

# QUAKERS, BRISSOT AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ABOLITIONISTS

Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793), the revolutionary journalist and political activist, is perhaps best known for his efforts to abolish the slave trade and slavery in France. Scholarship devoted to the abolitionist movement in general and to the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, the Quakers, and Brissot in particular has been admirably extensive, but it has not as yet turned to a definitive assessment of Brissot's written contributions to the movement as one of the founding members of the *Société*, which, when founded in Paris on 19 February 1788, needed a skilled publicist to contend with entrenched opposition to their cause.<sup>1</sup> The present inquiry will be concerned with bringing more clearly and particularly to light the activities and convictions by which Brissot's role may be understood and fairly judged. It will focus on how his journalistic writings and his pamphlets offer ideological arguments for abolition and an inclusive humanitarian vision. It will also examine, among the experiences which influenced his ideas and led to his commitment to the cause, his inspirational contacts with the Society of Friends in England.

Brissot was born in Chartres, the son of a *maître-hôtelier*. His mother was a devout Catholic who raised Brissot's older brother to enter the priesthood. Brissot himself was a voracious reader. His early years and intellectual development were greatly influenced by his study of Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire. By the age of twenty, in the first stages of his career as a writer, he left Chartres for Paris. His all-encompassing hatred for the repressive hierarchical system in which he lived had by this time begun to develop. He longed to break away from the restrictions which his petit-bourgeois, orthodox background sought to impose on him.

Under the spiritual guidance of Rousseau's *Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard*, he went through a religious crisis, ending in an irrevocable break with the Church and with his family. Among his early works, written in 1777, perhaps as an attempt to justify this break, are two polemical attacks on Catholicism as the embodiment of the repressive abuses of the established system.<sup>2</sup> His rejection of a divinely established

social and political hierarchy and of the Christian view of human nature laid the groundwork for his development as humanitarian and social reformer.

The development of his thought in this humanitarian direction was distinctly marked by his reading of Rousseau and of other *philosophes* as well. He found arguments against slavery in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* and *De l'esprit des lois* and in the *Encyclopédie* article 'Esclavage'.<sup>3</sup> In a number of his pamphlets on abolition, Brissot refers specifically to the work of the abbé Raynal.<sup>4</sup> The idealism of the *philosophes*' literary legacy was very much a part of his intellectual development as he passed from thought to writing and then to action as founder of *les Amis des Noirs* and as editor of *Le Patriote françois*. The outbreak of the Revolution more than a decade after his earliest writings gave him both the political opportunity and the journalistic freedom to translate his ideology into aggressive activity as he lobbied for an egalitarian society.

In 1778 he secured a position on *Le Courrier de l'Europe* and moved to Boulogne-sur-mer where he remained for more than a year. His first trip to London was in late 1779. The knowledge he had gained of the reform movement in England through his work on *Le Courrier* and the contacts he made in London on this and subsequent trips sparked his interest in the question of penal reform. Brissot's work in this area consisted of a series of examinations of the *Ordonnance criminelle* of 1670.<sup>5</sup> As either author or editor of a number of works, he set down his proposals for a much-needed criminal code reform.<sup>6</sup> Included in these works are several open attacks on the despotic nature of the legal system. It was his conviction that society is to blame for most crimes and criminal behaviour. Improved education, social reform and a belief in man's ability to better himself are important points in Brissot's proposals in this area. Here, as in his earlier attacks on the Church, he was rejecting a hierarchical system based on a narrow view of privilege and salvation. His intellectual development during the dozen or so years preceding the Revolution prepared him to embrace the kind of unrestricted humanitarian causes which quite naturally included Black emancipation. Brissot's position grew out of his own intellectual history – his personal identification with the oppressed, his hatred of the ruling classes and of the Church and his firm belief in the possibility of meliorative change.

Brissot's passage into the more active phase of his work toward abolition can be traced to his fascination with the Society of Friends. He returned to London for a lengthy stay in 1782 in order to set up his *Licée [sic] de Londres*, a correspondence, journal and organization which were

to keep men of letters informed of important political, social and literary events taking place in England. Although this project ended in dismal failure, Brissot made a number of important contacts, among them the Quaker, Robert Pigott, who was to become a close friend. As will be shown, Brissot's writings during the middle of the decade reflect his growing interest in the Society of Friends and their concerns.<sup>7</sup>

Brissot made another brief visit to England in 1787 when he was threatened by a *lettre de cachet* for his pamphlets on bankruptcy.<sup>8</sup> It was at this phase in his career that he began his active work against the slave trade. His arrival in England at this time coincided with important abolitionist events in the English Quaker community. Brissot, having already made contacts in that community and possessing an active interest in the humanitarian issue of emancipation, was ready to join the struggle.

