



Universiteit Leiden

The end of amnesia? Scotland's response to the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade and the quest for social justice

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History Master's Thesis
Specialisation: Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence

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Word count (excluding footnotes and bibliography): 25,097



Figure 1 'Rachel Pringle of Barbados' (1796) by Thomas Rowlandson. Pringle was the daughter of a Scottish slave owner and one of his slaves. She was one of a tiny number of 'freed' Afro-Barbadians, and was proprietor of a hotel and brothel.

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1. Introduction

The day before British Prime Minister Theresa May triggered Article 50 to begin the process of ‘Brexit,’ BBC Radio Scotland interviewed esteemed Scottish historian Professor Sir Tom Devine. The presenter Gary Robertson interviewed Devine at length on contemporary political issues, namely Scottish nationalism, the collapse of the Northern Irish power-sharing government, and the threat that Brexit poses to the future of a United Kingdom.¹ Devine was deemed qualified to answer questions on contemporary British politics based on his knowledge and skills as a historian. He addressed both the past and the present, and spoke of historical parallels, trajectories and patterns. The UK’s planned departure from the European Union has thrown-up such an array of political, economic and social complexities that we are looking to the past for answers. In 2017, Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales find their place in the world deeply uncertain. Citizens are being forced to place their identities and loyalties under the microscope. Thus, the way a nation’s historical narrative is understood, reinforced and promoted can have a profound effect on identity, politics and culture, as well as tourism, and even international relations. These in turn reinforce the historical narrative, so that it is further legitimised and secured. There is, therefore, a lot at stake in how we remember the past.

In 2007, Britain commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. In 1807, the Britain Government passed the Slave Trade Act, which forbade British people from engaging in the enforced transportation of African people from the African continent to the Americas. Parliament did not abolish the use of slave labour within British colonies until 1833, and in reality this did not come into effect until 1838.² Having previously protected British slave ships from pirates, the Royal Navy reversed its role overnight, and started to police the African coast to intercept slave ships. It was a phenomenal

¹ BBC Radio Scotland, ‘Sir Tom Devine: Brexit and IndyRef2,’ 28.03.17. Available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04y8kf9> (last accessed 29.03.17).

² Anthony Cooke, ‘An Elite Revisited: Glasgow West India Merchants, 1783-1877,’ *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 32:2, 2012, 130.

reversal and historians have rigorously debated why it occurred. Did morality win the day, or was abolition the result of the British Empire's changing economy?

Tony Blair's Labour government initiated the commemoration of the 2007 bicentenary, and a wide-ranging programme of activities took place across the country to mark the event. The bicentenary was the UK's first national-scale effort to address its role in slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In its official bicentenary pamphlet, the British Government stated that 2007 offered:

a unique chance for the people of Britain to reflect on the wider story of transatlantic slavery and its abolition, and on the roles of ordinary people and politicians, alongside other Britons, Africans and West Indians, in helping to bring an end to slavery.³

Scotland took part in the bicentenary, but it displayed a lacklustre response. Only seven commemorative projects took place in Scotland, compared to hundreds throughout England and Wales, and to a lesser degree Northern Ireland. The National Museum of Scotland did nothing to mark the bicentenary. Instead, City of Edinburgh Council, the Paxton Trust, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, The National Trust for Scotland, and Cromarty Courthouse Museum responded to the bicentenary and organised various commemorative exhibitions, events and community projects in their respective villages, towns and cities.

In 2007, what was at stake in Scotland? The traditional, deeply-engrained Scottish historical narrative is characterised by a handful of potent themes: Scotland the brave, defender of its lands; Scotland the victim, subjugated by the English; Scotland the emigrant, its people cleared off their lands; and Scotland the plucky imperialist and Victorian innovator, contributing to the colonial and industrial endeavour. In the National Museum of Scotland, there is a film called 'One Nation: Five Million Voices.' It claims to explore the notion of what it means to be Scottish. The 'potent' themes briefly described above all feature heavily

³ The National Archives, 'Bicentenary of the abolition of the slave,' 19.05.10. Available at http://webarhive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121015000000/http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG_065859 (last accessed 28.04.17).

in the film. Its main thrust is that Scots are a distinct people, with distinct personal qualities that are recognised, and appreciated, world-over – they are tolerant and self-deprecating, for example, with a love for unhealthy food and alcohol.⁴ While some of the film’s talking heads mention problems of narrow-mindedness and racism in Scotland, they are blips in a narrative that predominantly promotes ‘Scottish-ness’ as a positive, desirable and transferable trait, a trait that even a non-Scot could adopt. In many ways, Scotland’s biggest international export is ‘Scottish-ness.’ Yet, at the turn of the millennium, a ‘new’ chapter from Scotland’s history was brought to light that threatened to usurp the nation’s historical narrative.

A burgeoning body of academic research has emerged over the last 15 years, which convincingly argues that Scots were significantly involved in the transatlantic slave trade. Devine, Stephen Mullen, David Alston, Eric Graham, Michael Morris and Simon Newman are just some of the historians at the fore of this research, reflecting the development of a wider British historical canon on the transatlantic slave trade. The bicentenary came at a time when this research was just finding its feet in Scotland.

Over the ten years since the bicentenary, teams of historians and heritage experts have written articles, books, and even online resource packs analysing the response of British museums and heritage institutions to the bicentenary. They have outlined what lessons were learnt, as well as options for future commemorative projects. This academic response, however, has not dealt specifically with Scotland. This would not be so problematic if the British analyses incorporated data from Scotland, but they do not. This paper, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature

1.1. Research Question

Thomas Rowlandson etched Rachel Pringle of Barbados, shown on page one, for an eighteenth-century cosmopolitan London audience. It was a light-hearted, tongue-in-cheek, look at life in the British Caribbean, caricaturing Pringle as a ‘worldly wise procuress’ and

⁴ National Museums Scotland, ‘One Nation: Five Million Voices,’ 13.10.10. Available at <https://vimeo.com/15808388> (last accessed 29.03.17).

her customers as disease-ridden louts.⁵ Yet, the image reveals much more. It shows us the complexities, subtleties and power-relations at play during the height of the British transatlantic slave trade - and at the centre of it all is a woman who is half-African Caribbean, half-Scottish. The image is more than 220 years old, yet Scotland has suppressed the history of its slavery past for almost as long. Devine calls this suppression an ‘amnesia.’⁶ Ten years ago, with the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, this amnesia was – arguably - challenged for the first time.

This dissertation seeks to explore Scotland’s response to the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. If the bicentenary marked the end of Scotland’s 200-year amnesia, how was Scotland’s slavery past remembered, and to what extent did Scotland’s response pursue an agenda of social justice?

A brief discussion of social justice is required. At a most basic level, a belief in social justice is the belief that all human beings are equal. Aristotle infamously argued that only equals should be treated equally, and indeed, it was on such philosophical lines that some anti-abolitionists fought their case.⁷ While such philosophical views may have helped prop-up slavery in a secondary role, ultimately, slavery was propped up and sustained by greed and the desire for personal financial gain. If social justice is a corrective for self-interest,⁸ and slavery was indeed predominately about self-interest, then one could argue that social justice is the antithesis of slavery. However, this dissertation is not setting out to replicate the moral crusade of the abolitionists – a problematic notion in itself – in its assessment of Scotland’s bicentenary. Instead, it sets out to consider the bicentenary along more practical notions of social justice, aligned to collective memory and museum studies. How Scotland remembers its colonial past, slavery included, arguably has the power to influence what kind of post-colonial, and indeed multicultural, society it develops into. Moments of national self-

⁵ Carol Jacobi, ‘Rachel Pringle of Barbados (1796),’ in Alison Smith et al (eds.), *Artist and Empire*, (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 170.

⁶ Tom Devine, ‘Lost to History,’ in Tom Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2015), 21.

⁷ Leo Montada & Jurgen Maes, ‘Justice and Self-Interest,’ in Klarah Sabag & Manfred Schmitt (eds.), *Handbook of Social Justice Theory and Research*, (New York: Springer, 2016), 116.

⁸ Montada & Maes, Justice and Self-Interest, 109.

examination, such as the 2007 bicentenary, can force citizens to acknowledge, for example, oppressive power relations, racism, and intolerance, forged in the colonial past and sustained in the present.⁹

1.2. Structural Outline

This dissertation is organised in the following way: first, there is an overview of how the British and Scottish governments approached the bicentenary, which helps contextualise how both nations commemorated the 1807 Slave Trade Act. There is consideration of the type of language they used, the perspective they adopted, and the degree to which they respectively pursued an agenda of social justice. Secondly, there is a literature review, which is divided into three parts – the first part, ‘Strange Bedfellows,’ considers the uneasy relationship between commemorating abolition, and social justice. It is a debate between ideology and practicality, engaging the arguments of social activist group Ligali, and museum curator and historian Katherine Prior. The second part of the literature review, ‘A Muted Response,’ signals the fact that virtually nothing has been written about how Scotland commemorated the bicentenary - a gap that this dissertation intends to address. The third element of the literature review is a discussion of how African and Caribbean history have been handled by British museums, and how in turn, such collections could potentially be used to further the cause of social justice. The next part of the thesis is a discussion of theory, specifically, the theory of collective memory. This is broken down into various sub-discussions on: the relationship between popular memory and social justice; collective guilt; transnational memory; and finally, the ‘dislocation’ of justice – the danger of transplanting historic attitudes and societal norms onto the present. Next is a discussion of methodology, in which I consider various ways that one can analyse museum exhibitions. I consider museums’ capacity for debate and positive societal change, and detail the ways in which slavery exhibitions can be analysed through consideration of the imagery used and the deployment of

⁹ Emma Waterton & Ross Wilson, ‘Talking the talk: policy, popular and media responses to the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade using the ‘Abolition Discourse,’’ *Discourse & Society* 20:3, 2009, 382.

‘historical empathy.’ The next section is the dissertation’s main empirical analysis - I take three Scottish bicentenary projects as case studies, consider their strengths and weaknesses, and consider their alignment to an agenda of social justice. To do so, I deploy ideas and theories from the preceding theoretical and methodological sections. The projects all differed in scale, focus, approach and legacy. Put together, they offer an insight into Scotland’s response to the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. It is a case study of commemoration in a nation distinct from its southern neighbour in terms of its national identity, but similar in its historic role in the slave trade.

1.3. The British and Scottish Governments’ Bicentenary

The British Government’s decision to commemorate abolition remains a highly contested one. Toyin Agbetu is a social rights activist and founder of the Pan-African group Ligali. Agbetu and Ligali were the most vocal and radical opponents of the 2007 bicentenary. Agbetu disrupted an official service of commemoration at Westminster Cathedral in 2007, a protest aimed directly at Queen Elizabeth and then-Prime Minister Tony Blair, who were both in attendance.¹⁰ Agbetu said of the bicentenary:

So let’s be clear here: there was a lot of political reasons why the 2007 celebration came into being, but one thing was for sure – it wasn’t designed to correct an injustice against African people or to kick-start an era of reflection and corrective behaviour driven by genuine humanitarian ideals; instead it was very much a cynical gesture of political spin.¹¹

While such a stance is valid, others argued that hypocritical or not, at least the bicentenary got the general public talking about slavery. James Walvin, an esteemed historian of slavery, said of the bicentenary:

¹⁰ Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past & Institute of Historical Research, ‘Ligali,’ 02.08.07, available at <https://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/reviews/ligali.html>, last accessed 03.07.17.

¹¹ Toyin Agbetu, ‘Restoring the Pan-African Perspective: Reversing the Institutionalization of Maafa Denial,’ in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (eds.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 62.

I had been speaking in public on the topic for years and had never previously met such widespread attention: large, interested crowds, well-informed and critical questions, and a genuine attention to the broader issues.¹²

It is worth considering the government's official bicentenary rhetoric in some detail. The below extract is taken from a website that the government created for 2007:

Although it would be another 30 years before slaves gained their final freedom - when slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire - the Bicentenary in 2007 gives the opportunity to remember the millions who suffered; to pay tribute to the courage and moral conviction of all those – black and white – who campaigned for abolition; and to demand to know why today, in some parts of the world, forms of slavery still persist two centuries after the argument for abolition in this country was won.

There is a view strongly held by many people that the repercussions of the slave trade and slavery echo down the centuries. It is argued that some of those after-effects include racism, poverty and conflict in Africa and the Caribbean, inequality and complex cultural legacies.

The Government regrets and strongly condemns the evils of the transatlantic slave trade. The 1807 Act marked an important point in this country's development towards the nation it is today – a critical step into the modern world and into a new, and more just, moral universe. Its bicentenary offers a unique chance for the people of Britain to reflect on the wider story of transatlantic slavery and its abolition, and on the roles of ordinary people and politicians, alongside other Britons, Africans and West Indians, in helping to bring an end to slavery.¹³

Firstly, within the 200-word description, there is no direct mention of the fact that British people were slavers, nor is there any mention that slavers were supported by the British Government, and compensated by the government when 'slaves gained their final

¹² James Walvin, 'The Slave Trade, Abolition and Public Memory,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19, 2009, 140.

¹³ The National Archives, 'Bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade,' 19.05.10. Available at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121015000000/http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery/DG_065859 (last accessed 28.04.17).

freedom' with complete abolition in the 1830s. Secondly, the second paragraph explicitly distances the government from holding responsibility for contemporary legacies of slavery: *'there is a view strongly held by many people that the repercussions of the slave trade and slavery echo down the centuries.'* Thirdly, there is a further distancing tool at work; slavery continues in 'some parts of the world' today, and Britain is part of a 'just, moral universe.' In other words, Britain is not the country it once was, and bad things like slavery happen in other, less moral countries.

In the government's more detailed supporting pamphlet *Reflecting on the past and looking to the future*, there was a more explicit mention of the role of British people in the enslavement of African people: 'British subjects were involved with the trade as shipping owners, makers of chains and other instruments of control, goods manufacturers and as plantation and slave owners.'¹⁴ However, no statistics were given as evidence of the magnitude of Britain's involvement, nor the wealth that was created as a result. It was highly political, and five pages of the 15 page pamphlet listed Labour Government *past* initiatives to tackle inequality in Britain, despite the section heading 'Looking to the future.' There were some bizarre phrases used, for example, describing Britain's involvement in slavery as 'this country's diverse past.'¹⁵ It seemed like a communications manager has gone through the document with a fine-toothed comb looking for any language that directly implicated the government. Indeed, there was an outcry at the time when Tony Blair did not apologise for Britain's role in slavery, instead expressing 'sorrow' that it happened.¹⁶ This message was replicated in the government's official literature.

Within the pamphlet, the following action points were interspersed throughout the text:

¹⁴ Home Office Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Reflecting on the past and looking to the future: The 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Empire*, (London: 2006), 6-7.

¹⁵ Home Office, *Reflecting on the past*, 9.

¹⁶ Colin Brown, 'Blair admits to 'deep sorrow' over slavery - but no apology,' *The Independent*, 27.11.06. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/blair-admits-to-deep-sorrow-over-slavery-but-no-apology-426058.html> (last accessed 28.05.17).

- ‘to reflect on the wider story of the transatlantic slavery and its abolition’¹⁷
- ‘to celebrate all those men and women, both black and white, who campaigned before, alongside and behind figureheads of the abolitionist movement’¹⁸
- ‘to commemorate the lives and contributions of abolitionists and fierce critics of the slave trade such as Olaudah Equiano (1745-1797) and Ignatius Sancho (1729-1780), Africans who were sold or born into slavery’¹⁹
- ‘to make a collective commitment that in another two centuries’ time, no-one should feel the need to express regret on our behalf for our actions today;’
- to tackle human trafficking, as well as ‘social exclusion, lack of opportunity, racism and discrimination’ in Britain
- to respect each other as Britons [which] stems largely from the respect we have for ourselves and our own related histories.’²⁰

The British Government’s agenda for 2007, therefore, was threefold: reflection on history and remembering unsung heroes; making a ‘collective commitment’ to tackling contemporary injustices such as racism and social exclusion; and, working to eradicate modern-day slavery.

The Scottish Government commissioned two leading historians on Scotland and slavery – Eric Graham and Iain Whyte – to research and write its official pamphlet for the bicentenary. In what has become a poorly kept secret, Graham and Whyte left, or were asked to leave, the government project before its completion, and another historian, Paula Kitching, was called in to finish it off. Graham and Whyte’s response to their dismissal is telling; they argued that ‘the “dumbing down” of language and content was unnecessary in our professional opinion, based on our experience as communicators and educators, widely

¹⁷ Home Office, *Reflecting on the past*, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

published authors and contributors to various history radio and TV programmes.²¹ The pamphlet, therefore, was arguably not as radical as the original authors had intended. It was, however, considerably more radical than the British Government's version. It was more historically detailed and nuanced, backed up by academic references. It was over 50 pages long, and dense with historical information. Scottish slave traders, for example Richard Oswald, and tobacco merchants, for example John Glassford, were named, and the wealth they subsequently accumulated stated. For example, 'Oswald profited at every stage of the triangle. He owned a 100,000 acre estate at Auchincruive in Scotland, and on his death he left a fortune of £500,000, equivalent to £40 million pounds today.'²² On the other hand, the language was at times passive and negated responsibility. For example, '[t]he West Africans that were captured had their freedom removed and their own wishes ignored.'²³ One was left wondering, by whom?

The Scottish Government and the British Government pamphlets obviously held different aims and agendas, however their comparison is worthwhile: the British Government sought to highlight contemporary equality legislation – one of Blair's political legacies – while the Scottish Government sought to uncover a great swathe of unknown Scottish history. Indeed, the Scottish Government pamphlet only dedicated one page to the contemporary legacies of the slavery, and the text was 'wishy washy' and inconsequential, speaking of 'African Caribbean inspired' food and music.²⁴ Its only social justice action point was 'to continue the work started by [Scottish abolitionist] Macauley, Wilberforce and others and end slavery in the modern world, whilst remembering the past.'²⁵ It was hardly a bold proclamation of intent or call to radical action. Thus, the Scottish Government's agenda for social justice was about reflecting on history, and honouring the legacy of abolitionism through (unspecified) action.

²¹ Devine, *Lost to History*, 26.

²² Scottish Executive, *Scotland and the Slave Trade: 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act*, (Edinburgh: 2007), 12.

²³ Scottish Executive, *Scotland and the Slave Trade*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 47.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

1.4. Setting the Scene

1.4.1. Overview of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade spanned at least three centuries and was motivated by a desire to make as much money as possible through the cultivation and exportation of sugar, tobacco and cotton. Slavery was a means to imperial expansion and dominance in what we know today as the Caribbean and North America, and underpinned the European colonisation of the Atlantic World. Engagement in the slave trade and the use of slave labour on plantations was not unique to the British. Most European nations that possessed colonies traded in slaves and used slave labour. It was the British, however, who came to dominate the slave trade. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth-century, British ships carried approximately three million people from Africa to America.²⁶

1.4.2. Scots, the Slave trade and Abolition

In 1707, the Act of Union brought Scotland and England together under an economic and political union. Prior to 1707, Scots had typically worked against English merchants in the Atlantic world, circumventing the seventeenth-century English Navigation Acts and often working in tandem with Dutch and Scandinavian mariners. The Union, however, offered Scotland unrestricted access to previously English-held colonial markets, and a fledgling British Empire was born. Over the next 250 years, Scots played a prominent role within all aspects of empire, and not least, the transatlantic slave trade. Yet, it is the missionaries, army captains, and ship builders who we today remember as symbolic of Scotland's imperial past, not the slave owners and plantation overseers.

University College London's landmark *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* project is based on the government slavery compensation scheme which, following the abolition of slavery in 1833, paid out approximately £20 million to British slave owners to account for

²⁶ James Walvin, 'Slave trade', in David Dabydeen, John Gilmore & Cecily Jones (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

their losses, while the formerly-enslaved received nothing. The UCL project demarcates the ‘legacies’ as commercial, cultural, historical, imperial, physical and political. One of the most accessible of these categories are the physical legacies – one can browse, for example, the country houses, urban mansions, public monuments, and even villages that were wholly or partly funded by the profits of slavery.

