Emigration, Abolition and the Atlantic World in the Revolutionary Era

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The Revolutionary era transformed the Atlantic World, profoundly altering the balance of power for the years to come. Britain lost the bulk of its North American colonies, but gained predominance in the Caribbean and on the high seas; the slave trade had also been abolished in the British Empire by 1807. French maritime strength had been broken, and the slave revolution in Saint-Domingue led to the creation of an independent Haiti. The present article examines two linked aspects of this time of change; namely, the role played by émigrés who fled the changes in France and her colonies and the international connections maintained by slavery and the abolition movement. In recent years, scholars have become increasingly interested not only in these political and military ramifications of the fluctuations of Atlantic power, but also in the culture created by the networks of trade, communication and emigration of what is dubbed the Atlantic World. Although the idea of an Atlantic Revolution in which liberty and democracy spread from Philadelphia to Paris, proposed by scholars in the early years of the Cold War, has been attacked as overly reductive, a new awareness of the migration, cultural exchange, and financial interdependence has transformed the understanding of the period. The Atlantic World has also widened, with connections between places as far apart as Brazil and the Baltic states becoming apparent. These connections proved to be of invaluable use for the mass movements of peoples that resulted from the tumult of the Revolutionary period. Scholars have begun to look at the experience of emigration during the Revolution in more detail and have not just examined the situation in Europe, but also across the Americas and the former French colonies. The movements of people following the events of 1789 were not limited to the aristocracy or the clergy, but included all classes and races, many of whom moved across the Atlantic and throughout the Caribbean. Many of these journeys were made possible by the connections – in the words of one historian, ‘ready-made escape routes’ – laid down by the Atlantic world of trade and slaving. As this article will argue, the

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interchange of ideas and people between France and Britain with regard to slavery often had a profound influence on government policy. It will also draw attention to the many letters and memoranda held by the Department of Manuscripts relating to the émigré community in Britain, and relate them to the international situation, in particular the question of Caribbean colonies and slavery.

I

Despite the mercantile restrictions of the late eighteenth century, the ‘triangular trade’ between Europe, Africa and the Americas in slaves, coffee and sugar was resolutely international. Although taxes, closed ports, and colonial ties combined to limit merchant activity, financial networks, re-exporting, smuggling, and complex trade patterns linked France, Britain, the United States and other countries in a dense, international network. Family connections played an important role in these links. Vicomte Joseph Alexis Walsh’s *Souvenirs de cinquante ans* shows how one merchant family (the Walshes) could straddle the seas between Ireland and Saint Malo, trading successfully with the Caribbean, and was highly aware of its Irish roots as well as its Frenchness. Similarly, the Dobrée family, which has played a leading role in Nantaise society, linked Nantes to Jersey, the Baltic and German States with the riches of the Caribbean.⁵ Governments were also profoundly aware of the importance of colonial trade and the strategic aspects of shipping and slaving.

Abolitionism also linked ports and capital cities, albeit with much weaker and less well-funded ties. Anti-slavery was an international endeavour, which not only grew out of the development of humanitarian and moral thought, but from the personal connections formed by dedicated individuals. Abolitionist links between Britain and France were first forged by the journalist and bookseller Jacques-Pierre Brissot (more commonly known as Brissot de Warville), who was to play a leading role in the Girondin faction of the French Revolution (indeed, this group were referred to as ‘Brissotins’).⁶ Brissot began work as a legal clerk in his hometown of Chartres, before moving to Paris, where he had ambitions to make his mark as a man of letters. In 1780 he published *Testament politique de l’Angleterre* – an attack on the English cabinet that was to lead him to London. A copy had reached Swinton, the English publisher of *Courier de l’Europe*, a journal with a focus on English affairs, but aimed at the European market. He appointed Brissot to the editorship of the French edition of the paper, which was published at Boulogne.⁷ The young writer found government censorship to be overbearing and, according to Brissot’s memoirs, Swinton’s interest in the paper was waning, as it was losing too much money. Swinton took Brissot off the paper, but invited the Frenchman to stay with him in London. Here, Brissot began publishing his *Philadelphien à Genève* with some success, but a monthly series of pamphlets, the *Correspondence universelle* (December 1782–November 1783), failed to find a Francophone audience and, like many publishing enterprises, haemorrhaged cash and bred creditors. *Correspondence universelle* was banned in France, and Brissot was soon faced by a

