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# Abolition and Republicanism over the Transatlantic Long Term, 1640-1800

Anthony Di Lorenzo and John Donoghue

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- 1 Our article explores the links between abolition and French and Irish republicanism within the context of the eighteenth-century Atlantic Revolutions. We do so, however, through an unorthodox method that traces the republican inheritance of the late eighteenth century back to the English Revolution (ca. 1642-1660). We argue that such an expansion of revolutionary time in Atlantic space reveals that republicanism's ideological links with abolition were forged over the long term. Our argument contrasts with the common view that the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions first inspired republicans to bring slavery to an end.
- 2 Our article establishes five themes regarding the transatlantic tradition of republican abolition. First, the republicanism of the English Revolution (ca. 1642-1660), like that of the late eighteenth-century revolutions, evolved through the circulation of people, experience and ideas around the Atlantic world. Second, and unlike the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, the English Revolution did not create a cosmopolitan, transnational republicanism that crossed imperial borders. Third, like their late-eighteenth-century counterparts, abolitionists of the mid-seventeenth-century English Revolution generated several critiques of imperial expansion, one of which questioned the justice of building an empire of liberty on the foundation of chattel labor. Fourth, abolitionists combined a practical Christian moral philosophy—leavened by antinomian and evangelical convictions—with classical, humanist, and Radical Enlightenment thought to condemn racial slavery and other forms of human bondage. Finally, the same intellectual resources informed the rise of a transatlantic-republican political culture during the eighteenth century. Radicals in the American and French Revolutions cultivated this fertile, ideological ground, sowing the seeds for abolitionism to flourish in their own republican projects. At the same time, they both inspired and were inspired by

the republican projects of the Haitian Revolution and the Franco-Irish revolutionary alliance.

- 3 During the early modern era, people throughout the Atlantic world used the term “slavery” to describe the civil and social condition that resulted from the loss of political liberty. Indeed, it is difficult to find an English political pamphlet from the period that does not refer to “slavery” as the condition of those subjected to political tyranny. But during the age of the English Revolution, republicans in New and Old England radicalized the notion of political slavery. Drawing on classical Roman writing from historians and statesmen such as Cicero, Tacitus, and Livy, they broke with ancient constitutional tradition by recasting the discretionary powers vested in the monarchy, Parliament, and prerogative courts as inherently tyrannical. As John Goodwin, a prominent London republican and puritan cleric argued at the outset of the Revolution in 1642, monarchy was “never intended by God to be universal” since “kingly government is no ordinance of god.” Until liberated from the rule of kings and their courtiers, the people would continue, as Goodwin wrote, in “miserable slavery and bondage” under those “who make themselves Lords over you.” English Republicans believed that prerogative forms of government, relying upon the discretion of rulers rather than the rule of law, threatened the enslavement of the body politic to tyrants, or those who would violate the liberty of the people to secure their own rather than the public good<sup>1</sup>.
- 4 The antinomian convictions of republicans around the Atlantic, grounded in a theory of natural law expressed through Christian mysticism, helped make their radical break with English political tradition possible. Part of this break included a rejection of the patriarchal concept of sovereignty that English humanism and the magisterial reformation had embedded in English ancient constitutional thought. Here, those who wielded the magisterial prerogative in church and state had been providentially ordained to uphold the moral law and civil constitution, and so in this fashion, the great chain of patriarchal authority flowed from God, to the king-in-parliament, and thence to magistrates. The divine provenance of patriarchal authority thus made obedience to the magisterial prerogative in religious and political affairs both natural and just. Although early modern resistance theories allowed subjects to question whether these powers been lawfully exercised, challenging their fundamental equity amounted to both sedition and a moral sin against the authority of God Himself<sup>2</sup>.
- 5 Antinomians had an anti-patriarchal conception of the origins and exercise of sovereign power. According to the Leveller leader Richard Overton, God “created everyman free in Adam, so by nature all are like freemen born and...made free in grace by Christ,” which in the words of John Lilburne, another key figure in the Leveller movement, rendered “all... alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty.” All members of civil society “legitimately derived a natural propriety” from Christ the King, who had created them in his own sovereign image, endowing them with an inalienable set of “just rights” that formed the “prerogative of mankind.” To secure these “just rights,” God had given human beings the gift of “right reason” or the faculties of rational discernment, which were, as Overton lyrically observed, “commensurable and discernible by the rule of merciful justice and just mercy”<sup>3</sup>.
- 6 Levellers equated right reason with the “power of love,” the animating spirit of the “royal law” of Jesus. The royal law (what we call the Golden Rule) commanded God’s creation to emulate his unconditional love for them, subordinating self-interest to strive for the common good by freely bearing one another’s burdens. But as the power of love liberated

people from their own self-seeking, it also liberated them from unconditional subjection to earthly rulers. Such subjection amounted to an irrational call to obedience since magistrates often ruled in their own, corrupt self-interest. Since God's love for his creation redeemed the whole world through the "gifts and graces" that flowed, in Overton's words, "radically" or fundamentally from the Holy Spirit, God could not be a "God of irrationality, and madness, or tyranny." When rulers governed irrationally, that is for their own rather than the people's good, they broke the royal law. Magistrates who relied on prerogative—as opposed to rational, equitable, and popularly accountable authority grounded in law—usurped the sovereignty of God, arbitrarily creating power for themselves that God, out of love for his creation, had not even granted Himself<sup>4</sup>.

- 7 Seeking the restoration of God's sovereignty in human affairs, antinomians advocated active resistance to the policies of any "carnal" or human institution that contradicted the royal law. To not resist was to allow oneself to be enslaved by an arbitrary power, forfeiting the natural spirit of discernment, or in contemporary terms, the "liberty of conscience" with which God had endowed his creation. As the antinomian John Clarke wrote: the "spirit, mind, (and) conscience...this...commander in men... is such a sparkling beam from the father of lights and spirits that it cannot be commanded over by men, devils, or angels." Therefore, as Clarke continued, magistrates could not justly manage religious and political dissent "with a sword of steel." As this chapter argues, republican radicals around the English Atlantic strove to place the practical Christianity of the royal law, and the "liberty of conscience" that it afforded, at the heart of all political, economic, and social relationships. Their means for doing so included republican revolution in England and the establishment of republican constitutions in colonial commonwealths. Importantly, radical ideas and the radicals themselves proved especially mobile, as antinomian colonists advancing republican reforms in America would make critical contributions to the republican politics of the English Revolution<sup>5</sup>.
- 8 The political career of New England colonist and English revolutionary Samuel Gorton provides us with a case study of the transatlantic circuit of seventeenth-century English republicanism. In the late 1630s, the colonial courts of Plymouth and Massachusetts prosecuted Gorton and his followers for preaching the antinomian gospel, banishing them convicting them as blasphemers and seditious. In the years that followed, Massachusetts moved from prosecution to persecution. In 1643, the colony launched a militia attack that destroyed Gorton's exile settlement at Shawomet on the western shore of Narragansett Bay. After the assault, Gorton and the other leaders of his community were enslaved for a year on the public works, having narrowly escaped the gallows during their trial in Boston. Gaining his freedom in 1644, Gorton voyaged back across the Atlantic to advocate for his settlement of antinomian exiles. In London, Gorton sought Parliamentary protection, in the form of a charter, for territory that would become part of the colony of Rhode Island. Crucially, Gorton petitioned Parliament for a patent that would safeguard the settlers' "liberty of conscience," or their right to worship freely without censure from any government, colonial or imperial<sup>6</sup>.
- 9 In the eyes of Gorton and antinomians around the Atlantic, magisterial authority to command religious conformity produced spiritual and civil slavery, yoking both the bodies and consciences of ostensibly free people to the arbitrary power of an antichristian government. Reflecting on the persecution that the stalwarts of the magisterial reformation had visited upon New England's antinomians, Gorton wrote that they strove "to subject and make slaves" of those who questioned their prerogative in

civil and religious affairs, inflicting banishment, forced labor, and torturous punishments, including “incision on the nose, division of the ear from the head, stigmatization on the back, (and) suffocation of the veins.” Visualizing a revolutionary new antinomian order, he proclaimed that:

the rule is evident that... the ministration of justice and judgment belongs [exclusively] to no officer [or magistrate], but to a man as a brother, then to every brother, and if to every brother, whether rich or poor, ignorant or learned, then every Christian in a commonwealth must be king, and judge, and sheriff and captain, and Parliament man, and rule, and that not only in New England but in Old, and not only in Old, but in all the Christian world; down with all officers from their rule, and set up every brother for to rule<sup>7</sup>.

- 10 In an age when most regarded an established church as integral to preserving public virtue, social order, and the sovereign exercise of state power, the antinomian conception of liberty of conscience was a radical outlier around most of the Atlantic world; but when Gorton arrived in London to petition Parliament, it was becoming central to the republican project of the English Revolution.
- 11 Soon after Gorton ventured to the imperial capital, he joined Thomas Lambe’s congregation in the City’s crowded Coleman Street Ward, which hosted a warren of antinomian churches amidst a maze of twisting lanes and crooked alleys. The timing was propitious for the fortunes of transatlantic republicanism; when Gorton joined Lambe’s church, one of the best known antinomian enclaves in London, it was rapidly evolving as an organizational nerve center for the rise of the Leveller movement<sup>8</sup>.
- 12 The Levellers, as they warned in the title to one of their more famous pamphlets, aimed a figurative *Arrow Against all Tyrants*, seeking to inflict mortal wounds on prerogative forms of government and those who would use them to place the body politic in metaphorical bondage. Their chief targets included the Anglican church (and established churches in principle), the monarchy, the House of Lords, and the prerogative courts. As antinomians and classical republicans versed in Christian humanist philosophy, the Levellers believed that prerogative institutions, whether vested in the state or established church, perpetually threatened to master the body politic, since they exercised power without popular, constitutional accountability. Without such accountability, the people could be made, contrary to conscience, subject to authority that ruled in its own right and for its own interests. Leveller leaders William Walwyn and Richard Overton wrote in 1646 that “The continual oppressors of the nation have been kings...[who]...to make good their interests [brought the people] into a slavish subjection to their wills.” But the Levellers also called Parliament into question, as it had without statutory precedent or popular consent, aggrandized executive power since the King’s flight from London at the outbreak of the Revolution. “We are your principals, and you our agents” Walwyn and Overton reminded the MPS, warning that it was “usurpation and... oppression” to “assume or exercise any power that is not derived from our trust and choice thereunto.” Driving the point home, they wrote that the people “ought to be absolutely free from all kinds of... arbitrary power...without exception or limitation either in respect of persons, officers, degrees, or things...or else ... tell us why it is reasonable we should be slaves?”<sup>9</sup>. Prerogative government, whether vested in the monarchy or Parliament, thus posed a perennial threat to the civil, spiritual, and bodily liberty of individuals as well as to the body politic as a whole, creating a condition of arbitrary subjection that in classical terms amounted to a form of political slavery.