The compensation records confirm that by the early nineteenth-century, men and women from all parts of Scotland owned slaves and plantations throughout the Caribbean.²⁷ Not only were Scots involved in transatlantic slavery, but disproportionately so. In 1833, Scots made up ten per cent of the British population, but represented fifteen per cent of British absentee slave owners in the compensation lists.²⁸ Strong Scottish kith and kin networks, sometimes described as ‘clannish’ – or, ‘[n]ecessity, nepotism and cronyism,’ as one historian of Scottish migration puts it - ensured that if one Scot crossed the Atlantic to seek profits in slavery, another from his family or home town would follow suit.²⁹

1.4.3. The Nationalist Dimension

Scottish nationalism has undergone a renaissance. The creation of a devolved Scottish Government in 1999, the establishment of a minority Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) government in 2007, the landslide election of the SNP in 2011, and the (failed) Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014, stand out as defining moments. While 55% of the Scottish population voted against independence, the very fact that 45% voted for independence was regarded as a significant shift in the status quo. There had never before been such a high level of support for Scottish independence.

Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, the political and constitutional uncertainty thrown up by Brexit means that Scotland’s position within the UK remains

²⁷ It is worth noting that the loss of Britain’s North American colonies in 1776 effectively ended direct British participation in North American slavery.

²⁸ Nicholas Draper, ‘Scotland and Colonial Slave Ownership’ in Tom Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 174.

²⁹ David Armitage, ‘The Scottish Diaspora,’ in Jenny Wormald (ed.), *Scotland: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 232.

ambiguous. Under the influence of nationalism, Scotland is increasingly seeking to forge its own way in the world. In the twenty-first century, Scotland is an emboldened nation.

This comes at the same time as Scotland's 'rediscovery' of its role in transatlantic slavery. When the Scottish Government was established at the end of the last century, discussion of Scotland and slavery was non-existent. Today, less than 20 years later, it is a 'hot topic' – Scottish television documentaries, newspaper articles, works of art, and of course, academic research projects, increasingly remind the Scots of their less-than-admirable past.

In 1983, Benedict Anderson pointed out what he regarded as one of the great paradoxes of nationalism – 'the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye versus the subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists.'³⁰ As discussed in the introduction, Scottish history has, since the early-twentieth-century, been characterised by a victimhood narrative. This, of course, plays all too easily into the hands of blinkered nationalists. However, on the whole, Scottish nationalism today presents itself as civic, rather than ethnic, and progressive, rather than narrow-minded. For example, after the Brexit vote, the SNP government accused Westminster of using EU nationals living in the UK as 'bargaining chips' in the negotiations with Brussels,³¹ the implication being, of course, that the Scottish Government would treat UK and non-UK citizens equally, fostering civic, rather than ethnic, nationalism.

If Scotland is to continue pursuing the path of 'progressive' civic nationalism, it will need to reconfigure its victimhood narrative. In the introduction to *2007's Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, Berthold Schoene-Harwood argues that since devolution in 1999, cultural commentators 'have begun to issue reminders that Scotland's assumed moral superiority as a victim of historical circumstance must not be

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 2006), 5.

³¹ Libby Brooks, 'Nicola Sturgeon tells EU nationals: 'You are not bargaining chips,' *The Guardian*, 17.08.16.

permitted to persist uninterrogated.’³² Michael Morris in turn calls for ‘an honest reassessment of Scotland’s role in empire and slavery.’³³

Scotland’s past is as unflattering as the next European nation’s. The question is, however, how it will address this negative history and incorporate it into its national consciousness, identity and collective memory. Scotland’s response to the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade offers an insight.

³² Berthold Schoene-Harwood, ‘Introduction: Post-devolution Scottish Writing,’ in Berthold Schoene-Harwood (ed.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Writing*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

³³ Michael Morris, *Scotland and the Caribbean, c. 1740-1833: Atlantic Archipelagos*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), xi.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Strange Bedfellows: The Commemoration of Abolition and Social Justice

While politicians and policy makers regarded the bicentenary as an opportunity to develop how Britain understood and discussed the slave trade,³⁴ and historians such as Walvin spoke about integrating the history of slavery into Britain's 'national story',³⁵ some historians and commentators argue that the reality of the bicentenary 'on the ground' – in the museums and exhibition spaces - was somewhat different.

Ligali is a not-for-profit pan-African human rights organisation 'that challenges the misrepresentation of African people, culture and history in the British media.'³⁶ Founded in 2000, it is a predominantly online community that aims to advance and maintain African identity in Britain.³⁷ Ligali represents an 'Afro-centric' perspective in the debate on the bicentenary. It contributes a radical voice that exists outside of the academic establishment. Inclusion of its arguments is hopefully not tokenism, but a means to question the 'Euro-centric' perspectives that certainly influenced the bicentenary.

In 2005, Ligali published a declaration of protest to the proposed bicentenary. The group put forward three main objections: commemorating abolition would 'reassert the historic falsehood that African people were the passive recipients of emancipation;' celebration of abolitionists, such as Wilberforce, ignores the fact that they held 'deep-seated racist opinion' and were motivated by Christian duty and fear of God, as well as the fear of enslaved Africans rebelling; and, the famous image of the kneeling slave, which was the seal of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery (and which was used prolifically during the bicentenary), similarly depicts Africans as passive recipients of European charity 'incapable

³⁴ Jennifer Anne Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths: British museums and the legacies of slavery in the bicentenary year, 2007,' *Federation of International Human Rights Museums*, 2010, 5.

³⁵ James Walvin quoted in Carvill, *Uncomfortable Truths*, 5.

³⁶ Ligali, 'About Ligali.' Available at <http://www.ligali.org/about.html> (last accessed 28.05.17).

³⁷ Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past & Institute of Historical Research, 'Ligali,' 02.08.07, available at <https://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/reviews/ligali.html>, last accessed 03.07.17.

of self determination.³⁸ Such arguments over representation have, indeed, been debated in the United States since the 1990s.³⁹ Yet, in the US, arguments over social justice and the representation of slaves, for example, are inextricably bound up in the country's race relations 'crisis.'⁴⁰ Ira Berlin argues that this crisis, in which black children in America are more likely to end up in prison than college, has led American people to return to the 'ground zero of race relations' – slavery.⁴¹ Berlin also argues that racial inequality is, of course, an emotionally charged subject, and when racial inequality is conflated with the history of slavery, it too can find itself 'in the very same emotional brier patch.'⁴² Ligali perhaps falls into this brier patch, conflating both racism in Britain and the misrepresentation of African people with the history of slavery. They are of course directly linked to one another, but as Berlin reminds us, for the historian, context is everything; this is not to deny the brutality of slavery, but simply to provide a 'basis for understanding the actions of master and slave.'⁴³

Yet, the concerns heralded by Ligali two years prior to the bicentenary are reflected in the subsequent historiography. For example, the research of Laurajane Smith et al on the 'success' of the bicentenary largely corresponds with Ligali's predictions. Smith et al argue that overall, the tone of the bicentenary was heavily informed by the 'abolitionist myth,' and that across the UK, museums' engagement with the bicentenary 'was often anxious and ambiguous, reflecting uncertainties both about the social role of museums in contemporary society, and about their relationship to established narratives of national identity.'⁴⁴

Smith et al argue that critics' complaints of the bicentenary can be organised into two threads: in celebrating abolition, Britons were encouraged to take patriotic pride, which took

³⁸ Ligali, 'Declaration of Protest to the 2007 Commemoration of the Bicentenary of the British Parliamentary Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,' 2005, 5-6. Available at <http://www.africanholocaust.net/articles/Declaration%20of%20protest%20to%20the%202007%20Abolition%20Commemoration.pdf> (last accessed 28.05.17).

³⁹ Ira Berlin, 'American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice,' *The Journal of American History* 90:4, 2004, 1251 and 1260.

⁴⁰ Berlin, *American Slavery*, 1251.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 1258.

⁴² *Ibid*, 1260.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 1263.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Cubitt, Laurajane Smith and Ross Wilson, 'Introduction: Anxiety and Ambiguity in the Representation of Dissonant History,' in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (eds.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 1.

attention away from Britain's prolonged and deep involvement in slavery and the impact this had on the development of the British economy; and, the contribution that Africans made to their own liberation was downplayed, which worked to deny enslaved Africans and their descendants a sense of agency in their own history, thus perpetuating societal racism and inequality.⁴⁵ Smith et al argue that, overall, 'what 2007 exhibitions tended to offer were limited and anxious movements in new directions – gestures towards the possibility of alternative understandings – rather than radical new configurations.'⁴⁶

Katherine Prior is an historian who worked as a consultant at the (now defunct) British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, and was involved in putting together its 2007 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition. Prior's position as an institutional 'insider' offers some explanation for the bicentenary's curatorial downfalls. Prior argues that bicentenary exhibitions planned and put together by curators in conjunction with committees were typically watered down in their vision and radicalism.⁴⁷ She argues that, in her experience, committees sought to avoid trouble and ended up compromising radical or singular vision, resorting to 'passive, non-committal language in the hope that will pass for objective commentary.'⁴⁸ Prior also argues that the bicentenary sought to address a multitude of topics in addition to the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition; for example, slavery before the transatlantic trade, Africa prior to European arrival, and the contemporary legacies of slavery and of imperialism in Africa.⁴⁹ This is indicative of the argument that most British museums and heritage institutions had failed to address *any* of these topics in much depth preceding 2007. Yet, it also shows that museum practice reflected a larger trend in academia to connect slavery to wider geographical and temporal contexts.⁵⁰

Prior makes another interesting argument about the terminology and language used to describe the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. Prior argues that on top of the difficulty of

⁴⁵ Smith et al, Introduction, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

⁴⁷ Katherine Prior, 'Commemorating Slavery 2007: a Personal View from Inside the Museums,' *History Workshop Journal* 64, 2007, 201.

⁴⁸ Prior, Commemorating Slavery, 201.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 202.

⁵⁰ Berlin, American Slavery, 1261.

fitting diverse and nuanced perspectives on the slave trade into a 180-word information panel, for example, curators typically felt constrained by what language they felt they could or should use.⁵¹ Where exhibition advisors warned about ‘the all-subsuming nature of the label ‘slave’ or the political perspective inherent in the term ‘runaway,’” Prior argues that in a nervous museum environment, this could be taken as a ‘diktat’ not to use the words ‘slave’ and ‘runaway.’⁵² As a result, Prior argues, curators were not empowered to feel comfortable handling terminology as and how they saw appropriate, and as a result, ‘a rigid application of terms such as ‘enslaved African’ and ‘self-emancipated’, regardless of context,’ quickly became as depersonalizing as the original labels.⁵³

In its declaration of protest to the bicentenary, Ligali discussed the terminology and language of slavery. While Ligali presented an appendix of problematic words and recommended optional replacements – for example, ‘African’ instead of ‘black’ – their overarching argument was more fundamental: language is a tool that can be used to maintain social hierarchy and inequality, and thus must constantly be challenged with a view to implementing positive societal change.⁵⁴ Prior’s arguments come from a position of practical experience in the heritage industry, and her voice beside Ligali’s presents an interesting dialogue. To what degree do you do what is practicable, as opposed to following an agenda of political and social ideal? As discussed in this paper’s analysis of Scottish bicentenary projects, those curators/project leaders who were independent of large institutions were arguably freer to follow their own agenda, while those working for government organisations – no doubt curated by committee – were more constrained.

That the British government chose to commemorate the efforts of abolitionism rather than the three hundred years that had gone before in which Britain was the world’s foremost slaving nation, meant that anyone seeking to focus on an alternative part of Britain’s slaving past was destined to be working against the grain. Additionally, museums were unsure of the

⁵¹ Prior, *Commemorating Slavery*, 206.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Ligali, *Declaration of Protest*, 19.

role they should play in the bicentenary both as conveyors of the past, and as active participants of the present, and were constrained by a large degree of bureaucracy, timidity and, as this dissertation shall argue, a lack of familiarity with the subject matter and its complexities.

2.2. A Muted Response: The Bicentenary in Scotland and What Had Gone Before

Scotland's response to the bicentenary has been utterly neglected in the post-bicentenary academic literature. Indeed, as far as I can find, nothing has been written on the subject at all. For example, Smith et al were behind the University of York's *1807 Commemorated* project, whose aim was to 'map and analyse public debate and activity regarding the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade.'⁵⁵ The team interviewed thousands of people who were involved in the bicentenary, and afterwards developed an online toolkit for heritage practitioners for future related projects. In its research, the *1807 Commemorated* project seems to have taken data solely from bicentenary events in England, and possibly Wales. The project team worked with seven museums, all of which are in England. The team also carried out seven post-bicentenary workshops across 2008-09, all of which were in England. In the *1807 Commemorated* project, and the subsequent 300 page academic textbook *Ambiguous Engagements*, Scotland is not explicitly mentioned once.

Devine makes brief reference to Scotland's 'muted' response in 2015's *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*, however he does not mention any of the seven projects that actually took place, instead focusing on the Scottish Government pamphlet fiasco.⁵⁶ However, Devine does argue that '[n]o popular breakthrough in black history had taken place [in Scotland] of the kind which occurred in England in the 1980s and helped establish long-term foundations for the events of 2007.'⁵⁷ As Ana Lucia Araujo argues, the memory of slavery in Europe is sometimes regarded as having been 'remembered' or 'recovered;' the transmission of the

⁵⁵ 1807 Commemorated, 'About Us,' available at <http://www.york.ac.uk/1807commemorated/about.html> (last accessed 28.05.17).

⁵⁶ Devine, *Lost to History*, 25-6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 25.

memory of slavery was interrupted by the Atlantic and segregation.⁵⁸ Thus, the memory of slavery has not been passed on, but dug up. Furthermore, unlike the Americas, where plantations and former slave market sites are part of the built heritage, Europe does not have such explicit reminders of its slaving past. The exception, however, is its populations of African Caribbean descent. England, for example, has a significant minority black population – as such, the history of slavery could not be ignored forever. In Scotland, however, such is not the case. Indeed, South African comedian Trevor Noah found Scotland’s lack of black people so noticeable that he turned it into a sketch for his 2017 stand-up show ‘Afraid of the Dark.’ As Berlin argues, America’s interest in its slaving past has been encouraged by contemporary racial inequality. In Scotland, racial inequality is not a major social issue, as the population is so homogenously white, perhaps part-explaining why its slavery past has existed under the radar for so long.

So, what *had* gone before in Scotland, in terms of its slavery historiography and collective memory? Marian Gwyn’s 2014 doctoral thesis is a detailed analysis of the commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade at heritage sites in England and Wales. Gwyn identified a gap in the *1807 Commemorated* project – concerning historic houses in England and Wales and the refusal of some to engage with the bicentenary – and sought to put together her own toolkit for heritage and museum practitioners. Gwyn states in the introductory part of her thesis that Scotland and Ireland possess distinct histories from England and Wales – with different legal, political and economic trajectories – by arguing that their respective slaving pasts are also very different, and therefore not suitable for inclusion in her study.⁵⁹ She justifies her comparative look at England and Wales in that their political and economic pasts are sufficiently similar to enjoy a level playing field, while significant cultural differences makes for interesting comparison. She points out that Scotland was disproportionately more involved in slavery than other constituent parts of the UK, per

⁵⁸ Ana Lucia Araujo, ‘Introduction,’ in Ana Lucia Araujo (ed.), *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.

⁵⁹ Marian Gwyn, ‘The Heritage Industry and the Slave Trade: An Analysis of the Commemoration of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade at Heritage Sites in England and Wales’, unpublished doctoral thesis, Bangor University, 2014, 10-11.

head of population, and that although Northern Ireland was involved in the transatlantic slave trade, ‘its competing traditions of nationalism and unionism’ have taken focus away from this part of its history.⁶⁰ The final point she makes is that Ireland and Scotland ‘had their own stories that evolved during and after the slave trade that added to the challenges for heritage interpreters in 2007.’⁶¹

Sheila Watson’s critique of the history of national museums within Scotland offers a fascinating insight into the role of museums within Scotland and their relationship with national identity over the last 250 years.⁶² Watson’s article is a declaration of the state of Scotland’s most prestigious museums. This is useful both as an indication of what had gone before in Scotland prior to the bicentenary, and also as a way of adopting Gwyn’s suggestion of considering how Scotland’s distinct narrative evolved during and after slavery.

Watson argues that since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, Scotland’s national museums have actively engaged with, and been influenced by, Scottish nationalism. She argues that national museums in Scotland traditionally supported and affirmed the idea of a United Kingdom; they were established during the time of British imperial might, when Scottish participation was perceived as a crucial factor in the success of empire. As Watson puts it, ‘[n]ational museums in Scotland were about supporting Scottish identity and pride within the United Kingdom.’⁶³ Indeed, in his now classic tome on Scottish nationalism *The Break-Up of Britain*, Tom Nairn argues that ‘[d]uring the prolonged era of Anglo-Scots imperialist expansion, the Scottish ruling order found that it had given up statehood for a hugely profitable junior partnership in the New Rome.’⁶⁴ The decline of the empire in the twentieth-century, however, ‘removed one of the greatest benefits of the Union to the Scots, such as access to imperial markets, [and] military and colonial job

⁶⁰ Gwyn, *The Heritage Industry*, 11.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Sheila Watson, ‘National Museums in Scotland’, in Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds.), *Building National Museums in Europe 1750 - 2010*, Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity, Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28 - 30 April 2011, EuNaMus report no. 1, University of Linköping, 747.

⁶³ Watson, *National Museums in Scotland*, 747.

⁶⁴ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, (London: New Left Books, 1977), 129.

opportunities.’⁶⁵ With Scottish parliamentary devolution, Watson argues that the Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh became a symbol of growing national confidence.⁶⁶ In the Museum of Scotland, Watson argues, Scotland’s links with Europe, rather than England, were emphasised.⁶⁷ The museum team wanted visitors to ‘feel a sense of national pride, a recognition of Scotland’s place in the world, and a sense of amazement at the achievements of the past.’⁶⁸ The insertion of a slavery narrative into Scotland’s national story - that Scotland was involved in one of history’s most shocking and enduring atrocities - would turn this ambition on its head. And indeed, the 1998 Museum of Scotland told the story of Scots in Africa as one featuring missionaries, explorers and educationalists such as David Livingstone and Mary Slessor.⁶⁹ One journalist writing in the *Independent* commented: ‘If a museum of England imitated the Edinburgh Museum’s treatment of Empire...there would be a lynch mob at the gates.’⁷⁰

The National Museum of Scotland did not do anything to mark the 2007 bicentenary.⁷¹ In a brief comment on the museum’s post-2007 activity, Devine said ‘the policy of National Museums Scotland is one of careful adjustment of displays rather than root-and-branch revisionism.’⁷² However, in a discussion with one of the museum’s principal curators, it was pointed out with a touch of jest that Devine managed to write an entire book on the Scottish tobacco trade – *The Tobacco Lords* - without once mentioning slavery.⁷³ Stuart Allan, Principal Curator of the museum’s Scottish Late Modern Collections, said that the bicentenary and growing body of related historiography, however, had since impacted the museum’s work and was currently influencing its plans for a major revision of the museum’s

⁶⁵ Watson, *Museums in Scotland*, 751.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 747.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 752.

⁶⁸ Quote taken from Watson, *Museums in Scotland*, 764.

⁶⁹ Watson, *Museums in Scotland*, 765.

⁷⁰ Quote taken from Watson, *Museums in Scotland*, 765.

⁷¹ Email from Stuart Allan, Principal Curator, Scottish Late Modern Collections, National Museums Scotland, sent 18.01.17.

⁷² Devine, *Lost to History*, 26.

⁷³ Discussion with David Forsyth, Principal Curator, Scottish Medieval – Early Modern Collections at the National Museum of Scotland, 21.02.17.

Scotland Galleries.⁷⁴ Allan reiterated that while the museum had not actively done anything in 2007, ‘the bicentenary has certainly impacted on our work since, the fruits of which will be realised in future.’⁷⁵

Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature detailing Scotland’s response to the 2007 bicentenary. This corresponds with the general lack of academic focus on slavery in Scotland, linked to its predominately ‘white’ ethnic population. Furthermore, Scotland’s nationalist leanings arguably kept its national museum from looking at elements of Scotland’s less-than-admirable past.