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financial crisis, having invested all his savings in the ventures.\footnote{Brissot, Mémoires, vol. i, p. 329.} He proposed a club for intellectuals, to be known as the ‘Lycée de Londres’, which would publish a journal, intending to spread the ideals of the Enlightenment throughout Europe (fig. 1).\footnote{A prospectus (Lycée de Londres, ou assemblée et correspondance, établies a Londres, pour la réunion & la communication des gens de lettres de tous les pays, avec le journal, ou tableau périodique de l’état actuel des sciences & arts en Angleterre ([Paris], 1784)) can be found at BL, 1578/2653.} The venture failed. His creditors imprisoned him for debt. He returned to France on his release, where he was promptly incarcerated in the Bastille, again for debt.
In 1787, business and legal pressures led him again to London, where he renewed an acquaintance with the Quaker James Phillips, a bookseller. Phillips, along with Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson, was a member of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which had been founded in May of that year. As a result of this contact, Brissot attended a number of their meetings, the minute books of which are held by the British Library (fig. 2). Brissot became convinced of the barbarity of black slavery and its stain on the character of humanity. Following his return to Paris, he continued to correspond with the British Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and founded the French equivalent.
of that group, the Société des Amis des Noirs (Society of the Friends of the Blacks) on 19 February 1788. The founder members included men such as Stephen Clavière and Mirabeau. Lafayette and Condorcet were soon recruited to the cause, and Phillips also became a member. At first, the zeal of the Société caused some consternation to their British counterparts. Mirabeau published a series of articles in his L’Analyse des papiers anglais calling for the complete abolition of slavery, which in Eloise Ellery’s words ‘startled the English society’ into issuing a formal statement, denying that it was promoting ‘immediate abolition of slavery in the English colonies’. A copy of this denial was sent to all the journals of France.

The Société soon relied heavily on British pamphlets, which Brissot ordered from London (he kept ‘fighting’, as he wrote to Phillips in 1790 (fig. 3)). Its symbol was even a copy of the British cameo, ‘Am I Not a Man and a Brother?’.

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11 A list of the members of the Société des Amis des Noirs is at Archives Nationales, Paris, ADxviii C 115, printed in Ellery, Brissot de Warville, Appendix B.

12 Ellery, Brissot de Warville, p. 185.

The abolitionists were well aware of the international dimensions of the slave trade. The Proceedings of the London Society reveal a network of correspondence not only across Britain, but also with links to Paris, Lyon, Spain, New York and Philadelphia. When proposals were made for abolition of the trade by France and Britain, pains were taken to approach the Bishop of Cloyne to ensure that Ireland would not provide a route for traders. Corresponding members included not only Brissot but also Lafayette and Clavière. Dr Frossard, of Lyon, also provided translations of material for use in France, and the British society printed 2,000 copies of the message sent to ‘different Baillages’ in ‘that enlightened Nation’, recommending ‘a special instruction to require that the States [General] should consider the means of putting an end to the Slave Trade.’ This advice ‘was adopted by many of them; & Mons. Necker … expatiated in pathetick terms on the horrors of this Traffic.’

In 1789, events in that ‘Enlightened nation’ at first brought great hope to the abolitionist movement, who believed that the liberties which had been granted to white citizens would be extended to slaves. In August, Clarkson headed to Paris, where he wrote to Wilberforce that ‘I should not be surprised if the French were to do themselves the honour of voting away this diabolical traffic in a night.’ Wilberforce recalled that ‘LaFayette had undertaken to propose the Abolition in the National Assembly, which would probably, as soon as he ceased speaking, carry the question by acclamation.’ In the event, La Rochefoucauld would raise the question of slavery on the night of 4 August without success. The reality of emancipation was somewhat different, and the abolition of slavery would come from within by the slave societies themselves, rather than as a result of debates in the Paris Assembly.