Historically, English Quakers had expressed their official disapproval of the slave trade in 1727 and by 1761 they had excluded from their society all persons having anything to do with it. The judicial decision of Lord Mansfield, stating that a slave became free once in England, supported the Quaker initiative. In 1783, Quakers formed an association whose express purpose was the relief and liberation of the slaves in the West Indies and the discouragement of the African coast slave trade. As a result of the work of the Friends, Dr. Pinkard, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge proposed *an liceat invitos in servitatem dare* as the subject for the Latin essay prize of 1785. Thomas Clarkson was the winner. He published his prize essay in English the following year, 'Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species'. Along with Wilberforce and Granville Sharp as president, he formed a committee in 1787 to suppress the slave trade.<sup>9</sup>

During his brief stay in London in 1787, Brissot resumed contact with several of those campaigning against the slave trade whom he had met in 1783–1784. He had been corresponding with James Phillips, a book seller and a Quaker, even before arriving in England and had sent him a copy of his collaborative work with Etienne Clavière, *De la France et des Etats-Unis*.<sup>10</sup> Phillips had published Thomas Clarkson's prize essay in 1786. He was among those on the first list of members of the committee formed in 1787 for the suppression of the slave trade, presided over by Granville Sharp. Brissot was invited to join the group which held its meetings in Phillips' home.

Brissot was eager to join in the work of the London Committee. He returned to France determined to draw his colleagues into the effort. His first plan was to transmit information through the translation of

books and pamphlets. His enthusiastic commitment to Black emancipation was an integral part of his idealization of America as haven for the oppressed and refuge from despotism, and, of course, many Quakers had already emigrated to the New World to escape religious persecution.

Quaker virtue and simplicity and the American way of life were praised by Saint-Jean de Crèvecoeur in *Les Lettres d'un fermier américain*, published in France in 1784. Brissot read Crèvecoeur's work with appreciation and was incensed when the marquis de Chastellux published his own account of America, criticizing Crèvecoeur and ridiculing the Quakers.<sup>11</sup> In response, in 1786, Brissot wrote his *Examen critique des voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale de M. le marquis de Chatellux[sic], ou Lettre à M. le marquis de Chatellux dans laquelle on réfute principalement ses opinions sur les Quakers, sur les Negres, sur le Peuple et sur l'Homme*.<sup>12</sup> In defending those he names in his title, Brissot is also attacking the established system. The details of his arguments in support of the Quakers provide a key to his abolitionist thinking both before and during the Revolution. He stresses the purity of the new society which the Quakers and Blacks exemplify, and Quaker egalitarian beliefs. Both of these factors are fundamental to what would become his revolutionary vision for France and for humanity as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

In the *Examen critique*, Brissot presents Chastellux as the embodiment of old-world corruption and prejudice. The marquis, a member of the aristocracy, unable to comprehend the purity of values held by the Society of Friends, had criticized Quaker pacifism. Brissot, who at this point in his life shares this pacifist ideology, explains that war is simply a manifestation of the rivalries of the corrupt members of society. Quakers are capable of curing this aged pestilence; they will cleanse the system of despotism, ambition, and luxury.<sup>14</sup>

He writes at great length in defence of Quaker meditation, 'illumination' and 'enthusiasm', evidently identifying himself as one who is 'illuminated' and claiming Rousseau as the model 'enthusiast'. It is through the efforts of those who are pure and thus capable of receiving such inspiration that despotism and tyranny will crumble. The accomplishments of the United States are attributable to this force which the marquis has also ridiculed.