2.3. Museum Practice: Attitudes Towards Africa and the Caribbean

Helen Mears and Wayne Modest have investigated the history and contemporary use of ‘African collections’ in British museums, and consider how these collections could potentially be used to further the cause of social justice.⁷⁶ Mears and Modest remind us that British colonialists collected African artefacts for their own gratification, and displayed them in ways that reflected the racialized thinking of the time.⁷⁷ However, Mears and Modest argue that at the end of the twentieth-century museums implemented a more progressive practice, in line with government policy, which has subsequently seen a shift in how African people and their respective histories are engaged with in museums.⁷⁸ Through outreach and education programmes, museums are increasingly seeking to create positive ‘social outcomes’ through their practice.⁷⁹ Such an approach, however, ‘stands the risk of generating symbolic political gestures that effect little change in the status quo.’⁸⁰ In considering this danger, Mears and Modest adopt Iris Marion Young’s political theory on equality. Young argues that ‘formal equality’ does not eliminate social difference, and instead different social groups should ‘mutually respect one another and affirm one another in their differences’ in order to achieve

⁷⁴ Email, Stuart Allan, 18.01.17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Mears & Modest, *Museums*, 294.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁷⁹ Mears & Modest, *Museums*, 296.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 298.

a more deep-set and meaningful equality; this should involve the public affirmation and recognition of different groups' experiences, cultures and social contributions.⁸¹ Young also highlights the difference between cultural difference and positional difference, the latter being economic difference and disadvantage, which the celebration of cultural difference does not address nor change.⁸²

Mears and Modest argue, however, that a museum's bid to exhibit 'hidden histories,' by privileging the stories of those previously marginalised, often does not result in a transformational change; in other words, when an exhibition is packed up, the hidden history goes back into the storeroom without having the chance to merge with, and unsettle, the mainstream.⁸³ Mears and Modest argue that the V&A's African Diaspora Research Project is an example of this; the project was assigned fixed term staff and an online presence, and therefore failed to disrupt or properly engage with the museum's other collections and galleries.⁸⁴

With regards to the bicentenary, Mears and Modest cite Prior's work; Prior argues that African Caribbean culture has been the subject of institutional marginalisation for decades, not deemed worthy of collection and only considered in relation to slavery.⁸⁵ She points out that '[v]irtually no museum in Britain has a substantial collection of material-culture items from the Caribbean after the time of Columbus.'⁸⁶ Prior asks if Caribbean culture is only ever explored through the narrative of slavery, then is that any improvement on it being totally ignored?⁸⁷ Furthermore, Prior has pointed out that African objects have typically been used to represent African Caribbean culture, which over-simplifies the complexity of Caribbean identity.⁸⁸ Prior considers the institutional failure of British museums to engage with African Caribbean culture as responsible for the lack of history

⁸¹ Mears & Modest, *Museums*, 298.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 307.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁸⁶ Prior, *Commemorating Slavery 2007*, 208.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Mears & Modest, *Museums*, 305.

curators of African Caribbean descent.⁸⁹ She regards this symptomatic of a wider British ‘amnesia about the crucial role that the enslaved peoples of the Caribbean played in the enrichment and industrialization of modern Britain.’⁹⁰

For museum curators, the 2007 bicentenary presented the colossal task of acknowledging and showing the history of millions of people, involved in a highly complex world system – the transatlantic slave trade – in which uneven distribution of power was the foundation. How could this possibly be achieved and the distribution of power rebalanced? Was Caribbean and African history explored, and was this done in a meaningful way? Or was it simply a celebration of culture, with a failure to acknowledge ‘positional’ differences that continue to blight society. Was the status quo challenged? Were exhibitions put back in their boxes once the year was out? By asking these types of questions, Scotland’s response to the bicentenary can be analysed in terms of its commitment to an agenda of social justice.

⁸⁹ Prior, *Commemorating Slavery 2007*, 209.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Collective Memory

The 2007 bicentenary was a commemoration of both the slave trade and its abolition. Commemoration is about remembering, and the critical study of memory is the product of post-modernist thinking, specifically the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora and Michel Foucault. The post-modernists' concern is memory's place and function within society.⁹¹ How we remember the past, and what we choose to remember, is charged with political, philosophical, cultural, ethical and economic interest and bias. History is not something that happened in the past; history is what we *say* happened in the past. Certain narratives of the past prevail; others are forgotten or discredited. Thus, to state the obvious, commemoration is a powerful tool for shaping what people remember. And what people remember of the past is a fundamental building block of societal self-perception and identification.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was the forefather of the theory of collective memory. He sought to determine whether authentic individual memory was possible, and concluded that it was not. Halbwachs argued, instead, that while we hold fragments of memories in our minds, it is collective representations of the past that complete our memories.⁹² Furthermore, Halbwachs argued that collective representations of the past operate along, and indeed are structured by, societal and spatial frameworks.⁹³ Such a framework could be one's family, social class, and/or nation.⁹⁴ Halbwachs argued that when a group of people 'is integrated in a social space [as a family, as a distinct social class, as a nation], it develops a notion of its place in society, of the society itself and of what is required

⁹¹ Daniel Gordon, Review of *History as an Art of Memory* by Patrick H. Hutton, *History and Theory* 34:4, 1995, 342.

⁹² Jean-Christophe Marcel & Laurent Mucchielli, 'Maurice Halbwachs's *mémoire collective*,' in Sara Young et al (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 142.

⁹³ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* pdf, 6. Available at <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/hawlbachsspace.pdf>, (last accessed 03.07.17).

⁹⁴ Marcel & Mucchielli, *mémoire collective*, 147.

for its maintenance.⁹⁵ Halbwachs further argued that in order to secure its continuation and survival, a social group must develop a representation of itself; the actual and metaphorical ‘curation’ of imagery and material ‘things’ are crucial in creating this self-representation, as they are proof of a group’s existence.⁹⁶ Thus, commemoration is not only powerful in shaping what we individually and collectively remember; it contributes to societal cohesion, stability and even longevity. Thus, a commemorative event such as the 2007 bicentenary carries with it an exceptional degree of social responsibility - to ask whether the bicentenary in Scotland pursued an agenda of social justice is therefore a highly pertinent one.

3.2. The ‘Memory Boom’ and Social Justice

Memory studies as an academic field of enquiry has developed in tandem with a growing proliferation of memorialised pasts and commemorations. World wars, decolonization, and the ‘growth in identity politics’ have produced a ‘crisis of remembrance.’⁹⁷ What happened in the past is regarded as instrumental in determining how to live the present. As such, a ‘memory boom’ has occurred in which activists, politicians, citizens, artists, film producers, journalists and museum curators are all ‘engaged in the common enterprise of reconstructing and shaping the past.’⁹⁸

Two episodes of modern history have come to dominate both the academic and popular ‘memory boom’ – the Holocaust and transatlantic slavery.⁹⁹ Both have come to represent a fundamental feeling, or understanding, within the western world that nothing like that could ever be allowed to happen again. They are the symbolic epitome of atrocity, and this symbolism is reinforced, reshaped and reassessed time and again via the ‘memory boomers,’ the curators and filmmakers.

⁹⁵ Marcel & Mucchielli, *mémoire collective*, 144.

⁹⁶ Halbwachs, *Collective Memory*, 1.

⁹⁷ Chiara De Cesari & Ann Rigney, ‘Introduction,’ in Chiara De Cesari & Ann Rigney (eds.), *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales*, (Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), x.

⁹⁸ Aleida Assmann, ‘Transformations between History and Memory,’ *Social Research* 75:1, 2008, 49-54.

⁹⁹ For example, see Berlin, *American Slavery*, 1259.



Figure 2 Scene from *1745* (2016), a short film that tells the story of two enslaved women living in eighteenth-century Scotland.

While the ‘memory boom,’ as it relates to past atrocities, is not entirely without its critics – Geoffrey Cubitt, for example, argues that we run the risk of experiencing ‘slavery fatigue’ - its indomitable objective is to battle for greater global social justice. As Kowaleski-Wallace puts it, in examining slavery the emphasis should fall on ‘what we share as human beings’ in a bid to ‘advance a broadly community-building agenda.’¹⁰⁰ In other words, the ‘memory boomers’ should strive for justice for those who have suffered in the past, and for those who continue to suffer injustice today. In this way, history can be used as an appeal to humanity and empathy, and as a resource of ‘universal truths.’

3.3. Collective Guilt?

While the Holocaust and transatlantic slavery today both dominate the ‘memory boom,’ there are major differences in how both have been remembered over time. Slavery

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 21-22.

was not actively 'remembered' and processed as an atrocity in its immediate aftermath in the same way the Holocaust was. Indeed, there was not an immediate aftermath in the same sense as the Holocaust. The European endeavour of the transatlantic slave trade came to an end gradually. The perpetrators were not defeated. The perpetrators remained in government and in business, they remained owners of plantations, and they were *compensated*. As Catherine Hall argues, '[f]orgetting Britain's role in the slave trade began as soon as the trade was abolished in 1807.'¹⁰¹

The Holocaust is typically remembered along national lines; it was, in popular memory, 'a German crime.' In the context of the Holocaust and Germany, sociologist Jeffrey Olick engages with the notion of 'collective guilt.' Carl Jung first presented this concept in the 1940s; Jung distinguished between psychological guilt, and moral and criminal guilt. It is an idea that, although applied to Germany, is useful in thinking about Scotland, the slave trade and social justice.

Olick argues that as a society, 'we are very careful to avoid charges of "collective guilt," which often sound more like the problem than the solution.'¹⁰² Indeed, Olick argues that generally, in the case of post-war Germany, the general feeling is that collective guilt should be avoided.¹⁰³ There is the argument, for example, that collective guilt is illiberal in that it can be allied to collective punishment or guilt by association.¹⁰⁴ Olick, however, advocates the notion of collective guilt as Jung envisaged it - rather than charging guilty individuals, society as a whole should reflect upon and try to understand the guilt. As Jung put it, "[g]uilt can be restricted to the lawbreaker only from the legal, moral and intellectual point of view, but as a psychic phenomenon it spreads itself over the whole neighbourhood."¹⁰⁵ In this respect, Jung's theory is highly applicable to the slave trade in that

¹⁰¹ Catherine Hall, 'Britain's massive debt to slavery,' *Guardian*, 27.02.13. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/27/britain-debt-slavery-made-public> (last accessed 28.05.17).

¹⁰² Jeffrey Olick, 'The Guilt of Nations?', *Ethics & International Affairs* 17:2, 2003, 109.

¹⁰³ Olick, 'Guilt of Nations', 109.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰⁵ Carl G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events: The Psychology of Nazism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 51.

participation in the slave trade and slavery was in most cases indirect, filtered through society in varying degrees of potency.

3.4. Dislocation of Justice

There is a ‘dislocation’ between Scotland and its African, or ‘black’ history. Scotland is geographically distanced from Africa and the Caribbean. In the last census, just 0.1 per cent of the Scottish population identified as being of African and/or Caribbean ethnicity.¹⁰⁶ There is also a time dislocation: Scottish engagement in the African slave trade and American slavery ended 150-200 years ago. Furthermore, since the early nineteenth-century, the memory of slavery and Scotland’s role within it has been vigorously suppressed. As Devine points out, on the 50th anniversary of the abolition of slavery, the Glasgow West India Association publically stated:

It is to Glasgow’s lasting honour that while Bristol and Liverpool were up to their elbows in the slave trade, Glasgow kept out of it. The reproach can never be levelled at our city as it was Liverpool that there was not a stone in her streets that was not cemented with the blood of a slave.¹⁰⁷

As this example shows, just fifty years after abolition, the memory of Scottish involvement in slavery had become taboo, and this largely remained the case until the beginning of the twenty-first-century. It was into this space of dislocation - this vacuum - that the bicentenary arrived.

In addition to the contemporary dislocation between Scotland and its African history, in the context of commemoration, it is helpful to consider another dimension of dislocation – that of the experience of the African ‘saltwater slave.’ In her qualitative study of the ‘middle passage’, Stephanie Smallwood considers the feelings of dislocation and alienation

¹⁰⁶ Scottish Government, ‘Ethnic Group Demographics,’ available at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig>, accessed 30.04.17.

¹⁰⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1883, quoted from Tom Devine, ‘Lost to History’ in Tom Devine (ed.), *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 21.

experienced by African saltwater slaves during their transportation across the Atlantic. She points out that ‘the landless realm of the deep ocean did not figure in precolonial West African societies as a domain of human (as opposed to divine) activity – just as it had not figured as such in medieval European systems of knowledge.’¹⁰⁸ Smallwood argues that unlike the ship crew, saltwater slaves had little culture or experience of maritime travel, nor even the ocean, and so experienced dislocation in the absolute extreme. The experience of ocean travel, the passing of time, even death, were utterly alien from what the captive Africans had experienced before. So much so, that the slavers’ desired will was achieved: ‘[i]t was here, on the ocean crossing, that the practices of commodification most effectively muted the agency of the African subject and thereby produced their desired object: an African body fully alienated and available for exploitation in the American marketplace.’¹⁰⁹ Dislocating African people from everything they knew, the slavers were able to more easily commodify them.

Smallwood points out that ever since slavery has been a field of academic enquiry, historians have gauged the experience of the middle passage by calculating mortality rates.¹¹⁰ ‘By tallying the dead to measure the toll the voyage took on African life, we have made the body count the most potent symbolic measure of the horrors of the middle passage.’¹¹¹ The millions of African deaths at sea were recorded only to the extent that traders could know how many had died, and why. Who the person was, where they had come from, who their family was...all lost to the bottom of the ocean. Furthermore, Smallwood argues that this system of measuring and understanding death only loosely corresponds to how the African captives themselves understood death on the slave ship.¹¹² Crucially, tallying the dead is exactly what the slavers did.¹¹³ On remembering and reflecting upon the transatlantic slave trade – as the bicentenary called on Scotland to do – frameworks of understanding should be

¹⁰⁸ Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 124.

¹⁰⁹ Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery*, 122.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 139.

called in to question, just as Smallwood does here. To view slavery on the same terms as the slavers is arguably little progress in the quest for social justice. Indeed, Ligali challenged the use of the phrase ‘slave trade’ in its protest to the bicentenary – ‘[t]he word ‘trade’ implies a legitimate and consensual transaction and belittles the magnitude of the atrocities committed against African people.’¹¹⁴ Calling the capture and enslavement of millions of African people a ‘trade’ is indeed perhaps a further insult to all those who suffered, and failure to repair the memorial and historical dislocation. While the act of African slavery is now regarded as abhorrent, the societal attitudes, cultures and etymologies that enabled it to happen in the past must now be fully picked apart.

Smallwood argues that ship captains’ efforts to keep saltwater slaves alive – for example, extra food provisions, mandatory exercise, and inoculation against smallpox – was for *their* benefit, not that of the slaves. She argues that ‘it is easy to confuse European interest in preserving life to prevent economic loss with positive concern for the captives’ human welfare.’¹¹⁵ But caution is needed; to conflate modern outlooks with those of the past is ahistorical and widens the dislocation. Attitudes must be understood in the temporal contexts in which they existed.

Scotland is disconnected from its slavery past. As such, we are reliant on the accounts of others to rediscover that past. The accounts that are most accessible to us, however, belong to the slavers rather than the slaves. Yet, as Smallwood’s line of enquiry shows, we must be mindful in how we measure and understand slavery when using these accounts. If slavers ‘measured’ the experience of the Middle Passage in terms of slave mortality rates, for example, then we should be mindful when using the same yardstick. James Walvin argued in 2000’s *Making the Black Atlantic* that up until the millennium, historical analyses of slavery had dealt ‘merely in profits and loss,’ mirroring the economic analyses of the time.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ligali, Declaration of Protest, 17.

¹¹⁵ Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery, 151.

¹¹⁶ James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora*, (London: Cassell, 2000), 159.

Smallwood's study is a striking example of the power of qualitatively looking at the history of slavery, and the insights that can be gleaned from such an approach.

4. Methodology

4.1. Museums – a Forum for Debate?

The ultimate objective of collectively remembering traumatic historical events, such as the transatlantic slave trade, is the quest for greater social justice. The same can be said for contemporary museum practice. In the twenty-first-century, curators strive to construct museums and their content as forums for debate, shirking the twentieth-century idea that museums are temples of the past.¹¹⁷ Museums no longer deliver monologues, but engage in dialogues with their numerous publics.¹¹⁸ But by acting as a forum for debate, however, museums must accept that they are not neutral; ‘encoded within their displays are ideologies, hierarchies, and values of dominant social values and beliefs.’¹¹⁹

The bicentenary in Scotland, and across the rest of the UK, predominantly played out in museums and in exhibition spaces. With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, it was museums that effectively led the bicentenary. Jennifer Anne Carvill argues that this was ‘evidence of a growing confidence on behalf of museums to tackle more difficult and controversial topics.’¹²⁰ These ‘difficult and controversial topics,’ however, were not simply that Britain was deeply involved in slavery - a complex system of ‘identity politics’ was also at play. Cubitt describes the challenge, as museums sought to:

reconcile two objectives – on the one hand, to educate the members of a predominately white and middle-class museum-going public in the need to recognize slavery’s enormity as a crime against humanity and its centrality to British history; on the other, to persuade people of African and African Caribbean descent that museums were now a

¹¹⁷ Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp, ‘Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism’, in Steven D. Lavine and Ivan Karp (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Helen Mears & Wayne Modest, ‘Museums, African Collections and Social Justice,’ in Richard Sandell & Eithne Nightingale (eds.), *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, (London: Routledge, 2012), 294.

¹¹⁹ Jennifer Anne Carvill, ‘Uncomfortable Truths: British museums and the legacies of slavery in the bicentenary year, 2007,’ *Federation of International Human Rights Museums*, 2010, 1.

¹²⁰ Carvill, *Uncomfortable Truths*, 2.

space within which their voices could be heard, the sufferings and resistance of their ancestors acknowledged, and their place in narratives of British history no longer denied.¹²¹

Emma Waterton argues that the 2007 bicentenary was the product of New Labour's policy of multiculturalism, which in the years preceding the bicentenary had been under considerable strain.¹²² The perceived failings of multiculturalism, embodied in the Oldham, Bradford and Burnley 'race riots' of 2001, fed into a developing British identity crisis, which arguably is in a heightened state today. Kowaleski-Wallace concurs, arguing that at the turn of the twenty-first-century, British identity was under considerable strain, not least due to the social and economic impact of post-colonialism in Britain.¹²³ Waterton argues that in response to this identity crisis, 'political discourses trumpeting 'Britishness', along with ideals of national rights and obligations to core values, a shared heritage and dominant collective memories began to emerge.'¹²⁴ Such an attitude towards heritage and history, Waterton argues, can 'deny a sense of ownership and belonging to those marginalized by its representations.'¹²⁵ Furthermore, the 'injustices experienced either by individuals or groups are thus effectively wiped from the national narrative because they are seen as too divisive.'¹²⁶ It was this danger of eclipsing minority narratives, identities, and histories that, Waterton argues, was at stake in 2007.

Thus, museums could not explore the history of slavery without addressing its contemporary legacies – these being, primarily, persistent racial inequality and institutional prejudice within British society. Indeed, the museum is one such British institution where prejudice and racism has lain inherent since its inception.

¹²¹ Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Atrocity Materials and the Representation of Transatlantic Slavery: Problems, Strategies and Reactions,' in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (eds.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 231.

¹²² Emma Waterton, 'The Burden of Knowing Versus the Privilege of Unknowing', in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (eds.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 37.

¹²³ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1-5.

¹²⁴ Waterton, *Burden of Knowing*, 38.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

4.2. Analysing Exhibitions

With a critical eye, it is relatively straightforward to carry out a textual analysis of museum exhibitions – one can consider what type of language was used, what information was included or excluded, and to what extent exhibitions were radical in terms of their message and the language used to convey it. The earlier discussion of Prior’s writings on the bicentenary offers an example of this type of approach. Analysing exhibition imagery, however, is also vital; it is often neglected and arguably requires a more nuanced touch than its textual counterpart. Analysing images of slavery, however, calls for particular care and insight; such imagery has long been used as a tool for racism, and is charged with ‘Western’ bias.

