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‘I Die Content’:
Re-Imagining Slavery with Edgeworth
and Aikin’s Devoted Slaves

by Christine Tucker
By the end of the nineteenth century, British colonial power extended through Europe, North and Central America, Africa, the Caribbean, and islands in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans: “the British Empire was territorially the largest empire in world history, its population of over 400 million people to be found in all regions of the globe” (Fulford 2-3). British colonial power extended through Europe, North and Central America, Africa, the Caribbean, and islands in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. But only a century earlier, in the decades preceding its extraordinary expansion, multiple events threatened Britain’s dominion: the nation lost the American colonies; its citizens were shaken by the French revolution and slave rebellions in the West Indies; and it became overwhelmed by a raging debate over the slave trade. During this period, Maria Edgeworth, John Aikin, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld wrote children’s literature that explored issues of slavery, colonialism, and race relations. These authors celebrated loyal, submissive slave-figures in an attempt to appease whites’ fear of black rebellion. Edgeworth’s “The Grateful Negro” (1804), supplemented by “The Transmigrations of Indur” and “Perseverance, against Fortune” from Aikin and Barbauld’s Evenings at Home (1794), illustrates the ambiguity that surrounded the issue of slavery. These texts epitomize white man’s struggle to reconcile guilt and doubts about the humanity of slavery, with their awareness of Britain’s dependence on slave labor and their personal fears of losing control over native people.

Two key points dominated the defense of slavery in the late eighteenth century: one, slavery and the slave trade were vital to Britain’s economic survival; two, Africans were similar to uncivilized, dependent children who needed the “protection” of benevolent masters (Mellor 312). Historical evidence indicates that the first argument was quite valid. In the late eighteenth century, slavery, “Was the most profitable enterprise known to British commerce” (Carey 1). Plantations in the colonies provided Britain with products such as sugar, cotton, rum, and indigo. Even if individuals did not own a plantation or slaves, they relied on slave labor to sustain their lifestyles: “To Britain and its colonies in the mid eighteenth century, commerce was simultaneously the foundation of liberty, power, and refinement” (Carey 1). On a more individual level, planters in the West Indies often depended on African slave labor to repay debts they owed to the Royal Africa Company, which had provided them with investments to establish sugar plantations and estates (Miller). Thus, plantation owners’ relationships with the Company, as well as their livelihoods, relied on slave labor.
An address to the three thousand colored citizens of New York who are the owners of one hundred and twenty thousand acres of land in the state of New York, given to them by Gerrit Smith of Peterboro, September 1, 1846 Courtesy of Special Collections, Lehigh University Libraries.

Slavery was so important to the British economy that for decades, people willingly overlooked the moral, ethical, and religious implications of maintaining the institution. While slavery in England was abolished in 1772, the same time period in which Edgeworth, Aikin, Barbauld, and Trimmer wrote their stories, slave trade was still in full force. It is generally accepted that Barbauld was an abolitionist, but less information is available about her brother's views on slavery. Aikin and Barbauld so closely collaborated on Evenings at Home that they never signed their names to distinct pieces. Aikin's daughter, Lucy, claims that Barbauld wrote only fourteen of the ninety-nine stories, though Michelle Levy contends that Barbauld likely contributed much more (130-131). For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to Aikin as the sole author of "The Transmigrations of Indur" and "Perseverance, against Fortune"—pieces that are traditionally credited to him. Arguably, because Aikin and his sister put forth Evenings at Home as a joint effort, we might assume that he shared her abolitionist sentiment. Levy asserts that the siblings' refusal to claim individual stories demonstrates that the collection represents their mutual views (131).
Little scholarship exists on John Aikin, so we do not know if he was indeed an abolitionist. Regardless, moments in his stories demonstrate an underlying awareness and endorsement of subservient figures’ loyalty to their “masters.”

Unlike many of the anti-slavery authors of the period, neither Edgeworth nor Aikin emphasizes slaves’ dreadful working conditions or slavery’s violation of a person’s natural rights; rather, their work focuses on the relationships between masters and slaves. It seems that to these authors, the most noteworthy component of slavery is how a slaveholder treats his human property, and how the slave responds to that treatment. “Grateful,” “Transmigrations,” and “Perseverance” all venerate slave-figures who save their “masters” from attack despite enduring previous suffering at the hands of other men or masters. The first two stories convey much about the authors’ expectations of slaves and masters, whereas “Perseverance” informs the discussion of loyalty.

