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'Warmly Recommended by Miss Edgeworth': Alison Charles Carmichael, Maria Edgeworth and Slavery in the Caribbean

ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the relationship between the Scottish proslavery writer Alison Charles Carmichael and Maria Edgeworth. It does so through an analysis of Carmichael's 1833 work *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Negro and Coloured Population of the West Indies*, Edgeworth's reception of this text and her efforts to champion Carmichael's literary career. The article clarifies Carmichael's ties to enslavement. It shows that she utilised her interactions with enslaved people in the private sphere to make a public argument against the abolition of enslavement. Despite Carmichael's attempts to undermine the case for abolition, *Domestic Manners* reveals enslaved people's consistent resistance to enslavement. Subsequently, the article outlines Edgeworth's shifting reactions to *Domestic Manners*, encompassing curiosity, admiration and occasional bouts of scepticism. It highlights the similarity between Carmichael's depictions of enslaved people and Edgeworth's views of Ireland's rural poor. Additionally, it suggests possible congruences between Carmichael's arguments about slavery and resistance and Edgeworth's thinking on slavery and social change – both in the Caribbean and Ireland. Using Edgeworth's correspondence, the article traces the development of her epistolary friendship with Carmichael. Furthermore, it details Edgeworth's repeated attempts to secure support for Carmichael as part of the latter's efforts to build a literary career. In so doing, the article shows that Carmichael's avowed proslavery position was not an obstacle to securing Edgeworth's backing. Through its exploration of Carmichael's *Domestic Manners*, this article provides a new focus on an under-examined Scottish proslavery writer. Moreover, it offers fresh evidence regarding Edgeworth's complicated attitude toward slavery in the Caribbean.

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INTRODUCTION

On 6 March 1841, the *Naval and Military Gazette* took the unusual step of publishing a review of a book 'written for the young'. The review states that Mrs A. C. Carmichael's *Tales of a Grandmother* (1841) – a novel based partly on Carmichael's experiences in the Caribbean – enjoyed 'decided claims on its own merits, and (not less in our opinion) from being highly approved and warmly recommended by Miss Edgeworth'.[1] A subsequent advertisement for *Tales* published in the *Morning Herald* includes a similar reference to Maria Edgeworth's endorsement.[2] *Tales* was not the first of Carmichael's publications that Edgeworth had encountered. By late 1833, she had read Carmichael's *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Negro and Coloured Population of the West Indies* (1833).[3] Like *Tales*, *Domestic Manners* is based on Carmichael's time on plantations in St Vincent and Trinidad. Published as parliament legislated for the formal end of enslavement in Britain's Caribbean colonies, *Domestic Manners* is a two-volume examination of enslaved lives that espouses support for the proslavery cause.

Despite its detailed portrayal of life in the Caribbean, *Domestic Manners* has not been subjected to sustained scrutiny. Karina Williamson's useful article on Carmichael's life and work, which touches on her connections to Edgeworth, is the only example of a detailed scholarly analysis of *Domestic Manners*.[4] This article offers a further examination of Carmichael's connections to slavery and her portrayals of it in *Domestic Manners*. It argues that *Domestic Manners* represents Carmichael's attempts to use her interactions with enslaved people in the private sphere to disseminate a proslavery message in the public sphere.

Carmichael gestured towards her admiration for Edgeworth's writing in *Domestic Manners*. She made allusions to *The Absentee* (1812) and 'The Honest Boy and the Thief', which is included in *Early Lessons* (1801).[5] Underscoring this esteem, Carmichael claimed that her daughters had almost memorised Edgeworth's works by the age of four.[6] These references to Edgeworth's writing, coupled with Edgeworth's reading of *Domestic Manners*, indicates that these women were conversant with each other's work. In the years after she read *Domestic Manners*, Edgeworth and Carmichael became correspondents. While there has been recent scholarly interest in Edgeworth's epistolary connections to nineteenth-century Scottish writers, her relationship to Carmichael has been largely overlooked hitherto.[7] By examining Edgeworth's engagement with Carmichael and her work, it provides new details on a relationship between a lesser-known Scottish writer and a far more prominent literary figure.

Through examination of Edgeworth's correspondence with family members and epistolary acquaintances, this article details her complex reception of *Domestic Manners*. It argues that elements of the book appealed to Edgeworth. Specifically, it suggests that Carmichael's discussion of the Caribbean chimed with Edgeworth's reflections on rural Ireland and her thinking on enslavement in the 1820s and 1830s. By considering how she responded to Carmichael's work, this article offers a contribution to the scholarship concerning Edgeworth's attitudes towards slavery – a matter of ongoing scholarly conversation.[8] In addition to reading and discussing *Domestic Manners* with her correspondents, Edgeworth championed Carmichael's subsequent

1 Tales of a Grandmother, *Naval and Military Gazette*, 6 March 1841, 150.

2 *Morning Herald*, 1 April 1841.

3 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Frances Edgeworth, Bodleian Library (hereafter Bodl), MS. Eng. Let. c. 701, f.5v.

4 Karina Williamson, 'Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820–1826', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 4 (2008), n.32.

5 Mrs [Alison Charles] Carmichael, *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies*, (2 vols, London, 1832), I, 40; II, 134.

6 Ibid., II, 250.

7 Jane Rendall, 'Correspondence and Community: Maria Edgeworth's Scottish Friends', *European Romantic Review*, 31 (2020), 681–98.

8 Siobhaán Kilfeather and Frances Botkin have presented Edgeworth as an abolitionist. See Siobhán Kilfeather (ed.), *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (12 vols, London, 2003), II, xxxi, and Frances R. Botkin, 'Questioning the "Necessary Order of Things": Maria Edgeworth's "The Grateful Negro", Plantation Slavery, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade' in Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis and Sara Salih (eds), *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760–1838* (Basingstoke, 2004), 194–208. By contrast, George Boulukos has suggested Edgeworth supported enslavement. See George Boulukos, 'Maria Edgeworth's "Grateful Negro" and the Sentimental Argument for Slavery', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 23 (1999), 12–29. Subsequently, Onni Gust has argued that Edgeworth was an ameliorationist. See Onni Gust, *Unhomely Empire: Whiteness and Belonging, c.1760–1830* (London, 2020), 59–77.

writing. This article outlines Edgeworth's support for Carmichael's efforts to develop her literary career. It shows that Edgeworth used her connections and reputation as a noteworthy writer to lobby for Carmichael. While there is no definitive evidence that Edgeworth shared her friend's proslavery attitude, the article demonstrates that Carmichael's personal connections to enslavement and opposition to abolition were no barrier to securing Edgeworth's support.

