

**Rhetoric and argument in Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches on the abolition
of the slave trade: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach**

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Version 21 May 2013

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to expose “*events from the darker side of accountancy's past*” (Fleischman, Radcliffe & Vaughan, 2005, p. X), namely the use of accounting rhetoric in the debate on the abolition of the slave trade. The slave trade and its abolition have been much studied by social, economic and political historians. However, until recently, they have not been subject of much accounting research. This paper focuses on the slave trade in Great Britain in the late eighteenth century. It examines a previously unexplored area, namely the use of accounting concepts and accounting terminology (accounting rhetoric) in the parliamentary speeches of Richard Pennant, 1st Lord of Penrhyn, between 1788 and 1804. As a plantation owner, an MP for Liverpool, and the Chairman of the Society of West Indian Planters and Merchants, Richard Pennant represented the position of planters, merchants and traders who supported the slave trade. We employ a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to analyse the rhetoric and argument used in the parliamentary speeches of Richard Pennant and his private letters as an absentee plantation owner to his agents in Jamaica.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis; Slavery; Abolition; Rhetoric.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the eighteenth century the institution of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade it was based on became contentious. The legitimacy of colonial agricultural practices involving slave labour and of trading human beings was being questioned. It resulted in a public debate which lasted for fifty years, eighteen of which focused on the abolition of the slave trade. It permeated British society by involving politicians, clergymen, tradesmen, such as rope makers, bakers, and brewers, and middle-class housewives showing solidarity to the abolitionist cause by drinking tea without sugar.

Our paper focuses on the public discourse of the slave trade reflected in parliamentary debates. The slave trade is a social practice. Social practices are “*places where ‘agency’ meets ‘structure’*” (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 673) and thus constitute “*ways of controlling the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others, and the retention of these over time, in particular areas of social life*” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 23-24). Social practices are governed by social rules, norms, and beliefs. The debate on abolition constitutes an attempt to change a social practice and the resistance to such change, as the slave trade is deeply entrenched in the economic, political, and social fabric of eighteenth century Britain. Abolishing the slave trade thus entails changing social, political and economic structures which made up the ‘old colonial system’ (Ryden, 2009, p. 7).

The slave trade and its abolition are historical events that are important in economic, social and political terms, particularly in eighteenth century Great Britain. The triangular trade, as it was known, was a fundamental economic and cornerstone of the British Empire. Indeed, in parliamentary debates it was claimed that two thirds of the commerce of Great Britain depended on it (Lord Penrhyn, 1788). Socially, there was concern about the status of the ‘negroes’ which impacted on the debate on whether slavery should be abolished (Mathieson, 1926; Carey and Kitson, 2007; Oldfield 2003; Ryden 2003). Slavery was one of the most divisive issues in society, especially at the end of the century when William Wilberforce found himself in opposition to the Society of the West Indian Planters and Merchants on the issue of abolition. This was accompanied by vigorous debates in Parliament in the late 18th century. (Farrell, Unwin and Walvin, 2007). Public debates on moral and ethical issues were probably unprecedented in British history.

The slave trade has been much studied by social, economic and political historians. However, Vollmers (2003, p.371) maintains that “*despite these efforts, slavery is not fully understood*”. Fleischman (2004, p.9) comments that although slavery in the US “*has been studied from almost every conceivable angle by economic historians (2004, p.9), it is surprising that accounting historians have not found slavery a fertile field for research*”.¹ However, accounting played a key role in recording, measuring and establishing the worth of the individual slaves and of the productivity and profits of the merchants, traders and plantation holders (see, for example, Vollmers, 2003; Barney and Flesher, 1994; Anes, 2002). It provided an unseen technological infrastructure which made the trade possible. What is more, the use of ‘accounting rhetoric’ (Carruthers and Espeland 1991) or ‘accounting logic’ (Broadbent, 1998) in public controversies have not been studied in historical contexts.

1.1 Motivation

Our purpose is to examine accounting’s darker side and to show that it can be used to justify social practices. We do not wish to debate the fundamental moral question of whether in the eighteenth century slavery and the slave trade should have been considered the morally repugnant practices that they are viewed as today. We merely aim to show that accounting can be and was used as a rhetorical tool to advocate and support the slave trade and the institution of slavery. Our study has practical relevance in the sense that understanding the past involves valuable lessons and methodological tools to understand the present and change the future (Laughlin, 1987, p.482). Although slavery no longer exists as an institution, other forms of exploitation of labour in the present have many similarities to slavery, such as outsourcing manufacturing to Third World countries. Understanding the public debate about slavery can provide insights into current debates about human and animal rights and immigration. What is more, the situation of absentee landowners can be compared to today’s management of firms which have outsourced production to third-world countries where labour is cheap. Insights from the anti-abolition rhetoric can provide us with insights into current corporate rhetoric regarding social and environmental performance.

1.2 Contribution

Most of the prior work on the slave trade has focused on the transportation of the slaves and the associated costs. This prior research has provided a valuable understanding of these

¹ Since Fleishman (2004), however, there has been more attention paid to accounting and slavery, especially by Fleishman and his colleagues Oldroyd and Tyson.

processes. In this particular paper, a different aspect of the slave trade is examined, the use of accounting and accounting terminology in the arguments of the merchants and traders who supported the slave trade. As Oldroyd, Fleishman and Tyson comment, “*accounting data were likewise used for lobbying purposes in the debate over the abolition of slavery, although it tended to be the pro-slavery lobby rather than the abolitionists who made use of it in this way in order to demonstrate the economic perils of abandoning slavery*” (2008, p.773).

In particular, we focus on Richard Pennant’s role in the anti-abolition movement in the late 18th century. Richard Pennant was a key player in the anti-abolition movement. He owned sugar plantations in Jamaica and was a Member of Parliament for Liverpool, one of Britain’s most important slave trading ports, from 1784-1790.

Our data sources have previously not been used by accounting historians. They consist of two different types of data, (1) parliamentary speeches made by Richard Pennant, Lord Penrhyn, in the House of Commons between 1788 and 1804 and (2) correspondence by Richard Pennant with his London and Jamaican agents. These constitute original archival data from the period just before the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1807. This allows us to gain insights into how accounting concepts were used to defend the *status quo* and, in particular, to defend the slave trade. We apply Critical Discourse Analysis as an analytical framework to analyse the debate on abolition.

1.3 Structure of paper

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we introduce Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In Section 3 we describe our data and develop an analytical framework and categories of analysis which are applied in Section 4. We start by providing an overview of the slave trade and its importance in the eighteenth century. We then set out the specific context of our paper is concerned with Richard Pennant, First Lord of Penrhyn (1739-1808). This is followed by a rhetorical analysis of Richard Pennant’s parliamentary speeches between 1788 and 1804. The paper concludes in Section 5.

2. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a form of social research focusing on language which is regarded as dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). Focusing on the dialectic relationship between language and society, CDA addresses

how the content and the linguistic features of texts influence and are, in turn, influenced by the contexts of text production, distribution, reception and adaptation, and by the wider socio-economic context in which texts are embedded. CDA is critical in the sense that it studies “*the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text ... in the social and political context*” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 253). Discourses are specific ways of construing particular aspects of social life (e.g., different discourses on immigration, on climate change, or on the abolition of the slave trade) which can be identified with different perspectives of various groups of social actors (Fairclough, 2009, p. 164). Discourses thus represent specific perspectives on the social world and can be differentiated by specific stances expressed by a group of people who share specific beliefs and values. Discourses constitute ideas as well as specific ways of talking/writing which influence and are influenced by these ideas (Fairclough, 1993).

Slavery is an institution based on racism. It is based on the dominance of one social group over another based on race (i.e., skin colour). Dominance constitutes power abuse which is based on and legitimated by ideology. Ideology refers to the specific social beliefs of a group of people, in our case anti-abolitionists. Anti-abolitionists subscribe to a racist ideology based on the inequality of a group of people based on skin colour. The basic beliefs of an ideology organise specific attitudes about an issue, in our case the slave trade. Social dominance is institutionalised in the sense that it is not just enacted by group members, but also condoned by other group members, sanctioned by the courts (legalised, enshrined in law), legitimated by laws, enforced by the police, and ideologically sustained by newspapers. Racism is a social system of inequality, consisting of two main subsystems, (1) a social system of discriminatory actions at the micro-level and (2) group dominance at the macro-level and a cognitive system of racial ideologies controlling specific ethnic attitudes (van Dijk, 2000: 2). Due to the dialectic relationship between language and society racism manifests itself linguistically in the discourses used by specific groups of people.

