

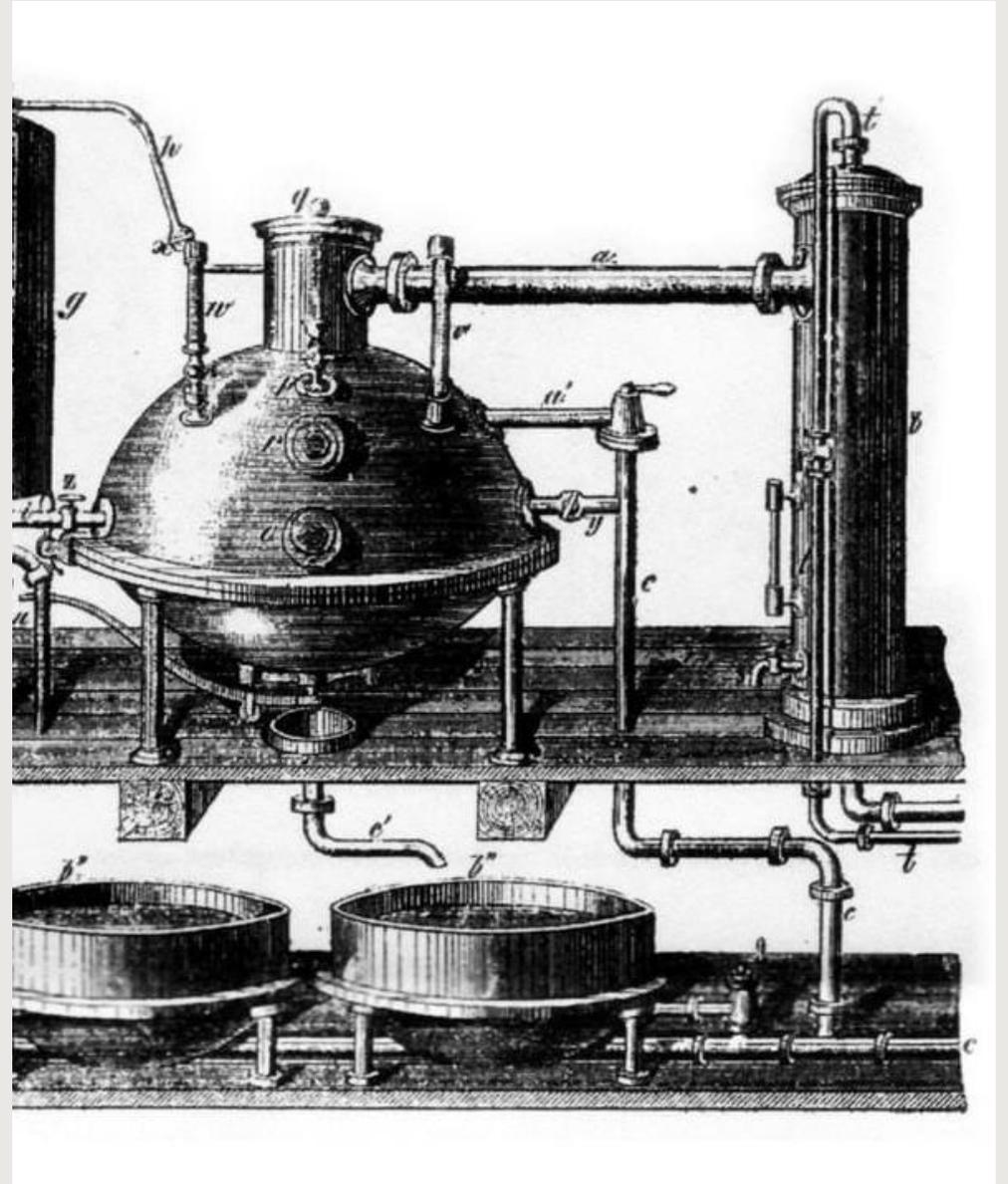
The background features a close-up of purple lavender flowers on the right side. The left side is a light greenish-grey background with several overlapping semi-circles and concentric circles, some of which are filled with a dotted pattern. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Sugar & Lavender

The Sweet British History in Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White*