- 13 In the mid-1640s, to emancipate England from such thralldom, the Levellers held mass meetings in taverns, streets, and churches—principally Thomas Lambe’s—engaged in a series of petitioning campaigns, and launched disorderly protests in prominent public spaces, including the members’ entrance to the Houses of Parliament<sup>10</sup>. They also engaged in recruiting drives in the City of London, in the provinces, and in the New Model Army, all of which Gorton supported and most likely helped to lead, given his charisma, political convictions, and the fact that his comrades in Lambe’s church and the army chaplains he travelled the provinces with at this time were all Levellers<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile, Richard Overton’s illegal printing press flooded London with tracts arguing for religious toleration, including those that he and other leading Levellers, such as William Walwyn, had written<sup>12</sup>. Through their cumulative efforts, the Levellers transformed English republicanism into a revolutionary mass movement. In the process, they reconfigured liberty of conscience into an operative principle of both religious reform and political resistance, making it the active agent in their formulation of popular sovereignty. By the autumn of 1647, with the war against Royalist forces seemingly winding down and with Parliament making ready to launch an imperial conquest of Ireland, the movement had grown strong enough to force Parliament and the army high command to consider a republican settlement to England’s constitutional crisis<sup>13</sup>.
- 14 A minority of Levellers opposed the Irish conquest on principle, but they all opposed military conscription, through which Parliament planned to man its army in Ireland, as the height of arbitrary government and thus as a form of political slavery<sup>14</sup>. Although most scholars have treated the concept of political slavery as a disembodied metaphor in Leveller discourse, the movement’s opposition to conscription reveals something more complicated. Forced military service figured as a form of embodied political slavery to the Levellers. Well before the projected invasion of Ireland, they had opposed Parliament’s use of conscription during the first war against the King (1642-1646). In the preface to a July 1646 petition that outlined the Levellers republican program, a petition that moreover gained over 96,000 signatures, the Leveller Richard Overton, Samuel Gorton’s friend and fellow traveler in Thomas Lambe’s church, wrote:
- We entreat you to consider what difference there is between binding a man to an oar as a galley-slave in Turkey or Argiere, and pressing of men to serve in your war. To surprise a man on the sudden, force him from his calling where he lived comfortably from a good trade, from his dear parents, wife or children, against inclination and disposition to fight...and if he live, to return to a lost trade, or beggary, or not much better: if any tyranny or cruelty exceed this, it must be worse than that of a Turkish galley-slave<sup>15</sup>.
- 15 As the passage makes clear, the tyranny of conscription reduced families to poverty and robbed men of their bodily liberty by forcing them into servile military labor. But as future Leveller pronouncements would clarify, conscription also violated the citizen-soldier’s “liberty of conscience” to volunteer their military labor power to serve the public good at home and abroad.
- 16 Conscription granted the state dominion over the bodies of its people for forced military labor; if they were compelled to serve in unjust wars, their service, according to critics of impressment, would empower the corrupt and tyrannical at the expense of the people’s liberty and the nation’s blood and treasure. Contesting conscription as a governmental prerogative, the Levellers located sovereign war-making power in the individual and collective consciences of the citizenry, rather than with political elites who stood to gain wealth and influence by forcing men to kill and be killed in wars with enemies real or

imagined. The Levellers thus viewed conscription as an enslaving power, and prioritized its abolition as a constitutional imperative. In *An Agreement of the People*, the republican constitution that they proposed to Parliament and the army high command in the autumn of 1647, a cadre of Leveller civilians and soldiers wrote that ending forced military service would help the nation avoid “returning to a slavish condition,” since:

impressing and constraining any of us to serve in the wars is against our freedom; and therefore we do not allow it in our representatives; the rather, because money (the sinews of war) being always at their disposal they can never want numbers of men apt enough to engage in any just cause.

- 17 The integrity of the commonwealth thus depended in part on the preservation of the citizens’ liberty of conscience to dispose of their military labor, as “every man’s conscience...[need]... be satisfied in the justness of that cause wherein he hazards his own or may destroy another’s.”<sup>16</sup>
- 18 Despite receiving the support of tens of thousands of civilians and soldiers, the Levellers’ challenge to conscription—and indeed most of their republican program—failed to materialize as part of the constitutional settlement that followed the English civil wars. In some cases, Leveller agitation was violently suppressed, as mutinous regiments in the New Model Army discovered first in the autumn 1647 and again in the spring 1649<sup>17</sup>. The defection of sectarian churches from the Leveller fold also eroded support among soldiers and civilians, as did a relentless stream of propaganda from Royalists and more moderate supporters of Parliament<sup>18</sup>. Gorton himself became a high profile target in a pamphlet entitled, *The Danger of Tolerating Levellers in a Civil State*. Written by Edward Winslow, a fierce opponent of antinomians and an old foe of Gorton’s from their days together in Plymouth Colony, the pamphlet equated antinomianism with sedition, anarchy, communism, and free love. Although in this light Gorton left London as an infamous Leveller, he had nonetheless triumphed in his mission to Parliament, having successfully lobbied for a colonial charter granting Rhode Island liberty of conscience<sup>19</sup>.
- 19 But Gorton’s work as a republican radical did not end when he arrived back in Rhode Island. There, he helped to fashion a republican constitution for his colony that, like the Levellers’ revolutionary program, abolished prerogative political institutions to guard against the enslavement of the body politic. In Rhode Island, Gorton also sustained the Leveller ideal that fused liberty of conscience with the liberty of the body, but unlike the Levellers, he moved republican abolition beyond military conscription to agitate against the rise of economic slavery<sup>20</sup>. In 1649, a small group of Rhode Island colonists had financed a trans-Atlantic voyage to “Guinney” (or West Africa) to trade for slaves that they then sold for profit in Barbados. At the same time, migrants moving from Barbados to settle in Rhode Island had introduced an enslaved population to a colony where many had already rejected the enslavement of Indian captives.<sup>21</sup> Led by Gorton, the majority of the Rhode Island Assembly moved to abolish slavery in the colony, declaring in 1651:
- whereas there is a common course practiced amongst English men to buy negers to that end they may have them for service or slaves forever; for the preventing of such practices among us, let it be ordered, that no black mankind or white being forced by covenant bond, or otherwise, to serve any man or his assigns longer than ten years<sup>22</sup>.
- 20 It is important to note the antislavery law’s reference to “black mankind or white,” as it reveals how colonists believed that people of both European and African descent were being forced into various forms of chattel bondage<sup>23</sup>.



- 21 In English popular culture itself, the Atlantic world, like its Mediterranean counterpart, loomed darkly as a space where both Europeans and Africans could suffer enslavement.<sup>24</sup> But while promoting the African slave trade, English political economists berated others from England for selling their own people into colonial slavery. George Gardnyer wrote a year before the Rhode Island antislavery ordinance that it was “dishonorable, in that we are upbraided by all other nations... for selling our own countrymen...we English were worse than the Turks, for that they sold strangers (foreigners) only, and we sold our own countrymen...barbarously stolen out of their own country by spirits.<sup>25</sup>” Gardnyer’s reference to “spirits” here contains a condemnation of the transatlantic trade in servants, where agents called “spirits” or “kidnappers” tricked or forced young, usually poor and illiterate victims aboard ships in Britain and Ireland from whence they were shipped to West Indian or the Chesapeake plantations and sold into servitude as the term-bound chattel property of their masters. As Charles Bayly later wrote about his own experience with a kidnapper in 1649, “I met with one Bradstreet, who was commonly called a “spirit,” for he was one of those who did entice children and people away for Virginia...he did cunningly get me on board a ship...to go to those parts...where I was sold as a bond-slave for seven years.<sup>26</sup>” During the 1650s, the period of Bayly’s enslavement, most chattel workers in the English plantation complex were of British and Irish descent, although by the next decade in the West Indies, they would be eclipsed by a majority of perpetually enslaved African workers<sup>27</sup>.
- 22 Although Gorton left London to make abolition a republican virtue in New England, the current of antislavery thought and action also flowed back across the Atlantic to Old England. We can follow the circuit flow by tracing the journey of Gorton’s political ally, John Clarke. In 1652, Clarke voyaged from Rhode Island to London, where he joined other former New Englanders in the millenarian Fifth Monarchist movement. Calling Christ their only king, this group opposed the monarchical rule of Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell along radical republican lines. Made up of former colonists, Levellers, and New Model Army soldiers, the Fifth Monarchists began mobilizing in the 1650s in part to oppose the massive conscription drive for the English invasion of the Spanish Caribbean. Called the Western Design, Cromwell had commissioned the campaign without Parliamentary consent. The Fifth Monarchists called the Western Design a mass-murdering, “enslaving design” as it had led to the deaths of six thousand of the seven thousand men forced to fight against their will ‘beyond the seas’ by the whim of a would be king. Moreover, the invasion, which brought Spanish Jamaica into England’s imperial orbit, was undertaken at the behest of a circle of slave trading merchants and absentee West Indian planters who had become Cromwell’s chief financiers and closest foreign policy advisors<sup>28</sup>.
- 23 John Clarke joined the former New Englander, Leveller, and New Model Army officer and mutineer, Wentworth Day, in protesting the “enslaving design” at a mass meeting of Fifth Monarchists in London in December 1655<sup>29</sup>. Day spoke before the tumultuous gathering, reminding the crowd that while the Levellers had tried to abolish conscription, Cromwell and his colonial advisors had revived that form of bondage to hasten the spread of slavery on plantations across the Atlantic. The Western Design, Day proclaimed, had “strengthen (ed) (the) wicked in their principles... to gain dominion over bodies...to make merchandize of men” in the colonies. Day castigated Cromwell as a “tyrant and usurper” over 20 times in his speech, for which he was soon arrested. Not long afterward, his supporter, John Clarke, followed him into jail<sup>30</sup>. But Thomas Venner, another former New



Englander among the Fifth Monarchists began organizing armed opposition to Cromwell's reign in a cell containing the most militant members of the movement. They circulated pamphlets through the radical republican underground accusing Cromwell and his advisors with having "captivated" the nation "in bonds," rendering them "slaves to serve like beasts the will and lusts of great men" who grew wealthy from making "merchandise of the slaves and souls of men" in Virginia and the West Indies<sup>31</sup>.

