BREAKING THE DEAD SILENCE

Engaging with the Legacies of Empire and Slave-Ownership in Bath and Bristol's Memoryscapes

Edited by Christina Horvath and Richard S. White

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Ignorance or concealment of major historical events constitutes an obstacle to mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation among peoples.

UNESCO. 2014. 'International Indentured Labour Route Project', information paper (archived). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000230359 [accessed 21 May 2024]

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INTRODUCTION

Breaking the 'dead silence'

Engaging with legacies of transatlantic slavery in the memoryscapes of Bath and Bristol

Christina Horvath and Richard S. White

Dr Christina Horvath is Reader in French Politics at the University of Bath. Her research interests include arts-based Co-Creation methodologies and the impact of colonialism on the ways we perceive plants, gardens, botany and knowledge. She has been researching Bath's links with transatlantic slavery since 2016.

Dr Richard S. White is Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Art, Film and Media at Bath Spa University. An artist-researcher, he is interested in movement, heritage and social justice. His emergent practice involves non-confrontational co-creative disturbances to authorised heritage narratives attending to reluctance, absence and presence.

This edited volume is born from their shared interests in and collaboration on colonial legacies in the city of Bath.

1 Living with the 'dead silence'

Jane Austen, who resided in Bath in 1801–6 when the campaign against the trade in enslaved Africans peaked, referred obliquely to slavery and enslavement in her fiction. Edward Said highlights a passage in her novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) in which a conversation on the slave trade is closed down by 'a dead silence'.[1] As this book will argue, that dead silence still prevails in Bath's contemporary 'authorised heritage',[2] into which Austen has been co-opted as the city's treasured author. The same can be said more

1 Said 1993, 115
2 Smith 2006

broadly about Britain, where silence, absence and constructed amnesia have long dominated the heritage narratives of empire, colonisation and slavery. The lack of diversity in memorial narratives has resulted in the construction of a national heritage in which postcolonial immigrants and their descendants struggle to recognise themselves since, as Hall stated, 'those who cannot see themselves in its mirror cannot properly "belong"'.[3] For decades, researchers have highlighted and challenged this silence, sparking public debate.[4] The aim of this collection of writings is to contribute to widening the public debate and bringing new voices to it in Bath, Bristol and beyond, hoping that a time will come when 'there would no longer be a dead silence when slavery was spoken of, and the subject [would become] central to a new understanding of what Europe was'.[5]

Recent international events sparked a new critical interest in the history and legacies of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, reigniting local debates about what should happen with Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes. The overwhelming surge of emotion following the murder of George Floyd triggered an international wave of protests, and statues of uncritically celebrated historical figures from Columbus to Leopold II and from Colbert to Victor Schœlcher came under intense scrutiny of attention and were removed by impassioned crowds. The Black Lives Matter protest in Bath on 6 June 2020 and the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol on 7 June are seen by many residents of Bath and Bristol as a watershed moment.

Commencing with an exploration of these events' aftermath in Bath and Bristol, this volume considers resonances and offers comparisons from elsewhere in the UK and the world. Bath and Bristol are two closely connected cities on the River Avon in the South West of England. Bristol was once Britain's principal imperial port, while Bath served as a city where the affluence of empire found tangible expression. As this volume seeks to demonstrate, the memoryscapes of both cities are contested spaces, although in different ways. Today Bristol stands at the heart of a large and culturally diverse modern conurbation, while Bath, a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site, has evolved into a meticulously curated tourist honey trap. The clash between both cities' official narratives and other, more diverse viewpoints became evident during the events of June 2020. This volume encompasses a spectrum of voices that provide diverse perspectives on that particular experience. For some, it signified a pivotal moment, while for

3 Hall 1999

4 Rice 2012; Araujo 2012; Moody 2020; Gueye and Michel 2018; Otele, Gandolfo and Galai 2021

5 Said 1993, 96

others, it constituted a segment of an extended struggle for remembrance, acknowledgement and recognition.

The memoryscapes of Bath and Bristol materialise narratives that have been serving the interests of powerful elites for generations. Stories of colonial exploitation, forced migration and looting are hidden in plain sight. This selective memory loss has been sanctioned and celebrated by cultural events such as the annual Jane Austen Festival, prestigious collections displayed at local museums, including Beckford's Tower, No. 1 Royal Crescent and the Holburne Museum, and the Mayor of Bath's free walking tours, departing twice a day from Bath Abbey. From Bath's UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site and the old port of Bristol to the coastal cities of the UK and beyond, public sites of memory have yet to fully acknowledge the atrocities committed in the creation of the wealth they manifest or cede space for descendants to grieve and memorialise the destroyed lives of their ancestors. Until recently, demands for truth-telling and questions of social justice and repair were greeted by a dead silence. Olivette Otele describes these spaces, where the resistance and agency of enslaved people are still to be formally recognised, as 'reluctant' sites of memory.[6] Ancestral ghosts haunt these sites and their spectral voices and narratives are only beginning to emerge.

Britain's leading role in the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, its economic and industrial development and its, albeit temporary, world domination funded by colonial extraction are well-documented in the archive. The nation's heritage narratives offer partial acknowledgement of this past violence and tend to overemphasise the roles of 'enlightened rulers' and privileged white male abolitionists like William Wilberforce.[7] Official narratives have been constructed and perpetuated through heritage orientation, tourist marketing, guided tours and school curricula. They have one-sidedly celebrated former slave traders and plantation owners, including Bristol's Edward Colston and Bath's William Pulteney, the Duke of Chandos, William Beckford or Thomas William Holburne, for their philanthropy, entrepreneurialism or aesthetic achievements. Critical inquiry on the sources of the wealth of these men has been promptly dismissed, claiming either that their behaviours 'should not be judged by today's standards' or that residents of both cities were 'all in it together'. While such myths have found traction within Britain's authorised heritage, the impact of African resistance and anti-slavery campaigns led by religious dissenters, women, formerly enslaved Africans and other uncelebrated campaigners continues to be neglected. The cityscapes of Bath and Bristol, among other cities, still bear testimony to the slave-owning elite's hegemonic power;

6 Otele 2016
7 e.g. Cubitt 2012

aesthetic canons established through calculated urban planning and policies of heritage protection continue to consolidate their privilege and ideology, thereby maintaining a veneer of respectability.

The consequences of the 'dead silence' in Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes are multiple. The glorification of those implicated in historic slavery and colonial looting through statues, museums, schools and street names has left many residents feeling out of place.[8] Hierarchies reaching back to the days of slavery have been perpetuated through discriminatory immigration legislation and manifestations of institutional racism including the Windrush scandal. Unchallenged imperialist, white-supremacist and Eurocentric ideologies have long kept museums and cultural institutions exclusive, ahistorical and segregated. The 'collective, selective amnesia in the service of easing a nation's cognitive dissonance'[9] accounts for much of present-day discrimination. It fuels a long history of racist violence against people of colour from the 1981 New Cross Fire in which 13 children perished to the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, and from the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 to the deaths of black Britons like Joy Gardner in 1993, Roger Sylvester in 1999, Dalian Atkinson in 2016 and Chris Kaba in 2022, at the hands of the police. The murder of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minnesota USA in 2020 reverberated within the historical context of racism and violence, drawing critical attention to the absences in Britain's memoryscapes.

In 1994, UNESCO's Slave Route project called for a reflection on a global scale about the transformations and cultural interactions caused by slavery in view of 'promoting inclusion, cultural pluralism, intercultural dialogue and the construction of new identities and citizenships' (UNESCO). A cautious engagement with Bristol's participation in the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans started with the exhibition 'A Respectable Trade? Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery' (Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery) in March 1999. In 2007, funding distributed to mark the bicentennial anniversary of the 1807 Slave Trade Act enabled exhibitions like 'Breaking the Chains' at Bristol's British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. Bath museums responded with temporary displays such as 'Ghosts in the Gallery' at the Holburne Museum, 'Big Spenders: The Beckfords and Slavery' at Beckford's Tower and Museum and 'Selina's Web' at the Museum of Bath Architecture commemorating the slave-owning, but emancipation-supporting, Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon. While these temporary exhibitions have undoubtedly contributed to critical conversations on both cities' colonial connections, the change they induced in the memoryscapes remained

8 Hall 1999, 4

9 Akala 2018, 126

ephemeral. After a brief questioning incentivised by funding, institutional risk aversion and sectional interest quickly stifled the debate. Experiences of questioning, challenging and seeking to diversify the stories that Bath tells itself and the world in the specific context of the events in the nearby city of Bristol and the international response to the murder of George Floyd are the starting points for many of the case studies that follow.

Bristol's popular critical engagement with its past is well-established and complex, and is discussed in several chapters in the volume. It has manifested itself in research and activism exemplified by the work of Bristol Radical History Group,[10] the Countering Colston activist group and the events of June 2020. During the years following the 2007 bicentennial, questioning of official narratives took the shape of guerrilla memorialisation in Bristol around Edward Colston's statue and activism which resulted in the naming of a bridge after Pero Jones, an enslaved servant to John Pinney, and renaming of the Colston Hall. Attempts to add an explanatory plaque to Colston's statue failed, however, thwarted by the inaction of the city council and the resistance of the Society of Merchant Venturers, a still powerful and secretive interest group.

2 Disrupting the silence in the wake of summer 2020

Public interest in suppressed colonial history accelerated with the release of an open-access slave-ownership database by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery at University College London. After the critically acclaimed documentary *The Slavery Business: Sugar Dynasty* (2005) aired on BBC2, two recent series have directed public attention more specifically to the links of Bath and Bristol with the 'uncomfortable' past of British slave trade and slave-ownership. In 'The Remains of Slavery' (2020), Miles Chambers explores objects and architecture found in and around both cities, while in *A House through Time* (2020) David Olusoga investigates the history of 10 Guinea Street in Bristol. Some of these links have also been explored by local historians, artists and curators, including one of the authors, Richard White,[11] whose public performative walking cycle began in Bath in 2016, and Amy Frost, Senior Curator at Bath Preservation Trust,[12] who dedicated several publications and museum resources to the Beckford family and their links with plantations in Jamaica.

When the Colston statue was finally toppled from its pedestal and thrown into the harbour by Black Lives Matter protesters on 7 June 2020, the echo

10 Steeds and Ball 2020

11 White 2021

12 Frost 2007; 2018

of the event, amplified by global trends and taken up by the world's media, resonated through the heritage sector of the region. It prompted museums to issue new mission statements admitting that slavery was a question they wanted to 'address and express, not supress'.[13] It was in this context that the 'Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery' was released in September 2020, sending a strong signal across the sector to ensure that 'links to colonialism and historic slavery are properly represented, shared and interpreted as part of a broader narrative'.[14] Another nationwide institution historically mired in the atrocities of empire and slave-ownership, the Church of England, joined the trend of unlocking and reflecting on their archives with regard to those legacies. Bath Abbey staged a temporary exhibition, 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery', in June–September 2021, while the Bristol Cathedral engaged with their own colonial connections through the 'All God's Children' exhibition, launched in August 2022. This latter received funding from the Society of Merchant Venturers, an institution seeking both to distance itself from complicity in past atrocities and obscure its legacies. The National Lottery agenda of diversity, inclusion and benefit for the community continues to drive change at Bath Preservation Trust, the Roman Baths, Sydney Gardens and Dyrham Park, resulting in the reinterpretations of objects in temporary and even permanent displays.

The events of 2020 left Bath and Bristol, as well as the residents of many other cities in Britain and beyond, with a set of unanswered questions. How could legacies of colonialism and empire and silenced links with the trade in, and wealth generated by, captured and enslaved Africans be uncovered and made part of the official narratives? What should happen to monuments celebrating Britain's legal slave owners and traders and how should the pervasive silence on these matters in places like Bath, where there are no statues to be removed and replaced, be broken? Is memorialisation the most efficient way of making the untold or unheard past visible in a city's memoryscape? If silence is complicity, is acknowledging institutionally forgotten legacies of the slave trade sufficient to take responsibility for what happened in the past? Do references to the abolitionist movement in Bath and Bristol risk obscuring white privilege and drawing attention away from black agency and resistance? And finally, how to capitalise on a favourable international and national context to create opportunities for a lasting change, rather than just a short-lived moment of opening? This volume seeks to answer some of these questions by offering a series of critical accounts and

13 Bath and North East Somerset Council 2020

14 Fowler et al. 2020

reflections inspired by a moment when the world's attention was captured by the image of the toppled statue of a Bristol slave trader being dumped into the harbour where his ships once moored.

3 The volume's aims and objectives

An overarching publication attending to the memoryscapes of Bath and Bristol is yet to be published. Our volume responds to this need by presenting, in one volume, research, interpretation and reflection undertaken by a diversity of authors engaging with legacies of slave-ownership and empire. It brings together voices from academics, educators, curators, artists, activists, community historians, early-career researchers and other practitioners from Bath, Bristol, and beyond. The authors reflect from different perspectives on how local events have participated in global trends and how international debates have found echoes in local contexts. They evaluate recent and ongoing attempts to challenge the official memoryscapes by addressing the moral deficit manifest in heritage construction. The book reveals some of the hegemonic power struggles manifest in the unequal memorialisation of the imperial past, questioning what is celebrated as Britain's prosperity, productivity, technical innovation, industrial revolution, entrepreneurialism and civic infrastructure development. Contributors highlight heritage injustices and tenacious racial and social hierarchies, denouncing the violence involved in these and offering strategies towards more nuanced understandings.

By exploring dissenting voices and minority practices challenging dominant narratives, this collective volume recognises the positive role of creativity, protest, contestation and questioning of the past. Collectively, the authors bring different perspectives to the fore and present strategies to contest dominant representations of the past in the urban space. Taken as a set of diverse and distinct voices inviting readers to listen and develop their own view, the volume advocates 'agonistic encounters' and 'radical multiperspectivism'[15] not only through theoretical engagement but also through practice.

Colonisation resulted in the erasure of much of the material and indigenous epistemic heritage in territories from which resources were extracted to fund industrial development and architectural beautification in colonising countries. The fundamental legacy is that the epistemology of the North has become 'the only source of valid knowledge while other ways of being and knowing have been invalidated and suppressed'.[16] Residents and visitors to the internationally famous cities attended to in this volume are thus disabled

15 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016

16 De Sousa Santos 2018

from fully knowing and sensing their past. The authors seek to create a space for a discussion that moves from acknowledgement and social justice concern to repair and reparation. Otele states that 'Questioning and challenging the representation of the memory of slavery [...] requires a plurality of approaches and the willingness to engage with collective responsibility'.[17] This volume presents commentaries and engagements with collective responsibility offering a contribution to the plurality of approaches Otele calls for. Authors reflect on changing personal and official memoryscapes and discuss potential strategies enabling different communities to be part of the conversation. Our shared ambition is to capture and document a live moment in contemporary history marked not only by the rise of an active critical engagement in a memorial landscape but an urge to enrich and generate a more open, transparent and honest memoryscape. From this local and time-specific starting point the book offers a series of engaged observations and conclusions of international significance concerning heritage, truth-telling and social justice.

4 Structure and overarching themes

This volume is divided into four parts. Part I (Chapters 1–4) suggests different strategies for a critical questioning of the past. Part II (Chapters 5–9), grounded in radical multiperspectivism, offers personal accounts and reflections to engage with colonial legacies in Bath and Bristol. Part III (Chapters 10–12) is concerned with arts-based practices and participatory approaches. Part IV (Chapters 13–16) brings comparative perspectives to the discussion. The Introduction and the discussion panel in Chapter 16 frame the volume. However, the chapters do not require to be read in any particular order. Below, we highlight a few themes and ambitions woven through this volume, which offer potential alternative pathways along which the reader can discover this book.

Part I: Strategies for a critical questioning of official heritage

In the 1830s, compensation was paid to British slave owners for their 'loss of property', while reparations to enslaved Africans and their descendants are yet to come. Critical perspectives on official heritage recognise its careful curation towards underpinning the construction of a nation's or city's official memory, and, consequently, collective identity.[18] This curation involves absences and silences as well as promoted presence resulting in the construction of an authorised heritage constructed to create unified and

17 Otele 2018, 201
18 Choay 1992, 152

culturally homogeneous imagined communities.[19] Such narratives continue to be informed by values and perspectives inflected with power and authority and thus 'largely narrated from the viewpoint of the colonisers'.[20] Otele argues that the silences and an 'authorised amnesia' impact upon descendants of perpetrators as well as descendants of enslaved people.[21]

Several chapters engage with these injustices, scrutinising nationalist and Eurocentric biases inherent to the selection criteria underpinning listings of outstanding national or universal value. They explore how the 'dead silence' has maintained itself in Bath and Bristol and offer some steps towards discovering how to challenge the 'amnesiac conditioning' of authorised heritage.[22] Chapter 1 by Anna Cento Bull and Christina Horvath offers an opening perspective reviewing how alternative narratives emerging from three main areas – museum exhibits, guerrilla memorialisation and walking practices – reveal Bristol and Bath's colonial legacies. In Chapter 2, Christina Horvath draws lessons from a Co-Creation project that used creative interventions to create a shift in Bath's memoryscape from an agonistic perspective. Chapter 3 by Bryn Jones and Phil de Souza investigates the role of William Johnstone Pulteney in the construction of Georgian Bath, discussing both the origin of his extraordinary wealth and its controversial but enduring legacy in Bath. In Chapter 4, Mark Steeds examines how the cult of slave merchant Edward Colston, once celebrated as Bristol's greatest benefactor, still haunts the city, just as the toppling of his statue haunts these pages. The chapter engages with Bristol's long history of resistance to and complicity in slave-ownership, articulating the need for a permanent site of memory for the victims and descendants.

Part II: Radical multiperspectivism in Bath and Bristol

Other contributors to the volume seek to disrupt official narratives by incorporating missing perspectives and unheard individual voices from various communities in Bath and Bristol. These distinct, complementary, overlapping and occasionally contrasting voices pursue a common aim: they seek to tell the missing stories of enslaved ancestors and their descendants, victims of forced transportation and members of diasporic migrant communities. Through their personal and creative practices, they also attempt to incorporate into the local memoryscapes affects and emotions which have, until recently, been largely overlooked by heritage scholars.[23]

19 Anderson 2006
20 Hall 1999, 7
21 Otele 2018, 201
22 Martin 2013, 185
23 Smith, Wetherell and Campbell 2018

Through their radical multiperspectivism they seek to make up for the democratic deficit and heal the epistemic wounding by diversifying Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes. Chapter 5 by John Payne combines his own memories of Bath's vivid 1960s African-Caribbean cricket scene with oral histories collected from Bath's Afro-Caribbean communities into a reflection on local issues of memory and identity from slavery to workhouses and the Irish potato famine to the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott. In Chapter 6, Roger Griffith explores a black British perspective, critically reflecting on his own memories and intellectual journey. In Chapter 7, Renée Jacobs delivers a moving creative engagement with oppression, racism and microaggressions, articulating a personal response to the murder of George Floyd, preceded and followed by cases of police violence on black Britons.

Chapter 8, presented as a dialogue between Polly Andrews, Learning Officer at Bath Abbey, and Shawn-Naphtali Sobers, a trustee and director at Fairfield House, Haile Selassie's place of exile in Bath, combines and contrasts diverging perspectives on forging alliances and devising strategies to break Bath's dead silence. The authors, a white woman raised in North London and a black man who grew up in Bath, discuss how they negotiate their desire to engage with the city's African-connected histories through the protective tendencies of heritage stakeholders in a small city which is an international tourist destination with UNESCO World Heritage status. Their intimate and open conversation is a timely exploration of the complexities of navigating this narrative space with regard to the so-called 'anti-woke' reaction to the 2020 global Black Lives Matter protests.

Chapter 9 brings together the voices of Louise Campion from Bath's Holburne Museum and Jillian Sutherland, an emerging academic, Curatorial Fellow at the Museum 2020–1, with a group of young people of different ethnicities. The chapter explores new, reflexive museum practices which acknowledge and deepen our collective understanding of 'race' and national identity, providing fuller and richer stories that support a pluralistic, rather than universal, sense of history. The young people respond to Sutherland's reinterpretation of a mutilated plantation day book from Barbados in a film produced with Boys in Mind by filmmaker Andrew Hassenruck. These diverse voices discuss the impact of displacing and reinterpreting a significant evidential item decentring formerly Eurocentric narratives in the museum space.

Part III: Arts-based and participatory approaches to the past

A further overarching theme concerns experimentation with embodied strategies and methods to break the silence and shed light on past elites' obscured or redacted connections with the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. Chapter 10 by Richard White draws lessons from a radical

performative walking practice in Bath, which used provocations and embodied forms of learning as triggers to open conversations about the city's obscured colonial connections. Chapter 11 by Rob Collin discusses the author's experience designing and presenting slavery-themed walks in Bristol and Bath before and after the toppling of the Colston statue in 2020. In Chapter 12, Christina Horvath and Benjamin Van Praag experiment with Co-Creation, an arts-based method of collaborative knowledge production, to deconstruct some of Bath's dominant myths and make the memory of transatlantic slavery visible in the city's public space through artworks and a collectively designed walk. The methods explored in these chapters range from self-decolonisation to Co-Creative research and art practices, history research from below, oral histories, as well as somatic and grass-root activism and reflective curating. These practices share a common desire to create shared safe spaces – new museums, interpretation centres or accessible public spaces – where different communities can meet and engage in dialogue and alternative rituals and memorial practices.

Part IV: Comparative perspectives

The final theme of the volume involves the juxtaposition of different contexts in contrast to the memoryscapes of Bath and Bristol, drawing lessons from these comparisons. Authors reflect on the various but equally politicised ways in which the colonial past is memorialised in different contexts. Chapter 13 by Pamela Ileana Castro Suarez and Héctor Quiroz Rothe draws on the comparison of Bath with another UNESCO World Heritage City in Mexico, San Miguel de Allende, to reflect on the interplay of aesthetic and ethical attributes that continue to privilege narratives celebrating architectural and cultural models originating from the Global North over vernacular models and heritage from the Global South. In both locations, flows of mass tourism and vested economic and political interests further complicate the construction of diverse, open and truth-telling memoryscapes. Chapter 14 by Christina Horvath establishes a comparison between Bath in Britain and Bath in Jamaica, two spa towns with similar geothermic properties, whose strikingly different heritage fortunes provide a poignant starting point for a reflection on heritage justice and the interplay of built and natural heritage. In Chapter 15, Alan Rice offers insights drawn from the process in Lancaster, a city which can be compared to and could serve as a model for cities such as Bath also coming to terms with an uncomfortable past. Finally, Chapter 16 brings the voices of some of the contributors together for a conversation on memoryscapes almost a year after the racist murder and statue toppling that constitute the moment of inception for this volume. Following the discussion and anticipating publication three years on, the editors offer some closing remarks.

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PART I

STRATEGIES FOR A CRITICAL QUESTIONING OF OFFICIAL HERITAGE

1

An agonistic approach to heritage dissonance in the memoryscapes of Bath and Bristol

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1.1 Introduction

In the summer of 2020, images of BLM activists tearing down the statue of slave-merchant-turned-philanthropist Edward Colston from its pedestal went viral around the world, creating an imperative for Bristol and Bath to stage a long-overdue public debate about their connections with empire, colonialism and transatlantic slavery. Although this unprecedented interplay between global debates and local events was almost immediately followed by an 'anti-woke' backlash,[1] it represented an extraordinary opportunity for the emergence and consolidation of new, unsettling voices and novel

1 The 2016 Brexit referendum in Britain signalled the end of two decades of tolerance and liberal consensus established after New Labour's landslide victory in 1997. The term 'culture war' has been coined to refer to the irreconcilable worldviews of progressive activists, academics and artists questioning issues related to race, gender, power and privilege and conservative social groups for whom identity politics had gone too far. In 2020, after the scrutiny of empire, slavery, race and ethnicity was amplified by the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown and BLM, conservative forces launched a counterattack on the so-called 'wokes'.

approaches to the past. These recent events also gave impetus to ongoing petitions, such as the attempts in Bristol to establish a permanent memorial site for the victims of enslavement and an 'Abolition Shed' interpretation centre dedicated to commemorating the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans on the harbourside.

This chapter aims to evaluate some of the recent and ongoing mutations in Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes from an agonistic perspective. As opposed to cosmopolitan or antagonistic modes of remembering, agonism engages with human and social emotions. It can therefore promote critical reflection and self-reflection as well as dialogue between communities and stakeholders having different perceptions of Britain's colonial past. Drawing on the concept of agonistic democracy introduced by Chantal Mouffe's[2] and Cento Bull and Hansen's[3] theorisation of memory work in an agonistic mode, the chapter will focus on debates about heritage to explore how clashes between conflicting memorial narratives can enable individuals and institutions in Bristol and Bath to question past and present representations of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and the British Empire. The authors will examine a range of examples drawn from curatorial, guerrilla art and radical walking practices, exploring how agonistic approaches have been integrated into institutions' and individuals' engagement with heritage dissonance and how radical multiperspectivity has informed these practices. The chapter will end with some recommendations for a context-sensitive approach and a reflection on how local events can participate in global trends and, vice versa, how international debates can find their echo in various local contexts.

1.2 Memoryscapes, heritage dissonance and agonistic memory

The term 'memoryscape' refers to memorial landscapes which materially and symbolically shape 'how collective memory is commonly spatialized'.[4] According to Gristwood,[5] the term was first coined by the sociologist Tim Edensor to categorise sites 'which attempt to materialize memory by assembling iconographic forms [around which] social remembering is organized'. As Gristwood notes, the material and symbolic organisation of social remembering is often deliberately orchestrated from above, even though this orchestration seeks to mask power struggles for control over meaning-making. Thus, 'the material world constitutes the context within

2 Mouffe 2005
3 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016
4 Muzaini and Yeoh 2005
5 Gristwood 2014

which practices of remembering and forgetting are performed, with material culture both enabling and limiting human practice'.[6]

On the one hand, 'the spatialisation of memory also implicates power, in the sense of creating a hegemonic narrative about the past'.[7] This narrative is often a national/nationalist one, aimed at remembering a collective 'us' in positive terms, as opposed to one or more collectives of 'them' portrayed as aliens or even enemies. In this process, dissenting voices and minority practices are marginalised and excluded. On the other hand, however, dominant memories are also resisted and contested through a variety of practices by multiple social and cultural agents, so much so that a memoryscape is best considered as 'a palimpsest of overlapping multi-vocal landscapes'.[8] The production of memoryscapes – whether concrete or imaginary – includes processes of 'calculated decision of landscape production, created and recreated by architects and planners, ideologically empowered by politicians and administrators' strategies, and [...] groups and individuals' tactics of the urban everyday routine'.[9] Kolodney notes that these competing processes in the urban fabric can take different forms, from street (re)naming and memorial construction to art performances and urban walks led by scholars or activists.

The specific dynamics of the power struggle around memoryscapes, and the extent to which dominant narratives are successfully contested, depend on contexts, practices and agents. In other words, any material heritage has the potential to generate dissonance and contestation, but the urban memoryscape can also crystallise around a well-established dominant discourse. In this sense, as Kisić[10] has rightly argued, 'heritage dissonance' is a more appropriate term than 'dissonant heritage'[11] since 'dissonance exists as a latent quality of any heritage' – it is present as a passive potential. This latent quality becomes active only when (a) new voice(s) is(are) articulated[12] and unlock(s) the already established discourse related to that particular heritage.

As we argue in this chapter, dissonance has a positive potential in so far as it offers opportunities to challenge established and hegemonic discourses, allowing for peaceful contestation of values and meanings, which is at the basis of democratic coexistence. Dissonance requires active agents and hence

6 Starzmann 2016
7 Kapralski 2011
8 Saunders 2001
9 Kolodney 2016
10 Kisić 2013, 56
11 Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996
12 Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Couldry 2010

participation on the part of diverse actors in discussions, debates and even controversies. It can be promoted using oral histories, artistic interventions and alternative commemorative practices offering multiple narratives so as to encourage multiperspectivity and critical thinking. By contrast, the dissonance that material heritage has the potential to generate can also be silenced or suppressed. For instance, it can be argued that there is little or no dissonance around a heritage site that has been largely forgotten or interpreted in ways that downplay the dissensus it may generate. This can happen, for example, when a site's aesthetic quality is overemphasised while its political message is neglected. Reliance on established canons to consolidate the ideology of the dominant classes can obscure the potential of historic buildings to generate dissonance. This can be observed in the case of the headquarters of the Fascist Party in Bolzano/Bozen, presented almost exclusively in terms of their architectural value,[13] but also in Bath, where the appreciation for Georgian architecture bypasses the issue of the 18th-century urban development having been, to a great extent, financed by plantation slavery (see also Chapters 9 and 14). Thus, canons can serve to generate selective, carefully curated memoryscapes in which domesticated meanings of an idealised past revolve around beauty and harmony in an effort to erase less-desirable memories of power struggles and conflicts.

Overall, the uses we make of heritage can determine whether the latter has the potential to generate dissonance which can be related to in a positive way to promote agonistic memory and democracy. The agonistic conception proposed by Mouffe[14] aims to revitalise the democratic project, especially when applied to the field of memory around contested heritage, precisely because it acknowledges and values disagreement and conflict. Mouffe argues in favour of sublimating antagonistic relations into what she terms a 'conflictual consensus among adversaries',[15] that is to say, a consensus about sharing a common symbolic space, which allows political adversaries to develop and pursue alternative hegemonic projects without attempting to overthrow the democratic institutions with recourse to violence.[16] Drawing on Mouffe's theorisation of agonistic democracy, Cento Bull and Hansen[17] have claimed that memory work in an agonistic mode has the potential to turn enemies into adversaries and to lay bare the historical processes and agents involved in the struggles around hegemony. Agonism as a mode of remembering engages with human and social emotions in order to promote

13 Cento Bull and Clarke 2020
14 Mouffe 2005; 2013
15 Mouffe 2013b, 52
16 Mouffe 2013a, 9
17 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016

critical reflection and self-reflection. Emotions play an important role in socio-political relations. Indeed, passion is a force that can be harnessed to reinvigorate democracy and can also be used to create a sense of solidarity without demonising the 'evil other'. Therefore, bringing agonistic narratives of the past to the fore allows for dissonant voices and agents to be heard and listened to. The aim is to understand the social and political conditions, as well as human and social emotions, that led to mass perpetration but also to resistance struggles.

Agonistic memory work can help bring about practices associated with Saunders'[18] definition of memoryscape as 'a palimpsest of overlapping multi-vocal landscapes'. This is because the agonistic approach to memory advocates radical, rather than consensual, multiperspectivism. As Cento Bull and Hansen argue,[19]

> In consensual multiperspectivism, often applied by cosmopolitan memory discourses, voices and perspectives belonging to characters who basically agree, or at least believe in the possibility of rational consensus, coincide. In radical multiperspectivism, voices and perspectives belonging to antagonistically opposed parties, typically victims and perpetrators, meet, alongside those of bystanders, traitors, collaborators and so on.

Consensual multiperspectivism restricts the narratives to a limited range of historical actors and 'roles', ultimately ensuring that all stories are seemingly told from the same perspective in terms of the overall narrative and interpretation of the (difficult) past. By contrast, radical multiperspectivism incorporates a wide range of narratives told from different, even contrasting, perspectives on the difficult past which have the potential to unsettle audiences. The multiplicity of different and even contrasting stories aims at open-endedness, setting aside the predication of a consensual narrative and laying the foundations for constructive discussions and dialogue.

While we acknowledge that both agonism and radical multiperspectivism tend to emerge as single 'moments' or interventions within largely non-agonistic memoryscapes,[20] much work remains to be done in terms of exploring the potential of agonism in the social and representational spheres and in assessing the complex relationship between multiple spatial levels of agonistic practices. This chapter aims to shed new light on these aspects.

18 Saunders 2001, 37
19 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016, 3
20 Cento Bull and Clarke 2020

1.3 Different memoryscape models in Bristol and Bath

Before we set out to assess the potential benefits of adopting an agonistic approach to the memory of transatlantic slavery in Bristol and Bath, it is useful to compare the contexts of both cities. Bristol is a multicultural port city with over 465,000 inhabitants and an important minority ethnic population of 16%.[21] The city's role in the trade in enslaved Africans as the most important British port for a brief period of time in the 18th century has been evidenced in logbooks, diaries, letters, compensation records and the Society of Merchant Venturers' archives.[22] Otele notes that since consensus was reached about facts and numbers in the late 1990s and early 2000s, debates in Bristol have mainly focused on the best strategies to commemorate the imperial past in the urban landscape. In contrast, Bath, situated only 20 km upriver from Bristol on the Avon, has a predominantly white population of about 100,000 and no maritime past. However, the 2020 English Heritage report exposing heritage site links with slavery describes Bath as a 'spa town dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure by wealthy fashionable society and [...] intimately linked with the fortunes of the transatlantic slave trade'.[23]

These colonial connections remain largely unacknowledged in the city's official memoryscape despite or perhaps because of its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which Bath earned in 1987. To acquire and maintain this status, the city was encouraged to demonstrate its prominent role and 'outstanding universal value' during 'two great eras in human history'.[24] The Eurocentric rhetoric praising the city's dual Roman and Georgian heritage omits reference to the shameful practice of chattel slavery in the Caribbean plantations, so crucial to the wealth accumulation of Georgian elites and the city's development. This whitewashing of Bath's memoryscape (see also Chapters 2 and 14) might also be motivated by the city's dependence on particular tourist markets. Visitors are welcomed to a city 'built for pleasure and relaxation' and a 'wellbeing destination since Roman times';[25] Bath attracts over six million tourists annually,[26] generating about £470 million

21 According to the 2021 census, 6.0% of the city's population is black, 5.5% Asian, 3.6 mixed, the BAME group making up 16% in total. In contrast, Bath has 2.6% Asian, 0.8% black and 1.6 ethnically mixed groups, which amounts to 5% in total.

22 Otele 2019, 133–42

23 Wills and Dresser 2020, 80

24 https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/consultations/city-bath-world-heritage-site-management-plan-2016-22

25 https://visitbath.co.uk/

26 Visitor Impact report 2018

in revenue.[27] We can conclude that selective amnesia has been used as a tool to uphold Bath's image as an iconic Georgian city while uncovering colonial connections has been viewed as a potential threat to this harmonious and attractive image.

While the heritage of transatlantic slavery was acknowledged almost a decade earlier in Bristol than in Bath, both cities have been grappling with their heritage dissonance, albeit in different ways. In Bristol, the debate has almost exclusively focused on the figure and legacies of Edward Colston. Community-driven social activism in the city resulted in occasional alliances between academics and activists. Such collaborations were epitomised by the Countering Colston campaign, which started in 2015.[28] In contrast, in Bath community groups have been less prominent and thus the debate has been muted and largely 'back-stage', with occasional interventions by activists, artists and academics. Unsurprisingly, even the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests differed in size and intensity in both cities. Protesters who took to the streets in Bath's Green Park on 6 June numbered about a thousand, in contrast with the crowd of ten thousand that toppled the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol on 7 June. Despite these substantial differences, activists seeking to revise hegemonic narratives have encountered similar difficulties in both cities, as we will demonstrate in the following sections.

1.3.1 Curatorial practices

Bristol first officially acknowledged its participation in the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans through the exhibition 'A Respectable Trade? Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery' which opened at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in March 1999. Praised for being 'an important step in the history of Bristolian exhibits',[29] the display was a response to the controversy sparked by the Festival of the Sea, a commercial event held in 1996 which celebrated Bristol's maritime past with barely a mention of colonialism or the transatlantic slave trade.[30] Co-curated by Sue Giles and Madge Dresser, the exhibition was designed in collaboration with Bristol Museums & Art Gallery, the University of the West of England, and an advisory panel of local and national historians and curators.[31] Moreover, for the first time a wide range of external stakeholders was involved, from

27 https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/staggering-amount-raised-tourism-bath-3465846

28 https://alternativebristol.com/campaign-group-countering-colston-comment-on-the-first-court-hearing-of-the-colston-4/

29 Otele 2012

30 Giles 2001; 2008

31 Dresser and Giles 2000

the Bristol Slave Trade Action Group through the academic advisory panel to the community consultative panel. An important innovation consisted of holding public meetings with communities outside the museum, for instance at the Malcolm X community centre, and organising a trip to the Liverpool Slavery Museum.[32] From these, by self-selection, and more widely by invitation, a community consultative panel was established. Finally, to ensure inclusivity, entrance fees were waived, and the exhibition was advertised via radio stations targeting minority ethnic audiences. Although from the great number of people who initially signed up for the consultation process, 'only four […] were there throughout',[33] their participation also contributed to the exhibition's success.

'A Respectable Trade', which attracted a record number of 160,000 visitors, helped diversify the viewpoints represented in the city's museums.[34] Its various sections addressed the transatlantic slave trade, the middle passage, life on Caribbean plantations, the resistance of enslaved men and women, and abolitionism. For instance, it included

> text panels, artifacts, and varying color schemes introduc[ing] African culture and diverse slave systems […] video material from the Steven Spielberg film Amistad (1997) […] [and] a replica neck iron and chain with modern padlock […] all positioned to provoke [a] response from visitors concerning slave suffering.[35]

While acknowledging the importance of the exhibition for providing a historical overview and dealing with the city's gains from the slave trade, Bernier argues that ultimately it raised more questions than it answered, not least because its narrative was at times selective or contradictory and the role of the still-powerful Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) both at the time of the slave trade and in present-day Bristol was not properly discussed. Bernier implies that this was potentially due to the Society's sponsorship of the exhibition.[36] However, as chief curator Sue Giles confirmed in an interview with the authors, the SMV only sponsored the printing of the trail. Also, while the curatorial team used SMV's archives and borrowed objects from them, the main focus of the exhibition was on the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and not on the SMV.

After the exhibition ended, its material was transferred to Bristol's Industrial Museum to create a permanent slave trade gallery in 2000.

32 Interview with Giles 2022
33 Interview with Giles 2022
34 Otele 2012; Bernier 2001
35 Bernier 2001, 1009
36 Bernier 2001, 1010

According to Otele,[37] both the 1999 temporary exhibition and the subsequent permanent gallery were successful at challenging hegemonic narratives dominated by selective amnesia. They equally addressed present-day social inequalities and racist attitudes and carefully avoided derogatory vocabulary when referring to the enslaved Africans[38] while also trying 'within certain limits to present a plurality of voices'.[39] Nevertheless, the ultimate goals of social cohesion and a shared memory, framed by the discourse of 'multicultural Britain', influenced the display and the adopted narrative and 'confrontation was carefully avoided'.[40] In other words, the display was an example of 'consensual' rather than 'radical' multiperspectivism.

When the Industrial Museum closed its doors in 2008, the slavery gallery became part of the M Shed, Bristol's new city museum which opened in 2011. According to former chief curator Sue Giles,[41] the original exhibit was organised in a very didactic fashion to provide diverse audiences with substantial information and food for thought. This aim was also supported by a catalogue, a website and a walking trail. When relocated to the Industrial Museum, the exhibition shrank as objects on loan were returned. The integration into the M Shed was more detrimental to the content because it not only reduced the exhibition's size to one-fifth of its original extent, but also reorganised its structure. Adapted to the M Shed's emphasis on Bristolians' individual stories, the display was recentred on a set of characters involved with the slave trade in different ways. A new design involving labelling on the glass required the shortening of all text to single paragraphs. The rest of the information was moved onto the computer system, which at first worked well but later, when the system was changed, resulted in a random association of pictures and characters. As a consequence, the gallery today

> doesn't quite work. […] It's a very small display. We did manage to rein in the design companies' worst excesses. It ended up that very quiet, calm space with very little in the way. They wanted originally to put in all sorts of graphics, which would have, I think, looked awful and dumbed down and probably offended a lot of people. […] I'm not happy with the gallery as it is, because we never quite finished it. […] I don't think it's got the right amount of space there or the right thing, you know, and the Abolition Shed would have been a very good thing.[42]

37 Otele 2012
38 Otele 2012, 160
39 Otele 2012, 167
40 Otele 2012, 167
41 Interview with Giles 2022
42 Interview with Giles 2022

Giles' view that the M Shed display is 'very much about the very diverse population of the city' highlights that it continues to be informed by a consensual narrative that avoids confrontation and aims to celebrate social cohesion and multiculturalism. Giles, who supports the 'Abolition Shed' project (see Chapter 4 for more detail), recognises the need for a space where the complex heritage of the transatlantic slave trade can be addressed in more detail and depth, but also in a more agonistic way than is possible in a single gallery in a city museum which has the vocation to tell many different stories.

In 2007, when marking the bicentennial anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, the city of Bristol succeeded in staging a very impressive and, in many ways, pioneering exhibition entitled 'Breaking the Chains' at the city's British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. This exhibition dealt extensively with the human costs of the slave trade but also with the agency of enslaved and free Africans, manifested through their struggles for justice and equality. A collection of artistic work called 'me deya' ('I am here'), which accompanied the exhibition, was 'dedicated to honouring martyrs, and ancestors, caught up in warring, forced transportation and struggles for liberation'.[43] The exhibition arguably incorporated radical voices and perspectives that had previously been missing. It also included public debates among its associated events, not least one on the issue of apology and reparations, which took place in 2006. According to Madge Dresser,[44] 'the museum's public consultation process and its incorporation of exhibitions of local black artists had been ground-breaking in its inclusivity'. Furthermore, innovative workshops organised in association with this event helped visitors engage with and express the complex emotions generated by the display.[45] Surprisingly, though, the exhibition was not found a permanent site in the city after the museum was put into liquidation in 2013. Rather, it was made accessible online, greatly limiting its appeal and its potential to continue to generate public encounters and discussions.

While petitions so far have not been successful at establishing a space dedicated to agonistic encounters and debates, Bristol Museums' initiative to produce a textbook engaging school audiences with the city's historic links to slavery can be considered a step forward. This project involved eight history teachers, leading experts from the University of Bristol, teachers of African heritage in Bristol and London, and a Bristol-based network of African and African-Caribbean community organisations, African Voices Forum, in bridging the gap in the curriculum to help schoolchildren in Bristol gain a

43 https://antislavery.ac.uk/items/show/420

44 Dresser 2009

45 Manley and Trustram 2018

better understanding of Bristol's slavery connections.[46] Entitled 'Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: Origins, impact and legacy', the textbook[47] adopts a primarily informative and neutral approach but does not shy away from controversial issues. These include attending to the development of a broad 'slave economy' that benefitted a very large section of Bristol's population and the continuing legacy of slavery and racism both in the world and in the city. As the book states,

> Cities like Bristol have not yet fully acknowledged the extent to which their economic and physical development rested on the racist ideas at the heart of the slave trade. Yet, as the Black Lives Matter demonstrations of 2020 made clear, ordinary men and women will continue to protest and resist racism and injustice.[48]

The textbook portrays protest and resistance in a positive light and concludes with an open-ended question about how Bristol's slave-trading past should be remembered, with wide-ranging suggestions including an annual day of remembering, a museum, a statue trail and even 'restitution and social justice work'.[49] The textbook therefore genuinely lends itself to opening up discussions in the classroom in a way that welcomes radical views and perspectives.

Unlike Bristol, Bath has no memorial or museum dedicated to the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, although it can be argued that this obscured heritage has been omnipresent in the city's architecture and museum collections. Museums failed to make the city's colonial links explicit until 2007, when the United Kingdom officially commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of the British transatlantic slave trade and funding was made available for temporary exhibits dedicated to this topic. In contrast with the 2007 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition at Bristol's British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, which remained available online after the dismantling of the museum in 2008,[50] the Holburne Museum's

46 https://shop.bristolmuseums.org.uk/products/bristol-and-transatlantic-slavery-origins-impact-and-legacy

47 Kennett et al. 2021

48 Kennett et al. 2021, 51

49 Kennett et al. 2021, 54

50 The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, opened in 2002 in Bristol's historic old railway station, announced its move to London in 2006 and closed down in 2009. However, in 2012 the move was finally cancelled and the museum's collections transferred to Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives. The Grade I listed building was returned to Network Rail and the shed, now known as Passenger Shed, has served as a conference and wedding venue since 2016.

'Ghosts in the Gallery' and Beckford's Tower and Museum's 'Big Spenders: The Beckfords and Slavery' have quickly faded from public and institutional memory. Organised around the bicentenary, these exhibitions finally acknowledged Bath's involvement in the 18th-century slave economy, almost a decade after this was done in Bristol. Jillian Sutherland, a former Artisa Foundation Curatorial Fellow at the Holburne Museum who discovered archive material from 'Ghosts in the Gallery', reflected on temporary exhibitions being threatened by oblivion:

> This historic exhibition looked really good. When I started conversations at the museum […] it had been lost to memory. Institutional memory of this was gone and me sort of delving through […] previous exhibitions brought it to attention. Some people just didn't know that it happened, which I think is a real shame because they would think they'd done some good work around the topic.[51]

Sutherland was appointed at the Holburne Museum in 2019–2020 with the expectation that she would provide a reinterpretation of an object of her choice (see also Chapter 9). The museum holds an important collection of portraits depicting members of prominent families with plantations in Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, Bermuda and Grenada and a series of fine ceramic and porcelain objects that served the enjoyment of colonial products such as tea and sugar during the Georgian period. Sutherland's choice fell on a ledger book from Barbados. It belonged to art collector William Holburne's family, who derived much of their fortune from sugar plantations on various Caribbean islands. The museum's permanent display, however, failed to expose this connection. Instead, it focused on tea and coffee consumption as a key feature of Georgian social life, omitting the sugar, which made both palatable, as well as the easy profits from the sugar production which enabled the new fashionable lifestyle. Presented in a closed drawer, with several of its pages ripped out, the object remained 'hidden in plain sight' (see Chapter 9), bearing witness to a desire to erase both its uncomfortable history and the enslaved people's names:

> I talked to staff about what was on display after I noticed this book, and some staff didn't know that it was there. […] so that shows how invisible it was. So, I knew that it was going to be confrontational from the very beginning – it was involving a curatorial team and existing staff who had been there for a long time. […] But as soon as I pointed it out, everybody was in agreement that it needed to change. Nobody said 'What's wrong with it being in the drawer? It's totally fine where it is'.[52]

51 Interview with Sutherland 2022
52 Interview with Sutherland 2022

Sutherland's reinterpretation took the book out of the drawer to turn it into the centrepiece of the gallery, thereby restoring its potential for heritage dissonance. It provided contextual information about the Holburne and Ball families' links with sugar plantations in Jamaica, Antigua and Barbados. It also restored the enslaved people's memory and dignity by adding their names and an epitaph by Barbadian-Scottish artist Alberta Whittle to the plinth. Furthermore, it contextualised British colonisation in the Caribbean and provided additional information about resistance and anti-slavery campaigning to emphasise enslaved people's agency.

This intervention by an emerging curator of Caribbean heritage was, in many ways, a lucky coincidence. Working at the Holburne as a curatorial fellow rather than a permanent member of staff, Sutherland had the necessary time, resources and independence from the museum's hierarchy. Yet, despite the support Sutherland received, she also experienced a certain degree of incomprehension from both volunteers and employees who challenged her decision to elevate the book's position in the gallery by placing it alone in a glass case. Limited funding also impacted the display, since it meant that a repurposed case had to be used. To better conserve the ledger book, it was necessary to exhibit it in a closed position, although an open, upright position in a purpose-built case would have been preferable. Overall, the redesigned gallery fulfilled its main goal by making a significant change to the dominant narrative, which previous temporary installations had failed to do.

Another attempt to break the silence about Bath's links with colonialism and transatlantic slavery was undertaken by Bath Abbey (see also Chapter 8). Recent restoration work and the 'Legacies of British Slave-Ownership' project at UCL (2009–2012) helped shed light on the colonial connections of about 200 of the 1,500 funeral monuments held at the Abbey. The exhibition 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery', on display from 24 May to 4 September 2021, focused on the relationships between those commemorated in the Abbey and the British Empire and the slave trade in the 1700s and 1800s. The exhibition pledged to 'communicate the Abbey's connections with the British Empire, including its involvement with the transatlantic slave trade in the 1700s and 1800s, openly and honestly'.[53] It included a prayer to end racism and a public apology from the Rector of Bath Abbey, Canon Guy Bridgewater, for the Abbey's complicity in the transatlantic slave trade.

In an effort to make the exhibition relevant to diverse audiences and enable various communities to have their voices heard, the Abbey team gathered perspectives from minority groups such as the Black in Bath Network and the Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association (BEMSCA)

53 https://www.bathabbey.org/anti-racism/

at Fairfield House, who were involved in writing the exhibition texts.[54] Contemporary artists and activists of African heritage whose collaboration was sought also included Shawn-Naphtali Sobers, an artist-researcher from the University of the West of England; Renée Jacobs, founder of B in Bath; photographer Manoel Akure; and poet Mark De'Lisser, captured on video while performing his poem 'Dark Shadows' in the Abbey.

Following the international Black Lives Matter outcry in June 2020, the Abbey and the Holburne Museum were among the institutions that issued mission statements acknowledging their founders' colonial connections with plantations in the Caribbean and announcing their commitment to reinterpret their displays and 'identify objects related to empire and slavery through the subjects depicted, their original purpose or the material used'.[55] To satisfy the requirements of the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Bath Abbey currently engages with members of Bath's black community, runs workshops for schools on the transatlantic slave trade and collaborates with the Bath Record Office on uncovering some of the city's colonial links. The new Bath and Colonialism Archive Project, funded by the National Archive Testbed Fund, is also part of this engagement. The Learning Officer at Bath Abbey, Polly Andrews, also disclosed future plans to memorialise transatlantic slavery either inside or outside the Abbey.[56] From the above examples it appears that in Bath, where activists have been preparing ground for a more diverse narrative, a real shift is emerging thanks to National Lottery leverage and the reactions of key institutions in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protest and the statue toppling in Bristol in 2020. These institutions commonly associate artists and activists to their projects, both to increase their own legitimacy and to monitor diversity and demonstrate collaborations with minority groups as required from grantees of public funding.

Bath Abbey's 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery' exhibition adopted an informative approach which would not alienate the core audiences. It did not, however, shy away from addressing the dark side of the British Empire and denouncing its uncritical celebration.[57] As one of the exhibition panels stated, 'the monuments here often idealise and celebrate the Empire and those involved in it' as it was seen as a time when 'England stood triumphant'. The same panel acknowledged that today 'we understand the human cost of empire and colonialism', hence the exhibition aims at 'revealing what is behind the text of the Abbey's monuments that either praise the empire or are silent about it'. The exhibition also incorporated new

54 Interview with Andrews 2022
55 https://www.holburne.org/about-us/the-legacy-of-slavery
56 Interview with Andrews 2022
57 https://www.bathabbey.org/anti-racism/memorials-empire-slavery-exhibition/

voices and perspectives. For instance, a powerful poem by Mark De'Lisser openly addressed the link between the opulent lives of the slave owners and the atrocities they committed: 'All for profit and funds. All so some could live well'. The poem also explicitly refers to the continuing legacy of slavery: 'A legacy that has chased us through our history/ So, if we really believe in equality/ Then we must examine our past unflinchingly/ Victims, benefiters, you and me'. The emphasis on the perspective of enslaved victims strove to engender affective reactions: 'As the voices of the victims echo/ Through time/ Reminding us never to forget or let go/ To never wipe from our minds/ Their pain'. In contrast, through his public apology for slavery, Rector Guy Bridgewater acknowledged the responsibility of both the perpetrators and passive bystanders: 'It is shameful that it was practised for so long, without effective challenge by church or nation'. The poem, the Rector's intervention and the prayer against racism championed by Bath Abbey were aimed at engendering emotions ranging from shame for the inhuman acts of the perpetrators to compassion for the victims. Thus, these initiatives went beyond the informative approach adopted for the core of the exhibition.

The Holburne Museum's new display on slavery has equally adopted a predominantly informative approach while also provoking affective reactions from the audiences. It went further than the Abbey's exhibition in three ways. First, as a permanent display, it cannot be easily discarded in future years. Second, it incorporated the alternative voices of black people who became vocal agents for resistance. Finally, it effectively ruptures the dominant narrative through a potent visual object, represented by the plantation day book. As Jillian Sutherland phrased it, 'it's not a beautiful object, because it's not shiny, because it's, you know, it is a battered, defaced, chopped up thing. Its appearance and its physical materiality is kind of ugly, so visually it's jarring […] The object is behind the narrative system'.[58] For Sutherland, this ugly-looking object powerfully exposes the dissonance around Bath's heritage by itself, incongruously displayed alongside aesthetically pleasing artefacts. The text underlines this contrast, as the caption reads: 'The book highlights the transactional treatment of people of colour through the colonial practices of the British Empire, and the origins of the consumption and luxury in this gallery, which warrants acknowledgement and remembrance'.[59]

In terms of engaging affective reactions, the panel on individual anti-slavery activism, which includes a number of black abolitionists, arguably has the potential to engender empathy for defiance and active resistance, as well as a passion for redressing social injustice beyond feelings of compassion for

58 Interview with Sutherland 2022

59 https://www.holburne.org/the-holburne-family-and-caribbean-plantations/#daybook4

the victims and condemnation for the perpetrators. To the extent that this is the case, the Holburne Museum display is closer to an agonistic approach. Nevertheless, a static museal display alone is insufficient to promote a dialogue between conflicting perspectives and (re)interpretations of a still-problematic past. Museal displays and exhibitions need to be supported by sustained socio-cultural practices and artistic interventions.[60] As Sutherland herself rightly argues in her contributions to this volume (see Chapters 9 and 16), the Holburne Museum's plantation-day-book display should be but one important step in rethinking the legacies of slavery and colonialism, as the museum should promote practices of critical interrogation and reflexivity, practices that involve both 'curatorial work and experiencing the museum as a visitor'.

In conclusion, in both cities, curatorial and museal practices have attempted to break the silence surrounding the uncomfortable heritage of empire and colonialism and to tackle the obscured history of the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy today. While Bristol did so as far back as the 1990s, under pressure from social and protest groups, in Bath the initiative rested with a few individuals working in established institutions. In both cases, we can talk of instances of agonistic practices linked to the incorporation of radical perspectives, displays of black resistance and defiance and occasional representations of the gains associated with the slave trade in terms of money, power, and ruthless exploitation. Such agonistic instances can arguably engender affective empathy with anti-racist struggles rather than mere compassion for the victims. Yet in both cases we are left today with a dearth of permanent displays and exhibitions, as most projects, especially the more ground-breaking, have been short-term and even episodic. This suggests a reluctance on the part of the cities' governing bodies to open up to the complexities of slavery and race as well as to their continuing relevance today.

1.3.2 Guerrilla memorialisation and activism in Bristol and Bath

'Guerrilla memorialisation' is a term coined by Alan Rice[61] to refer to what Kolodney calls 'memoryscape tactics' proposed by grassroots groups and individuals to challenge the urban memory space.[62] Rice defines guerrilla memorialisation as an 'underground dialogisation that subverts the majority story […] [and] works to rewrite the city and the nation's story bottom up'.[63] Most guerrilla tactics are genuinely agonistic in that they champion

60 Cento Bull and Clarke 2020
61 Rice 2007; 2010; 2011
62 Kolodney 2016, 123
63 Rice 2011, 255–6

heritage dissonance by challenging hegemonic narratives in active and performative ways. Bristol's effervescent street art scene has long been dominated by socially engaged artists from Banksy to Libita Clayton or Michele Curtis, who participated in diversifying the city's memoryscape with their performance 'Who Was Pero?' (2017) and the mural 'The Seven Saints of St Pauls' (2018), respectively.[64] Several guerrilla art interventions have attempted to redress the memorial injustice that reduced the victims of the transatlantic slave trade to silence while one-sidedly celebrating the slave trader Edward Colston (1636–1721). Thus, his statue has often been the target of these interventions, both before and after its toppling.[65]

Colston was born in Bristol in a family of wealthy merchants involved with the SMV. He initially traded wine, oil and textiles, but in 1680 he joined the Royal African Company (RAC),[66] Britain's sole company trading in enslaved Africans at that time. The RAC was responsible for shipping an estimated 84,500 captive West Africans to the Americas[67] in such brutal conditions that 23% did not survive the middle passage. Colston was an active member of the Company's governing body for 11 years and even became its Deputy Governor for a short period. After he left the declining RAC, he petitioned Parliament as a Tory MP for the expansion of the trade and, in his final years, became a commissioner and major investor in the slave-trading South Seas Company (SSC). After his death, he left an immense sum, £71,000, to support hospitals, schools, almshouses and churches as a way to oppose the rise of religious dissent through education. His name has been celebrated by naming Colston Hall, Colston Tower, Colston Avenue, Colston Street, Colston's Girls' School, Colston Almshouses and Colston Window after him, in addition to regular thanksgiving services held on 'Colston Day' (13 November), where Colston buns are distributed to schoolchildren.

As Nasar points out, although Colston has been venerated for centuries as one of Bristol's most prominent benefactors, the statue made by Irish sculptor John Cassidy was only dedicated to him in 1895, 174 years after his death and 88 years after the abolition of the slave trade. Engraved with the inscription, 'Erected by citizens of Bristol as a memorial of one of the most virtuous sons of their city',[68] the monument served to set the philanthropist as a 'noble example', contributing to establishing what Madge Dresser calls a 'sanitised image of Colston as an icon of an apparently

64 Schütz 2020
65 Cork 2022
66 Nasar 2020; Farrer 2020
67 Steeds and Ball 2020
68 Nasar 2020, 1219

universal Bristol identity'[69] in the heydays of the British Empire. Designated a Grade II monument in 1977, the statue became an important albeit increasingly contested and resisted part of Bristol's memorial landscape. This memoryscape was fashioned through the selective erasure of the horrors of slavery which resulted in an uncritical celebration of Britain's leading role in the abolitionist movement. In comparison, enslaved Africans were only memorialised through a guerrilla intervention parodying the English Heritage blue plaques. Installed by sculptor Will Coles on the statue's plinth in August 2017, the inscription read: 'Bristol, Capital of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1730–1745. This commemorates the 12,000,000 enslaved of whom 6,000,000 died as captives'.[70] The plaque was subsequently removed.

Debates around the memorialisation of Colston started emerging in the 1990s, and guerrilla interventions played an important role in this. In 1998, the statue was tagged with the words 'F**k off slave trader' shortly after Colston's role in the RAC was revealed during a consultation for the exhibition, 'A Respectable Trade? Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery'. In 2006, a British artist of Guyanese parentage, Hew Locke, was commissioned by Spike Island, a Bristol-based art space and artist collective, to produce 'Restoration', a series of altered photographic images of public monuments to be exhibited in Bristol's St Thomas the Martyr church. Instead of intervening directly on Colston's statue, Locke only manipulated the monument's photograph, among some other images featuring the statues of MP Edmund Burke and wool merchant Samuel Morley. By dressing these monuments in attires of guilt, glitter and plastic toys, he encouraged viewers to question the uncritical celebration of British philanthropists:

> It is perhaps the image of Colston that is most haunting. He is adorned with corrie shells and other trade beads, surrounded by a dark web formed by the branches of the tree. Whilst Colston's paternalism might have brought good to the city of Bristol, we are made aware of his, and many of his contemporaries' involvement in the uncomfortable truths of corruption and the enslavement of many African people.[71]

Locke noted that his intention was not to disfigure controversial monuments but to question dominant narratives glorifying the past. As he said, 'I'm interested in doing something which doesn't necessarily satisfy somebody who wants the thing gone but will certainly piss off somebody who wants it there, someone who thinks the past was glorious'.[72] Locke's work is

69 Dresser 2016
70 Otele 2019, 136
71 Spike Island 2006
72 Spike Island 2006

a particularly successful example of questioning hegemonic narratives glorifying colonialism in that it opens up a space in which unheard, dissonant voices can emerge.

A year later, in 2007, traces of red paint nicknamed 'Drops of Blood' appeared on the plinth of Colston's statue, attributed by some to Banksy.[73] In May 2018, Faith M created 'Colston in Shackles', an installation which consisted of knitted shackles of red wool added to the statue. As the artist commented:

> There was some excellent feedback and analytical comments which sparked debate about all kinds of issues. […] I love that some needles and a ball of wool made such a powerful statement and provoked so many feelings. It was up for around 3 weeks before someone ripped it down.[74]

Faith M's comments demonstrate that by choosing to remain anonymous, artists can escape unequal power relations that put them at a disadvantage in the face of hegemonic institutions that control official narratives of memorialisation. By creating a distance with hegemonic stories such as the renewed pride in British colonialism and entrepreneurship in the post-Brexit context, their irony and irreverent memory-acts 'expose this gulf between what happened in the past and how it now gets remembered'[75] to highlight gaps and shortcomings in official forms of memorialisation. As Rice suggests in his analysis of Lubaina Himid's work,

> guerrilla memorialisation negotiates new meanings out of the interaction between what is there and what is missing, […] subverts the imperial national narrative and makes the landscape speak its hidden and diverse histories. The city's amnesia and her act of remembrance are counter-points that create new multiple possibilities in the hitherto monological cityscape.[76]

Perhaps the most elaborate example of this interventionist approach is the guerrilla art exhibit which appeared on 18 October 2018 to mark anti-slavery day. The artwork, referencing the infamous 1801 diagram of the slave ship *Brookes*,[77] emulated a ship departing from Bristol with West African captives as cargo to the Caribbean or North America. The concrete blocks forming the ship's outline were wearing the inscriptions

73 Dresser 2016

74 Bristol Museums 2021

75 Young, quoted in Rice 2011, 256

76 Rice 2011, 256

77 British Library: https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item106661.html

'nail bar workers', 'sex worker', 'car wash attendant', 'domestic servant', 'fruit picker', 'kitchen worker' and 'farm worker' as well as the words 'here and now', thus associating the city's past involvement in trading human lives with modern-day slavery. As Cork notes, the installation depicted Edward Colston overlooking it as 'ship's captain, gazing down on the bodies lying in rows on deck before him'.[78] It was deeply agonistic in that it contributed to the repoliticising of the cityscape without seeking to negotiate a consensus between contrasting voices.

Interestingly, guerrilla memorialisation did not disappear with the performative toppling of the statue, which itself can be considered a highly powerful performative act that significantly contributed to transforming Bristol's memoryscape from below. In July 2020, the empty plinth of the statue was briefly filled with *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid)*, the life-size statue of a BLM activist made of resin and steel by artist Marc Quinn. The statue, which represented Reid with her fist raised in a Black power salute, was installed and unveiled without seeking formal consent from the city of Bristol. It challenged hegemonic memorialisation not only by replacing on the pedestal the slave trader, set up as an example, with a young black woman activist, but also by representing Africans and their descendants actively engaged in resistance rather than as passive victims. In their joint statement released on 15 July 2020, the activist and the artist agreed that the statue was not intended to become a permanent replacement for Colston's but a symbolic gesture to empower 'the enslaved people who died at the hands of Colston, […] George Floyd […], Black people like me who have suffered injustices and inequality'[79] and a symbol 'highlighting the unacceptable problem of institutionalised and systemic racism that everyone has a duty to face up to. […] It's time for direct action now'.[80] *A Surge of Power* was removed by Bristol City Council on 16 July 2020.