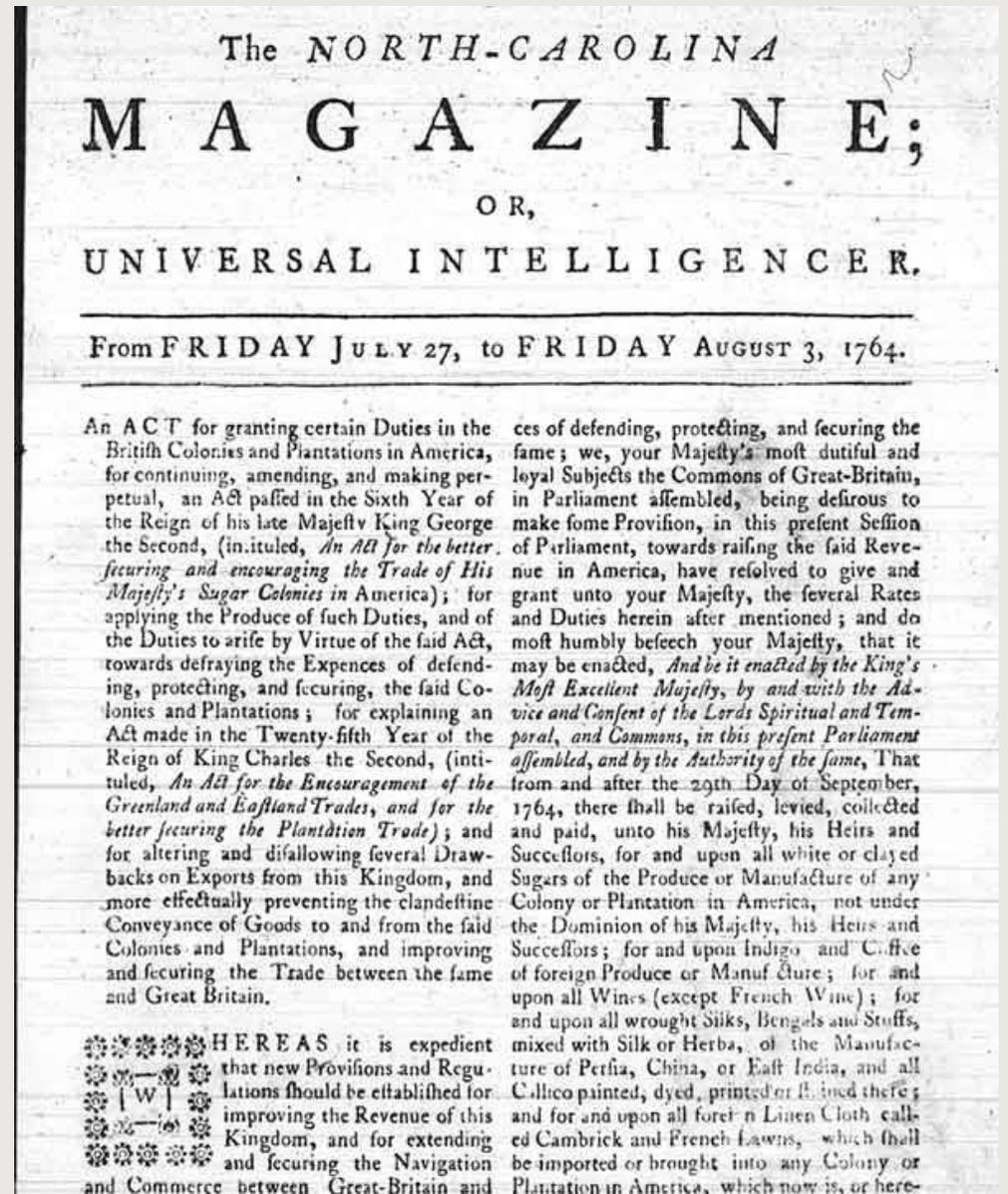
"Recent" History of Sugar

- 1402-1500: Spanish colonized the Canary Islands and set up sugar plantations
- 1500s: Sugar is particularly popular for its medicinal purposes such as strengthening the lungs and throat, powder form was for the eyes, sugar smoke for the common cold, and sprinkled on wounds to heal them
- 1600s: At this point, coffee, tea, and chocolate are introduced into Europe. This makes sugar quite popular and in high demand. In order to produce more sugar at a low cost, slavery increased.
- 1750s: By this time, sugar is the most valuable commodity surpassing grain
- 1768: Much of sugar production becomes mechanized with the invention of the steam engine which now powers the sugar mills
- 1813: British chemist Edward Howard invents "Howard's Vacuum Pan," a new way of refining raw sugar by placing the raw sugarcane juice in boiling water and holding it in a partial vacuum



The Political Price of "White Gold"

- Early on, sugar was a very lucrative commodity for the British (hence why sugar was called "white gold"). Some have even argued how the British Empire was founded on sugar and the sugar/slave trade. However, sugar soon becomes a point of conflict for the British with their colonies (now known as America)