Edgeworth’s “The Grateful Negro” tells the story of Caesar, a hard-working, trustworthy slave who, out of gratitude for being bought with his wife, saves his new owner, Mr. Edwards, from a group of rebel slaves. “The Transmigrations of Indur” relates the adventures of a man named Indur who passes through eight lives as various animals—the last (and most noteworthy) as a dog who dies protecting his master from robbers—before finally returning to his human state. “Perseverance, against Fortune” consists of Mr. Hardman’s account of his determination to succeed even in the face of adversity. The most relevant section of this story is the description of his time as a slave in Morocco. Shipwrecked and taken captive, Hardman despairs that he will be a slave forever; but when he protects his master from murderous, thieving “villains” who stab him in the process, he is rewarded with his liberty (Aikin, PF 9). Though Caesar, Indur, and Hardman vary in ethnicity (African, Indian, and English, respectively), and sometimes species, their situations parallel one another to a point where we can equate their subservient positions and their heroic actions, to interpret the stories’ implications about slavery in the British colonies. As I will elucidate later, I view and will refer to Indur as a “slave” despite (and simultaneously because of) the fact that he is not human. I consider Indur’s time as a dog to be a metaphoric slavery; thus, when I discuss “slavery” in relation to “The Transmigrations of Indur,” I mean the metaphor’s implications for the actual institution.

The masters in these texts have such sympathetic characters that readers might overlook the fact that they perpetuate other characters’ enslavement. The rebel slave, Hector, criticizes Caesar as one who, “Can be so wrought upon as to forget all the insults, and all the injuries he has received from this accursed race,” but he does not understand the degree of kindness from which Caesar’s loyalty stems (Edgeworth 550). Today, we find it difficult to excuse anyone who owned slaves, but in comparison to other slaveholders, specifically the character of Mr. Jeffries, Edwards is indeed generous. He gives his slaves holidays, provision-grounds, and overtime wages; he takes responsibility for the conditions on his plantation; he refrains from using harsh punishment; and he keeps Caesar and Clara from being parted. Jeffries, on the other hand, is irresponsible: his slaves are seized to pay his personal debts, he never plans ahead for misfortune with his crops, and he ignores the harsh actions of his overseer, Durant. Edwards is forewarned and lives, but he does not completely thwart the rebellion. Consequently, Jeffries’ slaves carry out their plan and Durant, “Died in tortures, inflicted by the hands of those who had suffered most by his cruelties” (Edgeworth 555). Jeffries and his family are financially ruined and live in constant fear of future insurrections. Through this story, we can see that Edgeworth clearly differentiates between a good master and a bad one and that there are repercussions for each man’s decisions.

Aikin also presents masters who merit their slaves’ respect and allegiance. In “Perseverance,” Hardman’s overseer treats him well and gives him wages, so that Hardman says, “I might have passed my time comfortably enough, could I have accommodated myself to their manners and religion, and forgot my native land” (Aikin, PF 9). The overseer’s conduct is good enough that Hardman could have lived tolerably in Morocco. We do not get much insight into Indur’s owner’s character, but we can see that he is compassionate. As soon as the man sees Indur’s wounds, he, “Threw himself by the side of Indur, and expressed the warmest concern” (Aikin, TI 33). Indur actually fluctuates between positions of servitude and authority. He goes from being a master—a human who reigns over the animal kingdom—to multiple sub-human positions as animals. As a human “master,” Indur ex-
emplifies the trait that Edgeworth commends most in Edwards: Indur has a, “Gentleness of disposition and humanity towards all living creatures” (Aikin, TI 1). He does not abuse his power by harming animals; rather, he does everything he can to prevent their suffering. He dies, for the first time, after trying to save a monkey from a serpent. Because they have presented the masters as kind, worthy men, Aikin and Edgeworth imply that such kindness deserves to be repaid with loyalty, even though it is actually a tool of oppression.

