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**Editorial Habitus in *The Liberator*:  
The Interdependence of Abolitionist Activism and Periodical Editorship**

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Laura Sawade  
Bergstrasse 40  
55595 Roxheim

Email: [lsawade@students.uni-mainz.de](mailto:lsawade@students.uni-mainz.de)

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## 1. Introduction

“He was gentle in manner and did not employ in his speeches the invective for which the *Liberator* was notorious. He was optimistic by nature and had limitless faith in the ultimate triumph of the antislavery cause” (Brown 534) – these are the crucial aspects which ensure William Lloyd Garrison’s success with his abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* (1831-65). His optimistic attitude and combative nature equip him with a specific charisma which his readership is supposed to identify with. Here, with both his defensive as well as emancipatory attitude, he primarily addresses the weakest members of society, namely African Americans and women. Hence, I will elaborate on how *The Liberator* conveys its editor’s attitude to the public by considering Matthew Philpotts’ methodological approach with regard to the editorial habitus of the newspaper. In light of this background, my work will focus on how the abolitionists’ cause shapes and influences *The Liberator*’s editorial habitus. I argue that both Garrison’s limitless faith in racial emancipation and especially the African American readers’ strong approval of *The Liberator* due to its critical portrayal of racial degradation as well as its emancipatory visions characterize the charismatic and bureaucratic editorship of this abolitionist publication.

While in a first step elaborating on how *The Liberator* draws readers’ attention to its cause, I consider Garrison’s personality and how he reflects it in his newspaper in terms of what Philpotts calls “charismatic editorship.” Furthermore, it is significant to assess in how far *The Liberator* has its own personal habitus, given that the editor-in-chief develops the main idea behind his publication, but that the paper also owes its success to the multiplicity of authors who provide regular textual contributions and, thereby, help develop an abolitionist periodical debate. Though popular among Garrisonian abolitionists, who, among others, regularly contribute textual materials and, thus, fill the newspaper’s columns, *The Liberator* still depends on financial means, which also ensure its economic success. In this context, Philpotts’ concept of the “bureaucratic editorship” will elaborate whether the newspaper aimed at financial profit or was rather driven by symbolical values. Here, the economic code, a further concept developed by Philpotts, will look at the financial funding with regard to the scarce readership and whether funds or other motivations had *The Liberator* survive for more than three decades.

Consequently, this raises the question of how *The Liberator* attracts the reader, especially in terms of its layout. To understand the significant interconnectedness of the newspaper’s text and illustrations, applying Philpotts’ compositional code will support my

analysis. By interpreting the illustrations' position in the context of an entire newspaper issue as well as the composition of each individual illustration, my work will finally assess how they tie in with the charismatic and bureaucratic editorship, i.e. how they reflect or represent the editor and *The Liberator* in place of antislavery activists.

## 2. The Effect of Charismatic Editorship on the *Liberator's* Institutional Habitus

In 2012, Matthew Philpotts published an innovative essay in which he elaborates on the significant function of a periodical editor<sup>1</sup> with regard to the interplay between the editor and his journalistic contribution. In this chapter, I apply what Philpotts terms “charismatic” and “bureaucratic editorship” to Garrison’s *Liberator* to show how an editor’s social role contributes to the cause of abolition. “[T]his relationship between the personal and the institutional habitus generates a profound personal identification on the part of the editor with the journal and its core ethos. This personal stake is often realized in a sense of mission and also of devotion and exhilaration” (Philpotts, “Periodical Editor” 48-49) – each of them an attribute that characterizes *The Liberator* and its editor.

In light of the mission Garrison pursues in the form of contributing to the immediate abolition of slavery, and the both devoted and exhilarated attitude he dedicates to his mission, these attributes are reflected in his statement that “I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – AND I WILL BE HEARD” (Garrison, *Liberator* 1.1 B1), which, consequently, shape the charismatic editorship of this abolitionist publication.