- 1733: The British passed the Molasses Act (a tax on molasses and sugar) in order to get money to repay their Seven Years' War debt. Colonists were not happy about this intrusive, expensive tax, so they started smuggling sugar products
- 1764: The Sugar Act is passed which reduces the taxes set by the Molasses Act. Yet the colonists were still unhappy about giving money to the monarch, so the smuggling continued even though smuggling was now more expensive
 - both these acts failed to produce any significant money from sugar for the British
- As we know, these acts were just fuel to the fire of the American Revolution
- 1791: British Parliament failed to pass the Slave Trade Abolition Bill which leads to the Abolitionist movement that included sugar boycotts
- 1807: Thomas Jefferson signs a bill prohibiting slave importation to the US. British Parliament followed suit, but slavery did not stop quickly.



What is Sugar's Relation to Sugar?

So, what do you think? Does Faber's Sugar have anything to do with Britain's history with sugar?

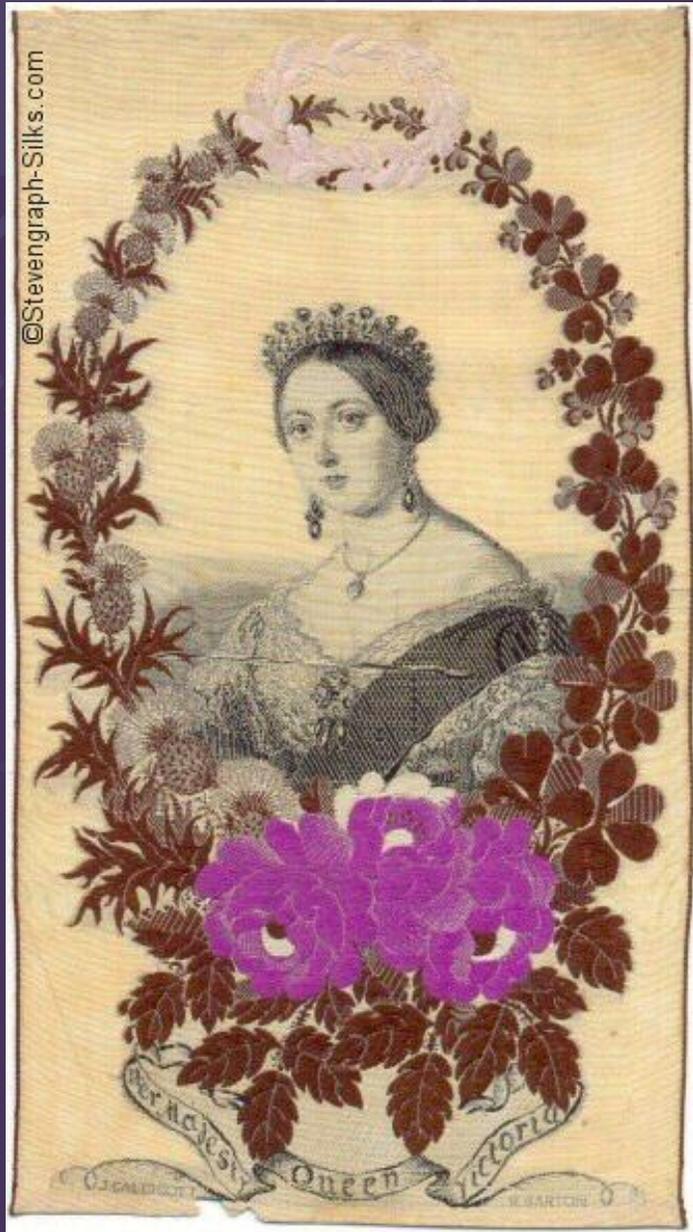
Questions to consider:

- Why is Sugar (plausibly) named after one of the most valuable substances of that time?
- What would the significance be if she was named after the substance which built the British Empire?
- Why name her after the sweet substance which had a hand in the American Revolution?
- What about the fact that Agnes consumes barely any sugar in her house unless she is in society?
- Do you see any connection between Sugar and slavery?

My Sugar Refinement Theory

Part 3 as a whole is Faber's refinement of his Sugar through his version of Howard's Vacuum Pan

- Part 1 and 2 show Sugar as a raw, hard, unprocessed material. Like actual sugar, Sugar has value in this state considering how popular a prostitute she is.
- However, in Part 3 when William buys Sugar her own place and keeps her as his mistress, he starts her refinement.
- Like Howard's Vacuum Pan, Sugar is kept partially isolated. She stays at home and waits for William to come to her. When she does go out as she stalks both William and Agnes, she is around a higher-class people than what she is used to at Mrs. Castaway's, thus refining her not only in manners but also in taste as she now likes music.
- What is most important in this section to my theory is Sugar's obsession with bathing. This is where Sugar, a once hard sugar, simmers in hot water sometimes several times a day (like the pan). In this process of constantly bathing, Sugar softens. She even tells herself that she is softening. This is because of William's refinement of Sugar.
- And as we see at the end of Part 3, now that she has been refined, it appears Sugar is now softened enough to enter William's own household.



The Other Sweet Stuff-Lavender

- Fun Fact: Lavender is named from the Latin verb lavare - "to wash" because the Greeks and Romans would bathe/wash in lavender
- Fun Fact #2: In Renaissance France, women who took in washing as a source of income were referred to as "lavenders"
- Flower language of femininity, purity, and calmness
- Lavender was not only used for headaches and stress relief, but it was also used as a medicine for burns
- The Victorian Era is really when people started growing lavender in their own personal gardens
- The color purple is the color of royalty and refinement
- Lavender was so popular because Queen Victoria praised it. She appointed Sarah Sprules, and world-renowned lavender water distiller, as "Purvey of Lavender Essence to the Queen" in 1886

Sugar and Lavender?

- What is the connection between Sugar and lavender? Faber describes how Sugar feels at home in the lavender field. Why?

Questions to consider:

- Why is it important that Sugar feels at home in a field of symbolic royalty (since lavender is purple)?
- Why does Sugar cry in this field?
- Is there a connection to the burning of the field to what will happen to Sugar in the end?
- Why is it that it is at the lavender bonfire that Sugar proposes being Sophie's governess?

My thoughts:

I love that the word lavender goes back to washing, which goes back to my sugar refinement idea. What I do find interesting, however, is that Sugar loves to wash herself yet does not wash her laundry. Why is that? Why is she not a French "lavender"? Is it because she isn't getting paid to wash the laundry?

References

[https://www.thechemicalengineer.com/features/cewctw-edward-charles-howard-and-norbert-rillieux-sugar-plantation-slavery-and-the-birth-of-chemical-engineering/-----the-pan picture on slide 2](https://www.thechemicalengineer.com/features/cewctw-edward-charles-howard-and-norbert-rillieux-sugar-plantation-slavery-and-the-birth-of-chemical-engineering/-----the-pan-picture-on-slide-2)

Sugar act slide pic: [https://i1.wp.com/smugglersgambit.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The Newbern Gazette Fri Aug 3 1764 Sugar-Act.jpg](https://i1.wp.com/smugglersgambit.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The-Newbern-Gazette-Fri-Aug-3-1764-Sugar-Act.jpg)

Lavender: <http://www.stevengraph-silks.com/others/caldicott/oca208.html>