If ridicule had stopped George Fox or Penn, what misfortune for humanity! Slaughter of the Savages in America would have continued, the Negroes would not have been freed so soon; the principles of equality and therefore of democracy would not have been communicated, would not have accelerated the revolution in America. That is what we owe to the spirit of illumination and enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup>

A belief in equality, the absence of hierarchical differentiation, is an aspect of Quaker doctrine to which Brissot gives great importance. He defends the Quaker use of 'tu' (thou) because it is used for all without distinction of rank or privilege.<sup>16</sup> They have neither priests, nor bishops nor ministers, because they see no mention of any ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Scriptures. This point is essential for Brissot who also emphasized it in his work on the early Church.<sup>17</sup> 'Every Quaker is a Minister, as soon as he feels inspired'.<sup>18</sup> Equality is an integral part of their religion and it includes sexual as well as racial equality, which was supported by their resolution of 1727.<sup>19</sup> Quaker humanitarianism is central to his defense of the sect.<sup>20</sup>

Brissot's support of the Society of Friends was encouraged by his friend Pierre Charles Blot who throughout Brissot's career shared his belief in the importance of humanitarian efforts. On one occasion Blot writes from his home in Lyon, following the publication of the *Examen critique*. He tells Brissot of a letter written in defense of Chastellux, and published in *Le Journal de Paris*.

*It is a real Diatribe against this respectable Society, in which the writer goes as far as to tarnish the memory of Penn... in truth it appears that the author is angry that there are still some Good People... if you take pen in hand Once More to support such a worthy cause, my friend, paint for us virtue, Good morals... teach us that, whatever anyone might say, without virtue, there can be no Happiness in this Life... Good People, virtuous men may always be persecuted. Indeed!... without persecution, virtue perhaps might make less progress... How sick at heart M. de Crev[ecoeur]... must be to see in us so much perversity... Europeans are really gangrenous... and Writers... ah, they are the most vile and the most corrupt...<sup>21</sup>*

Indeed, Brissot does continue to defend the Quakers and what this sect appears to exemplify for him. How do the fundamental arguments outlined above – the purity of the New World society, the egalitarian model, and the revolutionary vision – play a role in the articulation of Brissot's abolitionist literature?

The ideological content of Brissot's anti-slavery pamphlets must be considered in the context of certain important facts and events of his day. The *Société des Amis des Noirs* was formed at the request of the London Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, itself formed in 1787 as has been mentioned. The work of the French group was besieged from its inception by a number of very real obstacles. It was working in an intellectual environment in which racial tolerance was basically unknown. Although France benefited from the wealth of her colonial possessions, and above all from Saint-Domingue, (the present-day Haiti, granted to France by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1695),

there was general apathy concerning problems so far removed and unrelated to immediate issues of Europe. Specific groups resisting any humanitarian reform in the colonies were plantation owners, merchants living in French port cities engaged in trade with the colonial possessions, and shippers, all of whom felt economically threatened by the idea of possible emancipation. The status of mulattoes became a pressing issue as well, although Brissot saw this question as simply another aspect of his general humanitarian crusade.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, he and others associated with the *Société* were accused of forming a conspiracy with England, the object of which was to undermine France by abolishing the slave trade and destroying her colonial power.

Despite such a range of opposing forces, Brissot was convinced that his was a fight based on purity and righteousness. After travelling to the United States in 1788, in part to observe at first hand the efforts of abolitionist groups in the New World, Brissot reports to the *Société*, assuring them that although there were difficulties presented by the southern states, the end to the slave trade in America is imminent. His reasoning: the New World, by its very nature, is antithetical to slavery.<sup>23</sup> His image of Blacks forms an integral part of the moral purity he projects onto the New World. He views them with fondness because they have been oppressed. Once given freedom and treated with justice, they will respond virtuously because they are not tainted by European corruption.<sup>24</sup>

In Brissot's *Lettre à Barnave*, a deputy of the National Assembly, there is an interesting application of this obsession with old-world corruption. In March 1790 the Colonial Committee, through Antoine-Pierre Barnave, submitted a report to the Assembly stating among other things that the Assembly should decree no laws on the status of persons in the colonies, except upon the precise and formal demand of the colonial assemblies. This decree, hidden in a preamble to a law, virtually deprived the mulattoes of any chance for citizen status. The Assembly passed the law, never allowing any members of *les Amis des Noirs* to speak. Five days later Brissot wrote to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre of his resulting depression. 'I am good for nothing, my respectable recluse, not even for these unfortunate Blacks who, in spite of all my efforts, have been so cruelly abandoned to their executioners.'<sup>25</sup>

Until this point, Brissot had thought of Barnave as an ally of the revolutionary cause. Wounded by what appeared to him to be a sell-out to the plantation owners, he accuses Barnave of having deceived the National Assembly with his youthful, ingenuous appearance and his reputation as a patriot and democrat. Brissot's construct is, once again,

old-world corrupt values threatening the fresh innocence of the revolutionary effort; Barnave has corrupted the purity of the National Assembly. Infected by a tradition of despotism, it is to a despotic system that Barnave strives to return, bringing all of France with him.<sup>26</sup>