To comprehend how *The Liberator* works, the aspect “position” is crucial. The newspaper’s title implies one specific force that liberates the country from the tyrannical yoke of slavery. As the “Salutation,” the first article ever printed in *The Liberator*, claims, however, this specific liberator or *Liberator* depends on the support of additional forces – in the form of devoted abolitionists and readers whom he defines by exclaiming “Aid me, NEW ENGLAND!” (Garrison, *Liberator* 1.1 A1). Consequently, the editor does not see himself as the ultimate liberator, but the literate masses, i.e. those able to read, comprehend, and spread his criticism. Special about this poetic article is that it has *The Liberator* exceed its status as a mere newspaper and provides it with an own charisma that strongly resembles its creator, since “charismatic editorship can be readily aligned with . . . the charismatic image of artistic

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<sup>1</sup> Philpotts, Matthew. “The Role of the Periodical Editor: Literary Journals and Editorial Habitus.” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 107, no. 1, Jan. 2012, pp. 39-64.

activity” (Philpotts, “Periodical Editor” 49). Hence, as it represents the editor’s habitus, I argue that *The Liberator* itself practices charismatic editorship, i.e. it reflects Garrison’s outrageous attitude toward society, which influences its position on the abolitionist newspaper market. It is also significant that the salutation is printed as an anonymous contribution which introduces itself by saying

My name is ‘LIBERATOR’! I propose

To hurl my shafts at freedom’s deadliest foes!

My task is hard – for I am charged to save

*Man from his brother!* – to redeem the slave! (Garrison, *Liberator* 1.1 A1; orig. emphasis)

Though Garrison remains the editor-in-chief during the entire publication period, he does not intend to fight for racial emancipation as a single crusader but as one in an equally minded force of millions, as he eventually proclaims in his valedictory (35.52 B-C2). To clarify the significance of the opening article’s anonymity, applying Michel Foucault’s concept of the “author function” emphasizes that *The Liberator* as a newspaper is the result of numerous authorial contributions. Though being the editor-in-chief, Garrison primarily gives the impulse for which kind of textual content is to be published in his newspaper. As a result, the multiplicity of authors, who contribute textual material as well as their various personalities which are influenced by any encounter with the evils of slavery, shape the character of Garrison’s newspaper. In this respect, I consider *The Liberator* as a thirty-five-year long antislavery mass demonstration in print, which is omnipresent at antislavery conventions where its issues had been distributed.

As charismatic editors are the driving force on the newspaper market of the antebellum period, Garrison’s harsh rhetoric on the one hand and his poetic impulses on the other hand imply that *The Liberator* addresses a primarily intellectual readership. His oratorical genius supports him in transferring his critique of slavery on an emotional, outrageous level which his readership is able to sympathize with. Here, the editor eventually contributes to “anti-analphabetism” among (former) slaves regarding the fact that no less than seventy-five percent of his subscribers are of African American descent. In his research on (black) periodical readers of the *Christian Recorder*<sup>2</sup>, Eric Gardner complains about the “[reduction of] early black literature to the oral and vernacular – a limiting, often unacknowledged critical synecdoche” (229). Applying Gardner’s critique to *The Liberator* proves that stylistically

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<sup>2</sup> Gardner, Eric. “Remembered (Black) Readers: Subscribers to the *Christian Recorder*, 1864-1865.” *American Literary History*, vol. 23, no. 2, summer 2011, pp. 229-59.

well-written letters by African American subscribers contribute to refuting the perception that colored *Liberator* sympathizers were principally illiterate. Especially African American women writers are highly respected and acknowledged in *The Liberator* as this editorial note proves:

Our word for it, there are few young white ladies who can prepare an essay for the press with more accuracy in regard to orthography and punctuation, or written in a more beautiful hand, than the following [article], by a young colored lady. We beg for other favors. (2.30 D2)

The direct involvement of the readership as customers is crucial when considering Philpotts' concept of the bureaucratic editorship, which rather looks at the institutional habitus of the respective publication. Here, Garrison's oratorical genius, which does not only attract huge crowds to antislavery events to hear him speak but also enables him to convey the same emotional impact through written criticism in a print medium, is pushed to the background here, however, as it rather defines his personal habitus. Instead, the newspaper's heteronomy in the form of the editor's "professional, administrative, and commercial competences" (Philpotts, "Periodical Editor" 53) comes to the fore. Although Garrison remains editor-in-chief throughout *The Liberator's* entire publication period, his collaborative partners are exchanged several times; still, it is important to Garrison that all of them originate from New England due to it being the cradle of Garrison's own journalistic as well as editorial careers. Thus, also in light of his newspaper being partially banned in the United States, i.e. in the Southern States, the editor manifests his protest against his opponents first of all by his deliberate choice of collaborators, who I referred to above.