CARMICHAEL'S SLAVERY CONNECTIONS

Mrs Carmichael was born Alison Charles Stewart/Stuart around 1792.[9] Her will states that her parents were Mary Erskine and Dr Charles Stuart.[10] According to a letter written by the travel writer Henry David Inglis, Carmichael's brother was the author of *Three Years in North America* (1833). This author was James Stuart of Dunearn, who took part in the duel that led to the death of Alexander Boswell.[11] Carmichael's maternal grandfather was the abolitionist Church of Scotland Minister Dr John Erskine.[12] It is impossible to know if Erskine had any direct influence on his granddaughter. However, *Domestic Manners* implies that Carmichael inhabited an abolitionist milieu. She wrote that she 'landed in St. Vincent with [her] head full of those ideas respecting slavery which have been so long popular' – a likely allusion to abolitionism.[13] In light of her possible upbringing, the arguments she evinced in *Domestic Manners* suggests that Carmichael underwent a conversion to the proslavery cause during her time in the Caribbean

Her journey to the Caribbean was facilitated by her marriage to the Scottish army officer John Wilson Carmichael, whom she married in 1815.[14] He owned Mousebank estate in St Vincent between 1817 and 1822.[15] Along with her daughters and stepdaughters, Mrs Carmichael accompanied her husband to St Vincent in 1820. It is likely that the Carmichaels resided at Mousebank, although Mrs Carmichael did not mention her home in St Vincent by name in *Domestic Manners*. There were seventy-eight enslaved people at Mousebank – forty-one women and thirty-seven men – around the time John Wilson Carmichael sold it in 1822.[16] Separately, he leased thirty-two enslaved people to James Symon's New Prospect estate, twenty-seven of whom lived on an unidentified estate in St Vincent.[17] It is likely that this latter group enslaved people were taken to Laurel Hill estate in Trinidad in late 1822, the location for much of volume two of *Domestic Manners*.[18] By 1825, Carmichael had leased Laurel Hill to Trinidad's Chief Justice Ashton Warner.[19] After emancipation, John Wilson Carmichael received £981 18s 0d based on his claim for compensation on twenty-two enslaved people.[20] Mrs Carmichael did not enjoy legal ownership over Mousebank's and Laurel Hill's enslaved populations. Her role was to manage the estates' domestic spaces, including the work undertaken by the enslaved in plantation houses. While she could not claim formal proprietorship of the enslaved people on these properties, she wielded – or attempted to wield – significant power over them nevertheless.

9 Census Returns of England and Wales, 1881, Carmichal, Alison C, The National Archives (Carmichael's name is misspelled 'Carmichal' in this entry); Williamson, 'Carmichael', no pagination.

10 Testament of Alison Charles Carmichael of 44, Val Plaisant, St Helier, Jersey Heritage (hereafter JH), D/Y/A/44/108.

11 Letter of Henry David Inglis to his Publisher Mr How of Whittaker and Co., London, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), MS.50277, f.126r; Michael S. Moss, 'Stuart, James (1775–1849), Landowner, Politician, and Factory Inspector', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

12 Williamson, 'Carmichael', n.p.; JH, D/Y/A/44/108.

13 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 127.

14 Williamson, 'Carmichael', n.p.

15 'John Wilson Carmichael', *Legacies of British Slavery Database,* http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/29088, accessed 9 September 2021.

16 'Mousebank [St Vincent | St George]', *Legacies of British Slavery Database,* http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/14129, accessed 29 March 2021.

17 'New Prospect [St Vincent]', *Legacies of British Slavery Database,* http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/3602, accessed 29 March 2021; 'Unknown [St Vincent]', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*, http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/21997, accessed 6 May 2021.

18 '[Laurel Hill?] [Trinidad | Tacarigua and Arouca]', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*, http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/estate/view/3889, accessed 29 March 2021.

19 'Ashton Warner', *Legacies of British Slavery Database,* http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146631289, accessed 29 March 2021.

20 'Trinidad 1463', *Legacies of British Slavery Database,* http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/29542, accessed 29 March 2021.

The Carmichaels lived in the Caribbean for around six years. They had elite connections in St Vincent and Trinidad, including members of the Trinidadian political and legal establishment. The aforementioned Ashton Warner was a prior acquaintance from their time in Edinburgh.[21] When they arrived in Trinidad, the island's governor Sir Ralph Woodford gave them a tour of Port of Spain, during which Carmichael saw a jail built with stone hued from her father's quarry in Fife.[22] The proceeds of slavery funded the Carmichaels' social life in the West Indies, which included their attendance at parties and extravagant dinners. In *Domestic Manners*, Carmichael likened a gathering she attended in St Vincent to 'Miss Edgeworth's inimitable description of Mrs Rafferty's dinner, in her "Tales of a Fashionable Life."'[23] They returned to Britain in 1826.

PUBLICISING PRIVATE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENSLAVED

By 1827, Carmichael had submitted a manuscript of *Domestic Manners* – or a portion thereof – to the publisher John Murray. According to a letter from Carmichael to James Heywood Markland – a member of the Literary Committee of the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants – she had written it 'as fast as possible' at night after her children had gone to bed. Carmichael learned from a 'Mr Colquhoun' – possibly James Colquhoun, who acted as an agent for the West India interest – that Murray had delayed publishing the work because of 'difficulty of reading the M[anu].S[cript]'. This excuse may well have been Murray's polite way of rejecting *Domestic Manners*. This delay led to Carmichael's threat to withdraw it from Murray.[24] *Domestic Manners* was eventually published by Whittaker, Treacher and Co., confirming that Carmichael withdrew the manuscript from Murray. In fact, *Domestic Manners* was one of a number of similar texts published by Whittaker, Treacher and Co., including Fanny Trollope's bestselling *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). The speed with which Carmichael produced her manuscript, alongside her irritation at Murray's prevarication, suggests her eagerness to have *Domestic Manners* in the public domain.