- 24 Seeking to restore the Republic that had fallen to the machinations of tyrants and slave-traders even before the Restoration of Charles II, Thomas Venner led an ill-fated rebellion in January 1661 that plunged London into three days of bloody street fighting. Before the rising, the rebels had issued a manifesto calling for the abolition of "man-stealing", the biblical term for slave trading<sup>32</sup>. As millenarian republicans, they believed that their revolt would initiate the second coming of King Jesus, the sovereign law giver, who would make "Babylonish merchants" "weep and howl" by ending their trade in the "slaves and souls of men." Using a kidnapping metaphor, the Fifth Monarchists proclaimed that the slave-traders who had led England into the "land of bondage" would "deceive the nation no more, whose souls were made slaves unto her by the cunning and deceit of her spirits.<sup>33</sup>" Tellingly, most of the combat took place in front of a prison, the Wood Street Comptor, where the rebels fought to free poor people who were warehoused there by the state before being transported to labor as bond-slaves in Virginia and Barbados. Captured after sustaining nineteen wounds in the fighting, Venner spoke from the scaffold before his execution, urging all those who loved the republic "to look to liberty" while they still had breath in their bodies. But while Venner lost his life, he and the republican abolitionists of the English Revolution left a transatlantic legacy of liberty that lived on through the eighteenth century<sup>34</sup>.
- 25 Slavery spread rapidly in the eighteenth century, but the radical antinomian tradition forged in the English Revolution continued to inform abolitionist activities on both sides of the Atlantic. Radical Quakers in colonial America such as George Keith, Benjamin Lay, and Ralph Sandiford challenged the institution through appeals to the sovereignty of God and emphasis on the inviolability of personal conscience. In one incendiary tract, printed by a young Benjamin Franklin in 1737, Lay urged all slaveholders to turn to "the Blessed Truth, in your Hearts for Direction, for Counsel and Advice;" so they may acquit themselves from "so Hellish a Practice." He pointed to the ultimate authority and justice of God by declaring, "I suppose the pure holy eternal Being, which made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth, did not make others to be slaves to us, any more then we to be so to them..." Lay drew on his personal experience in Barbados and recalled the shiploads of starving Africans brought by the thousands each year – a situation he thought akin to "the very nature of Hell itself..."<sup>35</sup>.
- 26 Lay was ostracized by many of his fellow Quakers for his extremism, but gained a wide readership, becoming an abolitionist folk hero. Benjamin Rush, a leading light of the American Revolution and vocal opponent of slavery, later recalled that "[t]here was a time when the name of this celebrated Christian Philosopher, was familiar to every man, woman and to nearly every child in Pennsylvania<sup>36</sup>." According to Rush, he had left a "seed of virtue" for others to spread and it was left to another Quaker abolitionist, Anthony Benezet, to carry on Lay's legacy<sup>37</sup>.
- 27 Benezet indeed took up the mantle from the radical Quakers, fighting racial prejudice and comparing the oppression of Africans to that of dissenters<sup>38</sup>. His family were Huguenots from northern France who suffered extreme persecution for their Protestant beliefs. He

later lamented that, “one of my uncles was hung by these intolerants, my aunt was put in a convent, two of my cousins died at the galleys...<sup>39</sup>.” As a young child, he and his remaining family emigrated to London, and later to Philadelphia when he was seventeen. There Benezet was converted to the faith of the Society of Friends. Eschewing business, he worked as a teacher in Germantown and later took a position at the Friend’s School in Philadelphia. As an educator he reached out to black children, both free and enslaved, which undoubtedly shaped his perspective on slavery and race.

- 28 As tensions heightened between the colonies and Great Britain in the 1760s, Benezet published a series of highly influential pamphlets that fused abolitionism with republican politics. In doing so, he sought to reach beyond the narrow band of his fellow sectarians and spread the antislavery message more broadly. The first of these pamphlets, *A Short Account of That Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes* (1762), was a multifaceted tract that combined appeals to Christian brotherhood alongside Enlightenment notions of natural rights and republican concerns regarding the corrupting influence of slavery on society. Uniquely, it featured extensive excerpts from travel accounts and references to acts of resistance by the enslaved. Benezet’s work was cited as an inspiration by leading abolitionists throughout the Atlantic world, including Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and Jacques-Pierre Brissot<sup>40</sup>.
- 29 At the time of the publication of *A Short Account*, Great Britain had nearly defeated France in the Seven Years’ War and the expansion of the Atlantic slave trade continued unabated. Despite acknowledging the instability caused by recent slave rebellions, such as those in Surinam and Jamaica, Benezet emphasized the imperial power and self-interest that maintained the institution seemingly in perpetuity. Custom had served to “silence the Dictates of Conscience,” he argued, and acclimated even good people to “Things as would, when first proposed to our unprejudiced Minds have struck us with Amazement and Horror <sup>41</sup>.” Through his writings he attempted to strip the institution of its cultural and intellectual support, revealing the lack of any moral foundation to sustain it.
- 30 Benezet, along with other leading eighteenth-century abolitionists, combined explicit appeals to religious belief with an emphasis on Enlightenment notions of natural rights. The role of radical Enlightenment thought in shaping the antislavery debate of the late eighteenth century has frequently been misunderstood as a secular divergence from a religious antislavery tradition rather than a logical development from within that tradition<sup>42</sup>. Recovering and reconnecting the religious and political radicalism of the period, however, sheds light on the intersection between revolutionary ideology and abolitionism. In this vein, Benezet asked, “how, has [the enslaved African] forfeited his Liberty? Does not Justice loudly call for its being restored to him?” Later, in his *Notes on the Slave Trade*, he proclaimed that “Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air. And no human law can deprive him of the right, which he derives from the law of nature<sup>43</sup>.” Benezet cited a higher law that transcended human law and was to serve as the basis for natural rights.
- 31 In addition to eighteenth-century Quakers like Lay and Benezet, French *philosophes* such as Pierre Bayle, Denis Diderot, and Guillaume-Thomas Raynal helped lay the foundations for a potent democratic-republican critique of slavery during the Age of Revolution<sup>44</sup>. Referring to “the inward light of conscience,” as a transcendent reality, Bayle departed from his contemporary John Locke’s extreme environmentalism<sup>45</sup>. Likewise, Denis Diderot based his conception of “*droit naturel*” [natural right] on the “*sentiment intérieur*” [interior feeling] that “is common both to the philosopher and to the man who has not

reflected...” The common person, accordingly, discerned natural rights in the “tribunal of conscience,” and need not have access to philosophical terms to reach moral understanding<sup>46</sup>. In opposition to Voltaire’s epistemology, heavily influenced by Locke, Diderot and others carried on a democratic-republican tradition that embraced the individual conscience as moral guide.

- 32 The democratic assumptions of the radical *philosophes* had implications for antislavery discourse. The entry for “esclavage” [slavery] in the *Encyclopédie*, authored by Louis Chevalier de Jaucourt in 1755, demonstrates the extent to which the French Enlightenment critique of the institution corresponded with a broader political agenda. For Jaucourt, slavery “damages the liberty of man” and was contrary to “the principles of Nature...<sup>47</sup>.” His entry was not simply a moral indictment but also a political one. Slavery, he observed, “offends the best forms of government” and violates natural law. He argued that “civil slavery is accompanied by political slavery,” and that civil tyranny over the body bred political despotism in tangible ways<sup>48</sup>. He found the claim that one could hold “property rights” over another person to be “repugnant to reason.” To allow such an unjust claim to stand was an invitation to political tyranny. “Men and their freedom are not objects of commerce;” Jaucourt wrote in his entry on the slave trade, “they can be neither sold, nor purchased, nor bought at any price<sup>49</sup>.” This uncompromising position was fueled by abstract reasoning and a commitment to first principles that would later flourish in a revolutionary age.
- 33 Implicit in the radical Enlightenment critique of human bondage was the assumption that slavery was a cancer on the body politic. Still more radical, some reasoned that formerly enslaved human beings should, by natural right, be fully integrated into civil society. Free institutions of government required bodily freedom. The abolition of slavery was therefore a prerequisite to effective democratic-republican institutions. Under such governments, Jaucourt insisted, “The liberty of every citizen is a part of public liberty.” Popular sovereignty relied on public freedom, and such civil liberty depended on a free population. Immediate abolition of slavery was the only just course of action. He considered it grossly inhumane that judges did not “immediately decide to liberate” enslaved people, who possess “a soul like theirs,” when they were brought to “free” soil<sup>50</sup>. The Abbé Raynal, in collaboration with Diderot and others, offered a similar formulation in their widely printed and extremely influential *Histoire des deux Indes* [History of the two Indies], published in 1770. “Without liberty, or the property of one’s own body, and the enjoyment of one’s mind,” It logically followed that, “no man can be...a fellow citizen....” “The slave, impelled by the wicked man” is rendered merely a tool, but nevertheless “conscience... remains with the man,” he ultimately concluded<sup>51</sup>. Certain American, French, and Irish revolutionaries would be animated by similar convictions in the decades to follow.
- 34 Careful study of ideological expressions during the American Revolution demonstrates both the confluence of radical religious belief and revolutionary republicanism, as well as the connection between abolitionism and the democratic thought. The American Revolution did not simply release a “contagion of liberty” as Bernard Bailyn famously framed the transmission of revolutionary ideology to antislavery sentiments<sup>52</sup>. Rather, the most radical strains of the Revolution drew from antislavery discourses from the start, citing economic bondage and the slave trade as the most egregious examples of the British Empire’s excesses and hypocrisy — evidence that venerable institutions were

fundamentally flawed. Like cracks splintering the base of a grand monument, some viewed slavery as undermining the British imperial project at its foundations.