Moreover, Philpotts argues that "the bureaucratic mode is much more likely to ensure continuity and reproduction of the editorial role between successive post-holders" ("Periodical Editor" 53). This fact does not apply to Garrison himself, given that he holds the post of chief editor throughout *The Liberator's* entire publication period. Considering his co-publishers, however, the phenomenon Philpotts outlines does exist. Hence, since both Garrison's life and journalistic career began in Newburyport, Massachusetts, the editor employs as his first co-publisher and printer Isaac Knapp, who comes from Garrison's place of origin as well. As co-founder of the New England Anti-Slavery Society together with Garrison and also having published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano in America* (1837), Knapp's contribution to *The Liberator* (1831-39) was crucial for Garrison's abolitionist mission. Then, after briefly collaborating with the Vermont abolitionist Oliver Johnson as his general agent and printer (1839-41), Garrison has Robert F. Wallcut

take over the position as co-publisher and general agent until the end of *The Liberator's* era (1847-65). As a Massachusetts clergyman, Wallcut turns out to be a significant contributor to *The Liberator* too, since he supports the newspaper's and the editor's religious orientation.

Yet, I disagree with Philpotts regarding his claim that the enormous personal impact of an editor on his journal results in the journal's brief lifespan regarding the thirty-five-year long publication period (January 1831 to December 1865) of *The Liberator*. This contrasts the fact that a nineteenth-century antebellum newspaper had an average lifespan of about four years (qtd. in Gardner 236). I attempt to explain the *Liberator's* surprisingly long publication period by applying what Philpotts calls "periodical codes." Here, I focus on the economic code, which elaborates on the newspaper's financial issues and entrepreneurial side. Despite the fact that *The Liberator*, which had been published on a weekly basis, had a scarce readership of merely 3,000, the paper, however, manages to survive until the end of the Civil War in 1865, when Garrison eventually voluntarily decides to discontinue publishing *The Liberator*<sup>3</sup>. In his general explanation of the economic code's function, Philpotts speaks of the possibility that a newspaper can be "oriented towards subsidy, rather than financial profit" (Philpotts, "Thick Journal" 2). Applying his thought on *The Liberator* shows that this abolitionist publication, which enjoys significant popularity in the Northern States as well as overseas on the British Isles and Ireland (numerous letters to the editor from Irish abolitionists were published in *The Liberator*) depends or rather relies on the loyalty of its readership and contributors as benefactors, who ensure its mere survival rather than promoting the editor's wealth. Most importantly, the editor emphasizes that credit for *The Liberator's* long survival and success over thirty-five years must not be entirely entitled to him, but to his loyal readership and further contributors as well.

As there are no subscribers in the beginning, communication with his benefactors proves to be essential means for continuing his business. Therefore, the dialogue with his readership turns out to be as essential as his careful choice of assistants. "[T]he weekly method of communicating with each other" (Garrison, *Liberator* 35.52 C2) is Garrison's primary intention. In this respect, Philpotts argues that a newspaper's economic success can be attributed to its symbolic nature. Therefore, to emphasize that his "aim was symbolic, rather than economic profit" (Philpotts, "Thick Journal" 3), the editor refrains from

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<sup>3</sup> In his "Valedictory" (issue 35.52) he justifies the sudden discontinuation by arguing that "As I commenced [*The Liberator's*] publication without asking leave of any one (sic), so I claim to be competent to decide when it may fitly close its career" (C2). Thus, it is not financial issues that force the editor to stop his newspaper's publication, but his conviction that he satisfactorily fulfilled his role as an abolitionist.

attempting to bind his readership to him through pamphlets which would advertize *The Liberator*, although he is convinced that “Had I done so, no doubt its subscription list might have been much enlarged” (35.52 C2). Instead, he has abolitionist speakers distribute *The Liberator* during their tours in the Northern States. To ensure a bilateral communication, reader response in the form of letters to the editor, both by influential, powerful authorities as well as by the common man, play a crucial role.

Garrison, apart from relying on the moral attachment his readers felt for the editor’s cause of abolition, took precautions nevertheless to ensure long-term loyalty of his readers as well as financial security that would keep his business from bankruptcy. In general, readers are supposed to subscribe to the paper in order to obtain issues and are asked to pay an annual fee of \$2 to \$3.50 in advance. At the top of each *Liberator* issue, a terms-and-conditions section informs the reader on fees and subscription policies. Starting at \$2 per year (issue 1.1 – 7.49), the fee increases in late 1837 to \$2.50 per year (issue 7.50 – 32.52). The only drastic increase in a relatively short period occurs during the Civil War in 1863 up to \$3 per year (issue 33.1 – 34.53); in its final year – 1865 – the fee reaches \$3.50 (issue 35.1 – 35.52). The price increase can be explained with regard to the first global economic crisis of 1857, which had a huge impact on the U.S. American economy due to its exploitation of slave labor – an economic main branch. As the crisis has a severer impact on Northern economy, Garrison is forced to increase *The Liberator*’s fees to remain competitive on the newspaper market. Additionally, readers can purchase space in an issue for advertisements – the fee ranging between 75 cents to \$1.50, depending on their size<sup>4</sup>.

