [or] brute force" had been "happily […] determined in the public mind." Owing in part to the work of the Retreat, Tuke believed that "magistrates and other persons concerned in the public establishments for Lunatics, are, almost without exception, anxious to introduce the best mode of treatment."[75]

The administrators of Friends Asylum helped fulfill Tuke's hopes for the widespread dissemination of the Retreat's methods of treatment. As they built their own reputation on the success and rising profile of the York Retreat, Friends Asylum very consciously emulated the Retreat's institutional structure, treatment methods, and publicity techniques. Such vanguard work by these Philadelphia Quakers earned Friends Asylum a prominence as innovators in "moral treatment" amongst asylums in North America. The superintendent of an insane asylum in Lexington, Kentucky, wrote gratefully to the Directors of Friends Asylum as "[t]he only model […] for the internal government of this institution, is a small pamphlet published by the trustees of the Friends' Asylum." This publication empowered him to transform his asylum from one where "[w]hen [he] first entered on [his] charge, several wore chains, and some straps

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[75] Samuel Tuke, Letter to A.R. Barclay, July 1825, RET 1/10/2/1, Notebooks and transcripts of Retreat Correspondence and other records, c. 1760-1900, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

with lock-buckles, &c. At present the same are now freed from those manacles, and are peaceable."[76] Although both the Tukes and the administrators of Friends Asylum very effectively framed the Retreat's methods as the "best mode of treatment" to a Quaker and humanitarian-minded audience, the realities of treatment in the Retreat at times challenged the glossy veneer of the *Description* and other public pronouncements.

The Persistence of Restraint and Control at the Retreat and Friends Asylum

Yet in these same years, the Retreat's directors admitted to other asylum superintendents continued practices of physical restraint and control that appeared at odds with the benevolent "moral treatment" highlighted in the institution's publicity material. This internal contradiction, too, spread to and influenced the application of moral treatment at Friends Asylum. Tuke, in fact, had never been evasive about the fact that the Retreat continued to employ physical restraint and patient isolation as part of its wider regime of moral management. Acknowledging that even "the most enlightened and ingenious humanity will [n]ever be able entirely to supersede the necessity of personal restraint," Tuke stressed in his *Description* that the Retreat only used restraints in cases in which the administrators perceived the residents as being violent or at risk of committing suicide. Even then, the superintendent and attendants sought to implement "means of coercion" that would minimally "irritate or degrade the [patient's] feelings." Citing the rare instances of having to force-feed, isolate, or tie the residents to their beds, Tuke stressed that in these situations they nevertheless had some freedom of movement as he

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[76] Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.*, 1826.

believed that "[t]he power of judicious kindness over this unhappy class of society, is much greater than is generally imagined" in bringing about their recovery.[77] Thus, even while directly addressing the harsher aspects of the Retreat's treatment methods, Tuke constantly sought to positively frame the institution by assuring his Quaker audience that his concern for the "that of God in everyone" ensured kindness for all residents. Beyond this religious appeal to his fellow Friends, Tuke's framing of how the Retreat used restraint also highlighted that what might appear as a contradiction in fact fit neatly within Enlightenment concepts of insanity. When residents behaved violently, they provided empirical evidence of their subhuman condition and not only prompted, but also rationalized the superintendent and staff's use of coercive physical techniques.

Other asylum administrators, who also grappled with the same challenge of marketing their institutions as progressive while continuing to rely on more traditional treatment methods, showed particular interest in the Retreat's "humane" restraints. During his tenure as the Retreat's first superintendent from 1800 to 1822, George Jepson created and manufactured a number of new restraint devices, which Tuke described in a footnote in his chapter on the "Modes of Coercion." This precise description included materials, dimensions, and instructions for application. Tuke noted that this device, in contrast to the more confining strait-waistcoats the Retreat occasionally employed, had the benefits of quelling patients who staff viewed as in a state of "violent excitement" but could be "buckled so tight as to [not] hurt the patient."[78] In 1815, Jepson received a letter from Nottingham Lunatic Asylum superintendent Thomas Morris requesting that he send

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[77] Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 163, 164, 165–168.
[78] Ibid., 166, fn.

"a pair of your gloves, which I hear are effectual in preventing some of our unhappy patients tearing their garments."[79] Two years later, William Drury from the Glasgow Lunatic Asylum requested that Jepson send him "half-a-dozen of your spring buckles for the straps, some of which I saw in St. Luke's about 8 or 9 years ago. And at the same time I should like to learn the name and address of the maker," presumably in order to purchase for more widespread use in his asylum.[80] In 1818, Jepson received a follow-up request from William Ellis, the superintendent of the soon-to-open West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum in Wakefield. Ellis wanted to thoroughly equip his institution with restraints before it opened later that year, so he wrote "to order […] a set of straps the same as you use at the Retreat for the confining of Patients in bed."[81]

As was evident with institutional publicity strategies, Tuke's successful marketing of the Retreat as progressive particularly appealed to the Enlightenment-minded administrators of Friends Asylum who also found it difficult to manage their residents. Reading the *Description of the Retreat* shortly after its publication in 1813, Caleb Cresson, one of the founders of the Friends Asylum, then traveled to York to visit the Retreat in October 1815. While there, he closely studied its many restraint devices. Once back in the United States, Cresson wrote to Jepson to request the precise dimensions of the bed-straps as well as for Jepson to send him exact versions of the restraint buckles used at the Retreat. Beyond how to replicate these devices for Friends Asylum, Cresson

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[79] Thomas Morris, Letter to George Jepson, January 16, 1815, RET 1/5/1/20, Incoming Correspondence, January 1815, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.
[80] William Drury, Letter to George Jepson, June 12, 1817, RET 1/5/1/22, Incoming Correspondence, June 1817, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.
[81] William Ellis, Letter to George Jepson, September 2, 1818, RET 1/5/1/23, Incoming Correspondence, September 1818, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

also sought to learn about the most innovative methods for insane asylum management, and informed Jepson that he "should be glad to have a sample […] if there are any other articles for confining the patients, or other purposes, which experience has taught to be useful."[82] Shortly after that letter, the Visiting Committee of Friends Asylum agreed in the summer of 1817 to commission "[a]n arm chair calculated to confine the patients" that would mimic "the form of that used at the retreat at York in Great Britain." Early the next year, the Friends Asylum Visiting Committee acknowledged receipt of a "set of improved night and Day bandages for the more violent patients as used at the retreat near York in England" that its Superintendent Isaac Bonsall could then use when he deemed necessary.[83]

Inspired by Jepson's empirical approach to asylum governance, Cresson also began embracing the role of an innovator in moral treatment. After receiving a shipment of bed-straps, buckles, and strait-waistcoats, Cresson wrote back to Jepson to let him know that he had sent along some of these articles to other asylums in Pennsylvania and New York to help those institutions improve their treatment of patients. He also informed Jepson about his own lighter-weight straitjackets that would be appropriate for the humid Philadelphia summers by breathing better while not causing "injury to the patient." Cresson even offered to send Jepson a sample so that he and the staff at the Retreat could improve upon it further.[84] Jepson replied a few months later to notify Cresson that the

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[82] Caleb Cresson, Letter to George Jepson, May 24, 1817, RET 1/5/1/22, Incoming Correspondence, May 1817, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[83] Minutes from June 20, 1817, Minutes from February 28, 1818, in "Minutes of Visiting Committee, Vol. 1, 1813-1826."

[84] Caleb Cresson, Letter to George Jepson, March 4, 1818, RET 1/5/1/23, Incoming Correspondence, March 1818, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

Retreat's physician, Dr. Belcombe, had just developed, but not yet tested, an "apparatus for confining the hand" that had the potential to supplant the strait-waistcoat in some circumstances. Validating Cresson's desire to participate as an equal asylum innovator, Jepson then suggested that this device could "serve as a model for you to improve upon." He concluded by inviting Cresson to visit the Retreat again, as Jepson felt that "a good understanding and free intercourse" between "your happy world and the parent isle […] would […] tend much to the advantage of both."[85] Such transatlantic correspondence spoke both to the central place of the Retreat as a hotbed of innovation in moral treatment, and to the deep focus of asylum administrators on the traditional and omnipresent issues of patient control and the place of physical restraints in achieving those ends.

With the array of new restraint devices that Cresson obtained from Jepson and the Retreat, it then fell to Friends Asylum Superintendent Isaac Bonsall and his staff to apply these to the residents at their own discretion. Much as Cresson had demonstrated his empirical outlook as he detailed the minutiae of his experiments in modifying the restraints he learned about from the Retreat, so too did Bonsall keep close, copious, and descriptive accounts of how he applied moral treatment at Friends Asylum. These entries in the Superintendent's Journal, which generally conveyed "a kind of detached acceptance" and "sympathetic, nonjudgmental attitude toward his patients," shed light on the types and strategies of restraints from York that Bonsall employed.[86]

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[85] George Jepson, Letter to Caleb Cresson, July 25, 1817, Collection No. 1184, Families of Philadelphia Papers, Box 16, Caleb Cresson (1775-1821) Correspondence & Manuscripts, Haverford College Quaker Collection, Haverford, PA.
[86] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 153.

Bonsall's experience with Aaron P. Wood, a resident at Friends Asylum, illustrates the constant experimenting Bonsall conducted with restraint devices and techniques as he tried to quell the behavior of an individual he described as "one of the most difficult Patients we have on some accounts."[87] Bonsall requested "one or more tranquilizing chairs," which Cresson had commissioned in 1817, but apparently had not yet been installed at Friends Asylum by 1820, which, "rending the [residents] more secure," would "sav[e] us trouble and anxiety" as "they would not be so likely to injure themselves." Yet without this device in place yet, Bonsall instead "bled [him] copiously in the Evening which had a quieting effect."[88] The next day, after Wood destroyed further property in his room, Bonsall and the attendants "strapped [him] down on his bed," forced him to take a "Physick," and then secured him to the outdoor privy with handstraps. A few weeks after that, Wood was placed in solitary confinement, then "put in the Bathing Tub in Cold Water as a Punishment," and finally made to wear the "Straight Waistcoat."[89]

As indicated by his last punishment for Aaron P. Wood, Bonsall also employed cold and hot water baths frequently as a method to either punish recalcitrant and uncooperative residents or as a means to spur others into productive labor.[90] For Rachel Delaplaine, who "was so noisy and used so much bad language," the cold-water bath

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[87] Isaac Bonsall, entry from December 9, 1820, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824."

[88] Isaac Bonsall, entry from September 15, 1820, in ibid.; Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 155. According to Charles Cherry, bleeding as a method for treating individuals deemed insane had gained credence at the Pennsylvania Hospital under the direction of Benjamin Rush beginning in 1787. Given his prominence both within Philadelphia and within the wider transatlantic community of physicians, it seems as though his recommendations informed the use of this treatment at Friends Asylum.

[89] Isaac Bonsall, entry from September 16, 1820; entry from September 29, 1820, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824."

[90] Cherry, *A Quiet Haven*, 155.

served as a punishment for her perceived disruptions. This treatment apparently achieved

Bonsall's goals as it "produced much quietness for the remaining parts of the Day."[91] As

part of their treatment regimen, other residents were sometimes subjected to different

temperature baths in the same day. Such a scenario played out for James Hallowell, who

was "so much agitated and noisy that […] he was put into the Tub of cold water in the

morning," but later in the afternoon "he had the warm bath without any apparent good

effect."[92] Even though Bonsall relied on these forms of "hydrotherapy" more frequently

than did Jepson during his tenure at York, he nevertheless drew inspiration for this moral

treatment technique from the Retreat as well.[93]

In spite of the presence of occasionally harsh punishments that relied on these

new devices, Friends Asylum went on to advertise both its infrequent use of punitive

treatments and its reputation as a leading light of moral treatment in North America. Just

as the York Retreat had done in its early institutional publications, Friends Asylum also

acknowledged that it intended to use "mild restraint" to help eliminate the "afflicting

maladies" of insanity.[94] The precise nature of this "mild restraint"—typically solitary

confinement, seclusion in a dark room, use of the strait-waistcoat—however, was always

framed as being a clear improvement over more retrograde methods. As the next section

[91] Isaac Bonsall, entry from November 12, 1820, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824."

[92] Isaac Bonsall, entry from September 23, 1820, in ibid.

[93] Fourteen years into the Retreat's operation, William Tuke received a letter from a fellow asylum administrator with detailed diagrams and instructions as to how to design a large bathtub capable of holding and treating two residents simultaneously. This letter reveals Tuke's on-going empirical interest in how best to treat insanity and design his institution as well as provides evidence of such devices being used at the Retreat. See, Joseph Taylor, Letter to William Tuke, October 1810, RET 1/5/1/15, Incoming Correspondence, October 1810, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[94] Minutes from March 18, 1818, in "Minutes of the Contributors to Frankford Asylum, 1812-1827."

will illustrate, the residents subjected to these treatments rarely found them as "mild" as administrators advertised. The institution's 1826 annual report claimed very sweepingly that Friends Asylum allowed "no iron bands or collars— no handcuffs—no manacles—no fetters—nothing to convert the poor patients into felons, and their abode into what Pinel calls a 'medical prison.'" Instead, when the asylum staff used restraints, they always did do with "[g]entle manners, kindness, and the greatest mildness […] by which the feelings of the patients in the Asylum are generally controlled and interested."[95] Institutional publications further emphasized that when asylum staff used restraint they always did so in the best interests of the residents. These rhetorical framings displayed Friends Asylum administrators' keen awareness of how to market their use of moral treatment to make it appealing to a largely pacifistic, but also scientifically literate Quaker audience. "Personal restraint is rarely found requisite," claimed the 1839 annual report, "except in some cases while the patient is suffering under the acute stage of the disorder, when it is necessarily resorted to, until the violent symptoms are subdued."[96] Yet for both the Retreat and Friends Asylum, the rhetoric of a tranquil and kind application of "moral treatment" was undercut by the harsher realities of managing individuals who often resisted such treatments and their confinement in these institutions.

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[95] Contributors to the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.*, 1826, 13.

[96] Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason, *Twenty-Second Annual Report on the State of the Asylum for the Relief of Persons Deprived of the Use of Their Reason.: Published by Direction of the Contributors, Third Month, 1839.* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1839), 13.

"Patient" Agency and Challenges to Moral Treatment

at the Retreat and Friends Asylum

Rarely did the residents of these institutions have the privilege or right to articulate and preserve their own experience for the historical record. As a result, tracing the transatlantic transfer of ideas about moral treatment, restraint techniques and devices, and publicity methods (which appear in institutional publications and the correspondence of asylum administrators), proves more accessible than tracing the residents' experience of life in the Retreat and Friends Asylum. This fact has left historians with the challenge of finding ways to reclaim the agency of the individuals placed—often against their will—in these institutions. Historian Patricia D'Antonio has argued that the perspective of residents at Friends Asylum can be "gained by considering the prevalence of physical restraint and deliberate seclusion as a percentage of patients living in the house"—a number that totals 38% of individuals who experienced some form "of restraint or seclusion during any one year of their sojourn at the Asylum."[97]

Relying on quantitative measures can depersonalize the individual's experience and silences specific acts of resistance and agency claiming. Anne Digby, in a more qualitative fashion, acknowledges that "[m]utually contradictory testimony by patients as to their attitudes and feelings on life at the Retreat means that one set of generalisations can hardly do justice to their variety of experience. […] [E]vidence of patients' feelings was often filtered, refracted, or destroyed by their keepers."[98] Digby rightly asserts that the written record contains few examples of the asylum residents' voices; when they do

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[97] D'Antonio, *Founding Friends*, 139.
[98] Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, 200.

appear, it was often purposefully preserved by the asylum administrators to cast themselves in a good light.[99] Yet in spite of the paucity of residents' own voices, this section of the chapter strives to assess how individuals ostensibly being "improved" or "cured" by these treatments experienced and opposed them.

By reading official publications and private correspondence from asylum administrators against the grain, this section will first argue that asylum residents in York and Philadelphia exercised agency as they occasionally undermined the Enlightened and ostensibly "humane" methods used to them to "full" humanity.[100] Second, when faced

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[99] Isaac Bonsall, entry from January 7, 1821, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824". In this entry, Bonsall excerpted a letter from Friends Asylum resident Hannah Hollinshead to one of her friends. "I can truly say I am not sorry that I am here for I find my good friends Isaac and Ann Bonsall the same they ever were that is firm but not cross," opened Hollinshead. She then praised the asylum Matron (and Isaac's wife), Ann Bonsall, who ensured that Hollinshead had "not had one run of Snuff since I have been in this House [...] dont thee think I owe her a great deal for being so resolutely determined not to let me have it." This entry stands out for being one that extensively quotes from a resident, whereas many during Bonsall's administration focused on more banal aspects of asylum management. By including this letter, however, Bonsall clearly demonstrated his desire to make himself and his wife's administration over the domestic aspects of life at Friends Asylum seem as idyllic as possible to the Board of Managers, who might read from this official document.

[100] The emerging field of "Mad Studies" has informed the arguments in this section. One of the central tenets of "Mad Studies" focuses on understanding "mental illness" and madness within its broader social and economic context and not reducing individuals to these "biologically reductionist" and medically-designated labels (p. 2). To these ends, scholars working in the field of "Mad Studies" work from some of the basic assumptions that mad people can have agency and express resistance to medical authorities. Similarly, they also emphasize that madness exists on a continuum and manifests itself in a spectrum of behaviors, types of awareness, and perceptions; this belief challenges the notion that "insanity" or "mental illness" is a totalizing state that guides all aspects of an individual's life. Building on those assumptions, this section will suggest that many of the "insane" people at the Retreat and Friends Hospital were, in spite of their Enlightenment-inspired and medically-informed labels, able to be aware of opportunities to challenge the superintendents and staffs at these institutions and cognizant of ways they could best oppose the treatment regimen they experienced. For a definitional introduction to this field, see Robert Menzies, Brenda A. LaFrançois, and Geoffrey Reaume, "Introducing Mad Studies," in Brenda A. LeFrançois, Robert Menzies, and Geoffrey Reaume, eds., *Mad Matters: A Critical Reader in Canadian Mad Studies* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2013). For a monograph that analyzes the history of a specific mental institution from a "Mad Studies" perspective, see Geoffrey Reaume, *Remembrance of Patients Past: Patient Life at the Toronto Hospital for the Insane, 1870-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). For an analysis of neuro-diversity within the context of colleges and universities and the rhetoric that often ostracizes "mad" people within these settings, see Margaret Price, *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2011). For recent scholarship that adopts a similar method to that of "Mad Studies" by refuting the common

with these challenges to their vision of how to rationally improve and "cure" their ostensibly insane resident, this section examines how administrators at both the Retreat and Friends asylum developed rhetorical strategies that recast these internal struggles as objective, empirical accounts of asylum life, thereby placating their Quaker stakeholders. Finally, in identifying and reclaiming the residents' agency within these institutions, this section argues that the use of "moral treatment" created fissures and internal tensions amongst the asylum "family" even in the era when both the Retreat and Friends Asylum served an exclusively Quaker population.

Unlike the transfer of publicity strategies and the innovations in restraints, which occurred began in York and traveled across the Atlantic to Philadelphia, however, residents experienced and challenged these asylums' regimen of moral treatment simultaneously. As residents opposed their treatment and incarceration in both these institutions, they prompted asylum administrators to correspond more about the restraint devices and methods explored in the previous section. Especially after Tuke published the *Description of the Retreat* in 1813 and Friends Asylum published *Further information of the profess of the Asylum* in 1818, administrators in both institutions grappled with the challenge of preserving their positive reputations amongst the public and other asylums while continuing to use restraint as a treatment method. The complex and messy realities of governing insane asylums with Quaker patients who challenged this Quaker-influenced treatment regimen often clashed with the calm and peaceful image of the

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assumption that cognitive impairment designates (or predestines) a lack of individual agency, see Allison C. Carey, *On the Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

asylum "family" that these administrators sought to publicly project.

Even prior to the institution's founding, administrators' concerns about how their "insane" residents might undermine their treatment regimen informed the Retreat's architecture and design. John Bevans, the Retreat's architect, purposefully designed the windows with "iron or strongwood open bar gates […] kept always locked by the keeper of each ward" to prevent residents from employing the "art and cunning that some in this state possess." By making this design choice, Bevans conceded that individuals committed to these asylums "are generally very averse to confinement" and are often "tempted to escape," acknowledging both the agency of the asylum's residents and the ways that architecture served as a means of restraint.[101] Such resistance appeared immediately upon the Retreat's opening in 1796 when John Ellis, a resident who expressed "Symptoms of deep Melancholy," took the most extreme measure to resist treatment, escaping from his unlocked room in early December and "strangling himself in the Night." The Retreat fired the attendant in charge of him.[102] Four years later, another patient who the staff had previously considered unlikely "to injure himself or others," but who did at time "dirty himself if not well watched," ultimately died from "suicide strangulation."[103]

At Friends Asylum, harsh punishments followed some suicide attempts;

[101] John Bevans, Letter to William Tuke, January 31, 1794, RET 1/10/2/1, Notebooks and transcripts of Retreat Correspondence and other records, c. 1760-1900, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England; For a thorough analysis of the architectural elements of the Retreat and how they functioned within the "moral treatment" regimen, see Barry Edginton, "The Design of Moral Architecture at The York Retreat," *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 2003): 103–17, doi:10.1093/jdh/16.2.103.