In France, the Amis des Noirs were unable to replicate the mass support that abolitionism found in Britain. French abolitionism drew its support from the salon, not the meeting house, and, as Seymour Drescher has argued, such elitism and lack of mass support proved to be a crucial weakness for the French campaign. Unlike their counterparts in France, the British movement could also draw on two centuries of Quaker association. Although the periodical press shows the beginnings of mass support for abolitionism, the Amis des Noirs made no real effort to capitalize on this body of opinion, and slavery was finally abolished in the mid-nineteenth century without the impetus of a mass protest movement.

Abolitionism’s association with Britain also caused some to believe the society represented a British plot with designs on the French sugar islands. These British links proved to be particularly harmful during the Revolution, when Brissot was accused of being a British spy who intended to ‘ruin the French colonies’.

Slave uprisings in Saint-Domingue, Guadeloupe and other islands led to the granting of full voting rights to the islands’ gens de couleur libres (free men of colour) in 1792 and, on 4 February 1794 (16 pluviose II in the Republican Calendar), to the abolition of slavery. French expeditionary forces had failed to take control of the uprisings and slaves had ultimately seized their own freedom, in the face of opposition from white and free-black owners. The shock of black revolution, replete with horror stories of massacres and looting,

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16 Geggus, ‘Racial Equality’, p. 1293; Wilberforce, Life of William Wilberforce, vol. i, p. 229-30; Wilberforce still believed that France was ripe for conversion to the cause, although he suspected it would be a gradual process.
18 Bénot, La Révolution française, pp. 205-17.
19 Archives Nationales, AA 54, 1509, 2, no. 46, Accusation against Brissot, reprinted in Ellery, Brissot de Warville, pp. 448-9.
20 The classic account of the revolution in Saint-Domingue is C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins (London, 1938).
caused panic amongst the abolitionist movement, leading some to doubt the possibility of reforming the system without causing massive bloodshed: ‘People here,’ wrote Wilberforce, ‘are all panic-struck with the transactions in St. Domingo, and the apprehension or pretended apprehension of the like in Jamaica and other of our Islands.’\textsuperscript{21} His fears were well placed: on 19 April 1790, the Commons defeated his motion ‘to prevent the further importation of slaves into the British colonies in the West Indies’ by 163 to 88.\textsuperscript{21} Revolution was to have further, negative, consequences for abolitionism: colonists, often making use of connections made through trading links, fled – in many cases to Britain. The British colonial and pro-slaving lobby was also to be buttressed by a growing number of French emigrants and distressed créoles, adding weight to the pressures leading to British involvement in the Caribbean.

II

Romantic, picaresque or melodramatic tales of fleeing nobility became an established genre within the nineteenth-century publishing trade.\textsuperscript{23} Memoirs, adventure stories, and polemic pamphleteering all concentrated on what might be termed the aristocratic emigration following the French Revolution. Although the story of the emigration following the events of 1789 is well-worn, the ‘legend of a movement confined to lily-white aristocrats and black-gowned priests’, does not give adequate space to the great numbers of ordinary men and women who left France or the colonies, les petites gens, nor does it record the large numbers of slaves, free blacks, and people of mixed race who left their homes and land.\textsuperscript{24} Donald Greer reveals that 129,090 are recorded as having left France as émigrés. Some 30-45,000 French men and women, including figures such as Madame de la Tour du Pin, were dispersed across the Atlantic and Caribbean. Revolution in the Caribbean led, like that in Europe, to mass emigration, with far-reaching consequences for the Atlantic world. Although some settled in the southern states of the United States of America, or even headed inland as far as Ohio, many eventually returned to Europe.\textsuperscript{25} A ‘fair proportion’ of these Atlantic emigrants, Greer writes, were ‘artisans and shop-keepers’, people ‘of a humble rank’. Within these movements, London became an important centre for émigré communications, as well as a temporary home to many.\textsuperscript{26}