A major challenge in telling the story of slavery in a traditional exhibition setting is the lack of artefacts and images that exist and survive from the time. Surviving artefacts, or the ones typically held by museums, are instruments of torture and restraint – chains, manacles and whips – which are prioritised and therefore come to act as a *de facto* representation of slave life; aspects of slave life less easily shown in physical form – sexual abuse and the separation of families, for example – are typically under-developed in the museum setting.¹²⁷

Photography came into practical use several decades after Britain abolished slavery from its colonies; the visual representations of slavery that exist are all artists’ creations, imaginative substitutes for atrocity, and all charged with bias and motive.¹²⁸ Much of the slave imagery familiar to us today is the material used by abolitionists to lobby the British Government to end the slave trade and slavery. These images were designed to provoke emotional responses from their viewers. But more than that, as Geoffrey Cubitt and Marcus Wood concur, abolitionist imagery was highly racialized – ‘it presented black people as

¹²⁷ Cubitt, *Atrocity Materials*, 235.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 230.

victims and passive sufferers, lacking agency in their own affairs, and white people, at least potentially, as virtuous, redemptive and emancipatory agents.¹²⁹

The most iconic of these abolitionist images is the plan of the *Brookes* slave ship, (Figure 3) which was drawn up by the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1789 to show the conditions endured by slaves as they were being transported across the Atlantic. The image is an aerial view of dozens of bodies lying side by side, filling every spare inch of the slave ship. Yet, while the image's purpose was to shock politicians and the British public, this has been somewhat lost in historical translation. As Wood puts it, in 2007, the image 'was used as shorthand for what a slave ship looked like and was packed like.'¹³⁰ Wood argues that during the bicentenary, the same images and motifs were used to illustrate slavery; they prioritised 'slave suffering and slave anonymity.'¹³¹ Wood says of the *Brookes* ship: 'The very familiarity of the image appears to have given it a reassuring rather than horrific effect.'¹³² This is a particularly salient point – looking through the bicentenary materials (booklets, leaflets, posters), one would have difficulty distinguishing one exhibition from another, owing to the persistent and familiar use of the *Brookes* ship, along with chain/manacle imagery and motifs. Cubitt describes this phenomenon as the 'wallpaper effect.'

¹²⁹ Cubitt, *Atrocity Materials*, 238.

¹³⁰ Marcus Wood, 'Significant Silence: Where was Slave Agency in the Popular Imagery of 2007?' in Cora Kaplan & John Oldfield (eds.), *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 166.

¹³¹ Wood, *Significant Silence*, 164.

¹³² *Ibid*, 169.

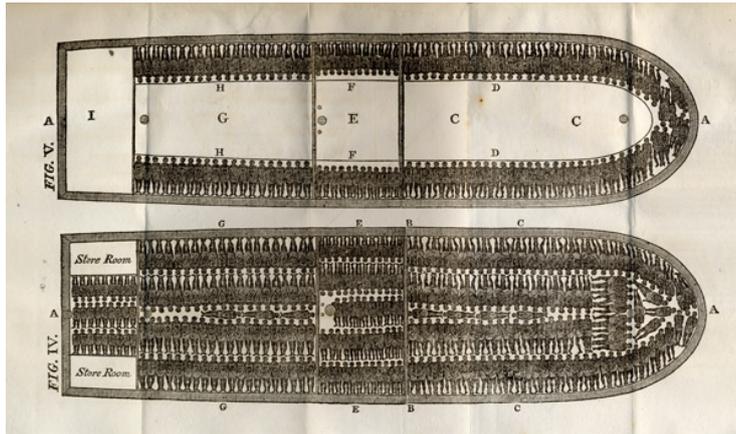


Figure 3 Plans of the Brookes Slave Ship.

Other familiar images include the abolition seal ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’ – it depicts a kneeling slave pleading for freedom. Ligali objected to the use of this image in the run up to the bicentenary arguing that it failed to promote proactive African resistance to slavery, instead depicting Africans as ‘passive recipients of European charity.’¹³³ Ligali’s protest, however, was not recognised; the image featured in the vast majority of bicentenary exhibitions, and was predominantly presented out of context.

Wood is an artist and academic, and has written extensively on historic and contemporary visual responses to, and representations of, slavery. In his analysis of the *Brookes* image, Wood concludes that more times than not, the image remains a symbol of control where ‘the manner in which the slave body was packaged for abolition in 1788 remains unchanged in 2007.’¹³⁴ Wood illustrates this point in his critique of the Royal Mail commemorative stamps that were issued in 2007. One stamp shows the face of abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, with a section of the *Brookes* ship - containing multiple constrained black bodies - placed behind him. ‘There could be no clearer articulation of how the slave body, and the experience of slave suffering, exists literally as a backdrop framing the earnest reality of Clarksonian philanthropy. As ever, it is the face of abolition that has substance, personality,

¹³³ Ligali, Declaration of Protest, 6.

¹³⁴ Wood, Significant Silence, 182.

biography and cultural presence, while the slave body remains anonymous and passive, a collective and nameless absence presence.’¹³⁵

From familiarity to atrocity, Cubitt explores the ways in which imagery of extreme suffering and torture can be used to effect and detriment in museum settings. Chain and manacle imagery was used prolifically throughout the bicentenary, and Scottish exhibitions were no exception. Cubitt argues that such imagery was used ‘to deliver insights of a generalized character.’¹³⁶ In other words, the use of such instruments wasn’t examined in all its variances; for example, there was no discussion of whether chains were used more on men or women, on ships or on plantations, or whether they were more common in some geographical areas than others. Instead, Cubitt argues, ‘chains are taken in a general way to be emblematic of enslaved experience, and to be a privileged vehicle for giving visitors access to that experience.’¹³⁷

Arguably, through the deployment of images of bodily suffering, museum curators and designers sought to engender empathy in their audiences. Cubitt argues that bodily suffering can be used as ‘a way in’; visitors can try to imagine what it must feel like to be bound by chains, thereby becoming a secondary witness to the physical suffering of African slaves.¹³⁸ However, Cubitt points out that this approach can offer visitors ‘too swift an emotional escape route from the need to confront difficult issues of complicity and historical connectedness.’¹³⁹ In other words, visitors can be ‘moved’ by images and stories of suffering the same way abolitionists were, but notions of difference and superiority can remain at play – empathy does not equate to social justice.

To follow on from this point, Cubitt refers to work of Barnor Hesse. Hesse argues that in remembering the atrocities of the slave trade, we can be distracted from its intimate connections to the development of ‘highly organized and systematic economic and racialized forms of governmentality’ and to the systems of capitalism and Western imperialism whose

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Cubitt, *Atrocity Materials*, 246.

¹³⁷ Cubitt, *Atrocity Materials*, 246.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

emergence and legacy have continuously shaped modern British society. Through the emphasis on cruelty and atrocity, Hesse suggests, ‘we are positioned to remember slavery as a pathological ephemera, as if historically it was a minor crimogenic deviation from a progressive modernizing project.’ It is on this point that, arguably, museums found themselves to be in a very difficult position. Slavery was a terrible, enduring episode in the devastating story of European imperialism. To present it as a separate entity that existed in an historical vacuum, a terrible phenomenon that was ‘cured’ when it was made illegal, is an ahistorical approach. Yet, how does a museum decide where an exhibition begins and ends? Someone has to decide what is essential information, and what is not; and this is always going to be subjective.

To return to the idea of empathy in the museum setting, Geerte Savenije and Pieter de Bruijn have investigated the notion of historical empathy by considering Dutch school students’ engagement with an exhibition on the Second World War at The Hague’s *Museon*.¹⁴⁰ By analysing students’ engagement with the exhibition, and then carrying out interviews with the students, the authors were able to ascertain what factors and experiences, both within and outside of the exhibition, influenced the students’ emotive and intellectual engagement with its content.

As this dissertation on Scotland and slavery has been written ten years since the bicentenary exhibitions were staged, visitor engagement is unavailable as a tool of analysis. In the three chosen case studies – Cromarty Courthouse Museum, Aberdeen City Council and Glasgow Building Preservation Trust - no formal reviews of visitor engagement were conducted. However, Savenije and de Bruijn’s research provides some useful methodological grounding.

While some scholars have argued that historical empathy is sometimes confused with sympathy for those in the past, Savenije and de Bruijn argue that historical empathy – ‘showing interest in historical actors, caring for them, and responding to consequences of the

¹⁴⁰ Geerte Savenije & Pieter de Bruijn, ‘Historical empathy in a museum: uniting contextualization and emotional engagement,’ *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2017.

events of the past' – is an important element in historical understanding.¹⁴¹ This in turn can be influenced by a visitor's own cultural background, beliefs and emotions, as well their willingness to engage with 'the other.'¹⁴²

Ways of analysing exhibitions' success at cultivating historical empathy include consideration of: the narrative structure of historical events, i.e. is there a 'plotline' of progress or decline?; perspectives, i.e. does the use of multiple perspectives create historic contextualization, or depersonalisation?; and, bridging techniques, i.e., are the past and present linked, for example, by focusing on the same geographical place over time, or does the use of artefacts stripped of their context further alienate the visitor?¹⁴³

Thus, there is scope for analysing the potential success of an exhibition – and by success, I mean the ability to both emotionally and intellectually engage a diverse audience – without interviewing visitors; an analysis of the exhibition itself – its structure, perspective, and engagement with temporality – can also offer insight.

¹⁴¹ Savenije & de Bruijn, Historical empathy, 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁴³ Savenije & de Bruijn, Historical empathy, 3.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Scotland's Seven Projects

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is a national, British government-sponsored charitable trust that awards hundreds of millions of pounds to heritage causes across Britain every year. In 2007, HLF allocated £16 million to the bicentenary.¹⁴⁴ It was the main driving force behind the bicentenary. HLF awarded £216,100 to Scottish projects - 1.35 per cent of the total £16 million.¹⁴⁵ Or to look at it another way, HLF awarded 285 grants for bicentenary projects – only seven of these went to Scottish projects. The Scottish population makes up approximately eight per cent of the total UK population. There was, therefore, a notable imbalance in the uptake of funding in Scotland.

In the summer of 2016, I contacted the HLF to ask about the Scottish bicentenary projects it had helped fund. The HLF was very helpful, and promptly returned a list of the seven projects, along with the funding the organisation had awarded to each (see table). David Alston from Cromarty Courthouse Museum said that the HLF grant application was very easy; given the small uptake of funding in Scotland, it is likely that the seven projects were awarded whatever they asked for. As such, rather than looking at how much each project was awarded, it is useful to consider how much each organisation asked for. Some projects received five times the amount of others, yet as this dissertation's empirical analysis shows, the size of the project grant did not translate in to the project's quality.

Organisation	Project Title	Funding
City of Edinburgh Council	<i>'It didn't happen here!' – Edinburgh's links with the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade</i>	£9,600

¹⁴⁴ Figure from Marian Gwyn, 'Memorialisation and Trauma: Britain and the Slave Trade,' *Museum International* 63:1-2, 2011.

¹⁴⁵ I came to total of £216,100 by looking at 'Our Project' section on Heritage Lottery Fund website, and adding up the seven Scottish project grant allocations.

Cromarty Courthouse Museum	<i>Slaves and Highlanders</i>	£9,800
The Paxton Trust	<i>From Slavery to Freedom – Grenada to Paxton</i>	£25,600
Glasgow Building Preservation Trust	<i>Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco and the Slave Trade</i>	£27,500
Aberdeenshire Council	<i>The Commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery¹⁴⁶</i>	£44,300
The National Trust for Scotland	<i>THIS IS OUR STORY: Commemorating the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade</i>	£49,300
Aberdeen City Council	<i>Our Stories of Slavery – Aberdeen, Africa and the Americas</i>	£50,000

Once I had this list of basic information, I made contact with these seven organisations. I said that I was researching how the bicentenary was commemorated in Scotland, and then asked some general questions about their respective projects and exhibitions. Despite trying various channels, two of the organisations failed to respond at all – the Paxton Trust and the National Trust for Scotland. City of Edinburgh Council responded, but was unable to provide any information at all; I was told, firstly, that the project's curator had passed away, and secondly, the council was reorganising its archives, and information was therefore temporarily difficult to locate. Aberdeenshire Council was similarly scant in the information it could provide; indeed, there seemed very little knowledge that the organisation

¹⁴⁶ Note, Aberdeenshire Council mistakenly conflated the end of the slave trade with the end of slavery.

had been involved at all - despite being awarded £44,300. The three most forthcoming organisations were Aberdeen City Council, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, and Cromarty Courthouse Museum. While I could have pursued the Paxton Trust and the National Trust for Scotland further, and pushed City of Edinburgh and Aberdeenshire Council harder, the information provided by Aberdeen City Council, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, and Cromarty Courthouse Museum was so plentiful that I felt I had enough data to construct a thesis. Glasgow, Aberdeen and Cromarty are all in different geographical areas of Scotland, representing the Central Belt, Aberdeenshire and the Highlands. Furthermore, each project received a significantly different sum of funding.

It is worth noting that none of the three project exhibitions contained historic artefacts. This obviously points to the lack of slavery artefacts held by Scotland's regional museums. However, museum practice in general has moved away from its traditional reliance on physical artefacts; museum 'authenticity' is today understood in multiple ways.¹⁴⁷ For example, an exhibition's success in stimulating emotional engagement on multiple levels, in multiple audiences, supported by sound historical evidence, is a greater concern than the number of objects on display.¹⁴⁸ Such was the concern of the three projects analysed below.

I have presented each of the three projects as a case study, and analysed each project drawing on the ideas, theories and methods outlined in the preceding chapters.

¹⁴⁷ Geerte M. Savenije & Pieter de Bruijn, 'Historical empathy in a museum: uniting contextualization and emotional engagement,' *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 2017, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Savenije & de Bruijn, Historical empathy in a museum, 2.

5.2. Case Study: Cromarty Courthouse Museum, *Slaves and Highlanders*

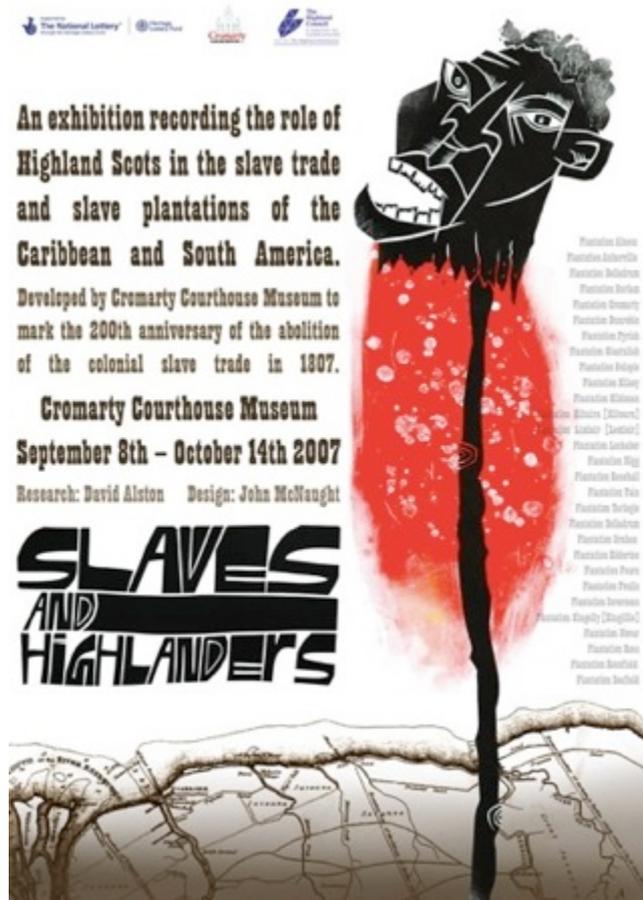


Figure 4 Poster for 'Slaves and Highlanders' exhibition at the Cromarty Courthouse Museum

The Scottish response to the bicentenary - in terms of dedicated museum exhibitions and projects – was muted. ‘What did strike me was it was the easiest grant application I’ve ever made,’ said David Alston, the founder curator of the Cromarty Courthouse Museum, and sole curator involved in putting together its ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ exhibition in 2007.¹⁴⁹

Cromarty is a historic fishing village at the furthest end of the ‘Black Isle’ peninsula in the north-east Scottish Highlands. It is home to several artists, writers, journalists and political thinkers. The population is generally quite affluent and largely white middle-class. Cromarty recently featured in a *Times* ‘top places to live’ list, and was described as ‘an arty

¹⁴⁹ Interview with David Alston at his house in Cromarty, 22.01.17.

Highland haven.’¹⁵⁰ Its population is below 700 people, but it hosts an annual film festival that attracts big industry names. It is an enterprising community, and a plethora of small independent businesses litter the village streets.

David Alston is a long-standing member of the Cromarty community, and indeed the broader Highland community. As a former local councillor and current chairman of NHS Highland, Alston features prominently in the local media. He is also a published historian, founder of the Cromarty Courthouse Museum, and one of the first people to draw attention to Scotland’s deep-rooted connection to, and involvement in, Caribbean slavery. I interviewed Alston twice at his home in Cromarty, and emailed him several times, in preparation for this thesis. Indeed, it was on accidentally coming across one of Alston’s articles that I myself discovered properly Scotland’s slavery history, and started to research the topic.

The ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ exhibition was compact, featuring only seven panels. They were displayed in a small exhibition room in the museum. Just two people – Alston, and local artist John McNaught - put the exhibition together; the very opposite of ‘curation by committee.’ The exhibition was largely based on research that Alston had carried out in the preceding years and published on his website, also called ‘Slaves and Highlanders.’¹⁵¹ Alston’s ever-expanding website has played a significant role in Scotland’s rediscovery of its slavery history, arguably a more impactful than the 2007 exhibition itself – a point I shall return to later.

The ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ project, however, became more than just the exhibition in 2007. Alston also gave numerous public talks; he gave talks in primary and secondary schools, as well as a university lecture, and commissioned a community poetry project. At the time of writing in May 2017, Alston has recently given a talk at a book festival in the north of Scotland about Highlanders and slavery. The 2007 ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ bicentenary

¹⁵⁰ staff writer, ‘Cromarty, Highlands,’ *The Times*, 19.03.17. Available at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/cromarty-best-places-to-live-2017-k3wqdlcxl>, last accessed 23.03.17.

¹⁵¹ Available at <http://www.spanglefish.com/slavesandhighlanders/>, last accessed 19.07.17.

exhibition was not ‘put back in to storage,’ but has grown in strength, public visibility and significance thanks to Alston’s commitment to sharing this ‘hidden history.’

5.2.1. Collective Memory

Alston had been researching the links between Scotland and slavery, and more specifically between the Highlands and Guiana (present-day Guyana), for several years before 2007. In this regard, Alston is a trailblazer; he had been singularly chipping away at Scotland’s established twentieth-century collective memory – that Scotland was not notably involved in slavery, and by extension certainly not the remote, sparsely populated and un-industrialized Highlands – before it had become an established and recognised area of academic research.

Thanks to the Victorians, the Highlands of Scotland are heavily romanticised in Scotland’s collective memory, as well as the rest of the world’s collective memory of Scotland. Highland culture – the bagpipes and tartan clothing – is typically conflated with Scottish culture. In the history of the Highlands, two ‘tragedies’ dominate: firstly, the failure of the Jacobite cause, culminating in Bonnie Prince Charlie’s defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746; and secondly, the subsequent clearance of Highland people from their land to make way for ‘modernisation’ – namely intensive sheep farming - between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth-century. From the ‘Highland Clearances’ came the mass emigration of Scottish Highlanders to the British colonies and creation of the ‘Scottish Diaspora.’ This is an ahistorical account of modern Scottish migration history.¹⁵² However, this narrative still has great power to ‘elicit intense emotions as it is bound up with notions of trauma, dislocation and oppression as well as a sense of loss and betrayal.’¹⁵³

Alston subverted this Highland collective memory in a powerful way. For example, when delivering public talks on slavery during the bicentenary, he sometimes referred to the

¹⁵² See Armitage, *The Scottish Diaspora*.

¹⁵³ Laurence Gourievidis, ‘Representing the Disputed Past of Northern Scotland,’ *History and Memory* 12:2, 2000, 126.

inscription on The Emigrants statue (Figure 5) in Helmsdale, which commemorates the Highland Clearances.



Figure 5 The Emigrants statue in Helmsdale, with a piper in traditional Highland dress standing on either side.

The statue's inscription reads:

The Emigrants commemorates the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland who, in the face of great adversity, sought freedom, hope and justice beyond these shores. They and their descendants went forth and explored continents, built great countries and cities and gave their enterprise and culture to the world. This is their legacy. Their voices will echo forever thro the empty straths and glens of their homeland.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Undiscovered Scotland, 'Emigrants Statue, available at <http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/helmsdale/emigrants/>, accessed 06.05.17.

Dennis Macleod, who funded The Emigrants statue, said in an interview that it was his ‘personal ambition to have the same statue erected in all the areas where the Highlanders settled.’¹⁵⁵ Alston asked whether Macleod would erect a statue in Guyana – the implied response is that he would not, because Highlanders as slavers does not fit in to the accepted collective memory. Despite the potential effectiveness of this approach, however, Alston argues that it can come across as antagonistic, and so such an approach needs to be carried out with care. He argues that the view that The Emigrants statue is a deeply complicated and contradictory memorial is not a view that Scottish, and particularly Highland people, can be forced in to holding.