[102] Entries from June 27, 1796 and January 10, 1797, in "Transcript of Case Book, 1796-1828," 1796-1828, 6, RET 1/10/1/2, Transcripts of Retreat Archives, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

[103] Entries from December 13, 1798 and March 8, 1800, in ibid., 19–20.

superintendents sought to subdue the resident and prove that accepting moral treatment was better than ending one's life. In early 1821, resident Abraham Sharp failed "to hang himself with one of the sheets to the transom [because] the knot slipped," leaving him once again under the control of the asylum attendants. First placing him in handstraps, but then strapping him down to his bed because "he beat his head so hard against the wall," when Sharp finally spoke to Bonsall, he "proposed that [the asylum staff] should drown him." Bonsall, however, perceived this as an opportunity to use the resident's own desire to end his life as an opportunity for punishment, "and in the hope it would have a salutary effect [he] proposed to the Doctor and men caretakers to have the bathing tub nearly filled with cold water and put him in under a pretence [*sic*] of drowning him; they did so and held him under for some time." According to Bonsall, Sharp felt relieved to survive this ordeal and "behaved better" for the asylum staff.[104] The incident, however, revealed both the near-sadistic forms that "moral treatment" could take as well as the inherent risks for residents who physically and vocally resisted the treatment regimen of the asylum.

Not all forms of resistance were as profound and devastating as suicide, however. One of the more common methods of resistance employed by patients involved refusing to eat, which pushed the asylum staff to force feed them: a process that Tuke outlined in detail in the *Description*.[105] Other residents employed small-scale violence or resistance, some "pinching the arms" of attendants, some more aggressively "strik[ing] […]

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[104] Isaac Bonsall, entry from February 13, 1821, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824."

[105] Tuke, *Description of the Retreat*, 169–170.

attendants" and the physicians or "attempting to bite those about" them, and others

"tearing or sullying [their] clothes" or "dirty[ing] [themselves] if not well watched."[106]

Indeed, residents often chose to strategically make life difficult and unpleasant for

asylum staff. Aaron P. Wood, whose punishments were discussed in the last section,

flouted the treatment regime of Friends Asylum consistently and aggressively. In the fall

and early winter of 1820, Wood challenged Bonsall's authority and control on numerous

occasions. In September he put "a quantity of his excrements both on the Ceiling & Wall

daubed his cloths" and then placed "both his feet and legs into the hole among the

excrements" while strapped down. Later that month he broke "17 panels of Glass" in an

insolation room, and then in November and December he destroyed multiple chamber

pots and then "distribute[d] his excrements over his Room on the Bed Cloths the Wall

and Floor."[107] Though he kept a generally placid demeanor in his journal entries, these

strategies bothered Bonsall. He recorded his feeling about another resident, for instance,

who "keeps so filthy and occasions so much trouble that it would be a great relief to us if

his friends would take him away."[108] Clearly, Quaker patients did not automatically trust

the institution or its administrators even when they, too, were Quakers. In other words,

theological cohesion between patients, administrators, and some staff did not inherently

create a cohesive asylum "family."

The general tone that the Retreat's Superintendent took in these comments,

moreover, revealed how his staff construed some forms of resistance as non-threatening

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[106] Entries from December 16, 1798; June 15, 1799; August 20, 1800; August 20, 1802; January 24, 1798; December 13, 1798, in "Transcript of Case Book, 1796-1828," 20, 22, 26–27, 34, 19–20.

[107] Isaac Bonsall, entries from September 16, 1820; September 29, 1820; November 28, 1820; December 9, 1820, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824."

[108] Isaac Bonsall, entry from February 17, 1821, in ibid.

and standard behavior for those identified as insane. A parallel dynamic developed for the administrators of Friends Asylum. When the allegedly "insane" residents of the asylum behaved in a non-violent manner at times when Bonsall anticipated otherwise, he remarked that they were "better than expected," suggesting that spontaneous violence was the *de facto* mode for his charges.[109] Entries in the administrators' records of both institutions use nonchalant turns of phrase that minimized the seriousness of the residents' behavior and made it seem a natural outgrowth of being declared "insane." Noting that some required "no particular attention" beyond stopping them from hurting themselves, while others "ha[d] not offered any violence" beyond frequently pinching the attendants, Jepson made the patients' violent and persistent resistance to their treatment and the Retreat staff appear a mere inconvenience.[110] At Friends Asylum, when a resident struck his attendant, the superintendent attributed this act of violence to another medicalized disability—palsy—and rationalized that it "made him irritable and he could not help it."[111] By normalizing the patients' small-scale resistance, and classifying it within empirically based Enlightenment classification schema, the staff and physicians similarly justified their approach to solving this behavior with more traditional methods that relied on physical restraint that might have been harsher than the idealized "moral treatment."

At York, some patients took advantage of the open and spacious setting of the Retreat's grounds to escape the institution and potentially return to their families, seek

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[109] Isaac Bonsall, entries from December 18, 1820 and January 23, 1821, in ibid.

[110] Entries from January 24, 1798; December 16, 1798, in "Transcript of Case Book, 1796-1828," 19, 20.

[111] D'Antonio, *Founding Friends*, 144.

help at other asylums, or simply flee the regime of the Retreat "family."[112] In a 1799

instance, a resident named John Fawcett succeeded in running away after two prior

attempts, and sought refuge in his brother's house. Upon locating him and checking on

his well-being, Jepson learned that he had been "for a considerable time pretty well," and

his friends confirmed that he had been "much the same as for a Year or more previous to

his admission." This led Jepson to "let him remain amongst" his friends and family. In

this instance, Fawcett's continued resistance to both the Retreat's treatment methods and

the asylum itself, ultimately, and with the support of his local community, allowed him to

successfully break away from the institution. Similarly, in 1801 John Moxham escaped

from the Retreat three times in the span of ten months. While Jepson dismissively

characterized these escapes as "unnecessary journeys," he also acknowledged that

Moxham "evinced peculiar adroitness" and that he "possess[ed] uncommon resolution &

invention"—characteristics that seemed to defy his placement in an asylum and instead

mark him as intellectually rational and sophisticated.[113]

When residents whose violent, recalcitrant, or dangerous behavior pushed Jepson

and his staff to resort to traditional methods of restraint, the Retreat's administrators

focused on how to continue projecting a positive image of their version of "moral

treatment." Administrators tracked how frequently and how intensely the staff used

restraint. The men's Visiting Committee for the Retreat took note of the number of

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[112] Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, 197.
[113] Entries from January 20, 1798; January 26, 1799; February 22, 1801, in "Transcript of Case Book, 1796-1828," 15, 29.

patients under restraint and the methods employed in these cases.[114] Straightforward,

objective descriptions, such as "none secluded, two partially restrained," "only one was

in any way restrained," and "three patients under restraint, two of them in bed,"

dominated these entries.[115] On occasion, however, the Visitors subtly revealed concerns

about how the staff treated patients. An entry from August 5, 1815 noted dispassionately

that four patients were restrained with either bed-straps or straitjackets, but that "in hot

weather" it would "appea[r] particularly desirable […] to secure the patients in bed

without the jacket." While not overtly stated by these visitors, their suggestion to allow

patients more breathable clothing in hot weather implied that they had observed

overheated patients in the summer and were concerned whether such restraints met the

standards of "moral treatment."

Beneath these claims of mere objective reporting, however, lay the visitors' keen

awareness that they were also writing for a Quaker audience. The visitors' caveat here

suggested a tone of defensiveness, as they worried that reports of the Retreat's fairly

frequent incidence of restraint might undermine its public reputation as the premiere site

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[114] Board of Governors of the Retreat at York, *Rules & Regulation for the Government of the Retreat, Near York; for the Reception of Persons Afflicted with Disorders of the Mind Among the Society of Friends* (York: W. Hargrave and Company, 1815), 7. The Men's Visiting Committee was comprised of two subscribers and charged with "inspect[ing] every part of the House," and making "such remarks as may appear to them necessary or desirable." The Female Visiting Committee, by contrast, had no designated assignments. As a result, once created, the women's committee focused primarily on the female patients and constrained its recommendations and advice to issues pertaining to the Asylum upkeep and how to make the rooms more comfortable and healthful, shedding light both of early nineteenth century notions of gender and women's limited role in governing such institutions. Moreover, the generally benign content in the reports suggest that women were shielded from (or prohibited from commenting on) issues of discipline and restraint in the Retreat. The Visiting Committee reports from the men, however, offer much greater insight into the use of restraint and the concerns it raised amongst the Retreat's administrators.

[115] Entries from December 16, 1815; December 25, 1815; February 5, 1816, in "Committee Visitors Report Book, 1815-1867" 1815-1867, RET 1/4/1/1, Borthwick Institute for Archives, York, England.

of "moral treatment." By framing these reports of restraint as merely factual, the visitors provided the Retreat's administrators with proof that their treatment methods cohered with Quaker values; such evidence thereby allowed Tuke and other administrators to market the institution as distinctively Quaker. Even when asylum staff restrained residents, they allegedly did so in their best interest and in a way that respected "that of God" within each person.

Similarly, in his Superintendent's Journal, Bonsall displayed an awareness of his role in preserving the placid, harmonious tone for Friends Asylum's Quaker "family." For Bonsall, who had no medical training or background, the increasing prominence of visiting physicians at Friends Asylum troubled him as both he and Ann Bonsall thought "more harm than good is done by the medical treatment although well intended." A major part of the problem, Bonsall thought, stemmed from the fact that six different visiting physicians had authority to administer doses of medicine, such as opioids, on asylum residents. Moreover, Bonsall also worried that the autonomy these visiting physicians displayed made the guidance of head physician and prominent local Quaker, Charles Matlack, "less efficacious [as he] is not so fully at liberty to exercise his own Judgement [*sic*]." Even though they were both prominent Philadelphia Friends, Bonsall also took issue with Matlack's "practice of administering Medicine quite as often as there is occasion," which Bonsall thought thwarted "a full experiment […] as to the effect of Moral Treatment."[116] As a lay, non-medical superintendent, Bonsall worried that the

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[116] Isaac Bonsall, entry from December 20, 1820, in Bonsall and Taylor, "Superintendent's Journal, 1820-1824"; Howard Barclay French, *Genealogy of the Descendants of Thomas French*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Howard B. French, 1913), 143. After serving as physician at Friends Asylum, Matlack opened a private practice, and then worked as a homeopathic doctor in Philadelphia until his death in 1874.

increasing use of drugs to treat Friends Asylum's residents would undermine both his administrative power and the legitimacy of moral treatment at the institution—concerns that came to fruition after his tenure in the 1830s.[117] This instance illustrated another way moral treatment created fissures and tensions within the asylum's Quaker "family" that went beyond resident resistance. Bonsall perceived medical treatment at Friends Asylum as necessary, but worried that its increasingly frequent use might displace the distinctive aspects of "moral treatment" that made it so cohesive with Quaker values.

For the Retreat, the fact that the Board of Governors created this Visiting Committee in 1815 after the publication and positive reception of Samuel Tuke's *Description of the Retreat* indicated the need they felt to ensure that the realities of "moral treatment" matched—at least rhetorically—the praiseworthy picture that circulated throughout the Atlantic world. Widespread knowledge of how patients resisted and escaped the "humane" and "Enlightened" regimen of treatment at the Retreat and Friends Asylum might both call the entire method into question and undermine the Retreat's vanguard position among insane asylums. Moreover, such reports also had the potential to challenge both asylums' harmonious vision of a Quaker "family"; the many Quaker patients who fought treatment revealed that simply going to an institution amongst their co-religionists was not necessarily a selling point. Given the importance of subscribers' and individual contributions to the survival of private insane asylums, any negative publicity would certainly have deleterious ripple effects on both institutions'

According to his genealogical biography, "Dr. Matlack was known and highly esteemed for his conscientious devotion to what he believed to be the truth, in science and religion. He was a respected member of the Society of Friends and took an active and zealous interest in its affairs."

[117] D'Antonio, *Founding Friends*, chap. 6.

finances. As a result, major institutional publications from the 1820s continued to stress

the kind, gentle, humane, and judicious use of restraints and punishments, thereby

glossing over some of the more damaging instances of resident resistance and punishment

that remained confined in the private records of these institutions.[118]

Conclusion:

The Legacy of Marketing "Moral Treatment" in the Transatlantic Quaker World

By examining the interplay between patient resistance and the marketing efforts

of the Retreat's administrators, we can more clearly see how the idealized vision of

humane "moral treatment" was, in fact, an arena of constant struggle and contestation. As

Tuke, and later the administrators of Friends Asylum, publicized their methods of moral

treatment and quantified their successes in praise-filled publications, these notions of

using kind treatment to ameliorate those perceived as mentally aberrant spread beyond

the Society of Friends. In other words, Quaker marketing of moral treatment—something

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[118] Waln's publication echoed many previous institutional reports from Friends Asylum in its description of moral treatment. Waln conceded that "Some patients are perfectly unmanageable without bodily restraint; and the most material point is to discover the different means of coercion which different patients require." Yet Waln firmly concluded by arguing that "[r]eason and experience show the necessity of confining those who are deprived of the use of their reason, in such manner as to prevent them from injuring themselves or others; but to chain, and to beat them, is both cruel and absurd. That coercion is only to be considered as 'a protecting and salutary restraint,' is the principle adopted at the Asylum." See Waln, Jr., *An Account of the Asylum for the Insane*, 22. In 1828, the Retreat's Directors published an updated version of Tuke's book from 1813, which continued to publicly reinforce the value of moral treatment. "Many striking instances have occurred," argued the text, "illustrating the almost infinite power of judicious kindness; and the mischievous effects of hasty and intemperate proceedings towards the insane. It may be interesting to the subscribers to know, that of the whole number of patients under our care, not more than eight, on an average, are found to require any degree of personal restraint, except those of the bounds allotted to them for exercise." In 1827 the Retreat had 87 residents living at the institution, meaning roughly 10% of those experienced some form of restraint. See, Directors of the General Meeting, *Sketch of the Origin, Progress and Present State of the Retreat, an Institution near York, for the Reception of Persons Afflicted with Disorders of the Mind, Among the Society of Friends* (York: W. Alexander and Son, 1828), 30, 37–38.

that Tuke presented initially as particularly suited to a Quaker ethos—eventually shaped

publicly-funded and non-sectarian institutions in Ireland, elsewhere in England, in

Scotland, and in the United States.[119]

Of course, we can never accept without question the claims of asylum and prison

administrators about the enlightened benevolence of their treatment methods. Institutional

publications such as annual reports, asylum histories, and public pronouncements served

first and foremost as a marketing and publicity tool. The Tuke family and the

administrators at Friends Asylum had to work hard to make their innovative and (for the

early nineteenth century) counter-intuitive ideas about kindness and respect for those

deemed insane seem a plausible and successful method of treatment. Purchasing large

plots of bucolic land, constructing new buildings, and hiring and supporting both lay and

medical staff required that the administrators of these institutions successfully persuade

Quaker citizens and meetings to invest in this ambitious project for the ostensible

betterment of humankind.

To achieve success, administrators in York and outside Philadelphia relied

heavily on the Enlightenment value of empiricism and on the powerful and humanitarian-

focused nature of the transatlantic Quaker community. Stressing, with quantitative

evidence, how "moral treatment" led to the "cure," "recovery," and "improvement" of

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[119] Among the institutions influenced by the Retreat were Loughall Retreat and Donnybrook Retreat in Ireland; Nottingham Asylum and West Riding Asylum in England; the Aberdeen Infirmary and Lunatic Asylum, the Edinburgh Asylum, and the Dundee Asylum in Scotland; Bloomingdale Asylum in New York, the Hartford Retreat in Connecticut, and McLean Asylum in Massachusetts, all in the United States. See, Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine*, 245–255; For wider context on the impact of moral treatment on North American asylums, British asylums, and the rise of psychiatry, respectively, see Grob, *The Mad Among Us*, 64–71; Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions*, 96–104, 188–202, 216–217; Porter, *Madness*, chap. 6.

those within the Retreat and Friends Asylum made the asylum staff's methods seem unimpeachable. Thorough, detailed descriptions of these asylums—their grounds, internal organization of residents, daily routines and focus on work and leisure—all appealed to a Quaker audience that was steeped in the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment where objective descriptions created proof. These seemingly scientific presentations were buffered with the humane discourse of "moral treatment." That this treatment philosophy respected the "inner light of God" within each individual undoubtedly appealed to Quakers who provided financial support through subscriptions and donations, who sent away friends and loved-ones for treatment, and who visited these institutions to see this Quaker-infused approach to "curing" insanity. The Tukes and the administrators of Friends Asylum fostered this positive response by including anecdotes and descriptions about moral treatment and the role of religion in institutional publications that reinforced the Quaker values undergirding the foundation of both institutions.

These benevolent voices, which have appeared most frequently and been echoed (at times uncritically) by other scholars has, however, silenced the lived experience of those whose perceived insanity was the target of moral treatment. It has also led scholars to overlook the ways in which "moral treatment" maintained continuity with the precise methods of restraint and punishment that it publicly disavowed as relics of an unenlightened era. By placing the Retreat's focus on restraint within a larger transatlantic context and tracing how Tuke and Jepson corresponded about these techniques with their colleagues at other institutions, we can more clearly see that preserving control remained

a central focus of early nineteenth-century asylum administrators.[120] That Friends

Asylum so self-consciously sought to emulate all aspects of the Retreat—even its

"gentler" restraints—further illustrates the influence this vanguard institution exerted in

terms of publicity and how it established order within its walls.

Uncovering how residents of these asylums responded to and challenged the

punishments and restraints in these institutions helps us create a more nuanced

understanding about how "moral treatment" functioned on a day-to-day basis. This

approach helps us see that "moral treatment" was an area of contestation throughout the

asylum. Informed by Enlightenment notions of insanity—a condition that cast ostensibly

"mad" individuals as less than fully human, but in doing so, simultaneously provided

them hope for recovery and a return to normalcy—Asylum superintendents struggled

with the best methods to achieve these "cures." Relying on their own observations,

experiences, as well as the dictates of asylum administrators, the lay superintendent

Friends who ran these asylums grappled with how to balance the outsider physicians' use

of medical treatments with their desire to use moral treatment to actualize the Quaker

vision of these institutions that their founders had articulated. More importantly, and in

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[120] This chapter has, admittedly, focused on the connections taking place primarily within the English-speaking Atlantic world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For a fuller, and fully transatlantic, treatment of this topic, it would be vital to include analysis of Philippe Pinel and explore the rhetoric surrounding insanity, resistance, overcoming, and the like at the Salpêtrière and Bicêtre Hospitals in France where Pinel developed his moral treatment methods. For his pioneering work on insanity and moral treatment, see Philippe Pinel, *A Treatise on Insanity*, trans. D.D. Davis (Sheffield: W. Todd for Cadell and Davies, 1806). For secondary source scholarship on Pinel and the wider context of French psychiatry, see Jan Ellen Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Louis C. Charland, "A Moral Line in the Sand: Alexander Crichton and Philippe Pinel on the Psychopathology of the Passions," in *Fact and Value in Emotion*, ed. Louis C. Charland and Peter Zachar, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2008), 15; For an analysis of the visual presentation of insanity in Pinel's publications, see Jane Kromm, *The Art of Frenzy: Public Madness in the Visual Culture of Europe, 1500-1850* (New York: Continuum, 2002), chap. 5.

spite of all the positive rhetorical framing, the Quaker residents of these asylums did not always experience being tied to a bed or placed in an isolation room as something that brought forth "that of God" within them. That the superintendents and asylum staff often felt irked or resorted to using the various restraint devices in the asylum speaks to the agency that residents exerted through their resistance.

At the core of these tensions lay the residents and their autonomy. Even within the bounds of highly regimented and proscribed institutions, when asylum residents fought against the treatments applied to them, they forced the superintendents and asylum staff to grapple with the morality of their actions and larger existential questions for these institutions. Did moral treatment truly fulfill these institutions' missions? Did using restraints cohere with moral treatment, or did it simply provide asylum staff with traditional methods of restraint repackaged as "humane" that allowed them to maintain order in what they perceived as a chaotic environment?

While there are no clear-cut answers to these questions, re-examining the traditionally laudatory histories of the York Retreat and Friends Asylum through both transatlantic and disability history lenses helps reveal a number of new aspects about these institutions. In part, we can more clearly see how the developing discourse around "insanity" in the early nineteenth century provided the Quaker reformers who founded and operated these institutions with a set of tools to manage and expand their institutions. The rhetorical frameworks that Tuke, Jepson, Cresson, Bonsall, and the like used attracted a transatlantic network of humanitarian-minded reformers, both Quaker and non-Quaker. By invoking the powerful and enlightened concept of "moral treatment,"

these asylum administrators made their institutions appealing on both the grounds of secular natural rights and Quaker doctrine of the "inner light." Yet "moral treatment's" more repressive tools of restraint, isolation, and selective punishment also appealed to administrators who felt the need to preserve order amongst the asylum "family" in a way that was philosophically palatable. By uncovering Quaker residents' persistent resistance, however, we can more clearly see that the traditional framing of "moral treatment" has allowed the rhetoric of kind, gentle, and judicious treatment to overshadow the reality of how this "humane" innovation enshrined and replicated both traditional treatment methods and traditional concepts of mental aberration that marginalized those deemed "insane."

Chapter 5

'the most useful instruments in dispensing light': "Overcoming" and Marketing Deaf

Education at the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb

In early November 1824, some of the most advanced students from the

Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb conducted one of their regular public

demonstrations at the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. As at many deaf schools

in the early nineteenth century, the students that night likely displayed their intellectual

acumen to a curious and (often) humanitarian-minded audience by reading out loud in

sign language, answering questions from the audience again in sign language, and

performing short dramatic scenes.[1] At the conclusion of the students' performance, J.R.

Ingersoll, one of the PIDD's Directors, addressed the audience to help them more fully

appreciate the wonder of what they had just witnessed:

> "The Directors [...] desire to exhibit the improvement of the pupils—their
> intelligence—their activity of perception and sound and practical capacity;
> substituted for the vacancy of mind and indolence of body, with which their
> infancy was threatened. […] Thrown by nature upon the kindness of others for
> their escape from darkness, they became by that kindness, themselves, the most
> useful instruments in dispensing light. They were born to ignorance—perhaps to
> misery. But the generous spirits that shed upon their minds the rays of knowledge;
> prepared them to take the happiest influences of religion, and the purest delights
> of connubial and parental love."

