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Jay D. Miller

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John Woolman

Jay David Miller

Introduction

John Woolman (b. 1720–d. 1772), a Quaker shopkeeper, tailor, and farmer from West Jersey, traveled extensively throughout colonial America as an itinerant minister and produced writings on the most important social problems of the era. Woolman was part of a group of ministers working for increased discipline and broad reform among Friends. He cared deeply about the right conduct and purity of Quaker meetings for worship, and these concerns informed his social thought, as did his various livelihoods. His experience selling goods from his store and the produce of his farm made him increasingly aware of how the transatlantic economy depended on enslaved labor, and in his early twenties he began to think seriously about enslavement as an evil with which Quakers needed to reckon. Witnessing plantation slavery on a journey to Virginia and North Carolina in 1746 reinforced Woolman's concerns and inspired his first antislavery essay, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754). Woolman began composing a journal recounting his life for the moral and spiritual edification of Friends in 1756, during the violence of the Seven Years' War. This imperial conflict radicalized many Quakers in colonial America, as Friends took a firmer stance against war, helped to negotiate on behalf of Indigenous people, and approved stricter measures against coreligionists who practiced enslavement. This trend can be seen in Woolman's second antislavery essay, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes . . . Part Second* (1762), in which he took a stronger position against enslavement by focusing on the violence of the African slave trade. In the last decade of his life, Woolman would write about a growing range of social issues. His 1763 journey to the Native settlement of Wyalusing to visit the Munsee leader Papunhank made clear to him the plight of Indigenous peoples dispossessed from their land. As Woolman focused less on the business of storekeeping and more on farming, he also wrote against the oppression of tenant laborers by wealthy landowners. His last essay published during his lifetime, *Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind* (1770), is a theological reflection on social ills of wealth. Woolman died while traveling in ministry among Quakers in England, and his journal was published posthumously as part of *The Works of John Woolman* (1774). No other colonial American writer wrote with such clarity and theological conviction about the injustices of the transatlantic economy and the need for reforms to address them.

General Overviews

Woolman's life and writings have long attracted interest, but until recently it has been common for even scholarly treatments to have a hagiographic tone. An example of an approach that combines admiration for Woolman with historical research is Slaughter 2008. The best general overview of Woolman and the development of his thought is Plank 2012, which foregrounds the importance of both British imperial and Quaker contexts. While Woolman is perhaps best-remembered for his writing on social issues, Kershner 2018 offers a crucial and comprehensive account of the theological underpinnings of this work, and Werge 1984 also makes suggestive observations in this area. Finally, Heller 2003 collects essays on a variety of topics related to Woolman from an interdisciplinary group of scholars.

Heller, Mike, ed. *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*. Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Press, 2003.

Collection of twenty essays from disciplinary perspectives such as economics, English, peace studies, religious studies, and sociology, which presents a multifaceted picture of Woolman. It is divided topically, focusing on Woolman's spirituality, the contexts of his work, his social vision, and the contributions of some prominent Woolman scholars. While the essays are academic, the collection invites contributors to reflect on how the study of Woolman has affected them personally.

Kershner, John. *John Woolman and the Government of Christ: A Colonial Quaker's Vision for the British Atlantic World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Innovative theological overview that is unique in Woolman studies. Argues that Woolman's theology is an underappreciated driver of his alternative vision for life in the British Atlantic world. Building on careful study of Woolman's corpus, emphasizes that his theology was in continuity with the apocalyptic focus of early Friends, calling into question the characterization of 18th-century Quakerism as quietist.

Plank, Geoffrey. *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Seeks to undo the image of Woolman as a singular, saint-like figure by drawing on detailed archival research and carefully tracking the development of Woolman's ideas and concerns over the course of his life. Organized into loosely chronological thematic chapters, shows how Woolman was embedded in both the culture and institutions of Quakerism and the politics of the British Empire.

Slaughter, Thomas P. *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.