In the early 1790s, émigrés were faced with several problems. These were firstly the difficulty of practical support, how to clothe, shelter and feed oneself and one’s family; wealth and connections, two benefits of colonial trade, were of vital importance here. Other problems were more ideological and political: what were their expectations of return to France, and how would that France be governed? Although there had been a tradition of French exile in London, such as the Huguenots, and arguably some form of welcoming community, émigrés faced much hardship in order to find accommodation or to earn a living. Local reaction to these Continental arrivals was mixed. Fear for local jobs and recurrent suspicion of Roman Catholicism could lead to problems for the French arrivals; on one occasion there were complaints that young Catholic priests were distributing tracts in English. Other were attacked or robbed.\textsuperscript{27} As hostilities between the two nations

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item 21 Life of Wilberforce, vol. i, p. 340.
\item 24 Donald Greer, The Incidence of the Emigration During the French Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 63, 64, 107.
\item 25 Frances S. Childs, French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800 (Baltimore, 1940), p. 10, quoted in Greer, Emigration, p. 92.
\item 27 Add. MS. 38228.
\end{thebibliography}
increased, and unemployment and dearth affected the British population, then the welcome soured. Nonetheless, by presenting themselves as opponents to the Revolution and as allies of the English, many émigrés retained support from their host community. A number of proposals for proper employment were made, including one suggesting the creation of silk farms to alleviate ‘the great distress’ of ‘so many unfortunate emigrants’.28

Some practical assistance was offered by the British establishment and by the philanthropic sectors of society. For example, the British Library holds the minutes of the French Clergy Assistance Society, which was co-founded by Edmund Burke. It reveals support from a number of quarters, including contributions from city guilds, and one gentleman who contributed fifty beds to the cause. Membership of the committee also answered another purpose. In 1792, Wilberforce had been granted honorary French citizenship. With British public opinion increasingly hostile to all things French, he worried that this honour would be a propaganda blow to the abolitionists’ cause. His journal entry reads thus: ‘To town for the French clergy public meeting, and consented to be on the committee at Burke’s request, partly to do away with French citizenship.’ Such worries demonstrate the crucial importance the Revolution, and its image, were to have for abolitionism.29

While revolution initially brought hope to the abolitionists, liberty would not easily extend to all those in bondage. As Wilberforce’s worries about French citizenship showed, the links between an increasingly radical Revolution and abolition could be unsettling. Although 1792 marked the century’s high-watermark for abolitionism (with Wilberforce’s motion for abolition of the trade being read before the House) events in Saint-Domingue had provided a startling warning of the possible consequences of liberty.30 The flood of émigrés into London from France and the Caribbean, many of whom strongly supported the use of slave labour in the colonies, provided a further bulwark against abolitionism. Furthermore, fears of slave armies, whether Catholic or Republican, helped to cool the British government’s attitudes towards abolition, particularly as it saw the need for its own slave or freed-black army.31

III

By the winter of 1792, the émigré community in London, which consisted of both créole and metropolitan French, included a great number with assets in Saint-Domingue and other islands. Atlantic trade was threatened. Some of the consequences of this curtailment were of a limited nature: for instance, the ‘Chevalier de Closson’, who began a ‘cook shop’, commented on the price of exotic products, such as cocoa and coffee. Much of his business was also reliant on the price of sugar, although he did find it cheaper than it had been in France.32 Others stood to lose a great deal more. For example, the Duc de Choiseul had invested heavily in Saint-Domingue; his ‘large sugar plantation’ in Petite Anse in the south of the Island was razed in the early days of the revolt.33 The Comte de Vaudreuil hoped for an annual income of £15,000 sterling from his three plantations, one of which lay within