On 7 June 2021, a guerrilla plaque was added to the spot where Colston's effigy was thrown into the docks. Claimed by 'The Guerrilla Historians' and designed by Bristol-based artist John Packer, the plaque marked the first anniversary of the statue toppling. It was engraved on its surface with the image of the statue hitting the water and the words: 'At this spot, during worldwide anti-racism protests, a statue celebrating the 17th-century slave trader Edward Colston was thrown into the harbour by the people of Bristol' as well as the poem 'Hollow' by Bristol's City Poet Laureate Vanessa Kisuule. This new sign highlighted the failure of the city to provide Colston's statue with a corrective plaque which could have protected it 'from being

78 Cork 2018

79 Reid's statement on Mark Quinn's website 2020

80 Quinn's statement on his website 2020

damaged by the repeated appearance of unauthorised protest plaques'.[81] According to Roger Ball, the process of agreeing the plaque text got diverted from its original aim to expose the uncomfortable facts about Colston's role in Bristol's slave-trading past. Hijacked by organisations having a vested interest in defending the 'toxic brand' of Colston, the text became a 'more sanitised, pro-Colston version, cheerleading his philanthropy' and so un-corrective that it was worth putting it 'into the dustbin and the statue into a museum so in the future our children can study the folly of the Colston apologists'.[82]

Three years after the toppling, at the time of writing, Colston's plinth is still empty. His statue has been stored at M Shed but it is only visible on behind-the-scenes tours. Cleaned of mud but still with the cord around its neck, it was put on temporary display for six months on 5 June 2021 to encourage the public to share their views on its future. However, instead of nurturing a democratic debate, the 'Colston Statue: What Next?' exhibition was disrupted by members of the 'Save Our Statues' campaign, who block-booked all the available tickets to prevent the statue from being seen until it has been 'repaired, reinstated and its future democratically decided'.[83]

As this case demonstrates, opportunities for agonistic encounters are often hijacked by conservative agents involved in protecting hegemonic narratives about Britain's colonial past. After ignoring the African-Caribbean community's demands to remove Colston's statue for 30 years,[84] Mayor Marvin Rees appointed an academic-led group to build a better shared understanding of Bristol's past. The We Are Bristol History Commission, which for many Bristolians lacked legitimacy since it failed to involve opposing activist viewpoints from individuals and organisations,[85] gathered 14,000 responses from citizens with regard to what should happen to the plinth space and the statue. They recommended integrating the statue into Bristol Museums' permanent collection, displaying it horizontally rather than vertically and using the plinth for temporary displays engaging with contemporary issues, alternated with periods of intentional emptiness.[86]

The four people charged with criminal damage over the toppling of the statue were found not guilty and acquitted by Bristol Magistrates' Court on 25 January 2022 after arguing that they acted to prevent a crime since 'it

81 Ball 2019

82 Ball 2019

83 https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2021/06/changes-made-after-colston-exhibition-hit-by-blockbooking-protests/#

84 Hayes, Doherty and Cammiss 2022

85 Interview with Steeds 2022

86 Burch-Brown and Cole et al. 2022

was a criminal offence to keep that statue up because it was so offensive'.[87] The acquittal was condemned by leading Tories who proposed a new bill imposing 10-year jail terms for the toppling of monuments. This disproportionately severe measure seeking to discourage counter-memorialisation highlights that the culture war for the control of urban memoryscapes is far from over, while power asymmetries are growing between those who impose official memorialisation from above and those who are contesting dominant narratives from below. Even though most acts of guerrilla memorialisation are ephemeral, they seem to be an efficient way to challenge the way public figures are remembered. By bringing the Colston cult into public consciousness, guerrilla interventions have contributed to the renaming of the Colston Hall, Tower and School and the annotation of the Colston Window in St Mary Redcliffe. We can conclude that guerrilla activism continues to play an important role in revivifying democracy by reigniting public debate. In contexts where institutions fail to respond to community voices, it can help shape urban identities from below and promote agonistic engagement in which multiple voices contribute layers to the urban palimpsest.

In contrast with Bristol, guerrilla practices have been less prominent in Bath, where neither have memorial plaques in churches and cemeteries been tagged, nor have buildings bearing witness to the economic and symbolic power of former slave owners become the centres of polemics. Instead of engaging with the presence of statues, socially critical artworks have been targeting and highlighting their absence. Examples include *Stories of Hidden Presence in Bath City* (2014), a documentary by independent filmmaker Shawn-Naphtali Sobers which focuses on some of Bath's black residents and visitors, including George Bridgetower, Ignatius Sancho, and Ellen and William Craft. This was part of a Heritage Lottery-funded project at Bath Record Office. The film, which shows young people researching these absentees and projecting their missing images onto the city's public buildings, provides an ephemeral memorialisation which can be compared to Hew Locke's photographic work or Lubaina Himid's fictive tourist guides.

1.3.3 Radical walking practices engaging with heritage

Radical walking practices engaging with Bristol's slave-trading past and black residents emerged as early as the 1990s. Cultural consultant and tour guide Liz Small started proposing walks to the Redcliffe caves, the Georgian House Museum and the grave of Scipio Africanus in the churchyard of St Mary's in Henbury in 1991.[88] In 1998, a leaflet entitled 'Slave Trade

87 Gayle 2022
88 Sobers 2000

Trail around Central Bristol' was published by the Bristol City Council.[89] Today, several regular commercial tours engage with this topic, as well as a series of free walks offered by the Bristol Radical History Group (BRHG), an independent Bristol-based organisation formed in 2006 with the explicit aim of revisiting the city's authorised heritage to research and expose what was left out of the official narrative. According to BRHG member Mark Steeds, members of the Bristol Radical History Group

> felt that aspects of Bristol's past weren't being covered by the official narrative or through the University of Bristol and UWE. All sorts of stuff was being left off, like for instance, African resistance that then led to abolition which wasn't being covered at all. Basically, there was a need to try and break the national narrative that sort of dictated what you were told and what you were allowed to investigate as it were. [...] another story needed to be told and it wasn't.[90]

In addition to research 'from below', conducted independently from 'universities, political parties, business or local government',[91] BRHG designed and ran several abolition-themed walks, including the 'Bristol Radical History Walk', 'Wulfstan to Colston and the sinews of slavery' and 'Edward Colston – why was he toppled?' The first walks focused on popular radicalism in Bristol as a continuum from which a bottom-up, active abolitionism emerged. More interested in abolition than slavery, they referenced forgotten figures like Bristol's 11th-century abolitionist Saint Wulfstan, anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson, as well as dissenters, Quakers, Baptists, Unitarians and female abolitionists. The route has evolved to include stops such as the Merchant Venturers' Almshouses, the Quaker Burial Ground, the Seven Stars pub, Colston's sugar refinery, Colston Corner and Pero's Bridge. These research-led walks have critically engaged with the activity of the Society of Merchant Venturers, establishing not only Edward Colston's role in the trade in captured Africans but also revealing the exact number of those enslaved through the efforts of Bristol's merchants. This narrative has also challenged the glorification of Britain's best-known abolitionist, William Wilberforce, providing information about anti-slavery resistance and the obscured role of Bristol's popular radical campaigners and networks of religious and political activists. In the wake of the BLM, BRHG proposed a new walk, 'Edward Colston – why was he toppled?', revisiting the myth around Colston in the context of the consultation about the statue's future. While shaming Colston, the BRHG also exposed the complicity of

89 Dresser, Jordan and Taylor 1998

90 Interview with Steeds 2022

91 https://www.brh.org.uk/

Figure 1.1 Slavery-themed walk led by members of the Bristol Radical History Group in 2019.

the Church of England, the Victorian elite and, above all, the Society of Merchant Venturers, who created and upheld the cult of Colston as Bristol's greatest philanthropist.

Walks offered by the BRHG have generated opportunities not only for the group to directly disseminate their research and nuance and diversify local narratives about transatlantic slavery and abolition but also for participants to 'chip in' by asking questions or sharing insights and to 'hang out' at the end for some more discussion. Mark Steeds believes that radical walks can make a difference, satisfying a popular demand for information and addressing highly political questions such as the selective memorialisation and the democratic deficit of the consultation process about the future of Colston's statue. He states that to produce agonistic encounters, a permanent interpretation centre is needed since 'that would be the place to […] enable people to research, question the existing narrative and also to display things while joining the dots of Bristol's history'.[92]

In Bath, walking is an intrinsic part of the authorised heritage landscape. Free walking tours are offered twice a day by volunteer organisation the Mayor of Bath's Corps of Honorary Guides. Besides these walks promoting the story of Georgian splendour, a broad range of themed walks is on offer, diversifying the hegemonic narrative rather than challenging it. The best established 'niche' tours are the Bath ghost tour, the Bizarre Bath comedy walk, literary walks focusing on Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and, more recently, the tour of Bath as shown in Netflix's Bridgerton series. 'Bath's Last Legal Slave Owners' (2016), the first walking artwork directly engaging with the silenced heritage of transatlantic slavery, was created by artist-researcher Richard White; his 'Sweet Waters' cycle of walks connected Bath and Bristol in 2017, and was followed by the cycle 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' focusing on Sydney Gardens, Bath (see also in Chapter 10). Motivated by a desire for in-depth understanding and social justice, these walks are no ordinary guided tours but rather 'socially engaged walking arts projects'[93] which grew out of White's questioning of the immoral accumulation of wealth on which Bath's iconic Neo-Palladian architecture was funded. In his own words:

> I suppose what I'm trying to do is not about the particular addresses, but it's about what's represented in those particular addresses. […] it's about helping people towards an understanding that these buildings, this stone has more of a story to tell, a richer story to tell than simply one of some rather pleasing classical architecture. And I suppose it's that idea […] of

92 Interview with Steeds 2022

93 White 2021

> trying to see [...] whether you can kind of create a mnemonic landscape so that these things are there.[94]

White uses the question 'where did the money come from?' to connect Bath's concrete, tangible, Georgian cityscape with the surrounding landscape on the one hand and remote or imagined locations on the other. Thus, he connects Bath not only with sites outside the city like the Salford Brass Mill where brass objects were made, but also with places in Africa where these objects were traded for humans to be shipped to plantations in the Caribbean. He addresses these issues through acts of provocation performed on the walk to gear the sensorial activity of walking towards triggering affective responses. He is consciously using his role as a host to create a safe place for the walkers, whom he encourages to interact by talking to each other, producing Twitter comments, and drawing or writing in shared notebooks: 'It's important to open up a space [where] people feel that they can say something and that their thoughts are respected'.[95]

It can be argued that this walking practice deliberately uses heritage dissonance to encourage walkers to think critically about race, positionality, gaps, absences and distortions in the official memoryscape. By creating and maintaining a tension between authorised heritage and what is left out of the official narratives, it promotes an agonistic engagement with the uncomfortable legacies of slave-ownership in Bath. White's principal aim is to counteract what he calls 'Bath's "dead silence"', that is resistance to free information flow, by supplying information most British people have been denied in their 'colonial, empire-glorifying education'[96] and offering informal education and social repair.[97]

Through the more recent cycle of walks, 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time', a Heritage Lottery-funded commission in the context of the refurbishment of Sydney Gardens, White was able to broaden his questioning of tacit colonial heritage by engaging with new geographical areas such as North America and India. He has also tackled new themes, including the ecological consequences of colonisation and Eurocentric approaches to science which resulted in erasing indigenous botanical knowledges. Through experimentation with sound, he provided an additional layer of sensorial experience connected with affect. This work was already in process in the summer of 2020 when a sudden increase in institutional interest in White's walking practice helped him break the silence on a larger scale, due to institutional

94 Interview with White 2022
95 Interview with White 2022
96 Interview with White 2022, 30:41
97 White 2021

Figure 1.2 Richard White performing the walk in Sydney Gardens in 2023.

backing. Only time can tell how durable this backing will be and whether it is genuine or motivated by a desire to recuperate White's legitimacy as an authentic, socially engaged artist.

Our interviews with Mark Steeds and Richard White demonstrate the potential of socially engaged walking practices to open up a space for agonistic dialogue in which participants are required to treat each other as adversaries rather than enemies and not obliged to reach consensus. They also show that slavery-themed walks generally appeal to like-minded people and thus walkers who dismiss counter-narratives to authorised heritage as 'wokism' tend to remain absent or leave the walks rather than engaging in an agonistic dialogue. It could also be argued, however, that some of these walks allocate time and space for discussion between participants and they may even become walking conversations. In addition, from both the interviews and observation conducted on the above walks, it appears that chance encounters with residents of properties included on the route and other professionals and walkers in the public space frequently bring unexpected new voices to the conversation, broadening the spectrum of the views expressed and discussed. Moreover, some of the conversations started during the walks continue later in other spaces and with other people and walkers, becoming what White terms 'story carriers'.[98]

98 White 2021; Ahmed 2014; Levine 2014

1.4 Conclusion

Based on our comparison of curatorial approaches, guerrilla memorialisation and radical walking practices in both cities, Bath can be described as a case where, until recently, heritage dissonance had been successfully ignored/silenced in favour of an established narrative revolving around the aesthetic appeal of the city's Georgian architecture and its idealised past as a place of leisure. This hegemonic narrative was only briefly questioned around 2007 when funding made available to mark the bicentenary of the Abolition Act enabled museums to produce temporary exhibitions with a critical focus. However, reinterpretations not incorporated in permanent exhibitions were rapidly forgotten. There seems to have been a tacit agreement among those striving to confront the hidden aspects of the city's heritage that its latent dissonance had first to be made visible for all to see, and thus disclosure and information arguably took precedence over multiperspectivism, discussion and contestation. Compared to Bath, Bristol's heritage was made dissonant mainly through bottom-up initiatives. Grassroots movements and protesters using guerrilla interventions were able to promote radical multiperspectivism and agonistic discussions. However, wider conversations about the silenced past and its legacy were repeatedly curtailed by the interventions of the local council or powerful interest groups, which resulted in only partial displays remaining at the M Shed and in the Georgian House Museum as a tangible reminder of Bristol's uncomfortable past.

In view of Bath's relative ethnic and social homogeneity, and lack of grassroots movements, the agents for change here were primarily socially engaged artists such as Shawn-Naphtali Sobers or Richard White, motivated by a thirst for a more just society. This, in White's own words (see also Chapters 10 and 15 in this volume) requires first of all 'retelling the unheard and forgotten stories into the memoryscape'.[99] However, individuals alone would arguably not have been able to break the silence other than episodically and temporarily had it not been for the external impetus provided by the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement that followed. These events spurred various institutions in the city to start addressing the latent dissonance in their own heritage, including various local museums and the Anglican Church. This in turn empowered a few key individuals within these institutions to tell alternative stories which ruptured the idealised narrative of the Georgian past and had the potential of unsettling audiences.

In contrast to Bath, the city of Bristol has a wealth of grassroots activists and groups able to contest official memorialisation by organising

99 Interview with White 2022

guerrilla interventions and acts of protest. Indeed, it was grassroots hostility to the Festival of the Sea that spurred a wider rethinking of the city's uncritical approach to its heritage and led to a ground-breaking temporary exhibition on slavery and abolitionism in 2007, which had a strong emphasis on resistance activities and rebellions in the plantations. Although the campaign Countering Colston, which started in 2015, did not result in adding a corrective plaque to the statue, exposing Colston's role in the slave trade and the conservative project he promoted with his philanthropy, it maintained the topic on the agenda while provoking a broad public debate involving a variety of social groups which can be considered as agonistic. The Black Lives Matter movement later reignited the debate, and this time a protest demonstration ended with the toppling of the statue, which was defaced and thrown into the harbour. A trial then ensued against the four people deemed responsible, which divided public opinion nationally as well as locally and ended with a full acquittal of the defendants.

As Bristol's case demonstrates, radical grassroots activism is often successfully countered by strong local institutions determined to back the status quo or at least minimise any change. Although, as we have seen, the memorialisation of the slave trade has included a range of stakeholders with hegemonic power such as national governments, religious institutions, city planners, local councils, museums, universities and heritage organisations, as well as groups and individuals promoting alternative narratives, the power relations between these agents have remained asymmetrical. As members of the Bristolian campaign group Countering Colston pointed out, their repeated requests for the statue of Colston to be modified by a plaque revealing his prominent role in the slave trade were ignored, not least due to the intervention of the powerful SMV, who successfully resisted attempts to diversify the urban memoryscape, for example by tempering the wording of the corrective plaque the city was considering adding to Colston's statue in 2018:

> the Merchants are not just a historical relic; they are an elite network [which] continues to run or be financially involved in a huge number of Bristol's public services, schools, cultural and public spaces. The SMV have sustained the narrative of how Colston has been remembered in the city, celebrated his accumulation of wealth, yet ignored his crimes against humanity.[100]

In short, while guerrilla art interventions around the statue proved relatively successful in keeping the issue in the public domain and contesting the

100 https://alternativebristol.com/campaign-group-countering-colston-comment-on-the-first-court-hearing-of-the-colston-4/

inaction of the city council, democratic attempts to modify Bristol's memoryscape by petitioning to remove the statue or to obtain a permanent space where agonistic encounters between various actors can be enacted were thwarted. Yet, as a public consultation following the temporary exhibition of Colston's defaced statue indicates, there appears to be a consensus in the city about the need to establish democratic channels for dialogue, exchanges and dynamic reinterpretations through artistic and social initiatives. This kind of initiative can promote agonistic encounters and give voice to alternative views and perspectives in ways that embrace peaceful practices of dissonance and contestation.

We would like to conclude by reflecting on the relationship between agonistic interventions, local and international contexts, and social and artistic agency. First, the previous analysis indicates that agonistic moments are lived experiences which cannot be 'museified' once and for all; rather, constant debate and discussion are needed to promote heritage dissonance through the incorporation of radical and alternative voices. Second, in both local contexts, not all voices are equally loud, audible and/or listened to. Institutional voices are stronger and, to some extent, more respected, not least because of their official and established status. They have the power to promote or curtail heritage dissonance. On the other hand, strategic alliances between actors can increase their impact and strengthen their hands vis-à-vis local institutions. Lastly, the overall national context plays an important role in influencing local attempts to challenge dominant narratives since there is an ongoing struggle for the interpretation of the past that informs present-day policies. For instance, in post-Brexit Britain, leading conservatives' anti-woke stance on immigration, memorialisation, national pride in past entrepreneurship and empire-building does not create a favourable context for agonistic attempts. Nevertheless, state-led policy at the national level can be successfully ruptured by transnational activism and discourse, as was the case with the repercussions of the Black Lives Matter movement, which spurred many institutions and individuals into action in both Bath and Bristol. Conversely, local struggles can successfully disrupt the national dominant approach, as the staging and outcome of the Colston Four trial demonstrated. Thus, a local agonistic moment can have wider national and international reverberations, partially deconstructing the hegemonic memoryscape.

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2

The agonistic potential of Co-Creation

Breaking the silence about slavery legacies in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath

Christina Horvath

Dr Christina Horvath is Reader in French Politics at the University of Bath. Since 2012, she has been working on reconceptualising Co-Creation as a collective, ethical and horizontal methodology of co-producing knowledges with communities using art as a catalyst. In 2017–22, she contributed to a project funded by RISE Horizon 2020 exploring the impact of Co-Creation interventions on urban cohesion in six countries: Mexico, Brazil, France, Germany, Belgium and Britain. One of the project's case studies engaged with Bath's links with transatlantic slavery from a Co-Creation perspective. This chapter draws on that case study and benefits from funding from the European Union's RISE Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 734770 and the University of Bath sabbatical scheme. Further details of the project and partners are at www.co-creation-network.org.

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of artist and activist Lara Varga who courageously defended the rights of disabled people and who sadly passed away during the process of producing this chapter. Her friendship was a cohesive force which strengthened the links between the workshop participants during the COVID-19 lockdowns and thus contributed to the success of the evaluation process conducted in 2020, a year after the Co-Creation workshop took place in Bath.

2.1 Introduction: ghosts of enslaved Africans in the UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath

In 2019, UNESCO commemorated the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first captive Africans in the British North American colonies in 1619. This significant occasion coincided with the 25th anniversary of the 'Slave Route: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage' initiative. Launched in 1994 in Ouidah in Benin, this project aimed to foster a deeper understanding of the

root causes, operational mechanisms, stakes and consequences of slavery in the world. Its overarching goal was to 'highlight the global transformations and cultural interactions that have resulted from this history [and to] contribute to a culture of peace by promoting reflection on inclusion, cultural pluralism, intercultural dialogue and the construction of new identities and citizenships'.[1]

Under the guidance of an International Scientific Committee, the Slave Route project encouraged the preservation of sites of remembrance tied to the enslavement of people of African descent. It also championed the recognition of their contribution to the construction of contemporary societies, the maintenance of archives and intangible heritage related to this history, and the design of educational materials. Yet the project identified a series of challenges obstructing a thorough engagement with this uncomfortable past. These include, among others, 'the lack of a shared vision between the different stakeholders involved in the management of memorial sites and places, […] institutional sluggishness; the reticence or refusal of certain institutional and private partners to respond to the ambitions of local communities by giving them the necessary support so that they can take ownership of their heritage; […] [and the] reluctance of private owners to reveal the historical links to slavery of sites and monuments they own'.[2]

Some of these factors, which have obscured the legacies of slavery, were also at play in Bath, a city on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 1987. Located merely 12 miles from Bristol, once one of Britain's most prominent slavery ports (see Chapter 1), Bath benefited from the economic gains of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, the subsequent surge in sugar production and the generous compensation bestowed upon plantation owners post-abolition. However, Bath, a city projected to its estimated 6.25 million annual visitors[3] as a visitor-friendly city 'built for pleasure and relaxation' and a 'wellbeing destination since Roman times',[4] has systematically obscured its troubling history in favour of an authorised narrative celebrating the city's Roman heritage, iconic Georgian architecture, links to the novelist Jane Austen, and its spa and leisure culture. Although Bath has no memorials or museums dedicated to the legacy of the transatlantic trade, it can be argued that this obscured heritage has subtly permeated the city's architecture and museum collections. A significant site bearing vestiges of this legacy is Bath Abbey, the final resting place of numerous figures, such

1 https://en.unesco.org/themes/fostering-rights-inclusion/slave-route
2 UNESCO 2018, 28
3 Visitor Impact report 2018
4 https://visitbath.co.uk/

as traders, planters, merchants, clergymen, politicians and military officials, involved in constructing and sustaining the system of transatlantic slavery.

Other monuments with colonial links include No. 1 Royal Crescent, a townhouse transformed into a museum illustrating the lives of Bath's Georgian elite, and Beckford's Tower, an extravagant structure erected between 1826 and 1827 funded by the wealthy writer and art collector William Beckford 'inherited and continued to accumulate as an owner of sugar plantations and enslaved people in Jamaica, and through the compensation he received from the government following the abolition of slavery'.[5] The Holburne Museum's exhibits are also connected with the sugar trade in the Caribbean, funded by profits derived from plantations owned by the Ball, Lascelles and Holburne families in Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua. Additionally, the permanent collection includes portraits depicting members of prominent families with plantations across the Caribbean and a series of fine porcelain objects serving the enjoyment of fashionable colonial products such as tea and sugar during the Georgian period. The database created by the 'Legacies of British Slave-Ownership' project at UCL (2009–12) and recent restoration work at Bath Abbey have been pivotal in illuminating the long-silenced connections between Bath's affluent elites and the exploitation of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.

Ironically, the 'whitewashing' of Bath's heritage narratives prevails even within the UNESCO document designating the city a site of 'Outstanding Universal Value'.[6] Celebrating architectural homogeneity as a 'testament to the skill and creativity of the architects and visionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries who applied and developed Palladianism in response to the specific opportunities offered by the spa town and its physical environment and natural resources',[7] the document falls short of acknowledging the contribution of enslaved Africans to the city's 18th-century urban development. It is telling that the word 'harmonious' features seven times in this short text which refers to the Roman and Georgian periods as 'two great eras in human history'[8] while sidestepping the enslavement and exploitation of kidnapped Africans which enabled the accumulation of great wealth (see also Chapter 14).

Recent initiatives in museums and National Trust sites in and around Bath seek to reinterpret objects in their collections with tangible links to slavery (see also Chapters 1 and 9, embracing the founders' plantation ties and committing to 'identify objects related to empire and slavery through

5 https://beckfordstower.org.uk/a-statement-from-bath-preservation-trust/

6 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/428/

7 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/428/

8 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/428/

the subjects depicted, their original purpose or the material used'.[9] 'The Slave's Lament', a temporary installation by Scottish artist Graham Fagen exhibited in the summer of 2019, and Scottish Barbadian artist Alberta Whittle's exhibition 'Dipping below a waxing moon, the dance claims us for release', commissioned in 2023, are some of the latest initiatives taken by the Holburne Museum to engage with the city's reluctant past. Other institutions displaying curatorial responses to Bath's 'uncomfortable' past include Bath Abbey, with its exhibition 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery', and Beckford's Tower, in its collaboration with State of Trust on the development of a unique and powerful dance performance of the novel *Cane Warriors* by Alex Wheatle, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of a wider 'Our Tower' regeneration plan. These mostly temporary displays have been cautious responses to the increasing decolonial pressures, carefully avoiding alienating the museums' mostly white and conservative core audiences. Notably reticent to provide a more complete and honest account of the city's past were the custodians of UNESCO World Heritage Status and the owners of the Roman Baths, the local authority, Bath and North East Somerset Council. However, the BLM protest and the toppling in June 2020 of the statue of Edward Colston, a 17th-century merchant involved in the shipping to the Americas of 84,000 captive Africans, attested to a growing need to engage with the uncomfortable past in both Bristol and Bath. The heritage debate sparked by these events also revealed that not only were opinions sharply divided as to whose history should be remembered and how, but that power over the heritage narratives also tended to be unequally distributed.

This chapter endeavours to explore how heritage narratives could be diversified and debates made more democratic by drawing insights from an arts-based workshop conducted in Bath and Bristol in September 2019,[10] only nine months before the Colston statue's toppling. Employing 'Co-Creation', a collaborative knowledge-production approach, the workshop aimed to involve multiple partners with different perspectives. It sought to test the suitability and effectiveness of Co-Creation as a methodological and conceptual tool to engage different audiences with Bath's uncomfortable past. The first part of the chapter will explain how the ethos and practice of Co-Creation underpinned the design of the workshop, which was organised in Bath and Bristol on 10–14 September 2019 and aimed to make slavery

9 https://www.holburne.org/about-us/the-legacy-of-slavery

10 This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 734770 (Co-Creation) and the University of Bath sabbatical scheme. Further details of the project and partners are at www.co-creation-network.org.

legacies visible in the public space. The second part will discuss how the workshop's creative, arts-based outputs engaged with untold stories and created new narratives. The third part will bring together the participants' diverging voices for a polyphonic reflection about Co-Creation's usefulness for developing new understanding. Finally, a set of recommendations will highlight how Co-Creation's transformative potential could be maximised in a heritage context.

2.2 A Co-Creation workshop to engage with the uncomfortable past in Bath

Organised by a team of researchers at the University of Bath, the workshop entitled 'Engaging with the Uncomfortable Past in Bath' spanned five days in September 2019. It was designed to be part of a case study in a European Commission-funded project seeking to conceptualise and test arts-based methods of knowledge production, drawing on different approaches, in particular participatory action research[11] and arts-based research.[12] The project defined Co-Creation as a method using creativity as a catalyst to promote collaborations between academic and non-academic communities, including groups whose insights emerge directly from their resistance to oppression.[13] This approach, emphasised with the capitalisation of the term, fostered active participation from a wide array of contributors – artists, academics, stakeholders and local community members – in collective creative processes culminating in both tangible and intangible outcomes. According to Horvath and Carpenter[14] this active collaboration is pivotal to both the ethos and the practice of Co-Creation. While the method effectively dismantles conventional hierarchies between academics and non-academics, it also facilitates building trust-based relations with communities generally excluded from knowledge production, thereby amplifying the voices of marginalised stakeholders.

The commitment to mitigating power asymmetries present in the usual dynamics of knowledge production underscored Co-Creation's suitability for revealing Bath's concealed heritage narratives. Further advantages of Co-Creation, defined as a collective creative process aiming to involve multiple partners,[15] included the method's potential to create agonistic encounters between institutions and individuals with opposing visions and

11 Whyte 1991
12 Carpenter, Horvath and Spencer 2020
13 De Sousa Santos 2018
14 Horvath and Carpenter 2020
15 Horvath and Carpenter 2020

its capacity to promote an agonistic mode of remembering.[16] As theorised by Carpenter and colleagues,[17] the incorporation of arts-based practices into Co-Creation methods enables processes of place-making in which agonistic spaces can be created. For Mouffe, these are places where 'conflicting points of view are confronted without any possibility of final reconciliation'[18] and, for Landau,[19] in such spaces actors' different perspectives are brought to the fore and contested, not with the aim of an 'antagonistic clash between enemies', but rather of an 'agonistic encounter', a struggle between adversaries, in respectful conflict with one another.

Mouffe argues that 'staging a confrontation between conflicting positions, museums and art institutions could make a decisive contribution to the proliferation of new public spaces open to agonistic forms of participation where radical democratic alternatives to neoliberalism could, once again, be imagined and cultivated'.[20] Extending Mouffe's model to the problem of historical memory, which is central to the issue of public commemorative art, Cento Bull and Hansen[21] proposed the concept of agonistic memory as an alternative to both antagonistic and cosmopolitan discourses. In their view, unlike cosmopolitan memory, which

> tends to decontextualize subjects and events, representing good and evil in immoral and abstract terms, and antagonistic practices [which] use selective memory to present a narrative of heroes versus villains, agonistic memory tries to repoliticise the past and the relation of the past to the present by unsettling established identity positions and relations and also revealing the socio-political struggles for hegemony fought both historically and in the present.[22]

In addition, as conceptualised by Mouffe,[23] agonistic encounters make room for disagreement and complex negotiations throughout the process, while they also allow participants to explore their own positionality, as recommended by Sultana.[24] Mouffe's advocacy for socially critical art[25] highlighted its potential to challenge people's unexamined beliefs, prompting them to

16 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016
17 Carpenter, Horvath and Spencer 2020
18 Mouffe 2013, 92
19 Landau 2019, 16
20 Mouffe 2013, 22
21 Cento Bull and Hansen 2016
22 Cento Bull and Clarke 2020, 4
23 Mouffe 2007; 2013
24 Sultana 2007, 382
25 Mouffe 2013, 95

envisage new possibilities. A Co-Creation workshop, grounded in these principles and mindful of potential tensions between artistic and academic ways of producing knowledge, emerged as an ideal conduit through which slavery legacies could be discussed. Moreover, the artistic engagement with the reluctant past provided a further advantage: it allowed participants to directly participate in and challenge the established symbolic order, thereby 'making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, in giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony'.[26] While the Co-Creation workshop's primary motivation to rely on an arts-methods was to address Bath's slavery legacy in an innovative, active and creative way, the kind of agonistic and ruptural practice recommended by Mouffe was also seen as suitable to generating a deeper understanding of different perspectives on the city and promoting more socially just and inclusive representations as the potential precursors of political change.

The Co-Creation workshop itself was preceded by a stakeholder consultation. This comprised three events: an anti-mapper workshop in 2017, a research exhibition in March 2019 presenting the Co-Creation method to larger audiences and a collage workshop integrated into the exhibition to identify in collective, creative ways some of the city's major challenges. All three events took place at the 44AD art space because this centrally located arts venue was seen as more accessible for broader audiences than the University of Bath campus. In addition to creating a buzz about the project, these events helped identify four key themes at odds with Bath's dominant narrative as a 'city of wellbeing': the financial pressures driving businesses and individuals out of the town centre, the rise of homelessness, the unfulfilled needs of citizens living with disabilities and the official amnesia surrounding Bath's slavery legacy. Of these themes, the latter issue was chosen as the subject of the project's Bath-based case study as it presented a unique opportunity to involve local artists, researchers and stakeholders in the project, as well as Brazilian and Mexican partners participating in the European Commission-funded Co-Creation project (2017–2022) to draw on their complementary perspectives on colonial legacies.

The workshop aimed to engage in creative ways with Bath's long-overlooked links with the transatlantic trade in enslaved people to produce alternatives to the city's official narratives, which were oblivious of the uncomfortable past. Its design was underpinned by the principles of the Co-Creation

26 Mouffe 2013, 93

method[27] and the practices of walking-with[28] and street art.[29] These methods were chosen for their capacity for place-making by rendering socially critical counter-narratives visible in the public space. However, the choice of street art was also motivated by the team members' previous work in Brazil[30] and the prominent socio-critical use of this art form in contemporary cities, including Bristol as well as Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City, where some project partners were based.

Workshop participants constituted a diverse amalgamation of artists, researchers and stakeholders from the Bath-based heritage sector. Nine core participants attended the entire workshop, including two artists from Brazil, three researchers from Mexico, and four academics from Bath, one of whom is simultaneously a graffiti writer working in Bristol. The workshop was co-designed by Bath-based artist-researcher Richard White, an expert in socially engaged performative walking practices (see also Chapters 1 and 10), and Katie O'Brien, director and chief curator of the 44AD art space, who both participated in several activities. Local stakeholders from the heritage sector who contributed to some of the walks and museum visits included trustees from Fairfield House, the chief curator of Beckford's Tower, the director of the Holburne Museum, as well as members of the Bristol-based street-art association 'Where the Wall' and Bristol Radical History Group. Although all stakeholders were invited to attend the entire workshop and actively participate in it, most of them limited their participation to one or two half-day sessions. Local participants, recruited via Eventbrite and local art and heritage networks, attended certain walks but were unable to participate in the subsequent venue-based creative activities.

The five-day programme started with a walk designed by Richard White focusing on the profit generated by enslaved people in and around Bath. The walk included a visit to Fairfield House, home to Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie during his 1936–41 exile in Bath, where author Keith Bower and trustee William Heath welcomed the group. On the second day, participants travelled to Bristol to trace histories of slave-ownership and abolition through a walk guided by Mark Steeds and Roger Ball from the Bristol Radical History Group, before exploring socially engaged graffiti through a tour guided by Rob Dean, from Where the Wall. On the third day, the group attended Bath's official free walking tour and then visited the Holburne Museum. They met director Chris Stephens, who highlighted parts of the permanent collection with connections to slave-ownership

27 Horvath and Carpenter 2020
28 Sundberg 2013; Springgay and Truman 2018; White 2021
29 Cooper and Sandlin 2020; Evans 2016
30 Rodrigues and Horvath 2020

Figure 2.1 Workshop participants looking at *The Auriol and Dashwood Families* by Johan Zoffany at the Holburne Museum.

including the porcelain collection and the portrait gallery (see Figure 2.1). After the visit, a collage and drawing activity allowed the group to get to grips with colonial history in creative ways. The workshop adopted the teacup as an iconic object connecting the city's reluctant past with its present-day celebration of Georgian heritage through visits to Bath's many cafés and tearooms, museum exhibits and annual Jane Austen Festival. On the fourth day, the group visited Beckford's Tower and met with chief curator Dr Amy Frost to discuss the historic amnesia surrounding third-generation slave owner William Beckford and the sources of his vast fortune. The creative work continued with the collective design of a street-art output inspired by the participants' individual teacup collages. On the fifth and final day, participants with expertise in street art painted a graffiti on canvas outside the 44AD art space aided by some other members of the group while others in the group pasted posters and distributed leaflets bearing alternative teacup images. Both activities generated performative encounters with attendees of the annual Jane Austen festival, many of whom dressed in Georgian attire.

2.3 Interpreting tangible and intangible workshop outcomes

To assess the effectiveness of the Co-Creation workshop in disrupting white silence and challenging Bath's sanitised narratives, it is paramount to examine its principal creative outcomes: the teacup collages and the graffiti on canvas. Since most Co-Creation workshops simultaneously result in tangible outcomes crafted by the participants and new understandings

Figure 2.2 Teacup collages created in the workshop and merged to form a poster by Katie O'Brien.

potentially conducive to change, we must examine how the participants' arts-based engagement with the city's reluctant past affected their individual and collective perception of this uncomfortable legacy.

The first output, crafted by eight participants who collaged onto blank teacup silhouettes derived from objects on display at the Holburne Museum, resulted in a collection of 30 posters. Many of these designs used the horizontal division of the original teacups to explore the contrast between the city's official narrative and untold stories. This discrepancy was most powerfully highlighted in a collage juxtaposing an image of daffodils in a green field surrounded by Georgian terraces in contemporary Bath with an extract from *A Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayiti* (1805), an engraving showing a group of enslaved Africans rising against their oppressors, situated in the lower section of the cup. A skull hovering over the cup helped further emphasise the toxicity of wealth accumulated through forced labour and colonial terror while also alluding to connections between violence exercised throughout the colonial period and the subsequent hierarchies of wealth and power between the global North and South.

The compelling interplay between the teacups' aesthetics – their graceful silhouettes, eye-catching golden, pink and lush green hues, and pleasing ornaments derived from Georgian architecture and tropical motifs – and the darker visual elements evoking enslavement – including handcuffs, bullets, chains, skulls, enchained or tortured bodies, and blood dripping from a Gorgon's head or a cracked cup – emerged as a defining hallmark of the collages. Frequent depictions of human forms were strategically employed by participants to denounce enduring racial and social hierarchies, emphasising the arbitrariness inherent to these distinctions. Such attempts were made in a design showing a European woman transported in a sedan chair by enslaved Africans and a drawing reversing colonial subjugation, portraying Africans as elites and Europeans as enslaved labourers harvesting sugar cane. In many designs, vibrant colours and patterns were used to compel the observer to detect traces of violence, which, mirroring Bath's concealed past, often escape initial notice. This strategy was perhaps most efficiently deployed in two gold-rimmed teacups adorned with rows of tightly clustered enslaved bodies camouflaged as innocuous geometrical ornaments. The collage ingeniously incorporated details from Thomas Clarkson's map of the Liverpool ship, famously circulated to every member of Parliament.[31] The alternative perception of Bath emerging from these representations laid bare the incongruities between the city's picturesque Georgian aestheticism and the harsh realities of its material foundation.

Most designs harnessed the juxtaposition between idyllic images of Bath extracted from the magazine *Bath Life*, depictions of plantations in Western art (Such as Zuber wallpapers) and portraits of plantation owners by Gainsborough, with more overtly violent imagery evoking enslaved Africans'

31 Benjamin and Fleming 2010, 37

uprisings and rebellions. While glossy magazine photographs of Bath were readily available, illustrations depicting the lived experience of enslaved individuals and their revolts had to be hand-drawn or reproduced from books such as *Transatlantic Slavery: An Introduction*.[32] Participants overlaid images of broken chains, handcuffs and powerful torsos emerging from teacups onto serene depictions of Bath to reassert the agency of the enslaved, countering established narratives that repeatedly depicted them as passive recipients of freedom granted by benevolent abolitionists. Connections between Bath's opulence, symbolised by ornate crystal chandeliers and lavishly adorned ballrooms, and the practice of enslavement were boldly expressed in other designs bearing inscriptions like 'Jamaica', 'Barbados' and 'made in slavery'. Exotic imagery, including a gemstone toucan perched on a teacup's handle, served to denounce a predominantly Eurocentric vision of the Global South which still persists today, despite being once used to justify colonial exploitation. In some designs, symbols from the Global South were integrated, such as depictions of 'Anastacia the slave', a revered saint in Brazil often depicted as an African woman with striking blue eyes and an oppressive facemask, accentuating the enduring impact of colonial connections and oppression.

The second outcome, a graffiti on canvas, depicted a giant China teapot and cup set in the centre of a city reminiscent of Bath. Floating in the teacup, a ship laden with enslaved individuals alluded to Bath's involvement in the triangular trade, while blood drops falling from the sky and scattered sugar cubes conveyed a searing condemnation of enslavement and forced labour on sugar plantations. Painted performatively in central Bath, amidst the bustling ambiance of the Jane Austen festival, only a few metres away from the Georgian Tearooms where visitors in period attire sipped tea and coffee, this graffiti added a supplementary layer to the critique in its design. The interaction with the festivalgoers served to highlight how Bath's self-inflicted amnesia engenders an uncritical celebration of the Georgian era, manifesting in Georgian-themed festivities and other activities emulating the lifestyles of 18th-century elites. The painting also promoted a critical exploration of tea consumption, often viewed by foreign tourists as a quaint and quintessentially 'English' tradition. The engagement through street art with the teacup as a powerful symbol of colonial legacies uniquely encouraged visitors to critically reflect upon the links between violence, exploitation and leisure, the global North and South, as well as the fashionable colonial commodities – tea from India, cups from Asia, sugar and coffee from the West Indies – enjoyed by affluent Georgian elites and the global consequences of massive cultivation that reverberate in contemporary challenges like climate change.

32 Benjamin and Fleming 2010

2.4 A polyphonic evaluation of the Co-Creation workshop by the participants

The preceding analysis delves into the tangible outputs of the Co-Creation workshop, which grappled with Bath's uncomfortable past. Yet the workshop's intangible outcomes can only be fully appreciated through the polyphonic reflections of the participants on their individual and collective experience of the workshop. A collective evaluation process was undertaken in three steps. Initially, written testimonies were collected from each participant. Subsequently, contributors were given the opportunity to comment on their peers' remarks. Lastly, a virtual group discussion was conducted via Zoom to distil recurring elements that emerged across various accounts. The overarching aim was to evaluate the degree to which the Co-Creation methodology succeeded in creating agonistic spaces and stimulating public debate about the city's heritage. Nine workshop contributors took part in the survey: three Mexican researchers (María José Pantoja Peschard, Pamela Castro Suárez and Héctor Quiroz Rothe); one Brazilian artist (Leandro 'Tick' Rodrigues); two Bath-based researchers (Christina Horvath and Adalgisa Giorgio); one local artist-activist (Lara Varga); and two artist-researchers (Benjamin Van Praag and Richard White).

Richard expressed his discomfort with certain imagery provided to participants and pondered how this curation, which he saw as a form of creative provocation, influenced the ultimate creative outcome. The participants' comments highlighted their awareness of their own positionalities. A recurring motif in their observations centred on social categories such as nationality, race, education, class and profession which were invoked to explain participants' perspectives and to evaluate the new insight they gained with regard to their previous knowledge, area of expertise (architecture, urban planning, history, cultural studies, philosophy, literature, art) and degree of familiarity with Bath. Finally, most participants commented on the efficacy of workshop activities such as the collective walks and creative workshops in shaping their understanding, emotions and intellectual reflections. Since the evaluation was conducted one year after the workshop, in 2020, when global debates about Black Lives Matter, decolonisation and the COVID-19 pandemic were in progress, these debates inevitably cast a shadow over participants' reflections regarding the workshop's accomplishments and shortcomings.

2.4.1 Positionality and self-decolonisation

Bringing together a mixed group with diverging perspectives on colonial history, the workshop provided participants with opportunities to decolonise their own gaze. Benjamin Van Praag, a Bristol-based artist and PhD

researcher at the University of Bath, underscored the significance of employing a 'sensitive language that does not compound othering and epistemic violence'. In tandem, the three scholars from the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) shared their insights into the experience of being re-colonised through enduringly Eurocentric university curricula both in the Global South and North. In the words of Héctor Quiroz,

> My first encounter with Bath's heritage was as a student at UNAM's Faculty of Architecture more than 30 years ago, in a session dedicated to highlighting the homogeneity of its urban landscape dominated by the neoclassical architecture of the Georgian era. This […] anecdote is an example of the hierarchy of knowledge typical of a completely colonised professional training, in which the details of European architectures are privileged over other knowledges.

Most participants agreed that the workshop increased their awareness of colonial injustice while it also made them more conscious about their own, to some extent, privileged background. As Lara Varga declared,

> This week made me fully understand how I am a product of English White Privilege […]. Almost none of us are owning up, taking responsibility and changing as a society. […]. At no point in my school education was I made aware of details concerning both cities' major roles in the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans. […] It is only now I see in hindsight, how totally white, and English Imperial my patchy education was, with almost no attempt to make our education site-specific.

Participants based in Bath attempted to dissociate themselves from the city's heritage by describing themselves as 'reluctant citizens'. They expressed preference for 'more diverse, multicultural cities' and complained about feeling occasionally out of place in Bath, whether because they were 'born into a working-class family' and had 'not much in common with the mostly affluent, well-spoken, white middle class permanent residents' or because they instinctively felt that 'there is something wrong in the fabric of the city, and the buildings'. While all participants displayed a strong willingness to acknowledge the negative ramifications of British colonialism and the unjust suffering endured by enslaved Africans, it is essential to acknowledge that merely three out of nine respondents were actually born and raised in the United Kingdom. When commenting on their identity, contributors frequently distanced themselves from dominant narratives of the British Empire, often emphasising their working-class heritage, foreign origins or anti-racist convictions. Thus, none of the participants felt directly concerned

with 'white fragility'[33] or responsible for the contested past. Overall, participants predominantly aligned themselves with the enslaved Africans, rather than associating with those who reaped benefits from their sufferings.

2.4.2 New perspectives and emotional responses

Irrespective of their familiarity with Bath, the majority of participants expressed that they had acquired at least some new insight during the workshop. For some contributors, these newfound perspectives were 'very surprising' or even 'shocking'. Brazilian graffiti artist Leandro Rodrigues articulated this sentiment, affirming that he found it remarkably impactful to uncover the history of Bath through such a negative lens. He was taken aback by the realisation of the extensive injustices, human exploitation and grievous brutalities perpetrated under the banners of 'faith' and 'progress'. Leandro aptly labelled this experience as 'outright shocking'. For another participant, 'encountering Co-Creation's Bath's Untold History week was completely shocking and profound, because of the revelations and dis-orientation'. Bath's silenced heritage was interpreted by most British participants as a failure of school curricula to engage with the legacy of colonial conquest and enslavement in both national and local history. Lara Varga put it aptly:

> We studied the USA, […] Amerindian injustices, cotton picking, and yet, no site-specific lessons cited in location, to see exactly where and how English people, our ancestors came to act out centuries of violence, systemically. So, the greatest surprise of my life was to *suddenly* learn, from Co-Creation in one week, that the money, for financing the building of so-called 'genteel' Bath, was from the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. That the founding fathers of *Bath*, the men with vast fortunes, from Beckford to Holburne, had literally funded and built this city on the bloodied backs of hundreds and thousands of enslaved African citizens.

Other revelations challenging previous assumptions about Bath included Jane Austen's family connections with sugar plantations as well as the discovery of Fairfield House, home to Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie who lived there in exile. For Lara, the house was a 'very surprising, hidden gem in Bath' while Adalgisa Giorgio noted that it helped her make connections between Bath's silenced colonial connections and an 'Italian colonialism, […] a well-kept secret in Italy, of which I didn't hear very much at school or at home, and which still now has received scarce academic elaboration in Italy, except for the utterly false idea that we were good colonisers'.

Participants discerned striking parallels between colonial monuments, such as the Colston statue visited in Bristol and the monument to Columbus

33 Diangelo 2018

Figure 2.3 Visitors to the Jane Austen Festival taking selfies with the graffiti on canvas.

in Mexico City, and the hushed colonial narratives in Bath, Mexico, Brazil, Italy and the rest of Europe. These comparisons helped them expand their understanding of colonialism but also, as articulated by Adalgisa, 'become more sensitive to colonial issues' and more able to apply a 'decolonising lens to mainstream artefacts, films, and TV series. I can now see things that I didn't see before, by reading through their gaps and interstices in order to construct alternative plots'.

Whereas much of the learning about Bath's past occurred through discovering and engaging with surprising facts and data, what truly intensified the learning experience was the visceral, embodied nature of these discoveries. These revelations often triggered profound emotions among the participants, above all a sense of compassion for the enslaved Africans and disappointment directed towards those responsible for the past crimes and the present-day amnesia in museum collections and school curricula. The language used by the commentators took on an impassioned tone, particularly when describing 'the absolute pain of torture and suffering on an unprecedented scale' which was the human cost of Bath's enrichment, the 'archaic, depressingly regressive, conservative and non-inclusive' approach adopted by contemporary institutions responsible for silencing this past, and the ethical irresponsibility of Western art history 'judging works by their aesthetic qualities and leaving aside the ethical aspects of their construction and financing'. Participants unequivocally condemned the historical whitewashing that culminated in the UNESCO

World Heritage designation and the Jane Austen Festival celebrations. As Leandro Rodrigues aptly pointed out,

> The fact that the city of Bath has all this heritage built on captive labour and at the same time is designated as a World Heritage Site is very contradictory because the era celebrated by people [visitors to the Jane Austen Festival] wearing period costumes is one of enslavement and racial hierarchies which we see in a very negative way and we tried to research and denounce.

The participants' testimonies conveyed a range of emotions, with sadness, indignation and condemnation of past violence and present-day amnesia being the central intangible outcomes of the workshop. Interestingly, the dominant narrative had found an unexpected outlet in the tourists attending the Jane Austen Festival, an event 'emblematic for giving and promoting the continued narrative' of the 'wonderful genteel and elegant landed gentry and high society', in Lara's words. For some participants, the interaction with festival attendees dressed in Georgian attire represented one of the workshop's most engrossing, memorable or ironic moments. They viewed their own attempts to engage with 'the amused period-costumed genteel white types looking at the workshopped work, bemused at the detoured signage, taking selfies', as valuable opportunities for an 'unexpected cultural dialogue', as Lara noted. Adalgisa Giorgio shared her experience:

> I distributed the cards of these teacups to passers-by in the immediate vicinity of the mural, drawing their attention to the mural, to the enslavement and exploitation of African people that worked to produce the tea drunk from those cups by the British nobility in Bath. Some people responded well to my attempts to explain what the cards were about, but they were tourists, some from abroad. The locals were initially interested, thinking the cards and mural were about extolling the Bath heritage, and hurriedly left as soon as they realised that we were trying to publicise an alternative, critical narrative.

For others, the dialogue was inevitably doomed to fail given that the festival attendees were primarily tourists focused on leisure rather than a deeper understanding of history and its implications. Nonetheless, several participants viewed this encounter as a rare opportunity to denounce a highly immoral practice associated with the city's heritage that should be remembered critically, instead of being celebrated. As Benjamin Van Praag highlighted,

> Although we tried to engage the Austen fans in conversation, most were too busy parading around to stop and consider that what we were painting

> was really a criticism of the period and its legacy that they had come to celebrate. I believe that we were considered to [be] part of the festival as costume-attired visitors posed in front of the ever-developing painting that had begun to feel more like a piece of performance art than a piece of graffiti. […] The thought of the visitors later looking at the pictures that they had taken that day fills me with an odd sense of satisfaction that they may, just maybe, notice the irony of what they so happily masqueraded in front of on their visit to Bath.

The participants' comments demonstrate how they dissociated themselves from the dominant narratives that glorify Georgian Bath, narratives seemingly endorsed by the costume-wearing festivalgoers. It is interesting to consider whether their detachment from these narratives and condemnation of the empire-celebrating narratives led them to perceive the costumed festival attendees as accomplices of the 'authorised heritage',[34] potentially giving rise to a sense of moral superiority. This sentiment might have influenced their perception of these visitors as enemies rather than fostering the intended workshop objective of creating an agonistic space where people with opposing views are viewed as adversaries rather than enemies.[35] At the same time, there were also slight divergences between the participants' emerging voices, noticeable through the dissatisfaction of some with the aesthetic or ethical qualities of the Co-Created painting.

2.4.3 The efficiency of the Co-Creation methodology

In their final reflections, participants offered a critical assessment of the workshop's achievements and shortcomings. On a positive note, they highlighted the workshop's success in fostering genuine dialogue between local and international participants who learnt from each other's complementary perspectives on enslavement, colonisation and heritage narratives in different Global North and Global South contexts. In the words of María José Pantoja Peschard, 'What I enjoyed of these walks was that I gained a new perspective of Bath and Bristol and got to share my impressions with the other participants, who came from different parts of the world – both from the Global North and the Global South – and had a wide range of academic or artistic interests'. For María José, the combination of walking-with and creative art methods allowed the group to 'collectively engage with obscured and reluctant heritage not just in an intellectual way – rational, conceptual and language-based – but also in a physical, sensory, affective and embodied manner'.

34 Smith 2006
35 Mouffe 2013

The cups collage exercise, in particular, was praised as an accessible activity which required a lower skill-level than graffiti painting and thereby allowed a broader participation within the workshop. The creative activity in general was considered a useful way to bring about new thinking and develop understanding in a non-verbal way, although its efficiency was somewhat limited by the composition of the group, since, as a Mexican scholar noted, 'most of the participants were academics, artists or curators so, in this sense, we were all likeminded people, with a disposition and an interest in learning, critically considering and questioning hegemonic narratives'. Another constraint arose from the predetermined anti-colonial and anti-slavery iconography participants were tasked with using, which precluded certain narratives and, in some cases, elicited discomfort. This, as Richard White noted, hindered reconciliation efforts and was accentuated by curatorial decisions, such as the imposition of the central teacup motif, rather than collaborative identification. Pamela Castro also noted that curating choices had an important impact on the final outcomes, for instance through the central motif of the teacup which was imposed from the onset rather than identified together. In addition, the artists involved in painting the graffiti felt to some extent uncomfortable about performing their skills to satisfy group expectations disregarding the specific constraints of street art. For them, the workshop involved some careful balancing between aesthetic ideals and ethical imperatives. Benjamin Van Praag concluded:

> Personally, I was unhappy with the final aesthetic of the finished painting, feeling that it was naïve in style, lacking effective composition and

Figure 2.4 Graffiti on canvas created by Leandro 'Tick' Rodrigues and Benjamin Van Praag.

> sophistication and did not showcase the skill of the artists that had painted it. However, the effect that workshop had on me and my knowledge and understanding of the city that I walk and work in every day will last a lifetime. […]. [It] freed me to think about the idea of working with graffiti as an alternative way of recording and presenting history in a community setting.

The question of artistic quality was also raised by Pamela Castro, who was left wondering whether any Co-Created alternative narrative could ever be as rich in terms of art-produced evidence as the Georgian authorised heritage. Most participants agreed upon experiencing feelings of public usefulness and contribution to social justice by revealing the legitimisation and normalisation of white supremacy in the 19th century. As Pamela worded it, 'The whole development of the project made me not only a better artist but also a better human being'.

2.5 Conclusions

The workshop in Bath highlighted Co-Creation's potential to facilitate embodied learning and the emergence of new, non-verbal ways of grappling with the reluctant past. The experience revealed that tensions between artistic and academic ways of producing knowledge could be overcome by involving in the process artist-researchers equally literate in creative and academic ways of knowledge production. Both the arts-based and the walking-with activities engendered embodied learning and stirred up a range of emotions. These helped the participants to broaden their understanding and decolonise their own gaze while learning from each other's experiences in a safe place. Thus, the experience demonstrated that, as a knowledge-production methodology, Co-Creation possesses the capacity to foster the construction of new narratives that are critical of hegemonic discourses while simultaneously facilitating their dissemination, both through the participants becoming 'story carriers'[36] and by claiming and altering the public space.

In relation to Co-Creation's ambition to build opportunities for symbolic, cultural and political change, benefits could be identified at both the individual and collective levels since most participants reported having experienced either an increased awareness of colonial injustice or a new insight into Bath's involvement in processes of enslavement and colonisation. However, the workshop was significantly less successful at enacting a transformative change. Although it provided an outlet for resistance to

36 White 2021

dominant imagery through artistic activities and discussions, Co-Creation's potential to inspire political processes challenging existing hierarchies[37] was somewhat limited by the relatively homogeneous composition of the group and its low level of embeddedness in the local context. By bringing together mostly non-residents, on the one hand, and participants sharing similar values, education levels and strategies of knowledge production, on the other, the event did not trigger much agonistic confrontation of dissident voices. The limited participation of museum professionals and decision makers invested with real power over heritage narratives further narrowed the workshop's ability to generate transformative change and address structural injustices and inequalities.

It is also important to reflect on the causes of the group's quite homogeneous composition since this did not result from the organisers' refusal to open the workshop to stakeholders with dissonant voices. Instead, it was largely attributed to local institutions' hesitancy to fully participate in it. It can be contended that those local participants drawn to the workshop were mainly individuals. Although embedded in the Bath context, most of them were unable to commit five full days to exploring Bath's past and only attended some of the walks. Representatives of heritage institutions like the Holburne Museum and Beckford's Tower mostly engaged in one-way communication with the group of participants, showing them around their premises and providing insights into some of their curatorial practices. Their reluctance to participate more extensively in the creative workshops and walks may stem from concerns about losing control over audacious narratives emerging from the collective creative process. As a consequence, the knowledge sharing remained one-directional, since only workshop participants benefited from their encounters with heritage professionals to further their understanding of the context. In contrast, museum curators failed to capitalise on group discussions and creative activities to advance their own insight.

While the relative ideological homogeneity of the group can be seen as a shortcoming, it also had a positive effect on the creative collaboration and the evaluation process, which were both aided by most participants' familiarity with Co-Creation methods and ability to critically reflect on their experience. Overall, we can conclude that the workshop's structure and activities were better suited to international participants who were available for five consecutive days to immerse themselves in Bath's contested past. Local citizens, on the other hand, were not as available due to their daily commitments. This misalignment resulted in the group not being firmly embedded within the local context, hampering the workshop's capacity to effect change. Future workshops could be designed to better accommodate

37 Laclau and Mouffe 1985

local residents – for instance, they could be scheduled on weekends and be offered as shorter but more regular sessions. Yet the low participation of local citizens and institutions, and the non-participation of some key stakeholders involved in the complex local power relations, also freed the workshop participants from some of the constraints their involvement would have generated and thus allowed more radical and subversive narratives to emerge.

The group's encounter with festival attendees on the final day proved to be a pivotal moment in which the workshop came closest to its initial aims of creating dissensus and agonistic dialogue. According to Mouffe,[38] art alone is unlikely to improve society; at best it triggers agonistic encounters between people with opposing views. Confronting an audience celebrating Bath's official narrative with an alternative vision of the past, encapsulated in a subversive graffiti performed in a public space, was an audacious attempt to trigger agonistic dialogue (see also Chapter 1). Nevertheless, this encounter, although unplanned and potentially confrontational, was met with resistance from the majority of visitors. As the encounter was random and mostly involved passers-by, it was difficult to measure its impact on their views and beliefs or to draw definitive conclusions about their experience of the artworks they were exposed to. Although a formal evaluation process was not conducted, it is plausible to argue that the encounter between workshop participants pasting up collages, distributing flyers and painting subversive graffiti and attendees of the Jane Austen Festival harboured agonistic potential. This prompts further inquiry into whether this encounter spurred narratives promoting truth and reconciliation.

After the group spent five consecutive days developing a counter-narrative directed against unethical colonial practices and hegemonic discourses, they were unexpectedly confronted, in the centre of Bath, with what one of the participants called 'hordes of visitors dressed in Regency costumes […] roaming about'. Viewed by workshop participants as representatives of the authorised heritage they sought to challenge, these visitors symbolised their ideological adversaries. Unlike the Co-Creators, who were actively involved in painting and creating a political representation aimed at disrupting the silence about Bath's uncomfortable past, these visitors were seen as passively accepting a one-sided glorification of Georgian Bath. This encounter highlighted the gulf between the two groups. As Benjamin Van Praag noted, the encounter was a failed attempt at dialogue as '[they were] interested in what was being painted but too busy parading around to stop and consider that what we were painting was really a criticism of the period and its legacy that they had come to celebrate'. The festival visitors became, in the eyes of most participants, living embodiments of Bath's dominant

38 Mouffe 2007

narrative. Their reluctance to engage in dialogue mirrored the historical indifference of Georgian society towards the suffering of enslaved Africans. This perception further solidified the participants' self-image as morally superior for attempting to catalyse change and social repair. This sentiment might elucidate that somewhat unusual satisfaction workshop participants gleaned from provoking the visitors and challenging their views by exposing them to their more radical representation of the past.

Directed to irritate their perceived opponents rather than to negotiate a shared vision, the participants' attempt to create a space of dissensus was definitely agonistic in that tensions and conflicts between different visions of the past were brought to the fore, visually encapsulated in the Regency symbolic on one side, and in the painting and teacup posters on the other side. The workshop activities, the encounters with the festival visitors and the final evaluation process enabled the participants to acknowledge and reflect on their own positionalities, emotions and visions and their shared understanding reflected by the workshop's creative outputs. The workshop also highlighted a specificity of the heritage context in Bath where irreconcilable visions are rarely articulated in agonistic encounters since the defenders of the status quo prefer to maintain the silence. This silence was vigorously challenged by the Co-Created visual art outcomes, despite their brief exposure. This underscores the potential of critical art in generating dissensus.[39]

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39 Mouffe 2007, 2

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3

Splendour from slavery

Contesting the Pulteney legacy in Bath

Bryn Jones and Phil de Souza

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> *Friend, patron, benefactor?*
> *Not Pulteney's wealth can Pulteney save!*
> *And Hopetoun falls, the generous, brave!*
>
> Robert Burns, Second Epistle to Robert Graham of Fintray, 1791 Introduction

3.1 Introduction

The aftermath of the 2020 Black Lives Matter campaigns and challenges to revise public memories of Britain's colonial past have raised questions about the architectural legacies of slave-owning profiteers. Should their works only be regarded as aesthetic triumphs bestowed on posterity by benevolent patrons? Alternatively, should these structures be accompanied by prominent reminders and revelations about the dehumanising economics which provided the necessary finance and status for their promoters and creators? The city of

Bath poses particularly glaring forms of this question. Many of its impressive Georgian buildings were commissioned, financed or bought by aristocratic and business elites who owned or traded in enslaved labour on Caribbean and North American plantations. University College London research has shown that 182 Bath residents received compensation for the loss of their slaves in 1834 under the scheme authorised by the legislation that abolished British slavery trading.[1] James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos, and slavery-linked agents Richard Marchant and John Jeffreys financed John Wood and son, builders of such jewels in Bath's architectural crown as Queens Square, the Circus and the Royal Crescent. Chandos was a key investor/controller in the Royal African Company's trade in enslaved people from 1720. Other agents and intermediaries in Wood Junior's projects, such as Marchant and Harford Lloyd, are believed to have been involved with the slavery trade financer, Bristol Old Bank.[2]

An equally significant player in Bath's slavery–construction nexus was a Scottish entrepreneur and politician, William Johnstone. Through his marriage to Frances Pulteney, he adopted the Pulteney surname. He promoted and part-financed the construction of the spacious Pulteney Estate and the world-famous Pulteney Bridge over the River Avon, which connects it to the rest of the Georgian city. Johnstone Pulteney, as we will call him, not only owned enslaved-labour estates in the Caribbean but was also a leading campaigner *against* abolition. As a senior MP with powerful connections, he occupied key parliamentary and government posts in the regulation of colonial trade, which he used to further the plantation interest. It was only after, and possibly in part because of, Johnstone Pulteney's death that William Wilberforce got a parliamentary majority for his bill to abolish slavery trading. Yet, in several other respects, Johnstone Pulteney could be regarded as a political liberal. His social milieu, including his own family, included pro-abolitionists. Thus, Johnstone Pulteney was not a passive financial beneficiary of the colonial slavery economy, like the many middle-class inheritors of plantation estates. Nor even was the profligate aristocrat William Beckford, whose architectural follies on the edge of Bath and at Fonthill in Wiltshire were funded from the 13 Jamaican sugar plantations and 3,000 enslaved Africans he inherited. Nor was Johnstone Pulteney isolated from the tide of humanitarian ideas driving the abolitionists' cause. When it comes to assessing culpability for the exploitation and preservation of slavery, Johnstone Pulteney's is therefore a critical case.