Biography written for a general audience that focuses on Woolman as a social activist and moral exemplar. While a work of history, sometimes constructs imaginative speculations on Woolman's life, and dedicates significant space to analyzing the dreams reported in the *Journal*.

Werge, Thomas. "John Woolman." In *American Colonial Writers, 1735–1781*. Edited by Emory Elliott, 274–290. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 31. Detroit: Gale Research, 1984.

Gives an excellent brief overview of Woolman's life and writings. Does an especially good job situating its subject in the broader contexts of Christian spirituality and theology.

Primary Texts

The first and most significant essays Woolman wrote advanced antislavery arguments at a time when Quakers were beginning to take stronger public stances against enslavement and the slave trade. Woolman would build on his critique of the exploitation of enslaved labor in other essays published near the end of his life, addressing a wide range of issues in colonial America, including education, poverty, trade, and Quakerism. Significant posthumous publications were also issued after Woolman's death in 1772. These include, most prominently, the *Journal*, which would become Woolman's most enduring work, and the wide-ranging essay *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*. Given the 18th-century Quaker practice of exerting extensive oversight in preparing official publications, Woolman's writing was subject to editing and alteration during his lifetime and after. For contemporary scholars, Phillips P. Moulton's edition of the *Journal* and several major essays is the standard source for Woolman's key writings, which can be supplemented by Amelia Mott Gummere's earlier edition that includes a wider selection of essays, including some that were previously unpublished. However, due to the Moulton's selectivity, Gummere's editorial errors, and the present lack of a comprehensive critical edition, scholars should consult Woolman's original publications when possible. Fortunately, all of the contemporary and posthumous publications listed in this section can be accessed as PDF scans in online databases such as Readex's *Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639–1800* and Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, which are available as subscriptions through many academic libraries.

Contemporary and Posthumous Publications

While Woolman began writing his first antislavery essay in 1746 after a visit to several southern colonies, it was almost a decade before it was published. Committed to working within the context of Quaker institutions, Woolman waited to offer his essay for review until the composition of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Overseers of the Press committee changed to include more antislavery Friends. Once this occurred in the early 1750s, it became possible for Woolman 1754 to be printed as Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's first official antislavery

publication. A second antislavery essay, Woolman 1762, would also be approved by the Overseers of the Press, although in this case the printing was paid for by Woolman himself, as he thought his argument would receive wider circulation this way. After publishing his antislavery essays, Woolman turned to broader topics. Woolman 1768 and Woolman 1770 discussed education, the exploitation of labor, and simple living, among other things. The Overseers of the Press approved both essays, although a section from one of the texts, "Serious Considerations on Trade," was not published until it appeared in Gummere 1922 (cited under Collected Writings). While the occasion for Woolman's essays was often a particular social issue, he always returned to more general theological convictions about the need for Christian integrity, which is the primary concern of Woolman 1772, a letter to his fellow Quakers that was the last text printed during his lifetime. Following his death in England, several posthumous works soon appeared. Woolman 1773a and Woolman 1773b draw from writings Woolman composed during his last months traveling across the Atlantic and in England, addressing topics ranging from the lives of sailors to the right conduct of meetings for worship. Woolman 1774 collected all the writings published in Woolman's lifetime and posthumously up to that point, and most significantly included the first printing of Woolman's *Journal*, which reflected on the entirety of his life experience in hopes of offering an edifying spiritual example to other Quakers. His final posthumous publication to appear in the 18th century was Woolman 1793, which presented a heavily edited version of a manuscript Woolman had begun in the 1760s at the end of the Seven Years' War, which broadly reflected on many of his social concerns.

Woolman, John. *Some Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination*. Philadelphia: J. Chattin, 1754.

Woolman's first and most frequently studied antislavery essay makes a measured but clear argument against the enslavement of Africans. Rebuts the position that Africans are socially and morally inferior to Europeans, and draws on many biblical injunctions against oppression that is caused by greed. Ultimately, argues that slaveholding and Christianity are incompatible. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity, of Every Denomination. Part Second*. Philadelphia: B. Franklin & D. Hall, 1762.

