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978-1-107-03076-3 - Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-Slavery, c. 1787–1820

J. R. Oldfield

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## Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution

*Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution* offers a fresh exploration of anti-slavery debates in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It challenges traditional perceptions of early anti-slavery activity as an entirely parochial British, European or American affair, and instead reframes the abolition movement as a broad international network of activists across a range of metropolitan centres and remote outposts.

Interdisciplinary in approach, this book explores the dynamics of transatlantic abolitionism, along with its structure, mechanisms and business methods and, in doing so, highlights the delicate balance that existed between national and international interests in an age of massive political upheaval throughout the Atlantic world. By setting slave-trade debates within a wider international context, J. R. Oldfield reveals how popular abolitionism emerged as a political force in the 1780s and how it adapted itself to the tumultuous events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

J. R. OLDFIELD is Wilberforce Professor of Slavery and Emancipation and Director of the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE) at the University of Hull. He has written extensively on slavery and abolition in the Atlantic world and has published numerous articles and books in this area. He was formerly Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton and Director of the Southampton Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies (2008–10). His research interests include the American South, maritime history and racialised relations in the USA.

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For Tom and Matt

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J. R. Oldfield

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Contents

---

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Note on terminology</i>	xi
Introduction	1
<b>Part I Building an anti-slavery wall</b>	11
1 Networks	13
2 Circuits of knowledge	42
3 Strategies	68
<b>Part II Abolitionism in a cold climate</b>	101
4 Rupture and fragmentation	103
5 Retrenchment	130
<b>Part III A new era</b>	163
6 Abolition	165
7 The revival of internationalism	195
8 Colonisation debates	223
Epilogue	251
<i>Bibliography</i>	254
<i>Index</i>	273

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Illustrations

---

1.1 David McNeely Stauffer, <i>James Pemberton</i> , c. 1893, based on an original portrait by John F. Watson	page 30
1.2 Charles François Gabriel Levachez, <i>Jacques-Pierre Brissot</i> , c. 1805	33
1.3 C. R. Leslie, <i>William Dillwyn</i> , 1815	36
1.4 Carl Frederick von Breda, <i>Thomas Clarkson</i> , 1789	38
5.1 Abraham James, <i>The Torrid Zone; or, Blessings of Jamaica</i> , 1803	146
5.2 Abraham James, <i>Segar Smoking Society in Jamaica!</i> , 1802	148
5.3 Abraham James, <i>Martial Law in Jamaica</i> , 1803	149
6.1 James Sayers, <i>A West India Sportsman</i> , 1807	189
6.2 James Sayers, <i>West India Fashionables</i> , 1807	190
6.3 Joseph Collyer after Henry Moses, <i>Plate to Commemorate the Abolition of the Slave Trade</i> , 1808	193



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978-1-107-03076-3 - Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-Slavery, c. 1787–1820

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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[More information](#)

---

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[More information](#)

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## Note on terminology

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This book deals with the histories of a number of different countries and uses a range of terms, particularly racial terms, that are specific to each. For instance, the term ‘free blacks’ is used here to denote those African men and women, North and South, who enjoyed free status in the USA during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to modern usage, the term is inclusive: the key thing is that these people were non-slaves. By contrast, the terms ‘free coloured’ and ‘free people of colour’ have a very specific French Caribbean context and refer to those men and women who were both free and of mixed black and white ancestry (literally *gens de couleur*). The terms ‘mulatto’, ‘quadroon’ and ‘octoroon’ were commonly used in slave societies across the Atlantic world, particularly in the French Caribbean and parts of the American South (Louisiana, for example) and reflected finely grained racial distinctions based on ancestry and hence skin colour. A mulatto was the offspring of one white and one black parent; a quadroon was the offspring of a mulatto and a white parent; octoroon referred to a person with one-eighth African ancestry.