28 Add. MS. 38228, f. 272. See also Kirsty Carpenter, Refugees of the French Revolution.
30 Wilberforce had received some 500 petitions when he addressed the Commons on 2 April 1792 (Ehrman, The Younger Pitt, vol. i, p. 399).
what became British territory. He lost it all. The Comte Walsh de Serrant owned vast holdings, including some 1,200 slaves, while the Baron de Montboissier attempted to claim £1,000 compensation for the loss of twelve ‘high-quality slaves’. The historian Carl Ludwig Lokke calculated that there were dozens of other planters living in London by 1793, many of whom were short of funds. Some, such as the Comte de Vaudreuil, were able to claim a pension from a London bank with these properties as security. The colonial question (and its relationship to the evils of the Revolution) was no doubt raised in the drawing rooms of Soho and Hampstead (where many émigrés settled). A picture of the texture of émigré life emerges from the writings of the Vicomte Walsh, whose memoirs give a certain prominence to Madame de Belzunc and her fashionable émigré salon in London: the family was known to have owned vast plantations, and was accorded an appropriately aristocratic line of credit. In six years, she was loaned some £2,000. Her son Louis was also taken under the wing of James Hancken, an English merchant, and sailed for Jamaica in order to oversee the settlement of some debts. His boat sank, drowning the young man.

The loss of Saint-Domingue not only affected French merchant houses, but was a severe blow to many British financiers and merchants. Planters living in London banked with a number of London firms who lent on the basis of their overseas properties. Such loans soon became a liability for the banking firms. For example, the Marquis de Chabanne received almost £900 from his London bank, repaying only £60. Others, such as a planter named de l’Epine, received a monthly pension, and never repaid their debts. British firms, which often had agents in France, had invested something like £300,000 in Saint-Domingue by the outbreak of the Revolution. With such exposure, these firms began to petition the government to restore order in the Caribbean, and continued to do so throughout the 1790s: after the British evacuation of Port-au-Prince in 1798, the banking firm of Turnbull, Forbes & Co. presented the Duke of Portland, as home secretary, with a list of thirty-two debtors who owed £8,246 in total.

By 1792, secessionist feeling was growing in the French colonies, supported by colonial groups in Europe. A group of planter émigrés who had fled the Jacobin government and the uprisings in Saint-Domingue gathered in Jamaica, where they proposed recovery of their property ‘by subjecting the Colony itself to the Government of Great Britain’; Spain was seen by others as a potential protector. War between Britain and Spain meant that the island presented itself as a strategic prize, as well as promising sugar revenues. Spanish Santo Domingo was approached by the planter Hanus de Jumécourt, while Pierre Victor Malouet, the former commissioner to the island, was deputed to represent the island’s interests in London. Royalist émigrés also moved to take advantage of the situation. Cougniac-Mion, a Haitian planter who had fled to France and then to London, and La Rochejacquelin, another planter, both knew Gilbert Franklyn, a Jamaican planter. Franklyn arranged an ‘accidental meeting’ with Lord Hawkesbury in an attempt to persuade the British to restore order in Saint-Domingue; the colonial visitors were to call, rather fittingly, to ‘share a disk of chocolate’. The Comte de Moustier wrote to the British government that ‘notre pauvre colonie est dans la désolation’: sugar had been confiscated and was to be sold for the republic, leaving émigrés with no resource; slaves had been taken for the expedition to

34 Add. MS. 38232, ff. 140-1, 187.
39 Quoted in Geggus, War, Slavery and Revolution, p. 57.
40 Add. MS. 38228, ff. 46-47, 192; See also Add. MS. 59037, passim.
Guadeloupe.\textsuperscript{41} By April 1793, planter groups in London, working through Malouet, drew up a treaty pledging their allegiance to the British in return for military protection, a ten-year suspension of their debts and access to the English markets. French émigrés from the Windward Isles came to a similar agreement. In 1794, British merchants also presented the Duke of Portland with their own petition requesting ‘a sufficient Military Force from His Majesty in order to preserve the recent conquests’.\textsuperscript{42}

The precariousness of the colonies’ position came into sharp focus as news of the explosion in Saint-Domingue reached London. Émigrés could point to the dangers of republicanism, and played on fears of revolts among British sugar islands (fig. 4):

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Letter rel. to Raimond and François. Add. MS. 59037, f. 170}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{41} Add. MS. 37856, ff. 70–70v.
Je m’empresse de prévenir my lord que deux mulattes français auteurs de la révolte et des désastres de St. Domingue sont arrivés à Londres dans le dessein de passer à la Jamaïque. Leurs noms sont Raimond et François… je crois qu’il importe à la sûreté de toutes les colonies anglaises d’en interdire l’entrée à tout mulatre ou nègre libre français… Raimond et François qui m’ont été dénoncés sont les associés de Brissot et Grégoire et ont dirigé la première insurrection des mulattes à St. Domingue… l’arrestation de ces deux hommes ici ou à la Jamaïque serait d’un grand intérêt pour les colonies anglaises et françaises.43