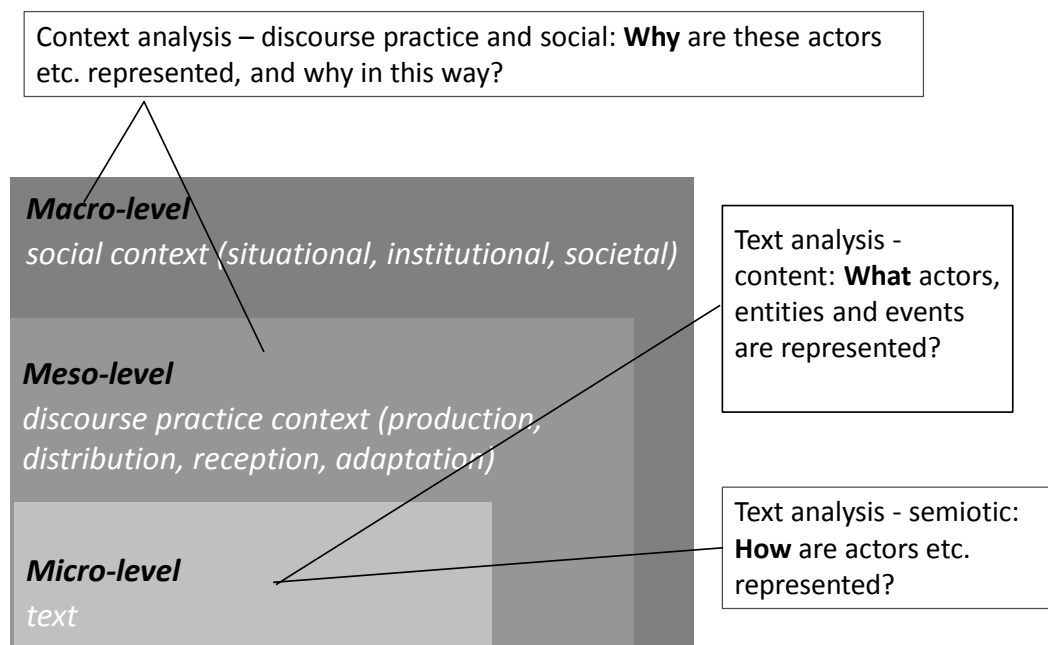
The focus of analysis in this paper is the use of rhetoric and argument used in parliamentary debates on abolition. Arguments constitute the verbal means by which speakers/writers aim to exert influence on their audience in a verbal exchange (Amossy, 2001). Rhetoric “*is the science and art of persuasive language use*” (Reisigl, 2008: 96) and thus constitutes an essential element of arguments. Rhetoric constitutes a powerful means of reinforcing racist

ideology and manufacturing consent by means of dominant discourses on slavery and the slave trade.

2.1 Levels of analysis: Text and context

Rhetoric is embedded in ‘the rhetorical situation’, i.e., the social context in which the verbal exchange takes place. The rhetorical situation consists of three interrelated elements: (1) the speaker/writer, (2) the audience(s), and (3) the purpose of communication. The use of rhetoric influences, and is, in turn, influenced by the rhetorical situation. Fairclough (2010) operationalises this dialectic relationship between language and society in a framework consisting of three levels of analysis, namely (1) the text itself (micro-level), (2) the context of producing, distributing, receiving and possibly adapting texts within a discourse community (meso-level), and (3) the dynamic socio-economic context in which the discourse community can be located (macro-level). The three interrelated levels of analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Levels of analysis



(Adapted from Fairclough, 1995: 98)

2.1.1 Micro-level analysis

Micro-level text analysis focuses on the specific linguistic features which are of particular importance for the text under investigation. These are dependent on the research objective, the genre of the text, the audience at which it is aimed, and the discourse(s) it incorporates. In parliamentary speeches rhetoric is used to convince opponents. The analysis of Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches focuses on the use of rhetoric as a means of framing and representing the slave trade and the social actors involved in it.

2.1.2 Meso-level analysis

Meso-level analysis explains the reasons for the representation strategies in the text by recourse to the discourse practice context which includes the production, distribution, reception and possible adaptation of texts. An analysis of the discourse practice context focuses on the roles of members of a discourse community and the relationships between them. In the case of Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches the focus of analysis is on the relationship between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists, and the British public. Both for text producers and recipients discourse practice also involves issues of unequal discourse access due to asymmetrical power between participants. In the parliamentary debates on abolition anti-abolitionists use rhetoric retrospectively to respond to an existing rhetorical situation characterised by growing pressure from abolitionists to abolish the slave trade.

2.1.3 Macro-level analysis

Macro-level analysis involves taking the wider social formation into account to interpret the findings of the text analysis. The aim of the analysis is to explain why social actors are represented in a specific way. Depending on the text in question, the focus may be on historical, economic, political, or cultural formations or on a combination of them. The focus of analysis is on details of the social formation (for example, the roles allocated to people), and on changes in the social formation and reasons for these changes. This entails an analysis of the role of slavery in the socio-political and economic framework of eighteenth century Britain.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this section we briefly outline our data and develop the analytical framework and categories of analysis employed to analyse Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches. The empirical application is carried out in Section 4.

3.1 Data

We examine the role of accounting rhetoric used by Richard Pennant in his parliamentary speeches to defend the slave trade. These are contained in the Hansard. We also examine the letters written by Richard Pennant to his agents in London and Jamaica from 1782 to 1808 and the plantation accounts provided by his agents. They are contained in the Penrhyn Castle papers at the Bangor University archives.

3.2 Analytical framework

Our analytical framework is based on three levels of analysis, namely (1) a rhetorical analysis of Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches (text), (2) an analysis of the rhetorical situation (discourse practice context), and (3) the socio-economic and political context of late eighteenth century Britain (the macro-context) in which the speeches are embedded. The rhetorical analysis is based on the view of rhetoric and argument as social action and focuses on the strategies used to achieve social and political goals.

As rhetoric and argument is embedded in the social context in which the interaction takes place, the categories of analysis emerge during an iterative process of going back and forth between the theoretical concepts developed in Section 2 of the paper and the empirical data described in Section 3.1. The data analysis and interpretation was preceded by the authors familiarising themselves with the theories and concepts of rhetoric and argument. This was followed by a number of close readings of the parliamentary speeches in order to provide a high level familiarity and understanding of the data. Following the close readings, initial analytical categories were selected for analysis based on their ability to capture rhetoric and argument in the speeches. These were refined a number of times by means of going forwards and backwards between theories and concepts and empirical data until we were satisfied that the analytical framework and categories of analysis were able to capture the dynamics of interaction during the parliamentary debates. We have made our analysis as transparent as possible, for example, by providing illustrative examples throughout the presentation of findings in Section 4 and by providing a full analysis of the speeches in the form of an appendix.

3.3. Categories of analysis

Arguments consist of three elements: (1) the claims or statements made, (2) the assumptions or beliefs underlying these statements, and (3) the evidence provided for the claims. Rhetoric constitutes a means of persuading others to change their attitudes, beliefs, values or actions (Cheney et al. 2004: 80) and is thus part of the evidence provided for a specific claim. Our rhetorical framework is based on classical Aristotelian rhetoric which differentiates between three types of rhetorical strategies: (1) *logos* (appeal to logic), *pathos* (appeal to emotion), and *ethos* (appeal to values or to the authority of the speaker / a respected person or social group). *Logos* aims to convince audiences by means of using facts and figures, including accounting numbers (accounting rhetoric) to back up a claim. It involves using discourse from the domains of science, technology, bureaucracy, law and business to persuade audiences of the validity and legitimacy of the claim. It makes the speaker/writer seem knowledgeable, thus enhancing their authority (*ethos*). *Ethos* is used to persuade audiences by means of either appealing to the authority of the speaker/writer or to the authority of another social actor (e.g., an expert, an independent authority or a person of high social or moral standing in the community). *Pathos* is aimed at invoking an emotional response and empathy. The use of metaphors constitutes an effective way of evoking an emotional response and having a psychological impact on the audience (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2005).