Woolman's second antislavery essay is more forceful than the first, and expands the scope of its analysis from North America to West Africa. In order to condemn not just slaveholding but the transatlantic slave trade itself, draws on both texts from the Bible and contemporary travel narratives in order to convey the injustice of enslavement. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *Considerations on Pure Wisdom, and Human Policy; on Labour; on Schools; and on the Right Use of the Lord's Outward Gifts*. Philadelphia: D. Hall & W. Sellers, 1768.

Consists of four brief essays that all examine how the pursuit of wealth and recognition distorts Christian witness and leads to the oppression of others. Argues that Christians can be content with possessing little because of God's provision, and that those who seek to maintain great estates do so by creating too much labor for others. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind; and How It Is to Be Maintained*. Philadelphia: J. Crunkshank, 1770.

Describing how extensive overseas trade creates inequality in society, points to Christ's humility and love as an example of solidarity with the poor. Following this example would lead to a limitation of trading, which Woolman believes has brought signs from God about impending judgement on colonial America. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends*. Burlington, NJ: Isaac Collins, 1772.

Urges fellow Quakers to conduct themselves with integrity lest they damage the witness of the church and set a bad example for others. Points out how others have suffered for their faith before, and that contemporary Quakers must not betray this legacy. Advocates that

Friends practice inward stillness and self-examination in order to live more pure lives. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *An Extract from John Woolman's Journal in Manuscript, Concerning the Ministry*. London, 1773a.

Short work, excerpted from a Woolman manuscript received by London Yearly Meeting after Woolman's death in England, that addresses the nature of vocal ministry in meetings for worship, emphasizing the need for reliance on God. The complex history of this text is discussed by Plank 2007 (cited under Criticism) and Kershner 2013 (under Quaker Manuscript and Print Culture). Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online by subscription.

Woolman, John. *Serious Considerations on Various Subjects of Importance: With Some of His Dying Expressions*. London: M. Hinde, 1773b.

Posthumous publication that collects Woolman 1768, Woolman 1770, and Woolman 1772 with several others short pieces, and an account of Woolman's dying words. The short pieces are titled "On Loving Our Neighbours as Ourselves," "On a Sailor's Life," and "On Silent Worship," and their complex textual history is discussed in Kershner 2013 (cited under Quaker Manuscript and Print Culture). While touching on separate topics, each essay reprises themes familiar in Woolman's work. Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online by subscription.

Woolman, John. *The Works of John Woolman: In Two Parts*. Philadelphia: J. Crukshank, 1774.

Posthumous comprehensive edition of Woolman's writing that included the first published version of *A Journal of the Life, Gospel Labours, and Christian Experiences of that Faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, John Woolman*. In it Woolman recounts his spiritual experiences and developing social concerns from his childhood to his last days traveling in England. Also included here are the essays published by Woolman during his lifetime, along with his other posthumous publications to date. Available through Early American Imprints, Series I by subscription.

Woolman, John. *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*. Dublin: T.M. Bates, 1793.

Summation of Woolman's thought. In a series of meditations divided into chapters, unfolds a comprehensive critique of the interconnected forms of oppression created by the desire for wealth. Beginning with concerns about the exploitation of tenant labor by landowners, essay broadens to address the enslavement of Africans and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Looks to the example of Christ as an antidote to the suffering caused by greed. Available from Eighteenth Century Collections Online by subscription.