Domestic Manners is based on the direct interactions Carmichael claimed she had with enslaved people. She asserted that her book is 'little else than an accumulation of facts; the results of personal experience and attentive observation'.[25] The text articulates a strong interest in people rather than place. Indeed, Carmichael clarified that 'man, rather than nature is my object'.[26] According to Carmichael, her visits were motivated by genuine curiosity about how enslaved people lived. Although she arrived in St Vincent with abolitionist views, Carmichael was 'not so utterly carried away by preconceived notions, as to be insensible to the opportunity now afforded [her] of investigating the subject personally.'[27] After she became used to enslaved people's 'broken language' and the climate in St Vincent, she conducted daily visits to estates near Kingstown. These excursions afforded her 'abundant opportunities' to observe enslaved people, 'chatting with them familiarly' in their own homes – likely without prior permission.[28] These interactions were part of a methodology designed by Carmichael to understand and describe enslaved lives. It is unclear how entering into conversation with Carmichael made these enslaved people feel but the experience is unlikely to have been comfortable.

21 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, II, 50.

22 Ibid, 70.

23 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 40. This allusion is a reference to Mrs Raffarty's ostentatious dinner party in Edgeworth's *The Absentee*, which was published in *Tales of a Fashionable Life*. See Heidi Van de Veire and Kim Walker, with Marilyn Butler (eds), *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (12 vols, London, 1999), V, 71–72.

24 Letters to John Murray, Publishers, of Correspondents with Surnames from Carlyle to Carmichael, NLS, MS.40196, f.33r. Markland had links to John Murray and William Blackwood. See 'James Heywood Markland', *Legacies of British Slavery Database*, http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/45822, accessed 26 September 2021, and Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery* (London, 2020), 58. For more on Colquhoun, see Michael Taylor, 'The British West India Interest and Its Allies', *English Historical Review*, 133 (2018), 1488.

25 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, vi.

26 Ibid., 3.

27 Ibid., 127.

28 Ibid., 127–128.

Through this methodology and her portrayals of the enslaved, Carmichael became involved in the production and circulation of knowledge about Africa and Africans.[29] The knowledge that she imparted was not objective. An essential feature of *Domestic Manners* is Carmichael's repeated efforts to reproduce the conversations she had with enslaved people in private spaces to make proslavery arguments publicly. The first of the conversations she detailed in *Domestic Manners* involved a woman identified by Carmichael as F (all of the enslaved people in the book are designated by their first initial rather than their full name). F was an enslaved woman who was, in Carmichael's words, 'of uncommonly good character, but not at all clever', who had refused offers of manumission.[30] According to Carmichael, F told her that she and her mother had been captured somewhere in Africa, and that her mother had been cannibalised by her captors. The story Carmichael relayed in *Domestic Manners* is that F was forced to eat part of her mother's heart. Later, F was sent to the coast and sold to a slave trader. In Carmichael's account, F was pleased to have been placed in the hands of an enslaver because 'Africa no good place'.[31] Thus, despite being captured, forced to engage in cannibalism and then taken to the Caribbean, F appears enthusiastic about her enslavement.

The ensuing section of *Domestic Manners* offers a series of similar stories in which enslaved people express happiness that they have been stolen from their places of origin and enslaved in the West Indies. Although she claimed to offer 'no apology' for the trade in enslaved people, Carmichael insisted that they had 'not been made more miserable' by it.[32] These stories, which Verene Shepherd has described as 'ventriloquised dialogue', portray the process of being captured, commodified and enslaved as a journey from supposed African barbarism to a life of apparent ease in the Caribbean.[33] On the basis of this warped portrayal, the condition of enslavement appears intrinsically beneficial to those subjected to it. The harrowing conditions attendant to the trade in enslaved people and enslavement in the Caribbean are nowhere to be seen in the narratives by offered by Carmichael. They indicate her consistent efforts to use private encounters with the enslaved as the foundation for her published proslavery arguments.

The argument Carmichael offered through these anecdotes must be considered in the context of contemporary political debates about slavery and its abolition. Renewed abolitionist activity from 1823 convinced the West India lobby that it had to proselytise its own message. These efforts included the production of proslavery texts.[34] *Domestic Manners* was part of the effort to ward off the abolitionist threat through the dissemination of such literature. For her part, Carmichael insisted that *Domestic Manners* had 'not been got up for an occasion'. She had written the 'whole of the first, and part of the second volume' prior to 'the agitation of the West India question by the present government'. The manuscript was 'on the point of publication by an eminent house, with the special recommendation of an influential body of men.' This history of *Domestic Manners*' production and publication is borne out by her 1827 letter about the manuscript being in John Murray's hands. For reasons she did not specify, Carmichael decided to 'suspend the negotiation', which meant *Domestic Manners* was published just as the legislative process to abolish slavery reached its conclusion.[35] It is possible that Carmichael was naïve enough to believe that a book about slavery in the Caribbean had no political connotations. Given her private links to Markland and Colquhoun, it is more likely that she made these claims to disguise a proslavery text under a shroud of apparent objectivity.

The reception of *Domestic Manners* suggests that its readers understood it as an overtly political and avowedly proslavery text. The *Literary Gazette* judged the work 'so politically well-timed' that it was 'sure to attract much popular attention'.[36] In pointedly gendered terms, the *Eclectic Review* argued 'that a woman should be found putting herself forward, or consenting

29 Verene Shepherd, 'Knowledge Production and the Construction of "Africa(ns)" in the Caribbean', *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 1 (2006), 135.

30 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 301–2.

31 Ibid., 304.

32 Ibid., 306–20.

33 Shepherd, 'Knowledge', 135.

34 Taylor, *Interest*, 58–61.

35 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, v.