- 35 Natural law and moral conscience, rather than custom and human law, would serve as the revolutionary's guide. British North American colonists of the eighteenth century often struggled to reconcile the idyll of British freedom with lived reality as rebellions amongst the enslaved in Jamaica, Surinam, and Guyana exposed the fragility of the imperial order and informed the protests that followed the Seven Years' War. As resistance advanced to perceived oppression during the Stamp Act crisis, efforts to undermine authority across the Atlantic contributed to a broader questioning of tradition and custom. Abolitionists, black and white, also relied on revolutionary languages to discredit an ancient institution and argue for radical change.<sup>53</sup>
- 36 The most biting critiques of the British empire during the American Revolution embraced the abstract reasoning of *la philosophie moderne* and included protests against slavery. Historians have long argued that the revolution spread liberationist ideology and converted some patriots to the cause of abolition. Few have acknowledged that abolitionist ideas animated the most radical participants from the start. Prominent ideologues like James Otis, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Paine, contended that chattel slavery was a symptom of a corrupted British imperial project—a contagion that threatened to infect the body politic, leading to tyranny and despotism. Otis, the Boston legal prodigy, demonstrated the potential of natural rights theory in pressing for racial equality. In a widely distributed pamphlet in 1764, he declared: "The Colonists are by the law of nature free born, as indeed all men are, white or black <sup>54</sup>."
- 37 James Otis was not alone among patriots in merging the battle against political tyranny with that confronting economic bondage. In a 1773 abolitionist pamphlet with republican overtones, Benjamin Rush argued that to tolerate slavery was to justify political tyranny. "If domestic Slavery is agreeable to the Will and Laws of God," he asserted, "political Slavery is much more so." Following this logic, Rush suggested, "King Charles the First did no wrong" and "Passive Obedience" was owed to tyrants<sup>55</sup>. Drawing explicitly on the tradition of the English Revolution, he argued that all despotism must be resisted, no matter how entrenched. Revolutions were needed to emancipate the people from political enslavement and would similarly be necessary to eradicate "domestic" slavery. The English Revolution offered a rich set of intellectual resources to draw upon when confronting oppressive power of all sorts. Radical dissenters among various seventeenth-century Protestant sects had merged religious fervor with republican politics. The most radical among them challenged slavery as a usurpation of the sovereignty of God and the integrity of personal conscience. Radicals in the late eighteenth century similarly sought to merge these discourses and simultaneously usher in an age of personal and political freedom.
- 38 Republican radicals sought to break definitively with the past and looked forward to the "birthday of a new world," in Paine's words.<sup>56</sup> In a piece published more than a year before his stirring pamphlet *Common Sense*, Paine assailed slave-traders who "wilfully sacrifice Conscience," and advocated for abolition as a matter of natural right. The artisan radical and recent émigré from England argued that governments should "in justice set [slaves] free, and punish those who hold them in slavery." Echoing both seventeenth-century English radicals and the democratic-republican *philosophes*, he asserted that justifications for enslaving human beings were "contrary to the plain dictates of natural light, and the conscience... <sup>57</sup>." Paine and others among the democratic wing of the

revolutionary movement increasingly embraced sweeping political and institutional changes, whereby society could be transformed and the chains of economic bondage broken forever.

- 39 Just months after Paine's piece appeared in print the first abolition society was formed in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society (1775) became the model both for the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in London (1787) and the *Amis des Noirs* in Paris (1788). The founding of the Paris society followed the French abolitionist Jacques-Pierre Brissot's travels to America and subsequent visit with British activists in London<sup>58</sup>. Brissot was a committed democratic-republican and strong supporter of American independence<sup>59</sup>. The roots of the club extended to the Gallo-American Society, a French group that gathered enthusiastic supporters of the American cause and Enlightenment ideals. It was also heavily indebted to the influence of Anthony Benezet, who they held as a veritable patron saint<sup>60</sup>. Members included Brissot, Condorcet, and Mirabeau, among others<sup>61</sup>. Many would go on to become leaders of the Girondin faction in the National Convention following the French Revolution<sup>62</sup>.
- 40 From the start of the revolution in France, Brissot's journal, *Le Patriote Français*, covered the campaign to extend representation to the free colored population in Saint-Domingue<sup>63</sup>. As a result of this advocacy, the *Amis des Noirs* welcomed bi-racial members and endorsed equal citizenship rights for all free men, regardless of race. This development had transnational ramifications.<sup>64</sup> The British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson was present at many of the meetings and personally lobbied members of the National Assembly<sup>65</sup>. He warned that if France failed to abolish the slave trade: "the Principles on which She has brought about the revolution will be justly considered to have flowed from a polluted source, her Declaration of the Bill of Rights will be considered as the Declaration of Hypocrites... and She will become the Derision of Europe<sup>66</sup>." For Clarkson, France had set the pace for change and could serve as a model for both Great Britain and the United States if the new republic embraced a multi-racial citizenry.
- 41 An uprising led by people of color, both free and enslaved, in Saint-Domingue in 1791 and the emancipation decrees that soon followed, occurred just as Francomania was growing in the young United States.<sup>67</sup> Defenders of slavery blamed the insurrection on the abolitionism of the *Amis des Noirs* and the spread of radical republican ideas in the French Caribbean<sup>68</sup>. There was truth in this claim, as numerous insurgents expressed their grievances in democratic-republican language – that they fought to “enjoy the liberty they are entitled to by the Rights of Man<sup>69</sup>.” Drawing on the language of the rebels in Saint-Domingue, some democrats in the United States fused pro-French sentiments with antislavery convictions, even lending support for the violent revolt<sup>70</sup>. PAS president James Pemberton wrote to the *Amis des Noirs*, calling the French response to grievances by people of color in Saint-Domingue as an “advance” that promised to “forward the great business of the abolition of slavery, and of a just recognition of the Rights of Man<sup>71</sup>.” The first American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery proclaimed it “inconsistent with sound policy” that slavery be allowed to continue, as it exposed the nation to “those evils which insurrections... have introduced into one of the riches islands in the West-Indies.” The rebellion in Saint-Domingue was caused by slavery itself, which robbed its victims of their natural freedom. “In vain has the tyranny of kings been rejected,” the convention continued, “while we permit in our country a domestic despotism...<sup>72</sup>.” The abolitionist crusade was firmly linked with the broader struggle against tyranny and oppression.

- 42 The French Emancipation Decree in early 1794, which abolished slavery in France and her colonies, framed transnational abolitionism as a liberation movement. The Convention's act applied to French colonies as well and even universally. Danton audaciously announced that "until now our decrees of liberty have been selfish, and only for ourselves. But today we proclaim it to the universe...<sup>73</sup>." For many French democrats, emancipation was the culmination of a process that began with the abolition of royal privilege and ended with a wholesale rejection of the "aristocracy of the skin"<sup>74</sup>. The emancipation decrees the French commissioners in 1793 and the French National Convention a year later sparked a transatlantic dialogue. A letter from the "citizens of color of Philadelphia" to the French National Convention reflected the optimism of the age, praising commissioner Léger-Félicité Sonthonax for "breaking our chains" with "the immortal Decree wiping out all traces of slavery in the French colonies."<sup>75</sup> Slavery had been overthrown in Saint-Domingue, a colony that had produced enormous wealth through forced labor, setting the tone for both radical antislavery activism and conservative reactions in the young United States.
- 43 American abolitionists took their cue from Paris and insisted on speeding up the process of emancipation in the United States and more aggressively challenging the planter interest. Shortly after news of the declaration reached Philadelphia, one advocate wrote to Benjamin Rush, noting that "the French... are more rapid in their motions than we"<sup>76</sup>. At the following meeting of the American Convention of Abolition Societies, the French decree received much attention. The antislavery convention even resolved "To endeavour to free negroes from St. Domingo retained here as slaves, contrary to the decree of the National Convention of France"<sup>77</sup>. The American abolitionist societies looked to the French emancipation decree as an example of what could be accomplished through appeals to universal rights.
- 44 The decree also received considerable attention beyond abolitionist circles. The democratic-republican press, especially in the northern United States, printed English translations of the proclamation and covered civic feasts featuring toasts which mingled the celebration of French military victories with calls for the abolition of slavery in all its forms<sup>78</sup>. A description of engravings displayed at a celebration in Boston, for example, was printed in a republican newspaper in South Carolina. It described "people of colour, all clad after the manner of their respective countries, stretching forth their arms towards France... stepping forward to take a copy of what is written on the tables (THE RIGHTS OF MEN) "<sup>79</sup>. Emancipation was consistently situated within the context of republican revolution and made use of radical Enlightenment language and imagery.<sup>80</sup> These were categories that "patriotic" Americans were predisposed to receive favorably, communicated an uncompromising commitment to freedom and insisted on unwavering support of fundamental principles.
- 45 Across the Atlantic, in Ireland, the influence of democratic-republican ideas on politics and antislavery activism was similarly conspicuous. The writings of Paine and leading French revolutionaries were especially influential and widely distributed amongst the United Irishmen. At celebrations of French victories, society members toasted "Confusion to the Enemies of French Liberty," and to "The Rights of Man"<sup>81</sup>. In 1791, Olaudah Equiano had toured Ireland, meeting abolitionists, discussing his autobiography, and fueling antislavery sentiment throughout the island<sup>82</sup>. Thomas McCabe, a founding member of the United Irishmen, planned an effective campaign against the involvement of Belfast merchants in the slave trade and another member, William Drennan, organized a boycott



of West Indian sugar in the early 1790s<sup>83</sup>. Yet another, Henry Joy McCracken, looked forward to “a speedy Repeal of the infamous traffic in the flesh and bone of Man<sup>84</sup>.” The society’s mouthpiece, the *Northern Star*, consistently promoted antislavery views throughout the 1790s. One editorial insisted that “it be admitted that the consumption of West India produce... is the sole support of [the slave trade], every individual, as far as he consumes, becomes accessory to the guilt<sup>85</sup>.” Calling for a boycott on sugar and rum from the Caribbean, the paper hoped to cut off the flow of capital that sustained plantation slavery in the new world.

- 46 The fusion of radical republican ideology and abolitionist commitments was especially evident in Thomas Russell’s widely distributed *A Letter to the People of Ireland* (1796). Russell forwarded a higher law doctrine of natural rights and adroitly linked the causes of oppressed Catholics, Irishmen impressed by the British Navy, and enslaved Africans. The tract aimed to thoroughly discredit British law and imperial policy. “Those insolent enslavers of the human race,” he exclaimed, “wish to fetter the mind as well as the body...” Human beings, he contended, were moral agents accountable only to God and conscience<sup>86</sup>.
- 47 Like the antinomian republicanism driving Leveller thought in the mid-seventeenth-century English Revolution, Russell’s *Letter to the People* grounded egalitarianism and democratic politics in divine conscience rather than human law. Human laws, he contended, “are to be obeyed so far as they consist with the Divine will and no further.” Respect for human laws was the greatest cause of “the calamities and wickedness which fill the annals of mankind.” He lamented that hundreds of thousands of Irishmen had been impressed to service in the British Navy forcing one to act against both “his reason and his conscience<sup>87</sup>.” This critique of empire echoed the resistance of seventeenth-century English radicals, who viewed military conscription as a form of embodied political slavery that enabled the development of racial slavery. For Russell, impressment was akin to enslavement, as individuals were physically coerced to serve without their consent.
- 48 Provocatively, Russell moved beyond the customary metaphor of slavery and called for the Irish to explicitly reject Britain’s support of African bondage, as it violated the “rights of man.” He pleaded with “the Irish nation” to consider that Britain’s warfare, which relied upon the impressment and forced labor of Irishmen and other imperial subjects, was aimed to continue the slave trade. He held that this concern was “of the greatest consequence” and questioned whether the Irish were “willing to employ their treasure and their blood,” to support such an oppressive system. Russell continued with a series of sharp queries on the subject: “Do they know that that horrid traffic spreads its influence over the globe... that it is impossible for language adequately to express its horror and guilt.... If this trade is wrong, is it right for the Irish nation to endeavour to continue it<sup>88</sup>?” Resistance to impressment, for this leading United Irishmen, represented tangible and direct resistance to the transatlantic slave trade.
- 49 For Russell, a free and independent Irish republic was predicated on the abolition of chattel bondage. He compared the treatment of Africans to that of Irish Catholics who were routinely denied basic rights by the Penal Law. To provide support for the slave trade contradicted the fundamental principles of the United Irishmen. It is “not only the right but the *essential duty* of every man” to remove support for a government that supports such a system, he implored<sup>89</sup>. The rights of humanity included the rights of



Africans, and he hoped that the Irish would take the lead in asserting liberty for all, regardless of race, class, or religion.