Collected Writings

No comprehensive scholarly edition of Woolman's writings exists. A complex collection of manuscripts and substantially edited publications has made establishing authoritative versions of Woolman's writings a challenging task. Multiple drafts of the *Journal* are extant, and different editors have treated different drafts as the final version. Moulton 1971 contains the most recent, thorough, and reliable editorial treatment of the *Journal*, along with Woolman's antislavery essays and *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich*, which is alternatively titled *A Plea for the Poor*. Furthermore, Moulton also provides clear discussions of his methods, Woolman's extant manuscripts, and the challenges of editing them. Gummere 1922 remains useful primarily for its publication of a wider selection of Woolman's writings, including previously unpublished pieces. Proud 2010 is a more recent edition that gives a good overview of Woolman's manuscripts, short texts, and ephemera. Readex's Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639–1800 and Gale's Eighteenth Century Collections Online are the best online databases for accessing PDF scans of Woolman's original publications, although image quality varies.

Based on the bibliographic work of Charles Evans and originally published by Readex as a microform set, this digitized edition contains nearly every book, pamphlet, and broadside published in America from 1639 to 1800. It provides access to Woolman's Philadelphia area publications. Subscription required.

Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

Digitization by Gale of 18th-century works from the bibliography known as the *English Short-title Catalogue* that contains works printed in Britain, Ireland, territories under British colonial rule, and the United States, among other things. It provides access to Woolman's Dublin, London, and Philadelphia publications. Subscription required.

Gummere, Amelia Mott, ed. *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*. New York: MacMillan, 1922.

Prints essays not included in Moulton's edition, such as *Considerations on Pure Wisdom* and *Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind*. Also prints the previously unpublished short pieces "Serious Consideration on Trade" and "Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it May be Promoted." While it is useful to have these pieces in print, Kershner 2013 (under Quaker Manuscript and Print Culture) argues that their arrangement by Gummere is not true to Woolman's intentions.

Moulton, Phillips P., ed. *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

The standard edition of Woolman's most important writings and the best starting place for anyone wanting to study his primary texts. Contains thorough scholarly apparatus, including an introduction, discussion of methods, and multiple appendices.

Proud, James, ed. *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*. San Francisco: Inner Light Books, 2010.

A modernized and accessible edition of many of Woolman's short writings. Especially valuable for printing some of Woolman's ephemera, such as unpublished essay fragments, and unique texts such as a primer for teaching children to read.

Historical Contexts

Woolman's essays are often occasional or topical, and his *Journal* was written with the very specific purpose of offering spiritual edification to the Quaker community. It is therefore essential to appreciate multiple historical contexts to fully understand Woolman's work. First, the culture of 18th-century Quakerism was a unique one that spanned the Atlantic world, giving Woolman a wide range of contacts and influences. Second, Quaker manuscript and print culture, particularly the institutional oversight of publications by Friends, was the context in which Woolman's writing were edited, produced, and distributed. Finally, while Woolman was interested in many social issues, antislavery was his first prominent concern, and the development of antislavery thought and activism among Friends is central to their history from the 17th to the 19th century.

Eighteenth-Century Quakerism

Quakerism in the 18th-century Atlantic world possessed a distinct culture that nonetheless maintained certain continuities with the character of the movement in the 17th century, and John Woolman embodies this paradox. That Quakerism in this period was transatlantic in scope cannot be overstated, as Tolles 1960, Crabtree 2015, Landes 2015, and Healey 2021 all demonstrate. In Jones 1921, 18th-century Quakerism is described as a period of quietism marked by scrupulous inwardness and a lack of engagement with worldly affairs, but Pryce 2010 and others persuasively contest this account as one-sided. As Marietta 1984 shows, the 18th-century was a time of reformation among Quakers in America, in which intense preoccupation with spiritual purity inspired a series of increasingly radical social positions. While Marietta focuses on Quaker men involved in civil and church politics, Larson 1999 amply documents the crucial role played by Quaker women in reform through their ministerial travels around the Atlantic world. The zeal of the reformers, however, should not obscure

the fact that they faced varying degrees of opposition from their fellow Friends, whether those invested in commercial pursuits as explored in Tolles 1948, or those involved in the political realm analyzed by Bauman 1971. It was precisely this type of opposition that Woolman attempted to address and mediate in his writings.