36 Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies, *Literary Gazette*, July 1833, 467.

to be put forward, as the vindicator of such a state of society as exists in the West Indies, is a circumstance which cannot but excite deep disgust.'[37] The *Eclectic Review*'s reception of *Domestic Manners* suggests that Carmichael was viewed as transgressive because she was a woman with a proslavery outlook.[38] By contrast, the *Metropolitan Magazine* encouraged readers to 'buy, beg, borrow, do all but steal Mrs Carmichael's book' in order to 'disabuse themselves of prejudices, misrepresentations, and false notions' about slavery.[39] No matter her precise intentions, *Domestic Manners*' reception suggests that it was perceived as a deliberate proslavery incursion into the debates about abolition.

RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY

Despite Carmichael's insistence about enslaved people's enthusiasm for enslavement, *Domestic Manners* is replete with examples of their resistance. Many of these instances occurred within Carmichael's home, particularly in the context of domestic labour. The nineteenth-century home has been described as the 'physical location of domesticity' by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall.[40] For Andreas Koller, the 'sphere of family life and intimacy and the private economy' is a core component of the private sphere.[41] As Verene Shepherd and Ahmed Reid have noted, instances of everyday resistance to enslavement interfered with the productive capacity of the plantation.[42] It also impeded attempts to make the plantation house a peaceful space. Thus, enslaved people's resistance impinged on enslavers' economic interests and disrupted their domestic lives.

By revealing the strife that occurred within her home, Carmichael emphasised the complex relationship between notions of private and public in *Domestic Manners*. For Nancy Fraser, discourses of domesticity focus on 'personal-familial matters in contradistinction to public, political matters.'[43] Women like Carmichael were encouraged to seek fulfilment by cultivating a well-ordered home rather than involvement in the apparently masculine worlds of politics and commerce.[44] Based on *Domestic Manners*, it is evident that Carmichael engaged with the discourse of domesticity, not least as she oversaw labour in the plantation house. Yet, she remained determined to occupy a private role as the manager of domestic spaces and a public role as a writer, using the former to underpin the latter. By basing her arguments on encounters with enslaved people in domestic contexts, Carmichael interpolated private concerns – essentialised as feminine – into the public debate on slavery and its abolition. Additionally, her discussion of resistance to slavery in private spaces exposed moments of conflict between enslaver and enslaved to public view.

Education was one domestic context in which enslaved resistance took place. According to *Domestic Manners*, Carmichael offered religious instruction and literacy classes to enslaved adults and children.[45] Many enslavers were alarmed by the potentially radicalising effects of education. Opposing them, Christian missionaries, colonial functionaries and social reformers viewed education as a tool to facilitate an orderly transition from slave to free societies. Crucially,

37 Domestic Manners and Social Conditions of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies, *Eclectic Review*, November 1833, 397.

38 For the role of middle-class women in the abolitionist movement see Catherine Hall, 'Private Persons versus Public Someones', in *British Feminist Thought: A Reader*, Terry Lovell (ed.) (Oxford, 1990), 62–3; Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670–1834* (London: 1992), 4; and Clare Midgley, 'Anti-Slavery and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender & History*, 5 (1993) 345–6.

39 The West Indian Colonies in their State of Transition from Bad to Worse, *Metropolitan Magazine*, September 1833, 99.

40 Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London, 1987), 178.

41 Andreas Koller, 'The Public Sphere and Comparative Historical Research: An Introduction', *Social Science History*, 34 (2010), 270.

42 Verene Shepherd and Ahmed Reid, 'Women, Slavery and the Reparation Movement in the Caribbean', *Social and Economic Studies*, 68 (2019), 37.

43 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), 73.

44 Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, 181–3.

45 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 221.

they understood education as a tool to control the Caribbean population.[46] Carmichael's prolonged attempts to educate enslaved people were met by continual resistance. She complained that enslaved children were 'deficient in attention'. They were 'never done with tricks' and, 'unlike a white child', Carmichael's presence did not check their 'most ridiculous conduct'. As soon as she began to instruct one child, 'the others began a thousand drolleries', which she was unable to stop. At other times they fell asleep mid-lesson, perhaps as a result of tiredness associated with the labour they were forced to perform prior to lessons beginning.[47] This low-level resistance exposed the shortcomings in Carmichael's attempts to establish herself as an efficient manager of domestic spaces.

In an effort to coax compliance, Carmichael read stories after her lessons, including Edgeworth's 'Honest Boy and the Thief'. According to Carmichael, had the 'excellent authoress peeped across the Atlantic' she would have seen 'the little animated circle of happy faces' of enslaved children.[48] Despite their apparent glee at hearing Edgeworth's story, Carmichael conceded that she 'failed completely' in her efforts to educate them.[49] From an enslaved perspective, this behaviour was an expression of the children's agency.[50] Through their actions, the enslaved children made Carmichael's classroom an arena for conflict. Despite Carmichael's best efforts, they resisted her attempts to impose her control over them. She interpreted this behaviour as proof of enslaved people's immodesty, inferiority and unsuitability for freedom.

There was also ongoing friction between Carmichael and the enslaved women over whom she tried to wield power.[51] The irritation that enslaved women caused Carmichael has been described by Barbara Bush as a kind of 'intrasexual antagonism'.[52] A good deal of this animosity revolved around clothing: an area linked to private and intimate life. Descriptions of dress and anecdotes about clothes recur throughout *Domestic Manners*. For example, Carmichael saw enslaved domestics wear 'fine light calico printed gowns, or white muslin', and 'good necklaces, ear-rings, gold rings, and a nice handkerchief for a turban.'[53] According to Danielle Skeehan, the clothes worn by enslaved and free women of colour were expressions of memorialisation, family ties and 'status and skill'. Skeehan has presented enslaved women as self-fashioners and authors of clothing-texts that expressed agency and emotion.[54] Likely attuned to these nuances, Carmichael used her discussion of clothing to offer uncomplimentary portrayals of enslaved women. She complained that they were 'such connoisseurs of dress' that she 'heard them criticise' her own clothes 'both in materials and make.'[55] Reacting to this admission, the novelist Andrea Levy envisaged 'proud' enslaved women mocking the 'dowdy' Mrs Carmichael.[56] It is evident from this brief anecdote that Carmichael enjoyed little respect from the enslaved people around her.