Metaphors involve an implied comparison between two entities, achieved through a figurative use of words (e.g., top management, fringe benefits, and front-line staff). They entail “*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5). For example, we conventionally conceptualise money as liquid (e.g., cash flow, liquidation of a firm, to run out of money) or organisations as machines (e.g., human resources, communication has broken down). Metaphors work by conveying abstract concepts (such as money or time) in concrete terms (e.g., as physical objects, spatial orientations or fixed structures relating to everyday human experience). As human beings find it difficult to relate to abstractions, metaphors capture the audience’s imagination and are therefore effective means of influencing audiences’ thinking and behaviour.⁵

Due to their function as both heuristic and persuasive devices, metaphors play a central role in rhetoric and argument. As highlighted by the linguistic ‘turn’ in the social sciences, we perceive social phenomena only in terms of the images used to represent them (Gabriel, 2004: 63). Thus, metaphors play a key role in knowledge construction and constitute “*a way*

of knowing” (Walters, 2004: 160). Making claims or statements invariably involves the use of metaphors. Metaphors reinforce specific perceptions and ways of thinking about an issue while ignoring others. For this reason, they not only function as a means of knowledge production, but also as a means of perception engineering (Walters, 2004). Metaphors thus play a key role in influencing others’ thinking and behaviour. This means that they are intrinsically rhetorical. Metaphors are also indicative of social actors’ underlying values and beliefs. They provide an insight into the assumptions underlying a claim or statement made on a particular issue. For this reason, metaphors play an instrumental role in constructing and reproducing ideologies and justifying social action and behaviour. In fact, the persuasive power of metaphors lies in their ability to “*tap ... into an accepted communal system of values*” (Charteris-Black, 2004: 12). They are thus a common feature in the speeches of political and corporate leaders (see, for example, Amernic et al. 2007; Charteris-Black, 2005; Cox, 2012). Metaphors tend to occur in the form of differentiation, i.e., significant pairings, contrasts, or dualisms, such as up-down, mind-body, public-private, etc. which are often seen “*in contradiction to each other, frequently with one term assuming dominance*” (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 670). Thus, social actors, actions, and events are often constructed in relation to each other in terms of dualisms. Arguments relating to the continuation of the slave trade involve the construction of actors implicated in the slave trade, namely slaves, plantation owners, and merchants. It also involves the construction of actors involved in the debate on the slave trade, namely the abolitionists on the one hand and the anti-abolitionists on the other hand. Thus, differentiation is used to construct diametrically opposed labels for slaves and slave traders/owners and for abolitionists and anti-abolitionists. The dualism of white–black is implicated in the domination of people of colour (Goatly, 2007: 116). In Western cultures the colour white is associated with positive traits, such as cleanliness and purity (e.g., to whitewash, white knight) and of the colour black with negative traits, such as dirt and vice (e.g., black market, to blacken) are realised non-linguistically in racist attitudes and behaviour.

4. FINDINGS: RICHARD PENNANT AND ABOLITION

We apply the analytical framework and the categories of analysis outlined in Section 3 to analyse the defence of the slave trade by Richard Pennant in the course of various parliamentary speeches focusing on abolition.

4.1 Socio-economic context: Eighteenth Century, Trade Commerce and Exploitation

For the North American Colonies, the British ports and the Caribbean Islands in the period before the American War of Independence (1776-1783), the production of sugar in the West Indies “*was considered to be the source of fantastic personal wealth, substantial tax revenues and national pride*” (Ryden, 2009, p.1). It was certainly commonly believed to be the pivotal point of Britain’s Atlantic economy.

England’s overseas empire in the early eighteenth century consisted of territories in Europe, Asia, Africa and America. The American territories economically became part of what is usually called the triangular system. This was similar for both France and England, major trading nations. The ships first of all were made ready for departure from European ports. They then sailed to the African coast where the first exchange was made of European merchandise for African slaves. The ships then made their second journey from Africa to the Americas. In the colonies, the African slaves were exchanged for trade goods primarily sugar, tobacco and indigo. The ship then returned home where the goods were sold and the ship could refit for its next voyage (see, McWatters and Lemarchand, 2009 especially for details of the English and French organisations).

A key aspect of this triangular trade was thus “*The need for manual labour to work the sugar plantations of the Caribbean Islands [which] led to the import of slaves from Africa*” (Cox, 1984, p.522). At first, from 1672 the Royal Africa company held a monopoly of royal trade with Africa, but in 1765 this monopoly ended (Morgan, 2003). Africa became a key source of slave labour for the Americas (Law, 2003)

British Trade was conducted to serve Great Britain. The key pillars of this were the Navigation Acts and the mercantilist system. The Navigation Acts, which stemmed from the mid-1600s effectively subordinated the interests of the colonies to those of the mother country. “*The general feeling was that the colonies existed for the benefit of Great Britain as a whole, specifically as a stimulant to British shipping, trade and eventual economic growth*” (Cox,1984,p.520). The Navigation Acts were a central part of the mercantilist system. They specified a number of colonial goods which must be shipped directly to the UK ports. Only when local demands were adequately met could some of these items be re-exported to foreign territories. This arrangement provided the colonies with a protected market for their goods

and Great Britain with a guaranteed outlet for its manufactures (Cox, 1984, p.521). This system was protected by the British Navy (Ward, 1969).

As a result of this system, economic growth in Britain was boosted by shipping, sugar refining and rum distilling which clearly relied heavily on West Indian slave labour; more than a tenth of English shipping was always engaged either directly or indirectly in areas affected by it (Cox, 1984, p.22). This trade therefore benefited a wide range of commercial interests such as London merchants and West Indian planters. Anes (2002), for example, studied the accounts of the England South Sea Company from 1718-22. He found that the company itself profited considerably from the slave trade. There were also wider benefits. “*For the overall trade of black slaves to America was a highly lucrative business in the early eighteenth century that led to a significant development of British harbours like London, Bristol and Liverpool*” (Anes, 2002, p.441). Given that all this wealth hinged upon the employment of slaves then it is unsurprising that there was a strong anti-abolition lobby.

O’Shaughnessy (1997) identified four lobby groups, the island agents; London merchants; West Indian planters; and British members of parliament. All were active lobbyists of the British government and won major concessions during the American Revolution. Before the 1760s, these interest groups largely lacked formal organisation. The American revolutionary war (1775-1783), however, created problems for the West Indian trade ranging from piracy to lack of provisions from the North American colonies. As a result of these troubles two organisations gained in strength, A Society of West Indian Merchants and A Society of Planters in which Richard Pennant was active. Indeed, by 1782-83, there was a standing committee of members of merchants and planters chaired by Richard Pennant. This society was thus organised so that they could provide a united front when fighting against the abolition of slavery. The abolition movement emerged at the end of the eighteenth century with, for example ‘*The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade*’ founded in 1787 (Oldfield, 2003). See Appendix 2 for a time-line of key events and Richard Pennant’s involvement in the anti-abolition movement.

Richard Pennant had connections with all four lobby groups supporting the slave trade and can thus be regarded as a key player in the anti-abolition movement. As well as being a plantation owner and MP for Liverpool, the biggest slave port in Great Britain, Richard Pennant was also the chairman of the *Society of West Indian Planters and Merchants* (the

Society), an organisation of merchants and plantation owners, during the abolition debate. The Society was “*the primary defender of the planters’ self-proclaimed right to earn profits, publishing pamphlets, drafting memorials and petitions, and lobbying MPs and the king’s ministers*” (Beck Ryden, 2009, 37). Richard Pennant’s key role in the *Society* becomes clear in the sense that he is listed as the second most frequent attendee at the meetings. There were 280 meetings between 1785 and 1807 of which he attended 133, i.e. 47.5%. Only William Chisholme attended more, namely 136. He also chaired almost 50% of the meetings, i.e. 135 of them. The society was also at the forefront of the fight to retain the slave trade. From 1788 Richard Pennant chaired a special *Society* sub-committee to organise opposition to abolition. Its tactics included sponsoring petitions to parliament and producing pamphlets that supported the slave trade and explained its economic benefits. The sub-committee was empowered to spend *Society’s* funds which were derived from a self-imposed tax on tropical commodities collected by city merchants. In 1792 and 1793, at the height of their campaign, the sub-committee spent twice as much £2,096 (approximately £210,000 in today’s money) on defending the slave trade as the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade spent on attacking it (Ryden, 2009). They were a very well organised business lobby who regarded the abolition movement not only as an economic threat in terms of cutting off their labour supply, but also as a socio-political threat in terms of undermining the ‘old colonial system’ (Ryden, 2009, p. 7).

Richard Pennant was an absentee landowner. His letters to his agents in Jamaica show him an astute businessman who was very much involved in the running of his plantations, giving detailed instructions and advice.² Richard Pennant clearly regarded his slaves as livestock, as he uses the term ‘chattels’ to refer to both cattle and slaves. In his letters to his agents in Jamaica he routinely enquires after the health of this ‘negroes’ and cattle and asks for both not to be ‘overworked’.

