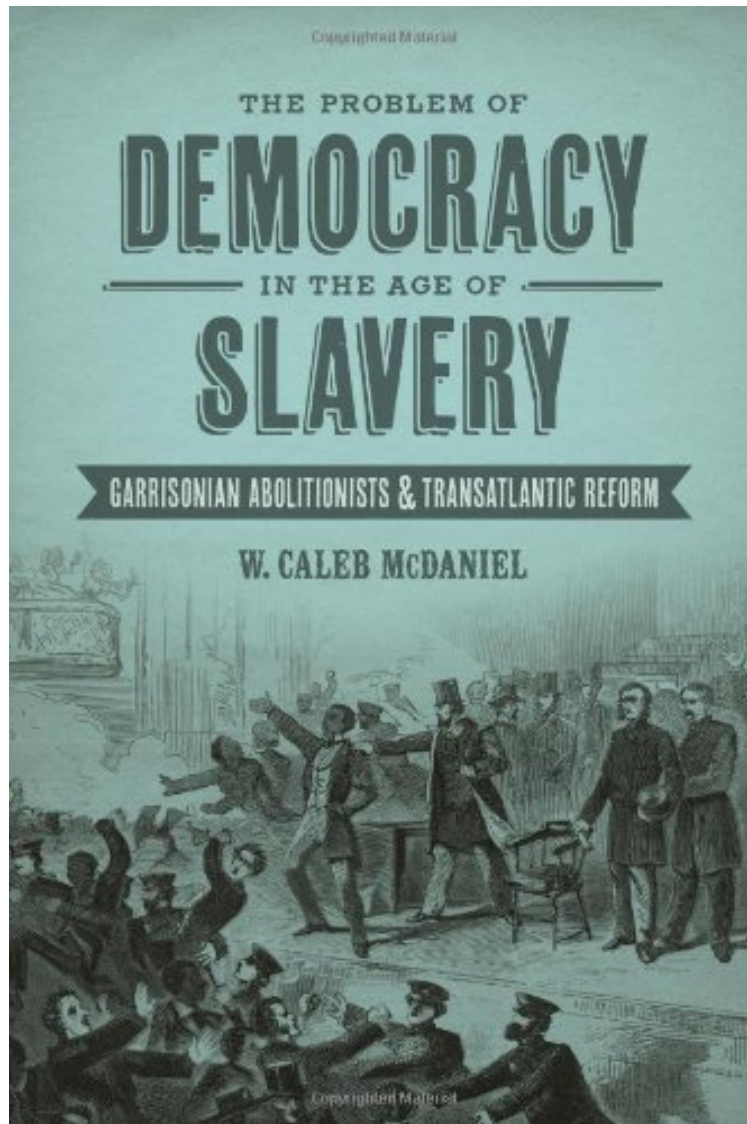


[Mobile ebook] The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform (Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World)

The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery: Garrisonian Abolitionists and Transatlantic Reform (Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World)

W. Caleb McDaniel

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5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. *Activists, Agitators, and Abolitionists* By Jim Schmidt This book was an outstanding compliment to the recent 3-part series, "The Abolitionists," on PBS. Indeed, one of the faults of the program is that it focused almost solely on the domestic aspects of slavery and abolition. The beauty of McDaniel's book is that it takes a global view: how leading American abolitionists were inspired by examples of activism in Europe and elsewhere and how the international community longed to use America as an example of the promises of liberty but were forestalled owing to our country's attachment to slavery. Part biography of Garrison, part primer on 19th century political philosophies, and part chronology of the decades-long struggle to secure emancipation for millions of American slaves, the book achieves all three goals with a serious, systematic, and logical argument and narrative. One of the great features of this book is how relevant it is to today's political climate. One also is struck by the patience and tenacity of abolitionists, especially Garrison: his persistent and decades-long agitation stands in stark contrast to the impatience that surrounds the modern cry of "What do we want? [Cause]! When do we want it? Now! Activists of all stripes can take lessons - and solace - from Garrison's long-term view and strategies. The book - as much of my recent reading on slavery and abolition also has - makes the point that the Abolitionists were up against a nationwide "slave-ocracy" that permeated all levels of government - executive, legislative, and judicial - especially in the South, but also in the north. It is also a warning against the dangers of the mob-thought, nationalism, aristocracy, and other dangers to liberty and the free expression of opinions, especially minority and dissenting opinions. Highly recommended. I thank LSU Press for the review copy.

In *The Problem of Democracy in the Age of Slavery*, W. Caleb McDaniel sets forth a new interpretation of the Garrisonian abolitionists, stressing their deep ties to reformers and liberal thinkers in Great Britain and Europe. The group of American reformers known as "Garrisonians" included, at various times, some of the most significant and familiar figures in the history of the antebellum struggle over slavery: Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, and William Lloyd Garrison himself. Between 1830 and 1870, American abolitionists led by Garrison developed extensive networks of friendship, correspondence, and intellectual exchange with a wide range of European reformers—Chartists, free trade advocates, Irish nationalists, and European revolutionaries. Garrison signaled the importance of these ties to his movement with the well-known cosmopolitan motto he printed on every issue of his famous newspaper, *The Liberator*: "Our Country is the World—Our Countrymen are All Mankind." That motto serves as an important but underappreciated cue for McDaniel's study, which shows that Garrison and his movement must be placed squarely within the context of transatlantic mid-nineteenth-century reform. Through exposure to contemporary European thinkers—such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Giuseppe Mazzini, and John Stuart Mill—Garrisonian abolitionists came to understand their own movement not only as an effort to mold "public opinion" about slavery but also as a measure to defend democracy in an Atlantic World still dominated by aristocracy and monarchy. While convinced that democracy offered the best form of government, Garrisonians recognized that the persistence of slavery in the United States revealed problems with the political system. They identified minority agitators as necessary to the health of a democratic society. Ultimately, Garrisonians' transatlantic activities reveal their deep patriotism, their interest in using "public opinion" to affect American politics, and their similarities to other antislavery groups. By following Garrisonian abolitionists across the Atlantic Ocean and exhaustively documenting their international networks, McDaniel challenges many of the timeworn stereotypes that still cling to their movement. He argues for a new image of Garrison's band as politically savvy, intellectually sophisticated liberal reformers, who were well informed about transatlantic debates regarding the problem of democracy.

This insightful study will be read profitably by seasoned scholars as well as those new to the field of abolitionist studies. . . . [A] careful, rich, and wide-ranging study. Civil War History McDaniel has produced a well-written and engaging work that will undoubtedly enjoy a wide readership and spark debate. *New England Quarterly* "This insightful study will be read profitably by seasoned scholars as well as those new to the field of abolitionist studies.... [A] careful, rich, and wide-ranging study." -- Civil War History "McDaniel has produced a well-written and engaging work that will undoubtedly enjoy a wide readership and spark debate." -- *New England Quarterly* About the Author W. Caleb McDaniel is assistant professor of history at Rice University.