However, if one considers the ‘drip effect’ that commemorative acts can have on collective self-identification, a forceful approach may indeed be unnecessary. In 2007 and 2008, Alston delivered talks about Highlanders and slavery to retirement clubs, university groups, heritage societies, women’s groups, primary and secondary schools, and at cultural events – such audiences inhabited a diverse range of social spaces, all with distinct notions of their place within society. Alston was planting factual seeds that could potentially bring alternative flowerings in the multiple collective memories.

In addition to challenging certain tropes of the emotive, even mythical, collective memory of the Scottish Diaspora, Alston also sought to bring biography back to people who had been enslaved and brutalised by members of that Scottish Diaspora. Alston argues that it is very important ‘to get back to the individual slaves.’ In the historical records left to us, the slave’s life is largely hidden. Individuals were stripped of their self – names were changed, families broken up. In the ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ exhibition, one of the six panels was dedicated to the life of ‘a slave called Inverness.’ The panel’s opening text read:

¹⁵⁵ Staff writer, ‘Memorial statue marks clearances,’ 23.07.07.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/highlands_and_islands/6911340.stm, accessed 23.03.17

We will never know the real name of the enslaved African called Inverness, who was bought and sold, re-named, exploited as a slave and hunted as a runaway, by Scots in Guyana.

It is a powerful statement. Inverness was bought by the overseer of one of the Berbice estates belonging to Lord Seaforth, the last Seaforth chief of Clan Mackenzie (Figure 6). Alston said he also speaks about 'Inverness' when he gives public talks, particularly in Inverness, the capital of the Highlands. He said his research shows that Inverness 'was captured in Africa and transported across the Atlantic, sold – I know who sold him – bought, renamed - he runs away - is recaptured, he runs away again, and is probably hunted down and killed, all by Scots and most of them Highlanders. And that's a good way of undermining the conventional view of the Highland emigrant.'¹⁵⁶



Figure 6 Illustration of Francis Mackenzie, Lord Seaforth, from 'Slaves and Highlanders' exhibition.

¹⁵⁶ Alston, Interview, 22.01.17.

Through a specific and detailed study of a slave called Inverness, Alston sought to confront the generalised, and arguably ill-informed, collective memory of Highland – and by extension, Scottish – history. The emotional value of The Emigrants statue is an important crutch of Highland collective memory. By pointing out the hypocrisy of its message, whereby Highlanders are celebrated as having ‘sought freedom, hope and justice beyond these shores,’ Alston could more effectively knock the crutch sideways. In doing so, Alston sought justice for those who had suffered at the hands of the diaspora, while also attempting to alter what people remember when they remember that diaspora. In as much as anything, Alston pursued a policy of social justice in seeking to add nuance to sometimes dangerously simplified memories of the past. While a commemorative event cannot lead all audiences to view the past with an unbiased, historically informed perspective – indeed, not even a historian can entirely achieve this – it can cause a small disruption in an otherwise clear-cut view, signalling to the audience the complexity of, in this case, the colonial experience.

5.2.2. Beyond Borders

Alston discussed the power of the digitally connected world in bringing together ‘obsessive people.’ Through his website, also called *Slaves and Highlanders*, Alston came into contact with someone, for example, who had meticulously transcribed every copy of the Essequibo and Demerara Gazette from 1804 to 1817. Whether he was implying it or not, Alston’s work itself could be described as obsessive. His website is an encyclopaedic account of the slaves, ‘runaways’, ‘free coloureds,’ plantation owners, overseers, tradesmen, doctors, wives, mistresses, legitimate children, illegitimate children, and the children of slaves and ‘masters,’ all with mutual Highlander and Guyanese ‘connections.’ Of course in his research, Alston has found information relating to non-Scots, and their details are also carefully stored within his website.

Asked if he would do another exhibition, Alston is hesitant. He said that he is beginning to realise the real power and potential of his website. The site currently receives around 1,000 visits a month, and 65% of visits are new sessions; visitors spend an average of

4 minutes on the site.¹⁵⁷ Alston said people have used it to help write PhDs, and that he meets up with a new person almost every month to discuss some element of the website's content. For example, at the time of our second interview in early 2017, Alston was in touch with a student from Glasgow who had organised a historic walking tour of Inverness, and wanted to include information about slavery. It has also put him in contact with researchers in the Caribbean, and North and South America. For example, Gaiutra Bahadur, an American writer born in Guyana to Indian parents, adopted some of Alston's research on writing her book *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*. The book is a meticulously researched account of the unmarried Indian women who helped fill the labour gap on Guyana's sugar plantations following the abolition of slavery in 1833/4; one of these women was Bahadur's great-grandmother.¹⁵⁸ Thus, not only has Alston's research disrupted the status quo regarding Scotland and African slavery, but it is also beginning to have implications in the understanding of the post-abolition Caribbean, a world that the Scots continued to dominate. Scots helped organise the mass-migration of indentured Indians to Guyana – something that 'looked uncomfortably like slavery itself' - until the system ended in 1919.¹⁵⁹

During our first interview, I had asked Alston if he felt that the research being carried out by Scottish historians and universities on the topic of slavery had been recognised and valued by international historians of slavery and the Atlantic. He said:

I think a lot of historians in the Caribbean have done a lot of work over many years in difficult circumstances and I think, at least amongst some of them, there's an understandable...people coming along from rich countries, like the UK, and getting published.

Alston said that he had found it difficult to get in touch with some historians in the Caribbean, and to establish cooperative relationships. He imagines their complaint – 'Why didn't people listen when I was saying this?' Alston then suggested that something should be

¹⁵⁷ Email from David Alston, 15.12.16.

¹⁵⁸ Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*, (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2013), 3-15.

¹⁵⁹ Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic*, 165.

done to support countries such as Guyana with their archives and to help them preserve their history. This would indeed fit an agenda for greater social justice beyond Scotland's borders, however it was not something that Alston realised during 2007 or afterwards.

Alston argues that slavery is 'marbled' throughout Scottish society. He argues that it is a 'touchstone' for so many things – Scottish identity, Scottish history, and the state of its museums. During our conversations, Alston mentions other areas of Scottish history that have similarly been swept under the rug: Scottish involvement in the indentured labour systems in the Caribbean after abolition in 1833, mentioned above; and, Scottish involvement in the Chinese opium trade. Alston spoke of William Jardine and James Matheson, two Scots, one a Highlander, whose colonial trading business in Asia was the forerunner of the multi-billion dollar conglomerate Jardine Matheson, and who Alston describes as the 'biggest drug dealers of the nineteenth-century.' Matheson's portrait currently hangs in the Cromarty Courthouse Museum, as Alston said no one else was interested in having it when it was dislodged from its previous home several years ago. Alston argues that recognising the complexities and darker sides of a nation's history is 'about corporate responsibility in the widest sense. If the corporate body is the state, or nation state, that's where the responsibilities are.' This approach reflects Aleida Assmann's idea of 'dialogic memory,' whereby nations accept the 'dark legacies of an entangled history of violence', while incorporating the memories of their victims within their own national memory.¹⁶⁰ While nations may still veer towards the 'grand solidarity' approach – proud nations built on complicated, but mostly proud, histories – then encompassed within that still lies the 'corporate responsibility.' Life may be experienced beyond borders, but it is still governed within them.

5.2.3. Imagery of Slavery

One of the most striking features of the 'Slaves and Highlanders' exhibition was its design and use of original artwork. Alston worked with a local artist and printmaker, John

¹⁶⁰ Aleida Assmann, 'Transnational Memories,' *European Review* 22:4, 2012, 553.

McNaught, in designing the exhibition.¹⁶¹ Alston said, ‘I do think you need to design an exhibition. It’s not just putting together text and images, so whether it needs to involve original artwork or not, it needs original design if its going to be effective.’ The Cromarty Courthouse Museum did not have any artefacts relating to the slave trade nor Cromarty’s role in it; all Alston had was his own research, and an artist willing to visualise his findings. This approach lent the exhibition a lot of freedom, but also responsibility. There could be no hiding behind artefacts and ‘neutral’ artefact descriptors. Creating linocut prints is a time-consuming artistic process – when the images being created are of torture and greed, one would have to be very confident in their own judgement and skill.

McNaught is a printmaker who lives in Cromarty. His distinctive linocut prints and lettering (Figure 7) can be seen in the signs for local cafes and restaurants in Cromarty, as well as the Courthouse Museum itself – McNaught had worked previously with Alston on other exhibitions at the Courthouse Museum, and he also designed the museum’s logo (Figure 8). McNaught’s distinctive imagery is very much associated with the village of Cromarty (Figure 9). Halbwachs argues that communities of people seek to self-preserve via the curation of self-reinforcing imagery; members of the community operate within ‘an implicit or explicit structure of shared concerns, values, experiences, [and] narratives.’¹⁶² Certainly, McNaught’s artwork is part of the village’s identity. Thus, in working with McNaught, the contemporary character and culture of the village was transferred over to the exhibition, and informed the ‘feel’ and personality of the exhibition. It rooted the exhibition in Cromarty even further, supporting the exhibition’s focus on the local area and its connections to the slave trade and slavery. On one hand, ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ was on Cromarty’s terms; two ‘insiders’ put it together, and it visually resembled exhibitions that had gone before. However, what Alston was doing was quite subversive. By drawing people close, making them feel like this was ‘their’ exhibition, he could more easily infiltrate the exhibition’s messages and aims.

¹⁶¹ See McNaught’s website: <http://www.johnmcnaught.com>, last accessed 18.07.17.

¹⁶² A. Assmann, *Transformations*, 51-52.



Figure 7 Example of John McNaught's linocut lettering



Figure 8 Logo of Cromarty Courthouse Museum



Figure 9 Logo for Sutor Creek Cafe in Cromarty, produced by John McNaught

a) Exhibition Imagery: Demerara Rebellion

As his starting point in creating the exhibition artwork, McNaught studied images from Joshua Bryant's *Account of an Insurrection of the Negro Slaves in the Colony of Demerara, which Broke Out on the 18th of August, 1823* (Figure 10). The Demerara Slave Rebellion has been described as 'one of the greatest slave uprisings in the history of the New World.'¹⁶³ An estimated 10,000 slaves rose up to claim their 'rights,' partly based on the rumour that Demerara's colonial slavers and administrators were withholding slave rights recently introduced by the British Government; the rebellion was brutally put down, and around 200 African Caribbean slaves were executed without trial.¹⁶⁴

Demerara had a significant Scottish population, particularly Scots from the north-east Highlands; Alston's research has so far uncovered hundreds of individuals connected to both the Highlands and Demerara, several from Cromarty itself. Reading through Bryant's list of convicted slaves following the uprising, the names of the plantations on which they were enslaved are striking to a Highland resident. For example, four of the convicted slaves worked on Plantation Foulis; Foulis is a well-known Highland estate and the seat of Clan Munro. Hundreds of Americans and Australians, for example, annually make a pilgrimage to Foulis to meet their clan chief. Thus, in using Bryant's imagery as a source of visual inspiration for the 'Slaves and Highlanders' exhibition artwork, McNaught was not only consulting contemporary records of slave rebellion and punishment, but consulting records with an extremely local connection, as many of the executed slaves belonged to Highlanders.

¹⁶³ Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823*, (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1994), xiii.

¹⁶⁴ Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, xiii.

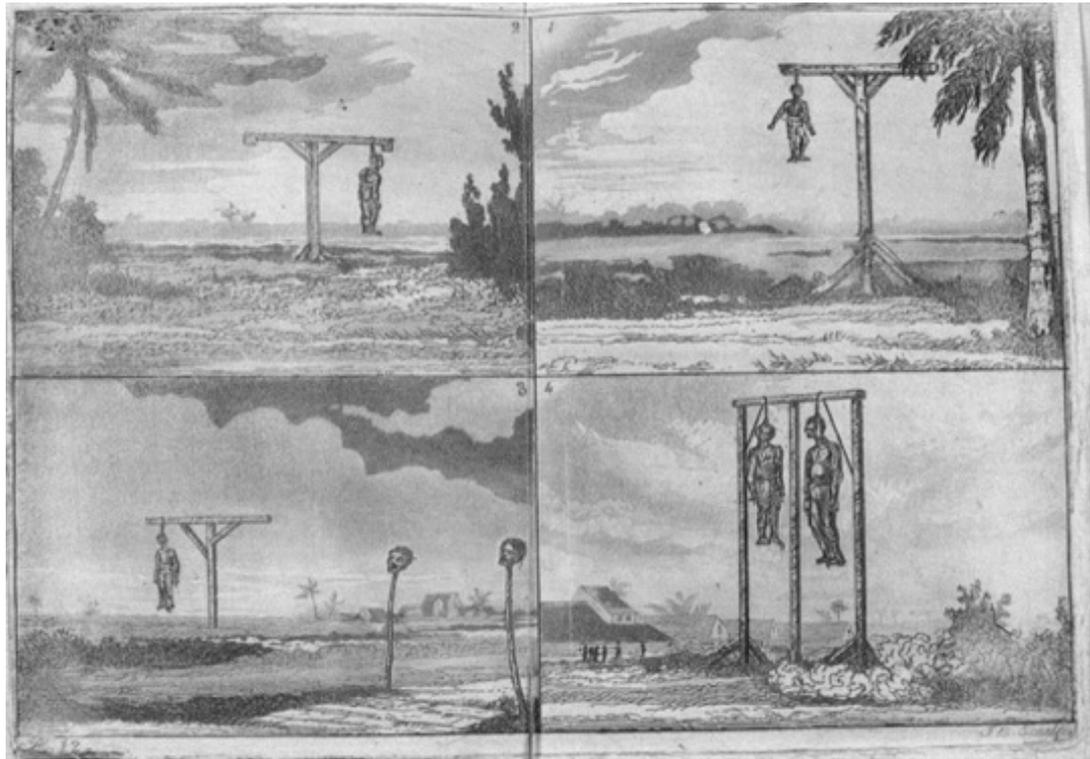


Figure 10 Image from Joshua Bryant's account of the 1823 Demerara Slave Rebellion

The exhibition poster shows the impaled head of a slave, with blood flowing from the head down the stake (Figure 4). Despite being highly stylized, it remains a shocking image. The image is based on Bryant's imagery of the Demerara uprising. Alston said the museum was never criticised for using the image, but as an image of torture, they might well have been. The agency of the enslaved in their rebellion, however, is completely missing from McNaught's artwork – it is the severe punishment, rather than the act of rebellion *en masse*, that is depicted; furthermore, it was used as the promotional image for the entire exhibition. Alston said, '[t]here is a need for a bit of shock. It was a conscious decision that this was going to be a hard-hitting exhibition.' That it could have been anything else is puzzling, but possibly indicative of the tone and approach adopted by some of the bicentenary projects, and also what had (not) gone before. Alston said that McNaught's work had the 'right kind of edge' and he knew McNaught 'could produce images which were sufficiently powerful for this topic.' While Cromarty exhibition's creative response had emotional impact, the agency and experience of the slave was lost.

b) The ‘Middle Passage’

‘Slaves and Highlanders’ acknowledged the ‘Middle Passage’ in the third panel titled ‘Slave Traders.’ The focus was on Evan Baillie, a politician, merchant, slave trader and anti-abolitionist from Inverness, and his family members who were also involved in slavery.¹⁶⁵ In a section of the panel (Figure 12), text about Baillie is superimposed on top of an image of bound male slaves (Figure 11). The image, ‘Sleeping Position of Captive Africans on the French Slave Ship *Aurore*, 1784’ is from a book by Jean Boudriot about French slave ships. It is an image produced for Boudriot’s book, rather than an historical image from the time. It differs greatly from contemporary images of the middle passage; the men are portrayed in great detail, their humanity shown to be under attack by imprisonment. Naked, in an enforced foetal position, ‘spooning’ one another, they are made vulnerable; it is an appeal to emotion and contemporary aesthetic sensibilities. The image’s repetitiveness and fluid lines are reminiscent of French ‘Art Nouveau.’

The image of ‘packed’ slaves on the *Brookes* slave ships featured *en masse* in bicentenary materials. Alston and McNaught’s use of Boudriot’s image, however, was more unusual. In no other slavery exhibition have I seen its use. Yet, the image was used as a sort-of backing pattern - a ‘wallpaper’ – to the text about Baillie, and this is problematic. In fact, one could almost miss the image altogether. On the other hand, the text that features on top of the image is about the Jacobite rebellion and Culloden; Baillie’s family had been supporters of the Jacobite cause, and like many well-to-do Highlanders, Baillie sought a more ‘prosperous’ life overseas following the defeat at Culloden. It is possible that Alston was again subverting an important element of Highland collective memory – the tragedy of Culloden – by pushing it into another, unexpected context - that of the brutality and inhumanity of the slave trade.

¹⁶⁵ His family’s 1834 compensation record is also noted – the Baillies of Dochfour received £110,000 (around £8.5 million in today’s value) from the British Government for the loss of 3,100 slaves.

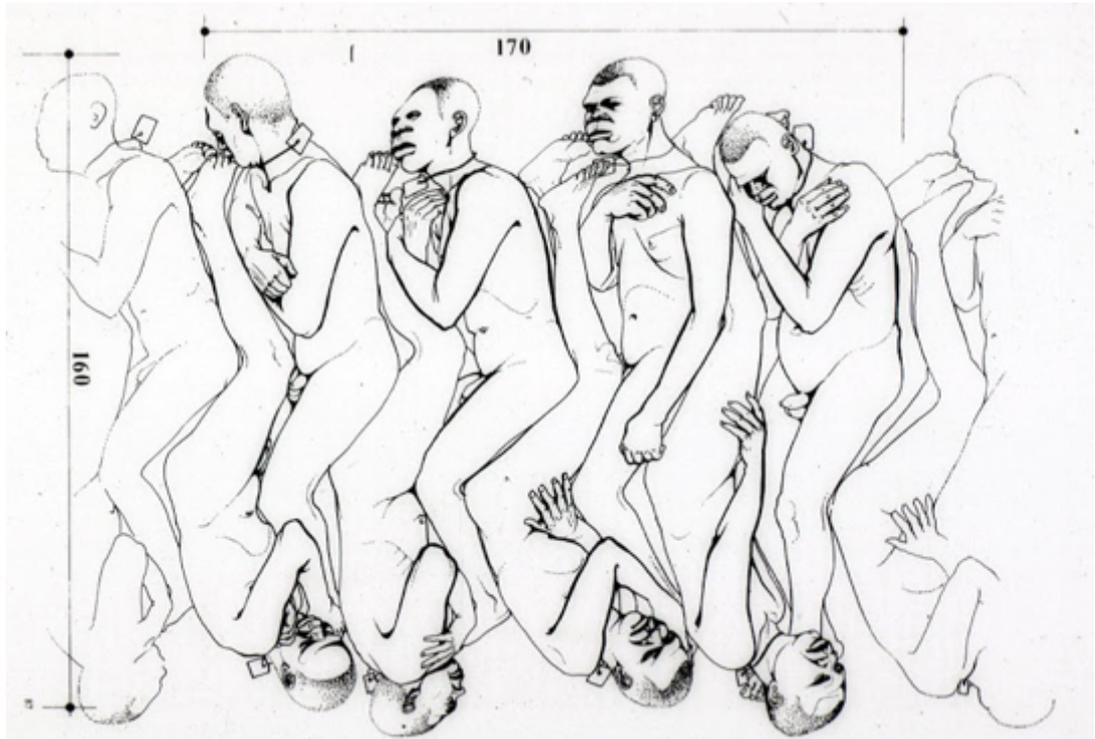


Figure 11 Illustration of captive slaves aboard a French slave ship, from a book by Jean Boudriot

SLAVE TRADERS

The Baillies had been supporters of the Jacobites and their house at Dochfour was burnt in reprisals after the defeat at Culloden (1746). As a very young boy Evan had watched the battle from the hills above his home. At the age of fifteen, Evan joined the army and served in the West Indies during the Seven Years War (1756–63). He used this experience to establish himself as a merchant and slave trader in the Caribbean islands of St Kitts and St Vincent, along with his brothers Alexander and James, and later his cousin George. Evan later established himself as a leading merchant in Bristol.

Body Positions of Slaves on the Slave Ship *Garret*, 1784

Figure 12 'Slave and Highlanders' exhibition's use of Boudriot's image

This is an example of how ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ got under the skin of the north-east Highlands; no place or family name was too Scottish, too Highland, or too local, to be connected to transatlantic slavery. This is powerful; when a local visitor was looking through the exhibition, there was a chance that their name might crop up in a highly negative context. Visitors’ very self-identity was at stake; it was personal.