For Brissot the mulattoes are a living example of the white aristocrat's infection of 'natural man' – they are a physical result of the white man's corruption of the Black. They, like the Black, are victims of oppression and persecution. Therefore their rights must be defended.<sup>27</sup> Time and again, Brissot states bluntly that Black, white, mulatto – all are equal by nature.<sup>28</sup> Again, it should be remembered that he was dealing with a public generally convinced that such was not at all the case, that the Black was inferior to the white, less sensitive, and specifically created to serve as beast of burden. Brissot attacks the marquis de Chastellux for his writings on Black inferiority and racial inequality.<sup>29</sup> He denies categorically that Blacks should be treated as property.<sup>30</sup> It is circumstance, the way individuals are treated by society, that shapes them as human beings. 'It is slavery itself which turns men into brutes.'<sup>31</sup>

As a true disciple of Rousseau, Brissot takes great pains to explain that it is not nature that is to blame for the behaviour of slaves; it is slavery itself as a social institution which is at the root of the problem. Therefore, as he has written in his study of criminal code reform, (and here he is no longer following Rousseau's teachings), it is natural for the enslaved to rebel against tyranny. Such rebellion is not criminal because slavery is in itself a crime against nature.<sup>32</sup> His discussion of the effects of tyranny is not limited to Blacks; it is a commentary on the state and the rights of all those oppressed by despotism.<sup>33</sup>

If the effects of oppression are so disastrous, then all men, including Blacks and mulattoes must be educated to be free.<sup>34</sup> Brissot acknowledges that this conviction arises from lessons he has learned reading Locke, Rousseau, Helvétius and Raynal. Like these mentors, he believes that contemporary man can be as good as or, in fact, better than his ancestors, when allowed to develop in a favourable environment.<sup>35</sup>

The Negroes will never be our friends, or men, as long as they are not like us in all ways, as long as they do not enjoy all our rights. Political liberty is the dividing line between good and evil, order and disorder, happiness and misery, ignorance and enlightenment. Do you wish to make the Negro worthy of you? then raise him to your level by giving him this liberty.<sup>36</sup>

Because in Brissot's view, the revolutionary vision applies to all of humanity, his humanitarian efforts are an integral part of his efforts to

realize the revolutionary dream.<sup>37</sup> The rights of man must be guaranteed to all equally before any other steps can be taken to establish a new society.<sup>38</sup>

In his attempts to deliver his message to colleagues and the public, Brissot faced a barrage of economic arguments which were among the most heated objections to the abolitionist cause. In his pamphlets he argues constantly against these objections. At all times, the essential point for him is the humanitarian issue. A society cannot be built on tyranny.

If I am the friend of the Blacks, I do not cherish any less all the French; I do not desire any less the prosperity of our maritime cities and that of our colonies. But I want to build that prosperity on foundations more solid than that of injustice and despotism; but I wish to affirm our prosperity on the great principles of liberty and justice.<sup>39</sup>

Again and again he returns to underscore the terrible irony that a people fighting to overthrow despotism and tyranny are themselves despotic and tyrannical.<sup>40</sup> As his efforts met with increasingly strong opposition in the National Assembly and he was confronted with the resistance and personal attack of specific individuals, his approach to this contradiction – the injustice of those fighting for justice – took on a more extreme hue. He saw in the anti-abolition forces an undermining of the Revolution as a whole. This is a logical conclusion for one who considered humanitarianism and the causes of the Revolution to be one and the same. He attacks Barnave for his inconsistent behaviour: Barnave has declared Saint-Domingue to be part of the French Empire, yet he does not agree that this island should be governed by the French constitution. Barnave agrees that all men are entitled to equal rights, yet he does not acknowledge that these rights should be the same everywhere.<sup>41</sup> Brissot accuses Barnave of invoking ‘the spirit of old-world despotism’. The Committee on Colonies, with Barnave as its spokesman, had branded as treasonous any attempt to incite uprisings against the colonists or their property. This measure clearly had been aimed at *les Amis des Noirs*. Brissot writes, ‘Was this not... to bring back those obscure laws concerning *lèse-majesté*, laws with which a Tiberius would get rid of individuals who defended liberty...?’<sup>42</sup> There can be no exceptions to justice, to the precepts of humanity, liberty and equality.