The Frenchmen to which the writer alluded were Julien Raimond, a plantation owner from Saint-Domingue who had campaigned for the representation of free blacks in the National Convention, and his brother François. (Many of Raimond’s printed speeches and pamphlets are held at the British Library, including Observations sur l’origine et les progrès du préjugé des colons blancs contre les hommes de couleur (Paris, 1791), BL, F676(3) (fig. 5)). The letter of warning must be treated with some scepticism; although Raimond and François did return from France to Saint-Domingue, they were both in Paris at this point. It appears to be part of a ploy to remove Raimond and also to garner support from the British by French planters.44 But it also shows that émigré planters were willing to make use of British fears of slave revolt in order to advance their aims in the Caribbean.45 These overtures are noted in a range of correspondence dispersed through a series of volumes of Additional Manuscripts (Add. MSS. 38228, 38351-38352, 38192 and 56037).46

Émigrés also arranged their own organizations: Colonel Venault de Charmilly placed an advertisement, ‘sur le demande de beaucoup de propriétaires de cette isle’, in the Courier de Londres in 1795, asking interested parties to meet him at ‘M. Harman’s’ house near Portland Street.47 As a result of this activity and their vast actual or potential wealth, the colonial interest had, as Simon Burrows suggests, ‘an influence out of all proportion to its size’.48 Burrows estimates that they numbered around 110, but their influence on British policy was as great as that of the former royal princes of France. Their numbers included two influential émigré journalists, Regnier and Peltier, who gave substantial coverage of colonial affairs in their numerous publications.49 The Courier de l’Europe, for example, devoted considerable space to West Indian affairs, even on one occasion supplanting news from Saint Malo.

43 ‘I am eager to warn my lord that two French mulattos, authors of the revolt and disasters of St. Domingue, have arrived in London in their hope to travel to Jamaica. Their names are Raimond and François… I believe that it is important for the security of all the English colonies to ban from entry all French mulattos or free blacks… Raimond and François, who have been denounced to me, are the associates of Brissot and Grégoire and directed the first insurrection of mulattos in St. Domingue… The arrest of these two men here or in Jamaica would be in the best interests of the English and French colonies’, Add. MS. 59037, f. 170 (10 Jan. [1793]).
46 On the war lobby and British Caribbean strategy, see Geggus, War, Slavery and Revolution and Michael Duffy, Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British expeditions to the West Indies and the war against revolutionary France (Oxford, 1987).
47 Simon Burrows, French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792-1814 (Woodbridge, 2000)
48 See also P.R.O., W.O. 1/58, cited in Ehrman, The Younger Pitt, vol. ii, p. 262 n.6. The subsequent history of Haiti can also be traced in the Department’s collections, notably in the Bathurst Papers (Loan 57), e.g., J. Clarke to Viscount Castlereagh, ‘Observations on the government, produce and commercial wants of St. Domingo’, 22 June 1807; Robert Fouleron, ‘Character of Henri Christophe, King of Hayti’, 15 Nov. 1820. See also H.M.C., no. 76, Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst, Preserved at Cirencester Park (London, 1923).
OBSERVATIONS
SUR L’ORIGINE ET LES PROGRÈS
DU PRÉJUGE 3
DES COLONS BLANCS
CONTRE
LES HOMMES DE COULEUR;
Sur les inconvénients de le perpétuer ; la nécessité,
la facilité de le détruire ; sur le projet du
Comité colonial, etc.

PAR M. RAYMOND,
(Huile)
Homme de couleur de Saint-Domingue.

À PARIS,
{BELIN, libraire, rue Saint-Jacques, près St. Yves;
Chez {DESENNE, libraire, au Palais-Royal;
{BAILLY, libraire, rue St. Honoré, barrière des Sergens;
Et au Bureau du PATRIOTE FRANÇAIS, place du Théâtre Italien,
rue Favart, no. 3.