The authors clearly extol the slave characters' fidelity, even to when he defends Edwards during the conflict, receiving a knife-wound in the process. When he wrongly believes that his wound is fatal, “The faithful servant staggered back a few paces: his master caught him in his arms. ‘I die content' said he’” (Edgeworth 555). Caesar’s quasi last words parallel Indur’s dying sentiments: Indur’s owner (accidentally) fires the shot the kills him, yet, “Indur died licking his [master’s] hand” (Aikin, TI 34). In “Perseverance,” Hardman is stabbed with a dagger then restored to health thanks to his master’s care. All three characters willingly put themselves at physical risk for the men that keep them captive, and none bears a grudge for the affliction he endures in the process. On the contrary, these slaves seem pleased to have suffered on their masters’ behalf.

Indur, Caesar, and Hardman possess the ability to remember wrongs inflicted on them, but they choose to ignore those injuries for the sake of doing good. Aikin specifically ensures that Indur’s memory is preserved as he transmutes from one animal to another. In the story’s opening scene, Indur lies dying from a serpent bite, and the monkey he saved turns into a fairy who grants his one wish: “[To] retain a rational soul, with the memory of the adventures I have gone through” (Aikin, TI 4). Thus, he must remember all the instances when humans killed him. The causes of Indur’s deaths (with the name of the animal he is at the time), are as follows: hunter’s falcon (antelope), man (goose), cat (mouse), human warfare (elephant), harpooner (whale), suffocation/smoke by beekeeper (bee), man (rabbit). Except for when he is a mouse, Indur meets his demise directly or indirectly at the hands of men. Yet, at the moment when Indur can hark back to those wrongs, he does not. He chooses to protect his owner—a member of the species that caused him so much suffering. Caesar similarly demonstrates an ability to relinquish vengeful impulses. He puts Mr. Jefferies and Mr. Durant’s abuse behind him, and places Mr. Edwards’ well-being over his own.

The authors’ approbation of Caesar and Indur seems to convey the message that despite a slave’s former maltreatment, an exceptionally kind master can win back his trust and devotion to the entire white race. Edwards’ benefaction makes Caesar see him as, “One for whose sake all [whites] must be spared” (Edgeworth 550). As a member of the Koromantyn tribe, Caesar had been taught his entire life that revenge is a virtue, but he releases all vengeful impulses once he is treated humanely.

By giving readers insight into what it would be like to live as a slave, the authors call attention to and incite change in the institution of slavery.
the argument because even after Edwards pardons him, he is, “In-capable...of listening to anything but revenge” (Edgeworth 555). Presumably, Hector’s character is vengeful because he has never personally experienced white benevolence. By the time Edwards forgivingly addresses him, Hector is at the point of no return. He has endured excessive brutality, as Edgeworth explains: “Durant, the overseer, did not scruple to use the most cruel and barbarous methods of forcing the slaves to exertions beyond their strength” (547). Durant’s conduct is brutal enough to harden Hector to any future acts of kindness. Therefore, with Caesar and Hector, Edgeworth simultaneously shows the optimistic possibility of winning slaves over with compassion and the reality that slaves have a threshold for the amount of cruelty they will endure before they irreversibly abhor the white race.

By writing about a heroic, loyal slave, Edgeworth may have been trying to calm children’s (and parents’) anxieties about the “Potentially violent nature of African slaves” (Roth 85). Slave rebellions like Hector’s periodically occurred in the colonies. The largest and most deadly revolt took place in 1791 on the French Island of St. Domingue—which would, as a result of a thirteen year long struggle, become the free black republic of Haiti, in 1804. As a Protestant in a largely Catholic Ireland, Edgeworth wrote “The Grateful Negro” eleven years after the initial revolt, “In the turbulent wake of the French Revolution and shortly after the chaos of peasant uprisings in Ireland (1798) which had driven her family to a nearby Protestant stronghold” (Botkin 195). She had seen social rebellion first hand, and with the knowledge of the St. Domingue bloodbath, composed a text that addressed the very real threat of black insurgence. “The Grateful Negro” indicates that whites’ greatest fear was blacks’ capacity to rise up and harm them, either physically or by removing their power. The crux of the story is Hector’s planned revolt against all the white men, women, and children in Jamaica. If he had succeeded, every white person on the island would have been killed, and the slaves would have gained control. Caesar’s prevention of the massacre reassures readers that despite the existence of extremely violent and vengeful slaves, once people re-evaluate and amend their treatment of the African race, enough slaves will be attached to and protective of whites to ensure their safety.