In her role as a manager of domestic spaces, Carmichael's time was consumed by 'cutting out dresses, superintending the trimmings, and inventing different fashions' for enslaved women.[57] By preparing and distributing these clothes, Carmichael exerted some control over their appearance. Conversely, the enslaved women avoided dressmaking labour when they allowed her to make their clothes.[58] Equally, enslaved women also took and wore Carmichael's

46 Olwyn Mary Blouet, 'Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies, 1823–33: The Role of Education', *History of Education Quarterly*, 30 (1990), 626.

47 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 225–6.

48 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, II, 134.

49 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 228.

50 Ibid., 225; Jerome Teelucksingh, 'The "Invisible Child" in British West Indian Slavery', *Slavery & Abolition*, 27 (2006), 245.

51 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, II, 11.

52 Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650–1838* (Kingston, Bloomington and London, 1990), 61.

53 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 154.

54 Danielle C. Skeehan, 'Caribbean Women, Creole Fashioning, and the Fabric of Black Atlantic Writing', *The Eighteenth Century*, 56 (2015), 105–6.

55 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 46.

56 Andrea Levy, 'The Writing of *The Long Song*', https://www.andrealevy.co.uk/other-media/, accessed 14 April 2021.

57 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 148.

58 Skeehan, 'Caribbean Women', 111–12.

garments. In signs of open defiance, they wore these items in her presence.[59] She lost 'stockings without number, pocket handkerchiefs and petticoats to a considerable amount' to washerwomen. Mundane chores like laundering clothes became a way of disrupting enslavers' domestic spaces and hindering the operation of the plantation.[60] While Carmichael aimed to present herself as an adroit domestic manager, these examples of resistance publicised the unruly and dysfunctional private spaces she struggled to control. Significantly, she used these instances of resistance, which represent examples of her failure to manage her domestic affairs, to present enslaved women as disorderly people who were unfit for freedom.

CARMICHAEL AND THE 'ISLAND OF EXPERIMENT'

Around eighteen months after the Carmichaels relocated to Laurel Hill estate, Trinidad became the site of an ameliorated slavery regime. In March 1824, the Trinidad Order in Council prohibited the flogging of women. Floggings of men were allowed but it had to be witnessed by a person who was not the recipient's enslaver or overseer. Punishment had to be carried out within twenty-four hours of an apparent offence being committed and they had to be recorded. The Order set out the process for manumission, gave enslaved people the right to own and pass on property, and established the position of Protector of Slaves.[61] The Order in Council had limited practical benefits for enslaved people in Trinidad, not least because it enshrined violent punishment into the slavery regime.[62]

The Order's provision that punishments had to be recorded means that it is possible to confirm that John Wilson Carmichael both authorised and witnessed corporal punishment on enslaved people. On 30 July 1824, he authorised twenty-five lashes followed by a day in the stocks for John Pierre for drunkenness and refusing to work. On 31 August, he witnessed an enslaved man named Azor being given fifteen lashes as a punishment for an assault. On 20 September, Mr Carmichael authorised fifteen lashes each for Henry and Jem as a punishment for being so-called runaways.[63] None of these punishments is detailed in *Domestic Manners*. These omissions suggest that Carmichael understood there were aspects of her Caribbean experiences that had to be shrouded from public view. Despite their continued ability to inflict corporal punishment on enslaved people, the ameliorative regulations irked enslavers like Carmichael. She dubbed Trinidad '*the island of experiment*', stressing her cautious attitude toward any changes in the relationship between enslaver and enslaved.[64]

Carmichael argued that amelioration was devised by people more familiar with agriculture 'pursued in the moon' than in the West Indies.[65] She claimed that enslaved people had been unsettled by 'constant changes and orders', which had 'weaken[ed] in the negro, respect or affection to the master'.[66] She perceived a strike carried out at Laurel Hill as an expression of the tension generated by amelioration.[67] Most disturbingly for Carmichael, she claimed that she discovered plots to kill her husband. The possible existence of such plots indicates a level of planning and serious discussion undertaken by Laurel Hill's enslaved population. It hints at the kinds of private conversations they had when Carmichael was not within earshot.

One evening, two 'very faithful' enslaved men – P and M – implored Carmichael to stop her husband from going to the boiling house as he would be murdered there.[68] A few weeks

59 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 119.

60 Stella Abasa Dadzie, *A Kick in the Belly: Women, Slavery and Resistance* (London and Brooklyn, 2020), 120

61 Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783–1962* (Kingston, Port of Spain and London, 1981), 59.

62 Claudius Fergus, 'The "Siete Partidas": A Framework for Philanthropy and Coercion during the Amelioration Experiment in Trinidad, 1823–43', *Caribbean Studies*, 36 (2008), 87–8; Brereton, *Modern Trinidad*, 60–1.

63 PP 1825 (008 010) XXVI XXVII, *Papers Presented to Parliament by His Majesty's Command, in Explanation of the Measures Adopted by His Majesty's Government, for the Melioration of the Condition of the Slave Population in His Majesty's Possessions in the West Indies, and on the Continent of South America. [In Continuation of the Papers Presented in the Year 1824.]*, 230.

64 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, I, 271.

65 Carmichael, *Domestic Manners*, II, 173.

66 Ibid., 206.

67 Ibid., 194.

68 Ibid., 217.

later, 'Mammy' J begged Mrs Carmichael to tell her husband to avoid the boiling house that night.[69] Given his active role in punishing Laurel Hill's enslaved people, it is possible – if not unsurprising – that at least some of them conspired to murder him. Equally, it is plausible that Carmichael manufactured these stories to strengthen her arguments against amelioration and abolition. Ultimately, the successful resistance of the enslaved people at Laurel Hill induced the Carmichaels to return to Britain.[70] Carmichael claimed that the 'best' enslaved people wept as she and her family departed.[71] Given the basic facts of slavery and the recurrent episodes of resistance, it seems unlikely that Laurel Hill's enslaved population were as sad to see their enslavers leave as Mrs Carmichael thought.