1 Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/

2 Neale 1981, 162, 166

Figure 3.1 Pulteney Bridge over the River Avon at Bath, 1774.

Sceptics might raise – and indeed have raised – more general doubts about the value of such efforts to, as they see it, 'rewrite history'. Firstly, do financial links to colonial slavery automatically equate to culpability for the misery caused, as described in the final part of this chapter? In today's political culture, this may seem an obvious question when individuals and institutions can be embarrassed for their investments in carbon-emitting industries or rogue states. However, during the rise of the British imperial trade and colonialism system, the wealth of individual traders and investors might have only indirect or fleeting relationships to the slave trade or its plantations. To put the question another way, if, as the prominent historian David Olusoga has claimed, much of the British economy had some financial or trade connection to these 'businesses', is there any point in singling out individuals for retrospective criticism and castigation? If, today, someone's bank or pension-fund investors divert their bank account or pension contributions into loans to environmentally destructive businesses, does that automatically make the beneficiary culpable? Secondly, there is the more common negative reaction to calls for the assignation of guilt and atonement. This holds that immoral behaviour in and by historic periods, institutions and individuals cannot be judged by today's values. As this argument goes, it would be absurd to denounce and de-sanctify as despicable, for example, the discriminatory treatment of women in societies in which there was universal acceptance of their subordinate social and civic status. A common and easy answer is that it is sufficient to acknowledge the historical wrongs of slavery and move on. As the editors of the glossy *Bath*

Life Magazine put it, although 'we do have a responsibility to see it clearly and to explain it thoroughly […] We can't make amends for the past'.[3]

Fuller acknowledgement of this legacy and the inhuman treatment of enslaved people is needed because it has contemporary relevance. The human costs and inequities of slavery are not confined to the past. It should be recognised that the effects of exploitation and oppression among those enslaved in the 18th and 19th centuries have cascaded through succeeding generations down to the present. These affect both formerly dominated and dominant groups and include: 'color prejudice, self and community disdain, denial of trauma, black-on-black violence, survival crime, child beating […] [and] belief in white supremacy, dehumanization […] gun violence'.[4] To which could be added the continuing material disadvantages associated with this legacy and related discrimination: poverty, insecure or exploited employment, and limitation of financial and cultural assets.

Moreover, historical relativist justifications of activities such as those of Johnstone Pulteney – as part and parcel of the social consensus of the time – are incompatible with the actual conjuncture in which the moral legitimacy of slavery was no longer universally accepted. It therefore allows the more searching question: how do we judge individuals whose, now reprehensible, behaviour took place on a moral cusp, at a time when it was possible to adhere to either an anti- or pro-slavery belief without any societal consensus to completely uphold either? This judgement has special relevance to the issue of how those implicated in historic slavery institutions are memorialised today. The major controversy over the perpetuation of slave trader Edward Colston's memory in nearby Bristol provided strong arguments for measures that delegitimise such a memory. In the Colston case, this meant removing his name from those of prominent buildings and eventually removing his statue. In Bath, no similar pre-eminent slavery perpetrator stands out in the city's structures. However, Beckford and Pulteney feature widely in place and building names.

Paradoxically, we leave aside Beckford's case because his reputation as a slavery beneficiary is particularly clear-cut. Despite abandoning the active control of the plantations to managers, who seemed to have extracted their own profits from them, he drew huge sums to pursue grandiose schemes, such as the mock-Gothic Fonthill Abbey and a tower at Lansdown on the outskirts of Bath. Yet he was more of a rentier, content to receive and spend immense profits from inherited plantations which eventually dwindled drastically. Elected to Parliament in 1790 and, understandably, fearful of a diminution of his Jamaican plantation incomes, Beckford opposed abolition.

3 Clegg 2020, 60

4 Bowser and Charles-Nicolas 2021

Yet he seems to have mostly been an MP in name only, failing to attend almost all sessions and not therefore a prominent political opponent of abolition.[5]

By contrast, because Johnstone Pulteney's impact was more powerful but is barely recognised, his role in Bath's architectural development deserves more detailed scrutiny.[6] As a key figure in the then British elite, he was an active and leading opponent of the abolition of the slave trade. He may also have used his profits from plantation slavery to help finance the 'architectural and engineering wonder of the world'[7] that is Pulteney Bridge (see Figure 3.1) and 'the grand thoroughfare' of Great Pulteney Street,[8] in which lived, at various times, Hannah More, Napoleon III and, ironically, William Wilberforce. This chapter falls into two parts. The first three selections examine key aspects of Johnstone Pulteney's life and work: the political and economic roles he won for himself; the interconnections between these roles and his slave-owning interests, including his part in thwarting abolition; and his civic development projects, particularly financing construction in Bath. In the final part, we address two central questions of this volume: first, how to uncover and integrate into official narratives Bath's historical connections with empire, colonial trade and the wealth from Atlantic slavery; and second, as part of wider debates on memorialising the slavery stain on Britain's imperial past, the question of what forms of remembrance are appropriate for figures like Johnstone Pulteney.

3.2 The economic and political rise of a slavery advocate

Periods of capitalist economic expansion such as the mid-18th century allow social mobility for a fortunate few. At that time, Britain's growing colonial empire, coinciding with the unification of Scotland with England and Wales, certainly did that for many ambitious and forceful Scottish émigrés. Among this Scottish 'mafia', who soon occupied key positions in London's colonial, trade, financial and political affairs, were several of the 11 children of an impecunious Scottish laird, James Johnstone (senior). Of the six male

5 Port and Thorne n.d.

6 Primary research using the letters and papers of Johnstone Pulteney is restricted by their location in Los Angeles at the Huntington Library. Fortunately, Emma Rothschild's forensic scrutiny of these records and other Johnstone family documents provides an unusually detailed account of many relevant extracts (Rothschild 2011). Like other historical researches into the rise of Georgian Bath, we are indebted to the scrupulous reports from contemporary documents in R.S. Neale's wide-ranging volume (Neale 1981).

7 Bruce-Watt 2021, 52

8 Wikipedia 2022

children, four became Westminster MPs. The two youngest, Gideon and Patrick, who died there aged 19, sought their fortunes mainly in the 'Orient' with the British East India Company. Although Gideon, like almost all his male siblings, also owned slaves, this was probably through his marriage into a Liverpool slave-trading business. The sisters, in contrast, lived more subordinate lives, mainly in Scotland.

William, as the eldest son, born in 1729, became the de facto banker and 'fixer' for the other brothers. Following a steep ascent from Edinburgh law graduate via a London Customs and Excise post aged 30, briefly MP for Cromarty, he became the Member for Shrewsbury at the age of 40. Admired for his intellect by his philosopher friend David Hume, Johnstone Pulteney was also on 'intimate' terms with the abolitionist, free-trade political economist Adam Smith. He was a respected member of London's Scottish intellectual set in the mid-1700s. In 1767 Johnstone Pulteney's wife, Frances, came into possession – albeit for her infant daughter – of the wealthy estate of her cousin (also a William), the first Earl of Bath. Hearing this news, Hume, social philosopher Adam Ferguson and other friends put aside their earnest moral speculations to celebrate.[9] Thus was established Johnstone Pulteney's business interest in Bath and, in particular, the Bathwick estate. By 1769, Johnstone Pulteney also had his own slave estate in Grenada after previously acting as a financial agent for his brother John's plantation purchases there.

We pick up the connections between Johnstone Pulteney's slave businesses and his developments in Bath in the next section. Here it is important to note how his interests straddled the diverse but reinforcing fields of politics, finance and urban development. His civic development and political interests meshed when, as Governor of the British Fisheries Society, he became a patron of civil engineer Thomas Telford, with whom he created a network of Highlands roads and bridges and designed a new herring port at Wick named 'Pulteneytown', as well as roads like the A7 through the Scottish Borders. As was common practice in the 18th century's corrupt politics,[10] he was also able to purchase control of the four Weymouth parliamentary seats and redevelop the Weymouth seafront. His international ambitions were pursued through his appointment as a Commissioner of Trade, which provided influence over key aspects of British trade and investments in West Indies and North America prior to US independence.

These positions facilitated contacts, adding to that of his brother John, Governor of West Florida. Despite the war for American independence, Johnstone Pulteney maintained links with American notables. In 1778

9 Rothschild 2011, 29
10 French 2004

he was entrusted with secret, ultimately failed, negotiations with USA representative Benjamin Franklin to end the war. These connections seem to have facilitated his 1792 purchase of the Genesee 'wilderness': a vast tract of upper New York state that he intended to develop into a network of modern farms and towns. The city of Geneva there still has Pulteney Park as the centre of its South Main Street Historic District.[11] One of the, failed, strategies for developing these lands was to attract slave plantation farmers from the Southern states. Had it succeeded, this would have driven a slave-owning economic wedge into the heart of what became the free labour and, eventually, anti-slavery society of the North. Such a development would have created a powerful opposition to the emancipation movements there.[12]

It is difficult to disentangle the motivations of Johnstone Pulteney's political and business dealings and civic entrepreneurialism. His developments in Scotland, Weymouth and Bath suggest a combination of public- and self-interest. Housing, roads and bridges improve the general infrastructure of communities, but they could also raise the value of his land ownings and enhance his and his associates' political image. A plausible characterisation as public benefactor is contradicted by the judgements of contemporaries. According to his sister's son-in-law, Johnstone Pulteney's mind was like 'a gloomy mansion fared to Mammon'.[13] His political stature and reputation for financial pedantry was lampooned by James Gillray. When he was being touted as a potential Chancellor of the Exchequer, the satirical cartoonist depicted Johnstone Pulteney as a Robespierrean figure poring over the national accounts. His expertise with data (mainly financial) was shown in becoming an authority in mortgages for slave-ownership, bills of exchange and bonds, agronomy, naval procurement and, significantly, a biased cost–benefit analysis of transatlantic slavery. On the latter subject he ignored the welfare dimension. What mattered, in his eyes, was the prosperity of the imperial economy at the macro level and resource productivity in plantations at the micro. He was dismissive of the initiatives of the more benevolent plantation owners, including his own brother James, to replace coercive-force work disciplines with what we might call technical innovation and human resource management. When he assumed control of the Westerhall plantation in Grenada following James's death, Johnstone Pulteney's manager was instructed to abandon the plough introduced by James and revert to the back-breaking but allegedly more productive manual labour of multiple enslaved workers.

11 Johnstone 2004
12 Williamson 2005
13 Rothschild 2011, 285

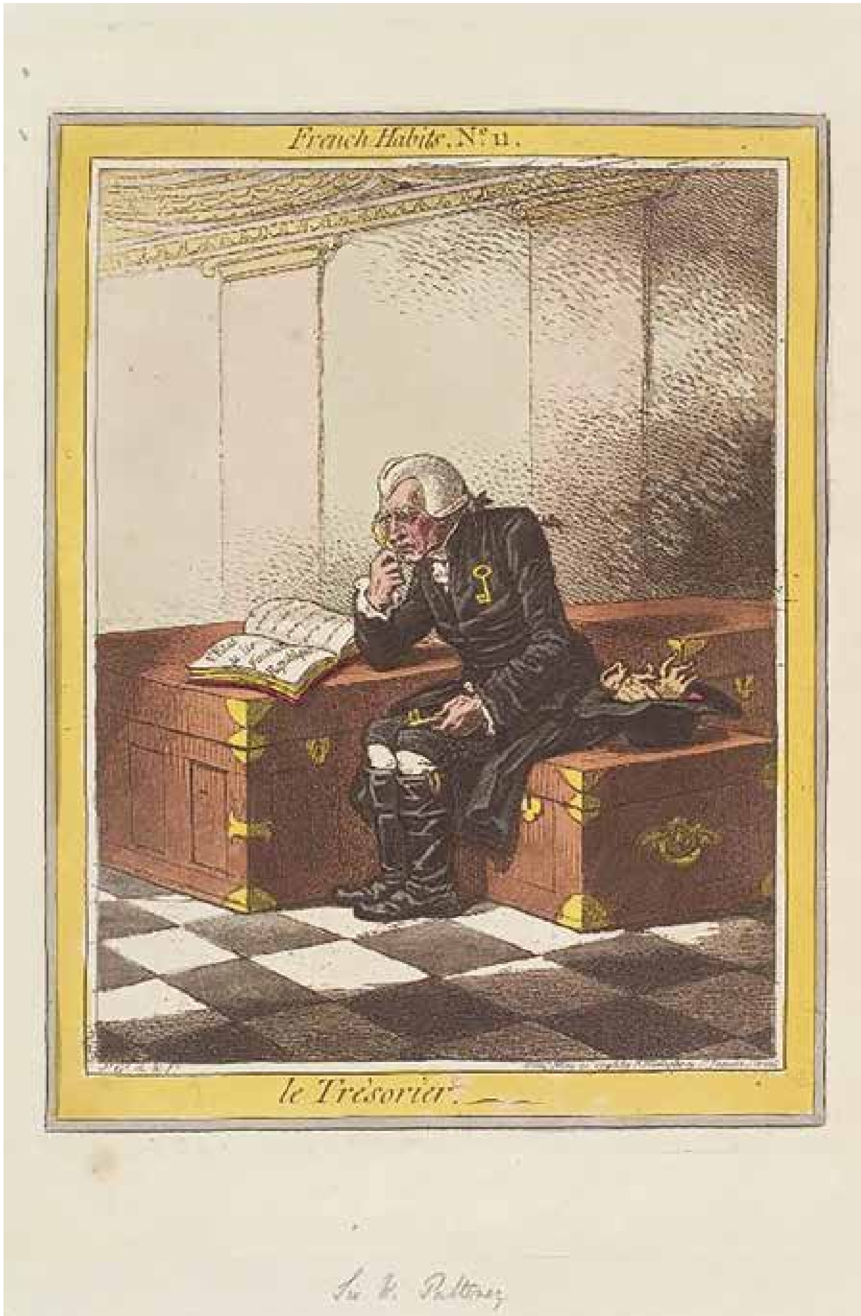

Figure 3.2 William Johnstone Pulteney as a Robespierrian treasurer. James Gillray, 1798.

3.3 The politics and practice of slave-ownership

Johnstone Pulteney was one of the most combative opponents of reforms to slave-ownership and abolition of the slave trade. He tried to dress up this opposition in terms of a rather tortuous economic perspective. Abolition of slave trading would not only bring ruin to the plantation economy of the Caribbean and thereby deplete imperial tax revenues, but it would also, he argued, rob African kingdoms of trading revenues. This 'free-market' defence of slavery did not prevent him from advocating government aid to planters when necessary. Johnstone Pulteney probably exploited his official role in colonial policy-making to get parliamentary authorisation of mortgages to compensate Grenada plantation owners for property damage from the 1795 'black' revolt.[14] This is the kind of 'exceptional' event which commercial insurers would no doubt have denied as constituting grounds for compensation.

Johnstone Pulteney's financial interest in protecting plantation slavery extended back as far as 1766 when he and his brothers agreed a 'plan' to acquire such assets. Johnstone Pulteney ended up with estates in Tobago, Grenada and Dominica. He was also instrumental in supplying the others with the funding and advice needed to purchase plantations. Unlike the more rentier-inclined owners, such as William Beckford, Johnstone Pulteney's interventionist and controlling personality meant he did not shy away from hands-on roles in plantation management, including slave trading with other estates. However, as their careers and businesses progressed, rifts developed between the siblings on the broader policies and politics of slavery. (Such differences may also have underlain the legal action begun by William and John against Alexander, to recoup £30,000 from the family's Westerhall, Grenada estate in 1774.[15]) Whereas William was a hard-line champion of punitive working practices and outright rejection of emancipation and abolition, James and John were converted to the abolition cause and Alexander promoted 'humane' methods of controlling and employing his slaves. Methods which Johnstone Pulteney dropped in 1797 when he took over the Westerhall plantation in Grenada that James had acquired on Alexander's death.

This ethical schism illustrates both Johnstone Pulteney's indifference to fraternal harmony and his prioritisation of the profiteering value of slavery as an institution. In Parliament, he was instrumental in defeating and stalling Wilberforce's dogged attempts to get Parliament to pass bills abolishing the trade. As late as 1805, only months before his death, Johnstone Pulteney's

14 Rothschild 2011, 167

15 Rothschild 2011, 99, 372

speech in the Commons helped defeat Wilberforce's bill of that year. Emma Rothschild comments that, although the bill was passed the following year, the delay meant that up to 100,000 additional Africans lost their liberty and many their lives, as slave ships continued to ply their inhuman trade.[16]

Johnstone Pulteney was erudite and intelligent. Modern critics of US imperialism would probably applaud his wry observation that the American independence project was 'the idea of establishing a new and magnificent empire upon the pillars of freedom'.[17] As an associate of Enlightenment figures such as Adam Smith and David Hume, he was in most respects a humanist and supporter of human and animal rights. He spoke out, for example, in Parliament against the proposed suspension of habeas corpus in Ireland in 1801[18] and helped draft legislation to outlaw bull-baiting.[19] Yet, in common with other educated people of his time, he lapsed into a racist mentality when it came to the connection of Africans with slavery. Black Africans were felicitously better suited to tropical plantation labour because they belonged to 'some other class of human species'.[20] In fact, 'negroes' were not especially equipped for tropical toil. It has been estimated that as many as a third of enslaved peoples died during the preparatory 'seasoning' phase of their employment on the plantations.[21]

Given Johnstone Pulteney's intensifying obsession with wealth and profiteering, his diverse ownerships and his legendary frugality, it is not surprising to find him described as 'The richest commoner in the Empire', with a final wealth of £12.1 billion in today's monetary values. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this monetising obsession eclipsed Enlightenment humanitarianism when it came to any questioning of overseas slavery. After all, the scruples of democracy were ignored when it came to the financial gains from parliamentary processes. An American nephew described him as someone 'totally absorbed in the accumulation of wealth', whose mind was mainly occupied with 'borough jobbing' – selling a constituency's electoral power to willing purchasers.[22]

16 Rothschild 2011, 115
17 Rothschild 2011, 122
18 Rothschild 2011, 258
19 Johnstone 2004
20 Rothschild 2011, 163
21 Sadler 2009, 25
22 Beresford and Rubinstein 2007; Rothschild 2011, 151

3.4 Johnstone Pulteney's Bath project

How did all of these predilections, powers and prejudices affect Johnstone Pulteney's activity in Bath? More specifically, did profits from his several slave plantations fund the construction of Pulteney Bridge and the fine houses on the new Bathwick estate? One summary answer could be that Johnstone Pulteney had the financial resources, skills and connections to have paid for all this work without relying on such incomes. In practice, however, it is likely that he did draw on the plantations' incomes and assets in order to complete, at least, the building of the bridge.

It must be remembered that the bridge was not built to provide the city of Bath with a public transport asset. The main aim was to make the development of elegant housing on the Bathwick side of the river a viable proposition. High-class housing in Bathwick would have been of little value or interest to builders and buyers unless there was a bridge connection to the city. At that time, there was only one other bridge crossing the Avon. That was the Old Bridge near the city's south gate, entailing a one-and-a-half-mile rural walk through virtual countryside to reach Bathwick. This would have been an unappealing prospect for the gentry and aristocrats attending the city's baths, Pump Rooms and Assembly Rooms. The bridge and Great Pulteney Street provided Jane Austen, for example, with more striking locations along which her *Northanger Abbey* characters, Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney, could stroll. Johnstone Pulteney must have calculated that the costs and any losses involved in building the bridge would be recouped by leasing and selling land and buildings on what became Great Pulteney Street and the Bathwick estate. This eventually proved a correct estimate, but its achievement proved more time-consuming and costly than he would have imagined.

As we have seen, his marriage to Frances Pulteney, daughter of the first Earl of Bath, eventually, on the death of the Earl's brother, brought him de facto control of the Earl's vast estates, including Bathwick to the east of Bath. The inheritance was covenanted to his infant daughter, Henrietta Laura, so the leases on the new Bathwick houses were granted in Laura's name. However, male legal privileges of the time would have given him, as father and husband of Laura's mother, Frances, power over the management of that wealth. As early as his 1760 marriage to Frances, his friends anticipated it would bring him a notional income of £20,000 when the Earl's fortune passed via his brother to Frances for Laura.[23] A bridge over the River Avon was needed to make the planned Bathwick estate accessible for the city and, in 1769, Johnstone Pulteney zealously adopted this idea that the

23 Neale 1981, 228

Earl had abandoned. How this was to be financed is not completely clear. Income from the inherited properties of the Earl was one option.

However, Johnstone Pulteney would not have had a completely free hand with regard to these finances. The Pulteney family wealth was legally covenanted to his wife and daughter. His role is described as akin to that of the 'senior administrator of a large corporation'.[24] The Pulteney family estate, or his own British and West Indian estates, could have provided collateral to obtain mortgage funds. A mortgage was arranged, but funds to pay for work to start on the construction required cash. Neale thinks Johnstone Pulteney spent some of his own income, which could have included the plantation profits, on this work. Simply buying titles to the land on the city side set him back £6,950, which apparently also came from his own funds. He also 'supplied mortgage money, particularly at the outset and to big builders', for work was to begin on the grand houses on the Bathwick side of the river, particularly the spacious Great Pulteney Street, concurrently with the bridge construction. Improvements to the initial bridge design and the inevitable 'snags' inflated total bridge costs to £11,000 (i.e. £2.2 million at today's prices). Two sets of repairs to the bridge, one to restore its piers after damage by flood water, piled on more costs.[25]

Leasehold rents should have started to flow in from the properties being built in Bathwick, now accessible from the city via the new bridge. However, the economic recession caused by the war with America, 1776–83, killed demand for new property in Bath. No serious house building began until 1790, and therefore there was no ground rent from the leases until then: 21 years after he had started paying for land preparation and building. It is true that by 1792 total rent incomes amounted to over £5,500 per annum, £1.1 million at today's values. However, until that point interest on a total of £10,739 in three separate mortgages had to be paid: around £430 each year from 1771; or £8,600 (£1.72 million today) for the whole period. Neale estimates that this sum was equivalent to the entire capital value of the Bathwick estate: 'It was indeed a most risky undertaking'.[26] The US War of Independence also spilled over into the Caribbean as America's ally, France, occupied Grenada until 1783. Consequently, sugar sales and revenues from Johnstone Pulteney's Grenada and Tobago plantations would have ceased for the duration.

Moreover, in the early stages of construction and rebuilding, Johnstone Pulteney had to draw on his own funds to buy land on the city side, with

24 Neale 1981, 228
25 Neale 1981, 230, 234, 240
26 Neale 1981, 234, 240

a net cost of £1,500.[27] The mortgages could have been raised with the Pulteney family's Bath estate as surety. However, additional costs would have had to be met from Johnstone Pulteney's own funds. These moneys must have come from the incomes from his own property, which would have included the West Indian plantations, excepting the period of their appropriation by the French. Even if he was 'the richest commoner in England', most of this wealth would have been in capital and property assets and not income streams that could be spent on the Bath project. We must conclude, therefore, that Johnstone Pulteney probably did, at some point, draw on the incomes from the slave plantations in order to begin and complete the building of Pulteney Bridge; or, less directly, to preserve the necessary financial capital at his disposal. This was under considerable threat during the 1780s and 1790s. In 1798 Johnstone Pulteney feared for the 'loss of his whole fortune' because, in addition to the burden of the continually rising bridge costs, the over-ambitious development of upstate New York devoured funds – at the colossal total of £200,000 at one point. This project did not move 'into the black' until 1805.[28]

The significance of Johnstone Pulteney for contemporary debates about the role of slavery in the architectural beautification of Britain can be summarised in four points. Firstly, without Johnstone Pulteney's political influence, wealth and, yes, organisational ability and vision, Pulteney Bridge and the impressive Great Pulteney Street would probably not have been built. Secondly, Johnstone Pulteney's financial clout was decisive in rescuing the bridge and house-building projects from failure – Bath's Georgian history was littered with bankruptcies, abandoned building schemes and unfinished edifices. Thirdly, moneys from plantation profits and slave trading were probably not a major direct source for funding all these projects. However, without them, the eventually successful Bath projects would have been failures. Fourthly, irrespective of his prowess in civic infrastructure development, Johnstone Pulteney was an open and forceful opponent of abolition and his political actions, notably in Parliament, helped prolong the trade and condemned thousands more to abduction, forced exile and possibly death on the notorious transatlantic slaving ships. Pulteney's case shows that there was a spectrum of slavery beneficiaries and interests involved in the creation and consumption of Bath's architectural expansion. This ranged from the aristocratic patronage of Chandos and the decadent dilettantism of William Beckford's extravaganzas to the more hard-headed political and commercial drive of Johnstone Pulteney. Johnstone Pulteney's activities should be remembered and publicised because he represents wider social,

27 Neale 1981, 232
28 Evans 1922, 91

economic and political facets of slavery in ways that go beyond the deeds and misdeeds of individual traders, owners or financial beneficiaries. To memorialise his role is to publicise the nature of the entire system on which Georgian Bath was substantially based. How should this historical memory of evils inflicted and the buildings that represent it be commemorated and exposed?

3.5 Addressing Bath's slavery-based heritage: reparations, restorative justice?

Despite Johnstone Pulteney's crucial role connecting Britain's colonial, slavery economy to Bath's architectural development, his contemporary resonance is mainly implicit. Like most of the city's luminaries, he has no statute and even his full name is concealed beneath the family-name labels of Pulteney Bridge, Great Pulteney Street and Pulteney Gardens. This is not exactly glorification on par with William Colston in Bristol, or even the grand monuments explicitly associated with William Beckford. Yet historical information and publicity for both locals and the tourism industry invariably implies that William Johnstone Pulteney was a visionary and pioneer developer who bequeathed architectural gems to the city.[29] Should not all of this also make clear his slavery interests and wealth, together with his political defence of and commitment to the slave trade and the colonial economy on which it was based? Most historical revelation and publicity about Bath's slavery dimension has dealt with financial backers, such as Chandos, or the plethora of residents with incomes from slavery, with William Beckford, that massive spender of slavery revenues, towering – financially and architecturally – over lesser beneficiaries.

Johnstone Pulteney represents some aspects of these facets, except for residence: he mostly lived in London, at 92 Piccadilly; a mansion that subsequently passed to the Barings banking dynasty – naturally also holders of several Caribbean slave estates. What marks him as a special case, worthy of close attention, was the pursuit and energetic defence of the transatlantic slavery complex in his political roles as a government trade official and leading intellectual advocate of the anti-abolitionist cause in Parliament. Publicising and memorialising the roles of figures such as Johnstone Pulteney could provide a fuller understanding of the interlocking institutions of political, financial and cultural power that articulated transatlantic slavery to the 'iconic, internationally recognisable structures' of Georgian Bath.[30] Rather than focussing only on stand-out figures such as Johnstone Pulteney, their

29 Funstacker n.d.; Visit Bath n.d.; Visit West n.d.

30 https://www.bathworldheritage.org.uk/18th-century-architecture

legacy for both Bath and the remembrance of slavery needs to be part of wider information and educational practices. We propose that all of these should be tackled through the lens of *reparations or restorative justice*.

Reparation as 'making amends for a wrong'[31] has been adapted to define 'reparations for slavery' as reparations to the victims of slavery and/or their descendants, ranging from individual monetary payments and scholarships, to formal apologies and acknowledgements of the injustices, and measures such as the removal of monuments and renaming of streets that honour slavers and defenders of slavery. The term 'restorative justice' addresses similar issues as reparations but it also implies 'collaboration and healing'.[32] Way back in 1993, Britain's first African Caribbean MP, Bernie Grant, argued that the moral debt to the African communities has yet to be paid. This is a debt composed of the consequences of the exploitation of Africa – 'painful and economic and personal consequences – and the racism it has generated'.[33] Caribbean nations' leaders such as Professor Sir Hilary Beckles have argued that 'colonial powers that built their industrial revolutions from enslavements, should give back to the Caribbean. We inherited poverty, illiteracy, hypertension, diabetes, racial degradation – all the negative dimensions, [whereas the British] inherited wealth, prosperity and prestige'.[34] The logic is impeccable. If the wealthy slave owners and investors were entitled to receive a total of £20 million (£17 billion at 2020 price levels) from the British government's abolition process, why, even 200 years later, are those suffering the consequences of slavery not entitled to recompense? In addition to material reparations, as urged by Caribbean authorities, amends to the status and respect owed to members of the Caribbean diaspora in Britain should be initiated.

Campaigners and relevant authorities have concerned themselves with the pros and cons of publicly visible forms of representation, such as displays, new or renamed monuments, and explanatory statements in public places. Various forms of educational communication need to be added to these essentially passive statements. School teaching could and should be upgraded from the currently limited coverage of colonial slavery in national curricula and teacher-led initiatives. Education in a wider sense would be useful for adult residents, tourists and other visitors in museums, Georgian

31 *Oxford English Dictionary*. Reparations and restorative justice are not new issues but have become prominent with the Black Lives Matter movement. As contemporary topics, they are currently being updated and revised. The issues raised in this chapter should be read as part of these discussions.

32 Otele 2023

33 UK Parliament 1993

34 Trevelyan 2022

buildings and tourist information. In our view, additional measures need to be geared to three different audiences: tourists and other visitors to Bath, its permanent residents and, not least, the local black community, which should participate in the planning of new initiatives. Firstly, what acknowledgements and information have the city's institutions provided so far?

The Bath and Colonialism Archive Project (a partnership between Bath Record Office, Bath Abbey and Bath Preservation Trust) has begun compiling a data archive of local press coverage of local slave-trade links from the period 1760–80.[35] Museums and heritage bodies have produced illustrative exhibits and events. Curated by Jillian Sutherland, the Holburne Museum's online and physical depictions now include a Barbados plantation book (see Chapter 9).[36] After criticisms and consultation with members of the Black and Ethnic Minorities Senior Citizens Association, the National Trust's Dyrham Park stately home has contextualised its slavery artefacts and publicised the colonialism that ultimately financed the estate. The Trustees of Beckford's Tower are concluding their consultation and survey to identify aspects of the Beckford family's slave-owning history.

In addition, these and other city exhibitions coordinated a focus on 'unlocking the legacies of the trade in enslaved people'. These included Beckford's Tower's exhibition 'Big Spenders: The Beckfords and Slavery', the Herschel Museum's 'Slaves to Fashion' display and No. 1 Royal Crescent's 'Elegance and Exploitation'. The Museum of Bath Architecture, which could be a central focus for Georgian Bath's slavery nexuses, mounted 'Selina's Web' on the slavery-financed construction of their building, the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, built for the slave-owning but emancipation-supporting Countess Selina Hastings. Cynthia Hammond's remark that this exhibition did not 'unpack' how slave trade profits helped 'finance the very things' celebrated by 'the city […] and the Museum in particular'[37] has been partly addressed by these new initiatives but more focussed reparations could still be undertaken.

In the education sphere, national movements have begun to see colonial slavery history through the eyes of young black children, driving schools to involve them in a re-evaluation of the school curriculum. Sixth formers in a London school argue that their learning of the facts from the 'victor's' perspective is one-sided. Their goal is to encourage the Department of Education to introduce a compulsory Key Stage 3 history module on British colonial history to include a black perspective.[38] Alex Wheatle, author of

35 bathandcolonialism.org
36 Holburne Museum n.d.
37 Hammond 2017, Chapter 2
38 BBC Bitesize 2020

Cane Warriors, works with schools to enable the teaching of 'history that is fundamental and inclusive'. In a recent talk for Beckford's Tower and Museum, Wheatle argued that there is no narrative on slavery in current history teaching. As Welsh primary schools will be using tools developed by local initiative BE.Xcellent[39] to focus on the teaching of diverse histories in teaching, what scope do Bath and North East Somerset (BaNES) schools have to do something similar? A local group in BaNES, Boys in Mind, have given black schoolchildren the voice to highlight racism's limitation of their educational potential,[40] including a video on 'Bath's connections to plantation ownership, the transatlantic trade of enslaved people and Black activism in the South West'. This prompted the BaNES Race Equality and Hate Crime Taskforce Partnership to draw up a race equality charter for schools.[41] Further exploration of the role of historic slavery in these phenomena could benefit both black and white students.

In the civic sphere, BaNES could act in various ways to come to terms with its slavery-financed heritage, beginning with a formal apology. Such a message would remedy the actions of its predecessor authority, Bath City Council, which repeatedly banned abolitionist meetings in the city's Guildhall in 1792.[42] This apology would not be unprecedented. Spurred on by the Black Lives Matter movement, civil society institutions have recanted their historical practices. The United Reform Church[43] and Bath Abbey (Chapters 1 and 8) have publicly acknowledged the crimes committed by their predecessors. The City of Edinburgh Council's Slavery and Legacy Review formally acknowledged and apologised for the city's involvement in Transatlantic slave trade 'which brought about racial injustice and systemic domination, still affecting Black and Minority Ethnic people today'. Otele argues that to express regret does not constitute an apology – in 2006, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed 'deep sorrow' for Britain's role in the transatlantic slave trade while, at the same time, reminding people to 'rejoice at the different and better times we live in today'. Otele rightly observes that life today continues to be influenced and shaped by the existence of slavery.[44]

BaNES Council should also acknowledge the historical legacy of the trade in enslaved peoples that fuelled racism and inequalities, affecting

39 BBC News 2022

40 Boys in Mind 2022a; Otele 2023

41 Bath and NE Somerset Council 2022, https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/race-equality-charter-schools

42 Holly 2016

43 Reynolds and Campbell 2021

44 City of Edinburgh Council n.d. https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/edinburghslavery-colonialism

the life chances of black people in towns and cities in the UK, down to the present COVID catastrophe[45] linked to local poverty and ill health, especially mental health of black communities, young and old. A practical solution would be targeted funding for local groups (e.g. BEMSCA, Black Families and Boys in Mind). These are already supporting black people despite shoestring budgets. While material measures could improve daily lives, symbolism could help spiritual confidence. Following the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol, the Colston Hall and School have been renamed, as has London's Geffrye Museum – now the Museum of the Home. These are tangible ways of shifting esteem and respect away from the perpetrators of racialised abuse. It could be further shifted towards their historic victims.

In Bath, consideration should be given to street names, bridges and other landmarks that bear the Pulteney name. A total name change may not always be appropriate, but dual naming should be considered. This retains the original name but adds in the names of, for example, the plantation, country or even individuals from which profits were derived, as in 'Pulteney–Grenada' bridge. Otherwise, technical devices, QR codes or plaques could explain to residents and tourists the history of monuments. Equally important is the naming of new landmarks. A new development in Lansdown, Bath was named after William Beckford with little forethought to the implications. New estates, bridges and other structures could be given names that correct forgotten concealed links to individuals, places and events in the slavery era. Several prominent former enslaved people and their offspring stayed in Bath: Olaudah Equiano, George Bridgetower and the Crafts.[46]

More generally, it is vital that different sections of the community, especially black members, participate in developing such measures. A possible vehicle for this engagement is BaNES Council's Race Panel of local citizens, co-chaired by a local councillor. With funding, this panel is in a position to seek the views of the local population on how Bath should remember and question the slavery sources of its heritage. Despite the need for major groundwork and sensitivity to the information uncovered, as well as the emotional memories it will undoubtedly raise for many black people in Bath, a smaller version of the Edinburgh survey could begin the process of gathering views and setting out the parameters of the consultation. After which, it may be the right time to consider setting up a dedicated information service-cum-forum, replacing or supplementing disparate, specialised displays. This could bring together in one overarching

45 UK Government 2020; Boys in Mind 2022b

46 Equiano and Sapoznik 2013; BBC News 2021; Holly 2016

narrative many of the different local strands of the slavery–lifestyle–building nexus and relate them to the debates within and around black history and contemporary injustices.

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the question of uncovering largely unacknowledged links to the colonial exploitation of slavery. It has explored and demonstrated the role of one influential slave owner and pro-slavery advocate whose name is commemorated in Bath's architecture. Although there are several such individuals, William Johnstone Pulteney is a paradigm test case for arguments about the culpability of individual beneficiaries of slave-ownership and plantation profits. We have shown that his architectural legacy in Bath was most probably assisted, even if not necessarily directly financed, by such 'investments'. However, his strident opposition to the abolition of the slave trade – even in the face of robust, now orthodox, humanitarian beliefs – shows that his memory should be suitably challenged. Accordingly, we have suggested measures for Bath's authorities that could acknowledge such moral violations and publicise instead the significance of the historic slavery locations and practices. Finally, we have broadened such policies to examine possibilities for more general cultural 'reparations'. Measures that, irrespective of the thorny issue of financial reparation, could right the wrongs inflicted on enslaved peoples; wrongs that have persisted, in other forms, throughout the generations to afflict black British and Caribbean peoples today. Otele emphasises that 'those who have suffered most from slavery and colonialism should determine the restorative justice agenda'.[47]

Comparisons could be made between the memorialisation of the slave trader and civic benefactor Edward Colston in Bristol and the works of Bath luminaries such as Johnston-Pulteney. However, overt acts of de-sacralisation and repudiation are not so easy to envisage in Pulteney's case. No one has seen fit to erect statues of him. Moreover, his astute adoption of the Pulteney name means that places such as Pulteney Bridge, Great Pulteney Street and Pulteney Gardens may be associated with the whole, mainly innocuous, family rather than its adopted Machiavelli. The Pulteney nametag, 'sewn into the very fabric of Bath',[48] does not explicitly celebrate or glorify any specific individual. On the other hand, the broader issue of Bath's architectural aggrandisement from the suffering and exploitation of African slaves, in sites such as 'his' bridge and his wider roles, should surely

47 Otele 2023
48 Otele 2023

be acknowledged and commemorated. In that case, the historical connection should be made publicly visible, rather than only memorialised in obscure museum displays and publications such as this, valuable though these may be in their own right! If the legacy of the Pulteney family *is* woven into the fabric of the city, it is even truer to say that its fabric is riven with the legacy of slavery.

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4

Memorialisation and counter-memorialisation

Competing narratives of Bristol's involvement in slavery

Mark Steeds

Mark Steeds is a former draughtsman and current publican of some 30 years, keen on trying to right old wrongs. Especially interested in Bristol's maritime and literary history, his 2007 pamphlet for Bristol Radical History Group was *Cry Freedom, Cry Seven Stars*, and he recently co-authored *From Wulfstan to Colston* with Roger Ball (2020).

4.1 Introduction

In November 2006, on the eve of nationwide events marking the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 (Abolition 200), the Bristol Radical History Group[1] (BRHG) hosted a week of walks, talks and exhibitions including the theme 'Slavery, Resistance and Rebellion'. Using a 'history from below' approach, it initiated the group's aim of opening up 'hidden histories' of Bristol and the South West. The event was put on in advance of Abolition 200 in order to explore alternative narratives to 'establishment histories'. My input was a talk about Bristol's Seven Stars pub and abolitionist Thomas Clarkson's epic stay there in 1787, which led me to becoming a member of the BRHG and then joining the campaigning group Countering Colston ten years later.[2] As a spin-off from

1 Influenced by radical historians in south London, the BRHG sprang out of a sports club in Easton in 2005, initially encouraged by *The Many Headed Hydra* authors, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker. In its founding statement, the BRHG recognised that the city was 'inexorably linked to the Atlantic and former British colonies through its seafaring and trading activities'. The group is independently organised by local Bristol people and NOT funded by business, universities, political parties or local government.

2 Formally named in 2016, Countering Colston as a group came together after state schoolchildren were made to attend archaic Colston ceremonies at Bristol Cathedral. In

the event, in 2009 the BRHG created a narrative plaque to Clarkson outside the Seven Stars, and then inspired stained-glass windows in Hawkesbury church to memorialise 11th-century abolitionist St Wulfstan. These acts of counter-memorialisation were a small step towards changing Bristol's memorial landscape, which had long been dominated by just three people: engineer Brunel, explorer Cabot and 'philanthropist' Colston. It was the over-memorialisation of slave-trading Edward Colston which so bridled campaigners; in addition to statues and buildings that celebrated him, it also manifested itself in rituals, ceremonies and institutions. Matters came to a head in the 21st century with campaigning groups such as Countering Colston who, in addition to protesting, proposed change in a positive way by promoting the idea of a national memorial to the victims of enslavement and an 'Abolition Shed' interpretation centre in the heart of Bristol.

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate through the lens of Bristol how the mainstream narratives of slavery, the slave trade and abolition affected memorialisation in Britain after the Emancipation Bill passed through Parliament in 1834. It also seeks to demonstrate how, in recent years, counter-memorialisation helped to reflect the people and movements who made a difference more accurately. Throughout the country, memorials were erected to key British abolitionists – Wilberforce in Hull, Buxton in London, St Wulfstan in Worcester and Clarkson in Wisbech – but, in contrast, Bristol failed to recognise its own abolitionists. In fact, the city did the opposite by reinventing and celebrating Edward Colston, portraying him as both a 'Good Samaritan' and the city's 'Greatest Philanthropist'. In addition, right up until the 1990s, Bristol maintained a wall of silence surrounding the slave trade perpetuated by the city's ruling elite and religious leaders – despite Bristol being the world's pre-eminent slave-trading port between the 1720s and 1740s, and in subsequent years a hotbed for abolitionists. If you are not going to talk about the slave trade, you are not going to talk about abolition; hence there were no memorials to the latter.

Dominant narratives concerning abolition, both locally and nationally, have diminished the role of African resistance and rebellion and the British mass movement involved in abolishing the slave trade. They also have omitted important historical periods such as the agonising wait for full emancipation that the enslaved endured throughout the Americas after 1834. Moreover, Britain's story of abolition has been dominated by a misleading mainstream narrative described by its critics as 'Wilberfarce', allied with historical silences in cities such as Bristol. Bristol's Caribbean community coined the

2014 the Bishop of Bristol misled one of these ceremonies and a complaint was made to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Campaigning against this continued – and began in earnest against other memorials to the same slave-trading individual.

term 'Wilberfarce' in response to Abolition 200, where commemorations were seemingly centred on the efforts of a single 'great (white) man', the British philanthropist William Wilberforce.[3]

Members of the Bristol Radical History Group were also concerned with how the history of Abolition 200 would be framed as a peculiarly British institution, where apparently our enlightened rulers had led the world in a progressive campaign to 'rescue the poor African' from his fate. As Caribbean historian Eric Williams sarcastically observed, 'British historians often wrote as if their country had only undertaken the largest branch of the Atlantic slave trade of any colonial power "in order to have the satisfaction of suppressing it"'.[4]

The BRHG's investigations showed that, after the abolition of the slave trade (1807) and emancipation (1838), the 'official' narrative distorted and sanitised history in a number of ways: (1) it concentrated on reactionary figures such as William Wilberforce to the exclusion of anti-slavery activists and the mass movement which sustained the campaign; (2) it refused to acknowledge the role of violent revolts and revolutions of the enslaved (and their victories over British forces) in terminating both the trade and slavery – and thus Africans were treated as silenced victims without agency; (3) it failed to contextualise West African slavery within the systems of forced labour of early capitalism which incarcerated both black and white people on a class basis; and (4) it completely ignored the effect of the French Revolution and the impact of the 'natural rights of man' on both the enslaved and the abolition movement it.[5]

An example of Bristol's 'wall of silence' was the 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition held at Bristol's now-defunct £8 million British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM) in 2007. It was Bristol's primary contribution to Abolition 200. Although not a slavery museum per se, the BECM received a £1 million Abolition 200 Heritage Lottery grant for the exhibition. Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers – historically responsible for the city's involvement in the slave trade and staunch defenders of it – was hardly mentioned. After cynically taking the Abolition 200 money for hosting the exhibition in 2007, the museum's managing charitable trust shocked the city by announcing a move to London. The Bristol public was last admitted in 2008. While looking for premises in London, scandal rocked the museum in 2011 when Director Gareth Griffiths was dismissed pending a police investigation into the unauthorised disposal of museum

3 COBG 2006
4 Blackburn 2005, 128
5 Steeds and Ball 2020, 270–4

artefacts.[6] The planned move was cancelled a year later and the surviving collection given to Bristol City Museum to be digitised and stored. The BECM fiasco certainly contributed to many Bristolians being put off from supporting similar ventures.

While civic leaders in Bristol tried to dodge the issue in the early noughties, Liverpool forged ahead with its plans for the International Slavery Museum, based upon its initial 1994 permanent exhibition on the slave trade in the Merseyside Maritime Museum. This was then built upon by using both Liverpool's involvement in Abolition 200 and its bid for European Capital of Culture in 2008 to receive funding. The museum project has been widely acclaimed and plans are now afoot to expand the venue and collection.

The French city of Nantes, an inland port like Bristol, has a similar geographic layout and history of involvement in slavery. With around 2,000 slave-ship voyages to its name, Nantes has also led the way in terms of memorialisation. As in Bristol, initially public attitudes varied between cynicism and guilty consciences, and a cloak of silence fell over the subject for decades. It was not until the 1990s that the residents, together with Nantes Urban Community,[7] began a conscious process of facing up to the city's history. This resulted in the 1992 'Shackles of Memory' exhibition, which attracted more than 400,000 visitors and enabled people to understand and analyse the reality of that history. Since then, Nantes has continued to move along this path by initiating local and international projects. These included cooperation and twinning with towns in Africa and South America and the organisation of the Global Forum on Human Rights. Finally, in 2011, a memorial was constructed 'in homage to all those who have fought, fight and will fight against slavery [...] [marking] the close of one cycle and the beginning of the next: that of the present and the future'.[8]

In contrast, Bristol's civic leaders, the City Council and local business leaders managed to achieve the opposite and actually engendered disquiet in certain quarters. This was especially the case in the mid-1990s with the instigation of the large-scale Cabot 500 celebrations and the Festival of the Sea. Neither event seriously considered the city's role in early colonialism and slavery and thus contributed to the city's apparent 'wall of silence' policy. This dire situation was partially allayed by the establishment of the Bristol Slavery Trail, followed in 1999 by the hugely successful 'A Respectable Trade? Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery' exhibition in Bristol's former

6 Morris 2011

7 Nantes Urban Community was the local authority responsible for the City of Nantes at that time.

8 *Nantes Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery*, visitors pamphlet (Nantes, 2015).

Industrial Museum, a building that now hosts M Shed.[9] The exhibition was the culmination of a three-year programme of public consultation and discussion that had been developed under the auspices of the Bristol Slave Trade Action Group. This organisation had been formed in 1996 by a small group of activists, city councillors and academics, partly in reaction to the controversy surrounding the Festival of the Sea.[10]

The naming of Pero's Bridge, a river crossing in the heart of the city docks, in 1999 was another controversial attempt to allay criticism. One local politician called the naming 'gesture politics'.[11] Twenty years on, Countering Colston recognised that an opportunity had been missed by naming it after Pero Jones, a victim of the slave trade, rather than a freedom fighter from history like Sam Sharpe, who was the leader and a martyr of the 1831 Emancipation Rebellion in Jamaica. The Jamaican Rebellion of December 1831 followed hard on the heels of Bristol's reform riots, and its timing may have been a tactical response to news of the wave of reform protests and disturbances in Britain and Ireland in October 1831. Had Sharpe been recognised, popularised and memorialised in Bristol, a quite different message would have been transmitted. The current Abolition Shed project wants to make fundamental changes to the established narrative by highlighting freedom-fighter abolitionists like Sharpe, challenging the city's established memorial landscape and uncovering other major contributions from hitherto-uncelebrated campaigners. Bristolians such as the Blackwell, Carpenter and Estlin families played leading roles in the abolition movement across the Atlantic. This tradition stretches back a thousand years, more than any slaving centre, and starts with Bristol's foremost abolitionist of the 11th century, St Wulfstan.

4.2 Abolition in 11th-century Bristol

Wulfstan was the last Anglo-Saxon Bishop of Worcester, whose major achievement was to end the Anglo-Irish slave trade in 1090. The trade had been spurred on by the establishment of Viking settlements in Ireland in the ninth and tenth centuries. At that time, the Vikings were the most important slave traders in northern Europe and they created the market for Bristol to become a major slaving port. Many Bristol merchants were engaged in the trade, which was practised openly and shamelessly, with Bristol earning the unenviable nickname the 'Step-mother of all England'.

9 The exhibition was visited by 160,000 people; Bristol's Industrial Museum was superseded by the M Shed museum in 2011.

10 Dresser 2007, 229

11 Onions 1998

William of Malmesbury's *The Life of Wulfstan* describes the situation as follows:

> There is a sea-port town, called Bristol, opposite to Ireland, into which its inhabitants make frequent voyages on account of trade. Wulfstan cured the people of this town of a most odious and inveterate custom, which they derived from their ancestors, of buying men and women in all parts of England, and exporting them to Ireland for the sake of gain. The young women they commonly got with child, and carried them to market in their pregnancy, that they might bring a better price. You might have seen, with sorrow, long ranks of young persons of both sexes, and of the greatest beauty, tied together with ropes, and daily exposed to sale. Oh! horrid wickedness! To give up their nearest relations, nay, their own children, to slavery. Wulfstan, knowing the obstinacy of these people, sometimes stayed two months among them, preaching every Lord's Day; by which, in process of time, he made so great an impression on their minds, that they abandoned that wicked trade, and *set an example to all of the rest of England* to do the same.[12]

To this day, abolitionist St Wulfstan's massive achievement is not signified in any way in central Bristol, in any of the city's streets or buildings. His personage has not been marked in any of the city's many central Anglican churches either, including Bristol Cathedral. The question is why has St Wulfstan been omitted from Bristol's memorial landscape despite the fact that his achievement has been well documented in history books for over 200 years?

Unfortunately, Wulfstan's achievement only lasted 80 years. Henry II used the resumption of the trade between Bristol and Dublin as a pretext for the invasion and colonisation of Ireland in 1171. The slave trade had become rampant again during the reign of King Stephen, a period known as 'the Anarchy'. It would not be the first time that English rulers would use slavery as a pretext for invasion and colonisation. They would be aided and abetted by an organisation in Bristol known as the Society of Merchant Venturers. The Merchant Venturers were a cartel of 'mere merchants' from Bristol, international traders who protected their interests from competition by restricting access to the port of Bristol and foreign markets. They were granted a Royal Charter in 1552 by Edward VI[13] at a time of a power vacuum, filling the void between church and state that Henry VIII had created with his Reformation during the 16th century. To this day, the charter offers the Merchant Venturers protection from public scrutiny of their finances.

12 Evans 1824, 1090 entry

13 Evans 1824, 1551 entry

Figure 4.1 Stained-glass window triptych depicting the life of Wulfstan in St Mary's Church, Hawkesbury. Caroline Pederick, 2011.

4.3 Forced labour in the new-found lands

Setting the template for future years, the Merchant Venturers' first governor was Sebastian Cabot, son of explorer John Cabot, and one of the earliest Bristolians to be involved in the African slave trade. He was followed by other merchants and adventurers who in the early 17th century included American colonisers Thomas Guy and Martin Pring, all of them encouraged by Bristol Cathedral Prebend Richard Hakluyt, "the father of English colonialism". Another leading Bristol Merchant Venturer, Robert Aldworth, traded with Spain, Portugal and Madeira; as a result of this trade, he was able to set up the first sugar refinery in Bristol in 1612. By investing in early exploration and colonisation, the Merchant Venturers' interests and influence greatly expanded throughout the 17th century. Completely ignoring the lessons of Wulfstan, they enhanced their business interests by obtaining plantations in the Caribbean and the Americas, which came with a dire need for labour, forced or otherwise. These workers first consisted of indigenous peoples, then indentured servants and penal labourers, and ultimately enslaved Africans.

Many dynastic families in Bristol were members of the Society of Merchant Venturers, including several generations of Colstons, the most successful of them all being Edward Colston, a cold and calculating man who made few financial mistakes. He was groomed as a youth to become a ruthless 'mere' merchant and made money hand over fist, first from the Iberian Peninsula and then from London. Born in 1636, he attended Bluecoats School in London and followed this up in 1654 by joining the Mercers' Company as

an apprentice.[14] Originally denoting a merchant in cloth, the Worshipful Company of Mercers was the premier, and most influential, livery company of the City of London. It was the perfect grounding for Colston's future career as a prominent merchant in the slave trade.

In the 17th century, Merchant Venturers and their allies in Bristol sent countless thousands to labour on plantations in the New World. Many were impoverished Bristolians.[15] Most of them went as indentured servants and penal labourers, with many losing their lives. Among them were religious and political dissidents, including some of Bristol's early Baptists and Quakers, whom Colston and others despised. They were roundly persecuted, some dying for their beliefs. These unrecognised non-conformists included Dorothy Hazard and 'Blackymore Maid' Frances. They followed abolitionists of the day such as Quaker James Naylor, who spoke out against the slave trade in the 1650s. There is evidence that Hazard and Frances may have attended the Putney Debates of 1647, where Leveller Colonel Thomas Rainsborough, Parliamentarian and liberator of Bristol, campaigned for abolition:[16] 'When he inveighed against slavery, Rainsborough included emancipation of several kinds: the practice of impressments, spiriting or kidnapping to the Americas, the capture for forced labour of English people in West and North Africa, and the enslavement of Africans'.[17]

4.4 Bristol officially engages in the African trade

The largely Royalist Merchant Venturers were not listening, and in 1685 Colston's own brother-in-law, Sir William Hayman, was convicted of abducting Bristolians and sending them off to the plantations as one of Judge Jeffreys' 'kidnapping knaves'. Others were implicated and certain merchants turned to illegally engaging in the slave trade by becoming interlopers. To protect their overseas tobacco trade, the Venturers successfully lobbied for the government to suppress local growers and enhanced their use of forced and bonded labour in the plantations. The Society then campaigned to become involved in the transatlantic slave trade.[18] As Charles Clark states in his history of the Society, 'For nearly forty years the Bristol merchants engaged in a truceless warfare as champions of free trade with Africa against the would-be monopolists of London'.[19]

14 Wilkins 1920, 12
15 Sacks 1991
16 Hunt 2007
17 Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, 111
18 Simpson and McNeill 2009
19 Clarke 1922

The 'would-be monopolists from London' is a direct reference to the Royal African Company who, like the Merchant Venturers, were granted a Royal Charter, this time by Charles II. Based in London, the Royal African Company claimed exclusive English rights to trade on the West coast of Africa and thus had a monopoly on the slave trade during the latter half of the 17th century. Throughout the 1690s the public propaganda war between the Company and the merchants in Bristol and other provinces intensified as both sides lobbied (and bribed) in order to gain or retain political influence over the Atlantic slave trade.[20]

From 1689 to 1691, major shareholder and Deputy Governor Colston was effectively second in command of the English slave trade, after serving as a dedicated Company committee member for nine years, making money from a salary, dividends, commodity sales, loans and insider trading. The hard fact remains that 84,500 men, women and children were shipped across the Atlantic during Colston's 12-year tenure, with around 19,000 dying en route.[21] Colston also sold his shareholdings, some of them to the new king, William III, who he put 'on to a good thing' when they were at the peak of their value. In 1698, after the Merchant Venturers' wishes were granted by Parliament, the African trade was opened up to merchants across England. Within 40 years of the overthrow of the Royal African Company monopoly, Bristol's African slave-trading fleet had grown exponentially to 52 vessels at the trade's peak in 1739.[22] At this juncture Colston appeared to leave slave trading behind him and turned his attention to money lending and latterly philanthropy. His attempt to support the Queen Elizabeth Hospital School in 1702 was turned down though by Bristol Corporation, primarily because of the strings he attached. As a High Anglican, he hated Catholics as well as non-conformists such as Baptists and Quakers and he did not want these children admitted to the school. To ensure total control of his benefactions and political and religious wishes (he also detested anyone with a 'tincture of Whigism'[23]), Colston sought to endow his own school. In 1709 he chose the Merchant Venturers to be the trustees for Colston's School, with the aim

20 It is unclear how Edward Colston reconciled being, simultaneously, deputy governor of the Royal African Company and a member of the SMV, one of the RAC's arch-opponents in the struggle to control the West African slave trade. Colston left the RAC in 1692 and appears to have backed the winning side (the SMV) after this point. Colston's knowledge of the RAC and its campaign to retain the monopoly would have been very valuable to the SMV in the 1690s. Other than his 'philanthropy', this was perhaps the reason he was so feted by the Bristol elite of the period: he had helped to make them fabulously wealthy.

21 Ball 2017

22 Bettey 1986

23 Wilkins 1920, 72

of managing the institution and his other endowments and perpetuating his memory. In so doing, he became the Merchant Venturers' icon, and this masterstroke led to his 'memory being kept green to this day'.[24] After the opening of his school in 1709, Colston unsurprisingly became Tory MP for Bristol in 1710, standing down in 1713 to allow his niece's husband (Hayman's son-in-law, Thomas Edwards junior) to stand in his stead.

As a Bristol Tory MP, Edward Colston resumed his interest in slavery by profiting from investments in the South Seas Company along with his banker associate and advisor, Henry Hoare. The fortunes of this company became one of the most infamous episodes in British economic history. A huge national debt had been built up during the Spanish War of Succession and the new Tory government came up with a plan to pay this off. This involved creating a company to break the stranglehold of the Whig-dominated Bank of England, which hitherto had controlled the national debt. In 1711, the plan for the proposed South Seas Company was revealed to a selected caucus of 40 or 50 Tory MPs.[25] It is likely that Colston was among this group of Tories who were privileged with the insider knowledge that the SSC venture relied on future access to Spanish America and the lucrative slave-trading monopoly known as the *Asiento*. Colston was familiar with the *Asiento* through his dealings with the Royal African Company, and when the opportunity arose, he immediately became a commissioner responsible for taking subscriptions to the South Seas Company.[26] The claiming of the *Asiento* as part of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 propelled Britain into the role of pre-eminent slave-trading nation in the world. Queen Anne was a major shareholder; the Company's figurehead banker, Henry Hoare's father, was a founder; and one of the chief negotiators for Britain at Utrecht was Bristol Bishop, John Robinson.

Colston's successor, Edwards, was not popular among the Bristol electorate and lost his seat in 1715, leading to this astonishing plea from a parishioner in Temple to the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), of which Colston was a leading member:

> Dated 20th July 1715, the SPCK receives a 'curious' letter from William Carey of Bristol in which he states Temple School is 'sinking'. Mr Colston has told the trustees not to clothe the boys whose parents voted against his kinsmen (his heir Mr Edwards and Captain Freetinge) at the last election. Subscriptions have been withdrawn. Will the Society interpose its good offices?[27]

24 Wilkins 1920, 96
25 Jenks 1914, 55–6
26 Hanham 2002
27 Lowther Clarke 1959, 53

To finally seal his memorialisation and start the process of perpetuating his name, Colston chose the Governors of St Bartholomew's Hospital in London to be executors of his will. His demands on his death in 1721 included the commissioning of a massive tablet outlining £70,000 of his philanthropy over his lifetime, along with a recumbent statue of himself by Rysbrack, placed prominently in All Saints Church. Having been unmarried and without heirs, the bulk of his fortune, £100,000, was inherited by his niece on his death in 1721, according to contemporary accounts. Today, that £170,000 is worth approximately £440 million in terms of share of GDP per capita.

4.5 'The slaves who abolished slavery' – African abolitionists

Resistance of enslaved Africans on the coast, aboard ships and in the colonies along with full-blown insurrections all played a significant role in the demise of slavery. Of the 2,081 slave ships leaving Bristol between 1698 and 1807 that are logged in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, 35 are tagged as having some form of explicit 'African resistance': eight are marked as 'vessel attacked from shore', while the remaining 27 are listed as 'slave insurrection', of which four appear to have been successful. This small number of insurrections may not be a true reflection of explicit on-board resistance as slave-ship captains were often reluctant to report such incidents as it questioned their reputation and reliability in delivering their human cargo. One group of researchers estimated the financial and human effects:

> Between 1680 and 1800, nearly 6.6 million slaves left Africa for the New World. The model predicts that without shipboard or coastal resistance the number of people moving across the Atlantic from Africa would have been nearly 9% greater. Put another way, in the long 18th century alone, resistance resulted in nearly 600,000 fewer slaves crossing the Atlantic and forced European consumers to pay higher prices for plantation produce. In effect, Africans who died resisting the slave traders as well as those who resisted unsuccessfully, but survived to work on the plantations of the Americas, saved others from forced migration to the Americas.[28]

In Bristol, the popularisation of the history of revolts of the enslaved in the Americas began in 1999 with the innovative 'A Respectable Trade? Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery' exhibition at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery. This was complemented by local initiatives such as the Living Easton community history project which the same year published a

28 Behrendt, Eltis and Richardson 2001, 473

Figure 4.2 Caribbean historian Richard Hart unveiling the Clarkson narrative plaque outside the Seven Stars pub in 2009.

well-read pamphlet listing hundreds of insurrections by the enslaved.[29] This data soon went online and the Bristol Radical History Group contributed a few years later with public meetings and appearances on local radio stations such as Radio Ujima to discuss Prince Klaas in Antigua, Bussa and Nanny Grigg in Barbados, Toussaint L'Ouverture in Haiti and Nanny, Queen of the Maroons and Sam Sharpe in Jamaica. Jamaican historian Richard Hart, who made Bristol his home, also regularly spoke to public audiences at Bristol Radical History Group events about his book *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, an acclaimed study of the Maroon Wars and the many slave rebellions and revolts in Jamaica.[30] (See Figure 4.2 for an image of Hart unveiling the Bristol Radical History Group Clarkson narrative plaque in 2009, his seminal book tucked under his left arm.)