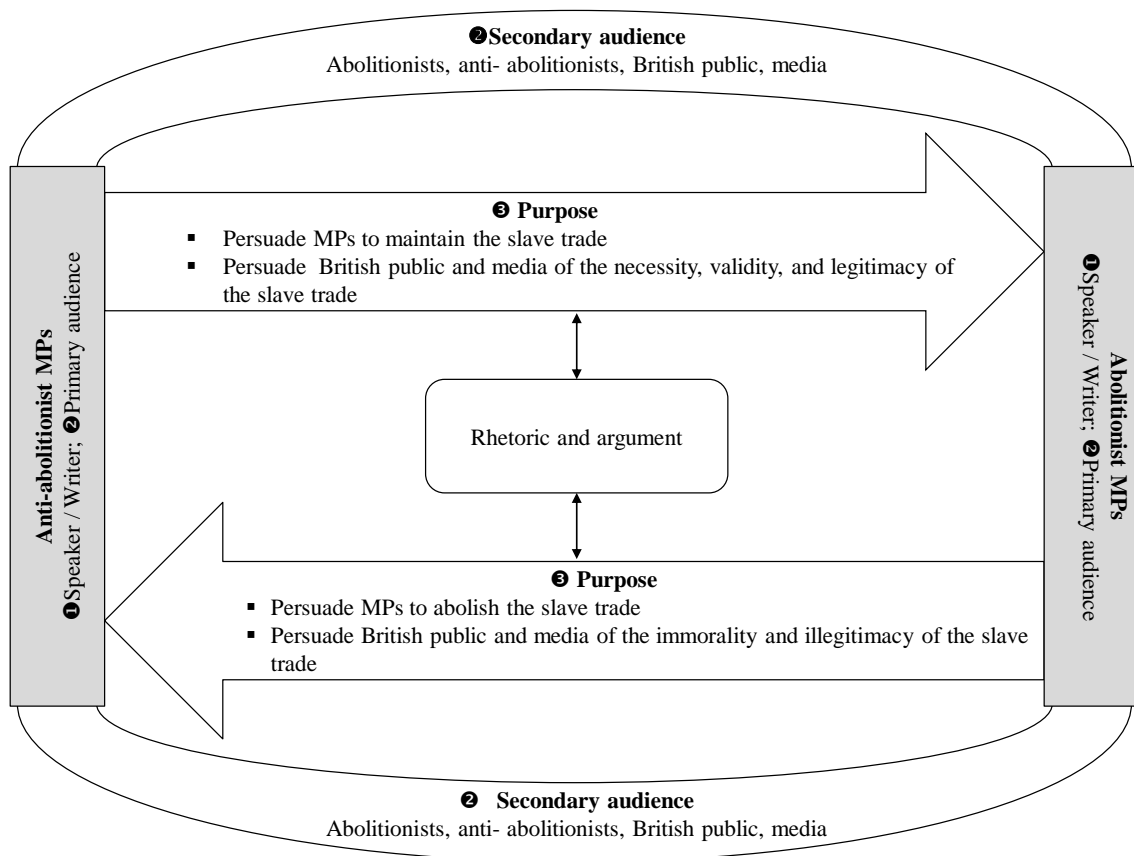
4.2 Discourse practice context

Figure 2 shows the role of rhetoric and argument in the parliamentary speeches of both anti-abolitionists and abolitionists to depend on the discourse practice context or rhetorical situation which characterises the issue of abolition. The parliamentary speeches are not only directed at fellow MPs, but also at wider audiences, including the British public and the

² Richard Pennant was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he enrolled in 1754.

media. Before 1771 there were no public records of parliamentary debates which were considered Parliamentary privilege. However, at the end of the eighteenth century the British public became increasingly interested in parliamentary debates. This resulted in the publication of unofficial accounts of parliamentary debates. These early publications are not based on transcripts of debates, but on a variety of sources, including newspaper reports. For this reason, they cannot be absolutely relied on.

Figure 2: The discourse practice context in the abolition of the slave trade



In his parliamentary speeches from 1788 to 1804 Richard Pennant argues both in defence of the slave trade and in defence of the three professions implicated in the slave trade, namely the planters, traders, and merchants. As a plantation owner and MP for Liverpool, the biggest slave trading port in Great Britain at the time, he represents the interests of all three groups in the House of Parliament. Thus, Richard Pennant's parliamentary speeches simultaneously serve two purposes, namely (1) to persuade MPs to maintain the slave trade and (2) to persuade the British public and the media of the necessity, validity and legitimacy of the slave trade, including the moral virtue of the planters, merchants, and traders. Conversely, the parliamentary speeches by abolitionists, including William Wilberforce also serve two

purposes, namely (1) to persuade MPs to abolish the slave trade and (2) to persuade the British public and the media of the immorality and illegitimacy of the slave trade, including the immorality of the planters, merchants and traders.

4.3 Text analysis

We analyse the parliamentary speeches of Richard Pennant from 1788 to 1804 using the analytical categories outlined in Section 3.3. The parliamentary speeches are provided in Appendix 1. From Richard Pennant's point of view as a plantation owner, the abolition of the slave trade does not only have adverse economic consequences in terms of cutting off his labour supply, but also poses a social and political threat to other plantation owners and members of the British aristocracy whose entire existence is built on a system of inequality and exploitation. By the time Richard Pennant makes his first parliamentary speech relating to the slave trade in 1788 abolitionists have already won public support for their cause based on moral arguments originating in Christian belief focusing on the humanity of the slaves (Crawford, 2002). This is evidenced by 102 petitions with 60,000 signatures supporting the abolition of the slave trade sent to Parliament in the same year. This means that anti-abolitionists are responding to an existing rhetorical situation which forces them to adopt a defensive position. What is more, with the public opposing the slave trade on moral grounds, anti-abolitionists advocate its continuation using economic, social, and political arguments. We summarise Richard Pennant's main arguments relating to the defence of the slave trade and the defence of the groups involved in the slave trade in Tables 2 and 3.

It is the economic arguments that are the most pertinent for our purposes. Broadly these arguments concern the interests of the planters, merchants, and traders, but wider economic arguments are advanced. He argues that abolishing the slave trade would have a negative economic impact on merchants and traders and on planters who depend on slaves as a source of cheap labour. Using statistics as a rhetorical tool he argues that abolition would not only wipe out "*seventy millions of property*" in the colonies, but also "*two thirds of the commerce of this country*". He also points out the socio-political consequences of abolition in terms of undermining the colonial system and upsetting the social and political order ("*subordination and good governance*") by giving slaves and poor white people a taste of what he refers to as "*wild and lawless freedom*". The economic and socio-political order threatened by abolition is depicted in a contemporary picture entitled "A scene of West Indian Industry" which is used as the cover image for Ryden's (2009) book on West Indian slavery and abolition. An

open ledger book symbolises accounting’s key role in maintaining this order as a legitimating device for the sugar business.

Table 1: Arguments in defence of the slave trade		
<p>Economic <i>There were mortgages in the West India Islands to the amount of seventy millions if they passed the vote of abolition, they actually struck at seventy millions of property Essential benefits the country had derived from it [the slave trade] the hardship of merchants being deprived of trade they enjoyed for so many years Two-thirds of the commerce of this country depended [on the slave trade] Supply of negroes absolutely necessary for the cultivation and improvement of the British Plantations in the West Indies No man’s property shall be injured Seventy millions of property [the] idea, that sugar could be cheaply cultivated by freemen ... had been tried ... in vain. They ruined the colonies some consideration was due to those whose property was deeply affected</i></p>	<p>Political <i>Most serious and alarming mischief Disastrous events Deplorable situation they ruined the colonies gave up the dominion of the sea the danger to be apprehended from its extending to the West Indies, where the disproportion of blacks and whites was so great state of savage anarchy subordination and good governance in the British West India colonies Negroes to make a general struggle for a wild and lawless freedom desolation and bloodshed</i></p>	<p>Social <i>Most serious and alarming mischief Disastrous events Deplorable situation actions of the greatest atrocities are hourly committed subordination and good governance in the British West India colonies Negroes to make a general struggle for a wild and lawless freedom desolation and bloodshed</i></p>

Richard Pennant defends the traders and merchants involved in the slave trade by means of economic and legal arguments. He fends off accusations of the inhumanity of the slave trade by an argument based on instrumental rationality. As slaves constitute assets, it is not in the interest of traders and merchants to “*torment and distress them during their passage, so as to endanger their lives*”, as their “*profit depends on the health and vigour of the African natives*”. Thus arguments of instrumental rationality are used to make humanitarian arguments for treating slaves well. He also argues that the slave trade constitutes a legal

activity which is carried out “*under the sanction and faith of parliament*”, it cannot be regarded as inhumane. He thus equals legality with morality.

Table 2: Arguments in defence of traders and merchants	
<p>Economic <i>Men whose profit depended on the health and vigour of the African natives</i> <i>The interest of the merchants themselves must induce them to be more tender of men, whose lives, were so valuable to them</i> <i>the whole profit of the voyage of the captains employed in the Slave Trade arose from the number of negroes they could bring to the West-India market in good health; and therefore it was so much their interest to preserve them</i></p>	<p>Legal <i>No crime</i> <i>Legal trade</i> <i>The encouragement the legislature held out to individuals to embark their fortunes in it [the slave trade]</i> <i>Under the sanction and faith of parliament depriving persons, so interested as his constituents were in the Slave Trade, of their rightful advantages by an “<i>ex post facto</i>” law. The African merchants ... had an undoubted right to call for an early investigation of the subject</i> <i>a leading principle of the British Constitution that no man’s property shall be injured by an Act of the Legislature without full compensation being allowed him.</i></p>

Richard Pennant uses a variety of fallacies to establish truth claims about the validity and legitimacy of the slave trade. First, he discredits opponents (*argumentum ad hominem*) by setting up a dichotomy between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists (see Table 3). He constructs anti-abolitionists as incorporating key values of the Enlightenment period, namely men of authority who are in search of truth and who base their arguments on reason, rather than emotion. In contrast to them, abolitionists are portrayed as driven by emotion, rather than reason. Abolitionists are portrayed as highly-strung, acting on “*infatuation, almost bordering on frenzy*”. This causes them base their arguments on ‘hearsay’ and ‘idle stories’, rather than on fact. In 1789 he attempts to discredit his opponent, Mr. Wilberforce, by using the strategy of predication to describe his arguments as biased (*misrepresented, misquoted*) and unreliable (*no reliance*) and thus not resulting in what could be described as a true and fair view (*fair state of the case*).