Throughout his speech, Ingersoll made clear he believed that all those associated with the

PIDD—the students, faculty, and administrators—had accomplished incredible

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[1] Although the precise program for this public demonstration has not been preserved, Esmail explains that these types of activities and performances became standard features at public demonstrations for deaf schools in the early-nineteenth century. See, Jennifer Esmail, "The Power of Deaf Poetry: The Exhibition of Literacy and the Nineteenth-Century Sign Language Debates," *Sign Language Studies* 8, no. 4 (2008): 350, doi:10.1353/sls.0.0003.

humanitarian feats in less than a decade since the institution's founding. Deaf people *could* successfully be educated and ultimately experience fuller spiritual and personal lives as a result, perhaps even marrying and forming families of their own. The audience, too, Ingersoll stressed, could help further these achievements by "generously sustaining" the PIDD in "its infancy." Such financial support would not only ensure that the school would "flourish" in its teaching of "the concentrated arts […] and science," but would also reaffirm the audience's own identity as a "liberal community."[2]

This speech and these demonstrations constituted more than a fundraising pitch; this event also served as an opportunity for the PIDD's Directors to market their educational methods as superior because they were grounded in an Enlightenment-influenced vision of deafness and disability. In characterizing deaf people as born into a state of "darkness," "ignorance," and "misery," shaped by a "vacancy of mind and indolence of body," Ingersoll expressed a Lockean vision of the human mind. Casting all people as "blank slates" who relied on sensory input and experiences to construct full knowledge of the world, Ingersoll validated the Enlightenment-based notion that individuals who lacked one of their senses were not "fully human" because they could not empirically process the world as "normal" people did.[3] Through his speech, Ingersoll echoed other Enlightenment-inspired reformers who founded institutions, asylums, and schools with the intent of using education and specialized treatment to "uplift" a variety

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[2] J.R. Ingersoll, "Address at the Exhibition of the Pupils of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb [delivered on November 5, 1824]," *Democratic Press*, November 23, 1824, MSS 162, Box 124, Folder 3, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. The quote in title of this chapter also comes from Ingersoll's speech.

[3] Locke articulated this notion of the mind as a "blank slate," or as he framed it in Latin, a "tabula rasa," in this famous 1690 work. See, John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Awnsham and John Churchil, 1700).

of aberrant humans, such as blind people and those labeled "insane."[4] In this context,

Ingersoll's speech captured these seemingly conflicting strains of Enlightenment thinking

about deafness and deaf people. He simultaneously cast the PIDD's students as objects of

sympathy and compassion, while providing hope that through education those students

could "overcome" their natural deficits, ultimately becoming closer to being "fully

human."

While Ingersoll's rhetoric from 1824 highlights the distinctive ways that

Enlightenment-inspired notions of disability and deafness permeated the PIDD and its

operations, many aspects of the school fit neatly into well-established narratives of Deaf

history.[5] As with many deaf schools in the United States in the early nineteenth century,

the PIDD had transatlantic foundations that drew on the educational methods developed

in France. In the late eighteenth century, some wealthy North American families sent

their children to receive an education at the Braidwood Academy in Scotland, an

institution that instructed students via oralism—a method that taught language via lip-

reading and speech. These oralist methods, however, did not initially take root widely in

the United States despite the shared language between the two countries. Instead, when

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[4] Samuel Gridley Howe provides one of the most clear-cut examples of this dynamic through his work in the Perkins Institution in Massachusetts. See, Ernest Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman: The First Deaf and Blind Person to Learn Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[5] Within the Deaf community, the issue of whether to capitalize the "d" in the word carries important cultural connotations. According to Padden and Humphries: "We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people." See, Carol A. Padden and Tom Humphries, *Deaf in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 2.

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, the founder of the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, traveled to Europe to study deaf education, he gravitated toward French manualism—a method that taught language via a complex combination of hand signs, facial expressions, and bodily gestures. With a strong base of financial support from the Connecticut legislature, the manualist methods developed and advertised at Gallaudet's American Asylum became the standard for other North American deaf schools, including the PIDD.[6]

Furthermore, the PIDD also demonstrated the ways that deaf schools fostered and their students created a distinctive Deaf culture in the United States through manualist education. Prior to Gallaudet's establishment of the American Asylum in Hartford, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, Henniker, New Hampshire, and Sandy River, Maine, had developed communities where deaf people were integrated fluidly into the wider society. In these New England towns, a locally created sign language—one that later mixed with French sign language in Hartford to create American Sign Language (ASL)—became a primary mode of communication for both deaf and hearing people. This development allowed for a cohesive, although not a "Deaf," community to form, thereby

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[6] Within the transatlantic context of deaf education, England and Scotland pursue oralism as the main methods to educate deaf people in their countries, following in the footsteps of Spain and Germany. See, John Vickrey Van Cleve and Barry A. Crouch, *A Place of Their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1989), viii, 18–46, 123–126. In terms of normative goals, John Vickery Van Cleve and Barry Crouch sought to empower deaf people and honor their history through this book by "provid[ing] a coherent look at […] the process whereby deaf Americans became the American deaf community." To those ends, the authors included the history of the PIDD to illustrate the growth of oralism in deaf residential schools and trace how the PIDD slowly marginalized manual instruction and moved toward an exclusive focus on oral methods by the early twentieth century. This discussion of the PIDD, however, relied almost exclusively on an institutionally-commissioned history from a century before (1893), and as a result, ignored the importance of Quakerism and a sense of how constructions of disability influenced the institution in its earliest years—the major foci of this chapter.

illustrating that the absence of hearing did not constitute a disability in and of itself.[7]

Once residential deaf schools opened their doors in the first half of the nineteenth century, they quietly became epicenters of strong Deaf identities. Literacy in English formed a central part of these schools' curriculums; using ASL to teach deaf students to read would allow them to not only understand religious teachings and ultimately achieve salvation, but also to become profitably employed.[8] In Martha's Vineyard, in fact, Deaf students who received an education under the manualist bilingual-bicultural model at residential schools like the American Asylum tended to be better educated than many hearing people on the island.[9] In the first half of the nineteenth century, communicating through ASL and written English became the norm for Deaf students at schools such as the American Asylum in Hartford, the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, and

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[7] At its peak in 1854, the deaf population of Martha's Vineyard stood at a ratio of one in 155 people (most of whom were hereditarily deaf), compared to the national average of one in 5,728. Nora Groce's monograph remains the classic treatment of this subject as well as an excellent example of the social model of disability. In exploring how many individuals on the island learned sign language alongside English and used them interchangeably, often fluidly switching between the two in a single conversation, Groce argued "that a handicap is defined by the community in which it appears. Although we can categorize the deaf Vineyarders as disabled, they certainly were not considered to be handicapped. They participated freely in all aspects of life in this Yankee community" (pp. 4-5). Nora Ellen Groce, *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), chap. 1, 5–8; For the wider context of these three deaf communities, see Harlan L. Lane, Richard Pillard, and Mary French, "Origins of the American Deaf-World: Assimilating and Differentiating Societies and Their Relation to Genetic Patterning," *Sign Language Studies* 1, no. 1 (2000): 17–44, doi:10.1353/sls.2000.0003.

[8] Douglas C. Baynton, "'A Silent Exile on This Earth': The Metaphorical Construction of Deafness in the Nineteenth Century," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1992): 220.

[9] At the American Asylum in Hartford, students learned the communicate manually via a system of signs, but also learned to read written English, giving them a skill-set intended to make them employable after graduation. The students from Martha's Vineyard who attended the American Asylum had to adapt to ASL from their locally-practiced form of signing as well as had to learn how to read English. See, R. A. R Edwards, *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth-Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 61–63.

Gallaudet College, the first post-secondary deaf school in the United States.[10] In some

instances, these deaf schools could bridge cultural divides that defined the antebellum

United States. At both the American Asylum and the New York School for the Deaf, free

black students lived and studied alongside their white peers at a time when other schools

in Connecticut and New York remained segregated.[11] Although the PIDD did not have a

black student until 1886, that institution's students also articulated a strong, proud Deaf

identity forged by the heavy concentration of signing students all in one place.[12]

Finally, the PIDD also followed the same trajectory as most other deaf schools in

the United States as it adopted an increasingly oralist educational approach and culture in

the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Scholars of Deaf history disagree on precisely when

and why oralism became dominant in these institutions. The more long-standing

argument asserts that oralism stemmed from jingoistic concerns about immigration and

the dilution of a distinctive American culture in the 1870s and 1880s.[13] More recent

scholarship has challenged the chronology and causality of oralism's rise, contending

instead that it emerged in the 1840s and 1850s as a backlash against the unique Deaf

communities created in deaf schools. By the 1870s, oralists, such as Alexander Graham

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[10] Van Cleve and Crouch, *A Place of Their Own*, chap. 5, 7; Baynton, "A Silent Exile on This Earth," 217; Douglas Baynton points to this short monograph as an exemplar for understanding both historical and contemporary American deaf culture. See, Padden and Humphries, *Deaf in America*.
[11] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 65–69.
[12] Thomas Flowers, the first black person to enroll at the PIDD, studied at that institution from 1886 to 1895. Although he attended the PIDD while *de jure* segregation was sweeping the South and then was upheld by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision (1896), Flowers nevertheless felt treated equally by his peers and teachers at the PIDD. See, Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 47.
[13] Oralists, such as Alexander Graham Bell and A.L.E. Crouter grounded their arguments for oralism in the idea that speech and hearing were the "normal" and "natural" way to process language, thereby cloaking their xenophobic motives in the guise of empirical and objective scientific "truths." See, ibid., 28, 57–58, 140–148.

Bell who bankrolled oralist education with roughly half of his wealth, had gained the

upper hand in condemning manual education because they feared it made the Deaf

community "clannish."[14] The PIDD, too, paralleled other North American institutions in

its embrace of oralist education in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In fact, in 1870

the PIDD's Directors sent a committee to visit the New York School for the Deaf and the

Clarke School in Northampton, Massachusetts, in order to learn the methods used by

instructors in their Articulation Departments. In 1881, the PIDD opened its own day

school entirely separated from the residential campus that used "pure oral" instruction for

those students—a physical and curricular distinction meant to undermine the internal

cohesion of Deaf students who used sign language.[15]

While the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb fits convincingly into

these familiar narratives of transatlantic foundations, the distinctive Deaf culture forged

by manualism, and oralism's eventual triumph, that narrative focus has led scholars to

ignore other important aspects of the institution. In contrast to those treatments of the

PIDD, this chapter argues that the institution's first decade and a half of existence—those

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[14] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, chap. 6, 7, Conclusion; After winning the Volta Award from the French government in 1880, Bell invested the 50,000 Francs he won to establish the Volta Bureau—a Washington D.C.-based organization dedicated to the study and advancement of oral education. Shortly after founding the Volta Bureau in 1887, Bell also became the first President of the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf. See, Brian H. Greenwald, "Alexander Graham Bell and His Role in Oral Education," *Disability History Museum--Education: Essay*, 2014, http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/edu/essay.html?id=59.

[15] H. Van Allen, *A Brief History of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb* (Philadelphia: Avil Printing Company, 1893), 19–21; The legacy of oralist instruction continues to shape the curriculum and identity of the PIDD, now called the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, in the 21st century. Courses in ASL and support for manualist education remain a small portion of the school's curriculum; instead, the school emphasizes its support for audiological services for hard of hearing students as well as support for students' use of cochlear implants. See, "High School Curriculum," *Pennsylvania School for the Deaf*, 2015, http://www.psd.org/uploaded/SECONDARY_DOCUMENTS/HIGH_SCHOOL_CURRICULUM.pdf; "Speech, Language and Assessment," *Pennsylvania School for the Deaf*, 2015, http://www.psd.org/page.cfm?p=762.

bounded by Roberts Vaux's involvement as a founder and administrator—reveal that the PIDD was profoundly influenced by both Quaker values and emerging transatlantic concepts of disability. These aspects of the institution make it a critical one both for the history of deaf education as well as for further understanding how Enlightenment ideas about human aberrance and normalcy shaped nineteenth-century understandings of disability. Although the PIDD was a non-sectarian institution that quickly fell under the financial and bureaucratic aegis of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, prominent Quakers and the longer-term successes of Friends' other philanthropic endeavors shaped the school in ways that mirrored exclusively Quaker charities. Scholars of Deaf history agree that manualist schools of the early nineteenth century served to educate their students about religion, but the PIDD provides a striking example of the way religious instruction *actually* occurred at a deaf school. Moreover, as Quakers on the Board of Directors influenced the institution's religious curriculum, they revealed their ability to strategically engage with and influence state-funded institutions at a time when Quakers remained officially separated from Pennsylvania politics. In other words, Quakers infused the PIDD's curriculum and culture with their distinctive theological values of the Inner Light and the spiritual equality of all people and used these to subtly influence the non-denominational religious curriculum for the school's blend of largely Protestant students.

Similarly, these Quaker philanthropists also incorporated the same emerging post-Enlightenment concepts of disability into their work with the PIDD that they had used to successfully build support for their other humanitarian endeavors, particularly insane asylums. Given that overlapping reformers, notably Roberts Vaux and Caleb Cresson,

worked to found and shape both Friends Asylum and the Pennsylvania Institution for the

Deaf and Dumb, it is unsurprising that they harnessed these same concepts of disability,

marginalization, and overcoming as tools to market and build financial and public

support for the PIDD. The PIDD's founders closely studied the transatlantic innovations

in deaf education—especially those in France—and used the successes of those deaf

schools to empirically prove the value of their institution to politicians and patrons. In

marketing the PIDD, the Quaker and non-Quaker Directors of the school set out to

address a social problem that they found easier to solve when they framed it through

Enlightenment rhetoric about disability: deafness was a lamentable and tragic state, but

one that could be overcome through education. In building an institution that could

accomplish this mission of intellectual and spiritual uplift, the PIDD's Directors also

invoked and reinforced the Enlightenment notion that all humans (including those with

bodily, sensory, and intellectual impairments) existed on a hierarchy. As they marketed

and raised public support, the PIDD's Board of Directors used this Enlightenment

concept of deafness, and the assumption that it existed toward the top of the disability

hierarchy, to argue that deaf people *could* be educated and trained for full citizenship

while others with less mental capacity were destined for second-class citizenship.[16]

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[16] In his landmark essay, Douglas Baynton illustrates that disability has been a central part of how American society has justified unequal treatment and rights throughout its history. In examining the ways various civil rights movements, such as those who fought for equality for women, black people, and immigrants, Baynton illustrates that proving how one's own group lacked a disability served as a central rhetorical strategy in the process of gaining more rights. For the full argument, see Douglas Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 33–57. This chapter builds on Baynton's argument, though it pushes it back chronologically to the early nineteenth century and explicitly includes deafness as part of this narrative, to explore the ways that this same dynamic of increasing rights and education for deaf people relied on marginalizing other people with intellectual aberrations perceived, in a post-Enlightenment mindset, as less "fully human." In

Ultimately, in the process of invoking this rhetoric, these reformers reified Enlightenment

hierarchies of disability that made deafness a superior condition to "idiocy" or "dullness,"

while also marketing the school as a beacon of hope to families who might send their

children to the PIDD. This institution, therefore, left a legacy that not reshaped the lives

of the deaf students who attended and graduated from the institution, but also had

profound, and often profoundly marginalizing, effects for all types of non-normative

people.

Roberts Vaux: Engaging with Notions of Disability through Philanthropy

In the 1810s, just as Roberts Vaux began to expand the scope of his philanthropic

work in Philadelphia to encompass insane asylums, prison reform, education, and—

vitally for this chapter—deaf schools, he dabbled briefly with biography. Between 1815

and 1817, Vaux wrote three short biographies of notable eighteenth-century Quaker

philanthropists, whose work had paved the way for the humanitarian endeavors Vaux

would pursue in the early nineteenth century. In 1815 Vaux profiled the militant and

peaceful abolitionists, Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford, respectively.[17] This joint-

biography dovetailed with and reinforced Vaux's work in the Pennsylvania Abolition

Society—an organization with which he had been associated since 1807 and for whom he

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using Baynton's argument to reconsider the history of the PIDD, I hope to reintegrate deaf history, which
has often been told as a separate narrative focused on Deaf culture, into the wider narratives and patterns of
disability history.

[17] Roberts Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford: Two of the Earliest
Public Advocates for the Emancipation of the Enslaved Africans* (Philadelphia: Solomon W. Conrad,
1815), http://archive.org/details/memoirsoflivesof00vaux. For analysis of how Vaux employed
Enlightenment-influenced concepts of disability as simultaneously marginalizing and empowering in his
biography of Lay as a way to explain the short-statured abolitionist's aggressive and dramatic anti-slavery
displays, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

served as a member of its Board of Education from 1809 to 1813.[18] By the end of that decade, Vaux built on this philanthropic work by becoming deeply involved in working to establish a deaf school in Philadelphia that would parallel the work done at the American Asylum in Hartford.

Yet as evinced by his involvement within the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, Vaux's primary passion was education, not only for those who sought to break free from abuses of North American slavery. In these same years of the 1810s, Vaux also joined a number of charities that sought to expand and improve education for some of the most marginalized groups both in Philadelphia and in the United States. He joined the Philadelphia Society for the Establishment and Support of Charity School in 1807, the Society for the Free Instruction of Orderly Blacks and People of Color in 1808, and the Adelphia School Association in 1809; his educational reform work culminated with his term as the first President of the Board of Controllers of the Pennsylvania Public Schools from 1818 to 1831.[19] Throughout all of this educational reform work, Vaux participated in privately funded, sectarian (read: Quaker-only) institutions, privately funded mixed (read: multi-denominational) institutions, as well as those that received public funding from the Pennsylvania General Assembly and whose Boards were composed of both

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[18] Margaret Morris Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World: The Humanitarian Activities of Philadelphia Quakers, 1790--1820" (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), 124–125, http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI9227678.

[19] Ibid., 124–125, 175–176. While the titles of most of these charities make their objectives self-explanatory, the Adelphia School requires some background. Founded as an organization to "provid[e] poor male children with a basic education," Haviland contends that it, as well as the others with which Vaux worked, sought to provide uplift to impoverished groups of Philadelphians through education, believing that a basic education would "provide the poor with tools to help themselves out of poverty."; According to his own accounts, Vaux belonged to at least forty-nine philanthropic organizations over the course of his career and while also serving on some governmental commissions. See, Joseph J. McCadden, "Roberts Vaux, 1836-1936," *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 25, no. 1 (April 1, 1936): 24.

Quakers and non-Quakers. Vaux's broad philanthropic involvement spoke to both his personal fascination with human aberration and his desire to forge an identity as a progressive, enlightened reformer who sought to improve the lives of some of the most marginalized and subjugated people in Philadelphia and North American society.

Despite such varied educational activities, Vaux always brought his Quaker faith and worldview to bear on these wide-spanning endeavors, including one of his less renowned known ones: his role as a founder, vice-president and Chairman of the Committee on Instruction of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (PIDD). Prior to officially becoming involved with the PIDD in 1820, Vaux had been fascinated with deaf education and had engaged with emerging post-Enlightenment concepts of deafness and human aberration. He echoed his own abolitionist activism through the vehicle of his Lay and Sandiford biographies; similarly, he also expressed an interest in and admiration for vanguard deaf educators in his 1817 biography of Anthony Benezet, who was primarily known as one of the foremost Quaker abolitionists of the late eighteenth century.

Vaux presented Benezet as one of Quakerism's great reformers of the eighteenth century, lauding him in particular for his abolitionist work in North America, England, and France. Benezet extended those concerns when he opened the African Free School in 1770 to educate young black students in "religious and literary instruction as would qualify them for the proper enjoyment of freedom, and for becoming useful and worthy

citizens."[20] Yet Vaux found himself drawn toward some of Benezet's less-known

educational experiments with deaf students. Benezet's "patient and persevering temper,"

Vaux wrote:

> was remarkably displayed, in the attention he bestowed upon a female who was deaf and dumb. She acquired, during two years under his tuition, such instruction as enabled her to enjoy an intercourse with society, which had been previously denied to her. And although his efforts in this case, to organise [*sic*] and develope [*sic*] ideas, did not reach the perfection since attained in the admirable scheme of his celebrated countryman the Abbé L'Epée, he nevertheless deserves credit for an attempt, which, in point of originality in Philadelphia, (perhaps in America,) must be awarded to him.[21]

Even in cases where Benezet's humanitarian work had seemingly failed, Vaux

acknowledged his fellow Friend as part of an educational vanguard for deaf people while

simultaneously making clear his own *bona fides* as an educational reformer. In

referencing Abbé L'Epée's "admirable scheme," Vaux demonstrated that he had

familiarity with the manualist system of signs developed at the School for the Deaf in

Paris, France, and possessed a general awareness of the transatlantic reforms intended to

help disabled people. Because Benezet focused on education and displayed a more placid

demeanor as a reformer than either Lay or Sandiford, Vaux also drew inspiration from

Benezet as he embarked on his own reform activities.[22]

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[20] Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, A Brief Sketch of the Schools for Black People and Their Descendants Established by the Religious Society of Friends in 1770 (Philadelphia: Friends Book Store, 1867) quoted in Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 22–23.

[21] Roberts Vaux and Anthony Benezet, *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet* (York: W. Alexander, 1817), 18.