Considering how the editor ensures financial security, for example by selling space in each issue for readers’ contributions (primarily in the form of advertisements), the following chapter elaborates on *The Liberator*’s composition with regard to how contributions – whether textual or visual – are typeset.

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<sup>4</sup> See terms-and-conditions section of *The Liberator*. The fees vary between 75 cents to \$1 from 1835 to 1864 (issue 5.1 – 34.53); advertisements in 1865 require \$1.50 (issue 35.1 – 35.52).



### 3. Critical Portrayal of Abolitionist Outrage Through Textual and Illustrative Composition

As the demanding calls for abolition grew continuously louder during the antebellum decades, Garrison answers by also reflecting the stronger presence of antislavery voices in the form of gradually increasing the content of each issue from four to six columns per page. The more columns were added, the more Garrison condensed the text by consistently keeping the four-page format with a page size of about 61-64 cm in length and about 39-43 cm in width<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, the font gets smaller and the line spacing is reduced.

I apply here what Philpotts calls the “compositional code” to show that, despite several alterations in its visual form, *The Liberator*’s basic compositional pattern remains consistent in terms of the textual layout throughout the entire thirty-five-year publication period. To begin with an analysis of the textual layout, the editor persuades his subscriber to read more than the title page of an issue by proficiently connecting all thematic sections. All of these sections deal with slavery, abolition, and emancipation (of woman and the (unfree) African American); they differ in so far as their rhetoric moves from harsh political criticism to artistic poetic criticism, thus having the newspaper cover various literary genres. Mark Arkin aptly describes the editor’s abolitionist rhetorical style as “vivid, sentimental, aggressive, and, at times, overwhelmingly physical” (76). Thus, Garrison gives each of his supporters the opportunity to express themselves in a literary way they feel most comfortable with; and considering that the editor reserves a part for poetry and fiction in each issue indicates that he attaches great importance to the power of language.

In this respect, the first page of each issue deals with current politics on major legal decisions and political developments. From issue 4.2 (January 11, 1834) onward, the first page is even subtitled “Refuge of Oppression.” On page two, *The Liberator* addresses the issue of slavery and abolition in the local context of Boston including letters, special editorial announcements (indicated with a hand extending its index finger ), as well as selections from abolitionist institutions or organizations, such as “From the National Anti-Slavery Standard. To the Abolitionists” (issue 10.25). Page three (formerly entitled “Journal of the Times,” issue 1.1 to 9.1) also covers local news from Boston, but primarily focuses on foreign and domestic news which are published among political addresses, proclamations on anti-

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<sup>5</sup> See *American Antiquarian Society*, [www.catalog.mwa.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=410&recount=10&recPointer=5&bibId=3662](http://www.catalog.mwa.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?searchId=410&recount=10&recPointer=5&bibId=3662) and *Massachusetts Historical Society*, [www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item\\_id=3299&pid=3](http://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=3299&pid=3).

slavery and emancipatory conventions, as well as letters from abroad, i.e. often publications from the British Isles and Ireland regarding Garrison's ties to abolitionists overseas. Then, the final part, page four, is consistently reserved for poetry and forms of human behavior. With few exceptions, each initial column of page four is filled with poetry, either subtitled with "Literary" (issue 1.1 to 9.52) or "Poetry" (issue 10.1 to 35.52). Followed by a "Miscellaneous" section, poetry is succeeded by discussions or elaborations on common human behaviors such as emotions or everyday incidents, such as drunkenness, as well as a part dedicated to woman's cause. A succeeding moral section deals with religion, given that the devout editor himself intends to provide his readers with spiritual strength in addition to his social criticism in terms of slavery. The final column, then, is reserved for advertisements, usually for doctors, dentists, medicine, and clothes.

To connect the textual content as well as the abolitionist or, in general, emancipatory topics Garrison's publication deals with to the visual layout of *The Liberator*, the composition of said advertisements is significant with regard to the lack of illustrations in this newspaper. As "established quality . . . is the defining feature also of the compositional codes (textual, visual, and design)" (Philpotts, "Thick Journal" 3), the lack of any kind of illustrative material has especially the few advertisements stand out. As illustrated below, medical professions and clothes are advertized in particular (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2):



Fig. 1: Advertisement for a dentist. Published in issue 8.44 (November 2, 1838).