Table 3: Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation: Abolitionists versus anti-abolitionists

Abolitionists	Anti-abolitionists
<p><i>To be founded on facts that were not true</i> <i>Contradictory</i></p>	<p><i>Full, candid, and sober investigation</i> <i>For the sake of truth, and the satisfaction of reason</i></p>
<p><i>Founded on hear-say</i></p>	<p><i>He had the full authority from the traders and merchants of Liverpool</i></p>
<p><i>False</i></p>	<p><i>Attack upon them, which was not justified by either fact or necessity</i></p>
<p><i>Absurd</i></p>	
<p><i>Intemperate discussion</i></p>	
<p><i>Idle stories</i></p>	
<p><i>Groundless calumnies</i></p>	
<p><i>Doctrines</i></p>	
<p><i>Infatuation almost bordering on frenzy</i></p>	
<p><i>The hon. gentleman [Wilberforce] has misrepresented so many articles with respect to the West Indies</i></p>	
<p><i>No reliance whatever could be placed on the picture he chose to exhibit</i></p>	
<p><i>He [Wilberforce] ... misquoted him, and overlooked many things essential to a fair state of the case</i></p>	
<p><i>Calumny and misrepresentation</i></p>	
<p><i>Ill-founded calumny</i></p>	

Richard Pennant uses a similar strategy to construct the two groups of social actors who are part of the institution of slavery, namely black Africans and white Europeans (see Table 4). This differentiation between two groups of people based on race is achieved by labelling them as black and white, as these two colours are highly loaded in Western cultures, with white standing for purity, innocence, and cleanliness and black standing for sin, guilt, and dirt. For example, Richard Pennant uses the phrase in connection with the planters whose characters have been ‘blackened’ by abolitionists. He differentiates the white social actors by means of their profession as planters, traders, and merchants. By contrast, black social actors are entirely defined by their colour (*black, Negro*), their place of birth (*African native*), and their relationship to white people (*slave*). Stripped of their individuality, humanity, and voice, they are entirely defined in legal and economic terms. They constitute property and a factor of production. Constructed as property, any attempt by the government to deprive the owners of their property warrants monetary compensation.³ By constructing slaves as property, he

³ His heir, George Hay Dawkins-Pennant receives £13,770 pounds (CANNOT ADD UP THE SHILLINGS AND PENCE) of compensation for the 704 slaves on the Jamaican plantations in 1835.

achieves two purposes, namely (1) establishing abolition as illegal, as it infringes on property rights and (2) any attempt by the government to deprive slave owners of their property as warranting monetary compensation. As a factor of production, they become conceptualised as assets which are used to generate profits. As accounting is based on instrumental, rather than substantive rationality, it is unable to distinguish between moral and amoral activities. Thus, “*the only metric of value is profit or loss*” (Chwastiak and Lehman, 2008, p. 322). Richard Pennant’s letters to his agents in Jamaica indicate that he clearly regards the ‘negroes’ on his own plantations in Jamaica as livestock. Thus his concerns are limited to its replenishment by means of regular purchases of new ‘negroes’ and to the health of his ‘negroes’ and cattle.

In 1790 he appeals to the fear of black insurrection (*argumentum ad baculum*) by pointing out the ratio of black and white people in the West Indies, which causes him to “*tremble for the consequences*” abolition may have. In 1804 makes a similar argument by pointing out the adverse consequences of abolition in the form of social and political unrest in the West Indian colonies. Arguing that slaves are unable to distinguish between abolition and emancipation, he appeals to the fear (*argumentum ad baculum*) of black revolution by citing the example of St. Domingo (Haiti), where the Haitian Revolution of 1791 to 1803 resulted in the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the first republic of ruled by former African slaves. For this purpose, the strategy of predication is used to qualify the Haitian Revolution as a ‘disastrous’ event. He refers to the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the republic of Haiti as “*the present deplorable situation*” which has resulted in a “*state of savage anarchy*” with “*actions of the greatest atrocity [being] hourly committed*”. He uses the strategy of intensification (*greatest* and *hourly*) to underline the danger of abolition. He sets up a dichotomy of black and white people, with white people being described as law-abiding and civilised, and black people described as uncivilised savages who have to be controlled by the institution of slavery in order for society not to descend into chaos.

Richard Pennant regards the abolition of slavery as undermining economic, social and political structures which secure the privilege of the white land-owning aristocracy. Although these racial stereo-types are no longer acceptable in today’s society, the discursive strategy of labelling is still in use today, for example in the current debate on welfare in the UK.

Table 4: In-group out-group polarisation: White (British) versus Black (Africans)

White	Black
<i>Merchants</i>	<i>African native</i>
<i>Planters</i>	<i>Negro</i>
<i>Traders</i>	<i>Slave</i>
<i>Good governance</i>	<i>Desolation</i>
<i>No crime</i>	<i>Bloodshed</i>
<i>Subordination</i>	<i>Mischief</i>
	<i>Actions of greatest atrocity</i>
	<i>Uncivilised</i>
	<i>Wild and lawless freedom</i>
	<i>Savage anarchy</i>

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper seeks to contribute to the recent debate on the implication of accounting in the institution of slavery. It looks at a previously unexplored area of the use of accounting rhetoric as a discursive strategy of argumentation in the debate on abolition by means of exploring the arguments of the anti-abolition lobby, particularly that of British Plantation owners and, in particular, Richard Pennant. To do this it employs a novel analytical framework in the form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). We analyse the discursive strategies in the parliamentary speeches by Richard Pennant, an MP for Liverpool and key player in the anti-abolition movement, in the House of Commons between 1788 and 1804 in defence of the slave trade. We find that accounting rhetoric is used as a key discursive strategy to defend the slave trade and the institution of slavery. Slaves are seen in the language of accounting to be assets and part of the business infrastructure of slave owners. These arguments are not only self-interested, but also paved the way, in due course, for the slave owners to be compensated for their loss of assets.

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Appendix 1: Analysis of Richard Pennant's Parliamentary speeches regarding the abolition of the slave trade		
	Analysis of discursive strategies	Rhetorical intent
9 May 1788		Claim 1, Merchants and planters are blameless
Lord Penrhyn thought that the petitions intended to incriminate ⁽²⁾ two types of persons ,; viz. the African merchants , and the West-India planters . He was convinced. That upon any inquiry, the merchants would be exonerated ⁽²⁾ from that blame which had been so profusely ⁽⁵⁾ thrown upon ⁽¹⁾ them. The planters were ready to appear in vindication of their conduct, and would not be pleased at the postponement of the affairs.	⁽²⁾ Planters and merchants are wrongly accused of wrong-doing ⁽¹⁾ Hyperbolic metaphor, blame is thrown on merchants like a net. They are portrayed as innocent passive victims ⁽⁵⁾ intensifies the act of blame throwing	Merchants and planters blameless. They are innocent victims who wrongly accused by abolitionists who bombard them with false accusations.
21 May 1788		Claim 2, Abolitionists use false evidence
Lord Penrhyn rose to express his disappropriation of the evidence on which the honourable gentleman [] has founded his complaint. It appeared ⁽⁵⁾ to him contradictory in itself chiefly founded on hear-say , and the greatest part of it absolutely false .	⁽⁵⁾ mitigation	Lord Penrhyn tries to discredit petitions by abolitions by accusing them to be based on illogical argumentation (fallacy), based on rumour, rather than fact, and untrue
Debate in the Commons on the African Slave Bill, 26 May 1788		Claim 3, Denial of cruelty towards slaves
Lord Penrhyn denied that the cruel ⁽²⁾ practices ⁽¹⁾ asserted ⁽⁵⁾ to prevail had ever existed. It was absurd to suppose that men, whose profit depended on the health and vigour of the African natives , would purposely torment and distress them during their passage, so as to endanger their lives ⁽³⁾ . He flatly denied the fact. The merchants of Liverpool were anxious for an inquiry; but for what sort of an inquiry? Not a hasty, intemperate discussion, but a full, candid and sober investigation, for the sake of truth , and the satisfaction of reason . Whenever such an inquiry took place, it would be found that the idle stories of cruelty, reported to be common on board the African ships, were groundless calumnies . He had full authority from the merchants and traders of Liverpool to say, that they would themselves come forward with a bill during the ensuing session, or assist the House in forming one, to put the Trade under proper regulation .	⁽²⁾ Discursive qualification ⁽¹⁾ ill-treatment of slaves described with the neutral collective term 'practices' ⁽³⁾ instrumental rationality, economic argument based on the use of an accounting concept	Claim 3, It is against business interests to damage (harm) their property Claim 4, An unemotional (rational) debate is needed
28 May 1788⁴		
Lord Penrhyn brought up a petition from the merchants and traders of Liverpool, stating the long existence of the African Slave Trade; the		Claim 5, Country has benefitted from slavery debate

⁴ Society sub-committee petition in support of the slave trade is presented by Richard to the House of Commons.