- 50 Russell and other United Irishmen embraced a cosmopolitan republicanism, emphasizing what the Irish had in common rather than their differences. Rallying Irishmen to defend their moral destinies in the face of British greed and oppression meant challenging all laws that support tyranny. “It is on this account that liberty should be fought and is truly estimable;” he observed. Not just Irishmen, but all human beings, must destroy “those prejudices and institutions which made man bow down before man, or his law; and to these Idols... sacrifice of his abilities, his judgment, his conscience, and his eternal happiness<sup>90</sup>.” Clearly influenced by the French Revolution, he identified the institutions of the past as corrupted and encouraged all to base their actions on a new moral code, grounded in reason and conscience. Human bondage was incompatible with this new moral outlook. Ultimately, he and other Irish radicals critiqued the colonial project itself as anathema to self-government and the protection of human rights.
- 51 In asserting their rights, the United Irishmen tended to reject precedent and constitutional approaches, instead embracing abstract principles and natural rights. Thomas Addis Emmet, a strong advocate of Irish independence and a vocal opponent of chattel slavery, embodied this perspective<sup>91</sup>. Prior to the rebellion, he wrote that “Their title to liberty rested not on the charter, it rested on the *rights of man*.” Man is made “a slave by precedent,” he concluded, “when he could not be made a slave by force.” For Emmet, freedom from enslavement was a natural right and he fought consistently against multiple forms of slavery throughout his life. He viewed the “subjection of Ireland to the English power” as a debasing form of slavery and also considered the enslavement of Africans as a gross violation of their natural rights<sup>92</sup>.
- 52 Emmet put principle into practice<sup>93</sup>. After being imprisoned following the failed rebellion 1798, he fled to the United States. Shortly after settling in New York City he wrote to a friend in Ireland, justifying his decision to avoid taking up residence in the South. “You know the insuperable objection I have always had to settling, where I could not dispense with the use of slaves,” he noted, “and that the more they abound, the stronger are my objections... <sup>94</sup>.” He proceeded to take up cases as a lawyer for the New-York Manumission Society and remained a passionate advocate for the enslaved and a defender of democratic principles well into the nineteenth century<sup>95</sup>.
- 53 In the United States, Emmet entered a political world more similar to the one he had left than he may have expected. The perceived excesses of the French Revolution and fears of abstract principles contributed to a backlash against both democratic-republican politics and radical abolitionism by the late 1790s<sup>96</sup>. Conservative “friends of order” like Noah Webster, Jedidiah Morse, and William Cobbett warned of a new contagion — that of French modern philosophy and the democratic politics that accompanied such ideas. They emphasized the threat of democrats, popular politics, and rash abolitionists to the fabric of the new republic. Fears of atheism, mob violence, and anarchy led many of those opposed to slavery to moderate their approach.
- 54 Prior to Emmet’s arrival, a number of other dissidents of the rebellion of 1798 had settled throughout the United States. During the 1790s over ten thousand Irish arrived in the Philadelphia region alone, many having experienced British repression<sup>97</sup>. In 1797, The American Society of United Irishmen was established in Philadelphia and seamlessly entered the already established network of democratic societies. A shared affinity for the “rights of man” and resistance to a perceived revival of arbitrary power in Britain and the

United States united the organizations in support of democratic revolutions throughout the world. The Constitution of the Society called for “the Union, Equality and Liberty of All Men...<sup>98</sup>.” Society member James Reynolds declared that the “tyrannical imprisonments, the rapes, the arsons, the tortures, and the military murders are about to be avenged, and, that a manly people, whom six hundred years slavery could not debase, are about to be restored to their rights<sup>99</sup>.” Members such as Reynolds brought a militancy to the American democratic movement that raised the ire of conservatives.

55 Arch-Federalist William Cobbett was alarmed that radical Irish republican writings were being circulating amongst democratic circles in America.<sup>100</sup> He promptly published a pamphlet attacking the group. Lumping the United Irishmen together with the “whisky-boys and their partizans, the democrats,” Cobbett characterized the society as imitators of French “modern philosophers,” and English dissenters such as “Priestley and Price.” Accordingly, he observed, they chanted “Equality! Dignity of human nature! — Aristocracy! — Slavery! Chains! The very cant of the philosophic philanthropic murderers in France.” Cobbett lamented the Irish emigrating in large numbers to the United States and even suggested they be enslaved instead. “I have sometimes been surprized,” he bitingly remarked, “that the traders to the Irish coast did not give their merchandize a different hue....” But he was not too surprised, because “a cargo of black boys is worth two of *white* boys at any time...<sup>101</sup>.”

56 After the founding of an American chapter of the United Irishmen, Cobbett’s denunciations grew even more intense. The “emigrated UNITED IRISHMEN,” Cobbett warned, were plotting a conspiracy to topple the established government of the United States. He was especially concerned with the Society’s commitment to “*Equality and Liberty to ALL men*,” and that the society held its meetings at “the AFRICAN SCHOOL.” For Cobbett, “what renders the situation of America more favourable to the views of France than any other country, is the *negro* slavery to the southward.” He sensed a clear link between democratic radicalism and emancipationism:

On this it is that the villains ground their hope. It is said, that some of the *free* negroes have already been admitted into the conspiracy of the UNITED IRISHMEN, and that some slave-holders either in Carolina or Virginia have engaged, in ‘a case of URGENCY,’ to set their negroes free, in order to excite discontents amongst those of their neighbours, and thus involve the whole country in rebellion and bloodshed.

57 Such a result is desired by “the jacobins” of America, he continued, and called on the “friends of government” to remain vigilant. He warned that “the closest intimacy exists between the sans-culotte French... the emigrated United Irishmen, and a base American printer, notoriously in the service of France<sup>102</sup>.”

58 Fears over the radical politics of Irish and French emigres contributed to an atmosphere of political paranoia that divided antislavery activists in the United States. The Alien and Sedition Acts passed during the Adams administration attempted to quell dissent and insulate the established government from attack<sup>103</sup>. Conservative observers looked across the Atlantic for evidence of the efficacy of such an approach. Pitt’s Britain had effectively stymied the reformers through a series of repressive laws and decrees. Ireland served as a warning to those who would take democratic radicalism too lightly. One conservative newspaper included an article from Dublin, daring its subscribers to read it and “tell me if the Alien and Sedition bills are not necessary<sup>104</sup>.” The acts had a chilling effect on radical politics, spilling over to antislavery activism. To witness the decline of abolitionism during this period was to witness, in David Brion Davis’s artful phrasing, “the

perishability of Revolutionary time.”<sup>105</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, a more moderate and pragmatic style of antislavery reform emerged and those who continued to vocalize commitments to radical republicanism were forced underground<sup>106</sup>.

## Conclusion

- 59 Transatlantic republicanism cannot be reduced to an eighteenth-century phenomenon let alone a mere product of the Age of Atlantic Revolutions. Its roots, both in ideological formation and revolutionary expression, stretch back to the mid-seventeenth century and the political upheavals that made the English Revolution an Atlantic event. Understanding how a complex intersection of ideological inheritances—classical, humanist, antinomian, and radical Enlightenment—combined over time to define this political culture requires the perspective of the *longue durée*. One very significant benefit of the *longue durée* approach is that it allows us to see how abolitionism emerged as an original feature of transatlantic republican political culture in the mid-seventeenth century. Here, during the English Revolution, antinomians circulating throughout the English Atlantic first critiqued the ways in which imperial expansion degenerated republican virtue at home through its reliance on political (military conscription) and economic (term-bound and perpetual chattel slavery) forms of embodied human bondage. So-called empires of liberty would ultimately impose the enslaving power of arbitrary government at home in order to force their own people and others of African descent into multiple forms of bondage in the pursuit of wealth and power abroad. In the first generation of transatlantic republicanism, radicals discovered that racial slavery in Atlantic colonies led to the internal colonization of the domestic body politic and plantation and military bondage for the poor.
- 60 Throughout the eighteenth century, radical Enlightenment thought in Britain, France, and the colonial Atlantic sustained and strengthened the links seventeenth-century antinomians made between liberty of conscience and liberty of the body, stressing their status as the fundamental features of human liberty, over which no entity, private or public, could justly claim prerogative, sovereign dominion. To exercise such power—to subject a person to the arbitrary will of another for the latter’s benefit—was to enslave them, as neither conscience nor body could be preserved in freedom through such subjection. Recurring examples of resistance from the enslaved themselves further influenced radical Enlightenment thinking regarding the liberty of body and conscience and its antithesis, the unnatural, oppressive, morally corrupt, exploitative, and socially degenerative institution of racialized slavery.
- 61 The *longue durée* view of republican abolition also compels us to begin re-thinking an historiographic paradigm regarding the Age of Atlantic Revolutions—that its challenge to monarchical/patriarchal order unleashed a contagion of radical thinking that made abolitionism a feature (albeit a contested one) of transatlantic republican political culture. We have argued instead that abolitionist thought and action throughout the eighteenth century helped inspire the revival of a revolutionary republican political culture in the late eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Radicals in the Franco-Irish republican network made some of the most impressive contributions to this revival, critiquing colonialism as a form of political slavery that captivated the Irish body politic, rendering it vulnerable to a form of embodied political slavery, the military conscription of Irishmen, whose forced labor in the British imperial military allowed even greater

tyrannies to fester around the Atlantic, most notably racialized slavery. Taking the *longue durée* of transatlantic radicalism into account once again, we see that in two periods of revolutionary upheaval, the first in the mid-seventeenth century and the second in the late-eighteenth, that the desire to abolish multiple forms of human bondage informed republican critiques of the very nature of colonialism.