While the enslaved were fighting for their freedom, the Merchant Venturers were taking control of the Bristol Corporation (modern-day Bristol City Council), claiming the positions of Alderman, Mayor, Sheriff and MP. In 1789, to protect themselves against the growing campaign for the abolition of the slave trade, Bristol's merchant elite established an influential committee to defend their interests in the slave trade. Made

29 Duck 1999
30 Hart 2002

up primarily of members of the Bristol Corporation and the Merchant Venturers, they became the New West India Society. Their petitions helped delay the abolition of the slave trade until 1807, and full emancipation until 1838. Among them was Sir James Laroche (Society Master in 1782), responsible for over 132 slave-trading voyages, and Thomas Daniel (Society Warden in 1789, Master in 1805 and 1834), who received the equivalent of over £100 million in compensation for the enslaved people he 'owned'. Society of Merchant Venturers historian Francis Greenacre described Daniel as 'one of the most powerful defenders of slavery'.[31]

Bristol's successful merchants invested in mansions in Queen Square and after making their fortunes began the exodus out of the city to the leafy suburb of Clifton and on to stately homes in the surrounding countryside before being memorialised in the city's most prestigious churches. In 1735 an equestrian statue of King William III was erected in Queen Square at a cost of £1,800 at the expense of the Corporation and the Society. The choice of William in lieu of Queen Anne – in a square named in her honour – is a strange one. Was William chosen in gratitude for granting the charter of 1698 legalising the slave trade to Africa for the 'outports'? According to Dresser, the idea for a brass statue was originally promoted by slave-trading Whig MP Abraham Elton II and Thomas Coster in 1733. Critics attributed their actions more to their interest in the brass industry than art.[32] It should be remembered, however, that the Eltons were a prominent slave-trading family in the Whig interest, far more likely to support a sculpture of King William than a Tory with Jacobite sympathies. The statue formed the focal point of protest for at least the next 100 years. The culmination of Society of Merchant Venturers investment in Bristol's public architecture occurred in 1743, at the peak of Bristol's involvement in the slave trade, with the construction of the new Exchange near the Old Council House in Corn Street, described in a 1970s Bristol history book as the epitome of 'Slave Trade Palladian'.

4.6 Religious and radical agitators for abolition

Aiding and abetting African resistance from the 1730s were lone abolitionists in America, Britain and France who began to organise themselves into a nascent international anti-slavery movement. Anthony Benezet, Montesquieu, Granville Sharp, John Wesley and Oladuah Equiano, among others, all contributed to the massive task of making people aware of the human cost of sugar in their tea, cotton on their backs and tobacco in their

31 Greenacre 2005, 33

32 Dresser 2007. Bristol-made brass was used extensively to trade for enslaved Africans.

pipes. They found fertile ground among the non-conformists of Bristol who were joined by John Wesley's upstart religion, Methodism, which from the outset condemned slavery. Then as now, justification for the slave trade came from the oft-repeated polemic stating 'The slaves transported to the Americas by Europeans, were the result of inter-tribal warring among African tribes'.[33] John Wesley refuted this in his 1774 *Thoughts Upon Slavery*:

> Indeed, it is said, 'that these Negroes being prisoners of war, our captains and factors buy them, merely to save them from being put to death. And is this not mercy?' I answer, (1.) Did Sir John Hawkins, and many others, seize upon men, women, and children, who were at peace in their own fields or houses, merely to save them from death? (2.) Was it to save them from death that they knocked out the brains of those they could not bring away? (3.) Who occasioned and fomented those wars, wherein these poor creatures were taken prisoners? Who excited them by money, by drink, by every possible means, to fall upon one another? Was it not themselves? They know in their own conscience it was, if they have any conscience left. But, (4.) To bring the matter to a short issue, can they say before God, that they ever took a single voyage, or bought a single Negro, from this motive? They cannot; they well know, to get money, not to save lives, was the whole and sole spring of their motions.[34]

International agitation led to the forming of the London Abolition Society in 1786. Desperate for hard facts about the 'vile trade', the Society sent abolitionist and Cambridge graduate Thomas Clarkson on an epic six-month visit to Bristol in 1787. Clarkson's findings revealed not only the misery of the 'middle passage' but the appalling treatment of both enslaved Africans and slave-ship sailors. Clarkson also discovered that sailors avoided working on slave ships and consequently there were systems for pressing (spiriting) or financially coercing (crimping) them aboard. The strength of the evidence was that it came from eye-witness testimony of slave-ship surgeons and sailors and thus was difficult to refute. Clarkson left Bristol to continue his research but not before founding the Bristol Abolition Society.

The abolition movement gathered strength by informing people about the horrors of slavery, petitioning Parliament and even boycotting West Indian sugar: the anti-sacherists. The campaign was supported by local writers such as Ann Yearsley and Hannah More, along with Bristol Romantics Robert Southey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, all of whom

33 Letters & Opinion pages of the *Bristol Post*, 2017–2018 – several letters of protest appeared after the Bristol Music Trust announced that they were going to change the name of the Colston Hall.

34 Wesley 1774

wrote widely circulated anti-slavery literature. The Bristol Quakers hosted Clarkson during his stay and the Bristol Baptists resumed their opposition to the trade; with the Unitarians joining the fray, they all came together nationally. The campaign culminated in the 1807 Act to abolish the slave trade. This Act only stopped the shipping of enslaved Africans by British ships, however, and full emancipation of the enslaved throughout the British Empire did not occur until 1838, an agonising historical gap. In that interim, Wilberforce had preferred 'gradualism' whereby slavery magically died out of its own accord, and others merely wanted 'amelioration' to improve the conditions of the enslaved. The unknown activist and writer Elizabeth Heyrick called for immediate emancipation in 1824, which energised the activists, and this uncompromising position was fully endorsed by Bristol's leading abolitionists, who had reformed their male and female anti-slavery societies in the 1820s. The actions of these activists are largely obscured nationally and not mentioned at all in Bristol.

The trigger for major change was public unrest over parliamentary reform and enfranchisement which had been initiated after successive revolutions in America and France. In Bristol, 'corporation-tyranny', as Daniel Defoe described it, was as true in the 1820s as it was in the 1720s, with the prevalence of election violence, bribery, lack of representation, gerrymandering, blackmail and corruption.[35] This led directly to the turbulent 1830s when the emancipation of the enslaved and the reform of Parliament and Municipal Corporations, including Bristol, were the dominant issues. It is clear that Bristol's merchant elite used the Corporation, the Society of Merchant Venturers and the Bristol Dock Company to further their own economic and political interests, while the Colston Societies were employed to enhance their popularity and influence through charity and patronage. In 1830, Bristol abolitionists were leading the way in seeking immediate emancipation of the enslaved while calling them 'our fellow subjects'. They also questioned why the enslaved were not being considered for compensation themselves, rather than the slave owners.

In a public meeting on Brandon Hill in August 1833, agitator Henry Hetherington addressed thousands of Bristolians regarding the final deal that gave Britain's 40,000-plus slave owners a total of £20,000,000 in compensation. He asked why they should receive this 'gift' in order to justify their 'loss of property', when the enslaved were already rising up to free themselves. Of these slave owners, fewer than 100 successful claimants in Bristol got a share of more than £400,000. The British tax payer only finished off paying this debt in 2015![36] An important part of this was

35 Bettey 1986, 63–4
36 Cork 2018

invested locally in the Great Western Railway, Great Western Steamship Company, Great Western Cotton factory, Clifton Suspension Bridge and even Clifton Zoo.

Not satisfied with ending slavery in the British Empire, prominent Bristol abolitionist families like the Blackwells, Estlins and Carpenters befriended the American abolition committee led by William Lloyd Garrison and set about trying to end slavery in the United States. Many American abolitionists came to Britain, including the great African-American activist Frederick Douglass in the 1840s, who gave several talks in Bristol on slavery in the United States. After this intervention there was a major increase in produce for the annual fund-raising Anti-Slavery Fair in Boston. This came from impoverished Bristolians and their children in addition to the well-to-do. Other leading 19th-century African-American anti-slavery campaigners who came to Bristol included William Wells Brown, James Pennington and the Craft husband-and-wife team, William and Ellen. The Estlins, Crafts and Brown even went to the Great Exhibition together in 1851 to protest at the American pavilion. All of these great people are encapsulated in Mary Carpenter's 19th-century *Poetical Extracts* scrap book, a priceless artefact originally belonging to Bristol's Red Lodge Museum.

4.7 The cult of Colston

While Bristol abolitionists were campaigning hard for the end of the slave system in the United States, the city's merchants, businessmen and church leaders were reviving the brand of Edward Colston, who they billed as the city's greatest philanthropist, even though he had several rivals including Bristol Quaker and industrialist Richard Reynolds. In 1844, Colston had a second statue added to the rebuilt Guildhall in Broad Street and, after his body was exhumed in All Saints Church, some of his hair and fingernails were taken for display in the Venturers' headquarters in Merchants' Hall. Over the Victorian period, stained-glass memorial windows were installed in the city's pre-eminent churches, St Mary Redcliffe and Bristol Cathedral. Reinvented as a 'merchant prince' and 'moral saint', Colston was connected to the parable of the Good Samaritan: 'Go thou and do likewise'.[37] The revival in his memorialisation was matched in public displays and rituals. Colston Day in early November was a rare public holiday in the city and marked the culmination of a week of Anglican services, parades and banquets. Colston's memorialisation reached its zenith in the 1890s with the erection of his third statue in Bristol, by John Cassidy, in 1895 – this after all manner of streets, roads and buildings (including the city's leading concert

37 Jordan 2013

hall in 1867) were named after him. All of these memorials were instigated by Bristol's ruling elite, most of whom were Society of Merchant Venturers members and supported by religious leaders.

In 1920, the Reverend Henry Wilkins initiated a century of protest against the over-memorialisation of Colston through his critical 'biography' of Edward Colston. Wilkins exposed Colston as a slave trader and political and religious bigot who believed in the 'power of the purse'.[38] Coining the term the 'cultus of Colston', Wilkins particularly disliked the Colston Day celebrations and thought that more than 70 other Bristol men and women could have been celebrated instead. Wilkins' book certainly had an impact within the clergy, as several times in the 1920s and '30s they were compelled to launch defences of the great man from the pulpit on Colston Day. Once again the well-worn (and fallacious) arguments, such as 'you can't judge the man from the standards of today' and 'everyone was involved in slavery' were redeployed. Their statements provoked debate in the local media, right up to the modern day, and thus began the process of unravelling the myths around the city father.

Perhaps as a response to these criticisms, certainly in tone, the first academic study of Bristol slavery and the slave trade was written by Professor C.M. MacInnes of Bristol University. His 1939 *Gateway to Empire* is full of imperialist exhortations, attempts to portray the British slave system as being the most humane and characterises the slave owners as 'kind despots' and 'pillars of society'. The book was dedicated to the Society of Merchant Venturers, 'whose fellowship has played so notable a part in the history of the Empire'. Others were not convinced, and post-war Bristol reference and history books began to openly state and criticise Colston's involvement in slavery and his bigotry.[39]

The defensive stance of the Merchant Venturers persisted. In 2006, on the eve of Abolition 200, D'Arcy Parkes, spokesman for the Venturers, stated: 'We all regret that the slave trade happened. Slavery was a trade which all of Bristol was involved in, but we believe an apology is totally meaningless'.[40] This 'we were all in it together' position was another deliberate attempt to try to lessen the important role the Merchant Venturers had played historically in slavery and make all Bristolians culpable, something which was patently untrue. Interventions by the SMV did not stop there. In 2007 an art installation around Colston's third statue in the centre was quashed,[41]

38 Wilkins 1920

39 Two popular such books were Bryan Little's *The City and County of Bristol* (1954) and Derek Robinson's seminal *A Shocking History of Bristol* (1973).

40 *Bristol Evening Post*, 28 November 2006 [now called the *Bristol Post*].

41 The 'Two Coins Project' was launched by artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn during

and in 2018 an interpretative plaque was actually manufactured but the project was halted before it could be attached to the statue. A member of the Society involved in the 'consultation' attempted to sanitise the history of Edward Colston and water down his role in the slave trade. The debate was even reduced to arguing over what constituted an enslaved child in order to make the total number of deaths less impactful – several thousand is a conservative estimate. This vacillation led ultimately to the statue's toppling during a Black Lives Matter demonstration in 2020. The Society subsequently stated that their intervention in the consultation was 'inappropriate', although this was only after Colston's statue had been dumped in the docks. In a knee-jerk response to the latter event, the Mayor announced a new We Are Bristol History Commission.

The History Commission has been criticised for including few historians, for not fully engaging with existing history groups within the city and because the city already had a well-documented past. The first task given to the Commission was to oversee the Colston Display at the city's social history museum, M Shed, where the curators asked people to express their views on the statue's future. Sadly, the main protagonists – the defenders of Colston's legacy like the Society of Merchant Venturers, Bristol Diocese, the Colston schools and societies and the campaigning groups like Countering Colston – were largely excluded from the exhibition, leaving visitors confused as to who was defending what.

4.8 Conclusion

The Merchant Venturers helped shape Bristol's past and present, but will they shape the city's future? Still in existence today as the doyen of Bristol's charities, they remain an undemocratic, unelected club largely for wealthy white businessmen, who play guardian to a goodly proportion of Bristol's schools and both universities,[42] regarding themselves as an innocuous force for good and operating patronage through the 'power of the purse'.[43] Perhaps the failure to have a memorial to remember the victims of enslavement in Bristol is down to their reluctance to engage? Their icon's namesake until

the year of Abolition 200. The idea was to erect an installation around the Colston statue and to project a silent subtitled film about slavery, using images from Bristol, West Africa and the Caribbean.

42 See, for example, University of Bristol report, https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/university/documents/merchant-venturers-building-historical-context-report.pdf

43 Colston's modus operandi according to Wilkins 1920, 32

2017, the Colston Hall, has had over *£132 million* spent on its refurbishment during a period of austerity. Does the answer lie here?

It was the actions of Countering Colston campaigners that directly led to changes in the Colston memorial landscape. Major milestones were challenging and halting the physical celebrations of Colston in Bristol's cathedral and churches, the renaming of the Colston Hall in 2017, starting the process of renaming Colston schools and the removal of Colston's portrait from the Bristol Lord Mayor's parlour after Countering Colston member Cleo Lake took over the role in 2018. Exposing the myths and hidden history of Colston, Countering Colston historians took the debate into the mainstream media and fought out the debates, following this up by publishing a full history of slavery in Bristol – and Colston's role in it – in 2020. This helped change public opinion and ultimately provided much of the basis for the defence and acquittal of the Colston Four after the statue toppling. Uncovering the long history of dissent and protest showed that local democracy had failed the people of Bristol, with questions about and calls for action regarding Colston's commemoration and memorialisation having been ignored for decades.

For campaigners, whether Countering Colston or Black Lives Matter, the fall of Colston was never the primary object of their activities. From a historical perspective, most of the campaigners support the idea of a memorial to the victims of enslavement. Key to the memorial is a location in a central historic location in Bristol's docks, where much of the history actually happened. The idea, on purpose, has not specified how the memorial would look or manifest itself, but without a doubt it should also remember the indigenous peoples and indentured servants who suffered and lost their lives as a result of the colonisation and plantation system. Obviously, African sacrifice was far greater, and this fact should be acknowledged in the design of the memorial. Another ambition is to have said memorial located in the centre of a garden of remembrance, so that people have somewhere to reflect and pay their respects.

The ambition for a combined memorial and Abolition Shed interpretation centre (later renamed BEAMi – Bristol Enslavement & Abolition Museum & institute) highlighting African resistance and the abolitionist movement would lay out the history beyond the current national narrative and encourage a critical engagement with the past. To facilitate this, a museum gallery dedicated to Colston's life, influence and demise would be an essential element of any modern-day interpretation centre. It would enhance people's knowledge of the city of his birth and allow researchers to contextualise the history of slavery and his role in the city's participation. Prime locations are at a premium and the first proposed site, although council owned, was given up without any due consideration in 2018. Since

the demise of the initial plans, there has been a boost with the recent publication of the Project T.R.U.T.H. report,[44] which, for the first time ever, has sought to gather the thoughts and views of Bristol's African-Caribbean community in general. As in Nantes, the proposed memorial and interpretation centre would work extremely well with existing slavery-related museums, in Bristol's case the Georgian House, Red Lodge Museum and the New Room in Broadmead, the latter having an excellent modern gallery already dedicated to John Wesley's and the Methodist's abolition activities. Both the Georgian House and the 16th-century Red Lodge are disparate parts of Bristol City Council's museum offerings; the former is associated with the plantation-owning pro-slavery Pinney family and the latter with anti-slavery campaigner Mary Carpenter. Neither attracts many visitors and both are hamstrung by their historic layouts and restricted exhibition space.

Soon after the Colston toppling, Bristol's Mayor, Marvin Rees, moved quickly to get sculptor Marc Quinn's unauthorised Black Lives Matter statue (see Chapter 1) replacing Colston taken down from the empty plinth and capped any debate by controlling what was said or not said with his History Commission. In 2021, the Mayor expressed caution over the idea of some kind of memorial to or museum about Bristol's role in the transatlantic slave trade, warning that he did not want the only focus to be on that part of Africa's history. Rees said the idea of a slavery or abolition museum, or even some form of memorial to the victims of the forced transportation of enslaved people from Africa to North America and the Caribbean by Bristol's merchants, should be part of the discussions of the We Are Bristol History Commission.[45]

Continuing their interventions to this day, the Society of Merchant Venturers provided a grant of £10,000 to enable Bristol Cathedral to put on an exhibition entitled 'All God's Children' between August and October 2022. The aim of the exhibition was to examine the church's links to the transatlantic slave trade through its many memorials. Unfortunately, the culpability of both the Society of Merchant Venturers' and the Anglican Church's involvement in the slave trade was greatly played down. During the exhibition, a seminar led by the new Dean of Bristol, Mandy Ford, was held

44 Born out of Bristol City Council's Legacy Steering Group, and completed in 2021, Project T.R.U.T.H. was for the first time a thorough consultation of Bristol's black communities where peer learning and recognition of self were paramount. Recommendations were made, especially around memorialisation: 'nothing about us, without us'. The report can be found here: Project+Truth+Report.pdf (squarespace.com).

45 Cork 2021. The 'Quinn BLM statue' refers to artist Marc Quinn's statue *A Surge of Power* depicting BLM activist Jen Reid, which temporarily occupied the empty Colston plinth. As yet, no alternatives have been put forward.

Figure 4.3 'All God's Children', temporary exhibition. Thomas Daniel memorial window display board, which underplayed Daniel's role in the Society of Merchant Venturers and defence of the slave system.

to debate the contents of the exhibitions. Opening the debate, the Dean said this was 'perhaps the Cathedral's last opportunity to air such grievances', and that 'everyone in the city is implicated, every warp and weft'. The last sentiment repeats the same mistaken stance that the Society of Merchant Venturers had taken in 2006. Several leading activists of African descent who attended the seminar made the following observations: (1) there was trauma for people 'with skin in the game', that plantation names are like holocaust tattoos; (2) too many initiatives of the past 20-odd years had been start/stop; (3) the narrative was too euro-centric, dominated by the unholy trinity of church, state and monarchy; and (4) people were tired of tokenistic talking shops and the momentum generated by Project T.R.U.T.H. should not be wasted.

At the end of 2022, the 'Abolition Shed Collective', submitted a full planning application to create a museum/interpretation centre in the derelict Seamen's Church by Queen Square near waste land on the waterfront. The Collective believed the latter would make an ideal remembrance garden for an international memorial to the victims of enslavement. Both locations were speculative purchases made in the 1980s by Yorkshire brewery Sam

Smiths. After the Mayor's administration tipped off Smiths regarding the Collective's interest, both sites were put up for sale. Developers circled and the Collective tried to make the Seamen's Church an Asset of Community Value but were immediately turned down by BCC.[46] The bid failed because the church hadn't been 'in recent community use', despite serving the community for over 100 years. In January 2023, the Mayor and his Deputy, Asher Craig, blogged that their administration was now in favour of the city fully recognising its past by sanctioning a 'monument', rather than a memorial, and a 'story house', rather than a museum. Although not named, the Collectives plans to combine Bristol's existing cultural offering with educational facilities from the city's two universities were said to be both 'opportunistic' and 'lacking in ambition'.[47] Did the Mayor's administration have their last-minute Damascene moment because of all the effort campaigners put in?

Subsequently the Mayor and his Deputy have failed to say exactly what their plans are; where they intend to locate their 'monument' and 'story house', and where they intend to get finance. In his final annual mayoral address in July 2023 the issue was not mentioned.[48] The Collective have now had two proposals scuppered without due democratic consideration. The Mayor and his administration have perpetually conducted matters in secrecy, with exclusive participants, and seemingly without trying to bring communities together. As evidenced, Bristol's Anglican Church and Society of Merchant Venturers are still blaming others for their culpability in instigating and prolonging Bristol's involvement in slavery and colonialism. This must surely end. The role of Mayor will finish in May 2024 and the Collective is hoping that a new administration will stop all of this can-kicking and finally tell Bristol's story in full.

Ingram Pinn's stunning political cartoon (see Figure 4.4) that first appeared in the *Financial Times* following the Colston statue toppling in June 2020 fully illustrates the concerns of the government regarding contagion of opposition to similar contentious statues throughout Britain – however, *this did not happen*. Bristol's memorial landscape is out of balance and has been for years, always dominated by church and state. Everyday citizens who did

46 The Collective was composed of members from Bristol Radical History Group, Countering Colston and the Long John Silver Trust. Twenty-one Bristolians of all different backgrounds, including two former Lord Mayors, put their names to the failed ACV application.

47 'Remembering the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade', https://thebristolmayor.com/2023/03/24/deputy-mayor-on-idrvstst/ [accessed on 3 August 2023]

48 '"We got stuff done": Mayor Defends Labour's Record', *Bristol Post*, 14 July 2023

Figure 4.4 Colston statue toppling. © Ingram Pinn/Financial Times.

great acts, especially the city's famous female reformers, have been left out. The Colston statue toppling only happened because the powers that be had failed the people, and unless the city breaks its silence and fully recognises its past with a memorial and museum to enslavement, community divisions will grow, ignorance will remain, and those who resisted and deserve to be remembered will continue to be overlooked.

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PART II

RADICAL MULTIPERSPECTIVISM IN BATH AND BRISTOL

5

A cricket match remembered

Personal narratives and oral histories in Bath's memoryscape

John Payne

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For it is not true that the work of man is finished
that we have nothing more to do
but be parasites in the world
that all we need do now is keep in step with the world.
The work of man is only just beginning
and it remains to conquer
all the violence entrenched in the recesses of his passion.
No race holds the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence, of strength
and there is a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.

Brief extract from A. Césaire, 'Return to My Native Land' ('Cahier d'un retour au pays natal'), 1984, vi

5.1 Slavery and poverty

This essay is an extended reflection on what I knew and what I did not know, what I was taught and was not taught as a white boy growing up in the city of Bath, Somerset in the 1950s and 1960s. I received a good education: after a shaky start in a decaying, cold, damp, Victorian primary school, I moved to a brand-new junior school on the outskirts of the city and then, via the 11-plus examinations, to a boys' grammar school. Examples of what I did not know and was not taught include my ignorance of the obscene cruelties of slavery, the Irish potato famine and the workhouse as a means of 'dealing with' poverty in the UK. My education was full of noise (white noise, I might say), information and skills. It was also full of silences.

I write mainly from interrogating my own experience, with some limited use of secondary sources. In addition, the narrative is enlivened and deepened by the interviews conducted in 2022 with two members of the Afro-Caribbean community in Bath, Messrs Dave Clarke and Vince Forde. Both played for the Bath West Indians cricket club. A third interview with another member of the club, the late Mr Orman Clarke, dates from 2010. In that same year I also talked to Mr Harold Ottway, a retired Afro-Caribbean bus driver, who introduced me to the Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963.

Let us begin with the institution of slavery.

The River Avon at Saltford, halfway between Bath and Bristol. Bristol, which has at least begun to acknowledge officially the crimes of the slave trade and slavery itself, which brought so much trade and wealth to the city – sugar, tobacco. Bath, which remains aloof from its own implication in such sordid matters. Roman Bath, Georgian Bath, UNESCO World Heritage Bath.

My hometown. Pleasant memories of summer evenings with other members of my youth club rowing down from Newbridge on the western fringe of Bath to the weir at Saltford.

Fast forward 50 years: the River Avon at Saltford. The churning brown winter waters caught up in the mill race of the old brass mill. It's not the only one either. There is a Brassmill Lane in Bath, a few steps from where I spent my childhood. The brass works at Saltford – throwing out pots and pans, guns and trinkets for the Bristol-to-West-Africa leg of the triangular trade. So many pots and pans worth the purchase of a human being, a human life. An enslaved life, not a free life.

The middle passage. Cargoes of African bodies bound for the Caribbean. Many died on the way. Many survived to work the plantations, to bear children who would be born into slavery. Into darkness rather than into light.

High above Bath, mocking the city, elegant, gold-capped Beckford's Tower, light-reflecting, symbolic, but of what? The enormous ego of William Beckford,[1] perhaps? The superiority of the Greek and Gothic over the trite classicism of the Georgians? There are many stories here but the question I want to ask is this. How did a bankrupt and notorious profligate ever find the money to build his tower? He had already wasted one fortune, a fortune based on slave plantations in Jamaica. There is no evidence that William Beckford ever visited Jamaica. But he spent the proceeds of slavery in a

1 William Beckford (1760–1844) was born into one of the richest families in England. From the 17th century, the family owned a number of plantations in Jamaica and a growing number of enslaved women, men and children. William's father, who died in 1770, owned at his death 13 plantations and 3,000 enslaved people.

profligate way. There were the parties, the sex, the books, the paintings, the art objects. There was the monstrous folly of Fonthill Abbey that began falling down no sooner than it was completed.

Beckford sold the near-ruin in 1822, moved to Bath and began work on Beckford's Tower. So how did a bankrupt and notorious profligate ever find the money to complete his tower, this second folly? In this age of the internet, it's not a hard question to answer, either. Its completion was paid for at least in part by government money, compensation for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. The ownership of enslaved black people was viewed at the time as a property right by men such as William Beckford, and it would have been impossible to pass the Act without compensation clauses. Many millions of pounds in today's money were borrowed by government for this purpose. Small amounts to the middling sorts of people who owned just a handful of enslaved people, a few sticks of human furniture. But the largest payments went to the richest men and women in England. Enslaved people, to continue the twisted, obscene logic of the slave owners, were property and property was – is still – sacrosanct, like land or mines or mansions.

And Beckford's Tower stands as a monument to slavery, a role it is cautiously moving to accept, if not embrace.[2] The Tower is now in the hands of the Bath Preservation Trust, which has struggled in recent years with the issue of interpretation and the balance between artistic collections and the slavery sources of the family fortune. The main page of their website states that at his death in 1770, William Beckford senior 'claimed over 1,000 enslaved people as property'.[3] However, another thread, 'The legacy of the Beckford family and slavery', reveals the figure of 3,000 enslaved people given above. It also tells the story of the revolt on one Beckford plantation in 1770, when 400 enslaved people were killed and the leader burned alive.[4]

If the state was generous in handing out compensation for the abolition of slavery, elsewhere it was much more parsimonious. The Irish potato famine of 1845–9: one million dead, one million forced emigrations. The famine walls constructed around the great estates of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy to provide paid work for starving peasants. The workhouses set up as a national system in the years immediately after the 1834 Poor Law Reform Act. Did

2 As of 2022 there is a display linking the Beckford family and slavery. Students from the Supplementary School programme run by the Bath Black Families Educational Support Group created a banner which was hung in the well of the spiral staircase at the tower. It illustrates the massive inequalities and cruelty of the plantation system.

3 https://beckfordstower.org.uk/history/

4 https://beckfordstower.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Beckfords-and-Slavery-leaflet-2007.pdf

we ever cover such issues in history lessons at school? Of course not. Just as I grew up ignorant of the obscene cruelties of slavery and the Irish potato famine, I also grew up ignorant of the very existence of the workhouse in Bath. But there it was, a massive stone building on Odd Down set between Midford Road, Frome Road and Wells Road. The Bath Union Workhouse. Not my side of town? No, but in the years immediately after the end of the Second World War, my half-brother and his family had lived in a post-war emergency 'prefab' right next to the site, while the workhouse was shape-changing and coming back into existence as St Martin's Hospital.

And there was the issue of the burial of the bodies of those who died in the Bath Workhouse. From its inception in 1838, bodies were returned to the parishes that together constituted the Bath Poor Law Union. All this changed when the chapel was completed in 1847. Between then and 1858, 1,107 bodies went into unmarked graves. In 1858 a field was purchased further down Wells Road. The bedrock of oolitic limestone had to be dug out before the bodies were thrown in. The road next to the field is called Oolite Grove. My sister's first boyfriend lived there. A tunnel was built under Frome Road so that bodies could be discretely transferred from the workhouse to the burial ground. The workhouse as a passage to the other world?

I discovered all this piece of history for myself after a distant cousin uncovered the fact that two of my great-grandparents had died in the workhouse in the early 1890s and are among the 3,182 bodies buried in unmarked graves there. As of 2021, we have a small plaque on the wall outside indicating what this field was once used for. It was immediately stolen but has since been replaced. Of such random acts, memory may or may not survive. Bulbs were planted and wildflower seeds sown. A yew tree was planted, the ancient Celtic symbol of life and death, which has passed into Christian beliefs, and is very common in churchyards as a symbol of death and resurrection. In 2022 an interpretation board arrived. The workhouse dead are no longer forgotten. A small group are campaigning for a permanent memorial there, which might take the form of a stone memorial, or might be funding for activities for young people growing up in this part of the city.

As I wrote in 'The Workhouse Dead', one of a series of poems on this theme,

> Yet these anonymous bodies
> were names and characters to themselves and others.
> We need to name the names
> to remember their little important lives
> and remember that any human
> life is worth the same as any other.

The words might of course apply equally to the victims of the Irish potato famine, the transatlantic slave trade or the plantation system. There is a coherence here with the work of Jill Sutherland (see Chapter 9) on the names in the plantation day book in the Holburne Museum in Bath. Not just names but real people, enslaved people, whose lives were diminished by the institution of slavery in the Caribbean plantation economy.

5.2 Cricket

And so to cricket. In May 1963, ignorant of the workhouse, the Irish famine and slavery, I was studying for my A-levels at the City of Bath Boys' School (now Beechen Cliff School), next to Alexandra Park and the domed summit of the high, steep, wooded hill that rises immediately to the south of Bath Spa Station. The sixth-form regime was quite relaxed, despite the imminence of A-level exams, and I had no intention of missing Somerset versus West Indies, the match being played out on the Recreation Ground in Bath. Now, of course, all Somerset County cricket is played out in Taunton. It makes business sense (apparently).

From the viewing point carved out for modern tourists at the far end of Alexandra Park I can reconstruct my rapid transfer at 4pm from school, down the precipitous flight of steps that emerge behind the railway station, across the pedestrian bridge over the River Avon, through the short tunnel beneath the railway station, up Manvers Street, right onto North Parade and then down to pay my sixpence (old money) for the evening session. I may have had additional pence from my Saturday gardening job. In which case, time to nip into the beer tent. The pied wagtails nibbled assiduously at the outfield as they have always done in Bath, as the Somerset team strolled lazily onto the field to resume their uneven battle.

Basil Butcher and Gary (later Sir Garfield) Sobers were completing a stand of 182 runs. Butcher may even have been out before I got there. It is the incomparable Sobers I remember, including one six over square leg that rattled into the iron cladding at the back of the old rugby stand in the far distance. A 'big' century, I recalled. A double century? Disappointing a bit to discover in the cricket archive that he scored a mere 112 runs! A brief cameo by Frank Worrell, the first black captain of a West Indies team. The West Indies were in a hurry, not least (as we shall see below) because there was a party to go to.

The soundtrack to this was not just the polite but rather muted applause that was characteristic of cricket in those far-off days but the raucous sounds of a steel band. My first. So to my image of Afro-Caribbean men as cricketers was added the new notion of them as musicians. The history of steel bands in Bath goes back to the formation of the Barbados All Stars in

1957 at the Bath YMCA. The main group of players lived at 15 Burlington Street, off Julian Road, and there were personal and family contacts from back in Barbados. Toussaint Clarke,[5] now recognised as a major force in steel-band development in England, was the son of Orman Clarke. Orman Clarke recorded his view that back in Barbados 'steel band players were regarded as bad boys… and the police always had an eye on it. Sometimes they arrest us and stuff like that… Once you had a pan and a strap round your neck with a pan you was regarded as a no-good'.[6] So the history of the band marks the gradual acceptance of such bands within both black and white cultures. Subsequently, the name changed to Rainbow Steel Band and, in 2007, the Rainbow Steel Orchestra celebrated its half-century with a big show in the exhibition area at the Bath Central Library. It was a belated recognition of the cultural contribution that Caribbean people had made to their adopted city. One of its founders, Hallam Ifill, still plays for them. Children then followed their parents into the band as founder members of the 'travelling generation' retired from playing or moved back to Barbados. It has given concerts all over Europe as well as back home in Barbados, and also does substantial educational work teaching young people, white and black, to play the pans.

Yet this history remained closed to me for another 30 years. In that same year of 1963, I went off to college in Manchester. It took me that long to get back anywhere near Bath. From the middle of the 20th century, Bath participated in the reversal of the imperial project of the British Empire, the arrival of small numbers of Commonwealth immigrants in what many of them had been taught to regard as the 'mother country'. The West Indian migrants made a particular impact on Bath. They came to work but they also brought their cricket and their steel bands. Many of them came from Barbados. Their first base was the Bath YMCA in Broad Street, and despite the casual racism of 1950s England ('no blacks here'; 'no coloureds need apply') they settled and thrived. Many of the women were employed as cleaners and nurses at local hospitals, and the men in manufacturing. Afro-Caribbean people worked at the engineering firm Stothert and Pitt, one of the largest employers in the city. This is clear from their in-house magazine during this period. In 1967 a retirement photo shows two black employees, while in 1976 there is a feature about a Jamaican secretary with a university degree in French and Italian. Some of the Bath West Indian community had come to England during the war and served in the forces: St John Dick arrived in 1943 and had played cricket for Stothert and Pitt. In 1976 his 'leisure' activity was running a Bath Multi-Racial Club with 120

5 https://www.strictlypan.co.uk/
6 https://vimeo.com/85722851

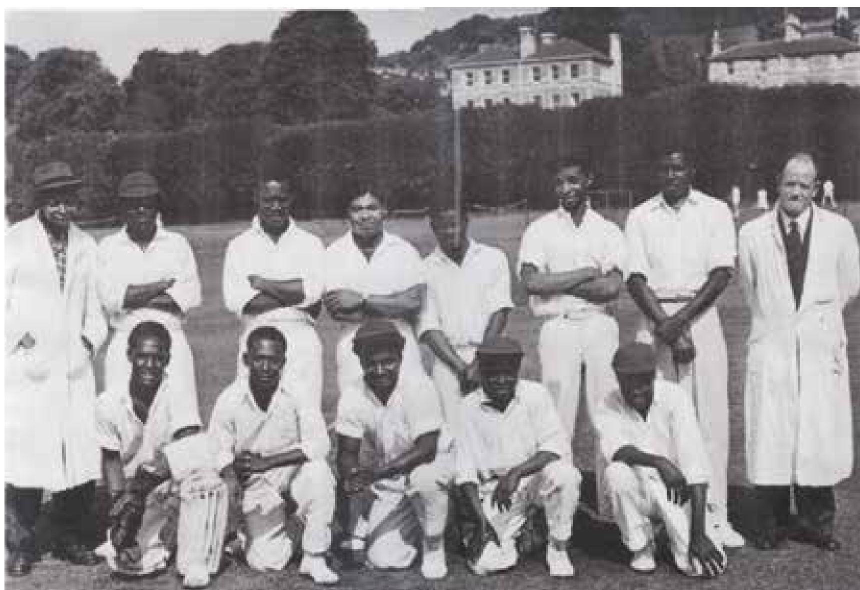

Figure 5.1 Bath West Indians cricket team on the Recreation Ground, Bath, c.1960. Umpire (back row, left) is Orman Clarke. Captain (front, left) is Milton Griffiths.

members, part social club and part advice centre. But there were no black faces in that year's intake of apprentices.

The focus of black cricket in Bath was the popular and successful Bath West Indians cricket team (see Figure 5.1). The late Orman Clarke was one of the original party of cricket- and pan-playing Barbadians who arrived in Bath in 1955. He worked at the Gas Board and later for many years in the Estates Department at the university. Before the university was built, he had played cricket on the playing fields there with the Bath West Indians team, of which he was the manager. He remembered matches against one village team in particular: 'We used to let Peasedown St John win because they treated us really good when we played at their ground – the food and drink and hospitality were really super'.

Mr Clarke was also one of the instigators in the early 1980s of what eventually became the Bath Racial Equality Council. There had been trouble between young black men and the police, and the Community Relations Council provided a forum for the open exchange of views. 'I believe I was guided to come to Bath. The Holy Spirit was saying to me, "Go to Bath and do some work", meaning community work', Orman Clarke wrote in a newspaper article in 2003. He died in October 2010 and the Rainbow Steel Orchestra played at his funeral service at St John's Church in South Parade.

The music of another place, another home. The service was conducted by the university's Roman Catholic chaplain. I had arranged to meet Mr Clarke as I was completing fieldwork for a book about Bath. But it was not to be.

Cricket was a serious business for most Afro-Caribbean men. *Beyond a Boundary* by the Trinidadian C.L.R. James is one of the best books ever written about cricket.[7] Yet James is equally known as a political activist and writer whose book titles reveal the breadth of his interests, including *The Black Jacobins* about the Haitian revolution and *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*. His education in Trinidad in the 1910s included not just cricket but a curriculum so narrow that it makes my own grammar-school experience in the 1960s seem almost broad. The history and literature of England predominated, with Latin thrown in for good measure, and a strong emphasis on the values of restraint, loyalty and good sportsmanship. In the 1930s, James joined the cricketer (Sir) Learie Constantine in England, where Constantine played Lancashire League cricket in Nelson. He devotes several chapters of *Beyond a Boundary* to Constantine. Other key passages are concerned with the long struggle to accept that a black man could captain a West Indian cricket team, culminating in Frank Worrell's appointment as captain for the 1960 tour of Australia and 1963 tour of England. For James, cricket represents essential social values but has a context. That context is racial discrimination and the struggle for political self-determination.

I conducted two more cricketer interviews some years later, in 2022. Vince Forde was born in Barbados and arrived in England at the tail end of 1961. He came to Bath because his sister lived there, in the London Road area. He lives in Twerton. Vince worked as a motor mechanic until his retirement in 2009. I asked him if there were things he particularly liked or disliked on arrival in England:

> Well, there wasn't anything I liked for the first couple of days. Everything seemed upside down. I wanted to return actually, but it was impossible. It was cold, very cold, no, it wasn't very pleasant. For a little while, it takes some getting used to. It was around March when I came. […] Then as it got warmer, I become a little bit happier! And begin to settle down […] It took a bit of time to get into things. But as the time went on you get used to things. It became natural. Yes, I enjoyed it after that.

Yet Barbados is still 'home':

> [I go to Barbados] quite frequently, when I can afford it. Because it's not cheap. Yes, I love Barbados. I was there about three years ago, that was my last visit. There'll never be anywhere like where you were born. Where

7 James 1994

> you were born is always home. For most people. So as long as I stay here and enjoy it, Barbados is still to me my home.

Like me, Vince was at the 1963 match on the Rec:

> I was there too. It was a long time ago! It was exciting to see the West Indian team. Yes, I was there, and as you said earlier, the steel band too, quite a lot of people. And it was very exciting.

If I had been impressed by the batting, Vince was more excited about the bowling. Wes Hall was not playing, and Charlie Griffiths was the main wicket-taker. Dave Clarke (no relation to Orman) was still a boy in Barbados, listening to radio commentaries, in 1963:

> He [Griffiths] was a bit fearsome in those days, I mean, that was early in his career. He was renowned for his pace, he was very hostile. With him and Wes Hall as a combination they were quite lethal actually! Unfortunately, he was labelled for a couple of things we don't think he was, but when it came to the bowling department, he was a very hostile bowler. Definite. And that particular series back in '63, I was in Barbados at the time, that was my first series that I actually followed as a kid, tuned into on the radio, you know.

After the match there was a party laid on in Bristol for the team (the West Indies had played Gloucestershire at Bristol earlier in the month). Vince recalls:

> I went to Bristol with the team. They were trying to find this house, I can't remember now exactly where the house was myself, but we were going down the wrong lane of a one-way street! The police caught us, stopped the van. We tried to explain to them where we were trying to find. And he said 'Is Wes Hall in the van?' – 'cause we had a van, we had Vincent Sobers' van at the time, so we said 'Yes'. So he said 'could I have his autograph for my daughter or son?!' He then take us to the house. So he directed us to the house. […] Lance Gibbs was there, but [Gary] Sobers stayed back. […] It was a good party, a great big party.

Dave Clarke arrived in Bath to join his parents in 1966:

> When I first came to England, that's the winter/autumn of '66 […] obviously it was a bit strange when you come to England, bear in mind I was 14 years old, I grew up the first 14 years of my life in Barbados surrounded by the local Barbadians, and then I come to this country and I hardly see any Barbadians or any black faces, all I can see is Caucasian

> or white faces. So of course it's a little bit of a shock. You feel, not intimidated, but you felt as if [it was] a different country. But because you've only just arrived it don't really sink in […] So that was the main thing that [occurred] to me when I first came here, the amount of English people that was here!

His main employment was at the famous Bath crane-makers Stothert and Pitt, destroyed by Robert Maxwell in the late 1980s:

> I went to Stothert's in about '73 or so. I was there for 17 years, I finished in '89. I went there as an electrical arc welder, but before that I learned the trade [at a] government training centre in Gloucestershire. When I finished the course I applied to Stothert's and I was accepted and I was there until '89 when Stothert's virtually finished.

It's a familiar Bath story. I had worked my way through college with holiday jobs at Stothert's, and we discovered we had both worked in Store 31 in the Victoria Works, though at different times. No doubt like me he had participated in the morning rush to avoid having pay docked for late arrival and the equally mad rush to get away at finish time.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, the Bath West Indians cricket team was formed in the late 1950s. All the players were from Barbados. I asked if there was a reason for this, and Vince explained:

> As far as cricket in Barbados is concerned, every kid played cricket. So really, coming here at the time, there weren't many black people in Bath, number one, and there were more Barbadians than the others. There were not many Trinidadians in Bath, we only had one Trinidadian playing for us. Jamaicans, you find that a lot of the youngsters didn't play cricket, weren't interested in cricket and a lot of them started to play cricket after coming here. So as it went on, there were a few Jamaicans joining in.

At first there were informal matches on Saturdays and Sundays in Victoria Park, next to the 'official' heritage sites of Georgian Bath. Later they moved to the council playing fields:

> And then in the end they moved to Norwood, the cricket ground where the university is now, the council used to rent out squares up there. Not the best way to play cricket […] That was home ground for a long time […] We had quite a lot of local teams in Bath at that time. We got together and were able to get a fixture, and after [that] one fixture would lead on to other fixtures.

Dave added from his own experience in the late 1960s, early 1970s:

> Bath West Indians mainly played at Norwood, so it was council ground, and it wasn't as well prepared as some of these more private grounds. So when you get the opportunity to play at somewhere like Peasedown, which was well looked after, you took advantage of that. You looked forward to playing there.

As with other aspects of Bath life, there was a pecking order in cricket too, and Bath West Indians, without a proper club ground of their own, were near the bottom of that order, despite the playing strength of the team, as Vince explained:

> In those days you wouldn't be able to play at Lansdown or Bath or the Civil Service, not at those grounds, because the team wasn't good enough, although it was strong enough. It wasn't organised, it didn't have backing or anything. But when we were given the chance, you know, it was proved that we were good enough. In the end then we started to play cup finals at Lansdown or Bath, I think we only played one at Bath, the majority were played at Lansdown.

Figure 5.2 Bath West Indians cricket team, mid-1960s. Back row (left to right): Teophilus Sobers, 'Sam' Gibbons, Vince Forde, Keith Laine, Lloyd Grosvenor, Richard Sobers, Lionel Chase. Front row (left to right): Bentley Blackett, Clive Chase, Milton Griffiths, Bruce Crick, Eustace Haywood.

Because of the strength of the team, lower-order batsmen seldom got an innings, as Dave explained:

> Another thing […] a lot of the matches this team played, a lot of the players never got a bat, because they were so good and you might only lose one or two wickets throughout the whole afternoon. So I did say to Milton [Griffiths, the captain] 'What did you do the following game, did you alternate the players so that the ones who didn't bat would bat the following game?' He said [rude noise]!

Vince felt strongly that if the team had had the ground and the facilities, they would have been able to compete in those days with Bath and Lansdown. Dave agreed:

> In latter years, after the team was more established and a lot of locals realised how good we were, we were given games at Lansdown but only again the [limited overs] format. We might get an evening game or a Wednesday afternoon/evening game. And on many occasions Lansdown would put their strongest team up against us. I can remember – bear in mind that I only joined the club back in '68 and we only lasted three to four years after that, so I probably played two or so games against Lansdown for Bath West Indians – and in those games we played, we actually held our own, and they were established teams. The Bath Cricket Club and Lansdown they were the two strongest teams in Bath. Not just Bath, but surrounding areas. We gave them a very good game. In those days we were very good. A very good team, hard to beat.

Bath West Indians disbanded in the early 1970s, as Vince explained:

> [Players] moved on, the team just wasn't as strong. Lots of those chaps went off to Canada, some went to America, some went back home. So the team wasn't actually as strong then. The younger generation wasn't that keen or interested. So in the end it folded.

Yet there was an enduring heritage of the team's distinctive approach to the game of cricket. Dave put it like this:

> We approach the game in an entertaining sort of way. We like to see the ball being hit, we like to see boundaries being hit, fours and sixes. We enjoy our game. A lot of the teams we played against, they adopt a different way for playing cricket. They were more defensive […] so in a sense they played the game not to lose. We play the game to win. There's a big difference there.

There is little doubt that the success and popularity of the Bath West Indians cricket team paved the way for the later popularity of Somerset's West Indian stars, Sir Vivian (Viv) Richards, Joel (Big Bird) Garner and Hallam Moseley. Both Richards and Moseley qualified for Somerset by playing a season at the Lansdown club in Bath, as Dave explained:

> Another thing about those days as well, players had to qualify to play for Somerset, not just Somerset but if you had a foreign player come to the island, the country, they had to qualify to play for their respective counties. And lucky enough for us, being local Bathonians, when Hallam came over he actually got into the local community, and he was quite a friendly, sociable sort of person. And then of course Viv came over afterwards and he was actually playing at Lansdown. In those days I had my first car, I think, and I actually took him to a couple of venues in Bath, while he was in Bath. It was quite exciting to see him play because each time he goes to the wicket he was scoring a hundred. I remember one captain, Chippenham it was, and he said 'There's no point [him] going to bat, just put a hundred in the scorebook for him'. He was so dominant, such a good player. And of course, we know what he went on to achieve.

Such players become almost mythical and Vince had a good story to tell about Moseley:

> Hallam was a very nice chap as well […] He was from Barbados. In 1971 I went to Barbados and there was a cricket team touring from Reading. They asked me if I had my gear and I said 'No', I didn't know anything about cricket! So in the end I went home, I rang Hallam and then Hallam rang his dad and he brought me over some cricket gear and I played for the team. And I also opened the bowling with Charlie Griffiths. Charlie Griffiths from one end and I from the other. Charlie was getting on! Charlie bowled from the road end, and he said to the captain he wanted to change ends. So I went to the other end and I got a wicket before Charlie did. He wasn't happy!

Hallam Moseley remained with Somerset until 1982, both popular and successful, and had a successful benefit season (see Figure 5.3). However, the cheerful story of Somerset's West Indian stars ended badly. By this time Ian Botham was an established part of Somerset cricket, and a strong bond of friendship formed between Botham, Garner and Richards. When at the end of the 1986 season, Somerset announced the sacking of Garner and Richards, Botham left too. The controversy extended from the players to the committee and the members but in the end the chairman, Michael Hill, and captain, Peter Roebuck, were not prepared to row back on the decision.

Figure 5.3 Hallam Moseley testimonial match, 1979: The Poplars CC versus Somerset CCC, The Poplars pub, Wingfield, Wiltshire.

The journalist and commentator Viv Marks was playing for Somerset at the time, and years later wrote:

> So Somerset had seen off the rebels but there were no real victors in this outcome. The club had been torn asunder and it took a long time to recover.[8]

Somerset have still never won the County Championship. But all three of the 1986 rebels were eventually honoured by Somerset. Either side of the Ian Botham stand at the County Ground in Taunton lie two sets of gates, one dedicated to Joel Garner, the other to Viv Richards. I never saw any of them play. Somehow the pace of family life and working life had overtaken the leisurely pace of cricket. In the early 2020s, a number of instances, both current and historical, of racism in English professional cricket have surfaced. The Bristol-born Gloucestershire player David (Syd) Lawrence is one player to have suffered in this way. His fellow professional Derek Pringle notes that he had bananas thrown at him while fielding against Yorkshire at

8 Marks 2019

Scarborough.[9] When he first played in an away match for his county, one of his new team-mates left a banana skin outside his hotel room door:

> I didn't quite know where I belonged. We would constantly be told 'Go home, go home.' You are thinking, 'this is my home. I am born here. This is my country.' [...] They say we have a chip on our shoulder. It's not a chip on our shoulder. It's the things we have experienced.[10]

Lawrence became the first British-born black man to play for England.

5.3 The Bristol Bus Boycott

That seminal cricket match on the Rec in Bath in 1963 coincided with one of the most striking episodes in the history of Bristol: the Bristol Bus Boycott.[11] For some time, the Bristol managers of the Bristol Omnibus Company, which ran bus services in the Bath and Bristol area, had been operating a colour bar. When a young black man, Guy Bailey, arrived for interview for a job in early 1963, he was told there were no vacancies, despite the fact that there had been advertisements for jobs in the local paper the day before. He was also told bluntly 'We don't employ black people'. It should be noted that Bristol's Afro-Caribbean community was much larger than Bath's – some 3,000 by 1960, growing to 7,000 by 1963, many of them living in the St Paul's area.[12]

Bath was already employing black crews, as I discovered during a visit to Bath Ethnic Minorities Senior Citizens Association in 2010. I met Harold Ottway, who had joined the bus company as a driver in 1956 and eventually completed 40 years of service. He recalled that on one occasion while driving on the Bath–Bristol route at the height of the row, a temporary bus stop was provided on the roundabout outside Bristol Bus Station and he was asked not to drive into the bus station for fear of escalating the dispute. Although my own father had been a driver on the Bath–Bristol route, he had died several years before 1963, so here was another piece of local history of which I had been entirely unaware.

A group of Bristolians were inspired by the civil rights movement in the USA and in particular the bus boycotts in Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama in 1956 over the issue of segregation on the buses. The West Indian Development Council had already been formed in Bristol when

9 Pringle 2018

10 https://www.skysports.com/watch/video/sports/cricket/12398354/you-guys-are-history-chapter-one

11 Kelly 2013

12 Rees 2019

youth worker Paul Stephenson arrived in Bristol in 1962. Supporters of the campaign duly kept off the buses and joined marches and demonstrations across the city. The TGWU, which represented the bus workers, was divided between its national anti-racist policies and the determination of its Bristol members not to work as part of mixed-race crews.

Things came to a head on 28 August 1963. In Washington, DC, Martin Luther King delivered his 'I have a dream' speech to a crowd of 250,000 in front of the Lincoln Memorial. King, together with Rosa Parks, had been a key organiser in the Alabama bus boycotts. In Bristol, the TGWU bus workers voted on 27 August in favour of 'the employment of suitable coloured workers as bus crews'. The next day, coinciding with King's speech, the general manager of the Bristol Omnibus Company announced a change of policy. There would be 'complete integration' on the buses 'without regard to race, colour or creed'.

If, at one level, there was a link between events in Bristol and the civil rights movement in the USA, there was also a link with the world of cricket. When the Gloucestershire versus West Indies match took place in Bristol (4–7 May), Frank Worrell, the West Indies captain, declined to offer his support to the protesters, using the time-worn argument that sport and politics do not mix. Sir Learie Constantine, High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, and a distinguished cricketer from the 1930s, was more decisive. He came down to Bristol to see for himself, as Madge Dresser describes:

> Constantine, whose 'constituency' after all was West Indian, unabashedly chose to ally himself with the boycott and express his own moral indignation about the colour bar: 'For it to be happening in Bristol of all places is even worse when you remember that the West Indies sugar industry has helped, through the slaves sent by this country, to make Bristol great'.[13]

Dresser suggests very strongly that Constantine's resignation in early 1964 was forced by the Trinidad and Tobago government, which felt that he had exceeded his duties, 'and should have recognised it as an internal matter for management and union and refused to intervene'.[14]

In addition to the work of Madge Dresser, one of those who have helped to maintain the memory of the 1963 campaign is Marvin Rees, mayor since 2016 when Bristol became the first major European city to have elected a mayor of black African heritage. His mayoralty has coincided with the Black Lives Matter movement, which has had a particular resonance in Bristol, the

13 Dresser 2013, 30 (Constantine had published his book, *Colour Bar*, in 1954.)

14 Dresser 2013, 54

wealth of which derives from the slave trade and from tropical products such as sugar and tobacco imported to Bristol for processing. His *Guardian* online article on the role of the Bristol Bus Boycott in the UK civil rights movement was published a few months before the statue of Edward Colston the slave trader was toppled and thrown into the Floating Harbour in 2020.[15]

That year also saw the television broadcast of the Bristol episode of David Olusoga's *A House through Time*, which re-emphasised the close link between Bristol and the slave trade. Reviewing the Colston statue toppling a year later, Olusoga wrote about the challenge to the mayor of being both the elected mayor of the whole city and a black man:

> The confected battle lines of our confected culture war run through both Bristol and its mayor. Mixed-race, with a working-class white mother and Jamaican father, Rees was brought up in one of Bristol's poorer districts. For him, as for many black people, myself included, the 'white working class' do not belong to a rival group but are family members, friends and members of the same communities.[16]

5.4 Conclusion: a brighter future?

Now the Bath West Indian elders meet at a twice-weekly lunch and social club (Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association, BEMSCA). The three main groups there are West Indians, mainly from Jamaica and Barbados, South Asians and Chinese. Their meeting place is Fairfield House in Kelston Road, Weston, where the Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie and his family lived from 1936 to 1941 after being deposed by Italian fascists. Bath must have been a culture shock after the land-locked time capsule of an African kingdom over which he had exercised absolute power. But, by and large, he liked Bath. He watched newsreel images of Italian soldiers marching through the streets of Addis Ababa at the Little Theatre cinema, the 'flea-pit' of my own boyhood in Bath. He returned on a state visit in 1954 to thank the people of Bath for their hospitality. My junior-school class walked two miles to the Royal Crescent to witness his drive through the city. In 1958, the Emperor donated Fairfield House to the people of Bath. Now the portrait of the Lion of Judah presides over the assorted elders as they eat lunch, play dominoes and, above all, put the past to rights. Curious, though, that this 'symbol of long-neglected African identity', as Stuart Hall once called him, is celebrated in socially conservative, provincial Bath.

15 Rees 2019
16 Olusoga 2021

Figure 5.4 Vince Forde and Dave Clarke, Fairfield House, Bath, 2022.

While older Afro-Caribbeans have returned home to the islands, or settled into contented old age in Bath, their children and grandchildren have continued to find it difficult to feel really at home in the city of their birth. The children find it difficult to achieve in education, while parents are anxious and mistrustful, remembering their own negative experiences of school.[17] This sense of being 'guests in their country of birth' creates an ironic contrast with middle-class white incomers to the city, who settle rapidly into jobs, membership of community organisations, and activity in political and heritage groups.

The Afro-Caribbean community in Bath continues to demonstrate the 'double consciousness' which the Afro-American writer W.E.B. Du Bois identified in the black community in the USA.[18] On the one hand, there is pride in the organisations they have set up, such as the Bath West Indians cricket team or the Rainbow Steel Band, pride in the progress of their home islands and in the successful transition from the Caribbean islands to England, success and happiness in work, housing and family. On the other

17 See the work of the Bath Black Families Educational Support Group, referred to in footnote 2.

18 Du Bois 1994

hand, there is still that sense of being a minority that still bears the burden of discrimination reaching back to the days of slavery.

In the case of the two cricketers I interviewed in 2022 (see Figure 5.4), this comes out not as complaints about their own treatment in England but in relation to matters of current debate: the 'Windrush generation' scandal (2012 and ongoing), the Nationality and Borders bill (now Act) and the decision of Barbados to sever its constitutional ties with the British monarchy. In relation to Windrush, Vince was critical of the subsequent treatment of early arrivals. Despite a critical official report in 2020, some still wait for compensation claims to be settled, while others have died. He said:

> I don't know of anyone who was sent home, and I've never heard of anyone in Bath either. It's a terrible thing really because what I don't understand is the way that is working anyway. Many of those kids were two or three, they were travelling with their parents so they wouldn't have a passport. They came here, they go to school, they work, and it's only when they become ill that a lot of these people find out. I think it's disgusting [...] There's some of them worked from around 15, 16, pay their taxes, come to the age of 70, 80, and then told 'You're not wanted', what is that person supposed to do? [...] They're going to take you and put you on a plane, and you have nothing.

Dave saw the Nationality and Borders bill (now Act) as adding insult to injury after the Windrush scandal:

> What makes it worse is that I understand that [a bill has] been passed in the House of Lords, the government can actually review and take away your citizenship, for no apparent reason, if they want to, they can take away your citizenship and they could send you back to [where you came from] [...] Now they're saying that it only applies to people who cause problems, but as long as the bill is there, it's not only going to apply to someone who causes problems!

Dave was not surprised by the decision of Barbados to become a republic in 2020, and related it directly to the history of black people in Barbados:

> There are a number of West Indian islands that have become republics. And I think what happened, the Barbados government wanted to conduct their own affairs themselves without having a higher authority overseeing everything they did, and they believe from the slave days and all that, although Barbados became independent, they weren't really independent, they was still obliged to do whatever England [ordered] – I remember growing up we always referred to England as the Mother Country,

> and there are certain aspects of things in Barbados, that Barbados was even referred to as Little England for a long period of time. Things like Nelson's Column in Barbados, that was actually there before Nelson had a monument in England. So you can see how much influence England had on Barbados. So I think a majority of people and a lot of governments over a lot of years really wanted to become a republic, really wanted to run their own affairs. I think at long last they achieve that. Good luck to them, I say.

Bath may be home now, but what happens in Barbados still arouses strong feelings.

As for myself, I expect to be buried in Bath, though 'home' is now 15 miles away in Frome. Bath has changed and I have changed. Through experience, reading and conversation, my own understanding of so much that has always been in plain sight in Bath – especially Beckford's Tower – now provides a much broader context for my life and times. I have appreciated and learned, in particular, from my conversations with the late Orman Clarke and Harold Ottway, and with Vince Forde and Dave Clarke. All these contacts were facilitated by Pauline Swaby-Wallace, the administrator of BEMSCA at Fairfield House in Bath. Thank you, Pauline, Vince and Dave. I hope the game of cricket will continue to thrive in both Bath and Barbados.

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6

My roots and routes

Memoryscapes of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans

Roger Griffith

Roger Griffith, Honorary Doctor of Arts, left school without qualifications during the turbulent 1980s. He became a community leader and passionate advocate of social activism. Now a lecturer, Roger shares his experience growing up Black and British through writing and public speaking. He delivers diversity training, advocates for lifelong learning and heads his social enterprise, Creative Connex CIC. Recognised for his dedication and his work, Roger holds an MBE, an honorary doctorate from UWE, a Bristol Lord Mayor's medal and has recently become a TEDx speaker.

Figure 6.1 Portrait of author as part of a collage including a Bristol double-decker bus, signifying the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott, and the toppling of the Colston statue, all on a 2-Tone music checkerboard background with a Black Power fist symbol and a map showing transatlantic enslaved trafficking routes. Illustration: Martha Zubieta © Roger Griffith.

6.1 Introduction: my roots and routes

From my family leaving Guyana as part of the Windrush Generation, to growing up Black and British in Bristol, I have at times felt as if a dark brooding shadow was accompanying me. The aim of this memoryscape is to chart how living with the Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans (TTEA)[1] has shaped my personal life and professional career, from initial traumatic encounters watching the television series *Roots* to the falling of Colston's statue.

I had been fighting the racism that plagued my life and mental health for decades. The bewildering turn of events after the murder of George Floyd invigorated the Black Lives Matter movement. Once again, I found myself within a nexus of historical crossroads. I made the connections via the *routes* of this transatlantic diasporic legacy. These included my African heritage, Caribbean parents, a multitude of relatives in America, years of research visits to the Deep South, as well as making Bristol my home.

These bonds helped me understand the world around me before I interpreted it for others. Only in confronting my past and our mutual history was I able to move beyond the shadow of the TTEA. I translated this into work as an activist, then artist and, after leaving school without qualifications, becoming an academic.

Through arts and culture, I used my past to re-educate myself, casting aside mental shackles to stand enlightened by the resilience and achievements of my ancestors.

1 'Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans' (TTEA) is the preferred term of activists and the Legacy Steering Group, which was founded in 2019 and consists of city partners, individuals and organisations convened by the Culture Department of Bristol City Council and chaired by Deputy Mayor for Communities, Cllr Asher Craig. The purpose of the steering group is to provide advice and strategic direction to Bristol City Council concerning the legacy of the TTEA and associated projects and programmes. Full findings are in the Project T.R.U.T.H. (Telling Restoring Understanding our Tapestry and History) report that was commissioned by Bristol City Council and the Bristol Legacy Steering Group, produced by the Black South West Network in partnership with the Afrikan ConneXions Consortium as a result of more than two years' work by the council's Legacy Steering Group (LSG) Project TRUTH subgroup. https://www.bristollegacyfoundation.com/

6.2 Discovery

6.2.1 Alex Haley's roots

My first encounter with the TTEA came via the TV mini-series *Roots*[2] on 8 April 1977. It came unexpectedly, like discovering a decomposing corpse in the woods. Then as I drew closer to the past, my very discovery seemed to rouse history into life. My revelation would uncover an interconnectedness beyond my teenage self. It was beyond my then understanding of the world.

Amid the terror, grief and trauma, I also saw at the core of the story a resilience that was indefatigable; a burning flame that could never be doused. It soon dawned on me that this too was my story, as a jigsaw piece in my identity fell into place. It was, however, a puzzle that my then 11-year-old self was unaware needed solving.

I had no idea of how boys like me were shipped off to the Americas in bondage. With fascination and repulsion, I followed Kunta Kinte's journey from his capture at home in Juffure, Gambia, through undertaking the horrific middle passage. I watched him sold as a commodity, broken-in and seasoned like a sentient farm animal, then punished and mutilated for trying to find freedom from a Virginia plantation.

In Britain, playground taunts and walking past signs reading 'Niggers Go Home' left me in no doubt of my race. Until then my ethnic identity was derived from the state labelling me Afro-Caribbean. I knew the Caribbean connection was from my parents' origins. They were part of the 'Windrush Generation', named after the first ship that arrived from Jamaica on 22 June 1948 as part of an influx from the Caribbean to help rebuild Britain after the Second World War.