[22] Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World," 128; Roderick Naylor Ryon, "Roberts Vaux: A Biography of a Reformer" (Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 1966), 58. Ryon, whose now-dated work still remains the most thorough and contemporary biography of Roberts Vaux, argued that Vaux chose to profile Lay, Sandiford, and Benezet because they paralleled Vaux's own life in his commitment to philanthropic endeavors for some of society's most marginalized groups: "He wrote of devoted,

While Vaux found all the subjects of his biographies ideologically appealing, he also found them fascinating because each one had some type of disability or physical aberration. Lay and Sandiford were both men of short stature. By Vaux's account, Benezet was also "small; his countenance was composed of strong and interesting features; and though his face beamed with benignant animation, it was far from being handsome." When requested to sit for a portrait, according to Vaux, Benezet rejected the offer, allegedly protesting, "'O! no, no, my ugly face shall not go down to posterity.'"[23] Contemporaneous accounts of Benezet's appearance corroborated the abolitionist's own deprecating self-assessment. A French officer writing after the American Revolution described "'the most zealous Quaker of Philadelphia,' as 'small, old, and ugly, but his countenance wears the stamp of a peaceful soul and the repose of a good conscience.'"[24] As he described Benezet's non-conforming body, Vaux suggested that his purportedly "ugly" appearances gave him experience with being a social outsider. In spite (or perhaps because) of his aesthetic shortcomings, Vaux contended, Benezet displayed authentic kindness to other marginalized and disabled people. This dynamic was most evident in Benezet's work to educate a local (albeit unnamed in Vaux's biography) deaf girl. Essentially, Benezet could empathize with other aberrant people because of his own experiences with physical difference.

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disinterested men whose humanitarian interest varied, because he admired such qualities. [...] Vaux's writing of biography was a solitary act aimed to promote reform by providing an example."

[23] Vaux, *Memoirs of the Lives of Benjamin Lay and Ralph Sandiford*, 11–12, 67; Vaux and Benezet, *Memoirs of the Life of Anthony Benezet*, 138.

[24] Jean S. Straub, "Anthony Benezet: Teacher and Abolitionist of the Eighteenth Century," *Quaker History* 57, no. 1 (April 1, 1968): 16.

These examples highlight the ways that Enlightenment concepts about disability

and Quakerism shaped Vaux's philanthropic work in the 1810s through the 1830s. Vaux

embraced an Enlightenment view of disability that cast deafness as a condition that

marginalized deaf people because of their inability to access language, but

simultaneously provided hope and empowerment for them to overcome their social and

spiritual ostracism through education. His Quaker faith, especially its focus on spiritual

quality and "that of God" in all people, reinforced this Enlightenment perspective on

deafness and spurred Vaux to passionately support the PIDD during his time as a Vice

President and Chairman of the Committee on Instruction for the PIDD's Board of

Directors.

The Transatlantic Influences of the PIDD

France, and particularly the School for the Deaf in Paris, France, served as the

center of deaf education in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and also

profoundly shaped the nature of early deaf education in the United States. Even though

the U.K. and the United States shared a spoken language, the oral methods of speech

reading used at the Braidwood School in England failed to take hold in the United States.

Instead the pioneering work of the Abbé de l'Epee and Abbé Sicard at the Paris school,

which employed a manualist system of sign language, took root in North America thanks

to the transatlantic travels and tireless efforts of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent

Clerc. After graduating from Yale, Gallaudet was hired by the Cogswell family in

Hartford, Connecticut, to help educate their deaf daughter, Alice. In order to learn about

the most effective methods for instructing deaf students, Gallaudet went on a European

tour, visiting both Braidwood's school as well as that in Paris. During his travels,

Gallaudet found the Braidwoods excessively rigid and profit-oriented while Sicard and

Clerc struck him much more hospitable and supportive; these impressions ultimately led

him to take up residence and study at the School for the Deaf in Paris. Because of these

personal experiences, Gallaudet ultimately chose the manual system as the foundation for

his curriculum and instructional methods at the American Asylum for the Deaf in

Hartford—the first such school in North America. In addition, Gallaudet also brought

back with him an instructor, who, although deaf and French speaking, thoroughly knew

the Abbé Sicard's instructional methods and could help direct students at the newly

established school. This individual, Laurent Clerc, would rapidly learn to write and

communicate in English via sign language. He went on to help develop a mixture of sign

languages for the English-speaking students in Hartford and also served as acting

principal during a period of administrative turmoil during the PIDD's early years.[25]

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[25] Van Cleve and Crouch, *A Place of Their Own*, 30–41; For details on the mixture of "natural signs," "methodologial signs," the manual alphabet, and writing that Clerc employed in the American Asylum's curriculum, see Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 37–42; Uneducated until he was twelve years old, Clerc attended the Paris School for the Deaf (*Institut National des Jeune Sourds-Muets*) and studied under Abbe Sicard's student, Jean Massieu. During Napoleon's Hundred Days in 1815, Clerc fled to London with Abbe Sicard and Massieu, giving public demonstrations, which is where Gallaudet discovered their manualist methods. Clerc ultimately chose to move to the United States with Gallaudet to serve as the lead instructor for Gallaudet's American Asylum in Hartford. After teaching at the American Asylum for three years, Clerc served as the interim principal of the PIDD from August 1821 to March 1822. In addition to his tenure at that fledgling institution, Clerc and his manualist education techniques also influenced the curriculum of schools in Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Virginia, and Quebec in Canada. In total, Clerc spent 50 of the 83 years of his life teaching students sign language and helping establish manualism as the dominant mode of deaf education in the early nineteenth century. See, Loida R. Canlas, "Laurent Clerc: Apostle to the Deaf People of the New World," *Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center*, 2015, https://www.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/info-to-go/deaf-culture/laurent-clerc.html.

In Philadelphia's Washington Hall on December 7, 1816, Roberts Vaux and his

fellow Friend and philanthropist Jonah Thompson learned about the manualist system of

deaf education from Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc. These two men held

a series of public meetings in late 1816 that brought the issue of deaf education to the

attention of reform-minded citizens in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in order to

advertise and raise support for their new school and sign language methods. In crafting

their address, Gallaudet and Clerc purposefully appealed to the desire of North American

reformers to feel equally enlightened as their European counterparts. Clerc claimed that

this educational system had quickly spread throughout Europe because of enlightened

patronage from European sovereigns. These monarchs, whom Clerc did not name

specifically, sent deputies to Paris to learn from the Abbé l'Epee and then bring his

signing system back to their respective countries. "It is then to [the Abbé l'Epee],"

asserted Clerc confidently, "that all the European deaf and dumb owe their present

happiness."[26] Clerc made the subtext clear: if those in attendance were unwilling to study

the manual system and create a school of their own for deaf citizens, they were actively

fostering unhappiness and misery for their fellow Philadelphians. Unsurprisingly, given

the audience, Clerc's pitch proved successful. The attendees ended the meeting by

passing a resolution that called for the creation of a "committee […] to wait upon the

inhabitants of the city and districts […] to aid the exertions […] for the education of the

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[26] "Miscellaneous Paragraphs," *The Port Folio* 3, no. 1 (January 1817): 86. Despite these bold assertions, many European countries, such as England, Spain, and many German kingdoms adopted oralist rather than manualist methods for deaf education.

deaf and dumb in our country." Vaux and Thompson were both appointed to this first

committee to advance the cause of deaf education in Philadelphia.[27]

In this same speech, Clerc also used the familiar post-Enlightenment language of

disability to describe deaf people, characterizing them in familiar Enlightenment terms as

marginalized and less than fully human because of their sensory impairment. Clerc's

characterization echoed common Enlightenment hierarchies of disabled people and

placed deaf individuals in a subordinate position alongside individuals with physical or

mental aberrations. Although Clerc himself was deaf, he nevertheless described deaf

people as "unfortunate persons" and members of an "unfortunate family" in order to

evoke sympathy and financial support for the cause of deaf education in each of these

North American cities. At the Question and Answer session at the end of the meeting,

one of the attendees asked Clerc whether he believed that "the deaf and dumb [are]

sensible of their misfortune," to which Clerc replied that "[t]hose who know how to

write, do not think they are unhappy; but those who are not instructed are sensible of their

misfortune, and are often jealous of the happiness of their companions."[28] In echoing this

language that marginalized deaf people, Clerc helped to reinforce non-deaf people's

concept that deafness was a lamentable state. Simultaneously, Clerc also argued that deaf

people could overcome this marginal state through education via sign language—his and

Gallaudet's primary goal in holding these meetings in the first place. Contemporary

philanthropists on both sides of the Atlantic had successfully harnessed similar

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[27] Ibid., 88; Roderick N. Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania from 1818 to 1834," *Pennsylvania History* 34, no. 3 (July 1, 1967): 243.
[28] "Miscellaneous Paragraphs," 85–86, 89.

Enlightenment-forged rhetorical framings of disability to raise funds for similar

institutions, such as those designed to cure those declared "insane." In so doing,

Gallaudet and Clerc employed a disability discourse and fundraising formula that was

both familiar and appealing to transatlantic reformers like Roberts Vaux, who had used

such techniques to successfully raise financial and public support for other projects.

Vaux's and Thompson's prior philanthropic activities and family connections

both led them to be inherently attracted to this type of endeavor on behalf of deaf

students. In addition to writing biographies of vanguard Quaker philanthropists who all

had some distinctive physical aberration, Vaux also served on the Board of Managers for

Friends Asylum—an institution for those deemed "insane." In that capacity, he visited the

asylum frequently to observe the conditions for and improvement in the residents and

also helped evaluate the staff and superintendent. Based on his "four years of service as

one of the Managers," Vaux asserted that the Superintendent, Isaac Bonsall, had

"uniformly manifested zeal, judgment, and activity in the discharging of his duties, to

[his] entire satisfaction."[29] Such a confident assertion displayed Vaux's interest both in

the well-being of those deemed insane and living at Friends Asylum as well as his sense

that he could accurately determine that Bonsall employed the best forms of treatment to

help "restore" the residents back to their families and "normal" society. Vaux's

involvement with these activities emphasized desire to continue his family's legacy of

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[29] Roberts Vaux, Letter to Thomas Eddy, December 14, 1820, Collection 684, Box 5, Folder 9, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; Roberts Vaux, Letter to James P. Parke, October 18, 1813, Collection 684, Box 5, Folder 9, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. Vaux's specific role on the Board of Managers was to work on the building committee, and in this capacity, he corresponded extensively with other asylum managers and closely observed the layout and design of Friends Asylum's Atlantic predecessor, the Retreat at York, England.

philanthropic work that was driven by their Quaker values. Simultaneously, Vaux

engagement with such a wide range of reform activities also allowed him to establish

himself as an Enlightened reformer who had the empirical knowledge to evaluate and

guide the treatment regimen at these institutions intended to improve "aberrant" groups

within the society.

Jonah Thompson, while not as extensively involved in philanthropic endeavors as

Vaux, came from a family that valued assisting Philadelphia's lower sort. Before he

married and had children, Thompson's father, John, had helped Anthony Benezet run his

school in Philadelphia in the late 1770s and early 1780s.[30] Jonah Thompson described

himself "[a]s an individual whose feeling have for some time past been considerably

interested in the instruction of the deaf and dumb"; he likely learned from his father about

Benezet's particular experiments with teaching a deaf student.[31] When presented with the

opportunity from Gallaudet and Clerc to help establish a school for the deaf in

Philadelphia, this family history led the younger Thompson to seek to continue the

philanthropic work that his father and Benezet had begun well before his birth.

After Clerc and Gallaudet's presentation, Vaux and Thompson began aggressively

pursuing the creation of a deaf school following the model of the American Asylum for

the Deaf in Hartford; ultimately they failed to establish a school based entirely on private

funding. Thompson initially hoped to create a system of deaf education that incorporated

both Braidwood's oralist methods with Sicard's manual methods, thereby "realizing the

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[30] Joanne Danifo, "Finding Aid for Collection 654, Thompson Family Papers, 1607-1936 (bulk 1770-1870)" (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, May 2006), http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/findingaid0654thompson.pdf.

[31] Jonah Thompson, "Rough Observations of the Deaf and Dumb" December 12, 1816, MSS 162, Box 26, Folder 10, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

advantages which one might have derived from the other." Thompson, however, saw

some strong drawbacks of oralism, ultimately concluding that it "is extremely difficult,

[…] requires great labour [*sic*], and, with the most perfect, the voice is extremely

disagreeable and monotonous." Writing more positively about the manual system

practiced in Paris, Thompson believed that it would "extend [a student's] mental

conceptions to the highest degree of expansion and communication by signs as well as by

writing," thereby leading to "great perfection in science" and "sublime ideas" such as

those already expressed by "the pupils of the Abbe Sicard, particularly by Clerc, Massieu

and Gard."[32] In his preference for manualism, Thompson acknowledged the benefits of

this bilingual-bicultural approach, which would allow students to communicate both in

ASL to forge their Deaf culture, while also learning to write English, thereby gaining

greater economic and social opportunities to integrate into American society after

graduating.[33]

Vaux and Thompson failed to attract financial support for a deaf school because

that project struck many in Pennsylvania as an educational experiment with students that

might not be able to learn and improve. Although Thompson also began a

correspondence with Clerc in his attempts to drum up support for a deaf school, it quickly

became clear after the meeting that his work to extend deaf education in Philadelphia

involved more recruiting for the American Asylum in Hartford than it did fundraising for

a new local school. Clerc wrote to Thompson roughly four months after his and

Gallaudet's presentation and noted that in spite of "the enthusiasm I witnessed among the

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Edwards, *Words Made Flesh*, 3–6, 44–47.

Inhabitants of *Washington Hall*" and his "hope that the sentiments they testified to me were truly in their hearts," he and Gallaudet had "yet received nothing from Philadelphia." Instead, Thompson was encouraged to pass along the American Asylum's *Prospectus* "containing the conditions on which the Pupils can be admitted into our school" to any Philadelphians that might be interested.[34] The philanthropically minded individuals whom Vaux and Thompson solicited instead believed that funds should help provide education "for normal children whom all recognized as educable." This anti-deaf (and more broadly anti-disabled) sentiment forced the reformers to wait until 1818 when the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed a law creating statewide public education before they could further pursue their desire to create a school for deaf children.[35]

With their aspirations to create a deaf school in Philadelphia quashed temporarily, Vaux and Thompson ceased pursuing this philanthropic endeavor for two years until Vaux serendipitously discovered the existence of a small school for deaf children in Philadelphia operated by a local Jewish merchant and amateur deaf educator, David Seixas. With no formal training in manualism, Seixas had created his own system of signs for his small group of students and had been teaching them in his shop in Philadelphia. Seizing on the extant school and the fact that the Pennsylvania General Assembly had passed a public education bill the prior year, Vaux decided to take administrative control over Seixas's small group of eleven students and officially turn this ad hoc school into the "Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb." Seixas felt

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[34] Laurent Clerc, Letter to Mr. Jonah Thompson, April 10, 1817, MSS 162, Box 26, Folder 4, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[35] Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania," 241–243.

confident that with the administrative support of and a salary from this newly-organized

Board of Directors, he could expand his group of eleven students to somewhere between

40 to 60, especially as he claimed to have received applications from around 70 students

since the winter of 1819.[36] In the two years since their first effort to create a deaf school

in Philadelphia, Thompson had ceased working with Vaux, likely because he and his

brother George were in the midst of organizing the purchase of a manufacturing business,

the Phoenix Nail Works, which they officially acquired in 1821.[37] In his place, Vaux

assembled a prominent group of other local philanthropists, including non-Quaker

Horace Binney, who created the Apprentice's Library for indigent laborers, and fellow

Friend Clement C. Biddle, who served as the first president of the Philadelphia Savings-

Fund Society.[38] These men attended the earliest meetings of the PIDD Board of

Managers, which officially voted to create the school on April 12, 1820.

In the earliest founding documents and public notices about the Pennsylvania

Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Vaux displayed a keen awareness of the transatlantic

developments in deaf education. At the second meeting of the Board of Directors, Vaux

stressed the need for the PIDD to receive public and financial support by emphasizing

that "[i]n Europe institutions have been for a long time in successful operation for the

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[36] Ibid., 242–243; Roberts Vaux, "Memorandum on Meeting with David G. Seixas" May 4, 1820, Collection 684, Box 2, Folder 6, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; Seymour Brody, *Jewish Heroes & Heroines of America: 151 True Stories of Jewish American Heroism* (Hollywood, FL: Frederick Fell Publishers, 2004), 15–16; Michael Feldberg, *Blessings of Freedom: Chapters in American Jewish History* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2002), 112–113. Very little scholarship exists on Seixas, and most of it focuses on his short time as the founder and first principal of the PIDD. Sexias came from a prominent Jewish family in Philadelphia, so his narrative also appears in contexts beyond deaf history as the son of Gershom Mendes Seixas, the first native-born Rabbi in the United States.

[37] Danifo, "Finding Aid for Collection 654, Thompson Family Papers, 1607-1936 (bulk 1770-1870)."

[38] John Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1884), 1949.

relief of this description of persons, […] but Pennsylvania had not numbered in the comprehensive list of her charitable institutions" a school for deaf students.[39] Similarly, less than two months after officially taking control of the school, Vaux and the Board authorized Seixas to travel to Hartford to visit the American Asylum "and collect whatever information may be supposed to be useful in the department of instruction, and the domestic economy of that establishment": a visit that would have him learn the French manualist methods from Laurent Clerc and transport them back to Philadelphia. Yet, having Seixas practice the instructional techniques developed in Paris was not sufficient for Vaux, as he also requested the authority "to import from England an artificial ear, and an improved hearing trumpet by Curtis of London."[40] For Vaux, having the most up-to-date European pedagogy and curricular aids—even if those contained hints of oralism that would undermine the bilingual-bicultural manualist curriculum— was vital for him to prove that the PIDD deserved funding because of its enlightened, contemporary practices.

Furthermore, Vaux and the other Directors employed familiar rhetorical strategies of marginalizing and making disabled people objects of pity as a way to rally state

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[39] Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb: With a List of the Contributors, &c* (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1821), 4.

[40] Roberts Vaux, "Minutes, Committee of Education" May 29, 1820, MSS 162, Box 122, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC; Prior to his visit to Hartford, Seixas had requested compensation that would be "the equivalent of the salaries and emoluments granted by the schools of Hartford and New York to their Teachers," in spite of his lack of formal training. Seixas and the Board ultimately agreed on a salary of $1000 per year. In this same correspondence, Seixas also displayed his transatlantic awareness of innovations in deaf education, and stressed that "almost indispensable facilities will be afforded by the acquisition of engravings &c. such as are used in the French and British schools." See, David G. Seixas, "Letter to Horace Binney, Roberts Vaux, Thomas Cadwalader, and the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" May 5, 1820, MSS 162, Box 122, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

support for the fledgling school. On May 6, 1820, the Board of Directors and President

William White adopted and agreed to publish an address entitled, "To the Inhabitants of

Pennsylvania," which became the first public presentation of the newly-organized PIDD

to both Pennsylvania's citizens and lawmakers. Opening the address by labeling deafness

as one of the worst "woes inflicted on our species," the PIDD Board used language

throughout the address that constructed deaf people as subordinate humans in need of

restoration. Juxtaposing deafness with insanity, which was perceived as a temporary

intellectual aberration in contrast to permanent "idiocy," and noting that insanity "leaves

the hope of cure and recovery […] and glimmerings […] of returning reason," the PIDD

Directors sought to present deafness as one of the worst varieties of human aberration.

Without access to language and education, the Directors reasoned, deaf people would

descend a slippery slope of intellectual, social, economic, and spiritual maladies:

> Idiocy, sometimes attendant, often consequent;—the natural powers of the mind
> exercised to their own perversion or destruction, the passions headstrong and
> impetuous, by the absence of the control of judgement [*sic*],—fretful impatience
> at the dark preception [*sic*] of unknown and unattainable excellence in the rest of
> their species,—the wily cunning of *instinct* in the place of generous *wisdom*,—
> total unfitness for all occupations but those to which the brutes are as well
> adapted,—an entire and invincible separation from the vast stores of knowledge
> which human talent has accumulated—ignorance of the truths of *Revelation*, her
> glorious assurances and unspeakable consolations,—all these are among the bitter
> ingredients that fill up the vast measure of affliction to the *Deaf and Dumb*.

In response to these conditions, "the parent courted the death of his child," asserted the

PIDD Directors ominously, "as the only termination of intolerable sorrow."[41]

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[41] Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 6–7.

After offering this litany of tragic fates, the Directors then spurred local philanthropists, educated citizens, and the Pennsylvania General Assembly to support the PIDD financially by appealing to both Enlightenment values and to the same sense of transatlantic competition that Gallaudet and Clerc had used in their presentation four years earlier. Stressing that "modern discoveries" and "human power" could now bring about "cures" that previously only happened via miracles, the Directors emphasized that they used reason, logic, and empirical experience to construct a curriculum that would save these "children of misfortune." Furthermore, the Directors shamed the same local humanitarians and philanthropists who had rejected Vaux and Thompson's earlier fundraising pleas, appealing to their civic pride. "[I]t does not become Pennsylvania to look abroad for benevolent institutions, nor is it convenient," the Directors asserted. They cited the city's storied legacy of vanguard philanthropy, recalling that "it has not been her custom to direct elsewhere her own objects of succour [*sic*] and compassion," indicating that further supporting European institutions or the American Asylum in Hartford would callously neglect their fellow citizens in Pennsylvania. To distinguish this effort from Vaux and Thompson's earlier one, however, the Directors noted that they sought "moderate contributions from the many," as well as "the benevolence of an enlightened legislature to ensure success to our common exertions, by the grant of an endowment proportioned to the greatness and the goodness of our purpose."[42]

In using this type of rhetoric and this argumentative structure, William White, Vaux, and the other Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb

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[42] Ibid., 7–9.

relied on familiar tropes of manualist education from the early nineteenth century that cast deaf people as pitiable and needing education for religious salvation. At its core, this argument arose from Evangelical reformers' desires to improve society through proselytizing and bringing the Gospel to individuals who had not converted to Christianity. With religion, those individuals would then catalyze the overall reformation and purification of society. But to catalyze this change, non-deaf reformers had to successfully educate and uplift deaf people. To accomplish this goal, they constructed deaf people as outsiders who needed non-deaf people—the only ones who had the proper educational methods—to rescue and restore these "children of misfortune" to full membership in society. Gallaudet had pioneered this line of argumentation as a result of his experiences in France and during his tour with Clerc as a way to bolster support for manualism, which he felt was the only method capable of teaching deaf people about Christianity, thereby enabling their salvation.[43] Given the diverse religious composition of both the Board of Directors and the student population the PIDD hoped to serve, creating a broadly Evangelical religious appeal rather than a narrowly denominational or Quaker one, offered the surest means of raising the necessary support.