Fig. 2: Advertisement for clothes. Published in issue 33.01 (January 2, 1863).

Even more significant in terms of illustrations, however, volume 2 (published in 1832) has the densest concentration of illustrations. In the following, I elaborate on four separate

illustrations whose interconnection Garrison stresses in *The Liberator's* illustrated masthead (see Fig. 7, p. 14) which embellishes the newspaper's cover page for fifteen years, i.e. more than twice as long as any other previous masthead illustration<sup>6</sup>. Due to the fact that Garrison hardly permits any illustrations in *The Liberator*, which is due to the fact that he trusts in the power of language rather than visualized protest, those few which appear are the more significant. On the one hand, visualizing real-life situations is to confront the readership with the inhumane practices their Constitution legally permits (in Garrison's opinion a document in favor of the practice of slavery, a copy of which he publicly burned on Independence Day in 1854). On the other hand, each illustration conveys the editor's vision of an emancipated future for both the slave and woman. Thus, I focus on volume 2 as the only one among a total of thirty-five volumes that consistently captions specific subsections with illustrations. Throughout volume 2, at least two of these four different illustrations are printed in each issue. While the subsections "Ladies' Department" and "Juvenile Department" are always captioned with the same image, the section on "Slavery Record" switches between a whipping scene and an illustration of the horrendous Middle Passage (see Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 below) to stress that an African's misery does not begin by entering the New World but once he is taken captive and degraded from a human being to cargo that is treated worse than cattle.



Fig. 3: Published throughout 1832 in the section "Slavery Record," this illustration refers to slave transportation via the Middle Passage. First appearance in issue 2.6 (February 11, 1832).



Fig. 4: Like Fig. 3 published throughout 1832 in the section "Slavery Record," the illustration shows a white slaveholder whipping a slave family. First appearance in issue 2.1 (January 7, 1832).

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout *The Liberator's* era, the masthead of this newspaper was revised three times. From issue 1.1 (January 1, 1831) up to issue 1.16 (April 16, 1831), the masthead merely consisted of the newspaper's title. The first illustration of a slave auction was added in issue 1.17 (April 23, 1831) and replaced by an illustration that added to the auction scene a section portraying slave labor along with emancipatory allusions (published from issue 8.9 up to issue 20.21, i.e. March 2, 1838 to May 24, 1850). On May 31, 1850, the last revision of the masthead was first published (issue 20.22), which lasted until the final *Liberator* issue 35.52 (December 29, 1865) showing the eventual leap for freedom of all African Americans in bondage (see Fig. 7, page 14).

To further elaborate on the conditions of slaves' transportation via the Middle Passage, Fig. 3 confronts the reader with an outrageous but common situation on board a slave ship. The illustration shows the anterior half of a slave ship, where African slaves appear to revolt against their white oppressors, who are outnumbered. Nevertheless depicted as the dominant force with swords as weapons, they overthrow the revolt by casting the African rebels overboard. Two of them are depicted in the sea, while a third one is dangling on the verge of the railing in the grip of a white trader. Furthermore, a fourth rebel is defeated in the background. Regarding the two slaves in the sea, Fig. 3 additionally criticizes that captives knowingly commit suicide by jumping overboard (if having the chance) to escape the ship's misanthropic and sanitary hell.

As the example of Fig. 3 demonstrates, whenever Garrison works with illustrations in his abolitionist function, he presents life as it is – i.e. quite in the sense of literary Realism; I do not say that *The Liberator* is a newspaper of Realism though – in order to convey his social criticism as directly as possible. Here, the misery of an African or African American slave resulting from the white man's oppressive rule always dominates the picture's center.

In this respect, Fig. 4 shows a common whipping scene witnessed by a large group of slaves in the background. A palm tree spatially separates the group from the center, which depicts a slave family: a couple holds each other in their arms, wearing nothing but a white cloth wrapped around their waists, while their toddler desperately clasps his mother's cloth. Behind them a white slave holder, who emphasizes his authoritative position over his slaves by swinging a whip at the slave family, is presented in the same colors as the slaves – with the difference that he wears fine clothes, while the slaves are scarcely covered with rags and their upper bodies are entirely exposed. To further criticize the attitude of whites towards African Americans, the white house behind the slaveholder both represents the mansion of the white man as well as the slave quarters, both of which are subject to white rule.