Before Kunta Kinte, I had no understanding of what my Africanness meant. In tracing his family tree through thousands of hours of painstaking, pre-internet research, author Alex Haley opened up new worlds for me. His genius was to turn the traditions of African oral storytelling into a book and a TV mini-series that captured the world's attention, including this young boy in Bristol.

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I watched the epic drama unfold with my mother in a council flat situated in a white working-class suburb of Bristol called Lawrence Weston. Over the next few days my Blackness and my Africanness were confirmed publicly. This came not by scholars or talking heads but through the viciousness of

2 https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0075572/

the imagination of schoolchildren. Almost verbatim they re-christened me Toby, Kunta's name given by a cruel white slave owner. One of the few other Black children in the school was also renamed Kizzy after a female enslaved character. It was 'suggested' we marry, possibly by jumping the broom as in African traditions. It was not yet my place to bemoan that there were very few drama classes and little cultural education on our curriculum. I swallowed down the humiliation and returned to the business of playing football with them. These were and are my friends, unable to understand the significance of what they were imitating; from a system that nurtured their ignorance. From an early age I was forced to confront the issues of identity and difference, learning first to survive within its confines, before speaking about its suffocating boundaries.

Watching *Roots* in a white working-class suburb of Bristol gave me invaluable insights into why many white people still struggle to comprehend these roots of racism. The journeys of other Kunta Kintes from Africa to the Americas and Britain's role and riches were always obscured.[3]

Steve McQueen's Oscar-winning *12 Years a Slave* (2015), based on Solomon Northup's memoirs of a free man tricked into enslavement, gave Britons an opportunity to confront its historical past as *Roots* had done decades before. As part of the Come The Revolution film collective with Bristol Watershed, we screened the film.[4] At a largely white screening, several audience-members wept openly, their sobs a constant accompaniment. The post-film discussion I chaired was more akin to a mass-counselling session as we talked of how Bristol's past could change the future.[5]

6.2.2 Bittersweet routes

Growing up, the TTEA, like sex education or racism, was an issue that was never raised. Before Dad passed away in 2009, I asked him why he had left the seemingly idyllic Caribbean. My father's prospects in a postcolonial Guyana were limited, with many in the region living a share-cropper's existence.

Unlike the soil, which had been left damaged by single-crop use, the system slavery had established always found ways to replenish itself. Post-slavery, 'Between 1833 and 1917 238,000 East Indians had been imported into Guyana as indentured labour'.[6] East Asians replaced enslaved Africans, who had replaced white servitude, who had earlier replaced Amerindians.

3 Dresser 2016
4 Come The Revolution: https://cometherev.wordpress.com/
5 https://www.watershed.co.uk/audio-video/12-years-a-slave-a-context-to-slavery
6 Williams 1944

The result of lands being interrupted by monoculture systems of agriculture in the Caribbean has been a costly colonial legacy. Instead of a flourishing eco-system, lands cleared to support 'King Sugar' have left the Caribbean region economically disadvantaged and its people burdened by the expense of imported goods. In Africa, global corporations have exploited its precious minerals, corrupting governments and aggravating conflict.

When I first visited Guyana in 2001 with Mum, I encountered many bittersweet moments. Staring at sugar cane, its tall robustness reminded me of bamboo, and I imagined what it would have been like to cut it down in the unrelenting heat and humidity with an overseer itching to put his whip to use.

On a later visit to Georgetown, I showed Mum a statue to Quamina, who led the 1823 Guyana enslaved rebellion. Mum had not been taught of him, yet she knows all of Queen Elizabeth's children. Her generation grew up thinking they were British even though they weren't born there.[7] The postcolonial Caribbean society that she grew up in, from the Anglican church to her schooling, had little need of our Afrocentric roots. The lack of dialogue about empire and colonialism in the educational curriculum and race and racism in society lies at the heart of both the problem and solution. Cognitive dissonance is imparted at an early age. A white senior figure of an organisation once informed me wryly, after an anti-racism training session I had delivered, that he would have to start again with his history because, 'if he didn't grow up thinking that it was OK to be a white supremacist then it meant he hadn't been paying attention in class!' No one discussed the reasons why the other Commonwealth kids in our different classrooms were speaking the Queen's English. At primary school we looked at Mercator maps which falsely depict Africa as smaller than its actual size to scale.[8] We only ever saw negative images of children dying of disease and poverty and lands ravaged by war that portrayed my African ancestry. Only Egypt would be highlighted, usually accompanied by lighter-skinned, impossibly bronzed figures. I would have to wait until I visited Luxor to learn of dark-skinned Nubians, whom locals cheerily informed me I resembled.

From our curriculums to our media, little was said about the systematic accumulation or origin of the wealth of empire. It took me decades to connect the final pieces of the puzzle and understand that the unpaid labour from generations of Kizzys and Kunta Kintes had enriched the then-slave-trading port of Bristol and the South West region where I now lived.

7 Roger's mother, Arabella Coleridge, and Roy Hackett's Caribbean Pioneers animation 'The Windrush Generation': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3PNCBPqJ7o

8 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/02/google-maps-gets-africa-wrong https://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/18/africa/real-size-of-africa/index.html

6.2.3 Teenage kicks

Although it sparked fresh understanding, I never watched *Roots* again, packing the mini-series away with other painful adolescent scars. I did pick up the book in my late teens as the need to find my identity and purpose became urgent, lest I lose my sanity. I had become another statistic, as the formerly unemployed band UB40 sung on 'One in Ten'.[9]

In the early 1980s I left school with qualifications only fit for a lengthening dole queue. At the time I left school, the Black youth unemployment rate doubled. In 1981, the year of the Brixton riots, 17.2% of young white people were unemployed, compared with 18.7% of young Black people.[10] In 1982, 41.8% of young Black people were unemployed compared to 22.9% of their white counterparts.

Being chased by neo-Nazis and skinheads through the English streets that we had made home caused me to question my identity. Like the Rubik's Cube, none of the answers I came up with solved my puzzle. Then I read of Malcolm X's path to redemption, re-educating himself from his prison cell and finding purpose through his Muslim faith. His autobiography was co-authored by the then-journalist Alex Haley, before the latter wrote *Roots*.

There was something else troubling me. For all Haley's trauma, he had generations of living relatives who could give testimony to his past. I had just one surviving grandparent and craved more than what lay in Caribbean archives. Ahead of me, many auto-didactic anthropological discoveries lit up like flares, revealing my route.

6.2.4 Taken

From the 17th century, Europeans ships trafficked and enslaved millions out of Africa across the Atlantic Ocean to work in horrific conditions on plantations in the Americas. Pan-African activists call these lost lives a Black Genocide, 'Maafa'.[11] This is remembered each year as Maangamizi on 1 August in Windrush Square, Brixton. I knew the current artistic director of the New Vic, Kwame Kwei-Armah, when he was a cast member on the BBC soap *Casualty*, filmed in Bristol. I vicariously followed his career, which included his hard-hitting 2003 play *Elmina's Kitchen* in Bath's Theatre Royal.[12] Its title was taken from the notorious fort in Ghana, West Africa where the enslaved, captured from all parts of Africa by Africans, awaited their fate on European slave ships. That it became known as the 'Slave

9 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_in_Ten

10 https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/apr/11/black-youth-unemployment-rate-brixton-riots-covid

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maafa

12 https://www.bbc.co.uk/somerset/stage/2003/09/elminas_kitchen.shtml

Coast' taught me of how Europeans viewed Africa. As Dave rapped on his track 'Black', 'The Ivory Coast, Gold Coast, Grain Coast' – all named after commodities or commerce.[13]

The captives were transported across the ocean on the notorious middle passage for between four and six weeks until they reached the Americas. They were chained together with limited food, water and air, often in sweltering or stormy conditions. Your bathroom was where you were shackled, and diseases such as dysentery were rife, causing many deaths among enslaved and crew. During exercise, some enslaved took their own lives by leaping overboard, preferring death to the living hell they were experiencing. Olaudah Equiano, the son of an Igbo chief in Nigeria before he was enslaved, also aged 11, describes the middle passage in his autobiography:

> The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome that it was dangerous to remain there for any time […] it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the enslaved, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.[14]

The ship would be scrubbed clean of its vile human slurry and prepared for its final four-week leg of the triangular route. Goods cultivated by the enslaved in the Americas were transported back to their British commercial ports like Bristol and Liverpool for vast economic gain.[15] I often remind the worthiest allies that this birth-to-grave enslavement over generations marks the Transatlantic Trafficking of Enslaved Africans as crueller than any servant, slave or indentured labour comparisons before or since.

The public discovery of my African roots had led me to this point of no return. For the next leg of my journey the history surrounding my parents' homeland gained sharper focus.

13 Dave 2019
14 Equiano 1789
15 Griffith 2015, 68

6.2.5 Moving from Colston's dark shadow

After my parents' divorce, Mum and I moved to Bristol to start a new life, ironically living for a while on Colston Road in Easton. I did not know then how his name would be bound up in my future. Before George Floyd's murder, Colston had more streets, buildings and monuments named after him than there were franchises of McDonald's. His name was so ubiquitous that you failed to notice its oppressive significance – until one day your past taps you on the shoulder.

Ros Martin, a Bristol-born artist and activist, used chalk drawings on the pavement outside the then Colston Hall as I entered for numerous concerts. Ros would later be arrested for peaceful protests about Colston, for which she received an apology from Avon and Somerset Police.[16]

Alongside the tower, schools and roads, decades after his death, new spotlights were being shone on his life. Edward Colston was a key figure in the growth of the British involvement in the TTEA. My stance became unequivocal: the blood of my ancestors financed the philanthropy that was still being revered in Bristol. Through a royal charter, the Company of Merchants became the Royal African Company (RAC), with only the Duke of York ranked higher than Colston as Governor. I picture Colston as a modern-day CEO facilitating the growth of a business that enslaved and transported over 80,000 Africans. Their enslaved cargos were marked physically and literally as property, branded with the RAC's initials using hot irons.[17] Colston's role as RAC Deputy Governor also ushered in a prominent group of figures and the rise of the Merchants, which became the Society of Merchant Venturers, gaining national and local influence.[18]

In 2007 I began the first of several research trips to the Deep South of America. I noted the similarities between Colston's statue and several monuments erected in an attempt to whitewash history and not inform the future. The Confederacy was celebrated by soldiers who would have kept people who looked like me enslaved. I took part in a commemorative march across the Edward Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, named after a Confederate general. In 1965, Senator John Lewis would lie bleeding, his skull fractured by a police baton on Bloody Sunday. In Georgia, Dr King's home state, I gawped open-mouthed at Stone Mountain Confederacy monument carved high into the granite.[19]

16 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/22/bristol-police-to-pay-damages-for-arrest-of-activists-using-covid-powers

17 Thomas 1999, 14

18 https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/who-was-edward-colston-2/ https://www.merchantventurers.com/who-we-are/history/edward-colston/

19 https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/confederate-statues/

After my bruising discoveries I needed to find wisdom on how such a trade had flourished for centuries.

6.3 Words of wisdom, salve and salvation: Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery*

Dr Eric Williams was a polymath, a former premier of Trinidad and Tobago and an early advocate of Caribbean unity. His work began life as an Oxford PhD study before being published in 1944. Williams' forensic examination made me understand the *business* of slavery.[20] It allowed me to find purpose beyond centuries of cruelty, misery and pain. The acclaimed American historian Seymour Drescher spoke of the book in the following terms:

> If one criterion of a classic is its ability to reorient our most basic way of viewing an object or a concept, Eric Williams' study supremely passes that test […] The achievement of *Capitalism & Slavery* is that Williams made it impossible for historians ever to return to the posture of splendid moral isolation which characterized the story of British slave emancipation for more than a century. Williams' most enduring message was that abolition could not have triumphed independently of economic developments linked to industrialization.[21]

Not far from where my mother lived in Barbados after her retirement in 1993 was a former plantation called Sam Lords Castle. It had been renovated into a resort and the 'castle' had been turned into a museum. I was half the age I am today and my memoryscape of the TTEA was still so traumatising that I could not enter the building where instruments of torture awaited my gaze. It was as if I had erected a forcefield around the plantation house for my own self-preservation as I searched for a salve to a wound that could never heal.

Today I regularly visit plantation houses, museums and archives around the world. The pain doesn't lessen, but I always leave with a greater understanding. Williams' wisdom helped me comprehend that the TTEA was a vast global system based on capture, subjugation and exploitation for financial reward. From there the roots and social construct of racism emerged. It also kick-started the industrial revolution, creating and expanding global commercial trade.

Williams challenged haughty white academics, for whom I suspect he had too much skin in the game. That he had enslaved blood in his veins gave

20 Griffith 2015

21 Drescher 1987

greater context to his clear-sighted analysis for me. I had found my salve and a salvation to write about my past.

Following the 2007 bicentennial commemorations of the abolition of the British slave trade, I discovered Williams' work.[22] It led me to view the world differently in my search to find past and present answers. In the aftermath of the 2007–8 global financial crisis, it became clear austerity would impact the communities I worked in. Williams' voice became a driving force. To find answers to our past and present malaise: *follow the money*.

To move the big commodity beasts of their day – tobacco, sugar and cotton – vast amounts of labour was needed on plantations. This heralded the rise of the planters, which included an influential group from the South West allied to the merchants. Two Bristolian brothers demonstrated how money, power and politics can influence the course of history.[23]

Sir John Yeamans (1611–74) was a Barbados plantation owner who became Governor of the South Carolina colony. His brother Sir Robert Yeamans (1617–86) was Sheriff, Chief Magistrate and Lord Mayor of Bristol and also had merchant interests.[24] Bristol planters transported their lavish lifestyles and their enslaved from Barbados to expand the plantocracy in the Deep South.[25]

Standing on Charleston Harbour in 2012, I stared with wonder at cannons used at nearby Fort Sumter that began the American Civil War, which resulted in 750,000 deaths. A war, to paraphrase President Lincoln, that determined whether America would be a free or slave nation.[26]

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Eli Whitney's cotton gin changed the world when it launched in 1793. It increased cotton production by 4,900%, demanding more labour and land.[27] In Britain it would lead to industrialisation and factory systems expanding places like Manchester and a network of surrounding northern towns. Centuries later, this field-to-factory production cycle would attract labour to a post-Second World War manufacturing boom. This time it was

22 Williams 1944

23 https://tinyurl.com/2uutjv2f

24 https://www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/slavery/people-involved/traders-merchants-planters/caribbean-plantation-development/plantation-owners/; Read 1910

25 Griffith 2015, 108

26 https://housedivided.dickinson.edu/sites/teagle/texts/lincoln-house-divided-speech-1858/

27 https://www.searchablemuseum.com/king-cotton

economic migration and not enforced labour that Britain harvested from its former empire, now known as the Commonwealth.

6.4 The Windrush Generations – my parents' journey

After Britain and her allies had defeated Hitler's Nazi Germany, it had to rebuild its war-torn infrastructure. Due to its imperial dominance, Britain gained an economic advantage over its European neighbours through its Commonwealth. In the 18th and 19th centuries, political, social and most importantly economic policies were put in place across the British Empire that would shape the world. After the Second World War, Caribbean countries gained independence from British rule but their land was not fit to produce a variety of foods. This made it hard for the populace to sustain itself.

Britain utilised this vast reservoir of talent from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to help what had been constructed in the colonial perspective as 'the Motherland'. A freshly created NHS, new transport links as well as manufacturing opportunities beckoned. The migrants, however, found that Britain's streets were not paved with gold, and encountered difficulties. Many were paid less than their white counterparts. Colour bars were in place in housing and employment, like that opposed by the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott. Many felt ostracised, and in response they created their own social institutions, religious groups, carnivals, sports and music clubs that still sustain their local communities.

6.5 From dole age to a new age

The 1980 St Pauls Riots/Uprisings were followed by several disturbances in UK cities. The social conditions that brought mass unemployment, police brutality and violence that had turned the inner cities into pressure cookers could no longer be ignored.

After leaving school, I endured ten years of unemployment and manual labour, undertaking several dubious government projects. When I walked into the Centre for Economic and Educational Development (CEED) in St Pauls in 1991 to undertake a positive-action scheme as a trainee housing officer, my life changed. My 18-year career in local government for Bristol City Council, including as equalities advisor and senior Housing Manager, began. When I took redundancy, I left with the skills to lead an organisation, taking Ujima Radio to several awards. I'm currently running my community consultancy and deeply conscious of the history that guided my success as well as the support of many.

While writing this essay I received the sad news of the death of Bristol civil-rights campaigner Roy Hackett MBE, aged 93. When he told me

about his rural farming background before he left Jamaica, I was fascinated. Through the Black & Green project we highlight the heritage of Black Indigenous People of Colour's (BIPOC) connection with the environment over generations. We challenge perceptions that Black communities are not interested in the environment. After all, who knows these lands better than those who were born or captured to work there.

At Cop 26 in 2021 these messages were reinforced by leaders of the developing nations, which are facing life and death from the climate emergency: 'developed countries must uphold their promise of finance and support […] to combat against climate change'.[28]

6.6 Fighting the legacy of historical racism

I have plenty of lived experience to show that racism is still with us in the UK. I consider myself fortunate that I only have physical scars from a racist attack by two men at a bus stop in Avonmouth, Bristol.

The year I left school, 1981, 13 children in my age group died in the New Cross Fire. I'm still haunted that my face could have easily replaced one of the blurry images used to remember them. The fire is still the largest mass murder of children in modern history. Yet until the Black British community protested on the streets' famously using the chant '13 Dead, Nothing Said', it was ignored by the media and the government.[29] Later that year, Prince Charles and the People's Princess Diana married in July as inner-city Britain still smouldered from the riots/uprisings. As they walked down the aisle, The Specials' epochal track 'Ghost Town' topped the UK charts.[30] They were heavily influenced by Jamaican Ska and on the EP was a track which spoke for all of us victims of racist violence and abuse. The track was called 'Why?' and featured the lyrics 'We don't need no National Front nor the Ku Klux Klan […] Why did you try to kill me'. Twelve years later, Stephen Lawrence's parents Doreen and Neville were the latest to ask the question 'Why?' after their son was murdered. Lord William MacPherson led the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and highlighted issues of institutional and systematic racism.

After George Floyd's murder I was reminded of the impact of 14-year-old Emmett Till's death on another younger generation. His mother displayed his mutilated body in an open casket to show the brutality. His crime was

28 https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1105222

29 *Uprising* [Steve McQueen documentary], BBC TV, https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episodes/m000y317/uprising

30 https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/culture/article/the-specials-jerry-dammers-ghost-town

whistling at a white woman. The purity of the white woman is another legacy of the Southern way of life, one as entwined with enslavement as the rope used in lynchings.[31] Till's murder had a galvanising impact on future civil-rights leaders such as Dr King, Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. Civil-rights protesters I would later interview proudly called themselves 'Emmett Till Men'. Alongside Mandela's fight against Apartheid South Africa, these battles for social justice inspired my work.

From the world of culture I gleaned more insights: Billie Holiday sung of the horror of lynching and shared trauma in 'Strange Fruit'. In Maya Angelou's poem 'And Still I Rise' I found triumph through resilience. Toni Morrison's goose-bump-inducing graphic fiction revealed new ways to memorialise history, once proclaiming 'The past colours the present and the present contorts the past'.[32] Seeing artists such as Lubaina Himid,[33] whose Turner Prize-winning exhibit Ujima showcased to the community at Spike Island, was also motivating, particularly with UWE Bristol and Kara Walker[34] expressing their trauma and troubled relationship with the TTEA.

6.7 Bristol, Bath and the TTEA: encounters with history

On Bristol's harbourside I watch the brooding waters reflecting the horns of Pero's Bridge stretching across the River Avon. Post-COVID, Bristol's port legacy is about to celebrate the return of one of its celebrated festivals.

A little less celebrated, at the foot of Pero's Bridge near the Arnolfini lies a plaque to Pero. It is one of the few public acknowledgements of Bristol's darker past. Industrial cranes greet the entrance to the M Shed and a flotilla of boats and barges greet you. Further down the River Avon, two of Isambard Kingdom's greatest feats, the SS *Great Britain* and the Clifton Suspension Bridge, herald the city's maritime past. Here too is where the rivers Frome and Avon merged to send ships to begin their triangular route to Africa.

In 1730, Britain became the world's biggest slave-trading country, and in 1737 Bristol overtook London as the biggest slaving port, with 37 voyages that year. In total, over 2,000 ships left Bristol for Africa.[35] As well as the human cargo, ivory, gold, silver and other precious items would return to

31 https://eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america/

32 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b062mp6k

33 https://diversityuk.org/slave-trade-artist-wins-turner-prize-2017/

34 https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/kara-walker-2674/kara-walkers-fons-americanus

35 Williams 1944, 57

Bristol's ports, home to merchant houses and financiers. Butchers, bakers and others would purchase shares on slaving trips which would help finance a voyage in the 'Guinea Trade'.[36]

According to historian David Robinson, Bristol already had the infrastructure ready for the transatlantic trade, with its kidnappings of white poor and particularly women from the Bristol Harbourside. Eric Williams wrote that 'One financed the other', referring to how Bristol expanded its slave-trading role from white locals to Africans.[37]

When Devon slaver Sir John Hawkins captured Portuguese ships in acts of piracy (1542) he brutally changed Britain's fortunes, expanding its empire and creating positions of power in Westminster and beyond for the region.

Bristol's growth led to Bath's Regency-period boom as South-Western merchants and planters used their wealth to build grand homes and businesses. The Royal Crescent website says:

> Georgian Bath was built largely due to the British Slave Trade. We know that our building and collections have strong connections with this awful period in history and we do not hide it. It is a crucial part of our narrative when people visit and contributes to the wider context of the World Heritage City of Bath.[38]

6.8 1895–2020: ending 125 years of hurt

6.8.1 The killing of George Floyd

On the 25 May 2020, George Floyd was murdered by officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His was the latest in a litany of murders by police officers. This included the shooting of Breonna Taylor, a young Black woman in Louisville, Kentucky, that sparked the Say Her Name campaign.[39] With lockdowns due to COVID-19 focusing global attention, the nine minutes, 29 seconds of footage of Floyd's killing captured the attention of the world.

Black activists, as they have done since organising enslaved escapes or insurrections, went into action. They mixed modern techniques of social media with traditional methods of protests. Every generation has had a murder to mourn – Emmett Till (1955), Martin Luther King (1968), the New Cross Fire (1981), Stephen Lawrence (1993), Stephen Walker (2003)

36 https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristol-transatlantic-slave-trade/

37 Williams 1944, 16

38 https://no1royalcrescent.org.uk/bath-and-the-slave-trade/

39 https://edition.cnn.com/2020/07/25/us/wnba-season-start-breonna-taylor-cnn/index.html

– that has changed how we view race and racism. For this generation, this was their defining moment.

6.8.2 The fall of Colston's statue: Black Lives Matter protest, 7 June 2020

As I watched the events unfold, a PTSD born of a legacy of trauma was triggered. On 7 June 2020, I set aside my cynicism about what the latest movement could achieve and gave the demonstrators gathering in Bristol for the Black Lives Matter protest my genuine best wishes. I and several community leaders had been asked to stay home and not spread the virus. Sadly, this sound advice came not from PM Boris Johnson but from our vibrant Black voluntary and community sector in an effort to keep our elders safe. I was on a community call, simultaneously watching on TV the brave young people who rejected Hobson's Choice; they had been given death via a health pandemic or death via the slow drip of the systematic racism they faced.

My phone began dancing across my coffee table, stirred into action by a multitude of communications informing me that Edward Colston's statue had been pulled down. Several replays flooded my phone before they hit the world's news agencies. I confess to feeling relief and, although not until I visited the empty plinth, joy. I found the statue's legitimacy in occupying the central space incongruent in our multicultural city. Any victory belonged to organisations such as Countering Colston, which included former Colston School pupil and former Lord Mayor Cleo Lake. She had previously removed Colston's painting from her council chambers.

Fighting racism in the city and beyond has many battlegrounds and two years earlier I had chosen mine.

6.8.3 2018, a year of change: City Conversations

Bristol Old Vic was built by slave money[40] and the *Bristol Post* had a poor track record in covering stories from the Black community.[41]

In my role as Executive Chair for Ujima Radio, after receiving Arts Council England support, I met with its leaders, Tom Morris and Mike Norton. We had several differences but one shared vision: to hold a series of conversations on race to heal some of the inequality divides in the city and reflect on its relationship with the TTEA.[42] This followed a report in 2017 by the Runnymede Trust stating that Bristol was the most segregated core

40 https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/feb/05/i-was-right-to-speak-out-slavery-money-bristol-old-vic-tom-morris

41 https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/editor-bristol-post-apologises-faces-1305272

42 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-44057920

city in the UK. Later that year, the *Sunday Times* celebrated Bristol as the best place to live in the UK.

From a combined audience of over 300 people, plus online comments, we received several recommendations, including a desire for further conversations on how to contextualise the role of the TTEA for future generations.

Members of the Society of Merchant Venturers (SMV) attended every City Conversation. They provided some answers on their opaque role in the city as well as inputting solutions, including the role of boards and providing information on their funding criteria.[43]

Although I received criticism for my methods, both working in partnership and holding dialogue with the SMV, I drew inspiration from these words of Fredrick Douglass: 'I would unite with anybody to do right and with nobody to do wrong'.[44]

National disapproval continues among those seeking to use Colston's statue in their culture wars. In a Bristol City Council poll, 80% of Bristol's residents decided the best place for the statue was in a museum.[45]

There were none of the previous objections that prevented Dr Madge Dresser from contextualising the Colston statue while it stood. New merchants, including Marti Burgess and Muhammad Sadiq, are working to modernise the SMV's tarnished origins.[46] Perhaps the established SMV merchants also took inspiration from another African-American civil-rights campaigner. During George Floyd's eulogy, the Reverend Al Sharpton referred to young whites taking part in Black Lives Matter protests: 'We'd never thought we'd see the day when grandchildren of slave masters, tore down slave masters' statues over in England and put it in the river'.[47]

6.8.4 A surge of power: spotlight on white allyship

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter 2020 protests came a renewed discussion on what an anti-racist can do. It also brought into the spotlight definitions and purpose of allyship and whiteness as an identity.

The statue *A Surge of Power* featuring Jen Reid arrived on the empty Colston plinth, but was sadly removed within 24 hours. Her husband,

43 https://thebristolcable.org/2021/07/listen-bristol-unpacked-with-the-master-of-the-merchant-venturers-on-whether-they-are-an-all-powerful-elite-club-or-just-charitable-business-people/

44 Douglass 1855

45 https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristol-transatlantic-slave-trade/

46 https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/marti-burgess-appointed-first-black-4145717

47 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDxG2jTA2Oc

Alasdair Doggart, was an activist on the ground as the statue fell. The Colston Four, who were put on trial, and Alasdair kept up a strong tradition of white allyship in the region, stretching back to the abolitionists.[48]

Frederick Douglass spoke to packed houses in Britain and Ireland and many contributed money to allow for his freedom to be bought from his owner.[49] Dr Edson Burton and Bristol Old Vic retraced the places he had visited in Bristol on a city-wide walk. His speeches were read by famous figures in 2018.[50]

Thomas Clarkson and Hannah More led abolition gatherings in Bath and Bristol and were involved in boycotts of West Indian sugar. Boycotts of South African goods were also organised during the Apartheid era; many remind me of the violence that took place at anti-Nazi rallies during the late 1970s and '80s.

Ironically, *12 Years a Slave* was screened yards from where Colston's statue would later be rolled into the River Avon by largely white protesters. While contemporary issues such as systematic racism cannot be solved by white allies, neither can they be resolved without their input to their peers. More action is required within the institutions that govern our policing, health, education, sports and cultural bodies. Only then will we see real change to the damning set of everyday outcomes and statistics for Black, Asian and ethnically diverse groups in Britain.[51]

6.9 When sorry is not enough: the case for reparations and restorative justice

Following George Floyd's death, one of the solutions examined was the issue of reparations and restorative justice. On 2 March 2021, Bristol City Council passed a cross-party motion calling on a parliamentary inquiry to investigate the case for reparations.[52] Cleo Lake, who worked on the motion with Mayor Marvin Rees and Deputy Mayor Asher Craig, said 'Bristol merchants grew rich through African enslavement and this legacy is still with us – not only in the buildings that surround us, but also in the rife inequalities of wealth, power and opportunity across our city'.[53]

48 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/06/jen-reid-bristol-black-lives-matter-colston-marc-quinn-faces-of-2020

49 Douglass 1855

50 https://bristololdvic.org.uk/whats-on/2018/frederick-douglass-an-abolitionist-returns-to-bristol

51 https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/04/1090032

52 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/02/bristol-council-calls-for-parliamentary-inquiry-on-slavery-reparations

53 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-56258320

The Europeans had already set a blueprint when France demanded restitution for the loss of its slave earnings from Haiti, for which Haiti is still paying the price.[54]

Eight years later, Britain followed with its 1833 Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire Act. For a long while, I was ambivalent about reparations. My reticence came from learned English sensibilities of fair play. What I was failing to comprehend was that the system was rigged and my ancestors had toiled to create today's riches. When the treasury released a tweet to say that the debt resulting from the payments to the slave owners had been 'paid off thanks to British taxpayers' I was shocked.[55] It seemed ingenious schemes could be devised to achieve social justice.

Professor David Olusoga, an eloquent campaigner for the statue to be housed in a museum, calls the attempts to whitewash Colston's history the 'Cult of Colston'.[56] Every time I passed the statue, the horrors of this despicable trade filled me with a nihilistic rage. It became a constant reminder of the roots of both my and many others' experiences of racism. Professor Olusoga and University College London uncovered the equivalent of billions of pounds paid to individual slave-owning Britons. The enslaved got nothing.

Also, on Bristol's Harbourside is the regional HQ of Lloyds Bank. John White Cater was a director of one of the rivals that Lloyds Bank acquired and received compensation for five estates that enslaved 80 people.[57]

The insurance company Lloyd's of London says on its website: 'By the 1730s it was dominating shipping insurance and playing a key role in the UK's empire building. That meant it was intimately involved in the slave trade'.[58] Simon Fraser, a founder member of Lloyd's, held at least 162 people in slavery and was paid the equivalent of nearly £400,000 for ceding a plantation in Dominica while owning enslaved people in my parents' homeland of British Guiana.[59] In Bath, the Beckford's Tower website reads: 'William Beckford's ability to build, and to collect, was made possible by the wealth he inherited and continued to accumulate as a plantation slave owner,

54 https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2017/12/06/in-1825-haiti-gained-independence-from-france-for-21-billion-its-time-for-france-to-pay-it-back/

55 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/feb/12/treasury-tweet-slavery-compensate-slave-owners

56 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/27/bristol-city-slave-trader-edward-colston

57 https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jun/18/barclays-hsbc-and-lloyds-among-uk-banks-that-had-links-to-slavery

58 https://www.lloyds.com/about-lloyds/history/the-trans-atlantic-slave-trade

59 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/18/lloyds-of-london-and-greene-king-to-make-slave-trade-reparations

and through the compensation he received from the government following the abolition of slavery'.[60]

From monuments past to monuments present, the case for reparations and restorative justice still burns today. Reparative justice and reparations are not limited to one single viewpoint. Across the Black diaspora we have different paths to the same justice. In Bristol and Bath, Cleo Lake, supported by community and Pan Africanist groups, summarises it as follows: 'Reparation is a legal concept defined by the UN which calls for holistic repair and can include public apologies, social justice initiatives, education, cultural projects, commemorative ceremonies, affirmative action and much more'.

In the Caribbean, Sir Hilary Beckles, Chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, states that 'Reparations is a process. Settlement is the event, CARICOM want the process. Reparative Justice is about what the victims know and what the rest of the world is willing to admit'.[61] Ta-Nehisi Coates' essay in the *Atlantic* makes the most compelling argument for the American road to restitution. He highlights the 150 years of plunder and kleptocracy of enslavement, followed by 100 years of white supremacy and violence under Jim Crow segregation. The last 50 years are tainted by a racially biased system leading to the mass incarceration of Black and Brown bodies.[62]

In the wake of the toppling of the Colston statue, the Bristol History Group and Bristol Legacy Foundation, which I sit upon with Cleo Lake and Asher Craig, was established. We work with a number of artists and activists seeking ways to help Bristol better understand its history through its citizens and community groups. On 15 March 2024, BLF announced a vision to have a cultural, educational and visitor experience dedicated to the lives and ancestors of TTEA at B-Bond, a renovated warehouse. Twenty-four hours earlier, Colston's fallen statue was put on display as it fell as part of an exhibition about protests at the M-Shed. From the trauma TTEA has evoked, it's been an honour to help memorialise this aspect of my heritage and our shared history.

On the 101st anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, I lit a candle to the hundreds of lives lost in one of America's most shameful chapters. On the wall I read words that encapsulate my roots-to-routes journey: 'The economic effects of anti-Blackness are linked to the nature of slavery itself. White capitalists enslaved Africans, profiting from their uncompensated labor, and

60 https://beckfordstower.org.uk/a-statement-from-bath-preservation-trust/

61 https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct1n61

62 https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/

depriving them of the opportunity for intergenerational transfers of wealth. The struggle to recover from that theft has been part of the Black experience'.[63]

Black activists and historians highlighted freedom fighters including Nanny Maroon, Toussaint Louverture, Cuffy, Bussa and Sam Sharpe, who all led Caribbean rebellions. They and others had played a defining role in making the Caribbean plantations economically unviable.

No longer are Black activists in Britain prepared to accept being whitewashed from history. Local historians professors Olivette Otele and David Olusoga are part of a fresh wave of historians and story-tellers. They have proved that by opening up hidden records and ignored oral testimonies, history can have more than a single viewpoint and change the narrative of how our past is told.

6.10 From roots of pain to routes of hope

From the plantation, an incredible resistance movement has evolved into many global civil-rights movements. Its most famous figure is Dr Martin Luther King. In researching my book, I discovered that my maternal uncle Clarence had moved to the US to study to be a vet. His life changed when he met Dr King after an assassination attempt in Alabama. Uncle Clarence listened to the advice of Dr King to become the first and still only Black Bishop of Connecticut.[64]

On 20 January 2009 I stood in sub-zero temperatures witnessing President Obama's inauguration. This marked a remarkable achievement – from the plantation to the polling booth to the presidency. As author Isabel Wilkerson points out in her book *Caste*, 'It is a measure how long enslavement lasted in the United States that 2022 marks the year that the USA will have been an independent nation for as long as slavery lasted on its soil'.[65]

*

That my mother found a *route* to Bristol to put down *roots* remains the sweetest of ironies!

I've come to terms with Bristol's past as well as Britain's history and continue to work to speak these truths to those seeking to avoid the inconvenience of our past. Other academics such as Paul Gilroy, Franz Fanon and W.E.B. Du Bois have shown me how to embrace my double

63 Extract seen at Greenwood Rising, Black Wall St History Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma
64 Coleridge 2016
65 Wilkerson 2020

consciousness by being able to thrive in the skin of both my Black and British identities.

My travels from Barbados to Bath have enriched my lived and learned experiences. This has enabled me to speak, write and broadcast to audiences and work with communities seeking answers to present social issues.[66]

The death of George Floyd and the activism that continues have forced us onto a road of racial reckoning. Even if governments are unable or unwilling to listen, there is growing evidence for change from several cultural institutions. This includes the American Museum in Bath and Bristol Cathedral, who are seeking to become more reflective of today's times and diverse communities.

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My discoveries have demonstrated that unless we confront the darkest annals of our shared history, we will be unable to shine a beacon of hope for future generations to navigate.

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7

No justice. No peace (while Black)

Renée Jacobs

Renée Jacobs is the founder of The Belonging Network, a network and social enterprise providing professionals from underrepresented backgrounds with advice, training and support, while also promoting collaboration, community building and integration. Renée is also passionate about technology and start-ups and author of several award-winning short stories.

(George Floyd was murdered by police on 25 May 2020. In the days and weeks that followed protests erupted across the United States and the world. A moment of collective action?)

There comes a time in your life when every day feels the same. The seconds, minutes and hours are punctuated by events, but the story doesn't change. Maybe there's something comfortable about that. Nothing is a surprise, and everything is expected. Events conform and fit the pattern. Even horrific events, wars and natural disasters, fit the pattern. You are shocked for a few moments by a news headline. You read the story. And it becomes just that: a story, a fiction, words about a distant place, occasionally imagined and frequently forgotten.

But some days the weight of it feels so heavy. Today is one of those days. I can't hold my focus on anything except the hot air as it blows through the open window. In the distance I can hear birds singing. Some days I am sure they sing for me, but not today. The sky is so blue, golden sunshine highlights the thin streaks of cloud. On another day, it would feel like a holiday. Outside there is silence, apart from the chirruping birds and hum of a lawnmower. Inside there is a build-up of tears, screaming, rage. It is deafening. At the corner of the window, a spider is diligently constructing its web. The thread, thin and stretched like the clouds, catches the sunlight and flutters weightless yet strong in the breeze.

I, too, feel thin and stretched. Tired from second-hand pain and first-hand mourning.

I scan the *Guardian* website, hungry for something to accompany my sadness. The article I seek is somewhere near the bottom of the page. I find it strange that the thing that is top of my mind is so close to the bottom of everyone else's. Another reminder, as if I needed one, that I am not the same as everyone else. Today, I read about protests. The photographs capture so much but I feel distant from the pain of others. It is both tangible and intangible. An ocean and twisted fortune divide us but, in another life, I know it could be me. In a different world, my journey would have led me to alternative shores. Some days I can forget, but today I can't avert my eyes.

I was 20 when Sarah Reed died in police custody. Hers is the first Black death I remember hearing about. The first time I felt sick to my core. The first time I looked at the face of a person and saw myself. Perhaps it was because she was a woman. Perhaps because she, like me, was struggling with her mental health. She needed help but what she got instead. Death. Her death, and life, became an imprint in my mind. I can see her face even with my eyes open. A constant figure on the edge of my consciousness.

Somewhere in the periphery of my attention a red notification bubble appears. I glance at my second screen to see a message from the Change Director: 'The CFO needs the final budget for the Expansion Project by the end of the day. This should be your top priority'.

'Ok', I type, before glancing at the clock on the bottom of the screen: 10:45. Nearly two hours gone already.

The message has nudged me back to my reality and I need coffee before I can turn my brain to budgets. My naked feet carry my body downstairs. My daughter is on the sofa watching *Peppa* and hides her eyes when she hears me on the stairs.

'Oh. Where's Daisy?' I feign surprise. 'Daddy, have you lost her again?'

'Yep, she just vanished!' Daddy plays along.

'Oh no. I am so sad!'

'Are you sad, Mummy?' A little voice peaks out from behind chubby hands.

'I thought I lost you!' I smile.

Daisy puckers her lips and I lean in for a perfect kiss. 'Sit with me', she asks, patting the empty sofa cushion next to her.

'Sorry', I sigh. 'Mummy has to work'. I put her favourite baby doll next to her. Its plushy brown skin is so soft and almost the same colour as hers. I cried when I saw it in the shop: a brown baby for my brown baby, something I hadn't realised child-me missed.

Joy Gardner had a five-year-old son when they came to deport her. Bound and gagged as he watched. Childhood and mother stolen all at once. How many mothers have they stolen? Transported, manhandled, killed. Like property, not people.

Coffee in hand and back at my desk in the repurposed box room, I give in and check my Instagram one more time. There is comfort in the common outpouring of agony and anger. It resonates somewhere near my heart and stomach and for a few moments I don't feel alone. But I do feel impotent. Usually, sometimes at least, I am good with words. Today's words are lost in sighs and behind eyes begging for help.

I can read the words of others, but I don't know what to say. Should I say something? Words feel so useless. And stuck. All my brain can do is reel. All my hands can do is scroll and wring. The anxious fidgeting and gurgling in my stomach; my nervous system telling me that something is wrong. Fight or flight activated. Or freeze. Today it's freeze. But I know I need action.

Accounting must be done. I open Excel and sigh once more. I breathe in. Air rushes through my nostrils and fills my lungs. I pause, feeling every millimetre of the fullness and stretch across my chest. BREATHE.

Roger Sylvester died after being restrained by six police officers. Six men to restrain one. I feel like a fly on a horrible wall. My mind replaying scenes I have never witnessed. My spirit feeling a familiar pain. How strong do they think we are that they have to restrain us so? Snatch our breath away, time and again.

FOCUS. I command my mind and force it to obey. The budget calls for complete concentration. Not only are there numbers to be checked and formulae to be utilised, there are also discrepancies to be highlighted. When I am finished, the entire project must be accounted for and presented to the Board. It is both important and urgent.

Bingy-boing. Bingy-boing. The upbeat twinkle-ring of an incoming video call. I quickly check my face in the camera-generated mirror on my screen. 'I guess that will do'. I accept the call.

'Morning!' I cheerfully exclaim.

'Morning', comes the dour reply. The CFO looks grey as ever. The shade of his hair and skin merge, like a foggy halo, effectively displaying his permanent mood. 'I thought I'd call and see how you're getting on'.

'How I'm getting on?' The confusion in my voice does nothing to give confidence to the CFO.

'With the budget?' he demands.

'Yes', I smile, 'yes, the budget. That's going well. I will be done soon and will send it over to you before the end of the day'.

'Good to hear. Glad you're having a good day'.

Who can be having a good day? Is creating a budget having a good day? I glance out of the window, perhaps looking for some kind of divine signal. An answer to the question in my heart. But there is nothing. The lawnmower stopped and I did not notice; the near-silence that followed is soft and woolly, comforting yet imperceptible to my preoccupied mind.

There is someone within me who feels alone. Isolated. Yet surrounded by news and notifications. It can be solitary, being Black and not living in London. Far from the centre of things. But also, near the source. Bristol. Walking past statues of some people's heroes. Bath. Down streets named after those whose greed paved them. Whose history do these names and structures commemorate? Remembering the oppressor and never the oppressed. My ancestors' names are long forgotten, scrawled perhaps somewhere as a record of ownership. These ancestors, though, whose evil-gotten wealth built our cities, are held in high regard. Where would we be without them?

Where indeed? An unknown home. But in its place, this home. Where the rules are reminiscent of another time. A worse time. Where authorities can still break and kill us, because our very presence is a threat. Our strength is too strong when not being used for gain. Our infringements are too severe, and the slightest disobedience cannot be tolerated.

A statue is pulled down. It is thrown into the harbour. A watery grave. Like those who could not stand the journey. Who would not be owned, shackled, imprisoned, killed. But not like them, because a statue is just a symbol. Its loss is no loss to me. So, throw it into the sea, into the deep. And the rest. There are times I want to destroy the whole thing. And start again. We need to start again.

Disobedience. The protests then. Like 2011. Smiley Culture. Mark Duggan. When I was in London and felt that fire in my soul. Something would change. It had to. I was afraid, and I was hopeful. You ask why my outrage is as though this is life or death. Because it frequently is.

Urgent and important. The highest classification of work. This project is not going to budget itself. And no one but me can do it. And it has to be done today. When I am in a flow, time stops. Effortlessly, work flows from my body. I am a machine, and the work is always done and it is always done well. I have never struggled at knowing what I am good at, and I have never turned in a piece of work late or incomplete. Today is no different, and so I push my emotions to the back, down and dark, into their safe space. They are contained, controlled in their storage area: out of sight, out of mind.

Object permanence – even when you can't see something, it continues to exist. If a Black person is killed by the police, and the video isn't shared by the media, do they deserve justice? Can you only understand my suffering if you can see my torture? Do you need to watch me take my last breath to appreciate my humanity?

Some of Mzee Mohammed-Daley's last moments could be watched on CCTV. The whole horrifying incident happened in full public view: a young man in mental-health crisis fighting for his life. Many members of my family struggle with poor mental health. In my 20s, I frequently had massive panic

attacks, sometimes in public. There is a fear of needing help and not getting it. I don't want to be incapacitated by my mental health. I can't be.

A lynching serves to warn wayward Black people of what will happen to them. It needs to be seen to be effective. The publicity is part of it. But what is the aim of a lynching for white people? Is my death your entertainment? My suffering your nine-minute coffee break? My trauma your pornography?

Or reassurance that everything is how it should be. My precariousness the antithesis of your safety.

*

This is my life. And it isn't a bug. It's a feature. The system was designed this way. To slowly, gradually strip me of my humanity. To make me scared to escape. To fear the punishment for non-conformity more than the injustice of the system.

There is a version of me who is terrified. She is always scared for her life. The knowledge that she could die at the hands of the police makes me question whether I should protest injustice, wonder whether I should get a 'suspicious' (read: posh/fancy) car, always get a receipt at the shop, make eye contact and smile at police. BE SAFE.

Somewhere between lunchtime and naptime, I return downstairs as always. Daisy is seating her toys for a tea party. I sit with them.

'Would you like a cup of tea?' She asks, plastic teapot in hand.

'Oh, yes please!' I grin and a rogue thought climbs into my brain: what would it be like to have a son?

A look of concentration flashes across her face as she pours the imaginary contents of the teapot into a plastic cup. She thuds down heavily, sitting almost on top of me, grasping my arm with her hot little hand.

'I like spending time with you, Mummy'.

I can feel the tears I have swallowed rising up my eyes. I force a smile. 'I like spending time with you too'.

As I watch her pouring tea and passing cakes for her dolls, I imagine, one day, telling her about the world. About her world and my world, and how it is different to Daddy's world or that of some of her friends. How can I tell her that there are people who would hurt her because of the colour of her skin? Can I tell her that I hope she never has a brother or a son? Can I explain the aching she will feel in her soul?

I feel physically sick. Dalian Atkinson's death a reminder that even heroes, even celebrities, are not immune. A reminder, again, that frequently the police don't exist to protect us. Should I tell her that I would never call the police if she was naughty? I would not ask them for help if she was

having a mental breakdown. Even if I was scared of her, I am terrified of them. I can't trust them to take care of my most precious thing.

But I know I won't tell her. She is just a baby. She deserves innocence. She deserves sweetness. Joy.

'Would you like a cake?' Her empty fingers are against my lips.

'I love cake!' I exclaim, munching full-mouthed on fantasy red velvet cake.

*

But I still have to instil The Fear into my daughter. Loud children get into trouble at school, at the corner shop, on the bus. Femininity does not make you immune to mistreatment and abuse. It simply changes the flavour of the abuse.

I was eight years old when I was first cat-called. And we know that Black children are seen as more adult than white. And we know that mixed-ethnicity children and adults are exoticised. Boyfriends have told me their fathers' sexualised comments about me. While at work in my early 20s, a security guard told me about his desire to fuck me, while also reminding me that I should not exist. Abomination.

The plod back upstairs, when all I want is rest. All I want is peace. And perhaps to play with my daughter. And perhaps to be left alone.

The final touches on my Excel masterpiece and then I can get something that feels like a break. Hopefully the project will be approved and I won't have to re-work the whole budget. A girl can dream.

By naptime, fortunately, I have done my most urgent work for the day. I can fall back into my social-media feed. It brings waves of anger and tears. Time stands still for me as videos of protests and police brutality wash over me. Tears fall as I watch children beg for change.

I wonder how much the world has changed. Has it changed, over the years? My own mother can remember stories, first-hand, of police violence. Her mother too, no doubt, although she would never speak of them. But what had my mother's mother's mother seen? My great-grandmother? And what about her mother? How many generations before the memories were only of brutality, slavery, white supremacy? The kidnap, the dark journey across oceans to who-knows-where? And how many before the memories were of the time before, of Africa-somewhere, of home? My foremothers cried tears for broken Black bodies, for brothers, sisters, children murdered. And so do I. How much has changed?

Perhaps that is why these pictures feel so material to me: because they are. They form part of a generational, genetic remembering. Generational trauma. Collective memory. Fundamental truth?

And what about justice? It is evasive. Trevor Smith was killed in his home by police. He had an imitation gun. But is the penalty for that death? Do we have the death penalty in the UK? Or is it only for some of us? You get no chances, no opportunity for mistakes. No option to change or learn or do better. You have to be the best. I have to be the best.

'Great job on the budget', the message pings happily from the CFO. 'It looks great. The Board will be impressed'.

'Excellent', I reply. 'They have to be'.

*

The view from my make-shift office window has not changed. The sun still shines and birds still sing. The distance is silent. A careless pigeon flies, bumping hard into the glass of the window. A cry and it is gone. The spider's web, which was almost finished, flaps loosely now. Broken. The spider is nowhere to be seen. It will build a new web tomorrow.

(Author's note: Chris Kaba was killed by police in London while I was finalising this piece. A reminder that the narrative has not changed. There is still work to be done. Black Lives Matter. No justice, no peace.)

8

Navigating personal and professional pathways towards the telling of Bath's African-connected histories

Polly Andrews and Shawn-Naphtali Sobers

Polly Andrews is Learning Manager at Bath Abbey. She is responsible for the school, university, family and community learning programmes. These make use of the new Learning Room in the vaults of the Abbey to explore its history. She is also the convenor of the Bath and Colonialism Action Group.

Dr Shawn-Naphtali Sobers is Professor of Cultural Interdisciplinary Practice at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and Director of the Critical Race and Culture Research Network. He is a co-founder of Fairfield House CIC. He is a visual anthropologist working in text, film-making and photography, exploring Black history and everyday life, hidden histories and cultural expression.

This chapter is a transcript of a conversation between Polly Andrews, Learning Manager for Bath Abbey and Convenor of the Bath and Colonialism Action Group, and Dr Shawn-Naphtali Sobers, trustee of Fairfield House,[1] Bath, and Professor of Cultural Interdisciplinary Practice at the University of the West of England, Bristol.

In their multiple roles, both Andrews and Sobers negotiate asking new questions about Bath's colonial and related histories, and they work to bring these alternative perspectives and new-found stories to new audiences. In a city which is ever mindful and protective of its international reputation as a

1 Fairfield House is the former residence of Emperor Haile Selassie, where he lived from 1936 to 1940, during the time of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. Members of his family and staff continued to live there until 1943. The Emperor purchased Fairfield House with his own money, and he donated it to the city in 1958, to be used as a home for aged people. The Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association (BEMSCA) have been based there for the 28 years, and continue to fulfil the Emperor's wishes for the use of the property.

UNESCO World Heritage Site, Andrews and Sobers discuss some of the challenges and opportunities in carrying out this work of introducing new narratives into the city's history.

Their intimate and open conversation reveals the complexities of navigating this narrative space, coming close after the (so-called) 'culture wars' debates following the fallout from the 2020 global Black Lives Matter protests. The discussion explores the responsibility each of them feels towards telling the histories of Bath's connections with transatlantic slavery, colonialism and the narratives of African-Caribbean presence in the city. As a white woman and black man respectively, both authors arrive at this exchange from different personal and cultural starting points, and the chapter explores their personal journeys and links with these histories and their arrival in this place in their personal and professional positions.

The chapter addresses how the institutions Andrews and Sobers represent can play a role in enlarging our understanding of this historic city in relation to race and class. Both Bath Abbey and Fairfield House[2] are important spiritual and religious sites and play significant roles in the lives of many people, and both also operate as sites of learning within the context of tourism and heritage industries. The chapter makes the case for the possibility of spiritual sites in contemporary society and how they can both challenge and reconcile the colonial past with a globalised present.

This conversation took place online on 19 August 2022.

Shawn: **S.S.**

Polly: **P.A.**

S.S.: Let's start with an audio description, which may help the readers get to know us a bit. I'm a black male, 50 years old. Dreadlocks, glasses. Wearing a Fairfield House hoodie, and a blue shirt underneath.

P.A.: Great. Well, I'm a white British woman, aged 53. Long dark hair, glasses and a sort of flowery top.

S.S.: Would you say this was the starting point of us wanting to have this conversation? That for a black man and a white woman talking about this subject, we thought it would be quite interesting in terms of thinking about

2 Fairfield House is a site of pilgrimage for Rastafari faithful from all over the world, as they view its former resident, Emperor Haile Selassie I, as a deity. For many members of Rastafari, Fairfield House is considered to be the most significant and holy site for the faith outside of Ethiopia. Also, many members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church treat Fairfield House as a site of significance for their religion. Formally consecrated ground, the Emperor had the first Ethiopian Orthodox Chapel outside of Ethiopia built on the grounds during his time living there.

starting points and crossovers, and hopefully create an interesting mixture of ideas and influences coming from different cultural backgrounds, and working from different perspectives on shared themes and values?

P.A.: Absolutely, I think that's been at the heart of my own personal experience of this work; but also, it's been a really important part of my learning. Being able to challenge myself along the way, in order to be a better ally in this particularly challenging area of work.

S.S.: What's your relationship to Bath? When did you first get to know the city, and what are your first memories of this place?

P.A.: I came on childhood visits and then with friends and loved Jane Austen, loved the Georgian history of the city. I don't think I was ever aware of anything more than that. Then [I] finally made the decision to move here in 2008. I'd come back from teaching in Italy, and really wanted to try and replicate that immersive cultural lifestyle that I'd had. I thought, 'Well, where could be better than Bath?' So, I decided to come back and try and make a living here as a primary teacher. So that was the motivation.

S.S.: Thanks, that's interesting. I was born in Bath, growing up here in the 1970s and 1980s. In the city centre you'd always see tourists with their backpacks, and it felt like kind of living in a museum sometimes. But we lived on the outskirts, and there definitely was a sense of, 'What's so special about Bath?' Just sort of taking it for granted when you live here.

But then I moved away to go to university, to a very different location and environment, and I suddenly thought, 'Oh, this is why people come to Bath!' It did sometimes feel quite frustrating, living in a place that's so geared toward tourists, and the council seemingly being so preoccupied with that. As a resident, you can see real poverty here, you see the needs of people, and the large amount of homelessness, and you know there's another side to the city that others don't see.

P.A.: Yes, it has a sort of goldfish-bowl feel. I think that feeds into a lot of what's happened in terms of the response to the work that we've all been trying to produce in response to Black Lives Matter. I think there's almost a safety blanket around it, and things that happen here maybe haven't been challenged as much as you would expect. I do wonder why that is, there are lots of reasons. It was a culture shock for me in the sense that I come from London from a lower-middle-class background, and always lived and worked as a teacher in a multicultural setting in north-east London. I don't know why I thought it would be a surprise, but it was to see how non-multicultural Bath is. It has an impact on a child's worldview, because obviously primary schools are a real opportunity for opening children's eyes

to the riches of world culture. Lots of teachers are very good at that, and certainly that is one of my key drivers as a teacher.

S.S.: I was one of a small handful of black children in our entire school, and the only black child in my class throughout the whole of my schooling, primary and secondary. We lived in a predominantly white working-class neighbourhood, but at the same time, my social network with my parents was very much within the Caribbean community in Bath. So, I've always felt comfortable and able to operate in both predominately white or black spaces, that doesn't really faze me, as I was always used to it. But it's not until you reflect back on it, you think the negotiation of a child to make sense of all that is quite surreal.

P.A.: Absolutely. I realise I'm lucky to have been able to build a network of friends and colleagues but Bath's felt slightly not as rich in terms of peoples' influences and interests. And that's my choice, isn't it; I've chosen to stay because Bath is a lovely place to live. But at the same time, I do have pangs about being back in London, and it would be up to me to challenge that in myself. But I can surround myself with people who are open to all this work that we've been trying to do rather than kind of dismissing it out of hand as 'this isn't relevant to me and my life'. I think that's been one of the greatest challenges, really, that kind of passive resistance to all the work that's happened as a result of Black Lives Matter: 'this doesn't speak to me', 'this doesn't have any meaning for me'. Actually, yes it can do, and it does, and it's really important.

S.S.: I think it's interesting, reflecting on it now, as a middle-aged man, because I was used to being the only black person in the room for a long time, and that just became the norm. I'd think it would be nice to have other black people there, but it wasn't really questioned, as that's just how it was when living in a predominantly white environment – and that includes church, school, college, university and starting full-time work. So, it's interesting with the conversations now about representation and diversity, where being the only black person in the room, particularly in rooms of influence, is challenged, as it should be in today's society. It's been fascinating to witness how the conversation has shifted and evolved over time with the demographic changes in the environment.

I think it's made me very resilient, but I do remember after I left to go to university, when I came back to Bath, I didn't always feel as comfortable as I did before. For example, walking around the city centre, where as a teenager you'd always bump into people you knew, but after being away for a while and coming back, obviously things had moved on. I became more self-conscious of people looking at me like I didn't belong here, I started

to feel like a stranger in the place, and see it through different eyes. A very weird moment.

P.A.: I'm sure it was. And it must have been quite upsetting as well? This is your hometown, a big part of your identity. I suppose my identity arriving here was as a teacher and so I could gauge a lot about different schools in Bath. Then I ended up working in the heritage sector, and that opened up another new world of people who tended to be from more privileged backgrounds, who are passionate about protecting Bath's heritage – which of course, I am, too. It was really interesting stepping into that world, a part of Bath which I wouldn't have ever come across before, working with people and finding common ground, and often using their understanding of Bath's heritage in a really positive way. So that was good for me because it kept me seeking out interesting people, and people who were hopefully going to be allies to the kind of work that I wanted to do. But then I realised, I was not hearing all the voices that I wanted to hear. So, I had to ask myself, 'What am I going to do about that?' and tackle how to broaden that base of opinion that I was mainly hearing. That's a constant challenge for me, I think.

S.S.: What was your route into working in the heritage sector?

P.A.: I did some volunteering for the National Trust in London at Sutton House in Hackney, which is a fantastic Tudor house – surrounded by quite a deprived, disadvantaged area, but I suspect it's been gentrified in the 30 years since then. And that was really rewarding; and also, it was my first taste, really, of exploring how to bring in a community, which absolutely deserves to connect with this incredible house and the stories within it, into that space, and for people to feel completely comfortable and a part of an experience that's relatable for them. But there was sometimes an invisible block to bringing in people who live on the doorstep. And you have to ask yourself and challenge how to start to really overcome that. Because that feels really important. So I've carried that experience into Bath as well. Bath's history is for everyone, and that's very pertinent to keeping on sharing the sort of stories that we've been trying to uncover in the Abbey in the last two years.

S.S.: Yes, absolutely. Speaking of the National Trust, I first worked with them as a freelance filmmaker in the early 2000s, working with young people at Tyntesfield House property in Bristol. Then in 2006, I was contacted by them again, saying they were interested to work with us at Firstborn Creatives (the media education company I then ran with Rob Mitchell and Louise Lynas). They wanted to collaborate on a project relating to the bicentenary anniversary in 2007, of the 1807 passing of the Act of Parliament to abolish the British slave trade. So, we pitched the project idea

to them, saying we wanted to do a creative research project looking at what the connections were, between slave-trade history and certain National Trust properties in the Bristol and Bath area, working with different groups that we'd bring to the properties. To our surprise the National Trust agreed to our proposal, and they managed to get National Lottery heritage funding for the project, which we called Re:Interpretation.[3] It became quite a big project, and was the precursor of what the National Trust did later in terms of looking at their properties and slave-trade connections, with their full report published in 2020.[4] It was sad to see their research receive quite a hostile reaction in the media and from certain politicians. When we did our research with them back in 2007, it wasn't seen as such a threat, I guess as it was in the context of the bicentenary anniversary.

Working with the National Trust was an eye opener, seeing the very different mechanisms of each property and the work of the custodians and volunteers, and how the stories that are told in those spaces to visitors become established. Also, how you need to have partnerships at multiple levels within the same organisation, to really maximise the opportunity and make it meaningful, in terms of making it a long-term sustainable vision of having those alternative narratives embedded permanently in the properties.

Shall we talk about Bath Abbey and Fairfield House? What's your role at the Abbey, and how did you get there?

P.A.: I worked in heritage education at the Bath Preservation Trust[5] for about eight years, and then moved from there to Bath Abbey as the Learning Officer working on their Footprint Project,[6] which is lottery funded to develop new audiences. It was a really nice move in the sense I had a reasonable understanding of Bath's history. I came in with a sense that this is a real opportunity. The Abbey is central to the city in two ways – literally

3 Re:Interpretation ran from 2007 to 2008 and involved taking BEMSCA elders, young people and resident groups to Dyrham Park, Clevedon Court and Tyntesfield House, to engage in research. The culmination of the project was an interactive media learning unit that toured the properties, and the Assembly Rooms, throughout 2008–9. To read more about the project and research findings, see Mitchell and Sobers, 2013.

4 To see the National Trust's research 'Addressing our histories of colonialism and historic slavery' (2020), use online search terms 'national trust slavery research'. The full report and auxiliary materials can be read online.

5 Bath Preservation Trust – 'We are a charity promoting high standards of planning and architecture in Bath, striving to ensure the future success of our special heritage city through conservation, education and museums'. https://www.bath-preservation-trust.org.uk

6 Bath Abbey's Footprint Project aims are conservation, innovation and inspiration. See more at: https://www.bathabbey.org/footprint

geographically central to the city, and also central to the city's understanding of itself and its history.

S.S.: And what was your perception of the Abbey before you started working there? You know, because it's hard to miss!

P.A.: Absolutely. I think a civic perception mainly. I grew up Christian but now would describe myself as a Humanist, and I still feel very sympathetic to many of the things the Church of England is trying to do, in terms of valuing and welcoming people and making them feel they are equal. It is an incredibly inspiring place just being there, with a sense of awe and wonder. It's really important to give children a chance to have access to spaces like the Abbey, which may be beyond their lived experience, to connect them with a spiritual understanding of the world. Every time you go into the Abbey, you can feel that. How did you relate to the Abbey growing up here?

S.S.: Yeah, the Abbey was definitely the key landmark in the city. I grew up Christian, Methodist. My parents' local church was completely opposite to the Abbey, in a sense of being low-key, modest décor. The architecture of the Abbey is very striking, and in the very first portfolio that I did going to college to study, I did a drawing of the Abbey – it's that impressive, quintessential, picturesque tourist thing, isn't it?

P.A.: Yes, absolutely. And what about Fairfield House? What were your first memories of there?

S.S.: I don't remember the first time I visited Fairfield House, and it was kind of a jigsaw puzzle of information to find out anything about it, even to find where it exactly was in the city. The first time I heard about Fairfield was fragments of one or two conversations when growing up, but nothing substantial, just one or two sentences. When I was about 15, the dad of my girlfriend at the time mentioned it to me, and I remember replying with a vague answer of recollection, but there was nothing more forthcoming. It definitely wasn't mentioned in school. Then when I embraced the Rastafari way of life in my late teens, in the late 1980s, the fragments of conversations came a little more when people saw your interest in the Emperor, but still not much information. This in the days long before the internet, but I had books about Rastafari culture and general encyclopaedias, and so I learnt for myself about Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia, and that Emperor Haile Selassie went into exile, but then the sentence stops. So then I had to try and find out where he went into exile to, and find out it's Bath, then the trail stops. Then I had to ask where in Bath, and so it went on. At the time, there was nowhere to visit in the city to find this information out, which is quite outstanding, really, for such a high-profile figure. Fairfield House wasn't

open to the public, and there was nothing that told the Fairfield House story. Not even a leaflet. I don't actually remember the first time I visited there, or how I even found it, as it's not an easy place to find. I was probably taken there by one of my Rasta friends at time. It is strange that my memory of my first visit there is vague, but that's the truth of how it was.

