

SLAVERY AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE

Geography played a key role in Britain's long national debate over slavery. Writers on both sides of the question represented the sites of slavery – Africa, the Caribbean, and the British Isles – as fully imagined places and the basis for a pro- or anti-slavery political agenda. With the help of twenty-first-century theories of space and place, Elizabeth A. Bohls examines the writings of planters, slaves, soldiers, sailors, and travelers whose diverse geographical and social locations inflect their representations of slavery. She shows how these writers use discourses of aesthetics, natural history, cultural geography, and gendered domesticity to engage with the slavery debate. Six inter-linked case studies, including Scottish mercenary John Stedman and domestic slave Mary Prince, examine the power of these discourses to represent the places of slavery, setting slaves' narratives in dialogue with pro-slavery texts, and highlighting in the latter previously unnoticed traces of the enslaved.

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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
Introduction: Captive spaces	i
1 The planter picturesque	16
2 Stedman’s tropics: The mercenary as naturalist	54
3 Colonial history and Atlantic geography	82
4 Equiano’s politics of place: From roots to routes	125
5 At home with the “blackies”: Janet Schaw and Maria Nugent	143
6 A long way from home: Slavery, travel, and imperial geography in <i>The History of Mary Prince</i>	165
<i>Notes</i>	185
<i>Bibliography</i>	234
<i>Index</i>	257

Illustrations

1.1	James Hakewill, “Montpelier Estate St. James’s,” from <i>A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica</i> (1825). Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.	page 20
1.2	James Hakewill, “Monument of the Late Thomas Hibbert, Esq., at Aqualta Vale Penn, St. Mary’s,” from <i>A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica</i> (1825). Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.	22
1.3	Isaac Taylor, “A View of the White River Cascade,” from Edward Long, <i>The History of Jamaica</i> (1774). Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.	25
1.4	Auguste Duperly, “Rebellion in the Island of Jamaica in January 1832. The Attack of the Rebels on Montpelier Old Works Estate in the Parish of St. James’s, the Property of Lord Seaford.” Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.	50
1.5	Duperly, detail (slave rebels in foreground). Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica.	52
2.1	“March thro’ a swamp or Marsh in Terra-Firma,” from John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam</i> (1796). From the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.	63
2.2	Francesco Bartolozzi, Frontispiece, from John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam</i> (1796). From the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.	72
2.3	William Blake, “The skinning of the Aboma snake, shot by Captain Stedman,” from John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam</i> (1796). From the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.	75

List of illustrations vii

2.4 William Blake, “Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave,” from John Gabriel Stedman, <i>Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam</i> (1796). From the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.	79
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ix

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