<p>essential benefits the country had derived from it; the encouragement the legislature held out to individuals to embark their fortunes init; and the <i>injury</i> that they must necessarily suffer from any sudden measure being taken respecting it. Having heard, therefore, that a bill was in the house for the purpose of operating a partial regulation, which they conceived to be founded on facts that were not true, they prayed to be heard by themselves and their counsel against the said bill. The petition was ordered to lie on the table, and the petitioners were ordered to be allowed to be heard by their counsel on the second reading of the Bill. Mr. Ewer brought up a petition from the merchants of London to the same effect with the Liverpool petition, and similar motions were put upon it, and agreed to.</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, that the hon. gentleman [Mr. Martin] had asked, what grounds there could be for the opposition to the Bill? For his own part, he could declare, that his constituents, under the sanction and faith of parliament, had continued for many years to carry out the African Trade; that they had every reason to think it a legal Trade, and such as they might pursue without imputation of inhumanity. Such ships had not yet sailed, were equipped and ready, and his constituents thought it hard that they should be prevented from sending them on their voyages , when they had committed no crime, and because the credulity of some persons had been imposed upon. Was that no ground for opposing the Bill? The hon. Baronet had talked a great deal of the petitions, and had stated many strong facts against the petitioners. After what has been said, might not the petitioners have a wish to clear themselves; and was not that a reasonable wish? The hon. baronet doubted whether they would come to the bar. Did he think that they would not have their characters cleared; most undoubtedly they would. The hon. baronet had urged the great necessity of passing his bill in the present session. What effect would it produce? The greatest part of the ships employed in the African trade were already sailed; it could not therefore have any operation upon them; and those captains who were yet to sail, after what had passed in that house would be cautious in what they did from principles of prudence, if they were not influenced by motives of pure humanity. What inducements any persons might have to disperse calumny he knew not, but he was certain the merchants of Liverpool had been grossly calumniated. The petitioners considered the bill as an attack upon them, which was not justified by either fact or necessity. It singled them out from every other description of merchants, therefore, feeling it to be as</p>		<p>It was a legal and humane trade</p>

unwarrantable as it was ill timed, they were determined to dispute its principle throughout.		
Lord Penrhyn represented the hardship of merchants being deprived of trade they enjoyed for so many years, on account of the calumny and misrepresentation of some, and the credulity of others. The many lives alleged to be lost in the transportation, was, in his mind, a convincing argument against its truth, for setting humanity out of the question, the interest of the merchants themselves must induce them to be more tender of men, whose lives were so valuable to them. Supposing even the whole of the allegations to be true, the Bill Would now be too late for any good effect, as most of the vessels destined for that trade had already sailed, and such as had not, would be taught at least sufficient caution by what had already passed on the subject, and what was still more expected shortly to take place		Merchants were deprived of trade and this forced economic hardship. Against common sense for slaves to be treated badly given their economic value. No action needed because ships would be more cautious anyway given the debate.
16 June 1788		
Lord Penrhyn said, he was at a loss		
17 June 1788		
Lord Penrhyn contended against <i>depriving</i> persons, so interested as his constituents were in the Slave Trade, of their <i>rightful advantages</i> by an “ex post facto” law. The measure would abolish the Trade, as far as the present traders were concerned in it. On the African Trade, it ought to be remembered, that two thirds of the commerce of this country depended [sic!]. The Committee [for the Abolition of the Slave Trade] might prevent Great Britain from carrying on the Trade, but they would not prevent other countries from carrying it on, they would therefore not befriend the Africans .		Should not deprive people of their rightful advantages by an after the event law. Two thirds of commerce of country depends on slave trade.
1788		
Lord Penrhyn said, there were two descriptions of men, one, those who where [sic!] concerned in the African trade; the other, the planters, whose characters had been blackened , and whose conduct had been grossly calumniated; both wished anxiously that an inquiry might be instituted, conscious that the more their conduct was examined, the less they would be found to merit the opprobrium with which they had been loaded. The charges against the Slave Trader were either true or false. If true, the Trade ought to be abolished; if false, justice ought to be done to the characters of those who were concerned in it.		The planters wanted an enquiry as they were innocent If slave traders were guilty then trade should be abolished, if not justice should be done.
Lord Penrhyn said, that he only spoke for himself and his constituents, when he pressed for an immediate inquiry into the Slave Trade. The African merchants felt their characters hurt , and therefore they had an undoubted right to call for an early investigation of the subject, that their reputation might be cleared from the <i>ill-founded calumny</i> which had been thrown upon it. With regard to the facts stated		African merchants felt an enquiry would clear their reputation.

by the hon. baronet his argument proved too much, because the whole profit of the voyage of the captains employed in the Slave Trade arose from the number of negroes they could bring to the West-India market in good health ; and therefore it was so much their interest to preserve them that it was not likely they should suffer them to generate mortal diseases in the manner described.		Whole profits of slave trade depended on slaves being kept in good health on voyage
Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Resolutions respecting the Slave Trade, 12 May 1789⁵		
Lord Penrhyn said, at that late hour of the night it was impossible for him to attempt to answer the hon. gentleman [Mr. Wilberforce]; one thing, however, he could not help noticing then, and that was, that the hon. gentleman had misrepresented so many articles with respect to the West Indies, in respect to its population, &c.; that no reliance whatever could be placed on the picture he had chosen to exhibit. In two or three instances, where he had mentioned Mr. long, he had misquoted him, and over-looked many things essential to a <i>fair</i> state of the case. He did not mean to take up the time of the House then; but when they should be called upon to vote the propositions they had just heard read, he should offer his observations upon them, and upon the whole argument of the hon. gentleman.		Mr Wilberforce's arguments were not sound
Lord Penrhyn rose again, merely to prevent the committee from going away with an idea, that sugar could be cheaply cultivated by freemen. It had been tried, and tried in vain. Notwithstanding the reveries, therefore, of the hon. mover [], that speculation must be abandoned. There were mortgages in the West India Islands to the amount of seventy millions ; the fact therefore was, if they passed the vote of abolition, they actually struck at seventy millions of property, they ruined the colonies , and by destroying an essential nursery for seamen, gave up the dominion of the sea at a single stroke.		Sugar could not be cultivated cheaply by freemen. Abolition would harm £70 million of property, ruin colonies and destroy Britain's dominance at sea.
27 May 1789		
Lord Penrhyn said, that he thought the best way of answering the Hon. Gentleman's [Mr. Wilberforce] speech		
Debate in the Commons on the Slave Trade, 23 April 1790		
Lord Penrhyn observed, that gentlemen who urged the humanity of the measure, ought to reflect that some consideration was due to those whose property was deeply affected by the proceedings which had taken place, and which, if protracted, might lead to the most fateful		Consideration should be due to those whose property was affected.

⁵ William Wilberforce introduced a debate in the House of Commons on the slave trade. The aim was to discuss the report of the Privy Council committee, which had been hearing evidence on the slave trade. Thomas Clarkson, the leading abolitionist, produced details from his inquiries. Liverpool members Bamber Gascoyne and Lord Penrhyn opposed the debate.

<p>consequences. When he saw the infatuation almost bordering on frenzy, which had taken possession of the public mind without, and saw it also extended to some men of the most enlightened understanding within doors, he felt extreme concern that the latter, at least, did not think of the danger to be apprehended from its extending to the West Indies, where the disproportion of blacks and whites was so great; he trembled for the consequences; and if there was no other reason for an immediate decision, that the consideration alone ought to have much weight with the House.</p>		
26 May 1790		
<p>Lord Penrhyn observed, that unless large vessels had the indulgence to be moved for in the Committee, the principal part of the trade would be abolished, the whole of that especially carried on at Bonny, which small vessels could not pursue.</p>		
9 June 1804 petition by Society of West-India Planters and Merchants, chaired by Lord Penrhyn	Petition	
<p>To the hon. The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the Planters, Merchants, and Mortgagees, Annuitants, and others, interested in the British West-India Colonies, whose names are hereunto subscribed. Sheweth, That your Petitioners have learnt, with the deepest concern, that a Bill is now depending before this Hon. House, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, at a time to be limited; that your Petitioners have great reason to apprehend, that the agitation of any question respecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Parliament, will be productive of the <i>most serious</i> and <i>alarming mischief</i>, in the British West India Colonies, That the experience of several years, founded on the <i>disastrous</i> events which happened in the island of St. Domingo⁶, and the present <i>deplorable</i> situation of that colony, which is reduced to a state of savage anarchy, and where actions of the greatest atrocity are hourly committed, impress forcibly on the minds of your Petitioners the necessity of avoiding all such discussions, that your petitioners consider, that the avowal of the doctrines connected with the Abolition of the Slave Trade, can have no other effect on the minds of <i>uncivilised</i> men, who consider an Abolition and Emancipation as one and the same matter, that to destroy all manner of subordination and <i>good governance</i> in the British West India colonies, and to induce the Negroes to make a general struggle for a <i>wild</i></p>		<p>Slave Trade abolition would cause severe problems such as those in St Domingo where an uprising of slaves has caused a state of savage anarchy.</p> <p>Abolition would harm planters and merchants interests in the cultivation and improvement of their plantations</p>

⁶ Haitian Revolution 1791-1803, resulting in the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the first republic of ruled by former African slaves.