Once the Institution had been organized and its vision of deaf education clearly articulated, the Directors' final major task was to gain the financial backing of the

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[43] Baynton, "A Silent Exile on This Earth," 220–222; A few weeks after the public notice was published, Seixas held a public demonstration of the students, which was followed by an address from the prominent local attorney and philanthropist, William Rawle. In this speech, Rawle also employed many of these same techniques and methods that manualist educators used to equate education with salvation. On that occasion, for instance, he asserted, "as the mind of the pupil is opened and enlarged, the moral feeling of gratitude is in some degree elevated by instruction while he learns the cause for its exercise." See, William Rawle, "Address to the Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" May 25, 1820, MSS 162, Box 65, Folder 4, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

Pennsylvania General Assembly. In early November 1820, the Board of Directors

selected Roberts Vaux "to prepare a memorial to the legislature of Pennsylvania," which

was intended to persuade the state's legislature to grant an appropriation for the school.

His strong political connections in the legislature and the fact that he had gained a

reputation as an expert on education thanks to his role as president of the Board of

Controllers of the Pennsylvania public schools made Vaux the natural candidate to craft

this appeal.[44]

As with the first notice to the "Inhabitants of Pennsylvania," this appeal to the

legislature stressed both the marginal place of deaf people in society and called upon

Pennsylvania to resume its place in the transatlantic world as an incubator of

philanthropy. Vaux opened by flattering the lawmakers, calling them "an enlightened and

liberal legislature," and then delved into statistics about the necessity for state funding for

the PIDD. Since taking charge of the Institution, the school had grown from eleven to

nineteen students and was educating fifteen of them without charge. Vaux speculated that

in the whole state lived around 400 students who would benefit from this type of school.

Finally, Vaux closed the appeal by again comparing Pennsylvania's absence of a deaf

school with "neighbouring [sic] commonwealths and remote nations" who "illustrat[ed]

their philanthropy and philosophy in" educating "a portion of the human race, who, more

emphatically than any other, invoke the sympathy and solace of their fellow beings."[45]

Though less expansive in its discussion of the allegedly tragic plight of deaf individuals,

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[44] Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania," 243; Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 12.

[45] Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 14–15.

this memorial nevertheless preserved the dominant characteristics of Vaux's and the PIDD's other presentations of deafness and its marginalizing impacts.

Vaux's appeal alone, however, proved insufficient to convince the Pennsylvania General Assembly to pass an appropriation bill; rather, it required a live demonstration of deaf students learning in Harrisburg to convince the legislature to fund the PIDD. In early January 1821, Seixas and six PIDD students traveled to the state capitol to display their sign language methods and English reading and translation skills for the lawmakers. Though no evidence exists of individual lawmakers' reactions to the demonstration, the legislature apparently was moved by the performance as it passed an appropriation bill for the school in early February 1821, granting it $8000 immediately and an additional $160 annually for each "indigent pupil" taught at the school.[46] The preamble to the "Act to incorporate and endow the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb," also echoed some of the language and concepts Vaux articulated in his Memorial. The Act explained that the PIDD was founded on the bilingual-bicultural mission "to reclaim the deaf and dumb" through education; rather than "laboring under the privation of the faculty of speech," learning to sign and read would restore deaf people "to the rank of their species, and render them useful members of society."[47] As will be discussed in a later section, exhibiting the students of the PIDD and having them perform for curious outsiders became both an important method for future fundraising but also engendered a deal of disagreement internally amongst the Directors of the Institution.

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[46] Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania," 243; Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 16.

[47] *Pennsylvania Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, Incorporate and Endow Act of Feb. 8, 1821, Cl. 24*, 1821.

At this moment in early 1821, Vaux's goal of over four years—creating a school for deaf students in Pennsylvania—had finally come to fruition. The state's financial support not only ensured the continued existence of the PIDD, but also encouraged more private donations, which grew steadily throughout the 1820s.[48] Writing a profile of the school in 1835, notable deaf scholar and poet, John R. Burnet explained that Pennsylvania's legislative appropriation had spurred "much aid from private liberality in other ways." Reflecting on this achievement, Burnet concluded that "There are no people perhaps, more warm and liberal in a benevolent cause than the inhabitants of Philadelphia."[49] Although the school was now officially a state-run concern and as such had a firmly non-denominational religious identity, Roberts Vaux and other Friends on the Board of Directors continued to influence the institution in uniquely Quaker ways both theologically and structurally.

Quakerism and the Role of Religion at the PIDD

As a state-funded, non-sectarian institution, the PIDD had to market their use of religion in ways that appealed to a broad Christian audience. Nevertheless, Friends on the Board of Directors strategically infused aspects of their Quaker culture and sectarian practice into the workings of the Institution. As historian Margaret Haviland has argued in examining a broad swath of Philadelphia charities and humanitarian endeavors in the

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[48] Ryon, "Public Sponsorship of Special Education in Pennsylvania," 244. Ryon notes that by 1822 the PIDD had added 179 new names to its list of subscribers, and by 1825 had received thousands of dollars in charitable bequests, thereby alleviating some of the financial worries that the Directors had felt in the late 1810s and early 1820s.

[49] John Robertson Burnet, *Tales of the Deaf and Dumb with Miscellaneous Poems* (Newark, N.J.: Benjamin Olds, 1835), 105.

early nineteenth century, "Quaker participation in the formative years of these organizations ensured that the activities they chose, the goals they attempted, and the successes they enjoyed drew shape and inspiration from Quaker faith and practice."[50] Certainly, a number of Quakers played prominent roles on both the Board of Directors and on the Female Committee of the Institution.[51] These individuals brought a Quaker sensibility and practice to even some of the smallest details of their jobs. Friends influenced the PIDD by shaping its administrative structure and operation as well as its humane character that respected "that of God" within all people in the PIDD "family."

This Quaker sensibility appeared within the administrative practices of the institution. An example of this influence comes from Elizabeth Waln Wistar, who was Roberts Vaux's sister-in-law, and served as the Secretary of the PIDD's Female Committee. In this capacity, she dated their minutes with the traditional Quaker system for labeling days of the week, calling them by their numbers ("First Day" for Sunday, "Second Day" for Monday, etc.) rather than by their traditional pagan origin names.[52]

Structurally, the Directors of the PIDD divided themselves into a number of committees that focused on the school's various functions and which paralleled those within a Quaker Monthly Meeting. These committees conducted the bulk of the PIDD's

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[50] Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World," 248.

[51] Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 5, 10. Among the first Directors of the Institution, there were five Quakers—Roberts Vaux, Clement C. Biddle, Caleb Cresson, Samuel Canby, Jr., and Samuel B. Morris. Many of these men, much like Vaux, participated in multiple Quaker-run or Quaker-influenced charities. Cresson and Morris both served on the Board of Managers for Friends Asylum, for instance, while Quakers Elizabeth Wistar and M.E. Morris served on the Female Committee.

[52] *The Wistar Family: A Genealogy of the Descendants of Caspar Wistar, Emigrant in 1717* (Philadelphia: R. W. Davids, 1896), 9; Minutes from January 8, 1820 in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" 1840 1821, MSS 162, Box 190, Folder 5, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

business and worked to achieve consensus in a manner familiar to Friends.[53] Standing

committees, such as the Committee of Instruction and the Female Committee, conducted

work that constantly impacted the PIDD, but Directors would often serve on ad hoc

committees that they convened to deal with a short-term crisis or concern. Operating on

the principle of group decision-making, all these committees could at times bog down in

debating minutiae as the Directors struggled to reach a consensus opinion—a very

familiar pattern for the Quaker members of these organizations.[54] Because many of the

same Quaker philanthropists, such as Roberts Vaux and Caleb Cresson, served on

committees and boards of many charitable organizations in Philadelphia, they brought

this same Quaker perspective about consensus and deliberation with them to all of those

organizations.[55] Therefore, even though the PIDD emphasized their non-sectarian

religious practices to appeal to various multi-denominational constituents—students,

board members, and Pennsylvania legislators—the fact that committees drove the work

of the institution nevertheless gave the school a Quaker character.

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[53] Minutes from May 2, 1821, in "Minutes of the Contributors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" 12 April 1820–18 January 1871, MSS 162, Box 16, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[54] Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World," 178; Haviland also offers an extensive excerpt from the following letter to illustrate this point about how Quakers could clash in their quest for consensus. See, Abraham L. Pennock, "Letter to Roberts Vaux," September 15, 1813, Collection 684, Box 1, Folder 10, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA. Though this letter referred to Vaux's work in founding Friends Asylum in 1813, it nicely illustrates the Quaker pattern of deliberating over minute details. In this particular committee meeting, some Quaker members of the committee became incensed over the proposal that future committee members be appointed by ballot—a pattern of voting that struck them as antithetical to the ethic of deliberation that otherwise guided their work in Friends' Meetings.

[55] Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World," 179, 196. Haviland nicely frames this concept when writing, "The committee system was the paradigm within which Philadelphia Quakers perceived Philadelphia's problems and conceived their solutions." She further argues that "the reliance on committees and the committee system [in] the mixed organizations mirrored the Quaker charities"—a claim that holds true for the PIDD.

The Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb also shared cultural practices with other Quaker-run institutions, further demonstrating its connection to the wider network of Quaker reform work. Just as the York Retreat in England and Friends Asylum in Philadelphia presented themselves as "families"—a concept that sought to bind administrators, staff, and residents together—so too did the PIDD use this same rhetoric in framing its community.[56] Evidence of this rhetoric appeared in early 1821 when the Female Committee drafted a series of rules intended to shape the daily routine and domestic life of the school. Regulating such aspects of the students' lives such as when they would rise, attend classes, and take meals, the Female Committee intended these rules to "most conduce to the conveniences and interest of the institution and comfort of the family." Similarly, the visiting committee of women who would visit the PIDD bi-monthly was charged with "superintend[ing] the economy of the family and ascertain[ing] the manner in which the provisions are used."[57] This rhetoric persisted beyond the school's founding years, as evinced by the PIDD's 1841 Annual Report, which included an obituary for Charles Leech—a student who died the previous year. While noting that he was "honest" and "faithful," the remembrance also explained that in the last few months of his life Leech's behavior "increased in frequency and violence,

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[56] Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 49–56; Patricia D'Antonio, *Founding Friends: Families, Staff, And Patients at the Friends Asylum in Early Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Lehigh University Press, 2006), chap. 4; Charles L. Cherry, *A Quiet Haven: Quakers, Moral Treatment, and Asylum Reform* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 103–105, 143; While this rhetoric of "family" helped cohere these Quaker institution, it was not exclusively used by Friends, but instead appeared at a host of other insane asylums and workhouses throughout the nineteenth century, see Andrew Scull, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 172.

[57] Minutes from January 8, 1821, in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."

often producing considerable inconvenience in the family."[58] Such shared values and concepts forged a network of Quaker-influenced institutions and led to the occasional movement of employees from one institution to another.[59]

Roberts Vaux's Quakerism and the PIDD's strong moral identity also played an important role when the young institution faced a potential scandal in 1821. In that year, the mother of PIDD student, Isabella Ford, had a dream that made her "sure some harm would come to her daughter." This accusation led her daughter, Letitia, to come forward and confirm that principal David Seixas had "used very severe measures with her, but seizing hold of, and pinching her thighs" as well as entering her room in the middle of the night.[60] Once this news reached the Directors, a number of other students and employees corroborated these charges of physical and sexual misconduct. Although Seixas' defense lawyer sought to discredit these charges as unreliable because they had first emerged based on Ford's dream, Vaux and many other PIDD's Directors took them quite seriously, ultimately firing Seixas from his post as a result. Vaux similarly viewed Ford's dream as unreliable and a poor basis for an accusation.[61] Once others came forward to substantiate the charges against Seixas, however, Vaux justified his decision to fire

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[58] *The Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb for 1840* (Philadelphia: E.G. Dorsey, 1841), 9, 8.

[59] Isaac Bonsall and Ann Bonsall, "Recommendation Letters for Benjamin D. Cox" November 8, 1826, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 2, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. The former Superintendent and former Matron of the Quaker-run Friends Asylum outside Philadelphia sent along an enthusiastic letter of recommendation for Benjamin Cox, noting that he was "of a disposition calculated to make himself agreeable to those with whom he associates," when he applied for employment at the PIDD.

[60] Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Board of Directors, *Documents in Relation to the Dismissal of David G. Seixas, from the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb : Published for the Information of the Contributors, in Pursuance of a Resolution of the Board of Directors, Passed the 3d of April, 1822* (Philadelphia: printed by order of the Board of Directors, 1822), 16–22, http://archive.org/details/gu_documentsrela00penn.

[61] Andrew Burstein, *Lincoln Dreamt He Died: The Midnight Visions of Remarkable Americans from Colonial Times to Freud* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 116–117.

Seixas on his repulsion at the sin and immoral behavior within the walls of the PIDD—an attitude grounded in his Quaker faith.[62] With this vacancy in the school, Roberts Vaux and the Committee of Instruction reached out to the American Asylum at Hartford and made arrangements to hire Laurent Clerc as acting principal in late October 1821.[63] By hiring Clerc, who had been so successful at both teaching deaf students and at marketing those pedagogical techniques to an interested public, the PIDD raised its profile as an institution at the vanguard of deaf education. Because Clerc came from a school that served students from heterogeneous religious backgrounds, much of the PIDD's marketing conveyed messages of religious inclusion that would appeal broadly beyond the Quaker community.

As a state-funded, non-denominational institution, the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb marketed religion as an element of the institution that cohered the school community together and validated the role education played in morally uplifting its students. Although the nature of that education would eventually change over the course of the nineteenth century from manualism to predominantly oralism, H. Van Allen, who was commissioned to write an institutional history in 1893, articulately expressed the foundational goals of religion at the PIDD:

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[62] Ryon, "Roberts Vaux," 89; Hon. Thomas M. Pettit, *"Memoir of Roberts Vaux, One of the Vice Presidents of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania," in Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, 1840), 127. In this memorial speech, Pettit, who worked with Vaux on the Board of Control for the Philadelphia Public Schools, explained the role Vaux's Quakerism played in his humanitarian work. "Though his philanthropic spirit [...] was not controlled by sectarian association," Pettit wrote, "[Vaux] yet thought, that in being faithful to the interests of his own religious denomination, he could not be false to any other duty."

[63] Committee of Instruction of Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Letter to Laurent Clerc," October 29, 1821, MSS 162, Box 122, Folder 5, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

The Institution, having a large number of children committed to its care who from their condition are wholly without moral or religious instruction, endeavors to inculcate, without any sectarian bias, those broad moral and religious principles upon which Christianity is based. No attempt at theological discussion or sectarian instruction is made, and no principles are inculcated which will in any way interfere with their joining upon graduation such church as their parents may prefer, but the endeavor is to give them an adequate conception of a Heavenly Father, of a Saviour, of the distinction between good and evil, and of their duties to God, to one another, and to themselves.[64]

This broadly inclusive, non-sectarian Christian identity from the late-nineteenth century, however, had its foundations in the Institution's earliest years. By remaining officially non-sectarian, Vaux and the PIDD's other Directors forged an institutional identity that would both secure state funding and appeal broadly to potential families.

The diverse religious composition of the PIDD's earliest students helped define its officially non-denominational character. During its first few years of operation, the PIDD kept records of each student's religion when they enrolled in the school, but this practice faded over the course of the 1820s and disappeared entirely by the early 1830s. Given the scattered and inconsistent nature of these records, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions about the overall religious environment of the PIDD other than to confirm its diversity. Amongst the earliest cohort of students for whom administrators recorded their religious identity, Presbyterians comprised the largest group at 34%, while Quakers were the second largest group at 15%. After that, Catholics, Episcopalians, and Baptists were all roughly equal with around 11% of the student body each, followed by Methodists and Lutherans, each at roughly 9%.[65] Because no religion predominated amongst the student

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[64] Van Allen, *A Brief History of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 34.
[65] "Records of Admissions, Vol. 1" 1842 1820, MSS 162, OV 100, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. These percentages were drawn from a small data set of only forty-seven students, making extrapolation for the ever-growing student body an imperfect science. For the records that were kept in

body and because the numbers of all sects other than Presbyterians were generally so equal, the PIDD crafted their religious identity and public messages around the "moral uplift" brought about by educating deaf students.

Even before the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed the Act incorporating and funding the PIDD, the Institution had already crafted advertisements to recruit students by stressing the spiritual benefits of education. An ad published in early 1821 called on those "who have the means of contributing to meliorate the moral condition of the deaf and dumb," thereby "afford[ing] the benefits of education to all their unfortunate fellow beings."[66] After receiving state funding, the Committee of Admissions then created a Notice that they issued to Pennsylvania counties, which recruited new students who would be supported by the state's subsidy. This Notice emphasized the importance of spiritual uplift for deaf students, claiming that the PIDD "afford[ed] them the advantages of literary, moral, and religious instruction" and that the staff paid "the strictest attention […] to the morals and health of the children."[67] With this emphasis on moral education as a central part of its mission, the PIDD followed in the path blazed by the American Asylum in Hartford, which held weekly worship and Bible services in sign language and

these earliest years, however, the numbers of faiths are as follows: Catholic – 5; Episcopalian - 5; Baptist – 5; Dunker/German Baptist – 1; Presbyterian – 16; Methodist – 4; Quaker – 7; Lutheran – 4.

[66] Jacob Gratz et al., "Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb," *The Republican Compiler*, January 3, 1821. This particular notice for the PIDD ran in a newspaper published in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

[67] Committee of Admission, "Notice to Pennsylvania Counties" 1824, MSS 162, Box 26, Folder 12, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. This notice did not include a specific date of publication, but it seems likely that the PIDD first released it in either 1824 or 1825. The third paragraph of the Notice stated the 24 state-funded students "have now completed their term of three years: and those, to whose superintending care the Institution has been committed, are anxious to fill the vacancy thus created." Given this assertion, and the fact that the Pennsylvania General Assembly began funding the PIDD in 1821, a publication date of 1824 seems the most likely.

strictly followed Gallaudet's vision that education should go beyond the "intellect" to improve the students' "moral character" as well.[68]

Along with these Notices to Pennsylvania counties, the PIDD also published and distributed "Pupil Circulars": essentially boilerplate application forms that echoed this broadly non-denominational language. These applications requested "the attestation of some respectable Physician and Clergyman or Schoolmaster, or of any other two respectable Individuals" on behalf of the student, and had families specifically answer the question: "What has been the general moral conduct and disposition of the Child?"[69] This repeated emphasis on the "moral condition/conduct/instruction" of the students indicated the broadly non-denominational character of the PIDD.[70] Yet the fact that the institution allowed clergy members or other "respectable Individuals" to attest to a student's character also acknowledged the prominent Quaker population of the state, who did not have a clergy to provide such endorsements.

Women—both at the administrative level and amongst the staff—played a central role in crafting the practice of religion within the institution. The Female Committee of the PIDD oversaw the work of the Matron, who, in addition to overseeing domestic

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[68] Phyllis Klein Valentine, "A Nineteenth-Century Experiment in Education of the Handicapped: The American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb," *The New England Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (September 1, 1991): 369–370, doi:10.2307/366347.

[69] Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Pupil Circular, Application of Carolina Witmer" June 25, 1824, MSS 162, Box 33, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[70] Although the PIDD predated Samuel Gridley Howe's work at the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Massachusetts, the PIDD pursued a similar strategy in terms of religious instruction as would Howe in 1831. Both schools relied on state funding from legislators whose religious sympathies varied from liberal and rational visions of God, to more traditional and Calvinist perspectives that stressed the infallibility of the Bible. Because of these theological mixtures in the legislatures, the Directors of the PIDD and Howe both employed this rhetoric of nonsectarian religious education that respected all students' different faiths. This language also had the effect of placating legislators who had appropriated tax dollars for the support of these schools. See, Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman*, 127–129.

education in knitting, sewing, cooking, and the like for the female students, also helped instill moral lessons to all students.[71] Mary Cowgill served as the Institution's first Matron, a post she held from 1820 until she resigned in 1833 on account of poor health.[72] While the record does not note her particular religious denomination, records of the Female Committee demonstrate her critical work in guiding "the moral and religious instruction of the children." To these ends, Cowgill "regularly assembled" the students "in the evening to 'pray with the Spirit,'" and watch signed readings of scriptural passages. As students gained repeated exposure to these Bible recitations and improved English literacy from their academic studies, members of the Female Committee felt confident that they would be "enable[d] […] to 'read, mark and inwardly digest' the Divine Oracles, to the furtherance of their piety, their moral conduct here, and their immortal salvation hereafter."[73] In conveying these types of moral and Biblical lessons to the students, Cowgill and the Female Committee illustrated a wider trend amongst bourgeois women during the Second Great Awakening in North America. This context of religious fervor, enthusiasm, and itinerant preaching, redefined women's proper sphere as extending beyond the household. Rather than caring for her own family exclusively, a

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[71] Van Allen, *A Brief History of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 33.

[72] Samuel Hazard, ed., "The Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb Report of the Board of Directors to the Contributors, May 1, 1833," *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania* 11, no. 21 (May 25, 1833): 330. Hazard reprinted this annual report from an earlier publication of this same material in the *National Gazette and Literary Register*, a Philadelphia-based newspaper.

[73] Minutes from July 9, 1821, in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."

woman could now justify pursuing a philanthropic or educational career based on her

"natural and divinely ordained […] call to sacrifice self for others' good."[74]

During the remainder of Cowgill's term as matron and beyond, the Female

Committee reiterated its view that the curriculum and religious experience of the PIDD

improved students' morals and enabled them to achieve salvation. Teaching religion and

a broadly non-denominational form of Christianity also disabused many students of

superstitious or heretical beliefs, they argued. "There is something comforting and

consoling to the mind," asserted the Female Committee, "in the idea of a beneficent and

tender Father, instead of being devoured by wild beasts which they supposed inhabited

the upper regions." Such comments revealed beliefs members of the Female Committee

had about uneducated deaf minds: ignorant, superstitious, and ultimately heretical.