They are blind! they do not see the fatal consequences of these exceptions! They do not see that they are cutting their own throats, that they are destroying their

constitution and placing themselves in irons once again! They do not see, for example, that all these classifications of active citizens who are eligible at ten pounds or at a marc, merely change the form of aristocracy. They modify it for a short time to make it more novel, and to make it weigh more cruelly than old-style despotism...<sup>43</sup>

Brissot would have no part of the argument that the islands present specific and unique problems which demand specific solutions. If the whites and Blacks of the islands are created in the same way that Europeans are, then they must be given the same rights.<sup>44</sup> Once the declaration of the rights of man has been affirmed, the Assembly no longer has the power to distinguish among various species of men.<sup>45</sup>

Brissot states that those who are oppressed have a right, in fact, a duty, to rise up in revolt against their oppressors. Any action attempting to suppress a revolt in the name of human rights must automatically be considered seditious.<sup>46</sup> Although it is evident that such statements evolved logically from Brissot's basic premises, they unfortunately made him an easy target for accusations of treason and blame for the eventual disintegration of France as a colonial power. But Brissot saw himself as part of a new and growing humanitarian vanguard, preparing to carry the revolutionary message to all of humanity.

Having gained considerable political influence not only as editor of *Le Patriote françois*, but also as deputy to the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, the forces opposing him began to gather strength. His colonial policy as well as his endorsement of military action against Austria and an unpopular decentralized governmental model were important factors in bringing about his political downfall. He was guillotined in 1793.

The efforts of *les Amis des Noirs*, Brissot's work with the Society of Friends, his pamphlets and articles in *Le Patriote françois*, offered concrete means by which he could transform humanitarian ideology into true revolutionary action. The abolitionist battle was finally won, if only temporarily, after Brissot's execution. But his work had prepared the way and clarified the questions, bringing about a new awareness with respect to prejudice and inequality, issues with which we are battling still today.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Among these studies are, Yves Benot, *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris, 1988); Marc Bouloiseau, 'L'Organisation de l'Europe selon Brissot et les Girondins à la fin de 1792', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 57, 3 (1985), 290–294;

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- <sup>2</sup> *Lettres philosophiques sur saint Paul, sur sa doctrine politique, morale & religieuse & sur plusieurs points de la religion chrétienne considérés politiquement* (Hambourg, 1784; Neuchâtel, 1783); *L'Autorité législative de Rome anéantie* N.p., 1784; 1785). Both works were written in 1777. See this author's 'The Roots of Brissot's Ideology', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 13, 2 (1989) [in press].
- <sup>3</sup> *Lettres persanes*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris, 1960), 89–91, 123–4, 158–60, 242–3, 249–50, 254–8; *De l'esprit des lois*, ed. Gonzague Truc, 2 vol. (Paris, 1961), I, 254–73; *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, par une société de gens de lettres, 35 vols. (Paris, Neuchâtel, 1751–1780), V, 936–7; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Ces mots esclavage, et, droit sont contradictoires,' livre I, chapitre iv, *Du contrat social*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond, 4 vol. (Paris, 1961–1964), III, 358; *Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, III, 111–194; *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, partie iv, lettre 3, II, 412–14. See also Jean-François, marquis de Saint-Lambart, *Les Saisons* (Paris, 1769). Voltaire is a more difficult issue. He discusses Spanish abuses in *Candide*, *Alzire*, *Essai sur les moeurs* and *Dictionnaire philosophique*, but his position is questionable from the point of view of general racial prejudice. See Mercier, *L'Afrique noire*, 105–8.
- <sup>4</sup> Abbé Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 10 vols. (Neuchâtel, Genève, 1783–1784). See Brissot, *Examen critique des voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale, de M. le marquis de Chatellux[sic], ou Lettre à M. le marquis de Chatellux, dans laquelle on réfute principalement ses opinions sur les Quakers, sur les Negres, sur le Peuple, & sur l'Homme* (Londres, 1786), 98; *Lettre de J.P. Brissot à M. Barnave, sur ses rapports concernant les colonies, leurs conséquences fatales, sur sa conduite dans le cours de la Révolution; sur le caractère des vrais démocrates; sur les bases de la constitution, les obstacles qui s'opposent à son achèvement, la nécessité de la terminer promptement, etc* (Paris, 1970), 48–9. Strict abolitionists, however, including Brissot, did not find the *philosophes'* arguments sufficiently strong. See Brissot, *Mémoires*, 2 vol. *Mémoires et documents relatifs aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, ed. Claude Perroud (Paris, 1911), II, 84–6.
- <sup>5</sup> A body of laws which defined crimes and punishments from 1670 to the Revolution. There was some attempt at modification during the years just prior to the Revolution. See Louis Masson, *La Révolution pénale en 1791 et ses précurseurs* (Nancy, 1899); Edmond Seligman, *La Justice en France pendant le Révolution (1789–1792)*, 2 vol. (Paris, 1901–1913).
- <sup>6</sup> *Les Moyens d'adoucir la rigueur des loix pénales en France, sans nuire à la sûreté publique* (Châlons-sur-Marne, 1781); *Le Sang innocent vengé, ou discours sur les réparations dues aux accusés innocens* (Berlin, Paris, 1781); *La Théorie des loix criminelles*, 2 vol. (Berlin, Neuchâtel, 1781); *Bibliothèque philosophique du législateur, du politique, du jurisconsulte*, 10 vol. (Berlin, Paris, 1782–1785). See this author's 'La Théorie des loix criminelles: Brissot and Legal Reform', *Australian Journal of French Studies* 2 (1989) [in press].
- <sup>7</sup> Brissot, 'Des quakers', and review of *Letters from an American Farmer*, *Journal du Lycée[sic] de Londres, ou Tableau de l'état présent des sciences et des arts en Angleterre*, 2 vol. in 1 (Paris, 1784), II, 195–205, 286–288; also *Examen critique des voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale, de M. le marquis de Chatellux[sic]; Réponse à une critique des lettres d'un cultivateur américain, des Quakers, etc., faite par l'auteur anonyme des Recherches sur les Etats-Unis* (N.p., 1788), in which Brissot attacks Philippe Mazzei, an Italian who had recently visited the United States and who had criticized Crèvecoeur. Brissot here