<p>and lawless freedom, through desolation and bloodshed, that the said Bill, if passed into the law, will be highly injurious to your Petitioners, inasmuch as they will thereby be deprived of the supply of Negroes <i>absolutely</i> necessary for the cultivation and improvement of the British Plantations in the West Indies, in which your petitioners are interested, That your petitioners conceive it to be a leading principle of the British Constitution that no man's property shall be injured by an Act of the legislature without full compensation being allowed him. To which in any such event your Petitioners hereby interpose their claim, that your Petitioners, their ancestors, and predecessors, have been induced to settle and to embark their fortunes upon Estates in the British East India Islands</p>		<p>Against the law that no man's property should be injured without full compensation</p>
<p>Numbers refer to strategies outlined in Table 1.</p>		

Appendix 1: Analysis of Richard Pennant's Parliamentary speeches regarding the abolition of the slave trade		
	Analysis of discursive strategies	Rhetorical intent
9 May 1788		
<p>Lord Penrhyn thought that the petitions intended to incriminate two types of persons; viz. the African merchants, and the West-India planters. He was convinced. That upon any inquiry, the merchants would be exonerated from that blame which had been so profusely thrown upon them. The planters were ready to appear in vindication of their conduct, and would not be pleased at the postponement of the affairs.</p>	<p>Victimisation; presenting ingroup as victim of outgroup; ingroup African merchants and West-India planters; Richard Pennant is the chairman of the Society of West Indian Planters and merchants and an absentee plantation owner</p>	<p>Merchants and planters blameless. They are innocent victims who wrongly accused by abolitionists who bombard them with false accusations.</p>
21 May 1788		
<p>Lord Penrhyn rose to express his disappropriation of the evidence on which the honourable gentleman [] has founded his complaint. It appeared to him contradictory in itself chiefly founded on hear-say, and the greatest part of it absolutely false.</p>		<p>Lord Penrhyn tries to discredit petitions by abolitions by accusing them to be based on illogical argumentation (fallacy), based on rumour, rather than fact, and untrue</p>
Debate in the Commons on the African Slave Bill, 26 May 1788		
<p>Lord Penrhyn denied that the cruel practices asserted to prevail had ever existed. It was absurd to suppose that men, whose profit depended on the health and vigour of the African natives, would purposely torment and distress them during their passage, so as to endanger their lives. He flatly denied the fact. The merchants of Liverpool were anxious for an inquiry; but for what sort of an inquiry? Not a hasty, intemperate discussion, but a full,</p>	<p>Denial; reasonableness (stressing the rationality and reason of the speaker); hyperbole (use of modifiers)</p>	<p>It is against business interests to damage (harm) their property. An unemotional (rational) debate is needed</p>

<p>candid and sober investigation, for the sake of truth, and the satisfaction of reason. Whenever such an inquiry took place, it would be found that the idle stories of cruelty, reported to be common on board the African ships, were groundless calumnies. He had full authority from the merchants and traders of Liverpool to say, that they would themselves come forward with a bill during the ensuing session, or assist the House in forming one, to put the Trade under proper regulation.</p>		
<p>28 May 1788⁷</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn brought up a petition from the merchants and traders of Liverpool, stating the long existence of the African Slave Trade; the essential benefits the country had derived from it; the encouragement the legislature held out to individuals to embark their fortunes in it; and the <i>injury</i> that they must necessarily suffer from any sudden measure being taken respecting it. Having heard, therefore, that a bill was in the house for the purpose of operating a partial regulation, which they conceived to be founded on facts that were not true, they prayed to be heard by themselves and their counsel against the said bill. The petition was ordered to lie on the table, and the petitioners were ordered to be allowed to be heard by their counsel on the second reading of the Bill. Mr. Ewer brought up a petition from the merchants of London to the same effect with the Liverpool petition, and similar motions were put upon it, and agreed to.</p>		<p>Claim 5, Country has benefitted from slavery debate</p>
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, that the hon. gentleman [Mr. Martin] had asked, what grounds there could be for the opposition to the Bill? For his own part, he could declare, that his constituents, under the sanction and faith of parliament, had continued for many years to carry out the African Trade; that they had every reason to think it a legal Trade, and such as they might pursue without imputation of inhumanity. Such ships had not yet sailed, were equipped and ready, and his constituents thought it hard that they should be prevented from sending them on their voyages, when they had committed no crime, and because the credulity of some persons had been imposed upon. Was that no ground for opposing the Bill? The hon. Baronet had talked a great deal of the petitions, and had stated many strong facts against the petitioners. After what has been said, might not the petitioners have a wish to clear themselves; and was not that a reasonable wish? The hon. baronet doubted whether they would come to the bar. Did he think that they would not have their characters cleared; most undoubtedly they would. The hon. baronet had urged the great necessity of</p>		<p>It was a legal and humane trade</p>

⁷ *Society* sub-committee petition in support of the slave trade is presented by Richard to the House of Commons.

<p>passing his bill in the present session. What effect would it produce? The greatest part of the ships employed in the African trade were already sailed; it could not therefore have any operation upon them; and those captains who were yet to sail, after what had passed in that house would be cautious in what they did from principles of prudence, if they were not influenced by motives of pure humanity. What inducements any persons might have to disperse calumny he knew not, but he was certain the merchants of Liverpool had been grossly calumniated. The petitioners considered the bill as an attack upon them, which was not justified by either fact or necessity. It singled them out from every other description of merchants, therefore, feeling it to be as unwarrantable as it was ill timed, they were determined to dispute its principle throughout.</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn represented the hardship of merchants being deprived of trade they enjoyed for so many years, on account of the calumny and misrepresentation of some, and the credulity of others. The many lives alleged to be lost in the transportation, was, in his mind, a convincing argument against its truth, for setting humanity out of the question, the interest of the merchants themselves must induce them to be more tender of men, whose lives were so valuable to them. Supposing even the whole of the allegations to be true, the Bill Would now be too late for any good effect, as most of the vessels destined for that trade had already sailed, and such as had not, would be taught at least sufficient caution by what had already passed on the subject, and what was still more expected shortly to take place</p>		<p>Merchants were deprived of trade and this forced economic hardship. Against common sense for slaves to be treated badly given their economic value.</p> <p>No action needed because ships would be more cautious anyway given the debate.</p>
<p>16 June 1788</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, he was at a loss</p>		
<p>17 June 1788</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn contended against <i>depriving</i> persons, so interested as his constituents were in the Slave Trade, of their <i>rightful advantages</i> by an “ex post facto” law. The measure would abolish the Trade, as far as the present traders were concerned in it. On the African Trade, it ought to be remembered, that two thirds of the commerce of this country depended [sic!]. The Committee [for the Abolition of the Slave Trade] might prevent Great Britain from carrying on the Trade, but they would not prevent other countries from carrying it on, they would therefore not befriend the Africans.</p>		<p>Should not deprive people of their rightful advantages by an after the event law.</p> <p>Two thirds of commerce of country depends on slave trade.</p>
<p>1788</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, there were two descriptions of men, one, those who where [sic!] concerned in the African trade; the other, the planters, whose characters had been blackened, and whose conduct had been grossly calumniated; both wished anxiously that an inquiry might be</p>		<p>The planters wanted an enquiry as they were innocent</p>