P.A.: That's incredible, because I'd assumed that Fairfield House had had a real influence on you, but it's the other way round, you found it after becoming Rasta.

S.S.: Yes, definitely. So, BEMSCA, the Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association, who are now based at Fairfield House, was established in 1993 and used to be based on the London Road, in a building called Number Three. When Number Three closed down in around 1995, BEMSCA had to find new premises, they were just told 'Oh, Fairfield House is empty, you could try there'. They weren't told anything about Haile Selassie or that this would be a good cultural location to be based. It was just 'That's an empty building, why don't you go there?' So, it's completely by accident that BEMSCA, who are thankfully sympathetic to Fairfield's Haile Selassie history due to the cultural connection, are now based there. I wasn't actually aware of any of that at the time, as I was away at university until 1996. But I do find it really beautiful how BEMSCA, a day centre for Caribbean and Asian elders, came to be based there. They've now been there for about 27 years.

My first formal involvement with Fairfield House was in 1999, when I directed an hour-long documentary called *Footsteps of the Emperor*,[7] presented by the poet Benjamin Zephaniah, for the regional ITV channel, then known as HTV West, where I worked, my first full-time job after university. I remember pitching the idea to the commissioning editor at the time, and I said, 'Look, I'd like to make a documentary about Haile Selassie living in the city of Bath'. None of the TV execs knew anything about it. They said if I came back with a fuller proposal, they'd give me a 30-minute broadcast slot, as it sounded interesting. So, I went away for a couple of weeks and found out more information, and when I brought it back to them, they said they'd give me an hour worth of broadcasting slot instead (2 x 30 mins), because they realised how big and fascinating the story was. That was the first time that that history had been told on television, and it's definitely been my proudest

7 *Footsteps of the Emperor*, produced and directed by Shawn Sobers, 1999. To watch the film, visit: http://www.shawnsobers.com/footsteps-of-the-emperor-film/ (password – emperor12)

and most successful film, in terms of reach and the impact that it's had. That was 1999, and as a volunteer in various capacities I've been there ever since.

P.A.: It sounds amazing because I hadn't realised your relationship went back so far. But also, how much that must have influenced your drive towards getting the funding for the Freedom in the City Festival.[8] And I can see that long journey of wanting to tell people about the history of Fairfield House.

S.S.: Absolutely, because people keep asking me if I'm going to make a sequel to *Footsteps of the Emperor*, but I feel that'd be for someone else to do. So really, when I did the Freedom in the City Festival, in a way that was my sequel.

P.A.: Is the ultimate aim of the film, the festival and other projects you do about Fairfield House to raise the profile to the point where anyone coming to Bath will definitely know that Haile Selassie was here?

S.S.: Yeah, my driving aim for a lot of this stuff is to try to really open up the city's narrative. For obvious reasons the city is very proud of its Roman and Georgian roots, as it's a very beautiful place to be, and celebrating figures such as Jane Austen, who lived here for a short while, adds popular appeal to the classical way the city sees itself. As an educator whose work largely focusses on areas of black history, I'm also aware of other aspects of the city's history that are not often talked about in the mainstream. One of them is definitely the city's connection with Ethiopia and Emperor Haile Selassie, who was one of the world's great leaders and hugely influential even to this day, the inspiration for a whole religion who follow his teachings, which we know as the Rastafari movement. The Emperor did not ask to be worshipped, but in Jamaica his influence was felt so strongly it birthed the Rastafari faith, which now spans every country in the world, and has in turn heavily influenced music, fashion, politics and so much more.

The other area of the city's history which I was aware wasn't being spoken about, was its ties to the wealth gained from transatlantic slavery, so I made a point of trying to bring it to public attention by giving some public lectures.

8 'Freedom in the City: Festival of Learning' was a series of events in April–November 2021 that explored the legacy of the Ethiopian royal family living in the city of Bath, and was a wider celebration of Ethiopian and Rastafari cultures and connections with the UK. Events included an opera in Bath's Guildhall and an Ethiopian Orthodox service in Bath Abbey. The festival was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), with the University of the West of England and Fairfield House. Sobers was the festival director and the festival producer was Jennifer Sharratt. To see more, and the archive of the festival events, see: https://freedominthecity.org/

It might be felt as an uncomfortable topic for some people to hear about, but so are lots of areas of history, that doesn't mean it should be ignored or pretend it doesn't exist, or dismissed as being too problematic. That's why I respect the work you did on the memorial plaques to slave traders at Bath Abbey, as I know that couldn't have been easy to do there.[9]

P.A.: So, certainly in the last few years on this particular area, it's been really important to me to try and have people in the room together to spark conversations and opportunities. And I think that has really paid off. It's been slow progress for all sorts of reasons, but nevertheless, there are projects happening now, plus those that have happened which wouldn't have taken place if we had not had those conversations or enabled those opportunities. And as you know, I contacted you after seeing the Bath Council webinar[10] and lots of fantastic things have come from that and I feel proud that I am trying to help make that kind of positive change happen in Bath.

I think the Abbey did move fast because we did want to talk about its history. I had three colleagues who really wanted to do the same thing as me, so I wasn't alone as I couldn't have done it on my own. I was new to the Abbey's staff and I'm not in a position of senior management. I needed people on my team, as it were, to try to enable this to take place. But also, I had to try to be an advocate for the best way of doing it or lots of people might not have been consulted. Possibly something would have been put up that wasn't sensitive, particularly at that moment in time, not from conscious insensitivity, but just perhaps a result of not being fully aware of the kind of issues at stake. So, I had to be the person who said, 'Love that idea; but no, we need to go to BEMSCA, we need to talk to Shawn, or we need to talk to Renée Jacobs of the Belonging in Bath network.[11] We can't do this alone'. This isn't about our right. It's not about our voices. We need to enable other voices within what we're trying to do, and they need to guide us. So that felt really important, and I think that hasn't really gone away. I feel like this

9 Bath Abbey has more monuments with colonial connections than any other place of worship in the country. In response to this, Andrews worked with colleagues and launched the 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery' exhibition, 24 May to 30 September 2021, at Bath Abbey. This was a free public exhibition revealing the Abbey's links to colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade through the history of its monuments and ledgerstones. To read the exhibition text, please see: https://www.bathabbey.org/anti-racism/memorials-empire-slavery-exhibition

10 On 24 June 2020, Bath's Liberal Democrat MP, Wera Hobhouse, hosted an online public discussion about racism and the experiences of black people living in the city of Bath. As well as Sobers, other panel members included Renée Jacobs, Toni Swaby, Rob Mitchell, Alex Raikes MBE, Lloyd Notice and Chris Baker.

11 Founded by Renée Jacobs, Belonging in Bath is an advocacy organisation supporting minority individuals and groups in Bath. See more here: https://bib-network.org/

whole two years has been a lot of pushing at closed doors, with many people's help of course. Sometimes the doors have opened really fast and really easily, and amazing things have happened, and other times the process might be slightly slower than I might wish, but it comes good in the end. That's fine. I appreciate that to enable change, that's part of the process.

S.S.: I remember when you started to reach out, it was around the time I did a talk at the Museum of Bath at Work in 2018, on Bath's connections with transatlantic slavery.[12] I'd previously done a lot of work about Bristol's connections, and Bristol as you know gets a lot of that focus for obvious reasons, as it's got that very direct connection. But Bath was in the shadows as the connections were slightly less direct, so much of the information wasn't known or talked about. It was the first time I had fully looked at how Bath's history was entwined with the slave trade, so I had to do a lot of my own research just to prepare for the talk itself.

I remember when it got to the section to talk about Jane Austen, I was slightly nervous, as I know her fans are very loyal and she's held with strong affection, but thankfully I didn't get any of the backlash I expected. I think Austen's case is interesting, as it shows the nuance of the situation in those times. Her connection was indirect, in the sense that her brothers married into wealthy slave-trading families, and they were also in the Navy and stopping ships trafficking enslaved Africans after the abolition act was passed. So, there's these kinds of direct impacts and connections, none of which was in her control, but I remember not wanting to be apologetic for talking about some of these links with the great and the good of Bath. The reality in those times was, if you were from a well-to-do family in Georgian times, it'd be impossible to not be connected in some way, shape or form with slavery, directly or indirectly, and on both sides, regardless of your own personal values. The whole history is full of these types of contradictions and nuance.

And the other area I talked about was the memorials to slave traders in Bath Abbey, and how there were more there than in any other place of worship in the country. And I remember seeing your email soon after saying you were already doing research and work around that issue. I was really pleased to see that, and eventually we connected. I was really pleased to see that Bath Abbey weren't being defensive about it, that they were actually being extremely proactive with addressing it and being very transparent. Which I admit, I was actually slightly surprised by, but pleasantly so.

12 'Transatlantic slavery connections with Bath city'. Lecture by Shawn Sobers, introduced by Phil de Souza – BAME officer, Bath Labour Party, 18 October 2018. To watch the lecture, see: https://vimeo.com/427720859

P.A.: Well, so was I. [Laughs] Because I think it's fair to say it is a conservative institution within a conservative city. I had a lot of, with hindsight, blind enthusiasm for the importance of talking about this. I managed to find colleagues within the Abbey who I knew would support me and I supported them, so we were working together. The whole process has been fascinating in the sense that almost none of the reactions to the work, either internally or externally, have been what I expected. I have been on this huge learning journey about who's been open to this and who's been interested in challenging their innate preconceived ideas, and I include myself in that. And how people react in such different ways to this subject matter and the strength of feeling on both sides. And unfortunately, as you know, it can come to a head. And we've needed to be very sensitive to that, I think.

And off the back of that work, we have set up the Bath and Colonialism Action Group,[13] consisting of university and heritage organisations in the city. It's really reassuring to go to those meetings and find that other people are moving forward trying to address their own colonial histories. So, the American Museum's done some work, the Holburne Museum and the National Trust as well. So, it's really encouraging. And in their own areas, they're finding the challenges as well; so, it is quite consoling that we're not alone at the Abbey, but there's obviously a lot of work still to be done.

S.S.: Yes, it has been fascinating seeing how this has all developed, and also reflecting back, which this conversation allows us to do. 2020 was such a crazy year with Black Lives Matter, obviously the murder of George Floyd in the US and then the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol. I know a lot of black academics and activists working on these issues, who had spoken publicly about these topics previously, started to get bombarded with requests from the media and from institutions they had not heard from before, and it was really exhausting. And half the time, I didn't even see the emails come in, let alone get to reply to them. And maybe it was also difficult not to be slightly cynical, I suppose, of their intentions, or whether this was just going to be a latest fad for them, or if they were taking the issue seriously.

P.A.: I could sense that very clearly and I was very aware of that. You were possibly the only person in Bath talking about that and the risk that it

13 The Bath and Colonialism Action Group was established in October 2020 by a number of Bath's heritage professionals and academics wanting to address their organisations' histories in the light of the Black Lives Matter protests. The group is convened by Polly Andrews and aims to work together to pool our histories, resources and skills to support the growing call for more transparent information on the city's links with colonialism.

borders on exploitation. It can be tokenism, and it's not a fair way to go about addressing this work. It's got to be about a real meaningful relationship, it's not just about parachuting somebody in because we desperately need your knowledge. So, yes, I was very aware of the risk of that. We managed to reach out to a number of really great people. The poet Mark De'Lisser came and created a fantastic poem for the exhibition,[14] and I really want to keep working alongside him, possibly a poetry workshop for schools. And Renée Jacobs has sat on some interview panels for follow-on projects. And the Bath and Colonialism website project,[15] funded by the National Archive, has been a really good opportunity because we've been able to offer paid work. This is an important strand of everything we're trying to do – one aim is to support young professionals from diverse backgrounds. So, it's all about absolutely respecting and valuing the input of everybody involved, so I completely understand where you're coming from, it's really important.

S.S.: Yes, like you say, some great things have come from it. I've really admired the network that you set up. And it's really interesting to see it exist in Bath, and for places such as Beckford's Tower to be involved, and for their slave-trading connections to be owned up to and talked about by them themselves is really important.

P.A.: Yes, and I think that the resources that we've got at the Abbey, and increasingly other organisations as well, are about devoting time to this subject of really uncovering the lives of those Georgians and seeing what life was like in Bath. In partnership with Bath Preservation Trust and Bath Record Office, we've run a newspaper research project which has involved exploring the *Bath Chronicle*. Volunteer researchers recorded 20 years of references between 1760 and 1780 to colonial trade, for example, records of goods arriving at Bristol, or ships sinking with all lives lost, or ships arriving in, for example, Antigua. So, clearly people were aware of it in Bath. And clearly, that money derived from trade was washing around Bath as much as anywhere else. And in the next year, we're going to produce at the Abbey a database of existing research into 1500 people with memorials or ledgerstones in the Abbey.[16] Of those, I would say about 200 have colonial

14 The poem 'Dark Shadows' was written in response to memorials' links to colonialism and slave trade. To watch and read the poem, go to: https://www.bathabbey.org/anti-racism/

15 The Bath and Colonialism Archive Project aims to share information on the City of Bath's links to the transatlantic slave trade through the Georgian copies of the *Bath Chronicle* newspaper, 1760–80. See: https://bathandcolonialism.org/

16 'Bath Abbey Memorials: Exploring Life Stories through our Graves and Tombstones'. See: https://www.bathabbeymemorials.org.uk/

connections; so instantly, we can talk about these people for the first time. And we can put that information on a database, to be publicly accessible. People deserve to hear more about that aspect of Bath's life at the time, and this is one way of doing it so that we can make it as open as possible.

S.S.: And even understanding why Bath is considered a wealthy city. It was the place that the wealthy, who were making their money in places like Bristol and Liverpool and London, came to for entertainment, for the spa, for music, for gambling, and then they left again. And, you know, one of the things that I was fascinated by in the research I found, was that before Bristol became really wealthy, through its involvement with the slave trade and other trades, Bath was actually quite a poor provincial city. And it actually only started to get wealthy when the surrounding areas also started to become wealthy. So, Bristol becoming a very successful port helped Bath grow into the wealthy city that it became, and it's not the other way round. People often think Bath's wealth was independent from Bristol, which was an industrial city. But actually no, the reason why Bath became wealthy was because Bristol was very successful at being a trading port.

P.A.: Absolutely, and I think there's some really interesting work to do on the connections because Bristol and Bath always seem so separate. And certainly, in response to the Colston statue and everything that's happened there, Bristol feels so much more switched on, and has been for so many more years with lots more activism there. And yet, you know, we're about 12 miles away and we're still pushing at that door even though, as you say, Bath and Bristol are absolutely historically linked.

S.S.: I guess this goes back to my own sense of identity and my own direction. I made the decision in 2019 that I wasn't going to do any more projects directly on slavery, because I've done so much of it before, and I wanted to shift the emphasis onto other areas of black history, and not feel like it's being defined by slavery. It wasn't going to be a topic that I was going to ignore, because it's too big and important to ignore, but I decided I wasn't going to do any more projects with slavery as the central premise. At that time in 2019 I was finishing writing a journal article about the Colston statue and artists' responses to it in Bristol.[17] So, I thought, after I finished that article, that's it, me, done!

P.A.: Little did you know!

S.S.: Exactly, little did I know! But when Colston's statue was then toppled, and Marvin Rees, the Mayor of Bristol, asked me to be on the

17 Beauchamp-Byrd and Sobers 2019

We Are Bristol History Commission,[18] I couldn't shy away from it, as all that past research comes into its own at that point, and I wasn't doing it for nothing. But at the same time, I also know that there's more to the black experience and black narratives than the slave trade. I don't want to be defined by it; I don't want that to be the only story we tell. And that's where Fairfield House is really interesting: we have lots of people that come to Fairfield, I remember a Rastafari man from Manchester said to me, 'This is the only place we can go with our family to feel good about ourselves. We get a different narrative from slavery, which is depressing'. Personally, I think we need a mixed economy, we need both things. We need museums and exhibitions dedicated to telling of Britain and transatlantic slavery, and we also need other spaces which tell different stories about black history, and not ones connected to trauma and oppression. We shouldn't limit ourselves to the stories we tell and share with others, whether that's through museums, films or other means, it's all valid.

You know, even when it comes to things like Black History Month, I'm sometimes quite resistant because I don't want any kind of tokenism. At Fairfield House we'll just do black history all of the time, 365 days a week. But at the same time, my colleagues are saying embrace things like Black History Month, because actually that's where audiences are, you can get more footfall, which is also true. Maybe I create these tensions in my head which are unwarranted! [Laughs]

P.A.: No, not at all. And I think your concerns are something that I certainly share. And I think educators generally feel that too, because you don't want it to be a niche area in your curriculum. A lot of work has happened during the last two years on the black curriculum, encouraging schools to open up. I feel very strongly that the Abbey talks about its slavery connections, but if we want people to engage with that, particularly from diverse communities, we need to find a positive reason for groups to come to us. We don't want to amplify painful recollections, painful connections, it's not what the Abbey should exist to do. So how do you marry honesty and being truthful about the very clear relationship between the church and slavery, with looking towards creating a more positive future? That's one of the reasons we ran the panel discussion 'Bath Abbey and the legacy of slavery',[19] which you were on, where we were trying to link learning from

18 The We Are Bristol History Commission was set up in 2020 by the city's elected mayor, Marvin Rees, to 'help Bristol better understand its history and how it became the city it is today'. To see more, search for 'We Are Bristol History Commission' and find the council webpage.

19 Panel Discussion via Zoom: 'Bath Abbey and the legacy of slavery', 25 June 2021. This was a conversation to learn from the past and shape the future. Panellists: Wera

the past with shaping a more positive future. I think that's got to be the motivation for any work going forward. Certainly, when I worked with Rob Mitchell and the Black Families Educational Support Group at the Abbey earlier this year,[20] we talked long and hard about how much we should refer to the Abbey's colonial past with that group of young people. In the end, it became clear that we wanted to enable a positive experience which was about their voices and their feelings of empowerment in their lives. Therefore, while we didn't gloss over it at all in terms of the tour of the monuments and the Abbey generally, what we ended up focusing on were the coats of arms that represent all kinds of people from all periods of the Abbey's history. The young people created their own coats of arms with symbols representing their interests, and their family history. So, we had lots of Jamaican flags on them, for example, which was fantastic. You know, the project was about the young people and their lives, how they saw them and feeling positive about them. So that was great.

But I do think there's always a risk of 'Okay, we've done that now. We've talked about it. It was difficult. We did a good job. We did our best. Let's move on'. And I don't think we have yet addressed the Abbey's history fully. I don't think we should go away, I think we should continue to be really open. So again, it's still about pushing away at the door. I don't think that's ever going to necessarily go away, maybe it will take a generation to really change that. But I think there is now such a momentum, which is fantastic, I don't think we can ever go back to where we were before.

S.S.: That's an excellent point, and I think an apt one to bring this conversation to a close. I've got one final question for us both – out of all the work that you've done around these areas, whether it was something big or small, what's been the defining or learning moment for you?

P.A.: I think probably working with Mark De'Lisser. I gave him a tour of the Abbey's floor, the memorials and the history of key people. I think that resonated with him, and he created a powerful poem where he talked about what lies 'beneath our feet' and the impact on him. But then he also broadened it out to what we should all be thinking and what we should all be doing; and I think that, for me, that really encapsulated what I'm trying to

Hobhouse, MP for Bath (Chair); Dr Shawn Sobers, Associate Professor, Cultural Interdisciplinary Practice, University of the West of England; Irvin Campbell, Chair, Stand Against Racism & Inequality (SARI); Rt Revd Alastair Redfern, founder of the Clewer Initiative; Renée Jacobs, B in Bath network; Revd Narinder Tegally, Lead Chaplain, Royal United Hospital, Bath and Bath UKME/GMH Advisor for Bath and Wells Diocese.

20 https://www.educationequals.org.uk

Figure 8.1 Screen grab from a video of Mark De'Lisser's performance of 'Dark Shadows' in Bath Abbey, April 2021.

do in my role. And it was enormously powerful because, of course, he's very skilled, and it felt really important to have his lived experience, his voice. What's the experience you would choose, to answer this question?

S.S.: That's fantastic, and I agree, Mark's poem was extremely powerful. The project I think about was the blue plaque we put up on Fairfield

Figure 8.2 Shawn Sobers speaking at the unveiling of the blue plaque at Fairfield House, 22 September 2019.

House in September 2019 (see Figure 8.2). The key thing for that day was that we did it in partnership with Weston-super-Mare – they had a blue plaque put up for Haile Selassie as well, they unveiled theirs in the morning and we unveiled ours in the afternoon. We organised for Prince Michael, Emperor Haile Selassie's grandson, to unveil them both on the same day. It felt very symbolic, and a very special day.[21]

P.A.: That's brilliant. And real testament to the strength in keeping pushing to make something incredible happen.

S.S.: So long may Fairfield House and the Abbey's partnership continue!

P.A.: Absolutely.

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21 Search online for 'blue plaques Haile Selassie' to see news articles and read about the double unveiling.

9

Hidden in plain sight, the Barbados Plantation Day Book in Bath's Holburne Museum

Material evidence and affective response

Louise Campion, Jillian Sutherland and members of Boys in Mind

Dr Jillian Sutherland is an independent museology researcher, lecturer and curator. Between 2022 and 2024, she lectured in Museum and Heritage Studies and Art History at the University of St Andrews. Her PhD from Bath Spa University (2022) explored postcolonial ethics in small-museum curating through practitioner interviews. In 2019–21, her Artisa Curatorial Fellowship at the Holburne Museum, Bath, focused on interpretation development for the collection, culminating in a new permanent display of the Plantation Day Book from Barbados, 1722. Jill continues to research diaspora and decoloniality in permanent museum displays and critical curatorial practices in the UK, and consults on decolonial interpretation and programming approaches.

Louise Campion is Head of Learning and Engagement and the Pathways to Wellbeing Programme Manager at the Holburne Museum, Bath. This arts, health and wellbeing initiative supports people living with mental-health challenges and social isolation. From 2012 she has developed a socially engaged strategy in which 'care' and 'creativity' are central to the museum's vision.

> 'For museums to meet the difficult challenges we face today, we must represent and involve the communities we are a part of to accurately reflect our shared history – complex and painful though that history might be'.[1]

9.1 Introduction: untold histories and a new display at Bath's Holburne Museum

Louise Campion

The Holburne is an independent museum established to care for the collection of Sir William Holburne (1794–1874). Many of the objects and paintings

1 Ciscle and Lyle, cited in Corrin 1994, lxxiii

Figure 9.1 Holburne Museum façade, 2016.

on display were acquired during a lifetime of collecting and bequeathed to the city as Bath's first 'Museum of Art' in 1882. The eclectic collection of historic paintings and decorative arts contains a plethora of material objects which speak of power dynamics of class, empire, colonialism and patriarchy. Our collective understanding of these objects and the narratives which surround them is constantly changing. Today, many people no longer perceive museums as neutral spaces. There is a recognition that the ways in which objects have been acquired, chosen for public view, interpreted and displayed are based on active decisions which can be interrogated and challenged. For me in my role as Head of Engagement this conversation is as much about recognising the absences and what is left unsaid or underrepresented as what is visible.

Since the reopening of the museum in 2011, after a three-year restoration and the addition of a large contemporary extension designed by Eric Parry, the interpretation in the new collection galleries has focused on several dominant narratives. These include the relationships within the immediate Holburne family, William Holburne's travels (the Grand Tour), Georgian fashions and tastes, and the 'art and craft' of making – from silver spoons to soft and hard paste porcelain. Wider themes of colonialism, empire and

the sources of Bath's wealth in its Georgian heyday permeate every space and object but are not directly addressed – the elephants in the galleries.

The museum has often been characterised as the domain of wealthy, older elites. Its grand neoclassical façade lures the tourists in while repelling other sections of society who experience it as a psychological barrier. Walk into the Brownsword picture gallery, and Gainsborough's paintings of the 'great and good' of 18th-century society stare back at you with the weight of their fortunes behind them, laying claim to their land and amassed wealth. The origins of this wealth, most often plantation ownership and colonialism, are rarely alluded to in the paintings.

During the last 20 years, there have been critical moments when the museum has sought to address these absent narratives/silences, such as on the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire. The 'Remembering Slavery' (1807–2007) exhibition redisplayed collection objects to explore the link between sugar consumption in 18th-century Britain and the transatlantic slave trade. However, the temporary nature of this exhibition, coupled with the loss of institutional memory as staff come and go, mean that awareness and knowledge have, until recently, not been embedded in the material experience and 'grand narratives' of the museum.

In 2019, the Holburne instigated a public debate about the changing function and purpose of museums as part of the programming around 'Why Museums Matter to Me', an exhibition which grew out of the Pathways to Wellbeing Programme funded by the National Lottery and Arts Council. This innovative exhibition showcased artwork made by local people and their authentic responses to collection objects, sharing perspectives from a diverse range of underrepresented people. Their collective desire to engage with and interpret objects in new ways galvanised the Holburne staff into action. Chris Stephens, Director of the Holburne since 2017, chaired a panel discussion with artist Sonia Boyce and directors of Tate and the V&A. The conversation explored the role of museums in contemporary society and some of the challenges they face. It addressed how cultural and heritage organisations are failing to change when sections of our communities do not see themselves represented, or worse when their presence and perspective are absent and unspoken despite having been exploited by the system that created this wealth.

At this time and throughout 2020–1, when the museum was closed due to lockdown restrictions, Jill Sutherland, an Artisa Foundation Curatorial Fellow of Caribbean heritage, was researching a Plantation Day Book in the collection. She developed a gallery redisplay which aimed to contextualise the Holburne family's wealth and William's collection with reference to plantation ownership and links to the Caribbean. The resulting new display aimed to acknowledge the presence and pain of the Plantation Day Book.

It included biographies of local abolitionists working to end the trade in enslaved people, as well as black activists and allies in the South West. The importance and urgency of this work were thrown into sharp focus by the events that unfolded following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

Jill's work resonated with Boys in Mind (BiM), a youth-led campaigning organisation for young men's mental health based in Bath. Some of BiM's Youth Advisors had responded to the Black Lives Matter protests in the UK by making two films with independent filmmaker Andrew Hassenruck (Malthouse films). Led by young people of colour, the first film (*Black Lives Matter*, 2020) gave voice to the racism and trauma experienced and observed by five young people from the Bath and North East Somerset area. The second film (*Race Equality in Schools*, 2021) was about racial equality and the ways in which young people have been working to highlight race discrimination and make their schools more inclusive spaces.

In 2021, through the museum's ongoing partnership with BiM, three Youth Advisors were invited to meet with Jill Sutherland to talk about her research into the Holburne family and wider plantation ownership within the city of Bath. When the museum was finally able to reopen with the lessening of COVID-19 restrictions, a larger group of young people involved in making the previous films were invited to visit the museum with their families and share their responses to the new display. This felt like an important moment in terms of building the trust and respect necessary for people, who might not have previously seen the museum as a safe or relevant space, to share their reactions and feel welcomed.

The subsequent film, *Untold Histories of Bath: From a Barbados Plantation to the Holburne Museum* (2021), captures their responses to the new display. The three older Youth Advisors held the process, sharing their own responses before interviewing younger members of the group after they had visited the galleries. The film was edited by Andrew Hassenruck with input from the young people, Jill Sutherland and myself.

After the initial filming, the decision was made to include further reflections from young white people as well as from young people of colour. This was a challenging decision as the film had originally been conceived as creating a space for underrepresented and marginalised voices to speak – an attempt to begin to address fundamental imbalances in representation. However, Lucia's words in the film, 'I want people to realise everyone's part of the same history. It's not black history and white history, it's one history' convinced us that it was important to include a wider range of voices, especially as one of the main audiences for the film would be young people in Bath and North East Somerset schools, the majority of whom are white.

The film was shown at an online launch event in July 2021 which was co-hosted by some of the young people involved in its making. It was then

shared across Bath and North East Somerset secondary schools. It is a small step in beginning conversations about Bath and how the city's history is taught and promoted. It shows the importance of this permanent display as a source of information and touchstone for young people growing up in and around the city as they come to understand the origins of the immense wealth that enabled Bath to expand and flourish in the 18th century. This work has gone on to shape the Holburne's strategic vision and understanding of itself in profound ways which continue to resonate.

9.2 The reinterpretation of the Plantation Day Book

Jillian Sutherland

I am the youngest daughter of Jayne and Jason, who both hail from the Caribbean island of St Vincent, usually addressed by its Commonwealth title as 'St Vincent and the Grenadines'. The Grenadines are a territorial grouping of islands of which St Vincent is the largest, originally named so by the Portuguese who colonised it as part of the European expansion project. Subsequently, Portuguese ownership of the isles was superseded by the French, who defeated them in their conquest for colonial domination. It fell into the hands of the British, then back to the French, and then the British again, when the British government under Queen Elizabeth II wanted to annex it. After the refusal from Vincentians to accept this, the country finally achieved postcolonial independence, but only in 1979, and it remains part of the Commonwealth today.

My surname, Sutherland, as with many of those from the colonial Caribbean diaspora, is Scottish and is likely that of the landowner who also 'owned' my family. Although the generations of my family were not enslaved as the Africans were, they were referred to as 'indentured workers' – the brown bodies utilised by the Europeans after the abolition of slavery was decreed. My family are from India, but locations and original names are difficult to access and trace: we are a people displaced. I classify myself, when I must, as a first-generation-born Indian-Caribbean Briton, though I prefer the globally interconnected term 'diasporic'.

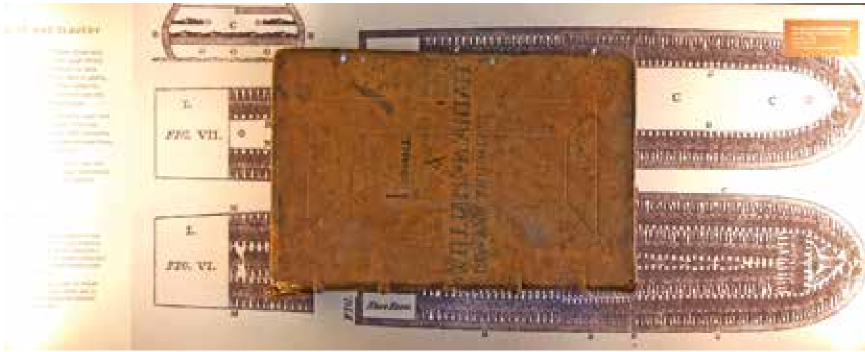
My background is working class. My parents emigrated to England in the 1960s, as was customary for many Caribbean people at the time. Post-'Windrush', they travelled to join family in the 'mother country' of Britain, as it was commonly advertised in the Caribbean islands, with a view to improving the educational and financial prospects for themselves and their children. My parents trained the traces of the Caribbean accent out of my sister and myself. I speak English eloquently and articulately, and if we were to converse on the phone you might not suspect that my skin colour was

anything other than white. Even though I was born here, I have spent my whole life assimilating myself into white, English culture.

Statistically, in Britain, I, and others like myself, am not 'successful'. Statistically, we are not typically represented in positions of management, in higher education, in art history or in other historical subjects. Statistically, we are not curators, professors or museum directors. Statistically, I am more likely to suffer health problems, and to find myself in a poor financial state. And racism manifests itself in my daily life: from being shouted at for being 'black' near my home to being served last in a restaurant when I arrived first; to being the only person in an otherwise all-white party to be stopped and searched in an airport. In British policy terms, I am often referred to as a 'BAME' (Black, Asian and/or Minority Ethnic), sometimes also termed just 'BME' – either way, I'm the last of both – a 'minority ethnic' and a woman of colour. In museum-sector terms, I am considered the 'non-user', one of your 'potential audience', from the 'diverse', 'ethnic minority group', perhaps even deemed 'hard-to-reach', 'underprivileged' and 'marginalised'.

Being 'successful' in the post of Curatorial Fellow at the Holburne Museum in 2019 therefore seemed to me to be a rather unlikely event. I had also struggled to be called to interview for countless roles in the arts in Bristol (where I lived), despite the qualifications and practical and theoretical experience I had gained over seven years in the region. Hence my cynicism prior to applying. My doctoral research was directly influenced by my experiences in the field, where I had observed the separation and elevated status of curators, and my own views that curating should be more engaged with audiences. A central advertised tenet of the post was to review the Holburne Museum's interpretation, primarily that of their permanent displays, and the Fellow was intended to produce a considered plan of action for the revamping of that interpretation, which struck me as unusual for what seemed to be a traditional decorative arts museum. The job description did not mention anything pertaining to exploring the museum's connections to colonial history. My interview commenced at 9am and I was the first interviewee of the day. The director called me that afternoon to tell me the good news, noting that I had made a great impression, and the rest is history. Well, it is, and it isn't, really.

History is surely the business of a museum professional: we deal in the past. We write about it, try to use our displays to teach about it, we preserve and present it. One's understanding of history, and the past, therefore, is crucial to a museum space. And yet, there are certain patterns of display practice that are consistently and too often repeated in our museums: those that promote a monocultural view of heritage. The question of 'whose heritage' is represented in our cultural institutions, memorably posed by Stuart Hall in 1999, has been on the lips of museum theorists, at least, for decades, but



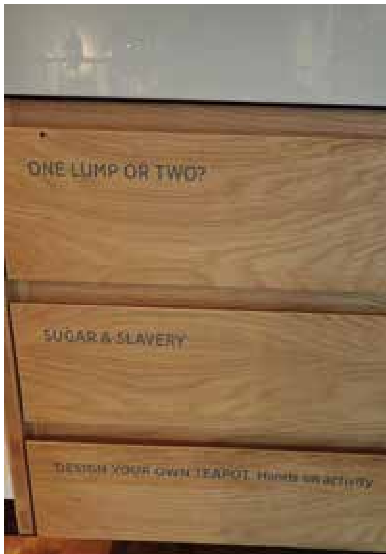


Figure 9.2 Plantation Day Book in drawer, original display, 2019.
Figure 9.3 Closed drawers, original display, 2019.
Figure 9.4 Plantation Day Book, drawer and original display, 2019.

in my experience was rarely in the minds of museum workers I encountered in Bristol and Bath. Either they had not thought about it, or just have not been listening, perhaps until now. The Black Lives Matter protests during the summer of 2020 catalysed a palpable shift in the museum sector in Britain, indeed around the globe, and the Holburne Museum was no exception in leaping into action – that is, making public certain promising announcements of a change in historical representations in our cultural institutions, and an underlying, implied message: that they support black lives.

However, the case of the Plantation Day Book, Barbados, 1722, at the Holburne Museum, and its display and redisplay, which began in October

2019, was – and still is – subject to tradition-informed assumptions and object hierarchy in both curatorial practice and in terms of audience access as recipients of the museum display's message. Furthermore, my encounter with the Day Book visually demonstrated the origins of those traditions: colonial history, racism, Western superiority over the 'other', and the categorisation and stratification of objects, culture, people and historical narratives.

The Plantation Day Book in the Holburne Museum's collection is a ledger from Barbados typically used to record sales of products and enslaved individuals and has the date '1722' hand-written on its cover. I first encountered the Day Book in the Fletcher Gallery at the Holburne Museum, situated on the mezzanine level in the most modern and, as I came to learn through the visitor research I conducted, the least-visited area of the museum. The theme of this section of the building was entitled 'Arts and Elegance in Georgian Bath', and its displays held opulent objects from the period: silverware, tea and sugar memorabilia and porcelain figurines. Under its main display cases, the room also featured drawers for visitors to explore. These contained a variety of things ranging from miniatures to interactive activities for children. I moved to the case with the heading 'Tea, Coffee and Chocolate', which showcased a selection of silver and porcelain tea-ware. At the centre of this display was a tea bowl and saucer, with the caption: 'A nice cup of tea? Tea is our National Drink. It's drunk by everyone. In the 18th century it was an expensive luxury. To drink it was to make a statement about how rich and fashionable you were'.

The case had three drawers at the bottom of the display. The Plantation Day Book was positioned in the second drawer, entitled 'Sugar and Slavery', positioned beneath the first drawer ('One Lump or Two?') containing silver spoons, and above the third ('Design your own teapot: Hands on activity'). A ledger, owned by Sir William Holburne's great-grandfather, from a Caribbean sugar plantation which had operated due to the enslavement and exploitation of generations of people during the colonial project, had been curatorially positioned between silver spoons and a children's activity. From an object-care perspective, it was poorly contained in an acrylic case, pressing into its sides, and sat atop a reproduced image of a dissected slave ship, portraying the tiny black figures squashed into place on the diagram. My initial observation, as a diasporic visitor,[2] was of the irony and insensi-

2 I use the term 'diasporic' in opposition to the term 'non-white'. Some scholars of colour have used the term in a variety of ways (e.g. Dawson 2007; Bhopal 2018; Andrews 2019), and often mean those of African descent who were dispersed from the continent during colonialism. My use of 'diasporic' refers to a global citizenry of people who have been displaced from their indigenous heritage, geographically, culturally and/or psychologically, as a result of Western colonialism and its continued effects.

tivity abundant in such a display. My work at the Holburne was to entail a physical display intervention, and within a few days of starting, I had unquestionably found the object to bring to light.

What messages did the placement of the object communicate? On the one hand, we might interpret its presence in the gallery as evidence that this museum was trying to claim ownership of its history: sugar came from slavery. Yet, on the other, its position below the main display, hidden in a drawer, surrounded by elegant, sparkling symbols of wealth and glamour, speaks volumes within the context of a museum tradition that has largely succeeded in silencing the side of history that reflects – and respects – people of colour. In 1992–93, the artist Fred Wilson re-curated an entire floor of the Maryland Historical Society's collection in an installation called 'Mining the Museum'. Repositioning over 100 objects, Wilson's exhibit confronted the visitor with jarring object (dis)placements. In a room entitled 'Cabinetmaking 1820–1960', amidst fine examples of furniture carved from rosewood, poplar and walnut, a 'slave' whipping post cast a long shadow; a Ku Klux Klan hood from the collection was nestled eerily inside a Victorian baby carriage; and a shining selection of Baltimore Repoussé silver vessels encircled a set of rusted shackles.[3] Such juxtapositions instantly arrest our attention and stop us in our tracks. Wilson's repositioning of objects in this way was – and is – an affront to a long-established and accepted sense of Western progress and celebration of whiteness in traditional museum displays, just as the Plantation Day Book's positioning at the Holburne Museum may have been an assault to the diasporic visitor's senses.

Taking my own visitor experience into account, the initial display of the Plantation Day Book followed an object hierarchy that visually, physically and psychologically communicated a message of the superiority of white culture over others. It presented a history that celebrated European endeavour and progress over colonial dispossession and human-rights atrocities. As an observer, curator and employee, this display marked me out among my peers and fellow visitors as one who does not belong, demonstrating the harm in perpetuating unchallenged traditional methods of curating museum displays that are 'race'-averse, that is, blind to, or unwilling to acknowledge, the racialised nature of colonial history and its representations.

When I handled the Day Book, I saw its contents: crudely cut-out pages, with only one remaining, and no record of the enslaved. I resolved that the redisplay concept was to be one of acknowledgement, remembrance and visibility. This project became an opportunity to intervene in the historical narrative of the museum through engaging with the colonial diaspora of Bath and Somerset, exposing the Holburne's connections to the Ball

3 Corrin 1994

Plantation in Barbados and other Caribbean islands, and a chance to negate traditional object hierarchies and provide a space showing the side of history that respects, includes, listens to and holds up people of colour.

As well as physical hierarchy, the presented narrative of the Day Book's original display also placed it beneath others – it had been positioned as less important for education, or discussion, or viewing, than spoons and silver. An argument can be made for maintaining the condition of the object through its placement in a drawer, as I was informed by curatorial colleagues of its sensitivity to light. However, a generally muted narrative extended to its exclusion from the museum in other ways during the redisplay project (2019–21), which speaks to some of the general problems with cultural organisations that continue to operate under 'traditional' means. The redisplay was not discussed in museum meetings unless I was present, nor was it framed as a collective piece of work within the curatorial team – it was my independent work as a temporary staff member. The project was not marketed on social media or through press communications and was not a planned feature for Black History Month, UK in October 2020. These actions contradicted the words of staff who had described the new 'slave book' display as 'exciting' and a 'celebratory opportunity' for visitors to witness a previously 'hidden' object.

From avoidance, to using confused and insensitive language, to an attempt to place another object in the new case with the Day Book thus undermining the entire redisplay concept and hurling the object back down its hierarchical ladder in the process – engaging with colonial history in British museums evidently poses a significant challenge to existing staff, including established curators. The nature of the display is not critical of the Holburne family, yet some staff and volunteers appeared to struggle with their own responses to the Day Book. The thought of engaging in 'anti-racist practice' or discussing an issue such as 'white supremacy', perhaps even finding out something undesirable regarding the museum's collector, could be confrontational for those who have not previously considered such ideas. We could infer that having attention drawn to such issues could be experienced by some as a threat to the order of things, the usual way of operating and thinking within the museum. However, difficulty or resistance in engaging with colonial history or diasporic narratives in a traditional museum space, such as the Holburne Museum, could also be interpreted as a natural response to talking about 'race'. If, as I contend, the traditional museum space is one that is racially segregated with a white bias, it stands to reason that introducing decolonial thoughts, images, concepts and narratives may be challenging or unwelcome. Feelings of pride and shame, threats to one's sense of belonging or community, may also be at play, particularly if you and your heritage are accepted as 'the norm'. Nevertheless, opening up stories around objects,

delving into history in a fuller sense and exploring our shared past as fellow citizens do not appear to be threatening acts in and of themselves. If these are not the function of museums, what is? Decolonising challenges our assumptions.

In my case as curator and researcher of the Day Book, the project led me to deeply reflect on my own positionality, my identity and how diasporic visitors might be impacted by confronting its colonial – and cut out – history. I reflected on the layers of damage represented by the object, physically, personally, socially. When designing the exhibit, which features portraits of diasporic and white individuals with links to Bath and Somerset who challenged assumptions through their activism or careers, I considered the museum's existing visitors and older-generation volunteers. I tried to remain mindful when engaging with young people of colour – from the language I used to the ways in which I listened to them. My respect for the international collaborators (Barbados Museum and Historical Society and Alberta Whittle, artist) pushed me outside of myself – the display was not about me. I reflected on the monocultural narratives prevalent in museums in the UK, the reluctant information in the building about the Holburne

Figure 9.5 Plantation Day Book redisplay, names on plinth, 2021.

Figure 9.6 Plantation Day Book redisplay, 2021.

family's connections to the plantation and the invisibility of those lost to enslavement, mirrored in the object's missing pages.

Through researching the object, I was forced to reconcile within myself the emotional labour of engaging with a painful and personally related past. In the isolating moments, I found solace in the work of diasporic writers, such as the poet Audre Lorde (1984), Tuhiwai Smith, a professor of indigenous education (2012), and historian David Olusoga (2016). I am no historian, but I became one for the purposes of this display. I am not an expert in colonial history, but I gave the object the time. Through these reflexive acts, the Day Book became elevated above its traditional order of 'less-important-than-X'. Curatorial time, effort, respect, collaboration and care held this conflicting record of human tragedy, domination and 'progress', with enough regard to allow others to view it and engage with its story, its truth. Of course, it is for the visitor to decide what messages the redisplay is communicating, how to respond to what has been presented, and whether or not the display is sufficient or successful in its aims.

9.3 Young people's reactions to the reinterpretation

Transcript from *Untold Histories of Bath: From a Barbados Plantation to the Holburne Museum*

Dr Jillian Sutherland

And I kind of thought, oh, this must be, well, what is this? And so, I opened the drawer and I see this book. I see the Plantation Day Book from Barbados, 1722. And I was really intrigued about the book, I didn't know what it was. And the interpretation that was there said that it belonged to William Holburne's great-grandfather, who owned plantations in Barbados.

It didn't tell you anything about the book itself.

So when we had a look at the book, books like this would have contained names of enslaved people on the plantation, not just produce coming in and out. So, I mean, they were accounting tools, they were used by plantation owners to record transactions of sales. And those sales were not just products, they involved people.

The most intriguing thing, I think, about our book is that pages have been cut out. Which is really odd and surprising and you know, raises so many questions, like why did this happen? But then, at the same time, there is a single page left that has writing on, that's just cocoa, candles and beef, are the transactions left in the book, there's no names and there's no explanation, obviously, for why that's happened.

Eli, Youth Advisor, Boys in Mind

The book didn't make me feel good, it didn't. It's kind of, the first thing I looked down, I was very drawn to it, I was drawn to the fact that the missing pages and just the lack of information, the crucial information that I would've loved to see in that book is not there, it gets taken out. There's so many things that I'm thinking about when I look at that book and it's just powerful. The people that are holding that book, you know what that book represents and what that represents to me now. I dunno, weird feelings.

Donovan

I was like very surprised. There was definitely a lot of mixed feelings going on there. But a lot of that was, yeah, I didn't know how I felt about it, to be honest.

Lucia, Youth Advisor, Boys in Mind

I felt really mixed emotions. And I did feel angry that this has just come about now, because this exhibition should have been here for years, that book's been around for years, so why has the exhibition not been here for years?

I don't think I was prepared for how much it would hit me. It's a lot. It hits you really hard, you know.

Jill

One of the things that had to be included was the Holburne family's history. And that was obviously inspired by the book and the fact that it is from the family and that there were links to plantations in Barbados.

And then the deeper I looked, the more I found that they were connected to Antigua, they were connected to Jamaica as well.

And the display does show how the Holburne Museum and their family were connected to the slave trade.

Trevane

Whenever slavery gets mentioned in all sources, either, you know, Bristol or the transatlantic trades. They only go on the basis of 'stuff', you know, what's traded, and that's all, whereas they never show the brutality, or the in-depth details about what's going on. Because in my eyes, Bath had nothing to do with slavery, just Bristol in this country, just 'cause it's on the coast.

Olivia

When you think about Bath, you think about big, expensive, Georgian houses, you don't really know about the history. So when I see exhibitions like this, it just makes me smile, like knowing and learning new things.

Josh

It gives you an insight into the history of just Bath in general, how we got to the one point at the expense of a certain people in order for like the majority to rise. And then, like, what happened to that minority that got affected, like, negatively?

Lucia

Growing up, I think the slave trade was very much so brushed over for me. When it was taught, I'd hear about it briefly mentioned in Black History Month, but I was unaware of the scale that had gone on in Bath.

And I think that that would have made me see my city that I grew up in so differently.

In the 18th century, many slave owners stayed in the city; some retired here with their entire retinue, including slaves.

The Byam, Beckford and Pulteney families and many more, holding vast fortunes of sugar plantation wealth, generated a honey pot in Bath.

Jill
There's a current interest, I suppose, in looking at colonial legacies, so it does bring the Holburne into those discussions.

In terms of the book itself, after being in that drawer for, I think, at least ten years, I thought, well, it deserves its own case. It's got to have its own case.

Ella
I was really moved by the way that it kind of starts off with these objective facts, and you see the kind of traditionally told history, and then it moves towards the more emotional centre.

And the way that that Plantation Book is framed, I thought was appropriate and really gave weight to and gave the appropriate gravity to like what was inside that book, which speaks for itself.

Trevane
I describe it as, a way of walking in a black person's shoes. You know, describing the background of a black person and minorities, especially the Indians, even after slavery was abolished. It really shows you just the problems that occurred in our empire and what people did just to get wealth.

Jill
The idea remained of using the display in some way to also speak for the missing pages. And so what we've done is collaborated with Barbados Museum to reproduce names of enslaved people on the plinth. The names on the plinth are taken from an 1834 mortgage deed of one of the plantations in Barbados. And that is a huge deal, I think, because it symbolises remembrance.

Ella
I think it was interesting seeing how she dealt with the challenge of seeing these names and the reality that there are people involved in this history and that it's difficult to harmonise ideas that slavery has these big numbers.

Levi, Youth Advisor, Boys in Mind
Museums can often take a very dispassionate view, and I don't think that's always the right approach 'cause you know, it's not a dispassionate subject. It means a lot to people and it has a lot of emotion behind it, you know. There's a lot of grief and pain there, and, you know, it's important to acknowledge that as well. They weren't just things that happened, they were things that happened to people.

Jill

The last two panels of the display engage with social history aspects, black and white individuals, and mixed-race individuals actually. And those individuals are from Georgian and Victorian times. And they were either anti-slavery campaigners or demonstrated a form of black agency. And having that in the room that talks about Georgian elegance and splendour and luxury, you know, it's the elephant in the room, that, it deserves its own spot.

Frankie

I did not know of any of those names prior to today. It was really interesting reading all of their stories as well. It was nice that there's bits about just kind of who they are outside of their racial activism as well. I think that's a really just nice little touch, kind of makes them a bit more whole. You know, this isn't just a person who did a thing for activism, this is a real person who had a life outside of this one particular topic.

Abi

There was a great history of defiance of the status quo and of established laws and social norms. And it's fantastic to see so many feminists, individuals, people of colour, all working hard against an institution that does not want them around. And it's fantastic that they got there, got off the ground and did these things. It's stunning to realise that a lot of these people passed away only just before my father was born and how recent these things are and how hard they would have had to work to get what they did done.

Lucia

I can only hope that that display will impact other people as much as it has impacted me, and I don't mean just members of the BAME Society, I mean white people as well. I think that people need to realise that everyone's part of the same history. It's not black history and white history, it's one history.

Jill

I'm very proud and excited that this is a permanent display because it's something that can be engaged with over a long period of time. It's not going to go away, and it shouldn't go away because the legacy of colonialism hasn't gone away, it's here.

Eli
The exhibition is so important because after looking at it, it changes kind of your whole perception of the entire museum.

Abi
It's a very heavy subject matter, and it's, I can't possibly know how these people felt, and it does make me feel at least, a little hopeful that you know, there was people back in those days who knew it was wrong and campaigned to end slavery.

Olivia
It makes me really happy because lots of people don't know. And it's just really good to learn, and understand that that is the history of Bath.

Donovan
I think it wouldn't have been right if it was only for like a few weeks or whatever. But if it's down as there permanently, I think it's definitely a lot better, so people know it's there.

Josh
I think it's very important 'cause since I didn't know much, it kind of shows that we need these kinds of exhibitions to just give us like an insight of what actually happened.

Abi
This is an admittedly fantastic baby step, but this is a baby step, still got huge amounts of systematic racism going on right now. And it's a long way to go before we make reparations for all the people that we've hurt in creating our nation as we have it now.

Trevane
It's important to show younger people there were people that fought against what happened [*the transatlantic trade in enslaved people*]. I'd say museums and exhibitions across the country and across the world can really show people of different minorities and cultures that bullying someone else's minority or anyone else's culture and religion is completely wrong.

9.4 Repositioning objects, repositioning ourselves: analysis and concluding thoughts

Jillian Sutherland

> '[Colonialism's] most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. […] To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others'.[4]

The following reflection raises several questions relating to the redisplay of objects within a museum setting. It will introduce some pertinent concepts that arise concerning our visual and cultural assumptions around museum objects and will present some of the inherent problems in continuing to utilise more traditional modes of curatorial practice in a 21st-century museum. As experienced through the Day Book redisplay process, I posit that the use of tradition, in this context, is pervasive, prejudiced and, ultimately, complicit in upholding a stagnant format of object hierarchy that repeatedly fails to respond to contemporary values, social concerns and, most of all, the diasporic visitor.

What is object hierarchy in the museum? Simply put, object hierarchy can be understood as the physical ordering of objects within a display, for example: what object is placed above another; which has been given the most interpretation; what has been awarded the most space; or what has received the most time spent on research. It includes where in the museum space the display is positioned in relation to other displays and themes, and we might view an object in dialogue with those in neighbouring displays. However, as I aim to demonstrate through the case of the Plantation Day Book, Barbados, 1722, the concept of object hierarchy in museums is also a complex one that, once we begin to consider it, prompts several critical lines of questioning about the ways in which messages are communicated through the visual displays in museums.[5] The concept of object hierarchy is also concerned with the narrative around objects in a museum display: which narrative is placed above another, given the most prominent position or emphasised in terms of significance to the overall message of the display or room. In addition, we may also consider *who* is featured in those narratives,

4 Thiong'o 1986, 16
5 Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Robinson 2018

which prompts us to reconsider who is given precedence over others, and from what perspective – or bias – the story is being told. Further still, we may be inspired to reflect on ourselves and our responses to museum displays in the process: what do we bring to the experience, as a visitor or as a curator? Some have suggested that the visual metaphors and symbolic narratives created as a result of physical arrangement may have even more impact on the way a museum display is perceived than the written information around it.[6]

Vergo's 'new museology'[7] represented a break with a traditional approach to museum work, which tended to focus on issues of custodial responsibility: the curator as keeper of collections, preserving, conserving and archiving. Traditional practices drew from enlightenment-influenced stratification styles, where objects, people and cultures were catalogued within hierarchical formats and early ethical guidance in museum practice was largely concerned with documentation, educational intent and collections care.[8] In the 'new museological' literature, Vergo and his peers sought to open lines of critical inquiry into the function and purpose of museums in Britain, rather than methods of museum practice, in response to a wider sense of critique towards museums that they observed.

This renewed attention to the role of the museum in society was reflected in the burgeoning fields of visitor studies and museum studies in the 1990s. In the former, Falk and Dierking,[9] for example, identified that a visitor's experience of a museum and its displays is dependent upon their own interests, expectations, knowledge and personal experiences, revolving around three experiential contexts: the personal, the social and the physical. In parallel, museum studies interrogated the origins of accepted museum practices and observed connections to colonialism, racism and the imbalanced portrayal of Western ideas and values as above and superior to those of other cultures.[10] Such interrogations drew attention to the power of the museum display in aiding and inhibiting our understanding of history and society through objects and art, and to the ways in which museums impact our readings of visual culture in relation to ourselves.

More recently, Procopio[11] provided an overview of the racialised origins and implications of Western museum culture through tracing the practices of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, USA, from 1893 to 1969. 'Race'

6 Carrier 2009
7 Vergo 1989
8 Thompson et al. 1984
9 Falk and Dierking 1992
10 e.g. Bal 1992; Coombes 1994; Prösler 1996
11 Procopio 2019

as we know it today was historically constructed during the colonial project, via a form of European pseudoscience that attempted to associate whiteness with intellectual and physical superiority. Skin colour was an essentialised and contributing factor to the West's perceived supremacy rhetoric, whereby those without European features or complexions were subjected to discrimination and dehumanisation. To consider representation in museums is thus to consider what is being represented on the surface and beneath it, the wider social contexts at play, from whose perspective it is being presented, and whether those representing are best placed to do so. As Carrier pointed out,[12] Western institutions have traditionally presented displays concerning objects and stories of 'other' cultures 'on their own cultural terms'.

While Procopio's piece is critical of the racist origins of curatorial practice in an American science museum, it also highlights the pervasiveness of white supremacist ideology in Western museum culture more generally and raises questions about how racism and racial supremacy continue to be manifested today, through visual representations in media, the historical narratives presented in museums and in our own assumptions and biases.

Such ideas are also explored in postcolonial theory, which calls for reflection on the concept that Western modernity was enabled by the exploitation and subjugation of people of colour, the countries and cultures of whom were considered external to modern progress.[13] How do we uphold and perpetuate colonial ideologies in our own actions and practices? Postcolonial thought encourages us to interrogate and contextualise visual and cultural representations, to understand the correlation between their symbolism and our perceptions, and to contemplate in what ways implicit colonial assumptions are still held.[14] Attempting to navigate or address issues of social importance in museums thus involves looking deeper for underlying causes and problems with visual and conceptual representation – and presentation – of museum objects. Furthermore, through the narratives presented in our museums, ideologies are perpetuated, reinforced, supplied and supported.[15]

Thiong'o[16] described the aftermath of colonialism as a 'metaphysical empire', whereby the language and ideology of colonialism persist beyond the physical manifestations of empire. This surviving language consists of narratives, social imagination, ideas and notions of heritage and culture. The narratives of Britain today, our collective imaginations and sense

12 Carrier 2009
13 Bhambra 2011
14 e.g. Hall 1999
15 Bal 1992
16 Thiong'o 2014

of identities, are imbued with the remnants of the Empire, including in some of the more regional or rural areas, such as Avon and Somerset, which may appear somewhat distanced from being associated with British colonial endeavour.[17] The ideologies underpinning traditionally curated museum displays are concurrently those of the Empire – imperialist, white supremacist and Euro-centric – which, when unchallenged, uphold the museum space as one that is exclusive, ahistorical and racially segregated. However, despite critical engagement with Western traditions and their relationship to cultural institutions and society in academic discourse as far back as the 1960s,[18] the effects on UK museum practice today and the tracking of changes in museum practices – a moving away from traditional display curating towards contemporary methods – remain to be substantially noted in practice: museum progress is notoriously slow.

Through contemplating object hierarchy, we thus observe several areas significant to the life and story of a museum object: i) visual display and positioning; ii) relationship to other objects; iii) presented narrative; iv) who it relates to; v) its position relative to the museum; vi) our position as a visitor; vii) archival information; viii) historical information. These factors are also significant to the overall message that is visually communicated by an object in a museum display. Abstracted and distilled, those areas of concern in considering object hierarchy can be understood as representing the following fundamental concepts: i) the museum display is a means of visual communication through its positioning of objects and interpretation; ii) the museum display is a means of knowledge production through narrative; iii) the museum display has the power to symbolically represent people through objects; iv) the museum display is a structure demonstrating how and what historical information is held, accessed and distributed about objects, cultures and people; v) the museum display traditionally follows a hierarchical order; vi) the museum display may be critically interrogated.

Curating the Plantation Day Book redisplay at the Holburne Museum was made possible through overall acceptance from the organisation that such a move was necessary – paramount, in fact – to addressing the social concerns of a contemporary museum public. Not only did the work respond to the moment in 2020, where cultural institutions across the globe were rocked to their core by the voices of Black Lives Matter protests, but it provided a long-needed intervention that forced the museum to reckon with its institutional identity. Therefore, changes can be made and decolonial conversations can be started, if the institution is willing to undertake the hard work. Such work is meaningful, however, as presented by the voices

17 Fowler 2020
18 Bourdieu et al. 1991

of the young Bath residents, of multiple ethnicities, featured in the Boys in Mind film.

A larger question remains, however. How will the museum move forward with this new display at its physical centre, and this once-silenced object firmly beating at the heart of its collection? Will its impact permeate throughout the rest of the building? What changes will the museum continue in the Plantation Day Book display's wake? A museum display's message is changed when an object is repositioned, physically and conceptually. However, one redisplay is simply not enough to negate or redress the pervasive imbalances in museum display traditions. As discussed in this case study, the process of decolonising in the museum space is one of recovery, repair, reconciliation and recognition. Only through these acts of rethinking and repositioning can the 21st-century museum avoid redundance. My standpoint is that this can be approached, navigated, more deeply understood and practically addressed through practising reflexivity. Furthermore, engaging with decolonial museum practices can only be appropriately explored by adopting a strand of reflexive practice that is concerned with recognising and acknowledging 'race'.

The Plantation Day Book redisplay demonstrates that repositioning museum objects can reposition traditional museum hierarchies and historical narratives – disrupting and expanding the traditional canon of Western history and visual culture. This case study highlights some of the problems inherent in perpetuating the traditional order of museum displays in curatorial practice and the dangers of continuing to present museum objects in unchallenged ways, particularly to a diasporic audience. The responses from the young people interviewed from Boys in Mind about the Plantation Day Book redisplay are a testament to the impact of changing a traditional narrative. Aside from the interpretation text, the positioning of portraits of diasporic individuals and anti-slavery activists within the same space as their white counterparts repositioned the narrative from one which had silenced Britain's diasporic history to one that engaged with it. Furthermore, this section has opened up the museum display as a space for critical interrogation through reflection on who is viewing, what is being said and how it is being presented.

The active practice of reflexivity can be described as both turning a critical eye towards oneself, while additionally engaging with one's assumptions and accepted cultural traditions as relational – that is, part of a wider, fuller context.[19] Reflexive praxis can also be understood as a means of 'rethinking' what we know.[20] In the context under discussion here, reflexivity can be

19 Lucal 1996; Rose 1997; Probst 2015

20 McLeod 2000, 34

applied to curatorial work and experiencing the museum as a visitor. If, as established earlier, museum display practices are predicated on the language of empire, reflexivity can – and must – also allow for critical consideration of the ways in which identities and narratives are constructed and presented in the museum display – racially, geographically and *metaphysically*.[21] This includes engaging with the concept of 'whiteness' and our experiences as relationally racialised individuals – personally, socially and physically.[22] Taking a reflexive approach to museum work, one that acknowledges 'race' rather than obscuring it or – worse still – aggravating traditional racist tropes, may benefit museum staff and audiences through deepening our collective understanding of national identity; inspiring further acts of 'rethinking'; and providing fuller and richer stories that support a pluralistic, rather than universal, sense of history. Such acts of rethinking have the potential to recontextualise and reposition the story and social significance of a museum object – and in some cases an entire collection, as one interviewee claimed in the film.

Making the invisible visible is central to decolonising – and desegregating – the traditional museum space. Therefore, talking and thinking about potentially difficult topics in museum curating makes the issues visible, acknowledged and embodied with humanity. While the process of reflexivity is confronting, there are moments of pride and validation in seeing oneself and one's socio-historical environment with open eyes. As explored in the case of the Plantation Day Book, 1722, context changes meaning.

Ultimately, decolonial and anti-racist work requires us to ask: how are we going to change our practices and ways of thinking in support of the subaltern – those groups in the fringes of history? We cannot speak nor think for the subaltern. If we identify as a subaltern ourselves, the matter risks becoming one of self-promotion, and does not help to undo what Spivak (2022) describes as 'the denial of the subaltern's intellectual labour'.[23] So how will we reposition ourselves, as visitors, artists, museum professionals or scholars, in relation to the museum's traditional, hierarchical order to do so? In repositioning objects, we reposition ourselves.

21 Thiong'o 2014

22 Frankenberg 1993; Bhopal 2018; Crenshaw et al. 2019

23 Spivak 2022

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PART III

ARTS-BASED AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES TO THE PAST

10

On the resilience of the dead silence and the crisis of imagination

Walking and asking questions in a UNESCO World Heritage City

Richard S. White

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10.1 Introduction

I am an older White[1] man raised in a rural West Country village in a White Christian monoculture. I was schooled and socialised into a heritage founded on White supremacy. The village I grew up in was once entirely owned by a branch of the notorious slave-owning Beckford dynasty, the Pitt-Rivers family. The creative work I reference in this chapter took place in the city of Bath (UK), a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site, where I lived for 17 years. The narrative refers to a cycle of walks, 'Sweet Waters',[2] and a series of site-specific walks in a public park, 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time'.[3] The work builds on previous creative interventions on the memoryscape of Bath, seeking to enrich the heritage narrative of the city.[4]

1 NB I use the capitalisation 'White' and, later on in the piece, 'Black' to attend to racialisation. Race is a cultural construction.