Bauman, Richard. *For the Reputation of Truth: Politics, Religion, and Conflict among the Pennsylvania Quakers, 1750–1800*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971.

Combining anthropological and historical methods, examines conflicting attitudes toward politics held by Pennsylvania Quakers in the second half of the 18th century. Taking the withdrawal of Quakers from the Pennsylvania Assembly in the 1750s as a point of departure, develops a tripartite typology of Quakers—reformers, worldly politicians, and politiqués—and traces their interactions through the end of the American Revolution.

Crabtree, Sarah. *Holy Nation: The Transatlantic Quaker Ministry in an Age of Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Arguing that Quakers practiced a form of religious transnationalism in an era focused on empire and nation, explores how Quakerism challenged the authority of the state in the late 18th century. The height of this challenge came during the Seven Years' War and American Revolution, but once these periods of intense conflict passed, Crabtree argues, Quakers made their peace with the state and began a process of assimilation.

Healey, Robynne Rogers, ed. *Quakerism in the Atlantic World, 1690–1830*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021.

This edited volume of new essays models an integrated approach to the development of the Quaker community in the Atlantic world during the long 18th century. While noting broad defining features of Quakerism during this era, such as quietism and reform, offers a complicated portrayal of Friends divided into two thematic parts: “Unique Quaker Testimonies and Practices” and “Tensions between Quakerism in Community and Quakerism in the Atlantic World.”

Jones, Rufus M. *The Later Periods of Quakerism*. Vol. 1. London: Macmillan, 1921.

While dated, the classic statement on what is sometimes known as the quietist period of Quaker history. In this account, 18th-century Quakerism marked a departure from the evangelical intensity of the early Quakers, retreating from the world into an intense but limiting spirituality.

Landes, Jordan. *London Quakers in the Trans-Atlantic World: The Creation of an Early Modern Community*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Topically organized study of how Quakers negotiated their position in the Atlantic world, arguing that transatlantic movement and activity fundamentally changed Quakerism. Focusing on institutions and administration, has chapters on meeting structures, merchant networks, communication, and the book trade, among others.

Larson, Rebecca. *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophecy in the Colonies and Abroad, 1770–1775*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.

One of the essential works on Quaker reform in the 18th century. Recovers the experiences of the many Quaker women who traveled as ministers throughout the Atlantic world. Describes women's experiences of being called to the ministry, details their travels and how their journeys intersected with their roles as mothers and wives, and analyzes their impact on Quakerism and wider society.

Marietta, Jack. *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748–1783*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

Best chronological account of the progress of Quaker reform efforts, divided into two parts analyzing social and political reform. In the first part, Quaker disciplinary practices within meetings are stressed as the precursor to developing new, more radical social testimonies. In the second part, narrates the prehistory and aftermath of Quaker withdrawal from the Pennsylvania Assembly.

Pryce, Elaine. “‘Negative to a Marked Degree’ or ‘An Intense and Glowing Faith’?: Rufus Jones and Quaker Quietism.” *Common Knowledge* 16.3 (2010): 518–531.

Reappraisal of 18th-century Quaker quietism that shows how Rufus Jones’s negative construal of the period stemmed from his liberal Protestant preference for action as opposed to contemplation. Argues that that this construal has led to an unfair and ahistorical treatment of Quakerism in this era.

Tolles, Frederick B. *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1783*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948.

A thorough and accessible account of Quaker society and culture in 17th- and 18th-century Philadelphia. Central thesis, developed over a series of topical chapters, is that Quakers in Philadelphia wrestled with the tension of cultivating their faith and achieving worldly success.

Tolles, Frederick B. *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Early entry in what would become the generative field of Atlantic studies. Collects essays by Tolles arguing that Quakerism in the 17th and 18th centuries should be understood in a transatlantic context. Along with describing how Quakers established and maintained their movement in the Atlantic world, also writes about Quakerism’s relationship to aesthetics and science in the period.