<p>instituted, conscious that the more their conduct was examined, the less they would be found to merit the opprobrium with which they had been loaded. The charges against the Slave Trader were either true or false. If true, the Trade ought to be abolished; if false, justice ought to be done to the characters of those who were concerned in it.</p>		<p>If slave traders were guilty then trade should be abolished, if not justice should be done.</p>
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, that he only spoke for himself and his constituents, when he pressed for an immediate inquiry into the Slave Trade. The African merchants felt their characters hurt, and therefore they had an undoubted right to call for an early investigation of the subject, that their reputation might be cleared from the <i>ill-founded calumny</i> which had been thrown upon it. With regard to the facts stated by the hon. baronet his argument proved too much, because the whole profit of the voyage of the captains employed in the Slave Trade arose from the number of negroes they could bring to the West-India market in good health; and therefore it was so much their interest to preserve them that it was not likely they should suffer them to generate mortal diseases in the manner described.</p>		<p>African merchants felt an enquiry would clear their reputation.</p> <p>Whole profits of slave trade depended on slaves being kept in good health on voyage</p>
<p>Debate on Mr. Wilberforce's Resolutions respecting the Slave Trade, 12 May 1789⁸</p>		
<p>Lord Penrhyn said, at that late hour of the night it was impossible for him to attempt to answer the hon. gentleman [Mr. Wilberforce]; one thing, however, he could not help noticing then, and that was, that the hon. gentleman had misrepresented so many articles with respect to the West Indies, in respect to its population, &c.; that no reliance whatever could be placed on the picture he had chosen to exhibit. In two or three instances, where he had mentioned Mr. long, he had misquoted him, and over-looked many things essential to a <i>fair</i> state of the case. He did not mean to take up the time of the House then; but when they should be called upon to vote the propositions they had just heard read, he should offer his observations upon them, and upon the whole argument of the hon. gentleman.</p>		<p>Mr Wilberforce's arguments were not sound</p>
<p>Lord Penrhyn rose again, merely to prevent the committee from going away with an idea, that sugar could be cheaply cultivated by freemen. It had been tried, and tried in vain. Notwithstanding the reveries, therefore, of the hon. mover [], that speculation must be abandoned. There were mortgages in the West India Islands to the amount of seventy millions; the fact therefore was, if they passed</p>		<p>Sugar could not be cultivated cheaply by freemen.</p> <p>Abolition would harm £70</p>

⁸ William Wilberforce introduced a debate in the House of Commons on the slave trade. The aim was to discuss the report of the Privy Council committee, which had been hearing evidence on the slave trade. Thomas Clarkson, the leading abolitionist, produced details from his inquiries. Liverpool members Bamber Gascoyne and Lord Penrhyn opposed the debate.

the vote of abolition, they actually struck at seventy millions of property, they ruined the colonies , and by destroying an essential nursery for seamen, gave up the dominion of the sea at a single stroke.		million of property, ruin colonies and destroy Britain's dominance at sea.
27 May 1789		
Lord Penrhyn said, that he thought the best way of answering the Hon. Gentleman's [Mr. Wilberforce] speech		
Debate in the Commons on the Slave Trade, 23 April 1790		
Lord Penrhyn observed, that gentlemen who urged the humanity of the measure, ought to reflect that some consideration was due to those whose property was deeply affected by the proceedings which had taken place, and which, if protracted, might lead to the most fateful consequences. When he saw the infatuation almost bordering on frenzy, which had taken possession of the public mind without, and saw it also extended to some men of the most enlightened understanding within doors, he felt extreme concern that the latter, at least, did not think of the danger to be apprehended from its extending to the West Indies, where the disproportion of blacks and whites was so great; he trembled for the consequences; and if there was no other reason for an immediate decision, that the consideration alone ought to have much weight with the House.		Consideration should be due to those whose property was affected.
26 May 1790		
Lord Penrhyn observed, that unless large vessels had the indulgence to be moved for in the Committee, the principal part of the trade would be abolished, the whole of that especially carried on at Bonny, which small vessels could not pursue.		
9 June 1804 petition by Society of West-India Planters and Merchants, chaired by Lord Penrhyn	Petition	
To the hon. The Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled. The humble petition of the Planters, Merchants, and Mortgagees, Annuitants , and others, interested in the British West-India Colonies, whose names are hereunto subscribed. Sheweth, That your Petitioners have learnt, with the deepest concern, that a Bill is now depending before this Hon. House, for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, at a time to be limited; that your Petitioners have great reason to apprehend, that the agitation of any question respecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Parliament, will be productive of the <i>most serious</i> and <i>alarming mischief</i> , in the British West India Colonies, That the experience of several years, founded		

<p>on the <i>disastrous</i> events which happened in the island of St. Domingo⁹, and the present <i>deplorable</i> situation of that colony, which is reduced to a state of savage anarchy, and where actions of the greatest atrocity are hourly committed, impress forcibly on the minds of your Petitioners the necessity of avoiding all such discussions, that your petitioners consider, that the avowal of the doctrines connected with the Abolition of the Slave Trade, can have no other effect on the minds of <i>uncivilised</i> men, who consider an Abolition and Emancipation as one and the same matter, that to destroy all manner of subordination and <i>good governance</i> in the British West India colonies, and to induce the Negroes to make a general struggle for a <i>wild and lawless freedom</i>, through desolation and bloodshed, that the said Bill, if passed into the law, will be highly injurious to your Petitioners, inasmuch as they will thereby be deprived of the supply of Negroes absolutely necessary for the cultivation and improvement of the British Plantations in the West Indies, in which your petitioners are interested, That your petitioners conceive it to be a leading principle of the British Constitution that no man's property shall be injured by an Act of the legislature without full compensation being allowed him. To which in any such event your Petitioners hereby interpose their claim, that your Petitioners, their ancestors, and predecessors, have been induced to settle and to embark their fortunes upon Estates in the British East India Islands</p>		<p>Slave Trade abolition would cause severe problems such as those in St Domingo where an uprising of slaves has caused a state of savage anarchy.</p> <p>Abolition would harm planters and merchants interests in the cultivation and improvement of their plantations</p> <p>Against the law that no man's property should be injured without full compensation</p>
<p>Numbers refer to strategies outlined in Table 1.</p>		

<p>9 June 1804 petition by Society of West-India Planters and Merchants, chaired by Lord Penrhyn</p>		
<p>That your Petitioners have ... great reason to apprehend, that the agitation of any question respecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Parliament, will be productive of the most serious and alarming mischief, in the British West India Colonies, That the experience of several years, founded on the disastrous events which happened in the island of St. Domingo, and the present deplorable situation of that colony, which is reduced to a state of savage anarchy, and where actions of the greatest atrocity are hourly committed, impress forcibly</p>	<p>Hyperbole</p>	<p>Exaggeration of effect of abolition by means of modifiers</p>

⁹ Haitian Revolution 1791-1803, resulting in the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the first republic of ruled by former African slaves.

<p>on the minds of your Petitioners the necessity of avoiding all such discussions, that your petitioners consider, that the avowal of the doctrines connected with the Abolition of the Slave Trade, can have no other effect on the minds of uncivilised men, who consider an Abolition and Emancipation as one and the same matter, that to destroy all manner of subordination and good governance in the British West India colonies, and to induce the Negroes to make a general struggle for a wild and lawless freedom, through desolation and bloodshed, that the said Bill, if passed into the law, will be highly injurious to your Petitioners, inasmuch as they will thereby be deprived of the supply of Negroes absolutely necessary for the cultivation and improvement of the British Plantations in the West Indies, in which your petitioners are interested, That your petitioners conceive it to be a leading principle of the British Constitution that no man's property shall be injured by an Act of the legislature without full compensation being allowed him. To which in any such event your Petitioners hereby interpose their claim, that your Petitioners, their ancestors, and predecessors, have been induced to settle and to embark their fortunes upon Estates in the British East India Islands</p>	<p>Negative other-presentation</p>	<p>Slaves portrayed as uncivilised</p> <p>Slave Trade abolition would cause severe problems such as those in St Domingo where an uprising of slaves has caused a state of savage anarchy.</p> <p>Abolition would harm planters and merchants interests in the cultivation and improvement of their plantations</p> <p>Against the law that no man's property should be injured without full compensation</p>
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Appendix 2: Timeline of events

1737 or 1739	Richard Pennant born
1767-1780	Richard Pennant serves as MP for Liverpool
1772	Emancipation of all slaves in England
1776	Adam Smith condemns slave trade as unprofitable in <i>An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i>
1784-1790	Richard Pennant serves as MP for Liverpool
22 May 1787	Society for Abolition of the Slave Trade formed by Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson
1788	The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade organises its first petition campaign. 102 petitions with about 60,00 signatures complaining about slavery are presented to Parliament.
1788	Richard Pennant chairs a special <i>Society</i> sub-committee to organise opposition to abolition
9 May 1788	Debate on slave trade initiated by Mr. Pitt; Lord Penrhyn responds
21 May 1788	Sir William Dolben prepares bill to reduce overcrowding on slave ships
26 May 1788	Debate resumed; Lord Penrhyn denies existence of cruel practices
28 May 1788	Lord Penrhyn introduces anti-abolition petitions from the slave traders and other merchants in Liverpool
2 June 1788	Debates on slave trade regulation
3 June 1788	Debates on slave trade regulation
12 June 1788	Debates on slave trade regulation
16 June 1788	Debates on slave trade regulation
10 July 1788	Slave Trade Regulation Act is passed
Spring 1789	Privy council Trade Committee delivers its report on the slave trade
12 May 1789	Wilberforce made his first major speech on the subject of Abolition in the House of Commons, in which he put forward 12 propositions for abolition. Lord Penrhyn argues against abolition.
1792	The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade organises its second petition campaign. This time 519 petitions with about 400,000 signatures are presented to Parliament. ¹
25 March 1807	Abolition of the Slave Trade Act receives royal assent

¹ This constitutes more petitions than on any other subject in a single session.