Slaves’ loyal acts in “Transmigrations,” “Perseverance,” and “Grateful” are paired with alternative scenarios in which the white masters and their families are potential victims of violence. Though Indur technically only saves his owner, the ruffians attack the man “near his own house” where his wife and children slept (Aikin, TI 32). Mr. Hardman makes “a loud outcry to alarm the family” of the villains’ presence, and Caesar alerts Mr. Edwards, who, readers know, had brought his family into the company of slaves earlier that evening (Aikin, PF 10). The coupling of the whites’ salvation with hints of an alternative outcome shows that an obedient slave can save you and your loved ones, whereas a slave’s refusal to defend you puts you all at risk.

The decision to place family members in danger emphasizes the way that whites attributed brutal determination and capacity for violence to slaves—slaves willing to kill (or let someone else kill) an entire family in cold-blooded revenge. As previously mentioned, Hector and Caesar are indigenous Africans who value vengeful instincts. Edgeworth shrouds their native culture in mystery and magic to imply that the violence Hector embodies is an inherent aspect of the African race. The character of Esther, the Obeah sorceress, especially highlights the slaves’ dangerous qualities. Because of her connection to the African belief system, Obeah, Esther represents African mystique, witchcraft, and healing (Botkin 203). Immediately following the description of Esther’s supposed “supernatural powers,” Edgeworth tells us that she, “Stimulated the revengeful temper of Hector almost to a phrenzy,” thus instigating the plan for insurrection (551). Additionally, the final confrontation between Edwards’ and the rebel slaves occurs outside of Esther’s house. Esther embodies all that is foreign to white society, and by connecting her to rebellion, Edgeworth makes her, and hence the presence of African culture on plantations, threatening.

Frances R. Botkin rightly calls attention to the importance of names in “The Grateful Negro.” Esther, whose name conjures the biblical woman who saved the Jews, seems to have a similar, albeit fleeting, capacity to free
the slaves. Botkin writes of the men, “Caesar’s name reverberates with at least dual meaning: he is simultane-ously the giver of empire and the destroyer of re-public. Hector’s name, too, conjures unsettling images. Unquestionably defeated, but the primeval ancestor of empire, Hector denotes a noble cause that anticipates future success” (Botkin 206). Caesar is the “giver,” or savior, of Edwards’ plantation “empire,” and the “de-stroyer” of Hector’s imagined slave “republic.” Hector is indeed defeated, but Edgeworth’s text centers on the frightening possibility that he could have been, or will eventually be, successful. Appropriately, Indur’s name reinforces the idea of selflessness: phonetically, “Indur” is similar to “endure.” Edgeworth even spells “endure” as “indre” in “The Grateful Negro” (553). Abraham Bayley—the only character to have a first and last name in Edgeworth’s tale—is a gentle overseer who agrees with and cares more about enacting Edwards’ humane visions than getting the most work out of the slaves. Bayley’s first name connotes the biblical patriarch, and assuming that he is white --which most overseers were-- reinforces the story’s theme that paternalistic benevolence is the most appropriate treatment of slaves.

A significant difference between “The Grateful Negro” and Aikin’s stories is that Edgeworth never grants her slave characters freedom, whereas Aikin does. Even though Caesar saves Mr. Edwards, the master (and perhaps Edgeworth) is still wary of giving up control over him. Such an ending exposes Edgeworth’s overall meliorist position. Aikin’s plot decision, though, reveals a quasi abolitionist agenda. In the last paragraph of “Transmigrations,” Aikin writes of Indur: “So generous a nature was no longer to be annexed to a brutal form” (34). The word “annex” connotes an appropriation of land, which is what Britain did in the West Indies and India. Like Indur, once the people of that land prove loyal to their superiors, they might be freed from their sub-human status. Mr. Hardman is also rewarded with his freedom, which suggests that slaves should be emancipated, but only after they have proven their attachment to the white race—only after whites are sure that rebellion will not ensue. “Perseverance, against Fortune” takes more of an abolitionist stance by recognizing the hardships of slaves. Hardman’s shipmates die from, “The thought of perpetual servitude, together with the hard treat-ment,” and he later says, “I have heard persons talk as if there was little in being a slave but the name; but they who have been slaves themselves, I am sure will never make light of slaver[ty] in others” (Aikin, PF 7-8). Hardman does not further condemn the institution, however, so readers and his child listener, Theodore, focus more on Hardman’s response to his situation than the situation’s inherent injustice.