- defends Crèvecoeur, and in particular his attitudes toward the Blacks and the Quakers.
- <sup>8</sup> Brissot, *Point de banqueroute, ou lettre à un créancier de l'état, sur l'impossibilité de la banqueroute nationale, et sur les moyens de ramener le crédit et la paix* (London, 1787); *Point de banqueroute, ou lettres à un créancier de l'état, sur l'impossibilité de la banqueroute nationale, et sur les moyens de ramener le crédit et la paix*, nouvelle édition, augmentée de trois autres lettres sur la dette nationale (London, 1787).
- <sup>9</sup> Clarkson, *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, 2 vol. (London, 1808), I, 257. See Ellery, *Brissot de Warville*, 183.
- <sup>10</sup> Brissot and Clavière, *De la France et des Etats-Unis, ou de l'importance de la révolution de l'Amérique pour le bonheur de la France, des rapports de ce royaume et des Etats-Unis, des avantages réciproques qu'ils peuvent retirer de leurs liaisons de commerce, et enfin la situation actuelle des Etats-Unis* (London, 1787); Brissot, *Correspondance et papiers*, in *Mémoires et documents relatifs aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, ed. Cl. Perroud, 4 vol. (Paris, 1912), IV, 142, letter 60 to David Williams, 20 mai 1787.
- <sup>11</sup> *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, 2 vol. (Paris, 1786).
- <sup>12</sup> See Nicole Aronson, 'Chastellux et Brissot: deux images de l'Amérique au dix-huitième siècle', *French Review* 49, 6 (1976), 960–71.
- <sup>13</sup> *Discours sur la nécessité d'établir à Paris une société pour concourir, avec celle de Londres, à l'abolition de la traite et de l'esclavage des nègres*; prononcé le 19 février 1788, dans une société de quelques amis rassemblés à Paris, à la prière du comité de Londres, 3. Although Brissot did not sign this tract, he is most probably the author.
- <sup>14</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 77. Later in his career as a revolutionary politician, Brissot supported the 1792 war against Austria. Although he believed that the war was necessary in order to protect the gains and progress of the Revolution, the policy proved ruinous for both France and Brissot.
- <sup>15</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 60. All quotations will retain the original punctuation. Translations are by the author of the present paper who takes full responsibility for them.
- <sup>16</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 22. Here the influence of Voltaire is evident. See 'Lettres sur les anglais', no. 1–4, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 13 vol. (Paris, 1876), V, 2–8. Pierre Brodin, 'Les Quakers américains et la France au dix-huitième siècle', *French Review* 49, 6 (1976), 899–908. Voltaire brought the Quakers to the attention of the French reading public. However, Brissot is careful not to refer to Voltaire in his humanitarian writings. He probably felt that Voltaire's position in this area would not help his efforts.
- <sup>17</sup> Brissot, *Autorité législative*, 14–15, 38, 39, 44. See also *Patriote françois*, 8 vol. (Paris, 28 juillet 1789–2 juin 1793), no. 543 du mercredi 2 février 1791.
- <sup>18</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 41.
- <sup>19</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 79.
- <sup>20</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 66–7.
- <sup>21</sup> Unpublished letter 21 novembre 1786, Archives Nationales 446 AP 1. Philippe Mazzei had written the letter to the *Journal*, using the name Ferri. See note 7.
- <sup>22</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 4.
- <sup>23</sup> Brissot, *Mémoire sur les Noirs de l'Amérique Septentrionale, lu à l'Assemblée de la Société des Amis des Noirs, le 9 février 1789* (Paris, 20 décembre 1789), 10–12. See also *Patriote françois*, no. 747 du vendredi 26 août 1791, 240, where he quotes from the second volume of his *Nouveau voyage dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, fait en 1788*, 3 vol.; no 780 du jeudi 29 septembre 1791, 383–4; *Réplique de J. P. Brissot à la première et dernière lettre*