EDGEWORTH AND *DOMESTIC MANNERS*

A letter dated 1 January 1834 from Edgeworth to her stepmother Frances Edgeworth contains a mention of 'Mrs Carmichael – Domestic Manners West Indies'. She asked her stepmother to 'send the enclosed note to her publisher' on her behalf as Edgeworth had 'reasons to be obliged' to Carmichael.[72] The precise nature of these obligations is unclear. On 30 December 1834, she told her cousin Sophy Ruxton that she had been 'exceedingly amused & instructed by a book on the state of the slaves in the West Indies – St Vincent and Trinidad – it is called "Domestic Manners"'. Edgeworth asserted that she 'was sure it is all true & it gives me a better idea than I ever had before of the state of slaves & masters of plantations'. She implored Ruxton to 'contrive to get it for I know you would like it'.[73]

This praise of *Domestic Manners* reflects Edgeworth's attentiveness to texts that centre around women's observations of places they had visited. Her interest in *Domestic Manners* and similar publications is evident in letters she sent to Rachel Mordecai Lazarus: her correspondent in Wilmington, North Carolina. Lazarus' husband Aaron Marks Lazarus claimed enslaved people as his property. Like Mrs Carmichael, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus managed domestic spaces in which enslaved people performed labour.[74] Akin to her subsequent correspondence with Carmichael, Edgeworth did not view Lazarus' role as an enslaver as a barrier to their epistolary friendship. On 27 June 1833, Edgeworth wrote to this 'well educated, impartial American' for her views on Trollope's novel *The Refugee in America* (1832).[75] A letter dated 1 July 1837 contains Edgeworth's views on Harriet Martineau's *Society in America* (1837). She described it as 'written with more ability than any work I have read on America except De Tocqueville.' Moreover, she agreed with Martineau that slavery was incompatible with American notions of liberty. While it is evident that Edgeworth enjoyed *Society in America*, she was keen to find out, via Lazarus, how the book had been received in America.[76] Her endorsement of Martineau's antislavery position provides a glimpse of Edgeworth's thinking on slavery in the 1830s. It suggests that she did not necessarily subscribe to the proslavery ideas Carmichael espoused in *Domestic Manners*. Nevertheless, Carmichael's proslavery worldview did not prevent Edgeworth from lending her support to Carmichael's career.

A further reason for Edgeworth's effusiveness about *Domestic Manners* in her letter to Ruxton is the methodology that undergirded Carmichael's work. Her apparent conversations with enslaved people, which forms the evidence for her proslavery views, echoed the approach to estate management adopted by Edgeworth's father Richard Lovell Edgeworth. In the second volume of the *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (1820), Edgeworth noted that her father engaged in many conversations with the people who lived on his Edgeworthstown estate.

69 Ibid., 217–8.

70 Ibid., 334.

71 Ibid., 337.

72 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Frances Edgeworth, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 701, f.5v.

73 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Sophy Ruxton, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 719, f.142r.

74 Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family* (New York, 2003), 130.

75 Edgar E. MacDonald (ed.), *The Education of the Heart: The Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth* (Chapel Hill, 1977), 247.

76 Ibid., 297–9.

Orphans and widows appeared before him with 'cases or oppression'. Others came to him 'helpless in procrastination, detected in cunning, or convicted in falsehood.'[77]

This presentation of some of Edgeworthtown's inhabitants as lazy and duplicitous is akin to Carmichael's later presentation of enslaved people in *Domestic Manners*. There is evidence that Edgeworth discerned the same supposed character flaws in Ireland's rural poor that Carmichael perceived in the enslaved. Going further still, Edgeworth drew a false equivalence between enslaved people in the Caribbean and poor people in Ireland. On 6 June 1825, she wrote to Lazarus that enslavement encouraged 'the vices of falsehood and cunning' within the enslaved. Edgeworth noted that 'in the Greeks, the West Indian slaves, the Irish "poor slave" as he often calls himself, the same defects of character from the same causes appear.'[78] The similar approaches towards depicting the enslaved and elements of Irish society may have been another reason that *Domestic Manners* appealed to Edgeworth.

Within a paradigm that equated enslaved people with Ireland's rural population, Carmichael's descriptions of the relationship between enslaver and enslaved may have resonated with Edgeworth's first-hand experience of the dynamic between landlord and tenant. In the context of social tension in Ireland, not least the rebellion in 1798, Carmichael's assertion that enslaved people posed a violent threat to their enslavers would have been particularly evocative. Edgeworth's 'The Grateful Negro' – published in *Popular Tales* (1804) – ostensibly revolves around a putative uprising of enslaved people in Jamaica. However, this story represents her deeper meditations on the relationship between land ownership, servitude and rebellion: issues brought to the fore by events in 1798.[79] Thus, as Frances Botkin has noted, Edgeworth's thinking and writing on enslavement in the Caribbean was influenced by her reflections on personal experiences and contemporary events in Ireland.[80]

Concerns around violent social upheaval feature in Edgeworth's letters to Lazarus, including the uprising of enslaved people in Virginia known as Nat Turner's Rebellion. On 4 November 1831, she wrote to Lazarus requesting that her friend confirm that she and her loved ones had not been harmed as a result of the rebellion.[81] Lazarus' reply to Edgeworth is missing. A subsequent letter from Edgeworth, dated 29 December 1831, states that she found Lazarus' account of the events in America 'horribly interesting.'[82] Edgeworth's interest in Nat Turner's Rebellion was occasioned by concern for her friend but also by more general considerations about the connection between enslavement and revolutionary violence. Carmichael's examination of enslaved people's resistance, therefore, touched on ideas Edgeworth was contemplating both in relation to slavery in the Americas and to events in Ireland. Even if she did not subscribe to Carmichael's proslavery perspective, the themes in *Domestic Manners* chimed with deliberations Edgeworth made during the 1820s and 1830s.