Reflecting on the place of religion in the school on the school's tenth anniversary, the

Female Committee felt "no doubt" that the students left "the asylum with enlarged views

of the attributes of the Deity and of their own increased importance in the scale of

creation." Similarly, after twenty years of operation the Female Committee triumphantly

noted that "between four and five hundred children have received the benefit of Christian

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[74] Susan Hill Lindley, *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 92–93; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 86–89. Within the context of increasing urbanization during the 1820s-1830s that resulted from the Market Revolution, Smith-Rosenberg argues that bourgeois men and women created philanthropic and reform institutions as a means to "contain disorder and serve their specific economic and emotional needs as an emerging class. [...] Moral reform and temperance societies, lyceums, volunteer fire companies—radically unlike one another—all nevertheless gave their members a sense of belonging in a fragmenting world" (87). Bourgeois women used their roles as committee members and matrons in these institutions to challenge the emerging "Cult of True Womanhood" that would confine them to the home, while simultaneously elevating their own social status and working to morally purify the world. See also, Mary P. Ryan, "The Power of Women's Networks: A Case Study of Female Moral Reform in Antebellum America," *Feminist Studies* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 1979): 66–85, doi:10.2307/3177551.

and literary instructions: emerging from a state of darkness to light and usefulness in the world."[75]

Even in cases where students behaved in ways the staff considered "immoral," the impact of their religious education and broadly non-denominational practices remained evident. The case of Daniel Nowlan illustrated both the discontent some students felt at the PIDD, as well as the ways the staff used religion to solidify the school community. Based on this school's disciplinary records, in the Spring of 1829, Nowlan attempted "to destroy the teachers, steward, matron, and all deaf and dumb girls, and the black woman and the Directors […] because [he] wished to become the Captain of all the male Deaf and Dumb on purpose to kill them all." Before he actually carried out any violent acts, however, Nowlan "became weak and guilty. The reasonable spirit of God conversed with [him] about wickedness." Nowlan's account of the event, which he articulated in a "Confession" letter that PIDD staff required him to write as part of his punishment, echoed some of the religious practices familiar to students at the school. In recollecting his conversation with God, Nowlan framed the discussion as a catechism, with God asking him questions such as "Why you take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?"; "Why you have all your sins?"; and "Why you neglect the prayers and religion?" As a remedy for his transgression, Nowlan recalled that God required him to "teach all the Deaf and Dumb boys and girls about the stories of good and wicked men in the bible on

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[75] Minutes from December 8, 1836; February 14, 1831; and March 12, 1840, in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."

every Sunday afternoon and every day" and that the PIDD staff "teach me about the bible every day and night."[76]

In recounting these divinely instructed remedies, Nowlan confirmed the Female Committee's accounts of religious practices at the PIDD. The matron, teachers, and other staff relied on didactic instruction and Biblical recitation to instruct these students in their broadly evangelical, non-denominational vision of Christianity—one in which God behaved in a "reasonable" and enlightened way. Even at exclusively Quaker-run schools, such as the Adelphia School or the Association of Friends for the Free Instruction of Adult Colored Persons, religious education took the form of guided prayers, scriptural lessons, or sermons. These practices differed starkly from the unstructured Quaker Meeting for Worship where Friends would rise and deliver testimony when moved by the spirit of God to do so. Instead, they would "introduce students to basic nondenominational Christian beliefs." Yet because these institutions—both the exclusively Quaker-run and those of mixed governance, like the PIDD—served a heterogeneous religious population, their more didactic methods avoided sectarian proselytizing and instead preached messages that sought to improve society by eliminating "poverty and its resulting vice, ignorance, and immorality."[77] As the PIDD's Directors emphasized these benefits from their institution, they also revealed their embrace of Enlightenment values that equated educational progress with social progress. Such "uplifting" messages of "overcoming" proved vital in how the PIDD's Directors

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[76] Daniel Nowlan, "Copy of D. Nowlan's Confession &c." April 12, 1829, MSS 162, Box 26, Folder 9, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.
[77] Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World," 177.

marketed deaf education, but they also raised troublesome questions about what effects

presenting the deaf students had for those individuals and for the institution's identity.

Defining Disability and Marketing Overcoming at the PIDD

As one of many in the crowded landscape of Philadelphia's benevolent

institutions, the PIDD needed to find ways to market the education they provided for their

students and the benefits that came from this education. Printing advertisements,

traveling to give public demonstrations, and inviting visitors onto campus all served as

vital strategies for the PIDD to raise its profile and persuade the legislature and private

benefactors to share their *largesse* with the institution. Yet the need to market the

institution caused concern amongst some of the school's administrators as the quest for

financial stability at times seemed to compromise the uplifting, Enlightenment-inspired

vision of deaf education. The PIDD used the Enlightenment rhetoric of deafness in their

marketing, which conveyed dual and conflicting messages: on the empowering side, the

PIDD claimed that deaf people *could* and *should* be educated, but in justifying this belief

the PIDD also marginalized deaf people, suggesting that without education they would

remain in a sub-human condition of ignorance and "darkness." As the PIDD worked to

prove the positive impact of this education to the public, the school had to simultaneously

marginalize these deaf students by displaying and commodifying them to curious (and

potentially prurient) outsiders who might be persuaded through these advertisements to

provide philanthropy and political support. Ultimately, the PIDD's use of this

Enlightenment rhetoric in its marketing constituted more than just words: it shaped the

operation of the institution and the lives of its graduates, some of whom came to realize, and then challenge, the subordinate place the school crafted for them.

Institutional histories constitute a natural starting place to explore how schools like the PIDD framed and marketed their distinctive identities. Commissioned and published by the institution itself as part of a larger collection of histories of deaf schools in the United States, H. Van Allen's 1893 overview of the PIDD marked the school's first comprehensive history and unsurprisingly placed the PIDD, its history, and its contemporary status in the best possible light. After operating and educating deaf students for over seventy years, Van Allen claimed the PIDD had become "the finest and most complete school for the deaf in the world." Given its publication date in the late nineteenth century, Van Allen also sought to trace a triumphal narrative for the rise of oral instruction and speech reading at the PIDD—a trend that the Philadelphia school had in common with the other centers of deaf education in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts.[78]

To understand the role Quakerism and emerging transatlantic notions about disability played in this marketing, however, Van Allen's work proves inadequate. The early years of the PIDD appear only cursorily; Van Allen focused primarily on the growth of the institution and its move to ever-larger and more impressive buildings rather

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[78] Van Allen, *A Brief History of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 8, 19–21. Van Allen recapped the introduction of oralism at the PIDD in the following narrative: In 1870, however, the Board of Directors, impressed by the reports of the success of speech teaching that reached them sent a committee [...] to inspect the Clarke Institution at Northampton, Mass., and the articulation departments of the Hartford and New York Institution. This committee was so favorably impressed that upon its return it recommended that arrangements be at once made for giving instruction in articulation to all semi-mute and semi-deaf children. [...] The success attending this form of instruction was so marked that the Board was led to consider the advisability of introducing separate oral instruction for such pupils as retained a considerable command of speech, and incidentally, as a means of testing the practicability of teaching speech to the congenitally deaf.".

than exploring the school's early history as a center of manualism. Furthermore, Van Allen spent almost no time explaining Vaux's role in shaping the PIDD and its curriculum, noting only that Vaux hosted the initial meeting to create the PIDD and then at a later meeting "made an address, in which he submitted a plan for organizing an institution. This plan was referred to a committee, of which Mr. Vaux was chairman."[79]

Although Van Allen ignores issues of publicity from these early years, questions about how to best market and publicly present the PIDD and its educational methods took central stage for the school's Directors in its first decade and a half of operation. In this sense, the PIDD paralleled other early nineteenth century deaf schools on both sides of the Atlantic. Schools in Paris, Hartford, and New York had established precedents not only about sign language pedagogy but also about how to present this educational work to a broader public. Displaying the students' intellectual acumen by "present[ing] readings in signed languages, g[iving] dramatic performances, execut[ing] mathematical and other exercises at the chalkboard, and answer[ing] questions from the audience" enabled deaf schools to raise public awareness of their achievements and also attract financial donations from private citizens and state governments.[80] These strategies were not confined only to deaf schools, however. Insane asylums, schools for the blind, and other charitable residential institutions also opened their doors to visitors "to raise funds, gain approval from legislators, allay public suspicion about the institutions, and

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[79] Ibid., 8–9; For the complete anthology where Van Allen's work appears, see Edward Allen Fay, ed., *Histories of American Schools for the Deaf, 1817-1893*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: The Volta Bureau, 1893).

[80] Esmail, "The Power of Deaf Poetry," 350. Although Esmail does not specify the language of these presentations in her article, her evidence from schools in the United States suggests that these readings likely took place in English. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 72.

demonstrate that the harsh treatments of the past had been replaced by humanitarian

kindness."[81] The experience of other successful reformers confirmed to the PIDD's

Directors that institutions designed to educate and "uplift" those considered aberrant must

constantly market themselves and engage with the public by allowing visitors and staging

public demonstrations in order to succeed.[82]

As with most innovations in deaf education in the late-eighteenth and early-

nineteenth centuries, the School for the Deaf in Paris forged the practices and structures

for public engagement that other schools—such as the PIDD—eventually adopted. In

Paris, Abbé de l'Epée began staging twice-weekly public demonstrations in 1771. These

events quickly grew in popularity, so the school responded by adding more

demonstrations in the evenings. By the end of the eighteenth century, students at the Paris

School (now under the direction of Laurent Clerc's teacher, Abbé Sicard), not only

performed monthly for interested Parisians—often 300 or 400 attendees per

demonstration—but had also exhibited their skills for numerous European emperors, the

Pope, and the British Parliament. Furthermore, in their quest to understand the nature of

the human mind and how people come to create language, a number of prominent

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[81] Benjamin Reiss, *Theaters of Madness: Insane Asylums and Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 13.

[82] Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman*, 51–56, 64. Perhaps one of the most successful individuals at using public demonstrations to display and market his institution's educational techniques was Samuel Gridley Howe. Howe ran the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts and was the first person to successfully teach language to a blind and deaf student: Laura Bridgman. Relentlessly touting his educational achievements by inviting visitors to the Perkins School and corresponding with specialists in Europe, Howe also traveled up-and-down North America's Eastern seaboard displaying Bridgman's intellectual skills to dignitaries in state legislatures as well as to President James K. Polk. His constant work to advertise Bridgman and her achievements brought Howe widespread fame and financial success that supported his work with all the students at the Perkins School. Howe's demonstrations drew so much attention largely because Bridgman was both deaf and blind.

Enlightenment thinkers also visited the Paris School to witness these *tabulae rasae* in the process of transforming from "little savages" into "civilized" humans.[83]

As with the PIDD's founding, the American Asylum in Hartford served as the transatlantic gateway and North American prototype for how the Pennsylvania Institution would structure and frame their demonstrations for an interested public. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet first connected with Sicard in 1815 after seeing one of his demonstrations in London during a European tour of students from the Paris School for the Deaf. Upon hiring Sicard's star pupil, Laurent Clerc, to design the curriculum and help instruct students at the American Asylum, Gallaudet held a series of similar public demonstrations in the United States. Philanthropists interested in deaf education as well as politicians found Clerc's performances at these public demonstrations impressive. These events even elicited financial support from the United States' federal government. After seeing Clerc and other students from the American Asylum perform in 1819, legendary Kentucky politician and then-Speaker of the House of Representatives, Henry Clay, personally rallied support for the American Asylum and helped pass a bill granting a permanent endowment for the school.[84] Observing the cumulative success that the School for the Deaf in Paris and the American Asylum experienced as a result of their public engagement, the PIDD's Directors determined to make public demonstrations and on-site visitors central parts of their institution as well.

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[83] Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995), 54–56.
      [84] Valentine, "A Nineteenth-Century Experiment in Education of the Handicapped," 359–361, 364.

From its earliest days, however, the presence of visitors at the PIDD created friction over whether having outsiders observe deaf students commodified and exploited the students solely for the institution's bottom line. The instructional faculty and some members of the Board of Directors, in particular, clashed over whether and how to allow visitors on campus. Within the first year of the PIDD's operation, members of the Visiting Committee expressed concern that allowing public visitors onto campus to observe the students and their classes was "a privilege altogether inconsistent with the good order that ought to govern the school, and manifestly impedes the advancement of the unfortunate pupils in their learning."[85] Once Clerc took charge as acting principal, he became more assertive about the educational impact of such visits. "It is our desire," wrote Clerc on behalf of himself and his faculty, "that Visitors should no longer be admitted into our school during the hours of tuition, that our Pupils may not be prevented from paying due attention to our lessons." As a Deaf person himself, Clerc likely had personal experience of being witnessed while a student in Paris and perhaps grounded his reservations in his childhood experiences. Instead of prohibiting visitors altogether, Clerc compromised by proposing that members of the public be allowed on campus only when accompanied by a Director on Friday afternoons.[86] Clerc proved successful in limiting visitors' access to the school to once per week. Remaining ever conscious of the impact these visits could have on the school's reputation, in late 1822 Clerc urged Board President, Reverend William White, to instead admit visitors on Thursdays, "as it is on

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[85] John Bacon et al., "Visiting Committee Report" June 6, 1820, MSS 162, Box 122, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[86] Laurent Clerc, "Letter to the Committee of Instruction of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" December 3, 1821, MSS 162, Box 122, Folder 5, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

this day the pupils change their clothes, and of course will be enabled to make the best appearance."[87]

Fearing that prurient or prying outside visitors would make these young students feel commodified thereby hindering the "uplifting" education the PIDD sought to provide, members of the Female Committee expressed similar reservations about the negative impact of public exposure. Worried that "their sudden introduction to public notice and the unavoidable exposure to observation, at an age when the mind is most susceptible of impression" might corrupt these students, the Female Committee decided to consider what policies the PIDD could adopt to protect the "manners […and] morals of this assemblage of youth and inexperience."[88] In the wake of the sexual scandal that ultimately led to Seixas's firing in 1821, members of the Female Committee also carefully considered the impact visitors had on the young women students at the school. Sensing that some visitors might have prurient motives in coming to observe the female students, the Committee expressed "unanimous […] disapprobation of [having] the elder girls perfor[m] their exercises publicly on the days of exhibition." Worried "that the effect of frequent exposure to indiscriminate observation will eventually prove injurious to the susceptible feelings of the youthful mind," the Female Committee requested that all female students above age twelve be excused from participating in these public exhibitions.[89] In proposing these limitations on public visits, the Female Committee not only displayed their perceived role as maternal protectors of the school's youth, but also

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[87] Laurent Clerc, "Letter to Rev. William White" December 6, 1822, MSS 162, Box 123, Folder 4, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[88] Minutes from June 11, 1821, in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."

[89] Minutes from April 14, 1823, in ibid.

indicated the extent to which Seixas' sexual abuse scandal created lasting concern amongst PIDD administrators.

Both internally and externally, public visits to the PIDD aroused enthusiasm and positive publicity for the school's educational achievements, which seemed to validate the Enlightenment belief that through education these "ignorant" deaf students could "overcome" their subordinate place in society. The PIDD's Directors eager touted such achievements, as they jockeyed to receive recognition and financial support amidst Philadelphia's crowded and competitive philanthropic landscape.[90] Beginning in the late 1820s, Philadelphia tourist guides explicitly mentioned the visiting policies, explaining to "strangers sojourning in the city" that they may "witness the exercises of the pupils" by "obtain[ing] from one of the directors."[91] Similarly, a tourist's handbook from 1849 explained that the PIDD's "very interesting public exhibitions" took place "every Thursday afternoon" and one could attend them by getting a ticket from one of the Directors, but "in fact, any respectable persons applying at the door are admitted."[92] After attending one of the students' exhibitions nearly fifteen years after the school opened, members of the Female Committee corroborated this sense of continued public

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[90] For a survey of the range of activities Quakers involved themselves in during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, see Haviland, "In the World, but Not of the World"; For a broader overview of welfare policy in the first half of the nineteenth century in Philadelphia, see Priscilla Ferguson Clement, *Welfare and the Poor in the Nineteenth-Century City: Philadelphia, 1800-1854* (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985).

[91] Cephas Grier Childs, *Views in Philadelphia, and Its Vicinity: Engraved from Original Drawings* (Philadelphia: C.G. Childs, 1827), sec. 15.

[92] Wellington Williams, *A Hand-Book for the Stranger in Philadelphia: Containing Descriptions of All the Objects of Interest in the City and Its Environs; with Views of the Public Buildings* (Philadelphia: George S. Appleton, 1849), 61.

fascination by noting that the "performances were interesting and agreeable, and still excite a good deal of public curiosity."[93]

Such "public curiosity" occasionally attracted prominent politicians and philanthropists who visited the PIDD and whose reactions revealed how effective the Directors had been at marketing the Enlightenment vision of deaf people as pitiable, ignorant people whose only hopes rest in education. In late 1824, the Marquis de Lafayette, who led forces against the British in the American Revolution and helped initiate the French Revolution as one of the authors of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen, and his son, George Washington Lafayette, visited the PIDD. While there, they observed an examination of the students and "appeared to be much gratified with the evident manifestation of native intelligence and of acquired information which was displayed […] by many of the children."[94] One of the most famous non-Philadelphia Quakers to visit the school was Joseph John Gurney, noted British abolitionist, prison reformer, and brother of Elizabeth Fry. During his journeys throughout the United States in the late 1830s, Gurney visited the PIDD, a school that where he felt "the art of educating these poor creatures is carried to great perfection." Gurney left favorably impressed with the sophistication of deaf language, remarking, "the language of signs is developed in the most extraordinary way. It is surprisingly expressive and intelligible even to such novices as myself."[95] The positive reactions from both of these notable individuals, who toured other institutions during their travels, revealed how the PIDD's

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[93] Minutes from May 9, 1833, in "Minutes of the Female Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb."
[94] Minutes from October 11, 1824, in ibid.
[95] Joseph John Gurney, Letter to His Children, December 11, 1838, TEMP MSS 434, 3/690, Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London.

openness to visitors remained a crucial method for raising public awareness, financial support, and ultimately, a positive reputation. Such public plaudits for their educational achievements, however, relied on the PIDD's Directors perpetuating an image of their students as marginalized and helpless. This dynamic essentially made funding the PIDD students' educations contingent on their continued public exploitation.

In its print publications, the PIDD framed its work within a transatlantic context to aggressively advertise its educational methods, recruit students, and help propagate Enlightenment notions of deafness and intellectual disability. To these ends, the PIDD borrowed tropes from the marketing materials of many deaf schools in the United Kingdom that presented deafness as a "calamity" and an "affliction." Such rhetoric served to solicit philanthropic support from those who hoped to improve these children. Placing immense value on the benefits of educating deaf children to read and write English, these solicitations emphasized that educating these students would enable them to read the Bible and gain access to salvation.[96] The National Institution for the education of Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor in Ireland used similar rhetoric in its publications that solicited subscribers to offer additional contributions to aid indigent students. Characterizing these applicants as living in "melancholy circumstances," the "Charity Letter" went on to explain the personal hardships of these already marginalized students as a way to evoke both sympathy and money.[97] The PIDD not only displayed its

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[96] Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 95.

[97] National Institution, for the education of Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor, in Ireland, "Charity Letter" May 6, 1823, MSS 162, Box 29, Folder 5, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. Some of the personal conditions described in the letter include the following: "An orphan. Three other

transatlantic engagement in deaf education in hiring Laurent Clerc and basing its

curriculum on the French model, but also referenced British examples in its institutional

publications. In lobbying the Pennsylvania General Assembly for additional funding in

1824, PIDD administrators cited European oralist institutions such as the Edinburgh

School and the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in London, which educated their students

for six or seven years.[98] These examples suggest that the PIDD was not doctrinaire in its

quest for money; although the school taught a manualist curriculum, it showed no

hesitation in using marketing techniques from oralist schools if those garnered them

funding. Such comparative transatlantic arguments proved effective, as in 1825 the

Pennsylvania legislature approved appropriations the PIDD to continue teaching this

"unfortunate part of our population" for another four years.[99]

The PIDD also employed the Enlightenment idea that only education could uplift

deaf people to a state of being "fully human" in its marketing materials designed to

recruit students and attract families who might have deaf relatives. In recounting its rapid

educational successes by 1823, the PIDD's Second Annual Report cited assistant teacher

Charles Dillingham as a prime example of someone who "devote[d] his life" to "the art

of instructing the deaf and dumb" because he had grown up in "the painfully interesting

circumstance of several of his immediate relatives being of that unfortunate description of

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children." "Parents indigent farmers, with five other children. Unable to pay any thing." "Mother dead.
Father a respectable Farmer, with five other children. Could pay part of expense." .
        [98] Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Draught of Fourth Annual Report" December
20, 1824, MSS 162, Box 124, Folder 3, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.
        [99] "A Supplement to the Act Entitled, 'An Act to Incorporate and Endow the Pennsylvania
Institution for the Deaf and Dumb'" March 4, 1825, MSS 162, Box 26, Folder 2, Gallaudet University
Archives, Washington, DC.

persons."[100] Dillingham's service to the PIDD exemplified both the power of sympathetic intervention by relatives of deaf people and wider hopes that education could help deaf people "overcome" their allegedly tragic plight. The idea that without education deaf people existed in a sub-human state also appeared in solicitations sent by the PIDD's Committee of Admissions sent to Pennsylvania counties. Encouraged to take advantage of the Pennsylvania legislature's largesse and send indigent deaf students to the PIDD free of charge, these notices called on friends and relatives of deaf people to "rescue a fellow-being from the very depths of wretchedness" by sending them to Philadelphia for their education. With the "mental cultivation" they would then receive these "unfortunate object[s]" would "be rescued, almost wholly, from the misery and suffering which must otherwise, through life, be consequent upon its situation."[101]

This Enlightenment rhetoric provided such a compelling and powerful justification for the institution's mission of educational uplift that decades after the institution's founding, the school continued to employ these constructions that represented deaf people as a sub-human. The 1844 Annual Report, for instance, included an appendix that featured excerpts from an address given by Joseph O. Pyatt, one of the deaf instructors at the PIDD and an amateur biographer.[102] Characterizing deafness as an "ignorant and degraded condition" and deaf people as an "unfortunate class of persons,"

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[100] *Second Annual Report of the Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb Made to the Legislature in Obedience to the Provisions of the Charter* (Philadelphia: William Fry, 1823), 5.
[101] Committee of Admission, "Notice to Pennsylvania Counties."
[102] Joseph O. Pyatt, *Memoir of Albert Newsam: Deaf Mute Artist* (Philadelphia: J.O. Pyatt, 1868). Pyatt dedicated this book about one of the PIDD's most famous and successful students to the Directors of the Institution. At the close of the Preface, Pyatt explained that the intention of his biography "has been to present to his brothers and sisters in misfortune, as well as to his more fortunate fellow-citizens, a faithful account of one of the most truly gifted and eminent artists, in his peculiar line, in America."