5.2.4. Summary

‘Slaves and Highlanders’ promoted itself as an ‘exhibition recording the role of Highland Scots in the slave trade and slave plantations of the Caribbean and South America.’ The use of the word ‘recording,’ rather than, say, ‘exploring,’ is telling; it implies that such a record does not yet exist, and that research in this field is in its infancy. Indeed, this was the case.

In many aspects, ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ was quietly radical. It was created by just two people, both personally connected to the local area – which was also the topic of the exhibition – but willing to flip the local collective memory on its head. In order to subvert the Highland collective memory, Alston highlighted the ironies and hypocrisy of emotive notions about the Highland Clearances and Scottish Diaspora; Highlanders may have been victims at home, but they were also perpetrators abroad (and vice versa). Via the bicentenary, Alston highlighted the complexities of the colonial experience, and brought this message to diverse audiences via his public talks. Alston replicated the subversive values and agenda of the bicentenary exhibition in his website, thereby potentially connecting to larger, more diverse audiences. In opening up his historical research to other historians and students working in other parts of the world, Alston has contributed to a transnational global memory culture, where human rights and social justice remain the objective. ‘Slaves and Highlanders’ shows that small-scale, low budget exhibitions can still have significant impact.

5.3 Case Study: Aberdeen City Council, *Our Stories of Slavery – Aberdeen, Africa and the Americas*

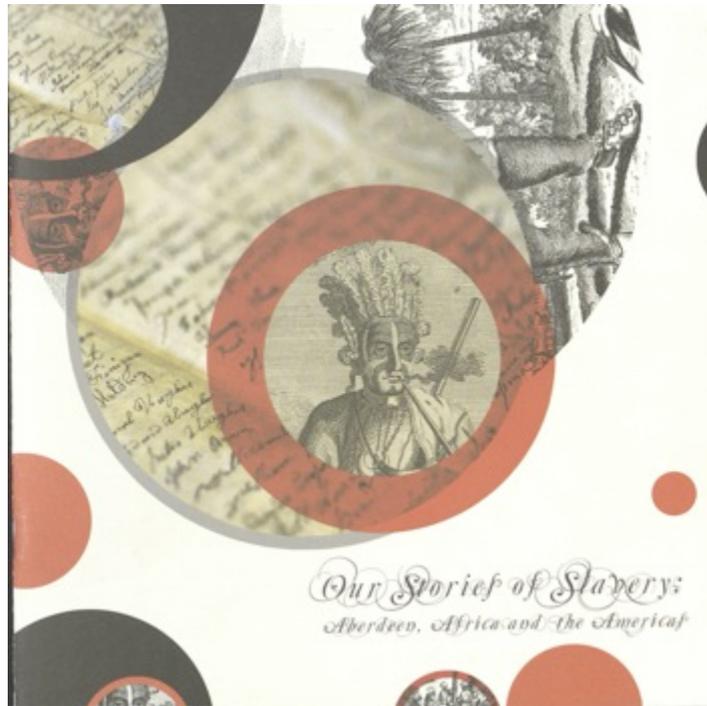


Figure 13 The front cover of Aberdeen City Council's bicentenary information pamphlet

A significant programme of events to mark the bicentenary took place across the north-east of Scotland in 2007. Aberdeen City Council is the local authority for the city of Aberdeen, while Aberdeenshire Council's area of responsibility takes in the vast surrounding area. Representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen University, Robert Gordon University and people from the region's African and African Caribbean communities formed a Bicentenary Committee in 2007.¹⁶⁶ The committee oversaw the commemoration of the bicentenary across the north-east, and worked in tandem with more location-specific projects carried out by the two local authorities. Dr Philip Muinde, who was at the time chairperson of the Grampian Racial Equality Council, chaired the north-east's Bicentenary Committee.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Aberdeen University, 'Acknowledgements,' *A North East Story – Scotland, Africa and Slavery in the Caribbean*. Available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/slavery/acknowledgements.htm>, accessed 12.04.17

¹⁶⁷ Foreign and Commonwealth Press Office, 'Honourary OBE Awarded to Dr Philip Kivuva Muinde,' 29.03.06, available <http://www.wired-gov.net/wg/wg-news-1.nsf/54e6de9e0c383719802572b9005141ed/16fe12d5f14248eb802572ab004bcd54?OpenDocument>

The HLF awarded Aberdeen City Council £50,000 for its bicentenary project ‘Our Stories of Slavery – Aberdeen, Africa and the Americas’ while Aberdeenshire Council received £43,300 for its project ‘The Commemoration of the Abolition of African Slavery.’¹⁶⁸ Taking into consideration that the HLF funding was ‘matched’ by the organisations themselves, it was a financially ambitious project, compared to the rest of Scotland. Furthermore, with the two local authorities working together under the umbrella of the north-east Bicentenary Committee, pooling resources and funding, there was scope for a major programme of events.

Gathering information on the Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council projects, however, was somewhat problematic. Trying to track down the ‘right’ person to speak to was difficult; very few of the project leads still work for the two councils. Aberdeenshire Council had virtually no record of the authority’s bicentenary project. However, on searching online, I found various traces of the authority’s involvement, owing to the inclusion of its logo on various legacy resources. Aberdeen City Council, however, was able to provide me with more information on its involvement, along with some related materials. Furthermore, Aberdeen’s public library was very forthcoming and helpful in digging up materials the City Council had produced in 2007. Thus, I will focus my analysis on Aberdeen City Council’s ‘Our Stories of Slavery’ project owing to the availability of source materials.

Aberdeen City Council’s Arts Development team – now called the Creative Learning Team - led the city’s bicentenary project. The project focus was three-fold. There was an artistic exploration of the legacies of slavery, including its ‘cultural collisions’ and the creation of new art forms, such as Capoeira, blues and jazz,¹⁶⁹ and an archival-based research programme conducted in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen that considered the city’s direct links to slavery – this resulted in the creation of a website and online resource

¹⁶⁸ Note, Aberdeenshire Council mistakenly conflated the abolition of the slave trade with the abolition of slavery.

¹⁶⁹ Aberdeen City Council, *Our Stories of Slavery: Aberdeen, African and the Americas*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen City Council, 2007).

called *A North-East Story*.¹⁷⁰ The final element of the project, however, was not focussed on African slavery, but a brief and strange episode in Aberdeen's history – the story of 'Indian Peter,' and Aberdeen's 'stolen' children.

5.3.1. Dislocation of Justice Part I: Indian Peter and Indentured Servitude

In the pursuit of social justice – the commitment to remember past tragedies and vow that they are never again repeated – whose memory is most deserving of recognition? The many or the few? The European or the African?

During the 1740s, several hundred children from Aberdeen and the surrounding area were kidnapped and sold into indentured servitude in the Americas, at the hands of the city's merchants and magistrates.¹⁷¹ One of these children, Peter Williamson – who called himself 'Indian Peter' - became something of a celebrity when he wrote a fantastical book about his experiences, which supposedly included a period of imprisonment by Delaware Native Americans. Incredibly, with the help of an Edinburgh lawyer, Williamson successfully sued Aberdeen's 'fathers' for their collaboration in his kidnapping, along with several of the city's merchants.¹⁷² Aberdeen City Council's 'Our Stories of Slavery' project pivoted around Indian Peter's story and its associated imagery, which became a motif of Aberdeen's entire bicentenary project (Figures 13 and 14). Chris Croly, one of the project's principal leads, said the team chose to highlight Williamson's story 'because it was a local dimension to the story and helped to put the issues into a wider context, as well as being aware that there is always a strong desire for local history at a local level; in short it helped to make the project more appealing locally.'¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Aberdeen City Council, Our Stories of Slavery.

¹⁷¹ Aberdeen Art Galleries and Museums, 'The Tolbooth Museum – History,' available at <http://www.aagm.co.uk/Visit/TheTolboothMuseum/ttm-history.aspx>, accessed 08.04.17.

¹⁷² Timothy J. Shannon, 'King of the Indians: The Hard Fate and Curious Career of Peter Williamson,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 66:1, 2009, 5.

¹⁷³ Email from Chris Croly, sent 12.04.17.



Figure 14 An image from Peter Williamson's own account of his life

Indentured servitude as it existed between the sixteenth and eighteenth-century was typically voluntary – an individual would sign a contract agreeing to work in America for a set number of years in return for their ship passage, after which they were free to do as they pleased.¹⁷⁴ David Dobson, however, estimates that after the Jacobite defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, the British Government banished around a thousand men, women and children to American plantations where they were sold as indentured servants.¹⁷⁵ The ‘kidnapping’ of children in Aberdeen during this period was possibly linked to this post-Culloden expulsion of Jacobitism, or most probably, an opportunistic add-on. Yet, overall, forced migration from Scotland to the Americas was rare; it was a drastic political response to

¹⁷⁴ David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607–1785*, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 6.

¹⁷⁵ Dobson, *Scottish Emigration*, 6.

a specific political problem. In contrast, between 1500 and 1900, Europeans forced at least 12 million African people on to slave ships bound for the Americas, and around 1.5 million of these people died during the middle passage.¹⁷⁶ To place this colossal human tragedy that spanned centuries and pivoted on the belief that African people were sub-human, within the same context as a few thousand Jacobite political prisoners, or indeed a few hundred kidnapped children, is difficult to defend. Yet, this is exactly what Aberdeen City Council did.

Furthermore, there are those who have actively tried to defend Scottish involvement in slavery by highlighting the case of indentured Scots in the Americas. While this is an ahistorical and ill-founded claim that sits on the fringes of credible historical debate, it occasionally rears its head. For example, Stephen Mullen, while working on his contribution to Devine's *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past*, received a letter from a member of the public:

I read that you are publishing a book on Slavery and wonder if you will be mentioning the Jacobites transported as slaves to the West Indies. They inter-married with the Africans. However, I doubt if you have any knowledge of these facts as Scottish History is not taught in Scottish schools and Scotch Historians only copy Anglo-Centric [expletive removed] from Unionist Historians.¹⁷⁷

Included in the letter was a list of Jacobites supposedly transported to America as 'slaves.' In response, Mullen wrote on his blog:

Without too much work, it has been quite easy to debunk the myths contained in a factually inaccurate and conceptually wrong letter. This was a prime example of historical *whataboutery*... according to the author, whilst Scots were involved with Caribbean slavery,

¹⁷⁶ Walvin, *Slave trade*.

¹⁷⁷ See Stephen Mullen, 'The myth of Scottish slaves,' available <http://sceptical.scot/2016/03/the-myth-of-scottish-slaves/>, accessed 08.14.17; Stephen Mullen, 'Scots & Caribbean Slavery – Victims and Profiteers,' *A Glasgow-West India Sojourn*, 06.03.14. available <https://glasgowwestindies.wordpress.com/2014/03/06/scots-caribbean-slavery-victims-and-profiteers/comment-page-1/#comment-145>, accessed 12.04.17.

we were also victims of English imperial tyranny and this should be a qualifier in any book on Scots and slavery.¹⁷⁸

Yet, this type of ‘whataboutery’ historical theorizing is not just confined to the polars of political extremity, and indeed, not just to Scotland. Denmark owned slave-labour colonies in the Caribbean – present day US Virgin Islands – and since the 1990s it has witnessed public outcry and argument over its colonial past.¹⁷⁹ Astrid Nonbo Andersen discusses what she calls ‘the Viking argument,’ professed by a centre-ground Danish politician in 1998: if Denmark is to apologise for slavery, should it also apologise for the violence of its Viking ancestors?¹⁸⁰

With its focus on ‘Indian Peter,’ Aberdeen City Council ventured into ambiguous territory in 2007. Arguably, the territory was that of forced migration and child exploitation – a topic, of course, worthy of great attention - but its shared contextual space with African transatlantic slavery was problematic. After all, 2007 was for the commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade. As confirmed by its organisers, the project’s focus on Indian Peter was a bid to attract more public interest. After considerable effort, I was able to track down Aberdeen City Council’s Lesley Thomson, who in 2007 was manager of the arts development team that led the bicentenary. I asked her what challenges she came across in 2007, to which she replied:

The subject matter we chose to engage schools and communities [Indian Peter] was met with some disagreement by some members of the larger ACC [Aberdeen City Council] working group, who did not believe that it reflected BME [‘black and minority ethnic’]

¹⁷⁸ Stephen Mullen, ‘Scots & Caribbean Slavery – Victims and Profiteers,’ *A Glasgow-West India Sojourn*, 06.03.14. available <https://glasgowwestindies.wordpress.com/2014/03/06/scots-caribbean-slavery-victims-and-profiteers/comment-page-1/#comment-145>, accessed 12.04.17.

¹⁷⁹ Astrid Nonbo Andersen, “‘We Have Reconquered the Islands’”: Figurations in Public Memories of Slavery and Colonialism in Denmark 1948–2012,’ *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26:1, 2013, 57.

¹⁸⁰ Nonbo Anderson, *We Have Reconquered the Islands*, 72.

experiences as we focused on a white indentured servant.¹⁸¹

Yet, her justification matched Croly's – it was 'a good way to engage the attention of the public.'¹⁸² Aberdeen City Council chose to focus on a minor quirk of Scottish history that is not representative of Scots' involvement in the slave trade. It supplanted contemporary notions about unfree labour – modern day slavery and human trafficking – onto the past, thereby treating both as equally condemnable, and thus appropriate to be discussed in the same context. Furthermore, I would argue that the focus on Indian Peter was also an attempt to make slavery a more palatable topic of discussion. Indian's Peter's story had a 'happy ending' in that he got justice - he escaped, returned home and the kidnappers were charged.

5.3.2. Dislocation of Justice Part II: Knitting for Africa

Aberdeen City Council's focus on the story of Indian Peter was also seen in the 'Cast Offs' art installation. Artist Chris Biddlecombe led the project. It was heavily geared towards community engagement, and its primary component was knitting. Thomson said it was one of the most popular elements of Aberdeen's bicentenary.¹⁸³ Participants were offered knit packs 'containing needles, wool, a text sheet providing information on the topic of slavery and a pattern for a jumper.'¹⁸⁴ Participants were then to knit a child-size jumper, to represent one of the hundreds of children kidnapped in Aberdeen, which would then be installed in Aberdeen's Kirk of St. Nicholas. Participants were also given access to academic research on Aberdeen and slavery, and were tasked with responding with either a piece of creative writing or a line drawing – 'an emotional response informed by factual information.'¹⁸⁵ The Kirk of St. Nicholas was chosen for St. Nicholas's association with children, seafarers and the poor.¹⁸⁶ Some of the jumpers had letters on the front, so that when put together in the church (Figure

¹⁸¹ Lesley Thomson, email, 15.05.17.

¹⁸² Thomson, email, 15.05.17.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Aberdeen City Council, Cast-Offs press release/community invitation

¹⁸⁵ Aberdeen City Council, Our Stories of Slavery.

¹⁸⁶ Aberdeen City Council, Cast-Offs press release/community invitation

15), the jumpers spelt out ‘text fragments, forgotten messages, lost initials and stolen words.’¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, the knitters’ drawn or written responses to historical and contemporary slavery were included on the garment labels ‘to deliver a second level of project interpretation to the viewers.’¹⁸⁸



Figure 15 Cast Offs art installation within Kirk of St. Nicholas, Aberdeen

Cast Offs remained in place for several weeks, and when the installation was disassembled, in partnership with Feed the Children UK, the jumpers were sent to Uganda to clothe the babies born to abducted girls.¹⁸⁹ This final element of the project – ‘a genuine source of aid to an international community’¹⁹⁰ – is arguably symptomatic of twentieth-century British attitudes towards Africa. Sending 600 woollen jumpers to Uganda seems reminiscent of a by-gone age; a token gesture lacking long-term commitment or incentive for systematic change and societal justice on a transnational scale.

¹⁸⁷ Aberdeen City Council, Cast-Offs press release/community invitation

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the Cast Offs project's focus on knitting was carefully selected because 'the knitting circle [in the north-east] has traditionally been a forum for debate and discussion around a range of issues' and textiles are 'a medium traditionally associated with the transatlantic slave trade.'¹⁹¹ The council sought to commemorate the slave trade via a forum that is 'native' to Aberdeen and the north-east – knitting circles - while recognising that the textile industry was intrinsically linked to the slave economies of the Americas and the Caribbean, and contributed significantly to Scotland's industrialisation and economic growth.¹⁹²

The 'jumpers for Africa' part of Aberdeen's bicentenary was considerably ill-judged. The stories of African children, for example, sold into slavery on the west African coast, and shipped across the Atlantic to a life of relentless oppression, were ignored. In creating an art installation to commemorate kidnapped Scottish children, and then posting bits of that installation to Uganda, where the aftermath of British colonialism – entrenched civil war and horrific levels of child exploitation – is well removed from Scottish consciousness, Aberdeen City Council overshadowed the more interesting element of the Cast Offs project - the relationship between the Scottish textile industry and slave labour. To date, this area of Scotland's history has not been thoroughly researched nor acknowledged.

5.3.3. Attitudes Towards Africa and the Caribbean

Smith et al argue that overall the bicentenary in Britain presented the history of slavery within a national framework and from a British perspective, 'rather than to subsume this British frame of reference within a broader category of European history and identity.'¹⁹³ Aberdeen arguably attempted to include broader historical reference and perspective in its bicentenary project. However, its adoption of diverse perspectives was limited to the celebration of the 'cultural collisions' that slavery facilitated – for example, capoeira, 'a Brazilian martial art of Nigerian origin, created by enslaved Africans during the 16th

¹⁹¹ Aberdeen City Council, Our Stories of Slavery.

¹⁹² Anthony Cooke, 'An Elite Revisited: Glasgow West India Merchants, 1783-1877,' *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 32:2, 2012, 127.

¹⁹³ Smith et al, Introduction, 10.

century'¹⁹⁴ – and traditional Western African art forms, in this case, woodcarving. It was a celebration of cultural difference, rather than an acknowledgement of, and response to, positional difference - persisting structural and institutional inequalities in which certain groups in society are favoured over others.¹⁹⁵

Yet, how does one engage citizens in the ideas of positional difference, deep-rooted inequality, and the racialized division of labour, for example, in a two-hour Saturday workshop for families? Capoeira and woodcarving are easier sells. Furthermore, the capoeira and woodcarving classes were described as a 'diverse range of activities' that would 'reflect the impact of the African Diaspora.'¹⁹⁶ To reduce the impact that the African diaspora has had on western society to two art forms is incredibly short sighted; indeed, it almost contributes to the endurance of nineteenth and twentieth century notions of people of African descent as entertainers and artists, rather than, say, revolutionaries, academics and scientists.

Considering Aberdeen's main focus was that of 'Indian Peter' and Aberdeen's 'stolen' children, and indeed the politics of forced labour, the capoeira and woodcarving classes were, arguably, somewhat out of place. While the council sought to link historical stories to contemporary issues, and to promote an 'awareness of history as a continuing story rather than past events,' in this instance, the continuing story of positional difference – along, for example, racial and ethnic lines – in our society was skipped over. The abduction of children from Aberdeen is in the past and the abduction of girls in Uganda is happening far away; capoeira and woodcarving are interesting, but what did they really say to the citizens of Aberdeen about the slave experience?

5.3.4. A Digital Legacy

The legacy of the north-east's commemoration of the bicentenary was the creation in 2008 of a website called *A North East Story – Scotland, Africa and Slavery in the Caribbean*. The research on the website is based on archives held by Aberdeen University; the website is

¹⁹⁴ Aberdeen City Council, Our Stories of Slavery.

¹⁹⁵ Iris Marion Young, Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference, Paper for the AHRC Centre for Law, Gender, and Sexuality, Intersectionality Workshop, 2005, 5-6.

¹⁹⁶ Aberdeen City Council, Our Stories of Slavery.

thorough, nuanced, and highlights the multiple links between Aberdeen and the transatlantic slave trade. The website also contains a substantial resource section for teachers to use in teaching slavery to secondary school students. The imagery used is specific, contextualised and adds further layers of complexity and nuance. The bicentenary facilitated the ‘opening up’ of Aberdeen University’s archives, which now remains indefinitely ‘open’ via the website. Katherine Prior is credited as having carried out the historical research for the website.¹⁹⁷

The resource section offers teachers a wealth of activities for school children. Activities typically involve looking at various images, and then responding to these images with a variety of meaningful questions and tasks. The imagery featured in the resource section is vast; despite having spent months researching the bicentenary for this paper, the majority of the images used in the resource section I had never come across before – this really emphasises the argument that the bicentenary, in both Scotland and the rest of the UK, relied heavily on a few select images that, as Wood argues, became shorthand for ‘slavery’ and the ‘slave trade.’ For example, in considering the middle passage, the *Brookes* ship engraving is nowhere to be seen. Instead, featured is a 1793 painting by British slave ship captain Samuel Gamble, which depicts slave raiders from north west African marching their captives to the coast (Figure 16). The other image used is a 1845 painting by a British naval lieutenant, which depicts the loaded decks of a Portuguese slave ship (Figure 17). One of the activity questions for these images is:

It is often said ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’. Do the pictures or the words give a better sense of what people suffered when they were captured and sold as slaves? Would you have been able to understand the pictures without Equiano’s and Asa-Asa’s stories to go with them? What do the pictures show or tell you that the stories do not?