George E. Boulukos effectively argues that “The Grateful Negro” is “Edgeworth’s attempt to re-imagine slavery as humane” (13). In response to his interpre-tation, Botkin asserts that the story actually reveals Edgeworth’s desire for slavery to be abolished, but through a gradual process that would benefit both master and slave (206). Though Botkin makes some excellent points, the textual evidence supports Boulukos’ position overall. Botkin uses Mr. Edwards’ comment to Mr. Jeffries—“The right should make the law”—to argue that the text takes a moderate abolitionist stance (201; Edgeworth 548). She ignores, however, the implication of Edwards’ personal inaction—he does not free Caesar, or any other slave, even after Caesar saves his life. If Edwards truly represented the abolitionist position, he would cease dealing in slavery, no matter what the cost. The fact that he keeps Caesar enslaved shows that the issue of importance is not that his slaves become free men, but that they become loyal men. Instead of giving them their free-dom, Edwards tries, “To make [his] negroes as happy as possible” (Edgeworth 548). Edgeworth’s emphasis on Mr. Edwards’ efforts toward “the melioration of the state of slaves” eclipses his brief mention that planta- tion-owners should consider slaves’ interests and that slaves could be replaced with wage laborers (547).

Edwards’ hesitation about abolition stems from the concern that even if slaves were freed, they would continue to threaten whites’ control. When Edgeworth and Aikin wrote, emancipation was by no means an inevitable event. Read together, their texts present a sympa-thetic, meliorist position on slavery, but they are certainly not abolitionist. “The Grateful Negro” defends the need for slavery’s continuation, primarily because of the indeterminable effects of emancipa-tion. Besides the chance that unowned (thus, uncon-trolled) slaves would violently rebel, another apolo-gist argument was that emancipated blacks would not be able to survive without whites’ guidance; they were better off enslaved. For example, Mr. Edwards, “Wished that there were no such thing as slavery in
the world; but he was convinced...that the sudden emancipation of the negroes would rather increase than diminish their miseries” (Edgeworth 547). This logic reflects Kipling’s “white man’s burden” idea that European influence and control actually betters other races. This justification lessens people’s guilt and, to them, excuses the inhumanity of slavery. Moments in “The Grateful Negro” do imply that the slaves actually wanted to be cared for. When Jeffries tells Edwards that he lets Durant manage his slaves, Edwards replies, “That is the very thing of which they complain” (Edgeworth 548). Edwards suggests that the slaves want their master to be more involved in
their lives. Of course, they want Durant’s abuse to stop, but Edwards also implies that they want their master to take responsibility for them, much like a parent would for a child. Similarly, when Indur is in his “master” position as a man, Aikin writes, “If he saw any opportunity of exercising his benevolence towards animals in distress, he never failed to make use of it” (TI 2). Here, Indur is very much like Edwards, who rescues Caesar and Clara when they are in distress. Paternalistic behavior moves the slaves and animals to such a degree that they repay their masters: Edwards receives Caesar’s devotion, and Indur gets his dying wish granted by a fairy.

Parallel to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse on the slave trade was the emerging animal rights movement. For some, an animal’s status as “thing” justified treating them poorly, but as the century progressed, more and more people promoted and accepted the argument that animals experienced suffering. In 1822, Commons passed the Bill for More Effectually Preventing Malicious and Wanton Cruelty to Animals (Ellis 94). Sarah Trimmer is one author whose work teaches children the importance of being kind to animals. In Fabulous Histories, she portrays animals experiencing emotional and physical pain, and the maternal human character, Mrs. Benson, encourages her children to imagine themselves in animals’ places. When Mrs. Benson’s son, Frederick, expresses a desire to catch a bird, his mother disapproves. She asks Frederick if he treasures his freedom to run about and play with his friends, and says, “Though these little animals are inferior to you, there is no doubt but they are capable of enjoyments similar to these” (Trimmer 31). Mrs. Benson incites empathy in child readers in an attempt to improve their treatment of animals. If children can imagine themselves as animals, they will be less inclined to harm them. By attributing the ability to feel pleasure to animals, Mrs. Benson humanizes them but simultaneously reinforces the idea that they are inferior.