Regarding the fact that Garrison fiercely holds on to his devout attitude, he also reflects it in Fig. 4 by dividing the illustration into an earthly and a spiritual sphere. Apart from the whipping at the earthly level, the clash of supernatural, spiritual forces is transferred to a combat between God and Satan. Taking up about the entire upper half of Fig. 4, the forms of the two clouds resemble, on the left side, a reptile-like creature, whose contours mainly consist of the slaveholder's whip, and, on the right side, a humanly shaped figure with its head slightly raised above the satanic creature and thereby demonstrating God's omnipotence, even over Satan and evil forces in general. In this respect, the earthly level is generally kept in dark

shades. However, the mountain ridge in the background is also dark at its bottom but lightens at its peaks to emphasize that it is God eventually who judges mankind and redeems the slave.

The following illustrations Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 go along with the pattern which Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 already indicate: Garrison does not merely present African American slaves in the center of each picture, but the suffering of the human race, the human body, the human soul.



Fig. 5: In volume 2 (1832), the kneeling slave occasionally captions the section “Ladies’ Department.” First appearance in issue 2.1 (January 7, 1832).



Fig. 6: Throughout volume 2, this slave auction captions the “Juvenile Department.” First appearance in issue 2.1 (January 7, 1832).

Captioning the “Ladies’ Department” with a kneeling, begging slave woman, who exclaims “Am I not a Woman and a Sister”<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 5), Garrison intensifies the emotional, sentimental impact his newspaper has on his reader. The kneeling slave is a reappearing motif that constantly attaches an emotional notion to the respective depicted scene of which it is part by appealing especially to the white reader to become aware of the fact that African Americans, no matter whether that person is considered free or not, are as much human as whites. Although, I go as far as to claim that Garrison intends to present the African American as the human being capable of emotional sensitivity, while whites are continuously presented in an oppressing, subduing, emotionless position. In this respect, the textual content of the “Ladies’ Department” conveys far more emotion in the form of sentimentalism than any other section of *The Liberator*. When being published for the first time (issue 2.1), Fig. 5 was captioned with an account of the following incident:

This poor woman was much distressed at my inquiries, and it was with difficulty that I prevailed on her to accept some little relief. I was obliged to tell her repeatedly, but perhaps without convincing her, that all white people were not like those who had

<sup>7</sup> The female slave captioning *The Liberator*’s “Ladies’ Department” strongly resembles the original antislavery emblem of the kneeling, praying slave by Josiah Wedgwood, entitled “Am I Not a Man and a Brother” (1787).

treated her with so much barbarity; and that the greater part of them detested such horrid cruelty. ‘*Why then,*’ she inquired with much earnestness, bursting into tears, ‘*why then do they not prevent it?*’ (D2; orig. emphasis)

Here, I agree with William M. Wiecek, who claims that “some men compelled other men to behave in ways ordained by those who controlled the instruments of force” (231). This perspective implies that by acting against the legal practice of slavery in the form of abolition, supporters of the abolitionists’ cause confute their government. Consequently, opponents of slavery hide their actual attitude and, thereby, silence several abolitionist voices, though probably unknowingly.

To come back to Philpotts at this point, applying his compositional code to *The Liberator* shows that this newspaper is not equipped with random illustrations once and again that are in any way connected to abolitionist topics, but they affect the reader in a specific emotional way, depending on the section in which they are printed. While the political section on page one does not include any illustration, Garrison intends to shape a certain emotional path his reader is supposed to experience. From first of all putting the reader in a state of outrage regarding the political treatment of slavery, especially the illustrations in volume 2 then attach a sentimental notion to the issue of slavery. Hence, they critically address (primarily) white readers by forcing them to imagine a life in horrendous bondage instead of freedom, a life as cattle instead of a human, a life where one’s family members including children are sold away. Eventually, the literary section completes the metamorphosis of the reader to a potential future abolitionist by demonstrating how *Liberator* contributors seek refuge in the literary arts in hope of finding a way to cope with the paradox of a nation hosting unfreedom while promoting the pursuit of happiness.