¹⁹⁷ Aberdeen University, Acknowledgements.

Such questions were indeed highly relevant to those behind the bicentenary projects – when is a picture relevant and beneficial, and when is it voyeuristic, or simply filling up empty space on an information panel?



Figure 16 Painting of north-west African slave raiders by Samuel Gamble, 1793



Figure 17 Painting of captive slaves in a Portuguese slave ship, 1845

The resource section's final category is entitled 'After Slavery' and here lie some vitally important questions and themes that would cause many an adult to stumble over. The website presents students with an image from 1908: a man of apparently white European descent sits atop a horse, with about ten African Caribbean workers standing behind him in a Trinidadian sugar cane field (Figure 18). Some of the workers are on horses too. Some are standing. It looks hot. It appears that the workers have momentarily stopped their

backbreaking work for the photograph to be taken. The white man's prominence in the image certainly speaks a thousand words. The website poses the question: 'What do you think has changed since the ending of slavery? How are these people's lives different to what it was like for the slaves?'

It is useful to return to Young's theory on the politics of positional difference. Young argues that positional difference is the structural social processes – like the gendered and racialised division of labour – that continue to favour and disfavour certain sections of society.¹⁹⁸ The politics of positional difference, Young argues, are an essential area of enquiry for those concerned with the values of freedom, equality and justice.¹⁹⁹ In the context of institutional racism in the US, for example, Young argues that the 'stigma of blackness' has its origins in the racial division of labour in the US, primarily slavery.²⁰⁰ By bringing attention to these images, the resource section leads students to engage with these ideas. While the slave trade was abolished in 1807 and slavery in 1833/4, life for the formerly enslaved did not suddenly become 'good.' While they were technically 'free' according to British legislation, and no longer legal property, they entered in to a new era of indentured servitude, as well as chronic poverty and discrimination, that arguably continues to influence the African Caribbean and African American experience today.

¹⁹⁸ Young, *Structural Injustice*, 6

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 22.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 14.



Cutting the sugar canes in Trinidad, 1908.

Figure 18 'Cutting the sugar canes in Trinidad, 1908'

The website then presents students with two more images; one from 1900 that shows female sugar cane workers in Jamaica (Figure 19), the other, a Scottish 'fisher girl' packing herring in 1910 (Figure 20). The website asks students whether the Scottish woman had more in common with the Jamaican sugarcane workers, or the man on his horse in Trinidad? Not an entirely easy question to answer.



From a stereograph titled 'Sugar Cane field hands, Montego bay, Jamaica', 1900.

Figure 19 'Sugar cane field hands, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 1900'

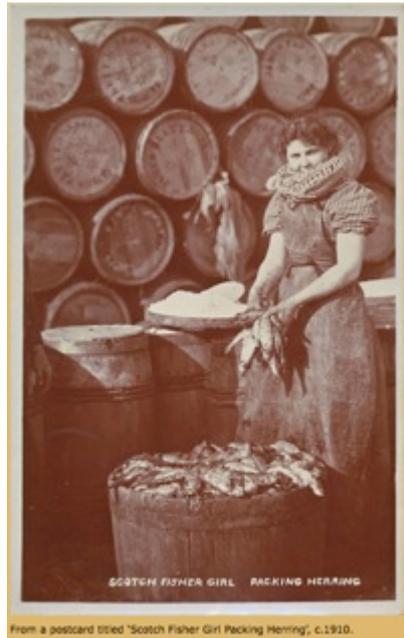


Figure 20 'Scottish Fisher Girl Packing Herring, c.1908'

The website thus also engages with the idea of the gendered division of labour. This is where Young takes a more singular view. Young argues that proponents of the theory of cultural difference – whereby certain cultural (ethnic/national) groups dominate over other cultural groups – perceive gender equality as the equal treatment of the sexes. Thus, she argues, there is a propensity for self-congratulation in western liberal societies whereby women are perceived as being treated equally, therefore making western liberal societies superior to societies that do not treat women equally. However, she argues that according to the politics of positional difference, in addition to – or indeed, instead of - treating both sexes equally, institutions should address the structures that continue to afford men greater freedom, access to resources and the ability to pursue their own life plans.²⁰¹ Young argues further that the male body is institutionally deemed preferable and the norm, while the female body – with its specific functions and needs - is still perceived as deviant from the norm.²⁰² The resource section provokes the kind of debate that Young would encourage. It encourages school students to engage with ideas of structural and institutional racism and sexism that almost transcend historical specificity, and appeal to more general concerns of social justice.

²⁰¹ Young, *Structural Injustice*, 18

²⁰² *Ibid.*

Of course, one cannot help but wish such a nuanced and varied approach were adopted by the 2007 Scottish bicentenary projects, particularly Aberdeen City Council. Yet, the irony is that the perceived failures of the bicentenary resulted in higher quality post-bicentenary educational work such as this. In a further irony – or perhaps one should regard it as a major step forward – the final part of the resource section deals directly with the 2007 bicentenary; it is titled ‘Remembering slavery.’ This is significant considering the website was produced just a year after. The website asks students to critique the pros and cons of remembering slavery, as well as the materials – including the Royal Mail commemorative stamps, for example – that were produced in 2007 as part of the bicentenary. With Katherine Prior responsible for pulling together the website’s content, it is perhaps not surprising it takes a critical and self-reflective approach.

Dutch scholar Pieter de Bruijn has spoken of British history teachers’ ‘anti-textbook mentality’ whereby there is a tendency to neglect prescribed textbooks in favour of self-prescribed digital resources.²⁰³ The *North East Story* website certainly presents a viable alternative to standardised history textbooks; indeed, in Scotland, the inclusion of the history of slavery in primary and secondary school education is not compulsory.²⁰⁴

5.3.5. Summary

In 2007, Aberdeen’s remembrance of the slave trade was somewhat overshadowed by the remembrance of Indian Peter and sale of Scottish children into indentured servitude. While it was designed as a device to attract local interest in the bicentenary, it came to dominate ‘air time’ at the expense of other, more original areas of study, particularly Aberdeen’s direct historical links to the transatlantic slave trade.

Furthermore, Aberdeen’s bicentenary committee voiced concern about the focus on Indian Peter – in that that the experiences of Africans and African Caribbeans were being

²⁰³ Pieter de Bruijn, *Bridges to the Past: Historical Distance and Multiperspectivity in English and Dutch Heritage Educational Resources*, (Rotterdam: Erasmus University, 2014), 25.

²⁰⁴ Andrew Denholm, ‘Teaching of slavery in Scots schools branded tokenism,’ *The Herald* 09.01.14. Available at http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13139592.Teaching_of_slavery_in_Scots_schools_branded_tokenism/, accessed 08.07.17.

ignored – but it seems the desire to attract participants to the bicentenary programme of activities was stronger than the desire to reflect minority perspectives.

The conflation of indentured servitude and chattel slavery was in many regards problematic. Indian Peter sought and won justice - financial compensation and public apology - in a way that is familiar to us today; the formerly enslaved were not compensated, nor granted an apology. This is a challenging concept to grasp and understand, and indeed, its very fact does challenge the status quo in that it remains a contentious issue in contemporary politics. In looking at Indian Peter, however, Aberdeen City Council side-stepped such controversial matters.

The programme of events – sending ‘aid’ to Africa and capoeira classes, for example – did not challenge contemporary attitudes towards Africa and the African diaspora, nor did it address the problems that British colonialism has created in nations such as Uganda today.

Aberdeen City Council, in conjunction with the bicentenary committee and Aberdeen University, carried out a significant body of original archive-based research as part of the bicentenary. However, the research was not utilised in the programme of events in 2007, and was instead reserved for the *A North East Story* website. In saying that, however, the website remains an impressive legacy of Aberdeen’s bicentenary, and holds the power and potential to engage with a transnational audience, as well as Aberdeenshire school students.

5.4. Case Study: Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, *Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco and the Slave Trade*

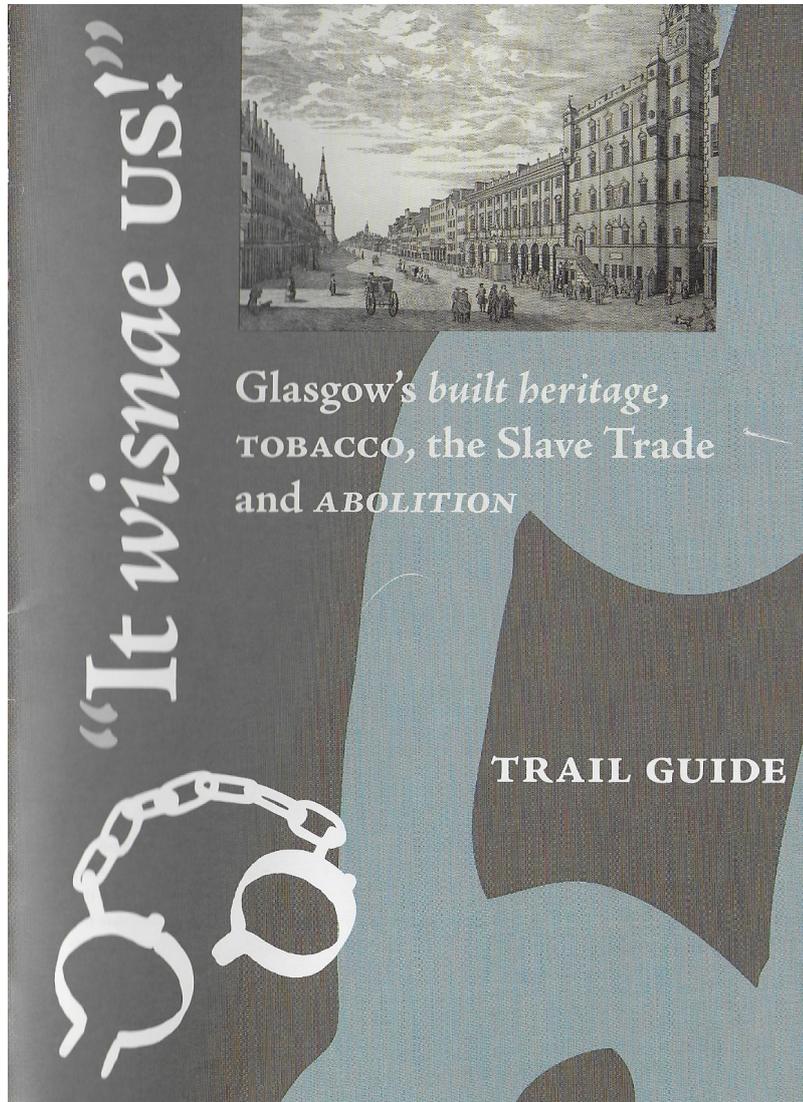


Figure 21 Front cover of *Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco, the Slave Trade and Abolition Trail Guide*

The Glasgow Building Preservation Trust (GBPT) is a Glasgow-based charity whose mission is ‘to rescue, repair, restore and rehabilitate significant, historic buildings at risk across the city.’²⁰⁵ In 2007, GBPT took the lead in marking the bicentenary in the city. Anne McClery, director of GBPT, was knowledgeable about Glasgow’s links to slavery, and she

²⁰⁵ Glasgow Building Preservation Trust, ‘About Us,’ available at <http://gbpt.org/about-us/>, last accessed 28.11.16

thought it essential to make this history more widely known in Glasgow, and across Scotland.²⁰⁶

Some of Glasgow's most impressive historic buildings are situated in the Merchant City, one of city's oldest quarters. From the mid-seventeenth-century, the Merchant City was built on the profits of the tobacco trade as Scotland reaped the rewards of colonialism and slave labour.²⁰⁷ What Glasgow lost in tobacco imports following American Independence, it made up for in sugar, rum, coffee and cotton.²⁰⁸ Today, after significant regeneration efforts, the Merchant City is once again one of Glasgow's most desirable quarters, home to high-end shops, art galleries, restaurants, bars and cultural festivals, as well as Glasgow's LGBT scene. The Merchant City has come full circle, and with the completion of any circle, two ends must meet – in this instance, the tobacco-funded beginning of the Merchant City came face to face with the HLF-funded bicentenary present.

5.4.1. Doors Open: Museums – or Festivals – as a Forum for Debate?

GBPT incorporated 'Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco and the Slave Trade' into its annual Doors Open Day Festival. Doors Open Day is actually a week-long festival, typically attracting tens of thousands of visitors. It enables Glaswegians and visitors alike to visit places and buildings in the city that are otherwise closed to the public. In this respect, the form of Glasgow's bicentenary mirrored its content – the doors to Glasgow's little known slavery past were literally opened wide. In addition to visiting buildings, attendees can take part in walking tours, listen to talks and visit exhibitions hosted within the buildings. Crucially, all Doors Open Day events are free of charge. The enduring popularity of the Doors Open Day festival, which essentially is a celebration of what city dwellers walk past every day, is testimony to the emotional and intellectual pull of historic buildings to citizens.

Glasgow's bicentenary, therefore, was heavily focussed on buildings and built heritage. While it was McChlery, in partnership with Jatin Haria of the Glasgow Anti Racist

²⁰⁶ Anne McChlery, telephone conversation, 15.12.16

²⁰⁷ Cooke, *An Elite Revisited*, 127.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 129.

Alliance (GARA), who led the project, a history graduate was employed to carry out the historical research. The graduate was Stephen Mullen, who today is a leading expert in the field of Scotland and slavery. After his short-term placement with GBPT and GARA, he went on to write his doctoral thesis on Glasgow's tobacco merchants, and today is a lecturer at Glasgow University. McChlery said that the employment of Mullen in 2007 was a 'serendipitous event'; she said he was the driving force behind the entire project.²⁰⁹ So, in this respect, Glasgow's bicentenary opened its doors in another way; it invited an 'outsider,' with little experience working in the heritage sector, but great passion for the topic, to be a main project contributor.

Mullen's research in 2007 culminated in two main outputs – an exhibition, and a walking tour. In 2009, Mullen wrote a short book called *It Wisnae Us: The Truth about Glasgow and Slavery*, which was a continuation of his research. Mullen was supported in this endeavour by GARA, as part of its Black History Month initiative.²¹⁰ Mullen said the book helped him secure funding for his PhD.²¹¹

The 2007 exhibition is now a pop-up travelling exhibition, which has been shown in locations across Scotland. Every year since 2007, at least one talk on Glasgow and slavery has been held in St Andrews in the Square. McChlery spoke of how, in 2007, people would come in on their lunch break to listen to talks, and to look at the exhibition. She said that people from all walks of life would come. The project also caught the attention of many people from the Caribbean. McChlery said people from Jamaica came across to attend some of the events and talks; she said there was much discussion over the proliferation of Scottish surnames in Jamaica!²¹²

Mullen's walking tour was called *It Wisnae Us! Glasgow's built heritage, tobacco, the slave trade and abolition*, and a trail guide was produced to accompany walkers.

Furthermore, if people were unable to attend the walking tours, they could do the walk solo

²⁰⁹ McChlery, telephone conversation, 15.12.16

²¹⁰ Stephen Mullen, *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery*, (Edinburgh: The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland on behalf of Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance, 2009).

²¹¹ Stephen Mullen, email conversation, 06.12.16.

²¹² McChlery, telephone conversation, 15.12.16

with the aid of a podcast. It was a free, and therefore accessible, activity to do. The walk featured 20 different built heritage locations (Figure 22) mostly within Glasgow's Merchant City. The predominant theme of the walk was, understandably, the history of the chosen locations, or more precisely, the history of those wealthy men who paid for the buildings, churches and graveyards to be built. At every stop, the trail guide reminds the walker that the wealth holding up these buildings came from tobacco, 'an industry built on slave labour.'²¹³ And indeed, the wealth accrued by the Tobacco Lords was phenomenal. The trail guide describes how '[t]he Tobacco Lords were said to stroll around the Tontine Piazza, resplendent in their scarlet cloaks and gold tipped canes. Citizens of lesser standing moved out of their way.'²¹⁴ Furthermore, many of the 'Lords' were related to one another in some way, and also filled many of Glasgow's civic positions, such as city Provost.

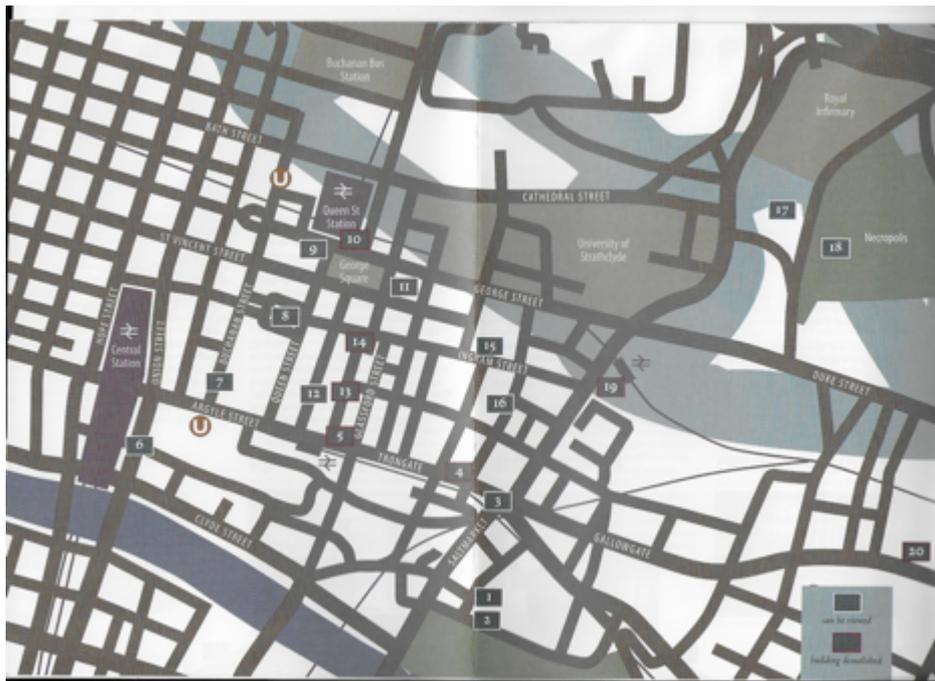


Figure 22 Map from *It Wisnae Us!* trail guide

Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace has written about Bristol's Slave Trade Trail, which incidentally, the city was doing pre-2007. Kowaleski-Wallace argues that trail walking can be

²¹³ Stephen Mullen, *It Wisnae Us! Glasgow's built heritage, tobacco, the slave trade and abolition Trail Guide*, 2007.

²¹⁴ Mullen, *It Wisnae Us! Trail Guide*.

subversive; the very act of being physically present and an active participant, the trail walker becomes both an ethnographer and performer.²¹⁵ Alan Rice and Johanna C. Kardux take this further, and argue that walking tours can be part of wider programme of ‘guerrilla memorialisation,’ which they describe as ‘community actions that begin to reclaim the cityscapes that have traditionally been designed to articulate the heroic stories of merchant adventurers and to make amends and finally tell the underside, ghostly narratives of those whose backs the profits were made.’²¹⁶ Indeed, Mullen used Glasgow’s city space as a living and breathing exhibition room, which – with his supporting narrative – trail-walkers could engage with in their own unique, personal way. For those walkers who lived in Glasgow and walked its streets daily, the subversion was potentially long lasting and far-reaching; they could share their knowledge with family, friends, and co-workers in the weeks and years to come, as they walked the city together.

The walk, however, was not just about Glasgow’s slave labour wealth, but those who had fought to end slavery. The history of Glasgow’s abolitionists also featured prominently in the walking tour, as well as the ironies and complexities that chequered the history of abolitionism. For example, there was discussion of the Oswald brothers, prominent tobacco traders in eighteenth-century Glasgow, whose nephew was ‘an M.P. who supported a petition moving for the abolition of the apprenticeship scheme in 1836.’²¹⁷ The issue of abolition divided families, not just ‘good’ from ‘bad.’