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## NOTES

1. John GOODWIN, *Anti-Cavalierisme, or Truth Pleading as Well as the Necessity, as the Lawfulness of this Present War*, London, 1642, p. 7-9, 16, 38-39. For the meaning of political slavery in early modern England, see Quentin SKINNER, 'Rethinking Political Liberty', *History Workshop Journal*, 61:1, 2006, p. 156-170, esp.158-159; 'John Milton and the Politics of Slavery', *Visions of Politics II: Renaissance Virtue*, 3 volumes, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 292-297. There was no single ideology or intellectual inheritance that unified republican (or 'commonwealth') thought in early modern England. Much work has been done on the classical inheritance and civic life that guided English humanist thought and political practice in the Tudor-Stuart era. See, for instance, John F. MCDIARMID (ed), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England*, New York, Routledge, 2007, second edition, 2016), for a collection of essays reflecting on Patrick Collinson's influential article, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester*, 1987, p. 1-31. In this article, I join Skinner's analysis of the anti-monarchical republicanism of the English Revolution with a republicanism based on civic virtue that J.G.A. Pocock famously discussed in *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975). Blair Worden distinguishes between Skinner's neo-Roman or "constitutional republicanism" and Pocock's Machiavellian notion of "civic republicanism." As Worden explains, constitutional republicanism may be defined as opposition to prerogative institutions of political power, culminating in an aversion to monarchical government. Pocock's civic republicanism reflects how the English refined Machiavelli's *Discourses* to form an ideal of "political action and civic virtue" in the century leading to up to the English Revolution. See Worden's illuminating essay, 'Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience', in Martin van GELDEREN and Quentin SKINNER (eds), *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 volumes, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 1: 307-327, quote on p. 308. This article, following Jonathan Scott's work, also moves beyond Skinner and Pocock, analyzing how a republicanism of English humanism, shaped by the Radical Reformation and practical Christian moral philosophy, informed the neo-classical constitutional challenge to monarchy during the English Revolution, see Jonathan SCOTT, 'What were Commonwealth Principles?', *The Historical Journal*, 47:3, 2004, p. 591-613.

2. For a contemporary formulation of sovereignty from the magisterial reformation perspective, see John WINTHROP, 'Liberty and the Weal Public Reconciled...Concerning...the Late Court of Elections at Newtown' and 'A Defense of an Order of Court Made in the Year 1637,' in Thomas HUTCHINSON (ed), *A Collection of Original Papers Relative to the History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*, Boston, 1769, p. 63-71. For work on ancient constitutional concepts of sovereignty, see Corinne WESTON and Janelle GREENBERG, *Subjects and Sovereigns: The Grand Controversy of Legal Sovereignty in Stuart England*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1991; Alan CROMARTIE, 'The Constitutionalist Revolution: the Transformation of Political Culture in Early Stuart England',

*Past and Present*, 163: 1, 1999, p. 76-120; J.G.A. POCOCK, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1957, second edition 1987.

3. John LILBURNE, *The Free Man's Freedom Vindicated*, London, 1645 in Don Wolfe (ed), *The Leveller Manifestos of the Puritan Revolution*, New York: Humanities Press, 1967, p. 317; Richard OVERTON, *An Arrow Against All Tyrants*, London, 1646, p. 5; *A Defiance Against All Arbitrary Usurpations*, London, 1646, p. 2, 5, 26.

4. *Vox Plebis, or the People's Outcry Against Oppression, Injustice, and Tyranny*, London, 1646, p. 2, 4; William WALWYN, *The Power of Love*, London, 1643.

5. John CLARKE, *Ill News from New England: or A Narrative of New England's Persecution Wherein is Declared That While Old England is Becoming New, New England is Becoming Old*, London, 1652, p. 5, 7. For more on antinomian spiritual and political beliefs, including liberty of conscience, see Christopher HILL, 'Antinomianism in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, 2 volumes, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986, 1:162-184; Jonathan SCOTT, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, Chapter 11; David COMO, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004.

6. For Gorton's life in New England, see Kenneth PORTER, 'Samuell Gorton: New England Firebrand', *The New England Quarterly*, 7:1, 1934, p. 405-454; George A. BRAYTON, *A Defense of Samuel Gorton and the Settlers of Shawomet*, Providence, RI, S.S. Rider, 1883. For his time in London during the Revolution, see Jonathan Beecher FIELD, *Errands into the Metropolis: New England Dissidents in Revolutionary London*, Hanover, N.H., University of New England Press, 2009, Chapter 6.

7. Quotations from Gorton may be found in Samuel GORTON, *Simplicity's Defense Against Seven-Headed Policy*, London, 1646, edited by William R. STAPLES, Providence, RI, Marshall Brown, 1853, p. 80; Edward WINSLOW, *Hypocrisy Unmasked: A True Relation of the Proceedings of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Against Samuel Gorton of Rhode Island*, London, 1646, edited by Howard Millar CHAPIN, Providence, 1916, p. 28, 34, 43, 44.

8. Murray TOLMIE, 'Thomas Lambe, Soapboiler, and Thomas Lambe, Merchant, General Baptists', *Baptist Quarterly*, 27 (1977-1978), p. 4-13; Stephen WRIGHT, 'Thomas Lambe, 1629-1661', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Online edition, January 2008) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/index/72/101072598>].

9. [Richard OVERTON and William WALWYN], *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens*, London, 1646, p. 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19-20.

10. Norah CARLIN, 'Leveller Organization in London', *Historical Journal*, 27:4, 1984, p. 959-960; Murray TOLMIE, *The Triumph of the Saints*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 144-184. Thomas EDWARDS, *Gangreana: or a Catalogue and Discovery... of the Many Errors of this Time*, 3 volumes, London, 1646, 1: 81, 91-93.

11. Philip GURA, 'The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton: New Light on the Relation of English to American Puritanism', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 36: 1, 1979, 78-100; 'Samuel Gorton and Religious Radicalism in England, 1644-1648', *Ibid.*, 40:1, 1983, p. 121-124.

12. For OVERTON, see *The Arraignment of Mr. Persecution*, London, 1645 and *Martin's Eccho*, London, 1645; for WALWYN, see *England's Lamentable Slavery*, London, 1645 and *A Word in Season*, London, 1646. For more on Overton's clandestine publishing career, see David R. ADAMS, 'The Secret Printing and Publishing Career of Richard Overton the Leveller, 1644-46', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, 11: 1, 2010, p. 3-88.

13. John COFFEY, 'Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution', *Historical Journal*, 41:4, 1998, p. 961-985.

14. Norah CARLIN, 'The Levellers and the Conquest of Ireland in 1649', *Historical Journal*, 30: 2, 1987, p. 269-288; Chris DURSTON, "'Let Ireland be Quiet:' Opposition in England to the Cromwellian Conquest of Ireland', *History Workshop Journal*, 21: 1, 1986, p. 105-112.
15. [OVERTON and WALWYN], *A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens*, 16.
16. *An Agreement of the People for a Firm and Present Peace, upon Grounds of Common Right and Freedom*, London, 1647, p. 4, section 2; John LILBURNE, William WALWYN, Richard OVERTON, and Thomas PRINCE, *An Agreement of the Free People of England*, London, 1649, section 11. For more on the Levellers' constitutional proposals, see Ian GENTLES, 'The Agreements of the People and their Political Contexts, 1647-1649', in Michael MENDLE (ed), *The Putney Debates of 1647: The Army, the Levellers, and the English State*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
17. For the 1647 mutiny Leveller mutiny on Corkbush Field, Ware, Herefordshire, see Frances MASERES (ed), *Select Tracts Relating to the Civil Wars in England in the Reign of King Charles I*, London, 1815, p. xxxiii, xl-xlii, xlv-xlvi, lv-lviii. For the 1649 Leveller mutinies in London and Oxfordshire, see Charles FIRTH and Godfrey DAVIES, *The Regimental History of Cromwell's Army*, 2 volumes, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940, 1: 182-184; Henry DENNE, *The Levellers Design Discovered: or, the Anatomie of the Late Unhappy Mutiny Presented Unto the Soldiery of the Army*, London, 1649. For the best interpretive work on the mutineers' radical politics, see James HOLSTUN, *Ehud's Dagger: Class Struggle in the English Revolution*, London: Verso, 2000, p. 195-235.
18. *A Declaration by Congregational Societies in and about the City of London*, London, 1647; *The Humble Petition and Representation of Several Churches of God in London Commonly (Though Falsely) Called Anabaptists*, London, 1649.
19. Edward WINSLOW, *The Danger of Tolerating Levellers in a Civil State, or, An Historical Narration of the Dangerous Pernicious Practices and Opinions wherewith Samuel Gorton and his Leveling Accomplices so Much Disturbed and Molested the Several Plantations in New-England Parallel to the Positions and Proceedings of the Present Levellers in Old England*, London, 1649; FIELD, *Errands Into the Metropolis: New England Dissidents in Revolutionary London*, p. 48-71.
20. John Russell BARTLETT (ed), *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, 1636-1663*, Providence, RI, 1857, p. 38-65, 134-135; J.S. MALOY, *The Colonial Origins of Modern Democratic Thought*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 167-169; Michelle BURNHAM, 'Samuel Gorton's Leveller Aesthetics and the Economics of Colonial Dissent', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 67: 3, 2010, p. 433-457.
21. Elaine Forman CRANE, *A Dependent People: Newport in the Revolutionary Era*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1962, p. 17; Lorenzo Johnston GREENE, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1942, p. 30.
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23. For the Rhode Island abolition law within the context of transatlantic republicanism, see John DONOGHUE, 'Fire under the Ashes': *An Atlantic History of the English Revolution*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013, p. 263-267; "'Out of the Land of Bondage": The English Revolution and the Atlantic Origins of Abolition', *The American Historical Review*, 115: 4, p. 964-965.
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25. George GARDNYER, *A Description of the New World, or, America Islands and Continent*, London, 1652, p. 8, 9.
26. Charles BAYLY, *A True and Faithful Warning unto the People and Inhabitants of Bristol*, London, 1663, p. 8, 9.
27. For more on kidnapping, see John WAREING, 'The Regulation and Organisation of the Trade in Indentured Servants for the American Colonies in London, 1645-1718, and the Career of William

Haverland, *Emigration Agent*, PhD Diss., University of London, 2000; “‘Violently Taken Away or Cheatingly Duckoyed’: The Illicit Recruitment in London of Indentured Servants for the American colonies, 1645-1718’, *London Journal*, 26: 2, 2001, p. 1-22. For demographic statistics and the transition from indentured servitude to racialized slavery in the English Atlantic, see David GALENSON, *White Servitude in Colonial America: An Economic Analysis*, New York, 1984, p. 216–218, tables H3 and H4; E. A. WRIGLEY and R. S. SCHOFIELD, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, London, 1981, p. 227; J. C. COOMBS, ‘The Phases of Conversion: A New Chronology for the Rise of Slavery in Early Virginia’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 68: 3, 2011, p. 335-338, 348; Hilary BECKLES, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1989; Christopher TOMLINS, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing America*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010; Simon NEWMAN, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

28. For Clarke, see ‘The English Career of John Clarke’, *The Baptist Quarterly*, 1: 8, 1923, p. 368-372. For the Fifth Monarchists in general, see B.S. CAPP, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism*, London, Faber and Faber, 1972. For the Fifth Monarchists and their critique of the slave-trading interests behind the Western Design, see DONOGHUE, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution*, p. 252-276.