2 White 2019

3 White 2020c; 2021a; 2021b

4 e.g. Mitchell and Sobers 2013; Hammond 2012

Invoking the possibility of social repair, I describe this city as 'wounded',[5] 'haunted'[6] by spectres of empire and colonialism. This chapter explores what happened in Bath after the Colston statue came down from the perspective of my creative practice. I offer a summary account of these iterations of a 'walking-with'[7] approach alongside an emergent reflection on epistemic justice and epistemic wounding. Drawing from this and in a rhetorical entanglement with the UNESCO status, I offer conclusions on learning otherwise, on the resilience of the dead silence and the crisis of imagination.

10.2 Bristol, June 2020

The afternoon of Sunday 7 June 2020 was hot and sunny. I was sitting with my daughter in a Bristol backyard. In those deadly times of the COVID-19 virus we took the precautions very seriously; she and her boyfriend had decided not to go to the Black Lives Matter march in the city centre that day. This was mum and dad visiting their new home for the first time. Socially distanced, occasionally checking the social-media stream from the march, drinking tea, outdoors, we relished a moment of family intimacy. This was something we had not felt since the first strange, heady days, three months previously, of being thrown into a single 'bubble' in our flat in Bath. Suddenly, a flash-memory-making alert from the phone cut through, and, as we looked across to the screen, a gentle roar rolled up the corridor of yards and gardens between the Victorian terraces, a ripple of energy from the city centre itself. Colston was down.

The statue of the slave trader was toppled, the sound of the crash and the grinding roll of the metal towards the waters of the Avon resonating and rattling around the world. A local manifestation of anger and frustration at the continuing and ongoing failure to address the wounds of enslavement and colonisation, re-traumatised by the murder of George Floyd. The sound of that rolling roar stayed with me as we drove back to Bath, a city emerging from the dead silence on slavery described by Jane Austen so many years earlier.[8] Leaning into the learning as I write, some two years on from the fall of that iconic statue of a White man who, both in life and in mythology, embodied all the atrocities and legacies of colonisation and empire, I reflect on my experience and attend to the difficulties of change.

5 Till 2008; 2011
6 Derrida 2006
7 Sundberg 2013
8 Austen 1996, 184

10.3 Haunting and wounding as uncomfortable heritage

I am working with a perspective of heritage as practice, as active and with agency, informing sense of belonging and identity, in which memory is both constituent and constitutive. Heritage constructs a collective social memory and thus, in the context of nation and national heritage, 'those who cannot see themselves in its mirror cannot properly "belong"'.[9] Hall's foundational analysis, and its application and development by Smith[10] and others,[11] resonates at a city level, especially with regard to Bath, a city favoured by elite people, given pride of place within the 'national heritage' and, as designated by UNESCO, a 'world heritage' city. The complex and entangled relationships between emotion, memory, identity and place through which the practices of heritage operate have been widely discussed.[12] Referencing Nora's *lieux de mémoire*,[13] Otele describes spaces as 'reluctant' where memory and memorialisation are prevented, denied or impeded.[14] Bath's Royal Crescent, the Pulteney Estate and other architectural features of the city of Bath are such 'reluctant sites of memory', offering no place to mourn or invitation to reflect, or even know, the sources of the wealth materialised; Bath's slave-owning and colonial past hides in plain sight.

In Derrida's[15] perspective the city is haunted by this past, and in Till's related commentary[16] the city is 'wounded' by the inherited and embodied memory of the trauma of capture and enslavement and unacknowledged complicity. Derrida's key work offers a widely applied conceptual framework theorising spectral presences; his wordplay on the French for 'shame' and the provenance of Bath's wealth gives the city's dead silence on the matter a particular hauntological resonance. Fisher summarises the perspective: 'Haunting can be seen as intrinsically resistant to the contraction and homogenisation of time and space. It happens when a place is stained by time, or when a particular place becomes the site for an encounter with broken time'.[17]

According to Craps,[18] Derrida states that for a just future, we need to learn to live with ghosts, be aware and attentive to those already dead and not yet born; this is encompassed by Haraway's exhortation to 'stay with

9 Hall 1999, 4
10 Smith 2006
11 e.g. Hall et al. 2014; Perry 2013
12 e.g. Crouch 2015; Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012; Massey 1994; Nora 1989
13 Nora 1989
14 Otele 2016, 2
15 Derrida 2006
16 Till 2011
17 Fisher 2012, 19
18 Craps 2010

the trouble'.[19] Bath is stained with time and teeming with ghosts: some are celebrated visitors and their ghosts are welcomed, but many thousands unknown are ignored and silenced, their labour embodied in the fabric of the city, their ancestral pain, terror and resistance resonate as inherited trauma.

Drawing on the work of activists and artists in Germany and South Africa, Till suggests that through an understanding of the city as wounded, 'other imaginaries of place, temporality, and the city might focus attention on why places, peoples, groups, environments, and non-human natures continue to be injured'.[20] Her work attends to sites infused with the spectres of trauma. Sharing Derrida's concern for social justice, Till describes wounded cities as 'densely settled locales that have been harmed and structured by particular histories of physical destructions, displacement and individual and social trauma resulting from state-perpetrated violence'.[21]

The state-perpetrated violence that haunts Bath may not be recent or local, but the legacies of slave-ownership and empire produce the epistemic injuries that constitute this wounded city, disabling residents and visitors alike from fully knowing and becoming. In the dead silence of the wounded city, mourning and memory work are, in Till's terms, 'acts of care'. Claiming sites of memory through acts of care has agency; retelling and locating unheard and forgotten stories into the memoryscape reveals reluctance and opens new conversations. This work, she argues, is 'fundamental in the establishment of differentiated and active forms of belonging and political community', leading towards a more just society.[22]

10.3.1 Epistemicide and epistemic wounding

Invoking De Sousa Santos' assertion that there is no social justice without cognitive justice,[23] I suggest that being able to feel and know the memory of colonial exploitation, extraction and enslavement, to sense ancestral voices and silenced ways of knowing, and bring them into the present, can begin to open meaningful social justice conversations. The authorised heritage narrative of Bath, however, frustrates this process.

The suppression, silencing and denigration of indigenous knowledge and ways of being during the period of European colonial expansion have been widely discussed and condemned.[24] De Sousa Santos argues that 'the

19 Haraway 2016
20 Till 2011, 5
21 Till 2011, 6
22 Till 2011, 8
23 De Sousa Santos 2018
24 e.g. Blaser and de la Cadena 2018; De Sousa Santos 2018; Haraway 2016; Stengers 2005

epistemologies of the North have contributed crucially to converting the scientific knowledge developed in the global North into the hegemonic way of representing the world as one's own and of transforming it according to one's needs and aspirations'.[25] Capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy are reproduced globally and the epistemology of the North becomes 'the only source of valid knowledge, no matter where in geographic terms that knowledge is produced'.[26]

During the period of colonisation by the North, the global South was rendered as a 'realm of ignorance' where indigenous knowledge, practices, languages and ways of being and knowing were invalidated and suppressed, and epistemicide accompanied genocide. The global South became a space for the looting and plunder of people, plants and materials; for example, from 1770 until the 1990s the colonial concept of 'Terra Nullius' was the legal principle which underpinned British law in Australia.[27] For indigenous peoples, those enslaved and transported to colonised lands and all their descendants, the legacy is pervasive, a sense of being 'disqualified as legitimate knowers'.[28]

10.3.2 Bath as a wounded city and a UNESCO World Heritage Site

The dramatic growth of Bath as an elite location in the 18th century coincided with the peak of the Atlantic slave trade and the flow of wealth generated by captured and enslaved Africans to England. The trade in enslaved people and its connections with Bristol, the seaport further down the River Avon, are well documented,[29] as is Georgian Bath's development using the wealth generated.[30] On the day that the Colston statue was torn from its plinth in Bristol, however, this was barely present in the stories Bath was officially telling about itself, and to the world, despite its UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site (WHS) status.[31]

The custodians of this status, Bath and North East Somerset Council, are advised by a group of representatives from the two local universities, local heritage organisations and Bath Abbey, but with no community-based representation. The Advisory Board is headed by real-estate expert Barry Gilbertson, a visiting professor at the University of Northumbria and former PricewaterhouseCoopers partner. The custodians, advised by the Board,

25 De Sousa Santos 2018, 6
26 De Sousa Santos 2018, 6
27 National Library of Australia 2022
28 Liegghio 2013, 123
29 e.g. Richardson 2005; Dresser 2007
30 e.g. Knight 1978; Parker 2012; Perry 2013; Pocock 2003
31 e.g. Bath and North East Somerset Council 2022

have not engaged with the long-running UNESCO initiative dedicated to connecting the routes of trafficked people and capital, the Slave Route project. The Slavery and Remembrance strand of the Slave Route project suggests that the wounding of capture, forced migration, forced labour and chattel enslavement, its memory and legacies, should be 'conceived from multiple levels, as material, economic, socio-psychological, and spiritual harm'.[32] UNESCO has as its mission statement 'building peace in the minds of men and women'; all WHS designations, including Bath's, must be seen as a contribution to this mission. The UNESCO statement that 'ignorance or concealment of major historical events constitutes an obstacle to mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation among peoples' haunts Bath's WHS status.[33]

In 2007, on the bicentennial of the abolition of the British slave trade, Bath's heritage sector received National Lottery funding to stage exhibitions and do research. The dead silence has proved resilient: a small exhibition at the Holburne Museum has vanished from the record and institutional memory, while at Bath Preservation Trust's Beckford's Tower, surviving copies of a broadsheet of research into its former owner, William Beckford, a third- if not fourth-generation slave owner and social climber, were held in a locked cupboard. While Bath formally celebrated the role in ending the slave trade played by occasional elite visitors and residents, notably White activists William Wilberforce and Hannah More, the role of others in profiting from the labour of captured and enslaved Africans and its legacies continues to be obscured and officially forgotten.

On Saturday 6 June 2020, a Black Lives Matter gathering took place in Bath[34] as part of the international outcry following the racist murder of George Floyd, without public reference to the legacies of slavery and slave-ownership in the city, possibly because it was not a significant part of a shared memoryscape. In Bristol, just a few miles away, at a similar gathering a day later, the Colston statue was toppled; by midweek, Bath's MP was warning that Bath cannot forget its links to the slave trade.[35] The impact of the action in Bristol resonated through the heritage sector in Bath in direct proportion to the way the dead silence on slavery prevailed as Floyd's cry, 'I can't breathe', resonated around the world. Not having had anything to say on the matter since its inception, the Bath World Heritage Site Advisory Board met six weeks later, by which time the connections had evidently been made. The published minutes of that meeting are littered with references

32 Colonial Williamsburg Foundation 2022
33 UNESCO 2014
34 Local World 2020
35 Elgee 2020

to new initiatives attending to Bath's connections with slavery, from Bath Preservation Trust avowing that it is 'a subject they have never been reticent to address', to the Chair of the Advisory Board, Barry Gilbertson, who is minuted as stating that there was a strong need for the WHS to 'address and express, not supress' the historic links between three (of our six) attributes of Outstanding Universal Value with Transatlantic Slavery and Enslavement.[36]

This is a surprising minute, given the fact that previous Advisory Board minutes applaud the success of a trail eulogising Admiral Horatio Nelson, and offer no evidence of any attempt to host or coordinate events around the two UN-designated international commemorative days: the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery (25 March) and the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition on 23 August each year. The minutes of the 14 July 2020 meeting record the formation of an Advisory Board sub-committee on this matter but, despite Gilbertson's explicit statement linking Bath's UNESCO designation to 'Transatlantic Slavery and Enslavement', the sub-committee only appears to have met once, and 23 August 2020 came and went.

I make these references to UNESCO as its World Heritage status designation is one of the most significant and valuable international arbiters of what constitutes the authorised heritage narrative. The designation currently underpins what Bath says to itself and to the world. Bath is haunted by silenced and unheard voices, whose absence in the official heritage narrative of the city is a wounding to the minds of the men and women who live, work and visit there. This manifests in diverse and disturbing ways – for example, erupting in a local secondary school in 2018 when a group of White boys held what was described as a 'mock slave auction' of one of their Black peers.[37] The perpetrators were not expelled by the school governors. As the young people in the film *Untold Histories of Bath* (see also Chapter 9 in this volume) bear witness, racism and the suppression of knowledge that might help make sense of this present continue. Whether it is through the othering practices of racialisation that diminish and erase the historic Black presence in Bath or the practices of empire that conceal the sources and circumstances of the extraction of wealth, these practices continue to inflict epistemic harm. The lack of shared awareness of Bath's historic connections to slavery and to empire and its legacies, as manifested in the Bath BLM June 2020 gathering,[38] offers some evidence of this in comparison with the events in Bristol on the following day. I suggest that this constitutes an epistemic wounding[39] and a fundamental failure by the

36 Bath and North East Somerset Council 2020
37 Cameron 2018
38 Local World 2020
39 Spivak 2006; De Sousa Santos 2018; Brunner 2021

custodians of Bath's World Heritage status to attend to the official memoryscape in response to the UNESCO mission statement.

10.4 An evolving creative practice: iterations of walking-with

As many writers and artists have argued,[40] diverse ways of knowing and being and a re-discovery of the complexity of intra-relationships with land and nature, (re-)emerging in the scholarly term 'epistemologies of the South', are powerful, timely and pertinent. I locate my creative work in the social justice context, articulated in the Zapatista 'Fourth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle', 'The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit'.[41]

While mindful of concerns regarding cultural appropriation and alert to the romanticisation of indigenous resistance, I respectfully improvise with the approach known as 'walking-with' arising out of the Zapatista approach of 'leading by following' and *Preguntando caminamos*, 'asking while walking'.[42] At the end of the 20th century, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation emerged in Chiapas, Mexico, a resistance movement of marginalised indigenous peoples aligned with global social justice and environmental networks. Distinctive methods of organising, including walking and questioning, are reportedly drawn from indigenous traditions and everyday practices.[43] I understand walking-with to be a critical somatic engagement with situated knowledges explored through group walking, questioning and listening in a context of convivial, respectful dialogue where an attendance to imagination, the senses and difference is implicit. Walking-with has been discussed and applied by other researchers;[44] the approach resonates with educator Paulo Freire's 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' and Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed', valuing tacit knowledge and nonmodern understandings, rooted in a dialogue founded on love, humility and faith in humanity.[45]

Following on from the 'homework' Sundberg refers to, I explicitly attend to race and racialisation at the opening point of these walks. I open a walk with a land, site and people acknowledgement and offer a personal statement of positionality as an older White man. I invite walkers to listen

40 e.g. Sundberg 2013; Loveless 2019; Horvath and Carpenter 2020; Mbonda 2015; Blaser and de la Cadena 2018; De Sousa Santos 2018

41 Blaser and de la Cadena 2018, 1

42 Sundberg 2013

43 Sundberg 2013; Holloway 2011

44 e.g. Jeffries 2010; Kelly 2013; Springgay and Truman 2018

45 Jeffries 2010, 352

to the presences around them and share thoughts with the person next to them. This opening is partly a grounding in place and an instant moment of 'homework', but also a call to somatic alertness, the beginning of thinking with the whole body. Whiteness, racialisation and White supremacy are key areas of absence in the conversations on the memoryscape in Bath; when I make my statement to a group of predominantly White walkers, I often notice a frisson of discomfort across their faces or in their bodies. I suggest that this affective response is an iteration of what Bennett describes as 'the squirm', 'a moment of regrouping the self […] the condition of continued participation, the sensation that works with and against a deeper level of response'.[46]

The walking-with process holds a safe space for this discomfort, facilitating an emergence of empathic dialogue from involuntary thought. Extending Deleuze's classic observation on involuntary action leading to 'profound truth',[47] Bennett argues that the 'affective encounter becomes the means by which thought proceeds and ultimately moves towards deeper truth'.[48] This is the principle that underpins the walking and asking questions process, disrupting equilibrium through curated juxtaposition and staying and learning with the discomfort; like the Holocaust Stolpersteine, these moments of discomfort bring to mind and body a memory, a voice, a spectre.[49] It is thus through this process, generating new knowings and empathic dialogue, we bring to mind and body the 'elusive remnants [of the past] that cannot be articulated in the languages available to us'.[50]

10.4.1 Walking in the park

'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' was a commission from the National Lottery-funded Sydney Gardens project to present a series of walks in a public park exploring, revealing and generating discussion on the entangled and embodied stories of the plants, their naming, the park and its buildings. Sydney Gardens had been an exclusive park for Bath's elite, combining in the heart of the city the aesthetic of landscape-garden picturesque[51] with the thrills and excitements of a 'Vauxhall' pleasure garden. Here there once was a maze, a grotto, a bandstand, a replica Roman temple, trophy plants from across the empire and spectacular performances of all kinds.[52] Sydney

46 Bennett 2006, 37
47 Deleuze 1989, 189
48 Bennett 2005, 17
49 Demnig n.d.
50 Zembylas 2013, 80
51 Nichols 2003
52 Elliott 2019

Gardens was imagined as the centrepiece of William Pulteney's grand Bath housing estate built speculatively for a target market of the wealthy flocking to Bath in the late 18th century. Many buyers, leaseholders and investors were slave owners, as was Pulteney himself; others were benefitting from wealth extracted elsewhere in the British Empire, notably from India. The Gardens were named after a business associate of Pulteney's, Viscount Sydney, a home secretary and senior official with connections in the East India Company. Sydney had commissioned a fleet loaded with convicts to follow in Cook's footsteps to Botany Bay in Australia and there to start a prison colony. The captain of the fleet and first governor of the colony, Arthur Phillip, subsequently retired to Bath and is memorialised in the Abbey.

Prior to lockdown, the walking had involved deep listening, mark making and curated provocations of information, sounds played out on handheld Bluetooth speakers and juxtapositions of activity and pace. At the time of George Floyd's racist murder, virus precautions in the UK prevailed, with only one walk in the series presented and the remaining walks postponed. The research and walking scripts continued to develop and were provisionally published online.[53]

10.4.2 Walking in the city and along the river

The 'Sweet Waters' series of walks, first offered as a cycle in 2017 emerged from a tracing of a walking route between the former addresses of Bath slave owners who had received 'compensation' in the late 1830s following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Addresses were culled from the Legacies of British Slavery database[54] and the walk provided an opportunity to visit the residencies of some of Bath's last legal slave owners, admire the Georgian architecture, consider the sources of the wealth thus manifested and reflect on its legacy. This was a revelation for many walkers, even for those who were long-established Bath residents; the connection with the Atlantic trade in captured and enslaved Africans and the manifestation of the wealth they produced had not been part of their Bath memoryscape, and neither was it part of the city's official memoryscape.

At that time, I was exploring the durational element in walking as a strategy to engage walkers' bodies towards a deeper level of sensing, seeking to encourage questioning as a corporeal practice. Progressively, walks grew in length and challenge, eventually following the River Avon through Bristol to the Bristol Channel – one walk began at the Holburne Museum in front of Gainsborough's large-scale portrait known as the Byam Family and progressed

53 White 2020c; 2021a; 2021b

54 UCL/LBS 2022

via short spoken-word performances outside some slave owners' former residences, before finishing at Beckford's Tower, high above the city. Although incomparable with the coerced journeys of kidnapped Africans, the embodied experience of walkers, combined with their discovery of new perspectives on the history of Bath, generated affective responses and empathic dialogues. Prior to the murder of George Floyd and the toppling of the Colston statue, the provenance of Beckford's wealth and his family history were obscured, as was the basis of Holburne's wealth. I drew on the then concealment of a redacted plantation book in a closed drawer in the Museum (see Chapter 9 in this volume), combined with the euphemistic captioning of the Gainsborough painting at the Holburne, and the locking away of a broadsheet on the sources of Beckford's wealth, referred to above, as triggers for reflection and discussion regarding the constructed amnesia at the heart of Bath's memoryscape.

'Sweet Waters', described as a 'sense-ing of legacies of slave ownership', was initially an interlocking cycle of walks from Bath to Bristol and back over eight days. The sense-ing founded on walking and asking questions included journaling and media gathering/making, curated juxtaposition of sound and information, talking, listening and walking in silence. The cycle of walks followed the old river towpath through ruins of mills, mines and factories once manufacturing goods for the trade in captured Africans in West Africa, or processing raw materials produced by their labour. We walked through this space, landscaped into a riverside idyll, finally arriving at the port, Bristol, where manufactured goods and raw materials came and went in the opening and closing 'passages' of the transatlantic slave trade. Walking and asking questions brought to mind enslaved Africans, those who traded in human lives and those who worked in the mills along the river. We remembered them as we went, stories and landscape experienced and imagined, mnemonically linked through our sensing: a building material made of copper slag, touched and traced, connected us with a cycle of misery and trauma; the taste of bitter sugar outside a chocolate factory, repurposed as a gated community, reminded us of the sugar which made tea, coffee and chocolate palatable. For most walkers, this intellectual and somatic knowledge anchored to particular iconic places was new and memorable. For some, it became part of a change in ways of thinking about self and justice and their relationship to those places. As I argue elsewhere,[55] through this process, walkers become story carriers, their memories linked to place/object/plant through sensory and affective experience, and some walkers become motivated to ask difficult social justice questions emerging from empathic dialogue.

55 White 2020a

10.5 Walking in Bath after the fall of Colston

The walking-with iterations of 'Sweet Waters' and 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' triggered small 'culture war' skirmishes at heritage sites; questions of race and racialisation, however, remained ghostly, unspoken presences in Bath's official heritage narrative. As I felt the tsunami of emotion following the murder of George Floyd and joined the celebratory shout of triumph as the enslaver's statue fell, I realised that a project that had begun in questioning the sources and legacies of the wealth materialised in Bath was holding a mirror up to me. Continuing to be confronted by my ignorance, I reflected on how my schooling into White privilege deprived me of abilities to know and be otherwise. In dialogue with Cadogan's seminal essay, 'Walking while Black',[56] and in no way seeking a comparison, I have reflected on the experience of walking while White elsewhere.[57] My research continues to uncover other ways of knowing and being, and my response-abilities regarding the memoryscape, especially from the positionality of being racialised as White. I continue to be challenged by Haraway's rhetorical question: 'With whose blood were my eyes crafted?'[58]

As the Colston statue was removed and dragged through the streets of Bristol, a number of other activities seeking to tell a richer and more transparent story were already under way on the fringes of Bath's authorised heritage narrative. Nothing on the scale of that mobilised in Bristol around Countering Colston[59] or Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford,[60] nevertheless the National Lottery agenda of diversity and inclusion and benefit for the community was driving change at Bath Preservation Trust, the Roman Baths and Sydney Gardens. Fowler's 2020 report for the National Trust and her account referencing work done with the National Trust in Bath were heading toward publication.[61] As noted elsewhere in this volume (see Chapter 9), the recently appointed director of the Holburne Museum was bringing new and critical perspectives to bear.

As the news of the statue toppling swept around the world, Bath's heritage organisations hurried to construct website statements referencing Black Lives Matter and making explicit the connections between their properties and slave-ownership. Cynics asked whether it was empathy with BLM or fear of property damage that motivated these gestures. Individuals

56 Cadogan 2016
57 White 2020b
58 Haraway 1988, 585
59 Countering Colston n.d.
60 Chantiluke, Kwoba and Athinangamso 2018
61 Fowler 2020; Fowler et al. 2020

and organisations who had previously distanced themselves from my work were suddenly eager to be in touch. I was not alone in being called into this rush for 'consultation': in August 2020, as these position statements started to appear, a Twitter spat broke out between Beckford's Tower and historian David Olusoga, who had been tagged on a Tower tweet – perhaps hopeful of an approving re-tweet. I found myself on consultations and Zoom panels, some hosted by the custodians of the UNESCO status. I was drawn into a network of heritage professionals working behind the lines of the authorised narrative, their social justice resolve stiffened by recent events and emboldened by National Lottery funding outcome requirements. Members of this network were producing 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery', the first major exhibition in Bath to explore the memorialisation of slave owners in the Abbey (see Chapters 8 and 9); a revised orientation to Beckford's Tower building on Frost's pioneering 2007 research on Beckford; and a major re-staging of the redacted plantation ledger at the Holburne Museum (Chapter 9). Wider work was also under way attending to the unheard stories of elite Black presence in the city, notably the four-year exile in the city of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, and offering a perspective of Black presence beyond and before the atrocities of empire.

I resumed the 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' walks in Sydney Gardens, feeling empowered by the energy manifested in Bristol and solidarity from the new networks that I found myself to be part of. For some, however, it resonated as anxiety: a White walker, who joined me in the park some weeks later, offered the view that it was 'a good job Bath did not have any statues of slave traders'. For others it surfaced as anger and resentment: on another occasion, at the opening conversation of the walk, a red-faced older White man chose not to converse with the person standing next to him as I had suggested, but aggressively insisted on addressing the whole group, demanding to know where they were each 'from'. Members of the group were alert to the agenda of this question and respectfully turned it back to him, questioning his positionality – he stumbled through a reply about being a local resident. I was disappointed that the man, having put his provocation to the group, decided to leave the walk, declaring that it was 'all too woke' for him; nevertheless, his intervention further stimulated empathic conversations about race and belonging already under way. I received this and other 'culture war' comments about re-writing history as manifestations of White fragility[62] underlining the need to continue to extend the non-confrontational walking-with process, developing ways of thinking otherwise and opening up empathic dialogue.

62 Diangelo 2018

10.5.1 Listening for spectres in the park

In Sydney Gardens, the walks evolved using listening and sound to generate deeper resonances. I experimented with recordings of brass bands made on my grandmother's wind-up gramophone played out through speakers stuffed under the stumps of the great horse chestnut trees that once towered over the bandstand. I recorded the sound with contact microphones poked deep in the cracks and called up the presence of a grandfather I never met, a cornet-playing First World War conscript in the colonial army in India. As we walked, we imagined him on guard outside the notorious Vellore Fort, where political prisoners were held during that war and, before them, other potential threats to British rule, including the court and children of the defeated Tipu Sultan. We listened for my grandfather and I told a family story. I played out a powerful Indian song about loss and pollution of the commons, 'Chennai-Poromboke-Paadal',[63] at the grotto removed from Sydney Gardens at the behest of the owner of nearby Vellore House. This great mansion, now a hotel, had been built and the grounds landscaped using wealth originating from his role in the East India Company's private army. Here, a man approached me, having joined the walk almost by accident, he said, to let me know that he was descended from a son of Tipu Sultan who had been imprisoned at the Vellore Fort. A revenant perhaps; such are the serendipities of walking-with. The ghosts of empire both tangible and imaginary haunting the grotto were momentarily brought to mind and body, acts of mourning, acts of paying respect, acts of care.

My research took me towards an understanding of the scale and ambition of the epistemological imperialism[64] unleashed by the imposition of the Linnaean system of botanical classification promoted by Joseph Banks and others and rolled out across the empires of the European powers. Using sound, touch and the sensing body in motion, curating interventions of juxtaposed information, voice and song as affective provocations, I attempted to generate an empathic response not only to the genocides of empire but to the epistemicides. Beside a tall 'Eucalyptus' tree I offered the observation that the tree, extracted as a trophy plant from Australia, came to Europe without any way of reaching the indigenous knowledge embodied in it. For all the nuanced complexity contained in the indigenous Australian naming practices, all the Eurocentric naming system could offer for the plant was something that approximates to 'beautiful hat'. Elsewhere in the park, a walk took us to an enormous trophy plant where we gathered close to feel its rustling and fibrous bark. We encountered its story and the ghosts embodied in its 'scientific' naming and contested through it: the Duke of Wellington, a

63 Krishna 2017
64 Mbonda 2015

British military leader and politician, and Sequoyah of the Cherokee Nation, an educator and linguist. In this way, as we walked and asked questions of ourselves, our bodies and the plants and buildings, we opened a space for unheard voices and uncomfortable stories from the past.

10.5.2 Resistance and uprising: walking in remembrance of the slave trade and its abolition

More than a year after the murder of George Floyd and the toppling of the statue in Bristol, there was no sign of the custodians of Bath's UNESCO World Heritage status or their Advisory Board formally initiating an activity contributing to the 2021 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, on 23 August. In their absence and alerting the new networks that I had found, I proposed a walk from the renewed presentation of the redacted plantation ledger in the Holburne to the temporary exhibition at the Abbey. The walk followed a route between a selection of former residencies of slave owners and other key sites in the abolition campaign. On this walk I sought to engage the spectres of resistance, at each stopping point as well as identifying the enslaver and the value of the 'compensation' received I identified key figures in the uprisings and resistance on that island or plantation. New names and new stories were fed into the memoryscape, alongside names of enslavers already beginning to gain some recognition as such in Bath, including Beckford and Pulteney.

The walk was fully booked almost overnight, attracting Black walkers, elected councillors, members of Bath and North East Somerset Council's Race Panel and the WHS Advisory Board. At each stop, we recovered a memory of resistance, identifying local support for the Underground Railroad or remembering uprisings of enslaved people and their links to former Bath residents. These moments of memory work, these small acts of care, were validated by the presence of individuals with agency in the official heritage of the city. The walk closed with a speech from the local MP and the Abbey Rector, who both referenced connections between Bath and the legacies of slave-ownership.

By the end of 2021, it felt that Bath's dead silence on the sources of its wealth was broken and a conversation on race and racialisation was opening up. For my part, I had led a number of very popular walks in the 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' series, culminating in an immersive audio experience in the park. This brought together much of the walking-with process into a live walk with pre-recorded sounds and a single prototype collaboration with sound artist Joseff Harris around one of the trees. This piece offered moments of meditation, listening and critical mindfulness, listening into a soundscape as an act of care in the wounded city.

10.6 Conclusion: a failed epistemology

In a time of social crisis and climate breakdown, the UNESCO mission of building peace in the minds of men and women is more important than ever. This is a crisis of the imagination; 'we are facing modern problems for which there are no longer sufficient modern solutions'.[65] As I have set out, an epistemology of the North underpins the authorised heritage narrative operating in Bath, negating questions on race and racialisation and normalising the sources of the investment that funded the city's rapid 18th-century expansion. Crucially, revisiting the trauma, recognising the hauntings, their continuing presence, and listening to how they speak in these times offer an engagement with the roots of racism and thus the possibility of repair. I suggest that the change needs to happen not simply in the information made available but in what constitutes the knowledge, in ways of knowing and being; as the planet burns and epidemics rage, it is clear that the epistemology of the global North has failed.

De Sousa Santos and others argue that this epistemology has sabotaged imagination and 'the very idea that another world is possible'.[66] In Bath, this leads to some depressing conclusions, especially taking it to the concerns of this chapter: the dead silence is resilient, the official memoryscape remains largely unchanged. Opportunities to attend to its UNESCO peace-building responsibilities have been repeatedly missed: at the time of writing, the exhibition in the Abbey has come down and the new Lottery-funded orientation at the World Heritage Site visitor centre offers barely a paragraph on the sources of the wealth that funded Bath's rapid 18th-century expansion. For my part, a recent commission to develop and re-stage the immersive audio experience from 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' as a 'Curious Perambulation' for the Victorian-themed reopening gala of Sydney Gardens was cancelled, the content deemed 'inappropriate for a celebratory event'.[67]

I suggest that the creative interventions I have hosted have contributed to sustaining a desire for change, whetting an appetite for new ways of knowledge that could contribute to an ending of the dead silence. Iterations of walking-with, walking and asking questions, generate solidarity and the emergence of stories, and locate memory. We have reclaimed sites, albeit temporarily, for affective encounters, asserting the significance of suppressed knowledge and disqualified memory. In this respect and in the context of related actions taking place elsewhere, 'Sweet Waters' and 'Botany, Empire and Deep Time' are manifestations of claims of ancestry and assertions

65 Escobar 2016, 22
66 De Sousa Santos 2018, 9
67 Author's notes 2022

of a social right to determine Bath's future.[68] We have only just begun to find a way of acknowledging the spectres of the atrocities that haunt this city and claim places to mourn and memorialise; it is incoherent and speculative, but in doing so, in being present with the ghosts, the silenced can be heard. Escobar[69] and others suggest that in daring to think otherwise, there is much to learn from epistemologies of the South (re-)emerging in diverse territorial struggles. Here I have worked with ideas and inspiration drawn indirectly from the Zapatista movement, developing my own critical walking practice, moving, thinking and sharing new thoughts towards a richer and deeper understanding of myself and others, how we can be together and live a good life.

'To think new thoughts […] requires [a] move out of the epistemic space of Western social theory and into the epistemic configurations associated with the multiple relational ontologies of the worlds in struggle'.[70] These practices represent new approaches to thinking about the city and offer a connected way of thinking with our whole bodies about the legacies of slave-ownership and colonialism, from structural racism to climate breakdown.

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68 Till 2011
69 Escobar 2016
70 Escobar 2016, 16

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11

Strategies to uncover hidden connections with historic legacies of the trade in captured and enslaved Africans

Rob Collin

Rob Collin is a Blue Badge Guide for the South West. Born in Africa, he grew up in Bristol and qualified in 2014 as a Blue Badge Guide after having worked in Hong Kong and then in London for several years. Today he guides tours focusing on Bath's connections with Britain's slave economy in the 18th century and on the trade in enslaved Africans in Bristol involving Edward Colston's legacy.

11.1 Introduction

I was born in Uganda, and as an adult worked in Hong Kong and then London. In December 2014 I qualified as a Blue Badge Guide for the South West and have since guided in Bristol and Bath. The Blue Badge is the highest qualification for guiding in the UK. I have guided on the 'Bristol Slave Trade' walk since March 2019 as a specific guided walk and started a guided walk on Bath's place in Britain's slave economy in the 18th century in July 2022. The aim of both walking tours has been to provide an honest narrative of the history of both cities and to demonstrate how Bristol and Bath were physically transformed in the 18th century as a direct result of the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy.

This chapter will explore the potential of guided tours on the subject of the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy to educate visitors and advance their understanding of Britain's participation in the triangular trade. It will draw on the author's experience as a Blue Badge Guide for the South West to develop positive strategies to deal with the legacies of this period of British history and to help address the inconsistent provision of school education on the subject of the transatlantic slave trade. In addition, it aims to provide an alternative narrative to the training of Blue Badge Guides, who hitherto have tended to avoid the subject, being routinely trained to showcase Britain in its best light, with the history of the transatlantic slave trade not

sitting comfortably with this formal guide training. There is, however, a different view claimed by academics in Bristol and Bath, who consider that guided walks on the subject of the transatlantic slave trade do showcase Britain in its best light, since they show a Britain open to reflecting on its past and thereby to developing strategies to address racism and inequality which both have their origin in this period of English and British history.

The first part of the chapter will discuss how the Bristol Slave Trade walk has been developed and how it attempts to engage visitors with the legacies of enslavement and colonisation. The walk covers the city's long history as a port as well as its participation in the development of the English colonies and the transatlantic slave trade. Through Colston's conflicted legacy, it identifies the complex links between the slave economy and institutions such as the University of Bristol and Bristol Cathedral. The conclusion of the walk in Queen Square close to Pero's Bridge, which opened in 1999, allows me to discuss how historical narratives are reshaped and how the subject continues to impact us. The bridge was named after Pero Jones, who worked in Bristol in the 1790s as an enslaved servant to John Pinney, a sugar merchant.

In the second part of the chapter, I will reflect on the purpose of the walk, visitors' reactions to it and its potential to promote a dialogue and break down the polarised views in both Bristol and Bath with regard to this difficult history. I attempt to draw a comparison between both cities, showing that although Bath has also benefited from the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade, there is an even greater absence of awareness of this legacy in the city than in Bristol. I discuss how my research into both cities and the evolution of the Bristol Slave Trade walk directly led me to developing a new walk on Bath's place in Britain's slave economy in the 18th century, with its commencement in July 2022. The tour discusses the connections between the building of Georgian Bath and the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy. Finally, I will conclude by discussing the role of education, to which the walk is hoped to contribute. I will argue that education on this subject can best be achieved through Black History education in schools as well as through a new museum in Bristol, similar to Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. This museum should be dedicated to the transatlantic slave trade and the slave economy that was integral to it and should cover both Bristol and Bath.

11.2 Evolution of the Bristol Slave Trade walk

When qualifying as a Blue Badge Guide for the South West, I decided very early on that I would guide only in Bristol and Bath. Both cities have long histories – Bath from the Roman period and Bristol from the late Saxon period in the 10th century. Although they have very different personalities,

Figure 11.1 The replica *Matthew*, with the SS *Great Britain* in the background, built in Bristol in 1996. In 1997, this ship repeated John Cabot's May 1497 voyage to Newfoundland, Canada.

both cities have one very obvious thing in common: they were both physically transformed in the 18th century, which was the height of Britain's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. That was no coincidence. As I read more widely on the subject, a subject about which I learnt nothing at school, in spite of studying Modern History A-Level, it became clear that the transatlantic slave trade was an integral part of Bristol's history, indeed of Britain's history, and that if I was to present an honest narrative of Bristol, then this difficult part of Bristol's history had to be incorporated.

This interest in the subject of the transatlantic slave trade prompted me to approach historians Evan Jones and Richard Stone at the University of Bristol. The research of Evan Jones[1] shed light on Bristol's commercial trade, from its growth as a port in the 12th century, with the import of wine from Bordeaux in south-west France, to the new trade with Spain and Portugal from the 1460s, with Bristol merchants locating their agents in Seville and Lisbon. The research included John Cabot's voyages to North America from Bristol in the late 1490s, and Bristol's continuing expeditions to North America up to 1508, at which time Bristol discontinued its expeditions, having found no commercial opportunities. Richard Stone has explored Bristol's participation in the development of the English colonies in the Americas in the 1600s and the city's central position in the transportation of white indentured servants, criminals and convicts, and of Irish Catholics

1 Jones and Condon 2016

from both southern Ireland and Bristol to England's American colonies. With the decline in the availability of white indentured servants, particularly after the end of the English Civil War, and the intensive labour demands for the cultivation of sugar in the English Caribbean colonies, England became involved commercially in the transatlantic slave trade. In 1660, the first chartered company, the Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa, was founded. They were given a 1,000-year monopoly of England's African trade, relating to gold, ivory, dyewood and the slave trade. The company, however, only lasted 12 years and was wound up in 1672 before a second chartered company, the Royal African Company, was founded in the same year and given the same 1,000-year monopoly on the African trade, with the trade in enslaved Africans becoming the dominant part of this trade.

After the monopoly of the Royal African Company was revoked by Parliament in 1698, ports like Bristol and later Liverpool were then able to officially engage in the transatlantic slave trade. However, according to Richard Stone, there was evidence confirming that Bristol was engaging in the transatlantic slave trade illegally, circumventing the monopolies of the Royal Adventurers of England Trading to Africa and then the Royal African Company, as early as 1662, only two years after the official start of the English participation in 1660.

My widening knowledge then enabled me to incorporate facts pertaining to Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade into a general tour on Bristol's history. This allowed visitors to Bristol and local residents to gain a more balanced view of the city's long history as a port, and not just history that Bristolians could rightly feel proud of. This latter history, which hitherto has formed the focus of guides in Bristol, included Brunel's achievements in Bristol, in particular the SS *Great Western*, the SS *Great Britain*, his design of the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol. Other notable Bristol highlights were the BBC's Natural History Unit, based in Bristol since 1957, with Sir David Attenborough's presentation of *Planet Earth* and *Blue Planet*, and other film connections such as Aardman Animations (Wallace and Gromit). In addition, Bristol's aviation and aeronautical industry was based in Filton since 1910, with a high point of the building of Concorde with the French Aero-Spatiale and the continuing work by Airbus, Rolls Royce and BAE Systems in Filton.

With my growing interest in the transatlantic slave trade, and with the encouragement of my mentor and fellow Blue Badge Guide Liz Gamlin, I started to lead a Bristol Slave Trade walk in March 2019. In those early days, the walk commenced from outside Bristol's Tourist Information Centre located within the Watershed Building, adjacent to the Floating Harbour. At the time, I had feared that Bristol Council or Destination Bristol, which operated Bristol's Tourist Information Centre, would step in to disallow the

walk to take place on the basis that any narrative in regard to Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade would bring Bristol into disrepute with visitors and show the city in a bad light. I also anticipated scrutiny from Blue Badge Guides in England for undertaking a public scheduled walk with a critical focus on slavery. That negative reaction did not take place, other than that Destination Bristol renamed the 'Bristol Slave Trade' walk the 'Bristol Transatlantic Slavery' walk when it was first advertised on the Visit Bristol website. Flyers for the Bristol Slave Trade walk at the Tourist Information Centre gave details of the walk's content and a summary of the walk was detailed on the Visit Bristol website. No control over the content of the walk was exerted by Destination Bristol. The renaming of the walk as the 'Bristol Transatlantic Slavery' walk by Destination Bristol was a decision taken unilaterally by them on the basis of advice taken from Olivette Otele, appointed as Professor of History of Slavery and Memory at the University of Bristol in January 2020. Although I endeavoured to contact Olivette Otele, she proved to be too busy, so I was unable to establish the reason for the name change, which required an explanation by me to attendees of the walk.

In those early days, the Bristol Slave Trade walk was designed with a focus on the chronological history of Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade, commencing with a summary of Bristol's long history as a port from the late Saxon period to the present day, to explain how Bristol became involved in the development of the English colonies in the Americas, through its central position in the transportation of white indentured servants to the colonies. This information provided the context for Bristol becoming officially involved in the transatlantic slave trade from 1698. The walk then moved to a central position in the city centre, where I provided the historical background to the site of Colston Hall, renamed Bristol Beacon in September 2020, being previously the location of Edward Colston's school, Colston Hospital, founded in 1710 for 100 poor boys. I explained that the school moved to new buildings in Stapleton in 1861 and was renamed Colston School before becoming a largely private school in the 1880s. The school announced in April 2022 that from the following academic year it would be renamed the Collegiate School. Again at this location, I also discussed the decision in early 2017 by Bristol Music Trust, who manage the Colston Hall on behalf of Bristol Council, to rename Colston Hall once the refurbishment works were completed at the end of 2020, and remove the name of Colston. This decision by Bristol Music Trust was based on their premise that they no longer wanted the name of a known slave trader on the side of a public building owned by Bristol Council. I discussed the fall-out of this announcement by Bristol Music Trust, not least the poll undertaken by the *Bristol Post*, Bristol's local newspaper, in

February 2017, where for every respondent who voted to remove the name of Colston from the Colston Hall, two respondents voted to retain Colston's name.[2] I mentioned further the comments by local politician Richard Eddy, Conservative councillor for Bishopsworth, who argued that the removal of the name Colston would be perceived as an attempt to conceal Bristol's shameful past and to expunge Colston's name from Bristol's history books. Mark Wright, Lib Dem councillor for Harbourside/Hotwells, argued that any renaming of Colston Hall was misguided on the basis that it was not right to judge Colston by the modern context, as at the time Colston was alive the mainstream saw nothing wrong with slavery or the slave trade. I used the arguments of the above two local politicians, who articulated the thoughts of many in Bristol, to open up a dialogue with attendees to the walk and encourage them to question these and other standpoints taken by different groups in Bristol.

The walk then moved to College Green, where I talked about the founding of University College in 1876, which became the University of Bristol in 1909. I then told the story of the Wills tobacco family, founded by the first Henry Overton Wills to manufacture smoking tobacco and snuff in about 1788. The company was then expanded by his two sons, William Day Wills and Henry Overton Wills II, to become the tobacco empire of W.D. & H.O. Wills in the 19th century, using tobacco produced by enslaved people in Virginia up to 1865. I then discussed how charitable donations by Henry Overton Wills III and other members of the Wills family, as well as members of the Fry's chocolate family, enabled the founding of the University of Bristol in 1909. The funds provided by these companies amounted to 89% of the £200,000 that was the necessary funding to enable the new University of Bristol's foundation. The Wills family alone donated £161,000 and were the principal benefactors.[3]

The walk then continued with a short history of Bristol Cathedral and its direct links with the transatlantic slave trade. This allowed me to highlight the continued memorialisation of Edward Colston through the Colston Window in the North Transept, and the South West Tower dedicated to Edward Colston in 1888 in the west front of the cathedral.[4] I then told the story of Thomas Daniel (1762–1854), born in Barbados, who was brought to Bristol at the age of two by his parents, Eleanor and Thomas Daniel, whose memorial is located in the north cloisters. Thomas Daniel became an important sugar merchant in Bristol. He married into the Cave banking family, worked on Bristol Council for about 50 years, and was known as the

2 www.bristolbeacon.org
3 Stone 2020, private Zoom lecture
4 Ball and Steeds 2020

'King of Bristol'. After the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833, he received the largest amount of compensation in Bristol, £71,563, for his loss of 4,697 enslaved people.[5] The British government paid out £20,000,000 in total as compensation to former slave owners like Thomas Daniel. Since he was not a philanthropist and invested the funds in his own private estates, very few people in Bristol have heard of him. The tour went on to discuss how the period of the transatlantic slave trade has embedded itself silently in our institutions all over Britain. In Bristol, these institutions include not only the University of Bristol and Bristol Cathedral but also large infrastructure projects undertaken in part using the compensation paid out by the British government pursuant to the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1833. The Clifton Suspension Bridge, the SS *Great Britain* and the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol were all built benefiting from these funds. Members of the civic and business elite in Bristol, such as Thomas Daniel, also invested some of these funds into their private estates.

Finally, the walk moved to Pero's Bridge and Cabot's statue adjacent to the Arnolfini, sculpted by Stephen Joyce in 1986. I explained how the bridge was opened in 1999 and was named after Pero Jones. Jones was an enslaved Creole, born in Nevis in the Caribbean in 1753. He was acquired at the age of 12 with his two younger sisters by John Pinney, a sugar plantation owner in Nevis. Pero Jones then worked for Pinney in Nevis as an enslaved servant for 18 years. Pinney brought him to Bristol at the age of 30 in 1783, and he continued to work for him as a servant, residing at his new house built in 1790 at 7 Great George Street, which is now the Georgian House Museum. Pero Jones died in 1798 at the age of 45. I explained that the naming of the bridge after Pero Jones was the first real attempt by Bristol Council to memorialise the city's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

After sharing the story of Pero Jones, I provided a summary of the English/British participation in the transatlantic slave trade, and Bristol's official participation from 1698, with a summary of the abolition movement, the Act to Abolish the Slave Trade in 1807 and the Act to Abolish Slavery in the British Colonies in 1833, with thoughts in conclusion as to why the subject has so much relevance to us now.

11.3 Modifications to the walk after the toppling of Colston's statue on Sunday, 7 June 2020

After the toppling of Colston's statue on Sunday, 7 June 2020 during a Black Lives Matter demonstration, the subject of Edward Colston was again thrust into the spotlight of Bristol politics. The divisive nature of his legacy

5 Hecht n.d.

Figure 11.2 All Saints Church, to the left of Bristol's Corn Exchange, is the parish church of Edward Colston's father, William Colston, and where Edward Colston's body was interred at his death in 1721.

as a senior official of the Royal African Company attracted global attention from journalists, who wanted to assess the impact of the global Black Lives Matter movement. There were, however, misstatements by journalists who distorted some facts relating to Edward Colston. In one article in the *New*

York Times, reference was made to the fact that Colston 'was now a toxic brand', and that 'in effect Colston had built Bristol'.[6] While Edward Colston may certainly be viewed as a toxic brand, he cannot, by any description, be viewed as having built Bristol at the time he was alive between 1636 and 1721.

The toppling of the Colston statue brought about a renewed interest in the slave trader's legacy in Bristol and the forthcoming renaming of the Colston Hall, which was scheduled to take place sometime in the autumn of 2020, and also in Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. To that end, I introduced into my walk a biography of Edward Colston, which I narrated at the remaining Colston plinth at the north end of the centre (see Figure 11.2). I also added a more detailed discussion of the arguments put forward by local politicians, the Conservative Councillor for Bishopsworth Richard Eddy, and Mark Wright, Lib Dem Councillor for Harbourside/Hotwells, who both favoured the retention of the name of the Colston Hall. I also included the counter-arguments presented by David Olusoga supporting the removal of Colston's name from Colston Hall as well as the standard tropes of the erasure of history by the removal of Colston's statue. The discussion informed participants of the walk about the arguments put forward both for and against the statue of Edward Colston remaining in place. Thus, it encouraged attendees to develop their own thoughts on the subject. One very important contribution from an attendee on the walk came from a former educator of colour in Bristol. She commented that, since the toppling of the Colston statue, there had been a more open dialogue in schools in Bristol as to both Edward Colston's legacy and Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade than had previously been the case. In other words, far from being an erasure of history, the toppling of Colston's statue had actually led to an upsurge of interest in Bristol's difficult history.

The walk then continued to College Green as before, to narrate the links between the University of Bristol and tobacco and cocoa produced by enslaved people, with the difference that I now provided an additional background history about tobacco both imported to and grown in England. The new element also discussed a scandal involving chocolate manufacturer Cadbury's, with whom Fry's merged in 1919. A considerable proportion of Cadbury's cocoa had been imported from Sao Tome, a Portuguese colony, in the latter half of the 19th century. This cocoa had been produced by enslaved people until slavery was abolished in the Portuguese colonies in 1869. However, an investigation by Henry Nevinson, a British journalist, in Angola in 1901,[7] established that workers on the Portuguese cocoa farms in Sao Tome had

6 Landler 2020
7 Satre 2005

first been enslaved in the interior of Angola, then brought to the coast of Angola where their status was changed to that of contract worker, before being transported to Sao Tome where their contracts were automatically renewed without reference to them. These trafficked workers thus remained enslaved and had no control of their labour. Nevinson's investigation exposed that Cadbury's imported cocoa was produced by enslaved people in Sao Tome. As Fry's in Bristol was a Quaker-founded company, this was a considerable scandal, the Quakers having distanced themselves from the transatlantic slave trade from the middle of the 18th century.

I again continued to discuss the links between Bristol Cathedral and the transatlantic slave trade, and then moved to Pero's Bridge and on to Queen Square, where I provided a summary of the English/British participation in the transatlantic slave trade. I finished with the conclusion that the subject was so important and relevant to us now because it allowed us to understand the origin of racism in Britain while it also revealed a historic conflict between trade, commerce and morality. This conflict was self-evident from the use of enslaved African labour as an economic solution to address the shortage of white indentured servant labour on the English plantations from the middle of the 17th century. This moral conflict again manifested itself in the main argument used by the pro-slavery lobby after the abolition movement started in the late 1780s: that the slave trade could not be abolished because Britain's wealth and that of her colonies, as well as Britain's status in the world, were entirely dependent on the use of enslaved labour on British plantations. I closed by discussing how the tensions between trade and morality continue to impact us, with the latest example relating to the British government's former support of Russian oligarchs and their investment in Britain with 'dirty money', the decision to withdraw that support coming only after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

11.4 The aims of the walk: to promote a positive dialogue on this difficult history and visitors' reactions

In the first part of this chapter, I focused on how the Bristol Slave Trade walk developed from a section of a general Bristol history walk into a standalone walk in March 2019 and evolved further after the toppling of Colston's statue on Sunday, 7 June 2020. The purpose of the walk was to provide an honest narrative of Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Other aims were to address my own ignorance of the subject, to understand the origins of racism in Britain and to explore the relevance of the subject today and the lessons to be learnt from this difficult and uncomfortable history, and how we use this history to underwrite a more equal and inclusive society.

When I started the walk, it only attracted small numbers of participants, of whom the majority were either young adults or persons of colour of all ages. The demographics of those attending the walk were therefore different to the 'Bristol Highlights' walk, which I conducted in Bristol on behalf of my fellow Blue Badge Guide, Liz Gamlin. The Bristol Highlights walk, as a narrative of the general history of Bristol, tended to attract those of retirement age and, pre-COVID, visitors from mainland Europe. The demographics of those attending each walk were therefore very different. What was clear was that those attending the Bristol Slave Trade walk were very interested in all aspects of the history of the English/British participation in the transatlantic slave trade, and that persons of colour, particularly those of sub-Saharan African descent, wanted to know specific details of this history, such as the James Somerset case, of June 1772, and the *Zong* trial, which took place at the Guildhall in London in March 1783. Both cases were heard before Lord Mansfield, the Lord Chief Justice of England. In the James Somerset case, Lord Mansfield determined that it was not lawful in English Law for a master to forcibly remove his slave from England to abroad. Although his determination was quite limited in its scope, as far as the press, masters/owners of enslaved Africans in Britain and enslaved Africans in Britain were concerned, there was a perception that Lord Mansfield had determined that slavery in England was illegal. The particular significance of this case resided in the fact that it was the first legal case which put slavery and the trade in enslaved Africans as operated by Britain into the spotlight of British politics.

The *Zong* trial involved an insurance claim by the owners of the Liverpool ship, the *Zong*, en route to Jamaica from Sao Tome, for the 'loss' of 132 enslaved Africans thrown overboard by order of the ship's captain, Luke Collingwood, between 29 November and 1 December 1781, to safeguard the remainder of the cargo of enslaved Africans and the crew, as the ship was allegedly short of water.[8] Because the ship's insurers refused to pay the claim, the matter went to trial at the Guildhall in London in March 1783, the case again heard by Lord Mansfield. Evidence was put before the court by the ship's owners that because of the shortage of water, the captain had no choice but to jettison part of his cargo of enslaved Africans, who were insured on a marine insurance policy. Based on this evidence, Lord Mansfield directed the jury to find in favour of the ship's owners and that the ship's insurers make a payment to the *Zong*'s owners of £3,960. This represented £30 for each of the 132 enslaved Africans thrown overboard, the £30 equating to the value of individual enslaved Africans in Jamaica. At a subsequent hearing requested by the marine insurers at the Court of King's Bench at Westminster Hall two months later, in May 1783, new evidence

8 Byrne 2014; Walvin 2011

Figure 11.3 The *Kaskelot*, once a regular visitor to Bristol. In 2007 in London, at the time of the bicentennial celebrations of the Abolition of Slave Trade Act 1807, the *Kaskelot* represented the Liverpool-owned ship the *Zong*, from which 132 enslaved Africans had been thrown overboard in November/December 1781, resulting in the ship's owners pursuing a claim under their marine insurance policy for the 'loss' of those 132 enslaved Africans.

was presented by the ship's insurers, to the effect that there had been heavy rain on board during the last day on 1 December 1781 when the last group of 36 enslaved Africans were thrown overboard. The rain in part replenished the water butts on board the ship. Since this contradicted the statements made by the *Zong*'s owners at trial, Lord Mansfield agreed to a re-trial, which never took place.[9] Persons of colour who attended my walks were much better informed about this difficult history than the average attendee. They inspired me to discuss both cases and to add more detail to the walk, as my understanding of the transatlantic slave trade period developed.

As the detail accumulated, I continued to gain a deeper understanding as to why England/Britain had participated in the transatlantic slave trade, and why enslaved Africans had been chosen to replace white indentured labour on the English plantations in the Americas. So began my personal journey seeking to understand not just the motives behind England's/Britain's participation in the transatlantic slave trade but also exploring how the English and Scottish elite, who had a vested interest in and profited from the operation of the triangular trade, perceived the trade in enslaved Africans. I wanted to understand whether they believed the trade was acceptable or

9 Olusoga 2016

whether they recognised its immorality, but had become inured to its evils because it was so profitable. Although my reading to address these questions is ongoing, one thing was very clear: one of the main arguments used by the pro-slavery lobby from the 1780s was that the slave trade could not be abolished without risking Britain's wealth and status in the world, which were entirely dependent on the enslavement of Africans.[10] In other words, the triangular trade had become embedded centrally in English/British commerce, and the trade in enslaved Africans was too difficult to withdraw from.

My own slowly developing understanding of this complex subject was something I attempted to incorporate into my walk and the reaction I received from both young adults and persons of colour to the walk by way of email or Tripadvisor review was very positive. This approach favoured understanding to address the confrontations triggered by the divisive legacy of Edward Colston and enabled attendees to ask questions directed to me and to discuss the subject as part of the walk. Attendees also asked for book recommendations about Colston and the transatlantic slave trade and were themselves sharing their reading material with me. This not only helped my own development but also led to a continued dialogue with those who remained in contact after the walk. That dialogue has enabled discussions about very difficult subjects, including the recent rise of critical race theory in the United States. Attempting to understand the complex subject of the transatlantic slave trade has opened my mind and has increased my empathy with persons of colour, who clearly want this difficult history discussed and the subject of formal education. There is no doubt that understanding the lessons to be learnt from this history will help us deconstruct its legacies, including racism in Britain.

11.5 The development of a walk on Bath's connections with Britain's slave economy in the 18th century

Before discussing the role of education in understanding the transatlantic slave trade and the lessons to be learnt from this difficult history, the evolution of my Bristol Slave Trade walk motivated me to develop a similar walk in Bath, to address the question as to whether the building of Georgian Bath was as a direct result of the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy. This is a complex question. In October 2020, Richard Stone stated in an online lecture to Bristol and Bath Guides that there was very little physical evidence to demonstrate Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade to visitors. The main difficulty was that the

10 Olusoga 2016

transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy in the 18th century were embedded silently in our institutions, such as our banks, universities, country houses and the houses of the merchants in Britain. Thus, Bristol and Bath's participation in the transatlantic slave trade and slave economy was not readily apparent. In Bath, inhabitants and visitors mostly expect to hear about Bath's long history, starting with the Roman period, the Georgian city's Palladian architecture and its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There has been a general absence of awareness that Bath greatly benefited from the wealth generated from the transatlantic slave trade and the slave economy.

There is a common misperception that the impact of the transatlantic slave trade can only be measured by study of the main British slaving ports of London, Bristol and Liverpool. Richard Stone extended my understanding further by introducing an interpretation of Britain's slave economy which formed an integral part of Britain's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. He defined the slave economy as

> everyone who benefited from the enslavement of Africans, to include the builders of the slave ships, those who victualled the slave ships, such as the sail makers and the rope makers, the merchants who manufactured the goods which were shipped out to west Africa to exchange for enslaved Africans, the slave ship owners who acquired the enslaved Africans, the plantation owners who bought the enslaved Africans, the merchants who imported the plantation crops into Britain, the bankers and the marine insurers.[11]

With this definition in mind, which extended to the consumers of the three new drinks – tea, coffee and cocoa – taken with sugar, routinely cultivated in the British Caribbean colonies by enslaved Africans, it was easy to comprehend that the transatlantic slave trade and the integral slave economy impacted on all Britain.

As a centre of entertainment for the wealthy in Britain from the early 18th century – including the Royal family, aristocrats, the gentry and wealthy merchants, part of whom were represented by those either with direct connections with the transatlantic slave trade or with Britain's slave economy – Bath was clearly part of this narrative that I was investigating. There was, however, a sparsity of publicly available reading material about Bath and its connections with the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy, other than R.S. Neale's book *Bath: A Social History 1680–1850*.[12] Neale looks at the transformation of Bath in the 18th century, which was consumer-led, with the arrival in Bath of what became known as the

11 Stone 2020, private Zoom lecture

12 Neale 1981

Company, including the Royal family, aristocrats, the gentry and wealthy merchants who, in addition to availing themselves of the health benefits offered by the hot mineral springs, subscribed to the entertainment offered in Bath, in particular gambling. The wealthy arriving in Bath needed high-class lodgings to rent for the season between September and May, and this provided the driving force for the building of Georgian Bath, initially by John Wood the Elder and his son, John Wood the Younger.

To extend my research beyond the publicly available reading material and to enquire further into the connections between Bath and the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy, I approached Alison Hems of Bath Spa University in October 2020, and through Richard White was then introduced to Christina Horvath of the University of Bath. Through their assistance and that of Bryn Jones of the University of Bath, I developed a growing understanding as to how the stimulus to build high-standard accommodation in Bath attracted wealthy entrepreneurs, in particular James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos, who provided John Wood the Elder's first recognised commission in Bath in 1727 at St John's Hospital, and then later Sir William J. Pulteney. Pulteney inherited the land (through his wife, Frances) and provided the financial platform for Bath New Town, the Pulteney Estate, on the east side of the River Avon from 1788. Both the Duke of Chandos and Sir William J. Pulteney had direct links with Britain's slave economy, but it was their provision of a financial platform which enabled the transformation of Bath into the Georgian city that we admire today.

Discussions with the academics helped me develop a walk exposing Bath's connections with Britain's slave economy. This walk started in July 2022. Again, although the numbers on the walk have been small, as with the start of the Bristol Slave Trade walk, two persons of colour who had also attended the Bristol walk agreed that the comparison of both cities helped throw light on the historic conflict between commerce, trade and morality, both in the 18th century and now. The walk's comparison between Bristol and Bath was instrumental to understanding that both cities, and not just Bristol as one of the three main slaving ports in Britain (together with London and Liverpool), gained greatly from the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's integral slave economy.

As a result of the collaboration with the Bath academics, I brought in an introduction to the Bristol Slave Trade walk to explain that the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade should not be considered as enriching solely the three main slaving ports of London, Bristol and Liverpool. On the contrary, it was important to understand that most of Britain gained from the enslavement of Africans, with Georgian Bath being built to meet the demands of the wealthy, part of whom had direct connections with the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy.

11.6 Conclusions

Although I hope that both the Bristol Slave Trade walk and the new walk commenced in July 2022 on Bath's role in Britain's 18th-century slave economy will contribute in some small way to a growing awareness of this subject, it should be stressed that the narrative is relevant to all of Britain and that an understanding of this subject can best be developed by incorporating Black History into school education.

My research into Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade and Colston's divisive legacy had started as an attempt to provide, as a guide, a more honest and balanced narrative of Bristol's long history. This would incorporate history that Bristol can rightly feel proud of, including Isambard Brunel's achievements in Bristol, the film industry and Bristol's aviation and aeronautical industry, to name but a few. But the guided walk would also include the difficult history of Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. This research and discussions with Richard Stone about Bristol's difficult history have also led me to consider the wider context of the slave economy in Britain. This then led to my understanding that all of Britain benefited from the wealth derived from the transatlantic slave trade and the integral slave economy, and not just the three main slaving ports of London, Bristol and Liverpool. The wider narrative extending to all of Britain made me ponder about Bath's place in Britain's slave economy. Encouraged by academics in Bath, I wanted to confront the relevance of the transatlantic slave trade to the 21st century and then draw the overall lessons to be learnt from this difficult history. This inevitably led me to consider the conflict that historically has existed between commerce, trade and morality, and whether 21st-century morality is any better than 18th-century morality.

Although it has been commonly said in Bristol that a different morality existed in the 18th century and that slavery and the trade in enslaved Africans were widely accepted, it was also very clear from my research that the English and Scottish elite had vested interests in and profited from the triangular trade. Therefore, when the abolition movement started in Britain and engaged ordinary people in the fight to abolish the Slave Trade, the English and Scottish elite continued to support Britain's trade in enslaved Africans, claiming that abolition of the trade would threaten Britain's wealth and status in the world. Vested interest and profit, with morality set aside, are a continuing theme of commerce and trade into the 21st century. There is much evidence for the view that our basic morality has not changed since the 18th century and that all aspects of society are still dominated by vested interest and profit, with no place for the consideration of morality. That conclusion and the recognition that racism originated from England's/ Britain's participation in the transatlantic slave trade have increased my own

empathy, particularly for people of colour. Discussions with attendees of the walks helped me consider the lessons to be learnt from this difficult history.