Here, the portrayal of a slave auction as the captioning illustration for the “Juvenile Department” additionally appeals to Christian values. Apart from adult white potential customers, Fig. 6 portrays a black and a white child. As the black slave child is exposed on a white table, the free white child, from its position on the ground, is forced to look up at the slave, a constellation which demands a higher social position for the emancipated slave. Furthermore, the slave child is almost on eye level with the white auctioneer, who is about to separate a slave family. While the two white adults in the background hardly pay any attention to the emotional impact the scene goes along with, a white youth reacts by reaching for the slave child’s parent to arrange that they are sold together. When first printed in issue 2.1, Fig. 6 is captioned with a rhetorical question directed to a Christian reader, demanding

‘Canst thou, and honor’d with a Christian’s name,  
 Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame;  
 Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead  
 Expedience as a warrant for the deed?’ (C2)

By appealing to Christian values, the contributor of this stanza simultaneously demands abolition, lauds women as crucial members of society, and stresses the importance of a morally well-educated next generation. Eventually, Garrison strongly appeals to his young readers’ morale, implying that the youngest generation is to be entrusted with shaping an emancipated future for the African American.

All these four illustrations eventually reappear in *The Liberator*’s masthead printed in issue 20.22 up to the very last issue 35.52 of December 29, 1865 (see Fig. 7). While every single illustration works as a separate snapshot in time, i.e. the depiction of critical but nevertheless typical scenes in the slave states, Fig. 7 combines them to create a vision of the future which allows successful revolutions to eventually liberate the African American.

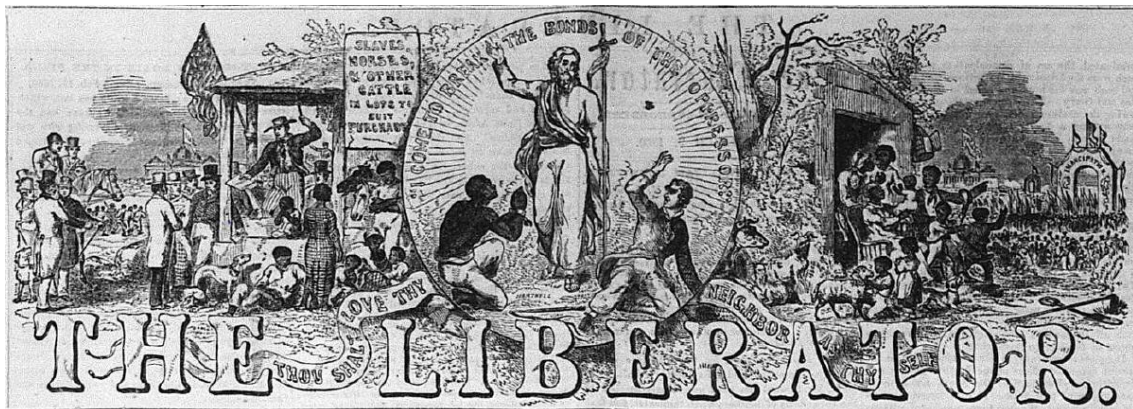


Fig. 7: Masthead of *The Liberator*, published from 1850 (issue 20.22) to 1865 (issue 35.52).

The whipping scene portrayed in Fig. 4, for example, reappears in the bottom right corner of Fig. 7. A wooden pole, to which slaves had been tied for whippings, symbolically buries slaves’ shackles. Being first published in light of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, this revised masthead clarifies that “Garrison . . . rejected not only war but the entire apparatus that sustained governments in power” (Wiecek 232). To stress his discontent with regard to the tightening of the slavery laws, the editor provocatively portrays the hidden paths of the Underground Railroad. That this secret passageway to freedom exists was common knowledge; therefore, it was the more frustrating for proslavery parties to be kept in the dark in terms of these passages’ whereabouts. Moreover, in this context the masthead illustration refers to the portrayal of the Middle Passage (Fig. 3) again. While the left section of Fig. 7 represents the Southern slave states from which masses of slaves attempt to flee to the

Northern States (or Canada after the ratification of the Fugitive Slave Law), which are represented in the right section by a gate engraved with the word “Emancipation.” So, the suicidal refuge into the sea slaves sought in Fig. 3, now turns into a path to refuge in life in the form of the Underground Railroad.