29. “Wentworth Day,” in Richard GREAVES and Robert ZALLER (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 volumes, Brighton, Sussex, 1982-1984, 1: 217; DONOGHUE, *Fire under the Ashes: An Atlantic History of the English Revolution*, p. 163-164, 189, 194, 196, 205.

30. Vavassor POWELL, *A Word for God or a Testimony on Truth’s Behalf from Several Churches and Diverse Hundreds of Christians in Wales*, London, 1655, p. A, 4, 5; *A Narrative wherein is Faithfully Set Forth the Sufferings of John Canne, Wentworth Day, and John Clarke*, London, 1658; Bodleian Library Rawlinson Mss A 39 fol. 528; 47 fol. 27; C.H. FIRTH (ed), *The Clarke Papers*, 4 volumes, London, Camden Society, 1891, 3: 62; Thomas BIRCH, (ed), *Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 volumes, London, 1742, 4: 302-317.

31. *A Banner of Truth Displayed*, London, 1656, p. A2, 1; *England’s Rembrancer*, London, 1656, p. 5; *Prophets Malachy and Isaiah Prophesying to the Saints and Professors*, London, 1656, p. 10-11; *A Standard Set Up*, London, 1657, p. 6, 7.

32. *A Door of Hope*, London, 1661, p. 5.

33. *A Banner of Truth Displayed*, p. A2, 15, 53, 54, 90.

34. *A Relation or History of the Rise and Suppression of the Fifth Monarchy...the Chief of Which Sect was one Thomas Venner, a Wine Cooper*, London, 1661; Thomas HOWELL, (ed), *Cobbett’s Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors, 1671-1678*, London, T.C. Hanserd, 1810, p. 67-70; Champlin BURRAGE, ‘The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections’, *English Historical Review*, 25, 1910, p. 738-745.

35. Benjamin LAY, *All Slave-keepers... Apostates*, Philadelphia, 1737, p. 12, 61, 27.

36. ‘Biographical Anecdotes of Benjamin Lay’, February 10, 1790, in Benjamin RUSH *Essays Literary, Moral and Philosophical*, [Original edition, Philadelphia, 1798], Schenectady, NY: Union College Press, 1988, p. 181.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

38. Jonathan D. SASSI, ‘Africans in the Quaker Image: Anthony Benezet, African Travel Narratives, and Revolutionary-Era Antislavery’, *Journal of Early Modern History*, 10: 1-2, 2006, p. 95-130.

39. G. S. BROOKES, *Friend Anthony Benezet*, London: Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 5.

40. The British abolitionist Granville Sharp discovered Benezet’s *A Short Account of That Part of Africa* while browsing a London bookstore and was inspired to have it reprinted in England (1768). Shortly thereafter, Sharp wrote and published *A Representation of the Injustice and dangerous tendency of tolerating Slavery in England* (1769), which Benezet would later print a lengthy excerpt



from. See Roger BRUNS, *Am I not a Man and a Brother: The Antislavery Crusade of Revolutionary America, 1688-1788*, New York: Chelsea House, 1977, p. 79. The re-publication of Sharp's treatise is referenced in a letter from Benezet to Sharp on May, 14, 1772. On Benezet's influence on the early abolitionist movement, see Betty FLADELAND, *Men and Brothers: Anglo-American Antislavery Cooperation*, Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972, p. 14-43; and Maurice JACKSON, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

41. Anthony BENEZET, *A Short Account of that Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes; with Respect to the Fertility of the Country; the good Disposition of many of the Natives, and the Manner by which the Slave Trade is carried on*, Philadelphia, 1762, p. 4-5.

42. The most comprehensive account of slavery and abolition during this period remains David Brion Davis' sweeping study *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, New York, 1975. Recent important work on the subject includes: Peter LINEBAUGH and Marcus REDIKER, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Boston, 2000; Robin BLACKBURN, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*, London and New York, 2011; and J.R. OLDFIELD, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution*, Cambridge, 2013. Historians increasingly differentiate between a "radical Enlightenment," and a "moderate Enlightenment," which helps to distinguish various currents within eighteenth-century social thought, with important implications for the study of abolitionism. Radical religious dissent was politicized and understandings of conscience and personal independence were reformulated in the context of the Age of Revolution. Radicalism denotes a commitment to fundamentally alter social and political structures as well as cultural systems. Margaret Jacob connects the political and scientific radicalism of the early Enlightenment with the religious enthusiasm of the English Revolution. See Margaret JACOB, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, 1981; Reprint, Lafayette, LA, Cornerstone, 2006. Jonathan Israel's characterization of what constitutes the Radical Enlightenment is somewhat different than Jacob's. While both point to the Enlightenment's seventeenth-century origins, Israel emphasizes the more secular sources of radicalism, especially the influence of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza. See Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; and *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from the Rights of Man to Robespierre*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

43. Anthony BENEZET, *Notes on the Slave Trade*, Philadelphia: 1781, p. 8.

44. On the influence of English republicanism in eighteenth-century France, see especially: Rachel HAMMERSLEY, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2010; 'Harringtonian Republicanism, Democracy and the French Revolution', *La Révolution française* [En ligne], 5 | 2013, mis en ligne le 31 décembre 2013; Margaret JACOB, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, 1981; Reprint, Lafayette, LA, Cornerstone, 2006, p. 94, 249-260; Raymonde MONNIER, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005; Pierre LURBE, 'Lost in [French] Translation: Sidney's Elusive Republicanism', in Gaby MAHLBERG and Dirk WIEMANN (eds), *European Contexts for English Republicanism*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013, p. 211-224. and Johnson K. WRIGHT, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997. For the later influence of the American Revolution on French politics and institutions, see Jacques Léon GODECHOT, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770-1799*, New York: Free Press, 1965; R. R. PALMER, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: a political history of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, 2 volumes, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1959-64; and Gary B. NASH, "Sparks from the Altar of 76': International Repercussions and Reconsiderations of the American Revolution," in *The Age of*

*Revolutions in Global Context, C. 1760-1840*, (eds) David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

45. Pierre BAYLE, *A General Dictionary*, London, 1734-41, Volume 6, p. 555. John Locke's sensationalist psychology, so popular among the intellectual elite of the eighteenth century, provided the epistemological basis for a philosophy that discarded belief in an innate moral capacity, which presupposed *a priori* understanding. He argued, rather, that the mind was shaped only by experience. See LOCKE, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, 1689. Votaire was particularly influenced by Lockean psychology and thus hostile toward the radical sectarians of the English Revolution who often embraced individual moral conscience. For example, see his review of David Hume's history of England: *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*, Volume 1, May 2, 1764, p. 193-200.

46. 'Droit Naturel (Morale)', in Denis DIDEROT and J. D'ALEMBERT (eds), *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 17 vols. 1751-80, Volume 5, Paris: Chez Briasson, 1755, p. 115. Translated from the French original. In a related entry for 'Right of nature' [Law of nature], Antoine-Gaspard Boucher d'Argis wrote of the natural law [la loi naturelle] "which God has engraved in our hearts," and is discerned primarily through "an instinct, or a kind of internal feeling" To apply the natural law to actions required that "one must consult one's conscience," which is a form of "reason." "Droit de la nature, ou droit naturel." *Ibid.*, p. 131-134. Translated.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 936. Translated.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 937-938. Translated.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 937. Translated.

50. 'Traite des nègres', in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Volume 16, Paris, 1765, p. 532. Translated.

51. G. T. RAYNAL, *The Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies, revised, augmented, and published*, vol. 5, London, 1783, p. 283. The original French language edition was published as *L'Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, Amsterdam, 1770. Raynal later published a pamphlet on the American Revolution in France, entitled *The Revolution of America* (1781), which was subsequently printed in English. Thomas Paine responded in his *Letter Addressed to the Abbé Raynal*, Philadelphia, 1782.

52. Bernard BAILYN, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967, Chapter 6.

53. LINEBAUGH and REDIKER, *The Many Headed Hydra*, Chapter 7; Gary B. NASH, *Race and Revolution*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990; Manisha SINHA, "'To Cast Just Obliquely' on Oppressors: Black Radicalism in the Age of Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Volume LXIV, No. 1 (January 2007): 149-160; and *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016, Chapter 2.

54. James OTIS, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (Boston, 1764), p. 43. Referring to an unpublished speech of two years earlier, John Adams recalled that "Not a Quaker in Philadelphia... had ever asserted the rights of negroes on stronger terms... I shuddered at the doctrine he taught; and I have all my life shuddered, and still shudder, at the consequences that may be drawn from such premises." John ADAMS to William Tudor, June 1, 1818, in *The Works of John Adams*, Volume 10, Charles Francis ADAMS (ed), Boston, 1856, p. 315.

55. [Benjamin RUSH], *A Vindication of the Address*, Philadelphia, 1773, p. 49.

56. Thomas PAINE, *Common Sense ... A New Edition ... To Which Is Added, an Appendix; Together with an Address to the People Called Quakers*, H.D. Symonds: London, 1792, p. 32.

57. *The Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, March 8, 1775.

58. Daniel P. RESNICK, 'La Société des Amis des Noirs and the Abolition of Slavery', *French Historical Studies*, 7, 4, 1972: p. 558-569. For the organization's minutes and related material, see Marcel

DORIGNY and Bernard GAINOT, eds., *La Société des Amis des Noirs, 1788-1799: Contribution à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage*, Paris: UNESCO, 1998.

59. Jonathan I. ISRAEL, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from the Rights of Man to Robespierre*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014, p. 41-42, *passim*; and J. R. OLDFIELD, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, Cambridge, UK, 2015, p. 32-36.