Pyatt celebrated the fact that the United States had six deaf schools by that year, which saved their students from an "intellectual darkness […] a great deal worse than that of the most ignorant savage." Yet more could still be done, argued Pyatt, to improve the lives of "several thousand deaf mutes," who had the "misfortune" of remaining "in the shadow of ignorance" and might without knowledge of how to read and sign, "die ignorant of our blessed redeemer."[103] Pyatt's address revealed how these popular notions of deafness as a tragic fate that ostracized deaf people from both society and salvation persisted both among the PIDD's Directors as well as among some deaf people themselves. Pyatt had internalized the rhetoric of the PIDD's marketing material and indicated his belief that uneducated deaf people existed in a pitiable, sub-human state of "ignorance." In fact, by including such testimonial from a deaf person, Pyatt's address helped to reinforce the idea that deafness was a tragedy that could only be overcome by individuals who expended the necessary effort and drive to become educated.

Advertising, printing Annual Reports, soliciting new applications, and traveling to give demonstrations occupied an important part of the institution's annual budget as the PIDD recruited new students by stressing the "tragic plight" uneducated deaf people experienced. Though the institution spent only 3 percent of its income in 1821 on things like "printing pamphlets," "distributing pamphlets," "postages and portages," and "printing notices and tablets for a public examination of the pupils," this number had grown to roughly 5 percent of the PIDD's budget by 1828.[104] The two largest years of

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[103] *The Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb for 1843* (Philadelphia: E.G. Dorsey, 1844), 10.

[104] John Bacon, "General Account Book, 1820-1855" December 5, 1820, 30–37, MSS 162, Box 304, Folder 7, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. In 1821, the PIDD spent $436.12 on

highest raw expense on these publicity activities—1825 when the PIDD spent $1770.28,

and 1826 when it spent $1830.20—followed immediately on the heels of Pennsylvania

legislature's renewed funding for the institution in 1824. This additional financial support

spurred the Directors on the Committee of Admissions to find more students. While the

initial state funding in 1821 had allowed the PIDD to increase enrollment from its initial

class of eleven students to a total of 44 students by 1823, the graduation of the first class

of 24 students forced the Committee of Admissions to creatively advertise its openings

for new state-supported students.[105] In response, this Committee published recruitment

fliers and asked citizens to place them throughout their neighborhoods and in the Post

Offices in order to reach families and friends of deaf individuals who might not know

about the institution and its state-sponsored education for indigent students.[106] Such

recruitment efforts proved successful as these varied publication that stressed how

education could save the "unfortunate" and "pitiable" deaf children ultimately led the

PIDD to enroll a total of 68 students by the end of 1828.[107]

"Incidental Expenses," which included all of these advertising and marketing activities. By 1828, this amount had grown to $947.69. John Bacon, "Treasurer's Accounts" 1821, MSS 162, Box 137, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. In 1821, the PIDD took in a total of $14,510.43 of revenue, and spent $436.12 on "Incidental Expenses."; Pennsylvania General Assembly Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of the Session 1828-29*, vol. 2 (Harrisburg, PA: S.C. Stambaugh, 1828), 328–329. In 1828, the PIDD took in total revenues of $19,129.77, and spent $947.69 on "Incidental Expenses."

[105] Committee of Admission, "Notice to Pennsylvania Counties"; *Second Annual Report of the Directors of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*, 20–23.

[106] "The Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, to the Inhabitants of Pennsylvania" 1826, MSS 162, OV 5, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[107] Senate, *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of the Session 1828-29*, 2:330–331. By this year, the PIDD had reached beyond the boundaries of Pennsylvania to also recruit and enroll students from Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland—states that had also passed laws appropriating public funds to send deaf children to the PIDD to receive an education. Amongst this total number of 68 students, 39 from Pennsylvania were supported by the state, while New Jersey funded three pupils and Maryland funded two.

Although the PIDD stressed the pitiable nature of uneducated deaf people to

friends and families that might enroll deaf students, the application materials the school

sent directly to families empowered deaf people by marginalizing people with other types

of disabilities. Families applied to send their children to the PIDD by completing "Pupil

Circulars," which contained a questionnaire about the student's background, medical

history, employment experience, and financial circumstances. Coming into use in 1824 as

a way to recruit more students to fill the school's newly vacated spots, these Circulars

solicited applications from "indigent children, not deficient in natural intellect, and free

from any constitutional malady, that might incapacitate them for instruction." Such

definitional boundaries conveyed the Directors' confidence that deaf students *could* learn

successfully, thereby making them superior to individuals with intellectual disabilities.[108]

Similarly, item #4 on the Circular queried: "Is ___ certainly not idiotic? Does ___

discover a good natural intellect, by making signs intelligible to those with whom ___ has

constant intercourse; and do they evince memory, judgment, &c.?"[109] This rhetorical

framing prompted families to affirm the questions and internalize the idea that their deaf

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[108] In the later nineteenth century, oralists marginalized signing deaf people by comparing their gestures and facial expressions to monkeys and insane people—both of which were perceived as lower evolutionary forms of life in comparison to normal humans. See Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*, 54–55; More broadly, Baynton also argues that emphasizing the hierarchy of disabilities served as a key strategy for black people, women, and immigrants to gain expanded political rights in the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Each of these groups based their claims for equal treatment and legal protections on the idea that they were not "disabled"—an argument that reinforced the widely accepted assumption that people with disabilities constituted a lesser form of human life than those who were "normal." Baynton neatly summarizes this dynamic toward the end of his essay: "This common strategy for attaining equal rights, which seeks to distance one's own group from imputations of disability and therefore tacitly accepts the idea that disability is a legitimate reason for inequality, is perhaps one of the factors responsible for making discrimination against people with disabilities so persistent and the struggle for disability rights so difficult" (51). For this full argument, see, Baynton, "Disability and the Justification on Inequality in American History," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 33–57.

[109] Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Pupil Circular, Application of Carolina Witmer."

children existed on a higher intellectual level to "idiots." Families adopted this language

in their responses, reformulating the questions to confirm their children's suitability for a

PIDD education: "A good natural intellect is very manifest"; "Not at all idiotic, but

discovers a good natural intellect and has a good memory, &c."; "He is certainly not an

idiot, but on the contrary he discovers a good natural intellect."[110]

Once enrolled, students needed to display adequate curricular progress and

confirm their intellectual acumen in order to retain their place in the school. The

Committee of Instruction took on the role of enforcing this prohibition against "idiots" or

other "dull" students from remaining in the school, empowered by an 1826 resolution to

dismiss students "when the Principal shall report, that in his judgment a pupil is

disqualified by mental imbecility from receiving the regular instruction of the

Institution."[111] Often, the Committee of Instruction acted quickly to remove these

students from the school. A student deemed "*non compos mentis*" was dismissed after

two-and-a-half months, while another declared "idiotic" left the PIDD after five months.

In its first decade of operation, the PIDD dismissed students for "idiocy," being "very

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[110] Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Pupil Circular, Application of John Chapman" September 5, 1835, MSS 162, Box 33, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC; Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Pupil Circular, Application of Catherine Zepp" November 13, 1835, MSS 162, Box 33, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC; Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, "Pupil Circular, Application of John Buchanan" February 8, 1838, MSS 162, Box 33, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[111] Roberts Vaux, "Committee of Instruction Resolutions" March 8, 1826, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC; In contrast to the Committee of Instruction's role in student evaluation and retention, Howe took that role on more personally himself at the Perkins School. During the late 1840s, Howe articulated a theory about the causes of "idiocy" that suggested this disability emerged from the sinful behavior of their parents. While he argued that "idiots," blind people, deaf people, and those deemed insane should still receive an education, his theory nevertheless indicated his sense that people with disabilities constituted a lower form of humans than "normal" individuals. See, Freeberg, *The Education of Laura Bridgman*, 200–202; For additional context on Howe's views toward "idiocy" and his role on the Massachusetts Commission "to inquire into the condition of Idiots of the Commonwealth" see James W. Trent, *The Manliest Man: Samuel G. Howe and the Contours of Nineteenth-Century American Reform* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 150–154.

dull," "dullness," and in once case for being "deranged"—this last student, however, took up residence at another Quaker-influenced institution in Philadelphia: Friends Asylum.[112] In eventually expelling those who did not qualify intellectually, the Committee of Instruction homogenized the student population at the PIDD to include *only* deaf students and in so doing sought to uplift those students by further marginalizing those with intellectual disabilities.

When communicating news of a child's dismissal from the PIDD because of his or her perceived intellectual aberrations, members of the Board of Directors strove to impart this news sympathetically and compassionately as dismissal effectively communicated that this student *was* a lower form of human. Upon learning from Roberts Vaux that his son, Hugh, was deemed "incapable of receiving any benefit from the Institution, owing to mental weakness," James Tannyhill expressed resigned acceptance. "I am very sorry to hear" news of this dismissal, Tannyhill noted, and then acknowledged that his son would have to return home to the family.[113] Once Hugh left the campus, PIDD Secretary and member of the Board of Directors, George W. Toland, wrote to the Tannyhills to "sympathize in [their] misfortune and regret the necessity which compels us to return [their] afflicted child."[114] The same language and tone that the PIDD used in its advertising materials to evoke sympathy and financial contributions on behalf of deaf

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[112] "Records of Admissions, Vol. 1". Evidence for these cases comes from entries from March 9, 1822; February 10, 1823; September 1824; April 20, 1825; and March 1831.

[113] James C. Tannyhill, "Letter to Lewis Weld" December 23, 1826, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 2, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. In his capacity as Chairman of the Committee of Instruction, the responsibility fell to Vaux to inform Tannyhill of his son's dismissal.

[114] Entry from June 12, 1827, in "Records of Admissions, Vol. 1"; George W. Toland, "Letter to James Tannyhill" July 14, 1827, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 3, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC. Toland served on the PIDD's Board of Directors from the late-1820s until 1858. In addition to his philanthropic activities, Toland also served two terms in the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1833-1836.

people reappeared in this private correspondence; in this case, however, the rhetoric elevated deafness as preferable to intellectual disabilities, likely reinforcing this notion amongst the families with which it corresponded.

Upon graduation, the most successful students at the PIDD received job offers that appeared to confirm the notion that the marginalizing impacts of deafness could be overcome through education. On occasion, however, this empowered self-assessment on the part of recent graduates clashed with wider cultural perceptions of deaf people as pitiable, dependent, and marginal—all identities that the PIDD parlayed and reinforced through some of their advertising materials. Yet, the intellectual and professional strides that some of the PIDD's most outstanding students made during their time at the school raised questions for the administration: what should become of the school's most successful graduates? What role should the PIDD play in employing and retaining these former students as employees? To solve these dilemmas, in 1826 Principal Lewis Weld proposed a system of "monitors," whereby the PIDD would hire its outstanding graduates "as assistants in the respective classes, acting in the presence and under the direction of the [hearing] teachers." This system, Weld believed, would "rende[r] [them] very useful in the school at the same time that they are making improvements for themselves." Furthermore, the school would also benefit financially as they would compensate these Monitors with "only their board and clothing for the first year," unless their service to the institution had been exemplary.[115]

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[115] Lewis Weld, "Letter to Roberts Vaux" February 28, 1826, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 1, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

As with retention and dismissal of students, the Committee of Instruction retained

oversight of the monitors and helped select them and determine their jobs within the

institution. Yet even when graduates became gainfully employed, the PIDD continued to

financially and rhetorically treat them in paternalistic ways based on their deafness. Three

members of the first graduating class—Albert Newsam, James C. Murtagh, and William

Darlington—were all enlisted as monitors in 1826, receiving as compensation only room

and board.[116] After their first year of successful service, the PIDD Board of Directors

proposed that Murtagh and Darlington be retained for the next year as "assistant tutors,"

which earned them salaries of $125 per year in addition to their room and board. By

contrast, the assistant teachers who were hearing earned salaries of $400 per year, making

the compensation of the deaf employees a scant 31 percent of what their non-disabled

colleagues earned.[117]

The Directors, however, recognized that Albert Newsam, who excelled at

printmaking, engraving, and drawing, could be better served by working outside but still

living within the PIDD's oversight. School administrators resolved to find Newsam an

apprenticeship "with some respectable engraver," and even though he would work

outside the PIDD's walls, "the institution [would] continue to regard him as its child,

[and] should extend toward him a paternal notice and care."[118] Less than two months

later, the PIDD successfully apprenticed Newsam to noted Philadelphia engraver, Cephas

G. Childs, who "fe[lt] a generous interest in [Newsam's] welfare and future success as an

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[116] Vaux, "Committee of Instruction Resolutions."

[117] Eleazar Holt, "Letter to Roberts Vaux" July 22, 1823, MSS 162, Box 123, Folder 6, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[118] Roberts Vaux, "Committee of Instruction Report" April 14, 1827, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 3, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

artist," agreeing to train him for a period of four years. In a self-aggrandizing turn, however, Vaux and the Committee of Instruction interpreted Newsam's hard work and success as a product of their paternalistic oversight. "[We] are not without a comforting assurance," Vaux wrote, "that in return for the instruction and protection afforded, the once pityable [*sic*] and destitute boy, will in his future career reflect credit upon the Institution, by his worth as a man."[119] Even in cases where its former students experienced immense success and profitable employment, Directors at the PIDD continued to construct deafness as a tragic deficit.

William Darlington, who served as an assistant teacher from 1827 to 1828, displayed how empowered his education at the PIDD had made him by ultimately rejecting the PIDD's marginalizing contract and resigning his post in 1828. Declaring that he had "long found this situation intolerable" since taking his post in 1826, Darlington firmly asserted that he would "never […] return as Monitor, as this station has long afforded me circumstances beneath my expectation."[120] After leaving his job at the PIDD, Darlington went on to serve as a "clerk in the Secretary Department at Washington City," but continued his intensive academic studies. He worked with another former PIDD instructor, Charles Dillingham, to learn French; this aggressive academic regimen led his former classmate, Augustus Prutzman, to declare that Darlington was the

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[119] Roberts Vaux, "Committee of Instruction Report" June 4, 1827, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 3, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[120] William Darlington, "Letter to Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb" April 2, 1828, MSS 162, Box 125, Folder 4, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

intellectual "equal to Mr. Clerc the great Frenchman."[121] In his later career, Darlington

published a book on Classical mythology as well as newspaper pieces decrying both the

behavior and treatment of impoverished deaf people.[122]

Darlington's case provided a clear example of the intersectional relationship

between social class and the Enlightenment-forged hierarchy of disability. Darlington

resigned because he came from an elite background; he was the nephew of a former

governor of Pennsylvania, David Rittenhouse Porter, and "his connexions [*sic*]

belong[ed] to the upper classes of society."[123] This social status enabled him to embrace

the PIDD's rhetoric of empowerment without accepting its insulting salary; instead,

Darlington pursued what he felt were more intellectually rewarding studies. Darlington's

later career as a scholar and author appeared to prove the truth of the PIDD's advertising

and public rhetoric (at least for some exceptional students): education for deaf people

uplifted and provided them with career opportunities that led to social respectability and

economic self-sufficiency. Yet, as the PIDD's recruitment materials made clear, these

benefits were contingent on excluding those with intellectual disabilities—a policy that

helped reinforce the constructions of deafness as a pitiable, yet conquerable disability,

and "idiocy" or "dullness" as an irremediable and tragic state of being. Even though

Darlington left the PIDD with bitterness and hostility because of its parsimonious

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[121] Augustus Prutzman, "Letter to Abraham B. Hutton" February 7, 1831, MSS 162, Box 126, Folder 2, Gallaudet University Archives, Washington, DC.

[122] William Darlington, *A Catechism of Mythology: Containing a Compendious History of the Heathen Gods and Heroes, Indispensable to a Correct Knowledge of the Ancient Poets and the Classics* (Baltimore: W.R. Lucas, 1832).

[123] Joe, The Jersey Mute, "Lewis Weld's Mute Scholars," *The North-Carolina Journal of Education* 2, no. 11 (November 1859): 341–342. The author of this piece, whose real name was Joseph Mount, wrote for a number of deaf-focused publications and taught deaf students himself, particularly about religion. Given these professional interests and experiences, Mount's laudatory tone and celebration of Darlington's intellectual pursuits and accomplishments prove unsurprising.

compensation, his ultimate success as a scholar nevertheless supported the institution's narrative of educational uplift. Darlington's intellectual abilities seemed to prove the value of the PIDD's curriculum, which could only benefit, and therefore should only be accessible to, deaf people who were intellectually "normal."

Conclusion

Although the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was officially a secular, state-run institution, it nevertheless bore the marks of Quaker humanitarianism in its structure, its leadership, and its shared constructions of disability. At its core, the PIDD emerged from the broader transatlantic discourse surrounding deafness that led to the creation of the Paris School for the Deaf and the American Asylum at Hartford in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophers, as well as the wider public, expressed fascination with sensory impairment and trying to understand what it meant to be "human." These schools and their founders, especially the Abbé l'Épée and Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, helped bring this fascination with deaf people and the essential nature of their minds into the public light by developing ASL and successfully educating deaf students to read, write, study a host of subjects, and share their intellectual advancements with the world. As news of these pedagogical achievements circulated throughout the Atlantic world and reached reform-minded Quakers who were also interested in uplifting marginalized populations, it planted the seeds of the founding a school for the deaf in Philadelphia.

In both its founding and its operation, the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb displayed continuity with other Quaker humanitarian institutions throughout the Atlantic world, particularly Friends Asylum. The PIDD developed these parallels because it employed the same network of Philadelphia Friends, such as Roberts Vaux, who worked in a host of other philanthropic endeavors in the city. Vaux and the other Quakers on the PIDD's Board of Directors brought with them a sense of shared decision-making through the committee system and Friends' ethos of an egalitarian religious community. These characteristics enabled Vaux and his fellow Friends to infuse the PIDD with distinctively Quaker elements even though the institution attracted a multi-denominational population and strove to broadly uplift its student body spiritually by empowering them to read and thereby receive access to the Gospels and salvation.

Yet religious and intellectual uplift proved to be only one aspect of how the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb expressed parallels to the reform work Quakers also undertook in the venues of abolitionism and insane asylum reform. All of involved in these endeavors also embraced and marketed emerging post-Enlightenment concepts of disability to build financial and political support for their work. To these ends, the PIDD's Directors constructed deafness as simultaneously a pitiable and tragic state, yet one that could be overcome through education. The PIDD faculty and students presented this narrative to the wider public by staging educational demonstrations for visitors, traveling to perform for state legislatures, and publishing newspaper advertisements and Annual Reports touting its students' achievements. Such marketing efforts enabled the PIDD to successfully grow its enrollment and also secured it renewed

state funding from the Pennsylvania legislature, thereby solidifying the institution's finances and reputation.

While this narrative of deaf education and its triumphs created a sense of hope and optimism for deaf people who would learn to read, write, gain employment (and eventually salvation) at the PIDD, it did so at the expense of those with intellectual disabilities. In order to elevate deafness as a disability that provided families and friends with hope for their deaf loved ones, the PIDD's Directors simultaneously constructed "idiocy," "dullness," and other intellectual aberrations in their publicity materials as hopeless conditions that no specially formulated education or pedagogy could solve. These rhetorical framings echoed the Enlightenment-derived concept that disabilities existed in a hierarchy. Deaf people and their educational allies used these notions to argue that because they could be educated and gain employment that they were *not* disabled and therefore deserved equal opportunities and treatment as "normal" people.

Families who corresponded with, enrolled their children in, and (on occasion) had their children removed from the PIDD imbibed these constructions of both deafness and intellectual disabilities. Such rhetoric empowered deaf students within the institution, especially the outstanding ones, who used this narrative of overcoming to pursue independent careers and substantive salaries. Yet, such public rhetoric also marginalized individuals with intellectual aberrations and excluded them from the same types of educational opportunities that deaf students experienced at the PIDD. In this respect, the rhetoric and construction of deafness at the PIDD shared characteristics with methods Quakers and other humanitarians used to construct other disabilities during this era:

advances and advocacy on behalf of some marginalized groups came at the expense and further marginalization of others. This history of the PIDD, then, coheres with other disability histories and ultimately supports Douglas Baynton's argument that marginalizing disabled people served as a crucial weapon in the fight for greater rights—even when those people themselves were disabled.