Her daughter, Harriet, asks Mrs. Benson why, if capturing birds is wrong, did she once keep a canary in a cage. Mrs. Benson proceeds to explain: “The case is very different in respect to Canaries, my dear...By keeping them in a cage I do them a kindness. I consider them as little foreigners who claim my hospitality...as they are always here bred in cages, they do not know how to procure the materials for their nests abroad. And there is another particular which would greatly distress them were they to be turned loose, which is, the ridicule and contempt they would be exposed to from other birds” (Trimmer 32).

Mrs. Benson believes that her actions benefit the canary; she makes caging the bird seem like the humane deed. The bird needs to be taken care of by a person or else it will either die or be harassed by other birds. Mrs. Benson’s rationalization echoes the “white man’s burden” concept that was hinted at in “The Grateful Negro.” Mrs. Benson also says that when she confined the canary, “I kept it some years, but not choosing to confine her in a little cage, had a large one bought” (Trimmer 33). She calls the captivity “deliverance,” but in reality, it is a form of enslavement. Just as Mr. Edwards believes that he is diminishing blacks’ miseries by keeping them enslaved, Mrs. Benson believes that the canary is better off in the cage. Trimmer places emphasis on “little” and “large” to show that to Mrs. Benson, the bird’s degree of freedom is important. Again, similar to Edwards, Mrs. Benson is not generous enough to completely free her captive, but she is more generous than other captors, which lessens her guilt.

In “The Grateful Negro,” Mr. Jeffries considers slaves to be, “‘A race of beings naturally inferior’...a different species from himself” (Edgeworth 549). Though Edgeworth demonizes Jeffries and his beliefs, she never grants Caesar complete human status; rather, he remains enslaved despite his valiant actions. Even though Caesar and his fellow slaves are human, they remain owned and sometimes treated as animals. Similarly, on the interior, Indur is a man—his wish guarantees that his human identity is preserved as he becomes different animals—but on the exterior, he is an animal, and is treated as such. As a dog, Indur is a close human companion, but until the story’s end he is still shy of being one of their species; he occupies a sub-human position of servitude. Aikin tells us that Indur’s owner acquires him as a, “Faithful guard for his house and grounds” (TI 30). Indur is essentially a slave with limited freedom and an obligation to serve his master, which he willingly does.
Aikin writes, “Indur presently attached himself to his master and all his family, and showed every mark of a noble and generous nature” (TI 30). Indur’s identity depends on and is defined by his master. Without his owner, he would have no reason or chance to exercise his loyalty, and therefore no chance to be humanized—literally restored to human form. It is only through his relationship with a person of higher social (and species) status that he is recognized as a feeling being.

The issue of whether or not slaves were regarded as human is complicated. As Markman Ellis explains, “The controversy over slavery caused by the abolition movement was to humanize slaves—to make the public view them as men, women, and children who experienced human emotions and responses just as whites did. Abolitionists used the same technique that Mrs. Benson does to make her children treat animals kindly. By giving readers insight into what it would be like to live as a slave, the authors call attention to and incite change in the institution of slavery. Boulukos acknowledges the sentimental tradition in abolition literature, and contends that sentimentalism was also used by apologists for slavery (24). He argues that Edgeworth depicts slaves as feeling beings so that white readers can discern how to better control them (13). Once whites recognize slaves’ ability to suffer, they can manipulate that suffering to their advantage. Boulukos’ argument is valid, but in terms of textual evidence, it is more useful to examine how Edgeworth’s (and to a degree Aikin’s) use of sentimentalism influences the characters’ sympathetic relationships.