The walking tour stopped at Glasgow’s City Halls, a former venue of anti-slavery meetings that ‘helps illustrate Glasgow’s truly international contribution to universal emancipation.’²¹⁸ Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe both addressed Glasgow crowds in the mid-nineteenth-century. The trail guide describes how the Glasgow Female New Association for the Abolition of Slavery invited Beecher Stowe and ‘a series of

²¹⁵ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 55.

²¹⁶ Alan Rice & Johanna C. Kardux, ‘Confronting the ghostly legacies of slavery: the politics of black bodies, embodied memories and memorial landscapes,’ *Atlantic Studies* 9:3, 2012, 252.

²¹⁷ Mullen, *It Wisnae Us! Trail Guide*.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

American black abolitionist lecturers, including J.W.C. Pennington,' to speak at its meetings.²¹⁹ A few streets away from the City Halls, the tour stopped at the site where the old Glasgow University used to stand. James McCune Smith, an African American denied entry to US universities, completed his BA, MA and MD at Glasgow University during the 1830s, making him the first African American in the world to graduate with a medical degree.²²⁰ The walking tour guide argues that McCune Smith's story demonstrates 'Glasgow University's long and honourable history as a place of learning for the disenfranchised and the dispossessed.'²²¹ As it so happens, the university's current Rector is Edward Snowden, the exiled US intelligence whistle-blower. Today, across the street from the old university, there is a café whose name honours McCune Smith. The proprietor learnt of McCune Smith while taking part in one of Mullen's walking tours, and felt compelled to commemorate the abolitionist in some way.²²² He states on the café's website: 'An influential abolitionist, was buried in an unmarked grave by his pale skinned children, to escape racial prejudice. For me, he embodies many of the positive and negative aspects of Glasgow's history and [...] deserves to be celebrated.'²²³

5.4.2. Imagery of Slavery

In the trail guide, photographs and historic images are used to illustrate the built heritage locations in question. However, a dominant graphic design motif features throughout the guide; it is the imagery of chains and manacles (Figure 23). Ultimately, the role of this motif is to visually connect the guide to transatlantic slavery. Were it not for the manacles, and if you could not read English, then you would not know what the trail was about. Perhaps, however, such an approach would be more powerful – lending more charge to the text. Yet, in this regard, Glasgow did what so many bicentenary projects did – it used images

²¹⁹ Mullen, *It Wisnae Us! Trail Guide*.

²²⁰ *Ibid*; University of Glasgow, 'James McCune Smith,' 02.11.17. Available at <http://www.universitystory.gla.ac.uk/biography/?id=WH24115&type=P> (last accessed 30.05.17).

²²¹ Mullen, *It Wisnae Us! Trail Guide*.

²²² McCune Smith Café, 'About,' available at <https://www.mccunesmith.co.uk>, last accessed 06.07.17.

²²³ *Ibid*.

of restraint and torture as representative of the history and experience of transatlantic slavery. Furthermore, it is presented in a decorative, rather than informative, way. The grand townhouses take centre stage, while the experience of the African slave remains murky, hinted at, but not explored. What else, however, could the Glasgow team have used for the trail guide - coins, clouds of tobacco smoke, ships? It is difficult to think of an appropriate symbol.

In Mullen's subsequent 2009 publication *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery*, which is based on the walking tour, chain and manacle imagery is not used in the same way. There are two images of torture and restraint, however they are presented in context, and images of slave rebellion feature alongside.²²⁴

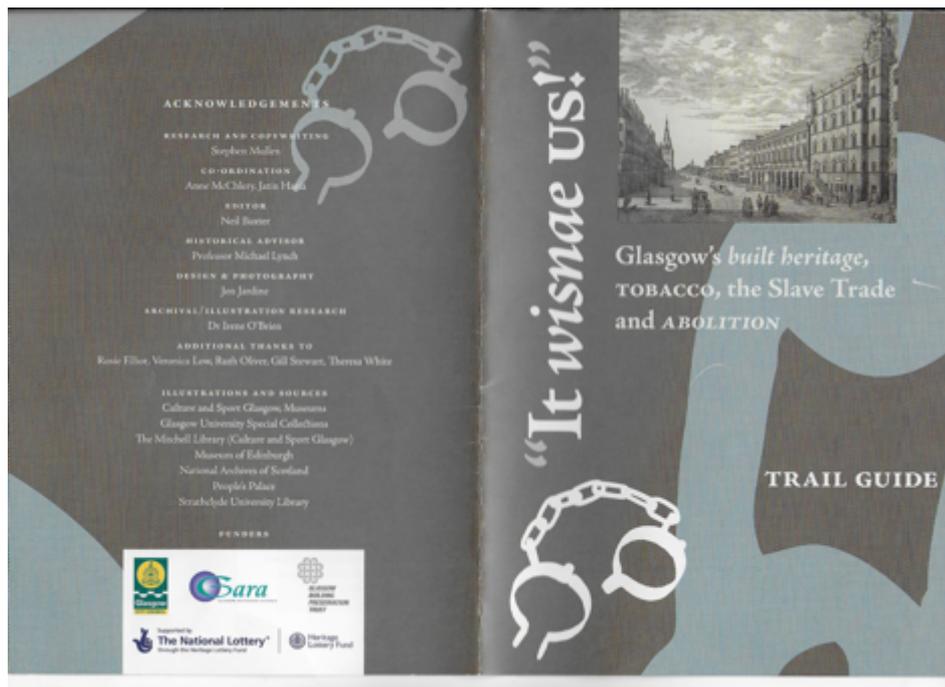


Figure 23 Front and back cover of *It Wisnae Us!* trail guide. Note the use of manacle and chain imagery.

²²⁴ Mullen, *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery*, 13.

5.4.3. The Scottish Enlightenment on Stage

As previously discussed, there was, arguably, an inherent injustice in the celebration of abolition in 2007. As Toyin Agbetu put it, the British Government's approach 'was like a serial killer boasting of moral integrity for revealing where he hid the bodies or expecting credit for not targeting children.'²²⁵ Bicentenary projects, therefore, were playing a catch-up game of redemption, achieving wins and losses at different turns and in varying degrees. While some bicentenary projects ignored the topic of abolition altogether as an act of protest – for example, Cromarty's 'Slaves and Highlanders' – GBPT did not. It commissioned a two-person play called *An Enlightened Land*, which was performed as part of the Doors Open Day bicentenary programme.

Arguably, the ambition of *An Enlightened Land* was to explore the different arguments and ideas of abolition as they would have been engaged with in the gentlemen's clubs and university lecture halls of eighteenth-century Glasgow. The play, however, had no slave presence on the stage. Enslaved people did not have a voice in a debate that was entirely about them. They were doubly silenced – both at the time, and then in retrospect.

Frances Hutcheson (1694-1746) has been described as 'Scotland's great Enlightenment moralist'; the Glasgow University professor put forward the theory that human beings have a moral sense that enables them to distinguish between right and wrong.²²⁶ To Hutcheson, slavery was fundamentally wrong, and he rejected Aristotle's argument that some by nature were destined to work for others.²²⁷

An Enlightened Land is a dialogue between Hutcheson and an unnamed tobacco lord; they debate the morality of slavery, and address the audience as if it too was from the eighteenth-century. The tobacco lord makes arguments, of course, that on the whole are unacceptable to a twenty-first century audience. There are, however, elements of his rhetoric

²²⁵ Toyin Agbetu, 'Restoring the Pan-African Perspective: Reversing the Institutionalization of Maafa Denial,' in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (eds.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 62.

²²⁶ Martin Cohen, *The Essentials of Philosophy and Ethics*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 133.

²²⁷ Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 51.

that arguably hold some sway in the modern age. For example, he justifies his actions by arguing that he is just trying to make a living and improve his circumstances, and he donates some of his wealth to ‘good causes’ such as the arts.

The way Hutcheson and the merchant speak and conduct their debate, it is as if they have accidentally fallen into a wormhole and been transported to the future. The playwright and director did an admirable job of, on the one hand, making the men appear totally of another age, and on the other, very relatable. And this is the power of the play. If the ‘villain,’ in this case the tobacco lord, says just one thing that the audience can almost sympathise with, even secretly, then it plants a seed of doubt. An audience member might then ask herself, would I have strongly opposed slavery if I had been alive in the 1700s? Or would I have justified it using arguments similar to the tobacco lord? Live theatre was a very clever medium to use; the portrayal of acted emotion, in unison with textual argument, is to many more effective than stating on a plaque, ‘some people argued *x* and some people argued *y*.’ One gets a sense of what people *felt*, and even if one does not agree with an argument, when they can understand the emotion, perhaps they are more inclined to recognise the nuance and terrible complexity of humanity’s capacity to commit atrocity.

Importantly, the play deals with the complexities of abolitionism and the Enlightenment. On arguing the racial inferiority of African people, the tobacco lord points out that some of Hutcheson’s philosopher colleagues hold a similar view. Hutcheson admits that ‘the Enlightenment is a broad church of views.’ Indeed, while many scholars credit the Scottish Enlightenment as a force for abolition, the philosophical arguments of Hutcheson, Adam Smith and David Hume, for example, were of their time. For example, while moral philosophers such as Hutcheson argued that all humans were entitled to love and care, they also argued that slavery was ‘uneconomic and a hindrance to the growth and wealth of a state due to its low productivity.’²²⁸ It was not just a matter of right and wrong, but economic viability. Eric Williams’ landmark 1944 publication *Capitalism and Slavery* famously

²²⁸ Alison Webster, ‘The Contribution of the Scottish Enlightenment to the Abandonment of the Institution of Slavery,’ *The European Legacy* 8:4, 2003, 484.

explored this idea; Williams argued that slavery contributed massively to Britain's Industrial Revolution, and that it was the development of capitalism, rather than intellectual morality, which caused slavery's demise. Yet, in today's debates over immigration and the intake of refugees, for example, the economic factor is typically part of the debate. In a capitalist society, perhaps one can convince more people of their pro-abolition or pro-immigration stance if they have a sound economic backing to their argument.

Similarly to several post-2007 events that explored the relationship between Glasgow and slavery, *An Enlightened Land* was performed in a building directly linked to the profits of slavery. The play was performed in St. Andrews in the Square, a GBPT-renovated early eighteenth-century church, which, along with its neighbouring townhouses, acted for a time as headquarters for Glasgow's merchant elite. During the play, Hutcheson asks the tobacco lord, 'and you feel no shame for the legacy you leave to the city of Glasgow and its future citizens?' to which the tobacco lord responds, 'Why so? We leave them most wondrous architecture that is the envy of Europe.' In this way, not only is the audience forced to consider its own morality, but the very physical environment in which it sits. This, perhaps, was GBPT's most significant achievement in 2007 – it unveiled the stone and mortar of Glasgow to be intrinsically linked to the transatlantic slave trade. Unlike the merchants, the city remains – and one cannot argue with that.

5.4.4. Summary

Owing to GBPT's leadership, the *Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco and the Slave Trade* bicentenary project had a very specific focus – built heritage. The team focused on the very clear links between Glasgow's buildings, the wealth of the 'Tobacco Lords,' and slave labour. These links had been previously ignored, and McChlery's move to finally look at them received a less-than-enthusiastic response from some of the city's modern day 'Fathers.' The Doors Open dimension guaranteed the project a very large audience – tens of thousands – and fostered a culture of 'openness.' The connections between Glasgow's built heritage and slavery were active at various levels – some of Glasgow's most historic and 'worthy'

buildings are the ones built on the riches of tobacco, preserved and renovated by the GBPT. Furthermore, the project helped make Glasgow's built heritage come to life, in that the exhibition was staged in an old 'Tobacco Lord'-funded church (where the exhibition remains today), and the heritage walks inspired a local businessman to open a café dedicated to an African American abolitionist, James McCune Smith. Presenting the city's built heritage in a new light, lending it new meaning, in a very public way, GBPT enabled Glaswegians to take greater ownership of their city's complex, and often negative, history.

GBPT had limited resources in terms of historical research – it employed a graduate for a short fixed-term research placement. Or, to look at it another way, it took a chance on a young 'expert in waiting,' a Glaswegian with a history degree and passion for the topic. This in turn led to further research on the topic, as Mullen used his bicentenary research to apply for doctoral funding and write his PhD on the Tobacco Lords.

While the imagery used in *Glasgow's Built Heritage, Tobacco and the Slave Trade* was symptomatic of a wider tendency towards chain and manacle motifs, in subsequent projects, this has been rectified.

The project fully embraced the abolitionist debate, but presented it through the prism of the Scottish Enlightenment – a major cornerstone of the country's intellectual, cultural and scientific history. *An Enlightened Land* revealed the complexities of the abolitionist debate, and helped personalise a Tobacco Lord, bringing his perspective to life and making the moral and economic debate over slavery tangible to a twenty-first-century audience.

It must be noted, McChlery's willingness and enthusiasm to talk to me about the bicentenary project was striking. She posted everything she had on the project to me in a huge parcel – someone she had only spoken to on the phone previously. The 'openness' of the project has thus been sustained by McChlery's continued employment at GBPT, and her enduring passion for the subject. To McChlery, this is still a topic of vital importance.

6. Conclusion

For Scotland in 2007, publicly recognising its significant historic involvement in the transatlantic slave trade was uncharted territory. Curators and heritage and arts workers found themselves grappling with an element of Scottish history that was largely under-researched, unknown and unflattering. That only seven Scottish bodies applied for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund is perhaps understandable. The SNP minority Scottish Government engaged with the bicentenary to the extent that it commissioned a pamphlet, which although was less radical than its original (expert) authors had envisaged, was still explicit about the Scots' significant and direct involvement in slavery. But, save for the pamphlet, there was not a national Scottish response to the bicentenary. The National Museum did not do anything, and to date, still has not. However, while Scotland's response was modest, its importance should not be underestimated. This was the first time that Scotland's slavery 'amnesia' had been addressed in any significant way.

This dissertation has shown that where academic 'experts' – Alston, Prior and Mullen - in the field of Scotland and slavery took the lead, the output was most successful. By successful, I mean considered, balanced, nuanced, thought provoking and willing to challenge deeply held collective memories.

Perhaps more significant than the bicentenary itself, however, was its aftermath and legacy. None of the three projects were put 'back in the box' afterwards, but remained publicly visible and active in some way. Aberdeen City Council, for example, produced a highly original and detailed web resource in 2008. The website addressed many of the problems that the original Aberdeen project had created, and filled many of the spaces that it had left – specifically, an almost complete failure to engage with Aberdeen's direct links to the transatlantic slavery, the profits made, and the impact this had on the enslaved then, and their descendants now. There was a very definite learning curve demonstrated in Aberdeen's response to the bicentenary, which arguably shows a desire to continue to develop and build upon how the city sees itself in the wider story of the slave trade.

In 2007, Glasgow Building Preservation Trust's director Anne McChlery, and former researcher Stephen Mullen, fostered a very specific focus on Scotland and slavery – Glasgow's built heritage. GBPT had a vision of what it wanted to achieve, and arguably, this was realised. The architectural legacy of the profits of slavery – the Merchant City - remains a constant in a city that is always changing; it is, to use de Bruijn's term, a 'bridge' to the past that has the power to stimulate historical empathy. Since 2007, Glasgow seems to have adopted its 'rediscovered' slavery past in an almost organic way. The opening of the McCune Smith café is a small but not insignificant tribute to the city's past; a city that was complicit in the slave trade, but with its university open to new ideas as well as alumni. Furthermore, the irony of a café – stuffed with sugar-sweetened cakes and coffee – named after a former slave, abolitionist and doctor is not lost. While GBPT continues to include Glasgow's slave history in its annual Doors Open Day, and Mullen still occasionally leads walking tours, the city's artists and heritage experts have also continued McChlery and Mullen's work. For example, the *Empire II – Scotland the Brand* workshop will take place on 30th July 2017; it will be a discussion about how Scotland should approach the less appealing aspects of its history, primarily slavery.²²⁹ It is Glasgow's second *Empire Café* event, the first having taken place during the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. The games put Scotland's slavery past on an international stage; both Devine and Mullen discussed Scotland's slavery past as part of the official proceedings. Despite initial trepidations, Glasgow has to a large extent embraced its difficult history, and the role of GBPT's 2007 project in creating this culture of openness should be recognised.

Alston's research continues to inform and inspire other academic research on the topic of the Scottish Highlands, Guyana and slavery – he also continues to talk publicly about his research, and add more information to his website *Slaves and Highlanders*. For Alston, 2007 was not a springboard for this, but rather an opportunity to get some funding for research he had already been doing. The bicentenary – with its HLF stamp of approval – also

²²⁹ The Empire Café, 'Empire II – Scotland the Brand,' available at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/empire-ii-scotland-the-brand-tickets-35435139456?aff=es2>, last accessed 16.07.17.

helped validate this area of historic research. Alston is an expert in a very specific field – the Highland connection to slavery – where his research is so detailed, its implications so far-reaching, that anyone with family from the Scottish Highlands may search their family name with a feeling of trepidation. Scotland does not have a large population, and in 1801 it numbered just over 1.5 million²³⁰ - in the aftermath of Alston's bicentenary project, the 'six degrees of separation' takes on a new meaning and immediacy.

The experience of the enslaved was largely omitted from Scotland's response to the bicentenary, with local Scottish perspectives taking centre stage. Cromarty was the only project out of the three case studies to engage with the perspective of a slave – 'a slave called Inverness' - and that was just a paragraph of text. Indeed, Aberdeen's bicentenary advisory committee warned of the lack of 'black,' or 'BME,' perspectives, but the project's leaders ignored this warning and stuck to their 'Indian Peter' narrative. GBPT's *An Enlightened Land* omitted the slave's perspective, instead lending air time to a white Scottish abolitionist and 'Tobacco Lord,' perspectives that had already been engaged with in other parts of Glasgow's bicentenary project. Furthermore, imagery of slave agency and self-emancipation was very absent from Scotland's response to the bicentenary. Alston engaged with the Demerara slave rebellion, but it is the striking image of the impaled African head that lingers in the mind – no doubt this was Alston's intention, but it perpetuates the notion of the slave as a subjugated and abused victim, and nothing more.

This leads to another important point. The UK does not have quite the same levels of racial inequality and tension as the US, nor is race at the forefront of politics in the same way – in saying that, immigration remains a constant tension in British society, and race is part of that tension. In Scotland, however, there are certainly not the same racial divisions and inequalities. That is not to say that racism and prejudice do not occur in Scotland – they most certainly do - but the population remains overwhelmingly 'white' and thus there is not the same demand to address the historical roots of racism. However, that does not mean that

²³⁰ Julie Jefferies, 'The UK Population: Past, Present and Future,' Office for National Statistics, 2005, 4.

Scotland should not address the contemporary legacies of slavery, for it was Scotland – along with so many other European nations – that helped establish and preserve the slave labour economy of the Americas.

Scotland's nationalist resurgence is challenging the status quo of the British Establishment, evidence in its frustration, for example, at supposedly being left out of the UK's Brexit negotiations. Indeed, Scotland was the most pro- 'remain' part of the UK in the EU membership referendum, with 62 per cent of the population voting to the stay in the EU. Just as the National Museum of Scotland has been, arguably, influenced by nationalism since the 1990s, emphasising its connections to Europe rather than England, for example, so too is contemporary Scottish politics sticking to the nationalist, but pro-Europe, hymn-sheet. The impact of the bicentenary on the National Museum of Scotland remains to be seen. As Alston pointed out, ten years is a long time to have not done anything on slavery.²³¹ Instead, the National Museum seems to be revisiting the (immensely popular) 'big hitters' of Scottish history – a major exhibition on Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Jacobites opened this summer at the museum.

This dissertation calls for greater collaboration between academics and those working in the heritage sector. The impact and originality of Alston's seemingly simple but subversive exhibition, Mullen's commitment to furthering public knowledge of Glasgow's slavery-funded cityscape through walks and talks, and the success of the website created by Prior for Aberdeen City Council using Aberdeen University's archives, reveal high quality pieces of work that engage with public audiences in diverse and important ways. In the twenty-first century, there is a huge appetite for recreating and remembering the past; it seems a logical progression that academics and heritage workers increasingly pool their knowledge and expertise in a bid for more rounded and considered responses. How can such responses be a positive force for social change and justice? Society as a whole must reflect on the past; it is a matter of collective responsibility as well as collective memory. The 2007 bicentenary burst the bubble of amnesia, and in the intervening years, more commemorative work has taken

²³¹ Alston, Interview, 22.01.17.

place. The onus now lies on Scotland's major national institutions to follow suit and bring forth new creative responses.

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