Quaker Manuscript and Print Culture

Woolman’s publications cannot be understood without knowledge of the history of Quaker manuscript and print culture. As Peters 2005 shows, printing and distributing books was a galvanizing feature of the early Quaker movement. O’Malley 1982 and Hall 1992 both chronicle the development of institutional oversight for Quaker publications and note the paradoxes involved in this process. Willauer 1983 and Frost 1991 give ample evidence that this same dynamic was at work in American Quakerism, and Sassi 2011 shows how changes to the Overseers of the Press committee for Philadelphia Yearly Meeting cleared the way for the publication of Woolman’s earliest essays. Plank 2009 and Kershner 2013 both discuss specific ways Woolman’s posthumous publications were edited by fellow Quakers.

Frost, J. William. “Quaker Books in Colonial Philadelphia.” *Quaker History* 80.1 (1991): 1–23.

Essential overview that analyzes the publication and importation of Quaker books in 17th- and 18th-century Pennsylvania. Points out the relative dearth of books published by American Quakers in this period and the significant spike in publishing during Woolman’s era.

Hall, David J. “‘The Fiercely Tryal of Their Infallible Examination’: Self-Control in the Regulation of Quaker Publishing in England from the 1670s to the Mid 19th Century.” In *Censorship and the Control of Print in England and France 1600–1910*. Edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, 59–86. Winchester, UK: St. Paul’s Bibliographies, 1992.

Survey of how Quaker leaders exerted control over official publications. Argues that those who oversaw the editing, production, and distribution of texts can be seen as simultaneously suppressing the individuality of certain Friends and supporting the broader community by shaping Quaker publications into a coherent body of work.

Kershner, John R. "The York Manuscript: John Woolman's Final Writings." *Quaker History* 102.2 (2013): 28–51.

Based on archival research, makes a compelling argument that the pieces often published as Woolman's "last essays," which were written during his travels to and within England, should be understood as a single integrated work. Previous misunderstandings of these pieces, including those that appear in Gummere 1922 (cited under Collected Writings), stems from their immediate reception by Quakers after Woolman's death.

O'Malley, Thomas. "Defying the Powers and Tempering the Spirit': A Review of Quaker Control over Their Publications." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33.1 (1982): 72–88.

Surveys the development of institutions within early Quakerism that supervised, printed, distributed, and financed Quaker books. Responding to external pressures on the movement, Friends in leadership positions began taking a more active role in overseeing individual publications, leading to a more uniform voice that was sometimes protested by Quakers themselves.

Peters, Kate. *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

An excellent overview of how Quakers in 17th-century England used print to develop and sustain their movement. Examines the prolific production of Quaker texts in a short span of time and the ways Quakers strategically organized their publications for particular polemical contexts.

Plank, Geoffrey. "The First Person in Antislavery Literature: John Woolman, His Clothes, His Journal." *Slavery and Abolition* 30.1 (2009): 67–91.

Along with analyzing the persona Woolman developed over the course of his life, gives an excellent account of the editing of Woolman's manuscripts immediately after his death, including the significant differences between the American and British versions of the *Journal*.

Sassi, Jonathan D. "With a Little Help from the Friends: The Quaker and Tactical Contexts of Anthony Benezet's Abolitionist Publishing." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 135.1 (2011): 33–71.

Very detailed study that examines changes in Quaker print culture that allowed writers like Woolman to share their antislavery ideas with a wider readership. Specifically focuses on the composition of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Overseers of the Press committee. With a shift toward Friends who were abolitionists, such as Anthony Benezet, the publication of works like Woolman's *Some Considerations on Keeping Negroes* became possible.

Willauer, George J., Jr. "Editorial Practices in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia: The Journal of Thomas Chalkley in Manuscript and Print." *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107.2 (1983): 217–234.

Gives good examples of how the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Overseers of the Press worked in the decades prior to Woolman's own publications. Using the journal of prominent Quaker Thomas Chalkley as a case study, shows how the Overseers shaped text authored by individuals to match the larger priorities of the yearly meeting.