26 JANVIER 1791.

Fig. 5. Observations sur l’origine et les progrès du préjugé des colons, title page. F 676 (3)
The émigré press used the bloodshed in Saint-Domingue to attack the principles of the Revolution, and also attacked those, such as the *Morning Chronicle*, which suggested that the Revolution had brought some benefits to the isles. Malouet was also an active journalist. As Burrows comments, ‘debates over the future of Saint-Domingue and colonial slavery had a high profile in the exile press in the 1790s.’

Émigrés, however, did not act as a bloc. Clear divisions existed amongst the London émigrés, some of whom wished to concentrate on winning British support for the counter-revolutionary uprising in the Vendée, while others sought assistance in crushing rebellion in the Caribbean. Others were suspicious of any British involvement in French affairs. Émigrés included royalists, constitutional monarchists and republicans. There were tensions between colonial secessionists and royalists, and between créoles and metropolitan émigrés. Divisions among the émigrés were caused by questions about the nature of the Revolution and of their relationship to the British. Slave revolts came to be seen as the natural outcome of the foolish philosophy of the Revolution. Many metropolitan émigrés believed that a Bourbon restoration was the answer to such concerns. Planter émigrés, in contrast, might have preferred secession.

Similar tensions also existed in the Americas, where many Saint-Domingue refugees had fled and were joined by émigrés from France. The social mix of exiles here was as thorough as London, if not more so: Madame de la Tour du Pin, one of many French aristocrats who had fled to America, noted that among the French arrivals at Boston Roads were ‘for the most part … very ordinary people: tradesmen who had been ruined, workmen seeking jobs.’ Planter émigrés from Saint-Domingue were politically divided, some supporting the monarchy, others not; their welcome was also mixed, whether their host society were British, American or even Brazilian. Furthermore, the émigré experience within the Caribbean was marked by its racial composition; as valuable, saleable property, slaves were taken or fled on their own behalf from Saint-Domingue and other French Islands. While welcomed for their particular skills, such as boiler-men and croppers, their new owners were afraid of the spread of revolution amongst their own slaves. Indeed, there is some evidence that revolutionary beliefs did spread in this fashion. It appears that some black or mixed-race Frenchmen and women, possibly former slaves, reached France. One of Comte Joseph de Puisaye’s correspondents, for example, mentions a young black man, for whom he was...

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52 British entanglements with the Royalist cause can be traced in the Windham Papers, particularly the Secretary of War’s correspondence with French Royalists (Add. MSS. 37855-37872), and through the Comte de Puisaye’s papers (Add. MSS. 7972-8088). A schedule and list of pseudonyms is at Add. MS. 8089, but should be used with caution and compared with Maurice Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution. Puisaye, the Princes and the British Government in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 1983), vol. ii, pp. 599-602. See also E. Gabory, ‘Les Sources de l'histoire vendémienne et chouanne aux archives anglaises,’ *Revue du Bas-Poitou* (1927), pp. 89-101 and Hutt, ‘Note sur les sources de l’histoire de la Contre-Révolution : Puisaye, principalement d’après les archives anglaises’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* (1964), pp. 1-21.


56 Such movements were complex, and were restrained by limits placed on slave imports; these, however, began to be eased in the early 1800s.
seeking a place in service. A few letters later we learn that the young man dies.\textsuperscript{57} As the historian R. J. Meadows comments, it was such people, the poor and the slave, that lacked the ability to pass along Atlantic networks; they have also left few written traces.\textsuperscript{58}