To take up Wiecek’s thought again that Garrison rejects war (232), it is significant to note the lack of African American violence. Whenever illustrations in *The Liberator* display violence, it is always performed by whites, while African Americans mostly stay passive by “enduring” it. Fig. 7 reflects these thoughts as well. Instead of rebelling in masses against their white oppressors, African Americans peacefully escape in secret. In this respect, the illustration stresses the difference which characterizes the South and North respectively. Hence, the only exemplar of a U.S. flag Garrison ever printed in *The Liberator* is portrayed in his final revision of the masthead (Fig. 7). Furthermore, this flag waves in the illustration’s left half, which represents the Southern States. Consequently, the editor “emphasize[s] the possibility that the United States’ policies confirmed it as a doomed oppressor rather than a chosen nation guaranteed redemption” (Fagan 107), thus stressing his conviction that the Constitution is a proslavery document. Here, Fig. 6 reappears as a slave auction beneath said U.S. flag, the nation’s emblem of emancipation considering its dissolution from England, thereby also providing the flag with a satirical, sarcastic notion in terms of personal liberty.

To stress, thus, that governmental power has to be overruled by a force stronger than humans, Fig. 7 attaches religious significance to the scenes it portrays. Reappearing in the badge-like center of Fig. 7, the praying slave, who resembles both the slave woman in Fig. 5 and Wedgwood’s original antislavery emblem, implies that he eventually puts his hope in a spiritual force redeeming the African American race, while next to him a white slaveholder crouches on the ground in a self-protective manner fearing the wrath of God. Both wrath towards the slaveholder as well as empathy towards the slave are embodied by the Jesus figure standing between them. That he is supposed to redeem the slave is emphasized with the proclamation “I come to break the bonds of the oppressor,” which is included in the illustration. *The Liberator*’s eventual advice for the white slavery supporter is “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Fig. 7), as the banner beneath this scene says, which serves as an indirect address to both the Union and the Confederacy to settle their differences by abolishing slavery.



#### 4. Conclusion

Overall, the interplay between Garrison and his *Liberator*, i.e. the personal and the institutional habitus or the charismatic and the bureaucratic editorship, vividly portrays the abolitionist mission both of them pursue. Thus, *The Liberator* serves as a place where the editor emphasizes his strong confidence in the abolition of slavery, which is why he especially considers contributions of his African American readership. Reflecting his outrageous attitude towards society, his provocative verbal style provides his newspaper its own charisma by reflecting part of the editor's character. Here, Foucault's author function lets the readership play a significant role in his publication, as the multiplicity of African American and white abolitionist authors allows presenting numerous voices, all fighting for the same cause.

Here, Garrison's "professional, administrative, and commercial competences" (Philpotts, "Periodical Editor" 53) result in *The Liberator* surviving more than three decades, while the average publication period of an antebellum newspaper was about four years only. In this respect, what Philpotts terms "economic" code, describes the relation between the newspaper and its financial organization. For rather being of a symbolic nature, *The Liberator* owes its above-average existence to the fact that its editor prefers to rely on regular subsidies instead of gaining material wealth, which is also reflected in the way the publication is financed apart from subsidies, namely primarily with subscriptions and advertisements.

In this context, the compositional code in combination with the few illustrations in *The Liberator* outlines that the scarce visual material focuses on specific real-life situations, which always illustrate the oppression of African Americans in its center. While one illustration addresses the Middle Passage with regard to the suicide attempts among slaves, the depiction of a slave whipping in a further picture transfers the racial conflict between human races to a spiritual level, which portrays God as the eventual redeemer. Here, the portrayal of a slave woman who resembles Josiah Wedgwood's emblem of a praying slave attaches more sentimentalism to the newspaper's textual content. For the emotional path, which the reader is supposed to experience, conveys political outrage in terms of abolition and the slavery issue as well as empathy regarding African Americans' degraded social position. To stress the importance of the latter issue, an illustration of a slave auction appeals to Christian values and, thus, increases *The Liberator's* emotional impact on its reader as it especially addresses the young as those who shape an emancipated future. Combining all of these illustrations in *The Liberator's* masthead first of all questions the value of freedom, for example by depicting a slave auction beneath a U.S. flag as an emblem of emancipation. Here, both the lack of

African American violence towards whites and African Americans' attachment to the Christian religion furthermore emphasize that in order to abolish abolition, a spiritual force needs to show wrath towards whites and empathy towards African Americans to eventually redeem the slave.

As my work mainly focuses on the application of the compositional code in terms of the illustrations by rather looking at their actual composition instead of their creational process, further research would indicate whether Garrison composed these illustrations printed in *The Liberator* by himself or whether they are contributions from abolitionist benefactors. Nevertheless, the illustrative material of *The Liberator* satisfies both the editor's as well as his readership's devoted attitudes towards their abolitionist cause by reflecting a charisma that is popular among antislavery sympathizers and ensures a bureaucratic environment which allows an antislavery newspaper to flourish despite few readers and numerous opponents.

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