

## ABSTRACT

Art as a Weapon:  
The Manipulation of the Image of Black People in British Slavery,  
1700 - 1834

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This thesis is a discussion of the significance of a selected number of visual images of Black people produced and disseminated by both pro-slavery and anti-slavery groups, as part of their respective propaganda campaigns to either abolish or retain the slave trade and slavery in England. The works of Eric Williams, Albert Boime, J.R. Oldfield, Jan Pieterse, James Walvin and Marcus Wood are used as the theoretical framework of the study, which discusses how the objectives of one of the most effective propaganda campaigns of all time were achieved. While the thesis pays attention (selectively so) to the wide body of critical and controversial literature on British abolitionism, its central focus is on the significance of cartoons and caricatures in influencing public opinion and the reciprocal reflection of public opinion in this art.

The writer argues that throughout the recorded history of contact between Europe and Africa, Europeans held at least two conflicting images of Black people, which were manipulated by interest groups for their own ends. There were the Janus-faced image of Africa and Black people symbolised by the golden King of Mali on the one hand and the bestial, grotesque image as depicted in Azurara's Chronicle on the other. From the start of the public campaign for the abolition of the British slave trade in 1787 to the campaign ending slavery in 1834, both the anti-slavery and the pro-slavery factions systematically manipulated the iconography of Black people for their respective ends. The reality was that neither of these two images projected by these groups was an accurate depiction of Africans who were forced to live in an environment created by and for Europeans.

Keywords: Editha Genteel Jacobs; Abolition of the British Slave Trade and Slavery; cartoon and caricature.