Conclusion

In May 2014, the Quaker magazine, *Friends Journal*, dedicated an entire issue to the topic of "Mental Health and Wellness." In articles throughout this issue, the authors explored the ways in which Quaker values informed and shaped their attitudes toward and interactions with individuals perceived as "mad." For Pam Melick, her Quaker faith helped her in her job at a mental health clinic; she learned to "look for that of God in all our [mental health] clients" and constantly "reminded [her]self to look for their kindness, warmth and humanity" because her clients "really do want dignity, respect, patience, and acceptance. They want to be treated as whole human beings. […] They are, after all, children of God."[1]

For neurodiversity and radical mental health advocate Kitt Eileen Reidy, her experience as a "mad" person and Quaker led her to identify intersections between her faith and her experience working in the radical mental health community. She found that Quakers and neurodiversity advocates shared the beliefs "that a person's experience doesn't need to be mediated by and outside authority […and] that we need to remove the systems of oppression that cause harm if we are to create a truly just world." Yet, she reported that even her fellow Friends occasionally used pejorative language and made negative assumptions about people whom they perceived as "mentally ill," reducing their non-conforming behaviors to a series of biochemical interactions in the brain. This belief about "mental illness" as objective, medically diagnosable state had its roots in and

[1] Pam Melick, "More Than a Diagnosis," *Friends Journal: Quaker Thought and Life Today*, May 2014, 20, 21.

reinforced Enlightenment hierarchies of humanity. Such attitudes, Reidy felt, created

trauma for mad people by denying them both their individual agency and their humanity,

thereby fracturing the Quaker community and belying its values.[2]

As these examples reveal, contemporary Quakers remain concerned about and

attentive to the ways in which their beliefs in the "Inner Light" of God within all people

and their commitment to social justice impact the lives of people perceived as "disabled."

In other words, since the sect's establishment in the mid-seventeenth century, Quakers

have continued to express a sincere commitment to recognizing the humanity of all

people and striving to assist those deemed "aberrant." However, as Reidy's comment and

this dissertation have illustrated, an earnest religious devotion and belief in the spiritual

equality of all people has certainly not prevented past or present Quakers from using the

concept of disability in ways that have, and continue to have, problematic impacts on the

lives of disabled people themselves. In this respect, the history of humanitarianism—in

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[2] Kitt Eileen Reidy, "A Rad Mad Approach to Justice," *Friends Journal: Quaker Thought and Life Today*, May 2014. For an overview of radical mental health written by those within the movement, see Mindful Occupation (Organization), *Mindful Occupation: Rising Up without Burning Out.* (Richmond, VA: Mindful Occupation, 2012). Within this text, the authors offer some of the following definitions: "Radical mental health is a dynamic, creative term; one which empowers us to come up with our own understandings for how our psyches, souls, and hearts experience the world, rather than pour them into conventional medical frameworks. [...] [R]adical mental health sees human experience as a holistic convergence of social, emotional, cultural, physical, spiritual, historical, and environmental elements. [...] Radical mental health is about survival—not "survival of the fittest" or survival through teeth-gritting, but survival through chaos and exploration. It means observing how others support themselves—things which might seem self-destructive from afar—with compassion and understanding. Radical mental health is about opening up doors for conversation; about taking shame out of the equation. It is not about trying to fit into narrow definitions of "normal," which are always wrong anyway, because every culture, every group, every place might have its own normal" (pp. 14-15). For a scholarly analysis of the neurodiversity movement and its relationship to the disability rights movement, see Steve Graby, "Neurodiversity: bridging the gap between the disabled people's movement and the mental health system survivors' movement?" in Helen Spandler, Jill Anderson, and Bob Sapey, eds., *Madness, Distress and the Politics of Disablement* (Chicago: Policy Press, 2015), chap. 16; Joseph N. Straus, "Autism as Culture," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 460–84; Sander L. Gilman, "Madness," in Rachel Adams, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, eds., *Keywords for Disability Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 118–119.

which Quakers played a critical, though not exclusive role—demonstrates continuity. Although Friends expressed genuine concern for the humanity within all people, they nevertheless adopted, adapted, and disseminated Enlightenment-forged notions of disability that helped to establish the narrative foundation for the medical model. In this process, Quakers and other humanitarians created a mixed legacy of both social marginalization and optimistic hopes of uplift and "overcoming" for people with disabilities in the modern Atlantic world.

As intellectuals in Europe developed and embraced empirical methods during the early modern transition into the Scientific Revolution, "disability" and those perceived as aberrant began to move from the realm of religion and superstition into the realm of science. Enlightenment thinkers adopted this scientific empiricism and applied it to human societies in order to understand the nature of the human mind and better articulate concepts of human equality. Although many Enlightenment thinkers advocated progress and natural equality amongst all humans, many also relied on empirical methods to claim that some types of humans were inherently superior to others, thereby creating hierarchies that naturalized human variation. In addition to creating rationales that explained the "inherent superiority" of men over women or of white Europeans over dark-skinned people from Africa, these Enlightenment thinkers also forged a concept of "disability" that justified inequality for those individuals whose minds or bodies were deemed deviant or abnormal. This concept of "disability" was essentially dualistic: disabled people were marginal and sub-human, but with the proper interventions and empirically grounded treatments, there was hope that they could "overcome" their

aberrance. As they developed this definition, Enlightenment thinkers also established a hierarchy *within* the category of disability that made, for instance, a bodily aberration acquired in military service superior to a congenital intellectual disability. This dualistic and hierarchical concept of disability influenced both intellectuals who participated in the "Republic of Letters" as well as Quaker reformers throughout the Atlantic world.

As Quaker philanthropists became increasingly prominent transatlantic humanitarians, they incorporated these concepts of disability into their reform activities and used Enlightenment-forged rhetorics of disability to market their treatment methods and specialized institutions. The dualistic nature of disability made human aberrance an individualized condition, which cohered nicely with Quakerism's central theological tenet—the "Inner Light" of God exists within all individuals. The parallels between their egalitarian theology and the Enlightenment optimism that individuals could, with proper assistance, overcome their disabilities, also drew Quakers to these concepts. Participating in Enlightenment circles and disseminating these intellectual constructs throughout their own transatlantic networks, Quaker humanitarians used this concept of disability as a rhetorical tool to market their reform endeavors. For Friends, the sacred and profane merged: employing this dualistic concept of disability allowed Quakers to earnestly pursue their goal of moral uplift while also addressing the secular exigencies of establishing, funding, and ensuring the survival of specialized institutions that could successfully foster this uplift.

During this Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment era, then, Quakers throughout the Atlantic world drew on these ideas to achieve their reform agendas. Antislavery

activist Benjamin Lay performatively displayed his aberrant body in and around Philadelphia to evoke sympathy for African slaves and call for his fellow Friends to disavow the practice of slaveholding in the name of universal human equality. Quaker abolitionists in the nineteenth century then circulated images of Lay's body that transformed his physical non-conformity from a tool for human equality into a symbol that explained Lay's seemingly "warped" mind and behavior. Members of the Tuke Family from York, England, founded and successfully marketed their insane asylum as coherent with both Quaker and Enlightenment values. Using empirical evidence to market how the Quaker superintendent and staff aided the asylum's residents on the path back to "sanity," the Tukes built a reputation as vanguard philanthropists and inspired the creation of a parallel insane asylum in North America. Roberts Vaux, in turn, immersed himself in a vast array of humanitarian activities in Philadelphia, inspired by both his faith and his Enlightenment belief in the possibility for human progress. Vaux gravitated to many of his philanthropic ventures because he found human aberrance and the ways individuals can overcome these marginalizing aspects of their identity deeply fascinating. With this inspiration, Vaux not only helped popularize Benjamin Lay's abolitionist contributions for a nineteenth-century audience (thereby widely disseminating the striking image of his non-conforming body), but also helped found Friends Asylum outside Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb.[3]

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[3] I've chosen the term "inspiration" to conjure up Stella Young's notion of "inspiration porn": "inspiration porn [...] objectif[ies] one group of people for the benefit of another group of people. So in this case, we're objectifying disabled people for the benefit of nondisabled people. The purpose of these images is to inspire you, to motivate you, so that we can look at them and think, 'Well, however bad my life is, it could be worse. I could be that person.'" In writing Lay's biography, Roberts Vaux described and used the image of Lay's aberrant body to narratively make Lay's abolitionist successes all the more remarkable in

As humanitarians like Tuke and Vaux invoked the concept of disability to market their own reform activities, they also reinforced the Enlightenment's hierarchical understanding of disability. In marketing how their institutions were congruent with both Quaker and Enlightenment values, these reformers defined success through the medical language of "cures" and "restoring" their charges back into "normal" society. Via this process of proving how they could elevate deaf people or those deemed "insane" back to their "full" humanity, these Quaker reformers reinforced the notion that those who were "feeble-minded" or had been labeled "idiots" existed at the lowest, and unredeemable, rungs of humanity. In this way, the financial and reputational success of reform institutions that worked with those at the upper-end of the disability hierarchy—physical or sensory impairments—came about at the expense and further marginalization of those with intellectual disabilities who remained relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy.

Yet the disabled individuals who were subjected to these institutions' treatments and education campaigns did not passively accept the rhetorical, educational, and medical interventions imposed on them by these humanitarians. Rather than simply expressing agency or resisting these treatments by running away from or physically destroying property within these institutions, the disabled people who had been rendered marginal and sub-human by the Enlightenment discourse of "disability" actively reshaped the meaning of this concept through their refusal to remain passive. Asylum superintendents and administrators were forced to reconsider what it meant to be "insane" when residents

that he achieved these ends despite his strange body and the concomitant social ostracism he experienced. For the full TED Talk on disability and "inspiration," see Stella Young, *I'm Not Your Inspiration, Thank You Very Much*, TED Talk (Sydney, Australia, 2014), https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en.

in these institutions carefully planned an escape that involved trickery or when residents strategically changed their behavior to gain greater rights and privileges from asylum staff. Similarly, when a deaf teacher, who himself had been educated at the PIDD, demanded better compensation to match that of the hearing staff, and then quit when such demands were not met, it forced the school's administrators both to reconsider their Enlightenment concepts of "disability": should "disabled" employees remain compensated less than "full" humans to reflect their marginal humanity? How much empowerment, uplift, and "overcoming" should an education at a deaf school provide if it leads its graduates to challenge the "natural" hierarchies forged by the Enlightenment? In all these ways, disabled people did more than just resist; they actively reshaped a concept philanthropists and medical experts used to marginalize, institutionalize, and under-compensate disabled people in the nineteenth century and beyond.

In addition to these contributions, this dissertation has also suggested a number of avenues for future research and investigation that would shed light on the role Quakers, transatlantic religious networks, and key individual reformers played in forging the intellectual underpinnings of the medical model of disability. One area that certainly deserves elaboration is the role that women played in this process of establishing and marketing Quakers' role and religious values in humanitarian reforms. Recent scholarship has illustrated the complex and central role Quaker female ministers played in forging both the sect's transatlantic foundations as well as its central theological and

social commitments to pacifism and eventually abolitionism.[4] Delving more into the role

played by the Female Committees of institutions like the York Retreat, Friends Asylum,

the Philadelphia Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and others, would also illustrate that

gender and ideas about gender hierarchies also shaped how Quakers understood and

marketed these post-Enlightenment notions of disability.

Examining other Quaker institutions and reform endeavors beyond abolition,

insane asylum reform, and deaf education would also demonstrate that Friends used

disability as an analytical tool to think about other marginalized groups. Quakers created

specialty schools for black children and for Native Americans in the United States, they

actively worked in prison reform on both sides of the Atlantic, they created charities to

address the causes and impacts of poverty, and they worked to solve humanitarian crises

such as the Irish Potato Famine. Exploring these endeavors might reveal how Quakers'

use of the Enlightenment-forged rhetoric surrounding disability applied in contexts where

the subjects of the charity were not overtly or medically-classified as "disabled." Might,

for instance, the rhetoric about marginalization and the potential for overcoming also

apply to criminals or those suffering from poverty? Douglas Baynton has contended that

women, black people, and immigrants juxtaposed themselves with disabled people as a

means to demand greater rights and social status in the late-nineteenth and early-

twentieth centuries.[5] Building on this notion, might concepts of disability have served as

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[4] Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1999).

[5] Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," in Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, eds., *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 33–57.

a rationale for Quakers who worked to provide education to black people and Native Americans? Might Quaker reformers have perceived these groups as ones that *could* be educated by virtue of juxtaposing them with disabled people who were perceived as incapable of education?

Similarly, while this dissertation has sketched the outlines of the networks through which Quaker humanitarians communicated and exchanged ideas about human aberrance and disability, more work remains to be done to fully elaborate the structure and operation of this network. By using the emerging field of network theory, one could profitably build on this argument to demonstrate the specific routes of transfer, the methods by which these Enlightenment-forged ideas about disability traveled, and which individuals played crucial roles in this network.[6] As future research illuminates the structure and operation of this Quaker reform network, it might also reveal how places in the Atlantic beyond Philadelphia, London, and York played vital roles as nodes for Quakers to communicate with one another about their reform endeavors. This approach might also broaden the analysis of Enlightenment-inspired reformers to include those beyond the Society of Friends. Quakers were just one of many religious groups who

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[6] For examples of scholarship on the methods of network analysis, see B. Wellman, "Social Network Analysis of Historical Communities: Some Questions from the Present for the Past," *The History of the Family* 1, no. 1 (1996): 97–121; Charles Wetherell, "Network Analysis Comes of Age: Review of Social Structures: A Network Approach," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 19, no. 4 (1989): 645–51; John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*, 2nd ed. (London; Thousands Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2000); For the most recent scholarship dealing with Quaker transatlantic networks (though in an era earlier than this dissertation), see Jordan Landes, *London Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World: The Creation of an Early Modern Community* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); For a nice illustration of social network theory as applied to post-Haitian Revolution French elite émigres, see R. Darrell Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000): 67. Meadows draws extensively on the epistolary network of French émigres to illuminate the structure and operation of this Atlantic network. Given the extensive collection of epistles in Quaker-focused archives in Philadelphia and London, especially, such an approach would likely prove profitable in demonstrating similar dynamics for Friends in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

worked to improve the world around them through their faith beliefs. How might the

transatlantic networks from other faiths or Christian denominations have interacted with

that of the Quakers, either influencing or adapting Friends' notions of disability, reform

agenda, or marketing methods for their own purposes? Addressing questions such as this

would help integrate religion and religious history more fully into disability history and

better illuminate the intersections between faith beliefs, progressive Enlightenment

notions, and changing concepts of disability in the modern Atlantic world.[7]

Finally, this dissertation has brought to light a number of important individuals—

both disabled and able-bodied—who thought about and crafted their reform work through

the lens of disability. Given the paucity of (recent) research for many of the prominent

individuals in this dissertation, scholars have numerous fruitful avenues for research that

re-reads the lives of these people in a disability history context. Foremost among these

people is Roberts Vaux. The last major biographies scholars wrote about Vaux date from

1966 and 1937, respectively, making his life and contributions long overdue for a re-

evaluation.[8] As this dissertation has suggested, Vaux expressed a great fascination with

human aberrance and bodily non-conformity, seen especially in his biographies of the

famous Quaker abolitionists Benjamin Lay and Anthony Benezet. This, along with his

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[7] For some of the most prominent scholarship that does address the intersection of religious beliefs and changing concepts of disability, see Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); R. A. R Edwards, *Words Made Flesh: Nineteenth-Century Deaf Education and the Growth of Deaf Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics : Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[8] Roderick Naylor Ryon, "Roberts Vaux: A Biography of a Reformer" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University, 1966); Joseph McCadden, *Education in Pennsylvania, 1801-1835, and Its Debt to Roberts Vaux* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937).

prolific and tireless philanthropic work on behalf of *many* groups—prisoners, those

deemed insane, deaf students, free and enslaved black people, impoverished residents of

Philadelphia, and the like—suggest that his commitment to aiding the oppressed and

marginalized might well be rooted in a common understanding and concept of disability.

Other "disabled" individuals, such as William Hay, Thomas Scattergood, Lindley

Murray, have also emerged in this dissertation and deserve fuller biographical treatments

in order to understand how their lived experience with and ideas about disability shaped

their lives and legacies. Even some of the tangential people who appeared only briefly in

this dissertation would become more complex historical figures when biographically

approached from a disability history perspective.[9] For example, earlier biographies of the

noted English prison reformer Elizabeth Fry suggest that she experienced anxiety,

depression and nervousness (symptoms known as "neurasthenia" later in the nineteenth

century) and focused much of her philanthropic work on human aberrance.[10] Re-reading

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[9] For a methodological analysis of how to approach biographies from a disability history perspective, see Elizabeth Bredberg, "Writing Disability History: Problems, Perspectives and Sources," *Disability & Society* 14, no. 2 (1999): 189–201; For a pre-disability history biography and an individual with a disability, see Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985); For a recent biography that approaches the life of a disabled person with attention to the historical constructions of disability, see Susan Burch and Hannah Joyner, *Unspeakable: The Story of Junius Wilson* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[10] For broad biographical overviews of Fry, see June Rose, *Elizabeth Fry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981). Throughout this biography, Rose suggests that Fry experienced various aberrant mental states: anxiety, depression, and nervousness. To combat these, she took a number of medicine in her adult years, including laudanum and alcohol. These mentions suggest that Fry's diaries and letters merit closer inspection to understand her own construction of her "disability" and how her work at Newgate Prison might have been inspired by her own experience with diverse mental states. For pertinent pages on these topics, see pp. 5, 6-7, 9-10, 32, 35, 47, 49, 58, 73, 123, 201. For a more contemporary biography of Fry, see Elizabeth Gurney Fry, *Elizabeth Fry: A Quaker Life, Selected Letters and Writings*, ed. Gil Skidmore (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005); For instances of Elizabeth Fry using the Enlightenment-inspired rhetoric of disability as a marginal, but overcomeable state, see Elizabeth Gurney Fry, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry: With Extracts from Her Journal and Letters*, vol. 1 (London: C. Gilpin, J. Hatchard, 1847), 60, 73–74; Elizabeth Gurney Fry, *Memoir of the Life of Elizabeth Fry, with Extracts from Her Journal and Letters*, vol. 2 (London: C. Gilpin, J. Hatchard, 1847), 232. In this journal entry from February 20, 1838,

her life with attention to disability history would help illuminate the ways that the Enlightenment-inspired project of prison reform, these dualistic and hierarchical notions of disability, and Fry's lived experience of disability shaped her work with and attitudes toward the women at Newgate Prison.

Ultimately, this dissertation has helped demonstrate the need to more fully understand how ideas about disability and people with disabilities existed and were used in an era before contemporary concepts of "disability" existed. So much disability history has been focused on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries because the fully formed medical model and its political uses greatly shaped institutions for, ideas about, and the lives of people with disabilities in those eras. But the dualistic and hierarchical concept of "disability" that emerged in the eighteenth century laid the foundation for this later medical model of disability: an individual's pathological difference that can only be "cured" or "overcome" through medical interventions. By pushing our investigation of disability back into the early modern era and its intellectual movements, we can more fully understand the central role of the Enlightenment for disability history and spur further research into the foundations of the medical model.

The Enlightenment thinkers and Quakers who helped forge and adopted this dualistic and hierarchical concept of disability left a very mixed legacy for the individuals who fell into this emerging category. Though the Quaker reformers who were the subject

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Fry described her visit to the Salpétrière insane asylum in France: "here are five thousand inmates. They were exceedingly struck with the kindness manifested towards them, particularly toward the insane, so much liberty being given them. Formerly, these unhappy creatures were chained and cruelly treated; many of the inmates followed the party about, pleased at being noticed." Fry's description of the conditions at the Salpétrière also reflect the lasting impact of Philippe Pinel and his methods of Moral Treatment, which he developed at that hospital and at the Bicêtre, both in France.

of this dissertation, and many other reformers who have worked to assist and "uplift" people with disabilities, had earnest and benevolent intentions in their humanitarian work, they often unwittingly ensured the long-term marginalization of the very people they sought to help. In the process of marketing and building public support for their reform activities, these thinkers and reformers also disseminated and popularized these dualistic and hierarchical ideas about disability to the point where such historical constructions began to seem "natural" and ahistorical in their medical objectivity.

These largely pejorative attitudes about disability have endured and continue to shape the ways contemporary Atlantic societies, especially in the United States, think and talk about the concept of disability.[11] Yet these ideas are *not* and never have been objective truths; they have always been historical constructions. By expanding our chronological understanding of disability, we can more fully appreciate why the medical model has remained so intellectually resilient, and by extension, why the fight for disability rights has been such a struggle. The concepts of disability established and disseminated during the Enlightenment helped create the intellectual foundations for a

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[11] The crucial work analyzing the rhetoric of disability and the "nice words" people use to marginalize people with disabilities as objects of pity remains Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability: Knowledge and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), chap. 1; For American culture in the United States especially, Longmore and Umansky contend that disability spurs an "existential anxiety" amongst those who perceive themselves as "normal." The authors attribute such an anxiety to the fact that many Americans perceive disability as antithetical to American values of independence, autonomy, and control. See Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, "Disability History: From the Margins to the Mainstream," in Longmore and Umansky, *The New Disability History*, 6–7; Even a quick scan of best-seller lists in late 2015 can offer examples of the omnipresence of language that disparages those with disabilities and suggests that bodily aberrance is a quality that must be overcome. See Donald Trump, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2015); Similar marginalizing rhetoric about disabilities even exists at universities with nationally-ranked wheelchair basketball teams, an ever-growing undergraduate minor in Disability Studies, and a long-standing commitment to serving students with disabilities. See "UTA Physicists Offer Hope for Macular Degeneration Sufferers - News Center - UT Arlington," accessed December 30, 2015, https://www.uta.edu/news/releases/2015/12/Laser%20gene%20delivery%20macular%20degeneration.php.

number of modern developments that have sought to cure, ostracize, solve the problem of, or even eradicate disabled people. Post-war rehabilitation programs, sheltered workshops, disability insurance programs, modern workers' compensation laws, and eugenics all owe their origins to understandings of disability shaped by the medical model. Only by critically examining the origin and popularization of these concepts of disability can we come to see beneath the veneer of (and begin to undo) these "objective realities" that have entrenched attitudes that unquestioningly accept human inequality as a "fact of life."

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