Quakers and Slavery

Quakers in the 18th century are probably best known and most regularly studied for their role in the progress of antislavery and abolitionist thought and activism. While Woolman is a key figure in this history, his work should not be understood in isolation from other Quakers, such as Anthony Benezet (Jackson 2009), or from the broader history of Quakers and slavery. While Quakers have often been celebrated as early critics of enslavement, scholarship like Soderlund 1985 shows that developing these criticisms in places like Pennsylvania was a struggle, underlining the fact that Friends themselves were willing enslavers before becoming abolitionists. Carey 2010 is a notable

contribution to this line of scholarship for its Atlantic scope and focus on rhetorical changes in Quaker debate about slavery in America, and Brown 2006 similarly pursues these concerns with an eye toward the development of British abolitionism. Carey and Plank 2014 is a good introduction to the variety of approaches contemporary scholars are taking to this topic, and Holcomb 2016 offers an intriguing study of the continuity between Woolman's antislavery ideas and 19th-century abolitionist strategies.

Brown, Christopher. *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Larger history of British abolitionism that is useful for understanding Quakers and slavery in that it tracks how Friends shifted from advocating simply for the elimination of slavery from their religious community to organizing to abolish it throughout the British Empire. Shows how tensions between more radical American Quakers and more conservative British Quakers eventually culminated in Friends taking a more public stance against slavery in the Atlantic world.

Carey, Brycchan. *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657–1761*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.

Uses the methods of a literary historian to describe the development and consolidation of Quaker antislavery rhetoric. Beginning in 17th-century Barbados and finishing with the formation of clear antislavery positions by Quakers in mid-18th-century Philadelphia and London, traces the slow but steady transformation of Quaker attitudes toward slavery.

Carey, Brycchan, and Geoffrey Plank, eds. *Quakers and Abolition*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2014.

While this collection of new essays takes as its purvey Quakerism's relationship to abolition well into the 19th century, it contains several pieces relevant to understanding Woolman's 18th-century antislavery context. In general, contends that while Quakers and abolition is not a new topic, a more fine-grained understanding of how Friends wrestled with their attitudes toward slavery is still needed.

Holcomb, Julie L. *Moral Commerce: Quakers and the Transatlantic Boycott of the Slave Labor Economy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016.

History of the free-produce movement—a strategy of some 19th-century abolitionists that sought to consume only goods not associated with enslaved labor—which looks to John Woolman as a key progenitor of this line of thought. Along with analyzing his influence on the movement, also assesses the extent to which this was a distinctly Quaker phenomenon.

Jackson, Maurice. *Anthony Benezet: The Father of Atlantic Abolitionism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Benezet was a close associate of Woolman who gave his fellow Quaker significant aid in publishing his antislavery writings. He was arguably an even more influential abolitionist writer than Woolman, and this biography is a good introduction to his life, work, and intellectual contexts.

Soderlund, Jean R. *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Very detailed study that focuses on the complexities of the development of Quaker antislavery in Pennsylvania. Noting the length of time it took Friends to reach unity on their antislavery positions, underscores the limits of Quaker abolitionism by showing how individual Quakers and their local meetings struggled to reconcile their moral principles with their economic and political interests.

Criticism

Literary criticism of Woolman's writing can be organized into several strands. First, critics attempt to determine the sources that shaped Woolman and his subsequent influence on other writers. Tolles 1942 is essential for understanding Woolman's reading based on the books he owned, and Moulton 1971 and Jolliff 2007 are good examples of research that traces the subsequent influence of Woolman in both broad and specific ways. Second, critics have understandably been interested in analyzing and assessing Woolman's social commitments. Stewart 1991 and Meranze 2002 offer contrasting approaches to the question of how radical Woolman's antislavery work was, while Oehlschlaeger 1996 urges scholars to remember that Woolman's social concerns were rooted in a theological outlook. While Woolman's environmental thought is less studied, Plank 2007 and Miller 2013 examine Woolman's views of animal life and wilderness, respectively. Finally, critics analyze Woolman's writings in formal literary terms. This is an area in particularly need of further research, but Shea 1968 offers a basic account of the *Journal* in terms of the spiritual autobiography genre, while Anderson 2016 gives a sustained analysis of Woolman's unique prose style.