This initial enthusiasm for *Domestic Manners* was complicated by Sophy Ruxton's reception of the book. Put simply, Ruxton did not like it at all. On 7 January 1835, Edgeworth wrote to her stepmother in an effort to conclude whether Carmichael was indeed a reliable source of information on enslaved people. She asked her stepmother to 'inquire into the character of Mrs Carmichael & her book on the Domestic Manners of West India Slaves'. Edgeworth made this request because Ruxton 'tells me she considers her [Carmichael] as a paid party writer & does not believe a word she says'. Edgeworth continued 'if so Mrs Carmichael must be a tremendous liar & I a most complete dupe'.[83] These comments suggest that Ruxton's view of Carmichael had caused Edgeworth to consider whether she had read *Domestic Manners* too credulously. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether Ruxton's attitude completely shifted Edgeworth towards the conclusion that Carmichael had produced an unreliable account. Edgeworth's use of the conditional clause – that she could have been duped by Carmichael but

77 Maria Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq*, (2 vols, London, 1820), II, 3.

78 MacDonald, *Education*, 80.

79 Elizabeth Eger, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Marilyn Butler (eds), *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (12 vols, London, 2003), XII, x; Nini Rodgers, *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: 1612–1865* (Basingstoke, 2007), 253.

80 Botkin, 'Questioning', 195.

81 MacDonald, *Education*, 213.

82 Ibid., 219.

83 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Frances Edgeworth, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 701, f.34r.

only 'if' Ruxton's reading was correct – suggests that Edgeworth left open the possibility that Carmichael's rendering of enslavement was accurate. What is clear, however, is that Ruxton's hostile reception complicated Edgeworth's understanding of *Domestic Manners*.

A line of communication between Carmichael and Edgeworth opened around May 1835. Carmichael – or someone acting on her behalf – began to send Edgeworth books and letters, initially via Edgeworth's half-sister Frances 'Fanny' Wilson. Carmichael doused her initial letter to Wilson in strong perfume before sending it. Edgeworth, who received this letter from Wilson, described it as 'very interesting' but she did not expand on its contents.[84] A letter from Edgeworth to Wilson, dated 6 June 1835, mentions that Edgeworth had received a 'bound copy of her [Carmichael's] book on the West Indies'.[85] Exchanging books was an important step in the initiation of Edgeworth's epistolary relationships.[86] Edgeworth was 'not clear' about the identity of the person who sent her this copy of *Domestic Manners*. If it was Carmichael, Edgeworth was 'sorry' that the 'poor woman' had gone to 'the expense of such binding' for her.[87] Despite the awkward start to their interactions, these parcels from Carmichael established an epistolary friendship that lasted for years. On 10 August 1839, Edgeworth sent her stepmother a letter that included an enclosed note from Carmichael about one of her daughters' marriages.[88] It is clear that a literary and personal relationship between Carmichael and Edgeworth existed despite Edgeworth's shifting views on *Domestic Manners*. Nor did Carmichael's open proslavery position – or her publicly acknowledged role as an enslaver – preclude her from entering into correspondence with Edgeworth.

The friendship involved Edgeworth's support for Carmichael's literary endeavours. On 16 June 1835, Edgeworth mentioned to Wilson that she had received letters from Carmichael that 'contained such a moving history of her domestic misfortunes' and provided 'evidence of her industry and wonderful struggles through life'. The letter states that Edgeworth had decided to 'recommend her to Murray the bookseller' and to 'prevail upon [John Gibson] Lockhart to prevail upon him [Murray] to purchase from her some stories for young people which she is concocting'.[89] It may be the case that Edgeworth decided to assist Carmichael because she felt sorry for her. Even if this was Edgeworth's primary motivation, Carmichael's stance on slavery did not prevent Edgeworth from supporting her friend.

Murray had received one of Carmichael's manuscripts but he had made no decision about whether to publish it. Writing to him on 14 June 1835, Edgeworth recommended 'a lady who is personally a stranger to me but who is known to me and perhaps to you by her book – Mrs. Carmichael – author of "Domestic Manners in the West Indies"'. The letter informed Murray that Carmichael had 'collected from long residence in Trinidad & St Vincent materials which she purposes working up into a book for young people'.[90] This book is likely *Tales of a Grandmother*. Edgeworth promised that Carmichael's work 'will be both NEW and TRUE'. She emphasised that Carmichael was 'ambitious of being published' by Murray.[91] Seemingly, Carmichael's past experience with Murray had not dampened her enthusiasm for being published by him. In an echo of his actions in 1827, Murray did not reply.

An exchange about *Domestic Manners* appears in Edgeworth and Lazarus' correspondence. On 15 April 1836, Edgeworth closed a letter to Lazarus with her opinion on the abolition of slavery. She asserted her belief that enslaved people 'must be prepared by education to be free and to provide for themselves before they can be set free without danger to others and destruction and misery to themselves and society' (a view that Carmichael would have endorsed). In the postscript to this letter, Edgeworth said she 'would also recommend or rather ask your opinion of Mrs Carmichael's Sketches of Manners in the West Indies, meaning Trinidad and St Vincent's

84 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Wilson, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 708, ff.62–4.

85 Ibid., f.77r.

86 Rendall, 'Edgeworth's Scottish Friends', 684.

87 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Wilson, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 708, f.77r.

88 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Frances Edgeworth, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 701, ff.136–43.

89 Letter of Maria Edgeworth to Fanny Wilson, Bodl, MS. Eng. Let. c. 708, f.79v.

90 Letters of Maria Edgeworth to John Murray II; including Manuscript Copies of Two of the Letters, NLS, MS.42180, no foliation.