IV

The European expeditions to Saint-Domingue met with failure, and with greatly increased emigration from the island: ‘no less than 30 French families have quitted [Port-au-Prince] for America, thinking themselves unsafe under the British protection’, to cite just one contemporary report. Former slaves also fled the island.\textsuperscript{59} In contrast, British abolitionism achieved its goal of ending the British trade in slaves in 1807. By 1814, the Allies’ victory over Napoleon raised further expectations amongst the abolitionists; they hoped to make use of their influence in the post-Napoleonic settlement. Louis XVIII was believed to be sympathetic to the cause: indeed, according to Lord Liverpool, the King of France ‘has solemnly promised, under his own hand, to … abolish the trade now within certain limits.’\textsuperscript{60} Efforts were made to court the men such as Talleyrand and Tsar Alexander I; Wilberforce called for a convention among the great powers, and the Duke of Wellington shared the abolitionists’ concern.\textsuperscript{61} Links forged amongst the émigrés and their hosts again played their part. Zachary Macaulay, the former governor of Sierra Leone, was a key player. In October 1814, he wrote to Lord Holland (whose house in the west of London was to become a bastion of Whig power and also of abolitionist sentiment) that he ‘forwarded to Baron Humboldt under the care of the Duke of Wellington a great variety of books and tracts on the subject of the slave trade.’ This included the ‘admirable pamphlet of M. Sismonde de Sismondi’, the economist and historian, that he hoped would be published in Peltier’s *Ambigu*. This paper, Macaulay wrote, had a ‘considerable circulation’ in England and in France. He would also send some further material to Sismondi.\textsuperscript{62} Macaulay did not mention that he had paid some considerable amount to Peltier on Wilberforce’s behalf to publish this account.\textsuperscript{63} Those involved in the campaign to abolish slavery were men – and women – of great ability; many were also former émigrés, including Madame de Staël, who translated documents for Wilberforce and provided a preface to one of his works. Others in this group were Benjamin Constant, Humbolt and de Sismondi. All were linked to Lord Holland and his circle, which included men such as Sir James Mackintosh, who defended Peltier from a charge of libel against Napoleon and was a friend of de Staël.\textsuperscript{64} It seems likely that their time

\textsuperscript{57} Add. MSS. 7972-8088, passim.
\textsuperscript{58} Meadows, ‘Engineering Exile’.
\textsuperscript{59} Add. MS. 38231, f. 27: letter to Lord Liverpool, 12 April 1796.
\textsuperscript{60} Loan 57/8: Lord Liverpool to Lord Bathurst, 2 October 1814.
\textsuperscript{62} Add. MS. 51820, f. 61, Zachary Macaulay to Henry, 3rd Lord Holland, 5 October 1814.
\textsuperscript{63} Burrows, *Exile Journalism*. Incidentally, Macaulay also revealed the racist assumption that even informed the abolitionists, discussing a ‘man of colour, but a man of education, intelligence and address’. This telling qualification makes certain assumptions about people of colour.
\textsuperscript{64} [Peltier], *The Trial of John Peltier, Esq. for a libel against Napoleon Bonaparte, first consul of the French Republic, at the court of the king's bench, Middlesex, on Monday the 21st February, 1803* (London, 1803).
in Britain influenced their attitudes towards slavery. Nonetheless, abolition remained irrevocably associated with the perceived chaos of Jacobinism. The same mistakes were made as in the early days of the Revolution. French anti-slavery remained an elite movement at best; it drew on British propaganda rather than specifically French research; it failed to present an economic argument or present the damage to French shipping caused by the trade, but instead concentrated on slavery as a problem of ethics rather than of practical cruelty and economic reality. Louis XVIII also relied on support from many with large overseas plantations; slavery remained intact in the restored French empire.

As this article has shown, the connections forged across the Channel, and indeed across the Atlantic, were extensive, but often equivocal. On the one hand, they provided support of various kinds: abolitionists and planters alike could find succour with similar groups, while fleeing émigrés could make use of pre-existing trade routes and contacts. Yet, such connections also bred suspicion. As Wilberforce was worrying about guilt by association with Jacobins, Brissot was charged — literally — with colluding with Pitt to lose the colonies. London émigrés were suspicious of each other’s motives, as well as of Britain’s intentions. Yet there were lasting consequences from these movements of populations. In the Americas, the experiences of these years forged a distinct créole identity, strongly distinct from the metropolis, while in Britain, lasting connections were made between the elite of French society and the abolitionist movement. The importance of the colonial debate to the émigrés and their British hosts also emphasizes the continuing cultural and strategic importance of the Caribbean, even at a moment of profound change on the Continent.