60. Two leading scholars of the Amis des Noirs have observed that the society viewed Benezet “as the initiator of abolitionism.” Marcel DORIGNY and Bernard GUINOT, *La Société des Amis des Noirs, 1788-1799: Contribution à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage*, p. 73, n. 28. Also see JACKSON, *Let this Voice Be Heard*, Chapter 7.

61. RESNICK, ‘Amis des Noirs and the Abolition of Slavery’, p. 560.

62. JACKSON, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, p. 181-186.

63. See, as examples, *Le Patriote Français*, October 9, 1789; November 10, 1789; and December 3, 1789.

64. For an excellent discussion of the coordination between abolitionists in the U.S. and Britain during this period, see SINHA, *The Slave's Cause*, Chapter 4. Similar exchange between the U.S. and France has received less attention by scholars.

65. OLDFIELD, *Transatlantic Abolitionism*, p. 90.

66. Thomas CLARKSON to Bouvet de Cresse, December 1, 1789, quoted in David B. DAVIS, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975, p. 400.

67. Edmond Charles Genet, the first minister from France and a member of the French abolition society the *Amis des Noirs*, was feted not only in the North, but throughout the South as well. Democratic societies were founded throughout the American Republic. On democratic-republican societies in the United States, see Eugene P. LINK, *Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800*, New York, 1942; Phillip S. FONER (ed), *The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook*, Westport, 1976; Albrecht KOSCHNIK, ‘The Democratic Societies of Philadelphia and the Limits of the American Public Sphere, Circa 1793-1795’. *William and Mary Quarterly* 58, 2001: 615-36; and Seth COTLAR, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic*, Charlottesville, VA, 2011.

68. Laurent DUBOIS, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 102-106.

69. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, October 10-11, 1791. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 105.

70. COTLAR, *Tom Paine's America*, 62-63. For example, Abraham Bishop's series of essays, reprinted in many democratic-republican newspapers, entitled “The Rights of Black Men” advocated strongly for the rebels and compared them favorably to America patriots. See Tim MATTHEWSON, “Abraham Bishop, ‘The Rights of Black Men’ and the American Reaction to the Haitian Revolution,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 67, No. 2, Summer, 1982. On Bishop's career, see David WALDSTREICHER, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997, p. 177-183, 208-210, 221-222, 244-245. On the influence of the Haitian Revolution in the United States, see especially, Ashli WHITE, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Support for the rebels was later tempered by self-interest and political conservatism. See Laurent DuBois, “‘Troubled Water’: Rebellion and Republicanism in the Revolutionary French Caribbean,” in James P. Horn, Jan Lewis, and Peter S. Onuf. *The Revolution of 1800: Democracy, Race, and the New Republic*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002; and James Alexander DUN, ‘Philadelphia not Philanthropolis: The Limits of Pennsylvanian Antislavery in the Era of the Haitian Revolution’, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 135, No. 1, January 2011, p. 73-102.

71. James PEMBERTON to Le Amis des Noirs, Aug. 29, 1791, PAS Papers, HSP.

72. *Minutes of the Proceeding of the Delegates of the Abolition Societies, established in different parts of the United States, Assembled in Philadelphia, Jan. 1, 1794*, Philadelphia, 1794, p. 23.
73. 'The Abolition of Slavery, February 4, 1794', in Laurent DUBOIS and John D. GARRIGUS (eds and trans), *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804*, Boston, 2006, p. 131.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
75. 'Les Citoyenes de couleur de Philadelphie a L'Assemblee Nationale', September 24, 1793. John Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island. Also see Gary B. NASH, 'Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Dominguans in Philadelphia', *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 65 (1998), p. 53.
76. Anonymous to Benjamin Rush, Mar. 3, 1794, Benjamin Rush Miscellaneous Correspondence, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
77. *Minutes of the proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies Established in Different Parts of the United States*, Philadelphia, 1797, p. 43. Also see p. 30-31.
78. Some Federalist papers covered the decree, but not in the same detail or as frequently as the opposition press. See, as examples, *Gazette of the United States* (New York) May 1, 1794; *American Apollo* (Boston), May 8, 1794; *Providence Gazette*, (Providence, RI), May 10, 1793.
79. *City Gazette* (Charleston, South Carolina), August 19, 1794.
80. Simon P. NEWMAN, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997, 139-140.
81. *Northern Star*, July 11, 1792. Theobald Wolfe Tone went as far as to toast to "the spirit of the French mob to the people of Ireland." Theobald Wolfe TONE, T. W. MOODY, R. B. MCDOWELL, and C. J. WOODS, *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763-98*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p. I:274. For more on political toasts in this context, see Martyn POWELL, 'Political Toasting in Eighteenth-century Ireland', *History* 91 4, Wiley: 2006, 508-29.
82. Nini RODGERS, *Equiano and Anti-Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Belfast*, Belfast, Northern Ireland: Belfast Society in association with the Ulster Historical Foundation, 2000. Equiano lodged with United Irishmen Samuel Nielson during his stay in Belfast.
83. Richard Robert MADDEN, Richard ROBERT, *The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times*, London: J. Madden, 1842, p. 303; WILSON, *United Irishmen, United States*, p. 134.
84. Henry Joy MCCracken to Sam McTier, 1792, in William DRENNAN, Maria LUDDY, Jean AGNEW, and Martha DRENNAN MCTIER, *The Drennan-McTier Letters*, Volume 1, Dublin: Women's History Project in association with the Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1998, p. 411.
85. *Northern Star* (Belfast), April 14, 1792.
86. Thomas RUSSELL, *A letter to the people of Ireland, on the present situation of the country*, Belfast, 1796, p. 15, 17, 18.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 18, 22.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 22-23.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
91. Thomas Addis Emmet was the brother of Robert Emmet, another influential Irish revolutionary. See Patrick M. GEOGHEGAN, *Robert Emmet: A Life*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002; and Anne DOLAN, *Reinterpreting Emmet: Essays on the Life and Legacy of Robert Emmet*, Dublin, Ireland: University College Dublin Press, 2007.
92. Thomas Addis EMMET, *Memoir of Thomas Addis and Robert Emmet*, Volume 1, New York, 1915, p. 28, 8-9.
93. While some among the United Irishmen who migrated to the United States maintained firm in their opposition to slavery, others accommodated the Jeffersonian shift away from antislavery activity amongst Democratic-Republicans. See Michael DUREY, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997, 282-288; WILSON, *United Irishmen*,

*United States*, 133-140; and Richard J. TWOMEY, *Jacobins and Jeffersonians: Anglo-American Radicalism in the United States, 1790-1820*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1989, p. 102-106. On the shift away from antislavery positions amongst Jeffersonians more generally, see Pdraig RILEY, *Slavery and the Democratic Conscience: Political Life in Jeffersonian America*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

94. Thomas A. EMMET to Joseph McCormick, New York, January 28, 1805, in *Ibid.*, p. I:393.

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97. Hans-Jiirgen GRABBE, 'European Immigration to the United States in the Early National Period, 1783-1820', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133, June 1989, p. 192. On the Irish community in Philadelphia during the Age of Revolution, see Maurice J. BRIC, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Reinvention of America, 1760-1800*. Four Courts Press, Portland, OR, 2008. On Irish affection for America during this period, see Vincent MORLEY, *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution, 1760-1783*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

98. 'Constitution of the American Society of United Irishmen', in William COBBETT, *Detection of a Conspiracy, Formed by the United Irishmen With the Evident Intention of Aiding the Tyrants of France in Subverting the Government of the United States*, Philadelphia, 1798, p. 5.

99. *American Society of United Irishmen*, December 18, 1797, Philadelphia, 1797, p. 21.

100. Cobbett viewed France's emancipation proclamation as further evidence that the sister republic should not serve as a model for the United States. In August of 1794 he wrote that "In the abolition of negro slavery, for example, the Governments of the United States have not rushed headlong into the mad plan of the National Convention." They have, he continued, "in spite of clubs and societies, proceeded with caution and justice." William COBBETT, *Observations on the Emigration of Doctor Joseph Priestley*, August 1794, in *Porcupine's Works*, London, 1801, p. 173.

101. Peter Porcupine [William COBBETT], *A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats Part II; Containing, Observations on a Patriotic Pamphlet, Entitled, 'Proceedings of the United Irishmen,'* Philadelphia, 1797, p. 4, 2, 6, 15-16.

102. William COBBETT, *Detection of a Conspiracy, Formed by the United Irishmen With the Evident Intention of Aiding the Tyrants of France in Subverting the Government of the United States*, Philadelphia, 1798, p. 4, 7, 23, 27-28, 21.

103. See James Morton SMITH, *Freedom's Fetters; The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956. Debates over the act frequently refer to "Jacobins" as a threat. See, for example, Thomas Hart BENTON and John C. RIVES, *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, from 1789 to 1856: From Gales and Seatons' Annals of Congress; from Their Register of Debates; and from the Official Reported Debates*, by John C. Rives, New York: D. Appleton, 1857, p. 2: 239, 279, 306, 336.

104. *Windham Herald* (Windham, CT), January 17, 1799.

105. DAVIS, *Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, 306-326; and *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2006), 154-155.

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## ABSTRACTS

This article compares and contrasts the conceptualization and transnational circulation of abolitionist ideas in the mid-seventeenth century English Revolution and the late-eighteenth-century "Age of Atlantic Revolutions." Our method stresses both continuity and change across time and Atlantic space in the multiple efforts republicans made to eradicate human bondage. In both the mid-seventeenth century and the late eighteenth century, major political revolutions informed the ideas and actions of those who opposed slavery. As revolutionary fervor spread in the late eighteenth century, conservatives reacted with repressive attempts to contain the radicalism that was spilling over into the closely guarded domain of economic enslavement.

Cet article met en comparaison et en contraste la conceptualisation et les circulations transnationales des idées abolitionnistes lors de la Révolution anglaise du milieu du dix-septième siècle et lors de « l'âge des révolutions atlantiques » de la fin du dix-huitième siècle. Notre méthode est de mettre l'accent sur à la fois les continuités et les ruptures à travers les époques et l'espace atlantique à travers les efforts multiples que les républicains ont fait pour éradiquer l'asservissement des hommes. Au milieu du dix-septième siècle et à la fin du dix-huitième, des révolutions politiques majeures nourrissent ainsi les idées et les actions de ceux qui s'opposaient à l'esclavage. A mesure que la ferveur révolutionnaire se répandit à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, la réaction conservatrice prit la forme de tentatives de répressions pour contenir le radicalisme qui atteignait le domaine jalousement gardé de l'esclavage économique.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** abolition de l'esclavage, républicanisme, démocratie, la révolution anglaise, républicanisme américain

**Keywords:** abolition of slavery, republicanism, slavery, democracy, English Revolution, American republicanism

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