- de Louis-Marthe Gouy, *défenseur de la Traite des Noirs et de l'Esclavage* (Paris, 10 février 1791), 43–4.
- <sup>24</sup> See Brissot, *Réplique à la première et dernière lettre*, 10, 34 and *Examen critique*, 107 where he defends his belief in the Black's moral purity in contrast with the corruption of European aristocracy.
- <sup>25</sup> Brissot, *Correspondance et papiers*, lettre CXIV du 13 mars 1790, 249.
- <sup>26</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 3, 10, 12, 17, 20, 70–1, 74, 76, 80–1.
- <sup>27</sup> Living proof of the aristocrat's corruption was the plantation owners' and colonists' desire to separate from the *métropole*. Brissot felt sure that the mulatto would remain loyal to the Revolution. Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 55–6, 62–3.
- <sup>28</sup> Brissot, *Adresse pour l'abolition de la traite*, 6–7; *Mémoire sur les Noirs*, 95; *Lettre à Barnave*, 61.
- <sup>29</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 85–6, 95–6, 108–110.
- <sup>30</sup> Brissot, *Mémoire sur les Noirs*, 20–1.
- <sup>31</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 86. See also, *Mémoire sur les Noirs*, 28–9, 31–2.
- <sup>32</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 90–1. See also, *Théorie des loix criminelles*, I, 276–7, 282–3, 291–2.
- <sup>33</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 93–4.
- <sup>34</sup> Brissot, *Discours sur la nécessité*, 7–8, 'The proposal to spread [enlightenment] while holding men in irons is to wish to enlighten human beings by depriving them of their eyes; it is to wish to procreate by abortion.'
- <sup>35</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 104–6.
- <sup>36</sup> Brissot, *Examen critique*, 99.
- <sup>37</sup> Brissot, *Adresse pour l'abolition*, 19.
- <sup>38</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 80.
- <sup>39</sup> Brissot, *Réplique à la première et dernière lettre*, 36. When first presenting his ideas for the *Société* in *Discours sur la nécessité*, he did include the interests of planters and their property as part of the society's responsibility, 26. See also *Adresse pour l'abolition de la traite*, 20–22.
- <sup>40</sup> Brissot, *Discours sur la nécessité*, 4. He attempts to project an image of the United States in keeping with what he wants to see happen in France. See Brissot, *Mémoire sur les Noirs*, 5–6. See also *De la France et des États-Unis*, 324, where his projection of the American situation moves into the realm of wish-fulfilment.
- <sup>41</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 22–3.
- <sup>42</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 28, 29. See also *Réplique à la première et dernière lettre*, 15–6.
- <sup>43</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 42. See also *Adresse pour L'abolition de la traite*, 2.
- <sup>44</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 60.
- <sup>45</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 15.
- <sup>46</sup> Brissot, *Lettre à Barnave*, 6; *Réplique à la première et dernière lettre*, 32.