91 Ibid.

specially.'[92] One reading of this letter is that Edgeworth wanted to assess the veracity of *Domestic Manners* via Lazarus before advocating any further on Carmichael's behalf. This interpretation, in turn, indicates that Edgeworth had become unsure about whether Carmichael's portrayals of enslavement were reliable. Yet, the formulation Edgeworth used in this mention of *Domestic Manners* is like her earlier one asking for Lazarus' thoughts on Martineau's *Society*. Edgeworth enjoyed Martineau's book but was interested in gaining an American's opinion on it. Her letter discussing Carmichael can be read as Edgeworth's way of stating that she enjoyed *Domestic Manners* – she did, after all, 'recommend' it – and she was keen to know what her friend Lazarus thought about it. For her part, Lazarus was unable to offer an opinion because she could not to find a copy of *Domestic Manners* in America.[93]

On 15 May 1836, one month after her letter to Lazarus, Edgeworth wrote to John Gibson Lockhart's wife Sophia regarding Carmichael. Edgeworth intended to 'torment' Sophia so that she would 'torment' her husband to obtain a decision from Murray. She asked Sophia to 'rummage over Lockhart's mountains of papers' and to 'rummage over his mind also till you draw out his opinion'. Edgeworth confirmed that she would transmit the decision to the 'poor mother & authoress'.[94] It is clear that Edgeworth used her relationship with the Lockharts to elicit a response from Murray on Carmichael's behalf. Edgeworth wrote to Murray again on 8 August 1836 to ask whether he had replied to Carmichael. She beseeched him to 'not delay longer to do so' because it was 'most cruel to keep her in suspense'.[95] Murray did not reply to this letter either. This reticence suggests he was less impressed by Carmichael's writing than Edgeworth.

Without a response by 11 January 1837, Edgeworth warned Murray that he would 'never get rid of [her] persecutions about Mrs Carmichael and her manuscripts'. She threatened to be 'as reasonable as an unreasonable woman can be'.[96] Thereafter, she asked whether Murray might convince another publisher to take on Carmichael's manuscript, and whether it required any revisions. This letter indicates that Carmichael had produced a number of works for publication, including a 'history of the Bible' and a 'tale' that she had given to Murray. Edgeworth demanded to know whether Murray intended to publish it, when he planned to do so and how much he intended to pay Carmichael. Reprising the threatening tone of her earlier letter, Edgeworth warned that while Carmichael was 'a most patient person' she was 'most impatient'. She promised Murray that he would 'be worried weekly with letters' until he replied to her.[97] Despite Edgeworth's efforts, Murray did not publish *Tales*. However, her attempts to harry him for a response shows the support she offered to Carmichael. These letters and her subsequent recommendation of *Tales* in 1841 demonstrate that Edgeworth provided prolonged assistance to Carmichael.

CONCLUSION

Domestic Manners is rooted in Carmichael's proximity to enslaved people. The methodology that allowed her to gather the source material for the book relied on her interactions with the enslaved. In addition to conversations she purported to conduct with enslaved people, Carmichael gleaned information about their lives through her management of their labour in the private sphere. A fundamental aspect of her argument was that enslaved people preferred enslavement to freedom, thus undermining the case for abolition. Yet, *Domestic Manners* contains numerous examples of enslaved people's resistance to enslavement. In domestic contexts including education and contention around clothing, these people expressed their dissatisfaction with their enslaved status.

Despite Carmichael's claims to the contrary, *Domestic Manners* is a text with a decidedly political message. She wrote it during a period of intense debate about the abolition of slavery.

92 MacDonald, *Education*, 280.

93 Ibid., 282.

94 Correspondence of John Gibson Lockhart and his wife with Maria Edgeworth, NLS, MS.936, ff.25r–25v.

95 NLS, MS.42180.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

The arguments in favour of enslavement that Carmichael offered throughout *Domestic Manners* represented her contribution to these debates. Based on her time in the Caribbean, Carmichael warned that even modest changes to the regime that governed slavery threatened to undermine the social order in the region. The avowedly proslavery arguments Carmichael advanced, which she based on her role as an enslaver, represent a public effort to defend enslavement based on her experiences within the private sphere. Moreover, *Domestic Manners*' reception in the periodical press indicates that her readers engaged with it as a text aimed at promoting a proslavery political agenda.

Edgeworth's response to *Domestic Manners* was not straightforward. Her 1834 letters to Frances Edgeworth and Sophy Ruxton display an enthusiasm for the book. As this article has suggested, there are a variety of reasons why *Domestic Manners* appealed to Edgeworth. First, she evinced a range of interests in texts that dealt with women's observations of domestic spaces by writers like Trollope and Martineau. Carmichael's *Domestic Manners* fit neatly into this kind of writing. Furthermore, the centrality of observation and discussion in the methodology Carmichael devised for *Domestic Manners* resembled the conversations Edgeworth's father had with his tenants. The social tension and political turmoil Edgeworth experienced in Ireland shaped her views about the nature of the relationship between the powerful and the (seemingly) powerless – a crucial theme in *Domestic Manners*. Significantly, her correspondence with Lazarus shows that Edgeworth conceived of Irish agricultural labourers along similar lines to enslaved people in the Caribbean. Accordingly, *Domestic Manners* spoke to ideas about enslavement and revolution – in the Caribbean, the United States and Ireland – with which Edgeworth grappled in the 1820s and 1830s.

It is evident that Edgeworth was enthusiastic about *Domestic Manners*, at least initially. However, her views on it were convoluted. Ruxton's far more negative reaction to Carmichael and her proslavery arguments gave Edgeworth reasons to reconsider whether *Domestic Manners* was a reliable guide to enslavement. Her request for Lazarus' perspectives on Carmichael's work indicates that Edgeworth enjoyed the book and was uncertain about it simultaneously. Nor is there definitive evidence that Edgeworth accepted Carmichael's proslavery positions in their entirety, even as she expressed ideas on enslaved people that echoed those of Carmichael. At any rate, Edgeworth was willing to maintain an epistolary friendship with Carmichael. Furthermore, she used her connections and celebrity to help Carmichael pursue a literary career. After requesting Lazarus' view on *Domestic Manners*, Edgeworth contacted both Sophia Lockhart and John Murrary in an effort to have Carmichael's writing published. These efforts continued into the 1840s as Edgeworth endorsed *Tales*. Carmichael's proslavery politics did not engender her relationship with Edgeworth, nor did they stimulate Edgeworth's advocacy of Carmichael's literary pursuits. Nevertheless, Carmichael's role as an enslaver and her position on slavery more broadly did not inhibit Edgeworth from establishing a relationship with her. Nor did it prevent her from supporting Carmichael's career.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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