Ellis provides fascinating insight into objects with “it-status” and the concept of sympathy in eighteenth-century England. He describes sympathy as, “An act of imagination in which we project ourselves into the place of another” (Ellis 102). Edgeworth immediately presents Caesar as a human character to whom readers and other characters might relate. The first indication of Caesar’s presence in the text is “the voice of distress” and loud “lamentations”; readers then encounter Clara “weeping bitterly” (Edgeworth 547-8). We can reasonably assume that Edwards’ meliorist attitudes about slavery stem from his ability to sympathize with the slaves. Indeed, his recognition and treatment of Caesar as a human with the capacity for suffering are what cements Caesar’s loyalty to him (Boulukos 14). He “was moved by [Caesar and Clara’s] entreaties” so he buys them both (Edgeworth 548). The passage directly following the purchase oozes with sentimentalism. Edgeworth writes: “[Caesar’s] feelings were at this instant so strong that he could not find expression for his gratitude: he stood like one stupified [sic]! Kindness…overpowered his manly heart; and, at hearing the words ‘my good friend,’ the tears gushed from his eyes…Gratitude swelled in his bosom; and he longed to be alone, that he might freely yield to his emotions” (549). Edgeworth’s description of Caesar’s emotional reaction shows that he is not an unfeeling piece of property; he is a man with the same emotions as the readers.

Ellis explains that the sympathetic relationship between animals and humans has a “problem with reciprocity” because animals cannot feel the same sympathy for humans that humans feel for them (103). Without the potential for mutual sympathy, people resist sympathizing with animals; they know that there is nothing in it for them, so to speak. Another factor that complicates the relationship is the species divide. A man can imagine himself as another man

The grateful slave is like a dog—he is enslaved to a master, yet he helps that master retain control over other slaves.
more easily than he can imagine himself as a dog (Ellis 104). In the context of slavery, if slaveholders view their slaves as animals, they will not sympathize with them, and consequently treat them badly. Likewise, as a result of masters' cruel treatment, slaves will be unwilling, and perhaps unable, to sympathize with whites, and therefore more disposed to violent rebellion. Hector represents the result of this cause and effect relationship: because whites have dehumanized him, he has no sympathy for them, and is willing to cause them great suffering. Conversely, treating slaves kindly—as Edwards does to Caesar—would restore the mutually sympathetic relationship between slaves and masters, securing whites' safety in the process. Thus, it makes sense that Edge worth, whose text is so concerned with rebellion, would include sentimental scenes that humanize slaves and show the positive result of a sympathetic relationship between master and slave.

Aikin's decision to have Indur display his loyalty as a dog is not accidental. More than any other creature, dogs have close relationships with humans. The familiar maxim "a dog is a man's best friend" conveys the exact sentiment of "Transmigrations."

Ellis quotes Ralph Beilby, author of General History of Quadrupeds (1790), as believing that the "key" to the history of the dog is the following: "Mankind's rise to preeminence and domination over the animals had only been possible through the assistance of 'one so bold, so tractable, and so obedient as the Dog,' without whose aid man could not have 'conquered, tamed, and reduced other animals into slavery.' Mankind was master, but only because of the faithful role of his gang-master and enslaver, the dog" (qtd. in Ellis 92). The grateful slave is like a dog—he is enslaved to a master, yet he helps that master retain control over other slaves. Aikin writes that Indur dies with "the satisfaction of seeing his master remain lord of the field" (TI 33). The language here conjures an image similar to that of Mr. Edwards reigning over his plantation—a condition that Caesar preserves. Significantly, the fact that the stories' slave-figures are in British colonies gives them a degree of influence over all of Britain. Colonialism, unlike the institution of slavery, which removed individuals from their countries, worked to, "Control people who lived in viable, if momentarily defeated communities" (Miller). Though Caesar is an African who has been brought to Jamaica, he plays a key role in maintaining European control over the island. Without slaves' cooperation, the colonies in India and the West Indies would fall apart and power.
would return to the native people.