Anderson, Douglas. "Reading John Woolman." *Early American Literature* 51.3 (2016): 547–570.

Analyzing Woolman's multiple revisions of the *Journal* and even small changes in word choice, argues that a central purpose of his prose style was to create an open-ended text that ushered the reader into an experience of the spiritual mysteries the author felt himself.

Jolliff, William. "The Economy of the Inward Life: John Woolman and Henry Thoreau." *Concord Saunterer* 15 (2007): 91–111.

Noting the significant similarities between Woolman and the transcendentalist writer Henry David Thoreau, examines both historical and textual evidence that the latter was influenced by the former. While the evidence is not conclusive, makes a suggestive argument about the continuities between the two writers.

Meranze, Michael. "Materializing Conscience: Embodiment, Speech, and the Experience of Sympathetic Identification." *Early American Literature* 37.1 (2002): 71–88.

Exploring how Woolman's acts of conscience both set him apart from the transatlantic economy and paradoxically reinscribed him as a commodity in a spiritual economy, treats Woolman's humanitarianism as meaningful but deeply fraught. One of the more theoretical readings of Woolman available.

Miller, Jay David. "'Nature Hath a Voice': John Woolman's Wilderness *Habitus*." *Religion and Literature* 45.2 (2013): 27–54.

Drawing on Woolman's account of traveling throughout colonial America, argues that he understood wilderness as a place of transformation due to the Christian theological traditions of which he was a part.

Moulton, Phillips P. "The Influence of the Writings of John Woolman." *Quaker History* 60.1 (1971): 3–13.

Broad overview of John Woolman's literary and political influence by the editor of the most authoritative edition of Woolman's writing.

Oehlschlaeger, Fritz. "Taking John Woolman's Christianity Seriously." *Renascence* 48.3 (1996): 191–207.

Argues that scholarship on Woolman sometimes disregards his Christianity in order to assimilate his work into presentist political concerns. Proceeds to outline the Christian, Quaker, and biblical dimensions of Woolman's life and thought, contrasting them with the subsequent political priorities of the United States.

Plank, Geoffrey. "'The Flame of Life Was Kindled in All Animal and Sensitive Creatures': One Quaker Colonist's View of Animal Life." *Church History* 76.3 (2007): 569–590.

While Woolman can in some ways be seen as an early advocate for animal rights, Plank emphasizes that his concerns about the care for and well-being of animals stemmed from his belief in this cosmic significance as a part of God's creation. Specifically, he viewed farm

animals in a millennial way as foreshadowing the peaceable kingdom prophesied in the book of Isaiah.

Shea, Daniel B. "The Journal of John Woolman." In *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America*. By Daniel B. Shea, 45–84. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Shea dedicates a chapter of his book to reading Woolman's *Journal* as the foremost example of Quaker spiritual autobiography, emphasizing the degree to which Woolman paradoxically gives an account of his life while also trying to withdraw emphasis on himself from the narrative.

Stewart, Margaret E. "John Woolman's 'Kindness beyond Expression': Collective Identity vs. Individualism and White Supremacy." *Early American Literature* 26.3 (1991): 251–275.

Examines Woolman's personal asceticism. Argues that his solidarity with those who suffered distinguished him from both individualism and shallow sympathetic identification with others.

Tolles, Frederick B. "John Woolman's List of 'Books Lent.'" *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 31.2 (1942): 72–81.

Reproduces and briefly analyzes a list of "books lent" found in Woolman's manuscripts, giving a picture of the texts he owned and likely read. These texts include Quaker writers, Christian theology and spirituality, and work of a practical character.

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