Indur and Caesar's compliance in their own oppression reiterates the message that slaves could willingly accept their inferior position. By warning Edwards about the rebellion, Caesar prevents his fellow slaves from gaining control of the island, which would have put him on the path to freedom. As Botkin says, "In choosing being grateful over being free, Caesar embraces this paternalism" (201). He perpetuates inequality for himself and the other slaves. Caesar never once complains about being a slave; rather, he seems perfectly happy with his condition. Indur is also content as a dog, presumable because he is well-treated. He loves his family, so when the children: "Use him as roughly as their little hands were capable of," he, "Never, even when hurt, [shows] any displeasure further than by a low growl" (Aikin, TI 31). By portraying submissive, silent slave-figures, Edgeworth and Aikin evade discussion of the inhumanity of slavery. If blacks did not seem to want equal rights, or even to be free, then the, "Question of whether they deserved those rights [became] wholly irrelevant" (Roth 107).

The common, underlying fact of all interpretations of Aikin and Edgeworth's texts is that they were intended for children. We cannot expect that children would have seen the slavery metaphor in "The Transmigrations or Indur," but what would they have taken away from "The Grateful Negro?" Primarily, they would have received a lesson about race relations instructing them to treat slaves and other races kindly, as humans. But embedded in the message of benevolence lies the implication that other races are inferior to whites. As Sarah N. Roth puts it, "The young people who perused these texts encountered a model of race relations that was at once highly affable and blatantly unequal" (89). The slaves seem relatively content, and the masters benefit in the best possible way (by staying alive), but white Europeans remain in control. If the slave trade and slavery in the colonies were abolished, late-eighteenth-century children would grow up to be the first generation of adults to interact with an entirely free black race. From messages like the one in "The Grateful Negro," they would likely expect blacks to serve and obey them, as humans and paid laborers if not as slaves. Roth reasonably contends that Edgeworth and Aikin may, "Have been suggest-
encouraged children to be engaged participants in political dialogue, and to, “Become critical observers of and, where necessary, vocal resisters to authority” (123). The problem is that because Indur’s owner, Hardman’s overseer, and Mr. Edwards treat their “slaves” well, children do not see a reason to question their authority. Finally, the texts present one more justification for Caesar and Indur’s enslavement, which is that they are inferior due to their lack of reason (Boulukos 20). Both Hector and Caesar are engulfed by their passions, revenge and gratitude, respectively. They are driven by purely emotional response. As the stories end, Aikin and Edgeworth reiterate the slave characters’ irrationality. Indur becomes human, “awakening as it were from a trance;” Clara, once Esther’s potion wears off, “wakened from her trance,” and Caesar, “thought he was still in a dream” (Aikin, TI 34; Edgeworth 555). Trance and dream-like states completely oppose clear-headed, rational thinking, so to say that the slave figures occupied those states throughout the text is to underscore their irrationality. Suggestions of irrationality never surround the masters in these stories. In fact, Edgeworth actually points out that reason is one of Mr. Edwards’ traits: “His benevolence...
therefore confined itself within the bounds of reason” (547). Edwards is admirable because he thinks rationally, whereas the slaves are lower and less human because they do not. In the late eighteenth century, reason was highly valued and emphasized. In his treatise on childhood education, *Emile: or, On Education* (1762), Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserts that the ultimate goal of education was to turn a child into a reasonable, self-sufficient adult. With that context, children might have seen the slave characters’ irrationality as evidence of their deficiency.

Readers of “The Grateful Negro,” “Perseverance, against Fortune,” and “The Transmigrations of Indur” encounter slave characters who willingly serve benevolent masters to the detriment of their own well-being. Edgeworth and Aikin—whether or not they identified themselves, or were identified by others, as abolitionists, apologists, or meliorists—produced texts that acknowledged the inhumanity of slavery, but were complicated by a latent fear of the aftermath of emancipation. Images of grateful, compliant slaves lessened white readers’ fears of slave rebellions, arguably making them more sympathetic to slaves’ circumstances; but such images did not go so far as to incite abolitionist sentiment. Like Mrs. Benson in Trimmer’s Fabulous Histories, Edgeworth and Aikin seem to justify slavery with a “white man’s burden” attitude, glossing over the issue of inequality and focus on a kind of slavery that, to them, seems to benefit both master and slave. The stories’ implication for European children is that if they want to sustain power over blacks, they cannot treat them as inhumanely as Durant and Jefferies do; instead, they must be as benevolent as Mr. Edwards.