In addition to developing Black History education in schools, it is important that a standalone slavery museum be constructed in Bristol with academic leadership. This museum should be dedicated to Bristol and Bath's participation in the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's slave economy that was integral to it. Through education in schools and an international slavery museum, this difficult and uncomfortable history can be better understood so that a more equal and inclusive society can develop. It is hoped that the Bristol Slave Trade walk and the walk on Bath's connections with Britain's slave economy in the 18th century, along with other similar walks in the UK, will contribute to a growing understanding of this subject and of the lessons to be learnt from this history.

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12

Mapping Bath's 'uncomfortable past'

A student project engaging with black history, slavery and abolition in Bath

Christina Horvath and Benjamin Van Praag

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Both authors started to collaborate in 2018, co-designing a project that looked at graffiti and Co-Creation as a means of promoting socially cohesive cities in Brazil. Their collaboration involved developing a case study using Co-Creation to explore the legacies of slavery in Bath. In 2020–1, both authors led a workshop that enabled a group of ten students at the University of Bath to design an alternative walking map to challenge the city's dominant heritage from which the memory of the transatlantic slave trade has been erased. The chapter reflects on this experience.

12.1 Introduction

Alan Rice notes in *Creating Memorials, Building Identities*[1] that adequately memorialising the trade in enslaved Africans is challenging since 'its legacy is often a mere trace that is difficult to comprehend, let alone visualise two hundred years after its official ending in Britain'. Visualising connections with past violence is even more difficult in sites of 'elite myth-making' like the city of Bath, where the horrors of plantation slavery have been covered with silence and are only visible through the idyllic Georgian architecture

1 Rice 2010, 1

built on the wealth enslaved Africans helped create. To expose the traces of these atrocities, one must 'look beneath the surface to the materiality that made such wealth possible'.[2] Georgian Bath is one of those sites that exhibit wealth, power and beauty and, as Eichstedt and Small suggest, engages in the work of social forgetting, with deep wounds and anxieties being confined to oblivion, 'meeting the needs of whites to create of the vision of the nation and themselves as noble and dissociated from racial atrocities'.[3] Rice, who has been actively involved in uncovering slavery legacies in another medium-sized British town, Lancaster, highlights that 'in contrast to Bristol and Liverpool, with their large Afro-Caribbean communities', smaller, predominantly white cities experience significantly less, if any, political pressure from residents to uncover and acknowledge their slave trading past.[4] This situation, however, has radically changed recently with the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020 and the protests it triggered in many cities around the world. On 6 June, a thousand peaceful protesters gathered in Bath's Green Park and the next day in Bristol a crowd of ten thousand pulled down the statue of slave trader Edward Colston. These protests sparked an unusually high level of curiosity surrounding the 'uncomfortable past' of both cities and the effects and legacies of transatlantic slavery locally and globally.

The project discussed in this chapter was conducted during the 2020–1 and 2021–2 academic years, in the immediate aftermath of the Colston toppling. It used arts-based Co-Creation methods (see also Chapter 2) as a strategy to tease out Bath's colonial connections and make them visible in the public space. Art has been chosen as a tool to enable 'guerrilla memorialisation', defined by Rice as a strategy to 'rewrite the national story from the bottom up'.[5] Bringing together art and socially engaged activism with participatory walking practices, the workshop 'Bath's Uncomfortable Past' brought together the two authors and a group of ten undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Bath. It sought to expose the UNESCO World Heritage City's long-obscured links with slavery by counter-mapping the city's official tourist trails in ways reminiscent of Lubaina Himid's satirical performance piece 'What Are Monuments For?'[6] which hijacked official heritage stories and maps of London and Paris designed for tourists to propose alternative narratives memorialising black history as a natural part of national history in England and France. The participants designed a new tourist circuit and a related map telling

2 Rice 2010, 9
3 Eichstedt and Small 2002, 15
4 Rice 2010, 33
5 Rice 2010, 15
6 Himid 2009; Rice 2010; Bernier et al. 2019

the stories of Bath's legal slave owners, as well as abolitionists and people of African descent connected with Bath. This chapter seeks to evaluate the extent to which this art-based counter-mapping as a decolonial practice enabled young people to critically engage with Bath's colonial legacies as well as their own positionalities.

The first section of the chapter will focus on the principal stages of the map-making process, explaining how the initial research and creative exercises helped the participants understand their own biases and preconceptions. It will also provide details on shaping the route by linking relevant historical figures to specific sites of interest and turning the walk into a map. The next section will discuss how, after a successful launch event, students assessed their own learning. The third section will reflect on the redesign of the map and walk in collaboration with British-Tanzanian artist Natasha Sweeting. This stage was facilitated by feedback gathered from broader audiences and resulted in an improved route, a clearer narrative and a more legible map, which was tested through a public walk guided by the authors as part of the Bathscape Walking Festival in September 2022. The final section will evaluate to what extent the method of map-making can be considered a decolonial strategy enabling participants to uncover their own biases while exploring silenced colonial legacies. It will critically assess the project's main tangible outcomes, the map, the launch event and the walking tour, in terms of their effectiveness as forms of guerrilla memorialisation. The conclusion will make some methodological recommendations for future work.

12.2 The Co-Creative process of map-making

The Bath's Uncomfortable Past project was initiated by the authors, Christina Horvath and Benjamin Van Praag, as a 'Vertically Integrated Project' at the University of Bath. The aim of these extracurricular projects is to engage students from different disciplines at various stages of their studies in research projects for the benefit of communities outside academia. Both authors are academics who had been involved in conceptualising and testing Co-Creation as a creative and collaborative knowledge practice (see more about this method in Chapter 2). They created this project as the extension of a case study exploring Bath's colonial legacies through Co-Creation in 2017–22.

The project used mapping with the aim of taking the students on a journey of discovery, exploring Bath's connections with enslaved Africans using independent research and Co-Creation, a collective and creative research method simultaneously producing shared understandings and tangible outcomes.[7] The walk used data extracted from the database established by

7 Horvath and Carpenter 2020

the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery at University College London, which reveals who in Bath had filed claims and benefited from generous compensation for their lost 'property' after slavery was abolished in 1833. Although we envisaged an array of possible outcomes for the project, including activities at local schools and creative art workshops at the Holburne Museum, the COVID-19 lockdown, which lasted for most of the 2020–1 academic year, ruled out many of the planned in-person activities. As a result, the project's focus shifted to the design of a walking trail and map to encourage people to engage with this past while walking, practising one of the few activities they were still able to do in the public space during the lockdown. As teaching at the University of Bath moved online, most participants returned home and worked remotely from their cities or even countries. Thus, all group meetings were held online and the map itself was designed entirely remotely, except for three face-to-face test walks conducted in small groups in December 2020, March 2021 and September 2021.

From various disciplines, the students had little previous knowledge about the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans and its legacies in Bath. They were encouraged to sign up for different roles within the project and elect a student facilitator to help coordinate the project. The elected facilitator, Nicole Kairinos, played a crucial role in holding the team together and organising the launch event. A student in MSc International Development, Nicole was passionate about researching human rights, racism in everyday life in the UK and biased media representations of ethnic minorities. Thibault Quinn, a student of BSc Architecture, and Max Hardwick, BA of Politics and International Relations, retrieved Bath-related information from the UCL database to identify addresses in Bath whose occupants had filed claims for compensation. Three students of architecture, Daria Shiryaeva, Galina Lyubimova and Thibault Quinn, sketched buildings and created a logo, while the map itself was designed by Galina. All participants researched various historical figures and wrote short texts about them. Lilly Luu and Rebecca Ann Philip, both enrolled in BSc Economics, and Emilia Milner, an undergraduate in Modern Languages, formed the public engagement team. Thibault and Thao Ngoc Do, a PhD student in accountancy, were also active in testing the route. The project culminated in a virtual online launch event in which the students presented the project and introduced a round-table discussion with researchers, museum curators and artists engaging with the subject (see Chapter 16).

From the first group conversations, it became clear that before being able to produce satisfying outputs, participants had to raise their awareness of their own unconscious biases and learn more about the history of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans, which was not covered in detail

in their educational curricula. By erasing their connections with this past from their narratives, British cities including Bath have contributed to an amnesia which provides a favourable ground for contemporary racism and race-based discrimination. To help the group develop a better understanding of race issues and colonial legacies, the participants compiled a reading list of academic and media resources. These included newspaper articles[8] as well as research papers and books on the experience of people of colour in Britain,[9] white fragility,[10] and the ways in which colonialism had shaped Britain.[11] In addition, the authors designed creative exercises to enable 'auto-decolonisation' through drawing and collaging. Prioritising a creative visual rather than an exclusively verbal engagement with the topic, the group shared images and first ideas through a Miro board. In addition, guest speakers, including artist-researchers Shawn Sobers from UWE and Richard White from Bath Spa University, were invited to share some of their relevant academic research and creative practices with the group.

During the first two months of the project, participants read recent reports[12] and research publications by heritage professionals and academics[13] as well as writings by 18th-century abolitionists.[14] This helped the group identify a range of historical figures involved in promoting or resisting slavery. To challenge dominant narratives that attribute the end of slavery to the efforts of white male abolitionists such as William Wilberforce, they decided to include in the walk both male and female figures from various racial and social groups holding a diversity of worldviews, from pro-slavery campaigners to abolitionists. The aim was to highlight the fact that many women and people of African descent played leading roles in the abolition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans in 1807 and the enactment of the Slavery Abolition Law in 1833. The first route, designed by Thibault, was test-walked by the authors in December 2020. The test showed that the walk was too long – even without stopping, it required almost three hours to complete and included a very steep uphill march to Lansdown Crescent. Overall, however, the trail proved walkable and only required some minor adjustments, for instance making the uphill loop optional for walkers,

8 Cameron-Bath 2018

9 Akala 2018; Eddo-Lodge 2017; Olusoga 2020

10 Diangelo 2018

11 Bhopal 2018; Sanghera 2021

12 UNESCO 1994; Wills and Dresser 2020

13 Dresser and Giles 2000; Dresser and Hann 2013; Fowler 2020; Frost 2018; Gobin 2011; Hall 2016; Otele 2020; Steeds and Ball 2020

14 Equiano 1789; Sancho 1784

Figure 12.1 Map designed by the student group, recto and verso.

depending on their time or stamina. Another test walk was conducted by Ben, Christina, Thao and Thibault in March 2021.

From the various historical figures researched by the group, 18 were retained to be linked to the map. Some of them were slave owners like Sir William Pulteney (1729–1805), William Beckford (1760–1844), George Byam (1734–79), Reverend Alexander Scott (1768–1840), James Heywood Markland (1788–1864) and James Holder Alleyne (1790–1842). Others fought actively against slave-ownership, such as Bussa, an enslaved African who lived on Scott's plantation in Barbados and became one of the leaders of the 1816 rebellion named after him. Other formerly enslaved individuals came to Bath as anti-slavery campaigners, such as Olaudah Equiano (1745–97) and Ellen (1826–91) and William Craft (1824–1900). The map also featured prominent female abolitionists – writer Hannah More (1745–1833) and Quaker Emma Sturge (1825–95), the owner of an anti-slavery cotton and linen shop in Bath in the 1850s. Other selected figures were artists who depicted Bath's Georgian society: painter Thomas Gainsborough (1727–88) and novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817). To illustrate the complex intertwinement of race and social standing, the walk also included a black slave owner, Nathanial Wells (1779–1852), the son of a Welsh plantation owner and an enslaved woman, who inherited his father's three sugar plantations in St Kitts and became Britain's first black Sheriff. A black artist unrelated to slavery, violin virtuoso George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778–1860), came to Bath to perform in 1788 as a child prodigy. Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon (1707–91), was included to illustrate that a person could be simultaneously involved in the fight for emancipation by supporting the publication of Olaudah Equiano's book in 1789 and rely on enslaved labour to finance her important charity work. Including the multiple voices and complex stories of these 18th- and 19th-century residents of and visitors to Bath allowed the group to construct a nuanced narrative of how the residents of Bath engaged with the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

12.3 Launch event and assessment of the learning

To provide the project with a coherent visual identity, the group designed a logo. Inspired by a previous Co-Creation workshop conducted in September 2019 (see Chapter 2), the group chose the teacup as a symbol of the refined lifestyle of Georgian elites consuming tea, coffee and sugar produced by enslaved people. A pair of fists emerging from the teacup and breaking a chain was inspired by the BLM logo. It aimed to highlight the active role of free and enslaved Africans in the fight for abolition. It also reflected the group's intention to break Bath's silence about the contribution of enslaved people to the city's wealth and urban development. Like the logo, the title of the walk,

'Bath's Uncomfortable Past', was adopted through group discussion. It was chosen for representing the idea that the city's links with slavery, excluded from Bath's official narrative, remained uncomfortable for many residents. Silence about it was a way not to stain the city's UNESCO World Heritage status, yet it was contrary to UNESCO's recommendations of exposing connections with slavery.[15] Members of the group created Facebook and Instagram pages to advertise the walk. They also designed an online launch event which used Zoom and included a student presentation explaining the project, a creative workshop and a round-table discussion with artists and heritage professionals. The event took place on 25 March 2021 and was advertised via Eventbrite, Facebook, heritage networks and word of mouth. It was booked by 300 people and over 250 joined the event via Zoom.

The event consisted of three different parts. First, the students presented the walk they had designed while critically reflecting on the process that they had been through to create the map. Nicole presented the group's understanding of decolonisation and explained how this vision underpinned the design of the trail, while Thibault introduced the map and explained how the walk was created. The audience was encouraged to ask questions. Then a round table staged four speakers who discussed their engagement with the history and legacies of slavery through curatorial practices, academic research and art, including film and performative walking. Shawn Sobers, Professor in Cultural and Interdisciplinary Practices at the University of the West of England and Director of the Critical Race and Culture Research Network, was included for his work with communities of Caribbean descent and the Rastafarian community at Fairfield House. Artist-researcher Dr Richard White from Bath Spa University was invited to talk about his Sweet Waters project exploring the legacies and resonances of slave-ownership in Bath. Professor Alan Rice, Director of UCLan Research Centre in Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX) and Co-Director of the Institute for Black Atlantic Research at the University of Central Lancashire, was invited to present his work as an activist leading walks and campaigning for building a memorial for victims of the trade in enslaved Africans in Lancaster. Jillian Sutherland, an Artisa Curatorial Fellow at the Holburne Museum and PhD student at Bath Spa University, was asked to reflect on her reinterpretation of a plantation day book as part of the Holburne Museum's new permanent display. The discussion panel was recorded and made available online (Chapter 16 provides the edited transcript of the discussion and Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 15 were authored or co-authored by these panellists).

The launch event concluded by inviting members of the audience to think about memorials to the slave trade and create their own designs of

15 UNESCO 1994

Figure 12.2 Revised map by artist Natasha Sweeting, recto.

what they would like to see in the city as public monuments. This hands-on creative workshop was led by one of the authors, Benjamin Van Praag, who encouraged participants to collage, draw, paint and juxtapose contemporary and colonial images to imagine monuments and other artworks

acknowledging the history of the transatlantic slave trade in Bath. To support the activity, an image pack was distributed online, including photographs of statues, buildings and monuments in Bath, maps, already-subverted images and related artwork. Members of the audience could submit their creations via Padlet. This activity was introduced to help the audience engage in active and creative ways with the monuments that were part of Bath's memoryscape, which often celebrate those directly involved in the exploitation of enslaved people.

The launch event, engaging nearly 300 members of the public, exposed a considerable interest in Bath's unheard heritage stories. It contributed to public awareness of the horrors that had taken place, showing in no uncertain terms that the city's wealth had originated through the exploitation of captured and enslaved Africans. The event gave voice to artists and academics, allowing them to reach a wide audience in Bath and beyond. Furthermore, the participants themselves benefited from the experience of organising and running a large online event. The broad attendance demonstrated a genuine interest in the project and showed the real-world impact of the students' work challenging colonialism and racism. In the survey conducted after the end of the project, participants reflected in very positive terms about their involvement in the project. As Thibault noted,

> My experience working on the Co-Creation VIP project has encouraged me to delve into the history of Bath and think self-critically about my understanding of my own in-built unconscious and conscious biases in relation to the British history of slavery. The broadness of experiences, specialties and skills of the group of fellow students, lecturers and external academics created a collaborative environment where perspectives were challenged and constantly shifting, which was crucial for a project that addressed a topic as important and sensitive as ours. Seeking out resources and actively researching for information about Bath's links to the slave trade and enslavement of Africans formed the early stages of the project.

Students also saw the project as a tool to promote social justice by breaking a persistent silence about ways in which British cities and institutions benefited from the economic gains of slavery. This aspect has been stressed by Galina:

> The project gave us an opportunity to learn about and reflect on aspects of the past that are not discussed but desperately need to be revealed. It was interesting but at the same time deeply saddening to learn about the persistent hypocrisy of cultural and historic institutions attempting to shush facts from the past that would put their status quo at risk.

12.4 Feedback and redesign

After the launch event, audiences were encouraged to walk using the map and fill in an online questionnaire about their experience. From the 22 individuals who responded to the survey, 40.9% declared that they were already familiar with Bath's links with transatlantic slavery, 36.4% had heard about it, but for 22.7% it was a new discovery. Only three respondents had done the walk before completing the survey, and therefore most responses were concerned with the map design and the stories told rather than the route itself. Most respondents highlighted some shortcomings of the map. Missing numbers relating to stops were flagged up, and some reviews mentioned that the map was confusing because it included too many side streets, which made it difficult to identify the route itself. Since the format of the map was size A3, when users tried to print it at home in a smaller format, the printout was hardly legible. Concerns were also raised about some historical figures mentioned in the narrative who had no ties to Bath or were not linked to a specific place on the map. Other respondents felt that the fragmented stories of individuals were not providing a coherent enough narrative. Suggestions were made to include further historical figures with slavery links in Bath such as William Blathwayt (1649–1717)[16] and Hastings Elwin (1777–1852).[17] Some respondents suggested including a more detailed introduction and links to resources for further reading. When asked about their expectations, 95.5% of the respondents said they wanted the map to 'engage people in questioning the past' and 86.4% wanted it to 'tell multiple stories' and 'encourage dialogue'. It appeared that showing empathy and commitment to social justice was perceived as slightly less important (77.3%) and only 31.8% expected the map to be impartial. In individual comments, people suggested producing a shorter and a longer version of the walk, as well as a separate trail destined for young audiences. The survey also revealed that the map's success in translating a vision remained limited; 86.4% of the respondents agreed that the map revealed former Bath residents' connections to the colonies, but only 45.5% thought that it showed a diversity of viewpoints and that it covered most aspects of the city's links to slavery.

The authors spent the following academic year (2021–2) working on improving the map. They changed the presentation of the information by merging texts about buildings and historical figures. The stories became shorter and were

16 Former owner of Dyrham Park, a National Trust property just outside Bath, member of the Board of Trade (1696–1707), Surveyor and Auditor-General of Plantation Revenues (1680–1717) and MP.

17 Hastings Elwin or Elwyn was one of the paid Commissioners of Compensation. He played a pivotal role in founding the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution in 1823.

linked to the stops on the map. Collaboration with British-Tanzanian artist Natasha Sweeting helped make the map more user-friendly. Natasha brought to the project her professional design skills and experience of drawing maps, while her cultural sensibility as an African-born artist proved a real asset for the redesign. She approved of the BLM-inspired logo but redesigned it to look more professional. She also acted as a critical friend, advising the authors to remove some historical figures with no links to Bath and introduce others to further emphasise black presence and agency in the city throughout the ages. Writer and composer Ignatius Sancho (1729–80), known for his *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1780), was added for his involvement in the nascent abolitionist movement. Sancho's portrait was painted in Bath by Gainsborough at his studio on the Circus; we therefore created a new stop there. Another new addition was actor and playwright Ira Aldridge (1807–67), who starred in *Othello* and *The Padlock* in London theatres and Bath's Theatre Royal, which was also included as a stop in the revised route. Finally, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie (1892–1975), who lived in Bath in exile for nearly five years from 1936 to 1941, was added to diversify the stories about black presence in the city, along with a new stop at Parade Gardens, where a special tea party in his honour was organised in 1936.

While working on the redesign of the map and route, we engaged in discussions with four critical friends. Each of them provided valuable insight in areas relevant to their expertise. Blue Badge Guide Rob Collin (see Chapter 11) gave us feedback about the map's overall narrative based on his experience guiding walks exposing Bristol's and Bath's slavery connections. As the redesign progressed, Rob expressed his reservations about shortening the text in significant ways since it inevitably meant truncating the information and reducing the complexity of the stories presented throughout the walk. Curator and academic Jillian Sutherland (see Chapter 9), Renée Jacobs (see Chapter 7), the founder of the association B(lack) in Bath, and artist-researcher Richard White (see Chapter 10) commented critically on the language used, highlighting the colonial connotations of terms such as 'East Indies' and 'West Indies' and pointing out the inconsistency in capitalising 'black' but not 'white'. The critical friends at times contradicted each other's recommendations – for instance, the phrase 'plantation owner' was recommended by some as an alternative to 'slave owner' to avoid essentialising enslaved Africans, while others saw the term 'plantation owner' as a euphemism and recommended using 'slave owner' as a term better suited to denouncing colonial violence. The four critical friends also commented on the route. We integrated their suggestions by adding some new stops, including the Royal Crescent where we talked about the Duke of Chandos (1673–1744), a leading shareholder of the Royal African Company.

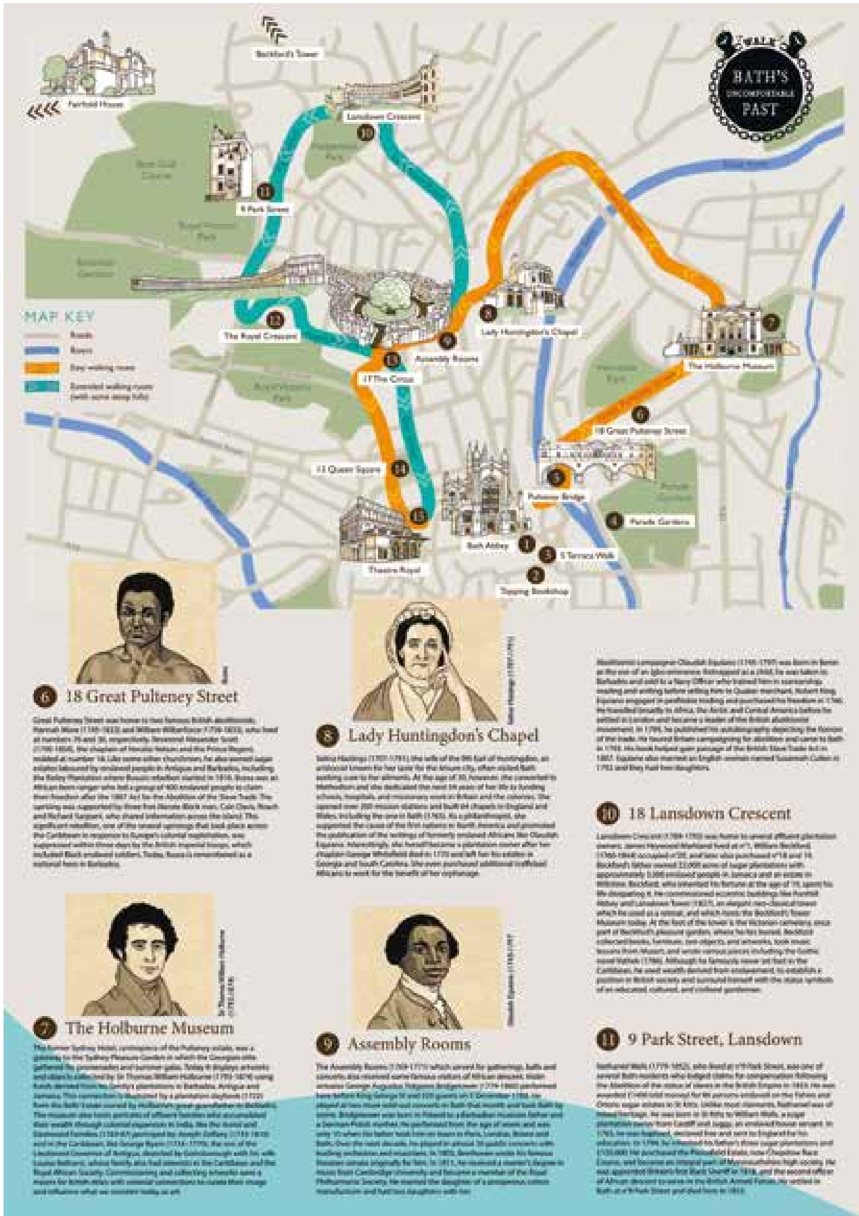

Figure 12.3 Walking map redesigned by Natasha Sweeting, verso.

We also gave a greater emphasis to Bussa's rebellion in Barbados to further accentuate the agency of enslaved Africans.

The critical friends' comments on the walk's title revealed some uncertainties with regard to the vision underpinning the walk. The group named the walk

'Bath's Uncomfortable Past' since their intention was to reveal obscured colonial connections erased from Bath's official narratives. However, as the walk evolved, more information about black presence in Bath was incorporated and we wondered whether a new title was needed to reflect this change. Two of the critical friends recommended keeping the title but developing a more confrontational narrative so that the walk deserved its name. Another critical friend recommended that we adopt the title 'Black History in Bath' and consider adding more recent and positive stories, shifting the focus from slavery to black experience over the ages. Finally, the fourth critical friend suggested that the authors change the title to 'Understanding Bath's Connections to Britain's Slave Economy in the 18th Century'. While we carefully considered each of these options, we decided to keep the original title as a brand name emerging from the original project, whose legacy we wanted to preserve. Overall, the redesign clarified the aims of the walk, and helped set a tone that the authors found provocative but not too uncomfortable. The redesigned walk's focus remained on the three most crucial aspects the students wanted to highlight: the ways in which Georgian elites benefited from colonisation and enslaved labour to increase their fortunes, the often-overlooked agency of people of African descent and the pivotal role of female abolitionists whose contribution had been left out of most official narratives. The improved version of the walk and map exposed social injustice more powerfully through a coherent narrative counteracting the uncritical glorification of Georgian Bath in official narratives.

Figure 12.4 The walk premiered as part of the Bathscape Walking Festival in September 2022.

The redesigned map was completed in May 2022. The walk premiered on 24 September 2022 as part of the Bathscape Walking Festival in September 2022, when we were guiding it for the first time. The fact that the walk was fully booked very early on revealed a keen interest in the topic in the city. The authors distributed printed copies of the map to those who attended the walk. They started the walk by introducing the project that had produced it. The walk, attended by about 20 mostly Bath- and Bristol-based participants, was generally well-received. Attendees were both impressed with the students' achievement and interested in hearing more about the project. As the group walked along the trail, they engaged in conversations with the authors guiding the walk and with each other, sharing many stories about their own experience and previous knowledge about the topic and asking us to print more maps and distribute them in the city or make them available online to download.

12.5 Analysis

The map design project had the ambition of testing the potential of Co-Creation as a decolonial practice. According to Mignolo,[18] decolonisation aims to end the 'westernization of the planet, political and economic unilaterality, and epistemic and aesthetic universality'. Co-Creation as a collaborative knowledge practice is also underpinned by De Sousa Santos'[19] proposal that an 'epistemological shift' is necessary to change the world by collective reinterpretation through 'dialogue between the producers of different types of knowledges'.[20] Co-Creation was used throughout the map-making project as an attempt to replace or at least complement the Western epistemic and aesthetic universality with pluriversality. This was achieved by combining the method of archival research, used to gather information on historical figures, with creative methods like drawing and collaging and the embodied practice of walking and sensing.

Recently, decoloniality has inspired academics to rethink their approaches to research, adopting more engaged stances and acknowledging their subjectivity. At the University of Bath, student groups such as Decolonise Architecture have made demands to decolonise curricula and a new research hub, DECkNO (Decolonise Knowledge), was set up by researchers to explore the meanings and practices of decolonising knowledge across the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences. In the broader context of the city, the Bath and Colonialism Action Group (BACA) has been founded

18 Mignolo 2021, x
19 De Sousa Santos 2018, viii
20 Horvath and Carpenter 2020, 3

to bring together heritage professionals and other stakeholders to share information and support a decolonial agenda across the sector. One of the principal challenges faced by these initiatives is the difficulty of translating decolonial aspirations into sustainable practices. However, as Mignolo and Walsh argue,[21] 'decoloniality is not an abstract academic paradigm, that is, a paradigm devoid of struggle and praxis'. On the contrary, decoloniality's primary aim is to propose 'a way, an option, a standpoint, and a practice (and praxis) of analyzing but also of being, becoming, sensing, feeling, thinking and doing'.[22]

The map-making workshop has contributed to promoting hands-on decolonial approaches to heritage in three essential ways. First, it sought to delink the Western way of storytelling which, according to Mignolo,[23] introduced space and time as two fundamental practices of living on which binary distinctions were founded, including the hierarchy between primitive hunters and civilised Europeans. By promoting a great variety of dissonant stories, the map-making workshop disrupted the hegemonic narrative celebrating the ideology and aesthetic canons of the dominant social group. By teasing out complex counter-narratives, it exposed Bath's dominant storytelling for what it is: just one among many possible stories, a 'western local narrative' valid only 'for westerners who believe in them'[24] rather than a universal representation of the past. The new map undermined this narrative by shifting attention to uncelebrated heroes, including the driver Bussa, who led the largest 'slave revolt' in Barbadian history, and Quaker Emma Sturge, who refused to sell cotton produced by enslaved labour.

Second, the workshop promoted decolonial self-awareness through arts-based methods. Drawing and collaging were used from the very start of the project, when the group celebrated Halloween with an auto-decolonising exercise which encouraged participants to creatively engage with the theme of the skull as a symbol of colonial practices and their legacies in Bath and the world. The arts methods mobilised participants' affects and encouraged them to use 'the 'utopian possibilities of visualisation' advocated by the practice of Lubaina Himid,[25] whose radical art has challenged the invisibilisation of enslaved Africans by acknowledging their diasporic memories and contributions through guerrilla memorialisation attempting to subvert Western triumphalism. As Nicole, the facilitator of the group, highlighted,

21 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 99
22 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 102
23 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 212
24 Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 216
25 Bernier et al. 2019, 3

this exercise was particularly useful for the participants to better understand their own positionalities:

> It wasn't until one of our first team meetings where we were asked to 'decolonise ourselves' that I understood that decolonisation is not just about telling stories of a forgotten past, it is about reflecting critically on our own positionality and how we uphold and contribute to the silencing of this history. This project helped me understand how colonial legacies permeate my everyday life as a White European woman: from the media I consume, the history I have learned, and the education I have received throughout my life. […] I feel that I have a much broader understanding of Bath's history and I have also been driven to think more critically about my positionality.

The map-making workshop also relied on arts-based methods during the launch workshop when the attendees, provided with an image pack, were encouraged to collage imagined memorials to enslaved Africans in Bath's public space while listening to the speakers. The resulting images visualised the absence of enslaved and free Africans who contributed to the city in various ways by juxtaposing Bath's Georgian cityscape and patterns borrowed from traditional African artefacts, portraits and statues of historical figures and the infamous plan of the slave ship *Brookes*, an iconic image of the inhumanity of the trade in enslaved people. These strategies were similar to Himid's work in that they memorialised the lives of black diasporic people in the hands of white governments and nations and highlighted that this guerrilla memorialisation was necessary since, in Himid's words, 'as a city you want to show that you would do differently now, that you would be able to defend those people now […] because your city would not be the city it is, without the sacrifices of those who were sold by or used by the city in the past'.[26]

Third, the map-making workshop sought to engage with embodied ways of learning through the practice of walking, although this attempt partially failed due to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, when most participants were forced to work remotely. Although opportunities to walk in Bath individually or together as a group were scarce, the walking tour and map the project produced encouraged residents to walk in the city and look out for the remnants of the 'uncomfortable past' at a crucial moment when discussions and debates about this past became endemic. When the lockdown was over and participatory walking practices restarted, the potential of walking as a form of guerrilla memorialisation became manifest through the opportunities it created for questioning the 'uncomfortable past'.

26 Himid 2009, quoted in Bernier at al. 2019, 250

This has been confirmed by the first guided walk we offered as part of the 2022 Bathscape Walking Festival.

12.6 Conclusions

According to Horvath and Carpenter,[27] Co-Creative projects have two types of outputs: tangible artefacts produced by the participants and intangible understanding emerging from group discussions, research and learning taking place throughout the creative process. One of Co-Creation's particular aims is to trigger critical discussions and civic engagement leading to transformative change (see also Chapter 2). The success of this particular project should therefore be assessed by evaluating how the final tangible outcomes, the Bath's Uncomfortable Past trail and the walking map, promoted learning about and critical engagement with silenced stories.

During the lifecycle of this project, the tangible outcomes kept evolving. The first map created by the students was a walkable tour that provided relevant information for visitors and countered the hegemonic narrative represented by the Mayor of Bath's Corps of Honorary Guides, created in the 1960s to train volunteers and offer free walking tours to tourists twice a day. However, its narrative remained hesitant, revealing that a mere juxtaposition of facts and individual stories was not enough to create an impactful narrative and counter dominant representations of the past. The first trail and map comprised many interesting but irrelevant details that distracted attention from Bath's colonial connections with sugar plantations in the Caribbean and the fight of abolitionists and enslaved and free Africans to end an exploitative and unjust system. Those walking with the map were required to make a significant effort to piece together information provided separately about buildings, historical figures and places on the map into an overarching story.

The redesign improved the map in two crucial ways. First, it made it more legible and practical. Walkers were now able to see the route and the information about each stop without having to refold the map or turn it over repeatedly. Second, the new map provided a clearer narrative without turning its back to the original aims and priorities established by the student group. A better focus on the main narrative arc allowed us to emphasise the connections between the multiple stories of slave owners, enslaved people, black, white, male and female abolitionists and artists and intellectuals of colour who came to or lived in Bath and contributed to the city. In addition to tweaking the narrative to increase coherence, we also understood when first guiding the walk that it had two stories to tell: one about Bath's

27 Horvath and Carpenter 2020, 7

uncomfortable past and another about designing the map with the students. Combining these two narratives allowed us to add a layer of self-reflectivity and explain some of the choices made during the design process.

The project's main intangible outcome was a new, shared understanding of Bath's multiple connections with colonialism and slavery. This understanding was produced with the student group to be then shared with broader audiences by proposing public debates and an alternative heritage narrative in Bath promoted through the walk and the map. The very successful launch event, which was attended by over 250 people from Bath and beyond, showed that the public was keen on finding out more about the city's colonial connections at a time when decolonisation had suddenly become an urgent and widely debated question in the public space. Leading the walk within the Bathscape Walking Festival confirmed that people in Bath were interested in more critical narratives of the city's heritage and that guided walks created ideal opportunities for people to come together and discuss these histories from a critical angle. As discussed elsewhere in this book (see Chapter 1), permanent museum displays are necessary to create more inclusive memoryscapes. Although walks are more ephemeral, trails like Bath's Uncomfortable Past prove good tools to complement these displays and make the stories come alive and be discussed with the public's active participation.

Designing the Bath's Uncomfortable Past walk and map was an opportunity for the authors and the student participants to deepen their understanding of Bath's links with socially unjust colonial practices. The project helped us raise our awareness of our own positionalities and responsibilities in fighting contemporary legacies of slavery. It equally revealed that exposing the silenced past, keeping its memory alive and recognising the agency of enslaved Africans and their contribution to society were crucial to building more socially just and inclusive narratives not only for Bath but for the entirety of British society.

The authors' experience of working with the student group confirmed that map design and Co-Creation methods were generally well suited to educative projects seeking to engage young people in critical reflection about past colonial practices and present-day injustices. Based on the understanding developed throughout this experience, we recommend that future projects dedicate enough time to creating from the start a safe place for all participants to explore their own positionalities, subconscious biases and emotions. Creative, arts-based methods can support this process as they allow different, including young or vulnerable, audiences to express their ideas without relying on words. Given the complexity of the issue of enslavement and colonial oppression, it can be useful to start work by

reading broadly about and discussing issues of race, gender and social justice before starting to focus on concrete examples locally.

The project also revealed that participatory walking was an effective way to build stronger relationships within the group and also to encourage bodily understanding and learning. Although, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the contributors to the project missed some opportunities for walking as a group, the authors recommend using walks early on to maximise opportunities for embodied experiences and social interactions. Walking was also useful for testing the route. It taught the participants to avoid streets that are too steep, noisy or difficult to cross with a group. The guided walk within the Bathscape Walking Festival demonstrated that walking was a great way to open up conversations about the past and diversify one-sided narratives which currently dominate Bath's memoryscape. The authors hope that reiterating this experience will enable them to gather more feedback, further consolidate the narrative and share it with more people, thereby contributing to breaking the silence about the city's colonial connections. Other ways of extending the legacy of Bath's Uncomfortable Past include connecting with other groups across Britain who designed similar walks in cities including Lancaster, Oxford, Cambridge and London and inspiring new groups in Bath interested in Co-Creation methods to produce their own maps reflecting their own positionalities and visions of Bath's uncomfortable past. As Nicole phrased it in a critical comment about the project,

> Although I appreciate this project attempted to dismantle 'white silence', I think we could have done better to work more closely throughout the project with individuals who have been marginalised to have their perspectives and voices heard. This is especially true for individuals who have been personally affected by this history as they will have unique experiences that many of us within the team lacked.

The authors propose that this experiment of Co-Creating a participatory walk could be used as a blueprint by other groups interested in creating their own versions of the walk, to share their visions of a trail engaging with the past and the present of the city.

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PART IV

COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

13

Walks and thoughts through historic cityscapes

Cultural heritage, mass tourism and hidden stories between Global North and Global South

Héctor Quiroz Rothe and Pamela Ileana Castro Suarez

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Both authors were involved in the Co-Creation project funded by RISE Horizon 2020, and their participation in September 2019 in a workshop seeking to address the legacies of slavery in Bath and Bristol discussed in Chapter 2 inspired this comparative chapter.

13.1 Introduction: walks between Bath and Mexico

Our first encounter with the heritage of Bath was as students at the Faculty of Architecture of the National Autonomous University of Mexico more than 30 years ago, in a history class glorifying it as the most accomplished

example of Georgian city planning. In 2017 we returned to the city to attend a Co-Creation workshop (see Chapter 2) which included a walk designed by artist-researcher Richard White. The walk addressed the contrast between the aesthetics of Georgian Bath and the unethical origin of some of the fortunes that sponsored its construction. It inspired us to reflect on this controversy by engaging with the built heritage of our own country. In Mexico, an important part of the built heritage in urban areas is the result of the exploitation of native people who have been colonised since the 16th century. Extraordinary architectural achievements and exceptional cityscapes do not always result from democratic or sustainable planning processes. In the Western canons of art and architecture, the aesthetic qualities of historic sites are often valued over the ethical aspects related to their construction and financing. This is deeply problematic not only from an architectural viewpoint but also with regard to the construction and preservation of what is regarded as heritage.

This chapter will compare the silencing of slavery legacies in Bath with heritage construction in the Mexican city of San Miguel de Allende (hereafter San Miguel). As in the Georgian city, where built heritage is the result of human trafficking and slavery, in San Miguel too great architectural monuments that today are part of the national heritage have been, directly or indirectly, produced by the vassalage and displacement of the indigenous populations. Like Bath, San Miguel has an important cultural heritage recognised by UNESCO (since 2008 in San Miguel's case). The city has a population of about 150,000 inhabitants, only slightly more than Bath. Most of them are Mexican but there is also a significant presence of foreign residents, mostly from the USA, supporting an unusually sophisticated offer of leisure activities, many of which, however, remain inaccessible for national inhabitants and visitors. It is estimated that 10% of the population residing in the municipality are of foreign origin; 70% are Americans, followed by Canadians and Europeans. This high proportion of foreign residents is exceptional in the Mexican context. In San Miguel, like in other tourist destinations, gentrification, fuelled by the city's aesthetic qualities and popularity among tourists and well-off retirees, has been rampant. In a certain way, the city has become a victim of its own success.

To better understand how political imperatives and ideologies shaped heritage narratives and policies of heritage protection in cities like Bath, this chapter proposes a sustained reflection on San Miguel as another example of how built heritage is constructed to mould official narratives of national identity and belonging. In both cities, these official narratives co-exist with other narratives developed around highly visible tourist attractions. Although more discrete, these narratives are not less valuable for the construction of a more inclusive vision of history and local identity. Through this analysis of the San Miguel case study, we seek to contribute to the international debate

on the meaning of history, heritage, and its use within the economy of mass tourism. We seek to highlight some alternative practices with the potential to offer visitors new narratives and alternative forms of heritage which can also be valuable in the context of Bath. Before discussing our Mexican case study, we will focus on the process of state and identity building in Mexico. We will then propose a conceptual framework to analyse political uses of built heritage, which is essential for our contribution to the broader international debate about how to make national heritage narratives more inclusive.

13.2 State, identity and cultural heritage

From early on, the modern state has developed policies to define and preserve the nation's historical heritage in close relation to the construction of national identity. Consequently, the cultural heritage of a society acquires an indisputable value. As a result, the definition of historical heritage is linked to the construction of a nation's history, its own image and, consequently, collective identity.[1] Heritage consists of tangible and intangible assets valued by a specific social group as resources to assert its own culture, identity and differences from other groups. As the most tangible expression of a political or religious ideology, the built heritage can thus be considered the concretion of an 'identity fiction'. This concept, proposed by Marc Augé to refer to discourses delivered and the actions undertaken to build the identity of a community, appeals to spatial references, architectures and forms of construction.[2] In this process, certain architectural forms, much like other elements of a nation's cultural identity, are manipulated by the narratives of authority to be designated as heritage.[3]

The official concern for the conservation and restoration of built heritage is a recent historical phenomenon, a sign of our times. It is associated with the construction of the nationalist discourse of the modern state based on historical elements and artistic manifestations considered unique and typical of a nation. The restoration of built heritage, like the official history, is the result of the political intention to create, through a selection of buildings, references from the past in accordance with criteria established by powerful groups. The notion of the historical monument can encompass isolated buildings, such as urban or rural sites that testify to a unique civilisation, a historical event or a significant phase in the evolution of humanity.

The importance of monuments is produced in political discourse and spread by the media and public education to be assimilated by most people

1 Choay 1992, 152

2 Augé 1997, cited by Biase 2001, 158

3 Biase 2001

who adopt certain monuments as symbols of a collective identity. In this sense, it is possible to talk about a modern cult of monuments.[4] Today, the protection of architectural heritage can be viewed as a source of social mobilisations that affect the organisation of urban space.[5] At the same time, a heritage industry has been created, associated with the development of the real-estate market in historic centres and mass tourism. Heritage conservation contributes significantly to the consolidation of the nation state due to the production of symbols that prove its legitimacy.[6] Conservation occupies a privileged place in the agenda of many institutions and is increasingly present in the decisions about cultural promotion by cultural and academic organisations.

The notion of national heritage as well as the programmes oriented to its protection are underpinned by four principles.[7] First, each era recovers the past and selects the goods that constitute the heritage in a different way. Second, the selection and restoration of heritage is carried out in accordance with particular criteria set by the ruling class. Third, the state's definition of heritage is founded on a distinction between what has a general value and what has a particular value. Thus, and this is the final principle, national heritage is a result of a historical process in which the social and political interests of the nation are interlinked. As we will see in our case study, these principles are at work in San Miguel, just as they are in Bath.

Recently, both Mexico and Europe have witnessed the emergence of new cultural heritage narratives that demand more visibility for those communities – indigenous, migrant, African descendant, LGBTQA+ and others – that have historically remained marginalised. These new narratives usually confront the hegemonic position of the groups in power who have defined the national heritage. In this moment of transformation, we consider that mass tourism is a space of conflicts but also of new, arising possibilities to make visible these emerging identity discourses and alternative heritages. Let us take a closer look at this process in Mexico.

13.3 The integration of national identity and heritage in postcolonial Mexico

In Latin America, the nation appears to be a pure creation of the state. At the outset of the 19th century, as the process of achieving independence unfolded, the factions spearheading the emerging independent nations recognised the

4 Saez 1995, 189

5 Safa, 1995, 9

6 Melé and Lacarrieu, cited by Villegas and Solís 2000, 37

7 Florescano 1997, 15

imperative to construct a narrative that would foster national cohesion. Mexican nationalism originates from *criollo*[8] patriotism, established in the 18th century by Spaniards born in Mexico to demark themselves from Spain. This ideology was founded on the appreciation of the indigenous past, in particular the Aztecs, the condemnation of the Spanish conquest and devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe.[9] The criollos' interest in pre-Hispanic cultures was linked to their need to define their own cultural identity in opposition to foreign models. They selected the pre-Hispanic world as their cultural model since it offered the possibility of building a history prior to the colonial conquest and the basis for creating a common identity for the members of the new 'Mexican nation'.

Once national independence was achieved in 1821, Mexico experienced a series of internal conflicts between liberals and conservatives which made the way to national unity very difficult. In addition, the country also faced the Mexican–American War from 1846 to 1848, occupation by the French from 1862 to 1867 and dictatorship under Porfirio Díaz, who served as president from 1876 to 1911. The geohistorical space of Mexico was far from constituting an integrated territory; regional interests prevailed over those of the nation. Liberals saw the United States as a model and rejected the indigenous and colonial past. The conservatives, on the other hand, supported Hispanic linguistic and religious heritage as the main element of national cohesion. To define the roots of the new nation[10] implied clarifying the legitimate origin and evolution of power. Discourses promoting national unity were necessary to establish the legitimacy of those who claimed the right to govern this territory.

The definitive triumph of liberalism under the presidency of Benito Juárez (1857–72) encouraged the establishment of an ideology in concordance with the ambitions of the local bourgeoisie allied with foreign interests, particularly those of the USA. The irruption of liberalism into a society built on a Spanish hierarchical model fostered an excessive appreciation of European traits and flagrant discrimination against indigenous communities. However, in the official discourse the pre-Hispanic heritage was exalted as part of the nationalist discourse linked to the formation of the state.[11]

8 Spaniards born in America. Brading (1980) highlights the figures of Carlos de Siguenza y Gongora, Lorenzo Boturini and Francisco Xavier Clavijero.

9 Brading 1980, 119

10 For example, the Castas War (1847–1901) headed by the Mayas of Yucatan or the Yaqui people rebellion (1899–1910). Both indigenous groups were brutally repressed by the National government.

11 In 1825, the creation of the first National Museum was decreed with the aim of collecting the antiquities of primitive peoples. In 1833, a first census of indigenous peoples was carried out (Uribe 1987, 4). In 1860, the Mexican Society of Geography

The indigenous heritage was used by groups in power to strengthen their position by rejecting artistic expressions that were reminiscent of colonial domination and at the same time also considered to be the core of the conservative national heritage. Interest in the pre-Hispanic universe was also influenced by Romantic thought and the idealisation of the past.[12] Beyond this position, republican architecture assimilated European, particularly neoclassical, styles with state institutions.

During the Porfiriato (1876–1911), the centralisation of public education was the most effective way to achieve national unity. Following the example of European nationalism, children were taught patriotism and the idea that all Mexicans are part of a large family despite their contradictions and internal conflicts.[13] A central power supported by the army, the bureaucracy and the development of communication routes imposed itself on the regions and constituted a federation of 'sovereign' states. During this period, the desire for modernity favoured the Europeanisation of the culture and the arts, which in the field of architecture resulted in the assimilation of imported historicist styles, for instance neo-Gothic.[14]

The Mexican Revolution, which in 1910 overthrew the dictator Porfirio Díaz, did not bring profound changes in the centralised organisation of the Mexican state. Its leaders once again faced the need to redefine national values to resolve the conflicts that threatened the unity of the country. They constructed a new nationalist discourse imbued with the notion of *mestizaje*, or cultural mixing, to legitimise their power by offering a place in the social structure to the most disadvantaged groups.[15] The thesis of mestizaje affirms that Mexico has its own identity and culture, with its regional particularities, which are the result of a synthesis of various indigenous, European and African elements. This synthesis allegedly resulted in a *mestizo* culture that is distinguished by a sensitivity and a new attitude towards the world.[16] The imposed official mestizo culture also favoured the spread of a principle of equality among the country's inhabitants. However, mestizaje as a principle of national unity was not assimilated by the entire population.[17] It is important to note that in this discourse, the indigenous person was

and Statistics drafted a bill according to which the country's archaeological monuments were declared national property. Lombardo 1997, 199

12 Robles 1987, 22

13 Eguiarte 1987, 12

14 This is the case of the main facade of the parish church of San Miguel de Allende that dominates the landscape of its historic centre and has become a landmark of local identity reproduced in multiple media.

15 Acevedo 1987, 18

16 Béjar and Rosales 1999, 48

17 Lomnitz 1995, 360

less an actor in the construction of the mestizo culture than a mere cultural referent.

An emblematic figure of the revolutionary cultural project, Minister of Education José Vasconcelos, conceived in the early 1920s a cultural policy based on the promotion of popular art as one of the pillars of national unity. The art of the Revolution was an art of propaganda, fuelled by the desire to bring the people closer to the cultural refinement that had been reserved for the elites and, at the same time, to create a bond between all Mexicans. For Vasconcelos, the pre-Hispanic civilisations were dead and the contemporary indigenous population had no other future than to accept Western civilisation through education.[18] During this period, studies on pre-Hispanic and colonial art and architecture multiplied. This scholarly work influenced the construction of buildings in regional historicist styles such as neo-Aztec, neo-Mayan and neo-Hispanic.[19] Vasconcelos favoured the use of the latter in the new government buildings, showing that the notion of nationalism rested above all on the contributions of criollo culture. Thus, paradoxically, colonial architecture, which in the 19th century had been rejected as an expression of Spanish domination, now became the architectural expression of national and revolutionary identity, opposing European modernity privileged by the Porfirian regime. The incompatibility of the aesthetic codes typical of these historicist styles with the needs of modern society, as well as their indifference to technical innovations in construction, condemned this architecture to become a purely decorative exercise in public and residential buildings. In 1925, the resignation of José Vasconcelos would facilitate the opening of Mexican architecture to the avant-garde movements of Europe and the United States, which by their origin were considered symbols of modernity.[20]

As we have set out above, the construction of a shared national identity underpinning the definition of cultural heritage in Mexico is a complex and contested process. It refers to the European conquest and colonisation of a territory occupied by various native peoples,[21] who for 500 years have been

18 Acevedo 1987, 18

19 We can point out the work of Ignacio Marquina and Manuel Gamio on archaeology and pre-Hispanic art; as well as the investigations of Manuel Toussaint and Federico Mariscal on colonial architecture, published during the first third of the 20th century (Acevedo 1987, 19).

20 Anda 1987, 28

21 To which have recently been added African descendant communities, who share conditions of marginalisation and discrimination comparable to those of indigenous peoples. Specialised historiography indicates that the population of African origin that arrived enslaved during the Colony, assimilated with the indigenous and mestizo population to the extent that today it is difficult to distinguish the African heritage in

marginalised by a society that defined itself as mestizo. During the last decade of the 20th century, these social and political contradictions rose to the surface during the 1994 Zapatista uprising in the state of Chiapas, which led to the modification of the Constitution to recognise Mexico as a multicultural rather than mestizo nation. Undoubtedly, the Zapatista movement is a very important precedent for the decolonial discourse in Latin America.

This dynamism permeating the official discourses which define the nation and its built heritage is perfectly illustrated by the changing fortunes of commemorative monuments that adorn the public spaces of our cities. In 1992[22] indigenous protesters tore down the statue of the conquistador Diego de Mazariegos in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. From then on, in Mexico City, indigenist groups began to 'vandalise' the monument to Christopher Columbus, built in 1877 and located on the most prestigious avenue of the city, every year during the commemoration of the discovery of America. Finally, in 2021, the Mayor of Mexico City decided to permanently remove this sculpture and replace it with an official monument to Mexican women. The proposed new monument has not been without aesthetic controversies and remains unfinished; meanwhile, various feminist groups have intervened on the old pedestal with graffiti and temporary installations. The erection and destruction of monuments illustrate well the constant struggle over identity narratives which are simultaneously shaped by the state and challenged by other forces.

13.4 Approaches to heritage protection in Mexico

Mexico stands out in the Latin American context as a pioneer in the protection of historical heritage. The first official attempts to protect archaeological heritage date back to the 19th century; however, the prevailing conditions of political instability made the application of such measures almost impossible. In 1885 Porfirio Díaz created the General Inspection of Monuments. In 1897 a first decree was written to protect pre-Hispanic heritage and in 1907 the first archaeological site in Teotihuacan was opened. Drafted during the Revolution in 1916, the first legislation related to the conservation of historical monuments was the antecedent of the 1934

the population as a whole, except for some micro-regions in the south of the country. See Ministry of Culture's 'The Afro-Mexican Peoples and the Recognition of their Diversity', https://www.gob.mx/cultura/es/articulos/los-pueblos-afromexicanos-y-el-reconocimiento-de-su-diversidad?idiom=es

22 The year of the commemoration of the 500 years since the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus or the meeting of cultures that gave rise to contemporary America.

law for the protection and conservation of archaeological and historical monuments, typical localities and places of natural beauty.[23] In 1939, the National Institute of Anthropology and History was created to study, protect and conserve the national cultural heritage. It has been used to promote a collective identity on which the national government founds its legitimacy.[24]

At the international level, Mexico has closely followed the evolution of both the concept of heritage and the legislation associated with its protection. As soon as UNESCO was founded in 1945, the Mexican government adopted international recommendations encouraging concrete actions for the conservation of historic monuments and towns.[25] In response to the Venice Charter on the Restoration and Conservation of Historic Monuments, political measures were introduced in the 1960s in favour of conservation, supported by the designation of historical and natural areas as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The selection of predominantly urban centres of colonial origin, sometimes associated with pre-Hispanic vestiges, to be nominated to UNESCO reflects Mexican authorities' desire to promote sites linked to official history and its heroes.[26]

Each historical period has left its mark on Mexican cities, from pre-Hispanic foundations to 20th-century skyscrapers. UNESCO recognises 32 sites catalogued as Cultural Heritage of Humanity in Mexico; ten of these are of an archaeological nature and ten of a colonial urban nature. The rest fall into the categories of natural heritage, isolated buildings and cultural landscapes. Without a doubt, the historic centres continue to comply fully with the principles of functional and symbolic centrality. They are perceived as emblematic spaces of Mexican identity and continue to be the scene of all kinds of patriotic and folkloric expressions. San Miguel is a good example of this condition. UNESCO denominations are usually related to the development of mass-tourism destinations all around the world. In Mexico, heritage tourism occupies second place in the national rankings of tourism destinations, behind sea-and-sun destinations. This tourism favours the historic centres of cities founded in colonial times which mainly attract domestic tourists. San Miguel, like Bath in the UK, has been listed by UNESCO for the quality of its built heritage, combining various periods of historic architecture as well as its outstanding urban parks and landscapes. This confirms the similarity of both cities as destinations for cultural tourism.

23 Díaz-Berrio 1976, 149

24 Melé 1998, 65

25 Lombardo 1997, 207

26 This is the case, for example, of Dolores Hidalgo (the Cradle of National Independence), Mexcaltitlán (considered the mythical origin of the Aztecs) or Ixcateopan (the town where the tomb of Moctezuma II was discovered).

Figure 13.1 Public spaces conquered by mass tourism in San Miguel de Allende and Bath.

13.5 Built heritage and tourism beyond Bath: the Mexican case of San Miguel de Allende

The city of Bath was a forerunner of the urban dynamics associated with leisure tourism in the 18th century. We refer to the production of an urban environment dedicated almost exclusively to pleasure and enjoyment. The massification of tourism in the 20th century can be interpreted as a triumph of the welfare state or a sign of the detachment of the modern man, urged to evade his daily life on pleasure trips to exotic and idealised landscapes. The search for authenticity and the desire to escape are trends in international tourism, which contain the paradox of the inevitable impact generated by the flow of visitors in the relatively original contexts that they try to discover and experience. This paradox becomes more palpable in places branded by national and international organisations as cultural heritage. This notion becomes a bargaining chip in a fragile balance between development expectations and increased economic benefits for authorities and entrepreneurs in the sector and the social and environmental impact of tourism on host communities.[27]

Table 13.1 shows the main tourist attractions of San Miguel and Bath listed on Tripadvisor, an important tourist promotion website.[28] It demonstrates how heritage sites listed by UNESCO and promoted by local

27 Hiernaux and González 2014; Troitiño and Troitiño 2016

28 https://www.tripadvisor.com.mx/Attractions-g151932-Activities-San_Miguel_de_Allende_Central_Mexico_and_Gulf_Coast.html https://www.tripadvisor.com.mx/Attractions-g186370-Activities-Bath_Somerset_England.html

authorities become primary destinations for mass tourism. As can be seen, the most popular sites are historical buildings and green spaces in both cities. The promotion of official heritage sites raises a crucial question about the future of the cultural expressions and heritage of non-hegemonic groups in the dynamics of mass tourism, as illustrated by the case of the Jimmy Ray Chapel (the seventh most popular destination in San Miguel) which we will discuss later.

Table 13.1 What do tourists visit in Bath and San Miguel de Allende?

San Miguel	**Type of attraction**	**Order of importance**[29]	**Bath**	**Type of attraction**
Parish of San Miguel Arcangel	Religious architecture	1	The Roman Baths	Architecture/ archaeological site
Cañada de la Virgen	Archaeological site	2	Bath Abbey	Religious architecture
Factory La Aurora	Industrial architecture, shopping and art facilities	3	No. 1 Royal Crescent	Museum Architecture
El Jardin (The Garden)	Architecture and public space	4	Pulteney Bridge	Architecture/ urban landscape
El Charco del Ingenio	Park	5	Royal Crescent	Architecture Urban landscape civil/public space
Sanctuary of Atotonilco	Religious architecture	6	Fashion Museum Bath	Museum
Gallery Church of Jimmy Ray	Museum	7	The Circus	Architecture and public space
Museum of the Mask	Museum	8	Royal Victoria Park	Park

29 According to Tripadvisor.

San Miguel	Type of attraction	Order of importance[29]	Bath	Type of attraction
Park Juárez	Park	9	Prior Park Landscape Gardens	Park Landscape sightseeing
El Mirador	Landscape sightseeing	10	Little Salisbury Hill	Landscape sightseeing
La Esquina. Museum of the Mexican toy	Private museum	11	Holburne Museum	Private museum

Figure 13.2 Panoramic view of the central area of San Miguel de Allende.

Figure 13.3 Interior of the Sanctuary of Jesus Nazareno.

Every weekend, San Miguel receives crowds of visitors who saturate the streets of its historic centre, causing permanent traffic congestion.[30] The cathedral – the icon of the city – is the setting for a wedding parade organised by specialised agencies as 'all-inclusive' packages that attract young couples from all over the country. At night the downtown streets become the sites of a permanent party which makes normal life impossible for national and foreign residents. The local low-income Mexican population has been progressively expelled from this area because of the exponential increase in property prices, which are usually quoted in US dollars. Thus, the historic centre that concentrates most of the city's built heritage and the main attractions has become a kind of theme park in which tourist accommodation options co-exist with Mexican cantinas, gourmet restaurants, art galleries and countless craft and souvenir shops for all budgets, as well as the main cultural facilities of the city.

In Mexico's collective national imagination, San Miguel, along with other cities in the state of Guanajuato, occupies a special place due to its historical status as the Cradle of Independence.[31] Its picture-perfect image meets all the requirements of what a traditional Mexican city should be. On several occasions the city has been voted 'Best City in the World'[32] – a title boasted by businessmen and local authorities – repeatedly confirming San Miguel's mediatic and commercial success.

Some of the questions raised by the walking tours we attended in Bath about hidden or neglected aspects of history difficult to identify at first are also relevant in San Miguel. Beyond the tinsel of tourist guides, among the less visible facets of local history, the active and constant participation of indigenous communities in the founding and development of the city stands out. Dozens of pre-Hispanic archaeological sites are known to exist in the basin of the Lajas River that runs through the municipality, proving that it was a densely populated territory before European colonisation.[33] However, as in many Mexican cities, the official history equates the origin of the settlement with the arrival of the first missionaries in 1542.

San Miguel El Grande was founded in a border region between the territory that was the seat of the main Mesoamerican civilisations and the

30 Before the pandemic, San Miguel de Allende used to host around one million visitors per year.

31 The name of Allende refers to Ignacio Allende, one of the criollo captains, originally from the city, who rebelled against the Spanish authorities in 1810.

32 This charming Mexican city was voted the best in the world for the second year in a row: https://www.travelandleisure.com/worlds-best/san-miguel-de-allende-best-city-in-the-world

33 See the articles in *Arqueología Mexicana* magazine dedicated to the history and archaeology of Guanajuato State, vol. XVI, no. 92, July 2008. www.arqueomex.com

extensive semi-desert spaces inhabited by semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers, who clashed for decades with European colonisers. The Chichimecas and the Otomies or Ñahñu were the original inhabitants who shared the resources of this region. The Chichimecas were described in colonial documents as barbarian and brave. They were almost exterminated, and the survivors withdrew to the mountainous areas. The Ñahñu, who lived subjugated by the Aztecs before the Spanish colonisation, initially accepted the conquerors as a form of liberation. They were evangelised and actively participated in the colonisation as intermediaries for the sedentarisation of other indigenous groups. In San Miguel El Grande they settled in neighbourhoods and ranches that have survived to this day despite episodes of confrontation due to the dispossession of these communities whose farmland was appropriated by the Spanish landowners.

Currently, the state of Guanajuato is not known for its indigenous population, which represents less than 1% of the total population. In San Miguel, 23 rural communities concentrate an indigenous population estimated at 8,000 inhabitants (2000 census). Most of these communities live in conditions of extreme poverty and marginalisation but they retain their own forms of organisation and social cohesion. The integrity of their communal way of life, understood as the interrelation of the imaginary and the symbolic with the material, is expressed through original cultural and artistic manifestations, including patron-saint festivities, dances,[34] ritual crafts and traditional clothing.[35] The basic social organisation is the extended family founded on family relations and expanded by ritual kinship that occurs through sponsorship of baptism, marriage or through the blessing of a religious image or a new house. The identity of the family is associated with a territory – a neighbourhood or rural community – governed through positions or stewardships that regulate civic and religious life.

The cultural diversity of the region is even more complex as, like in other New Hispanic cities, in San Miguel El Grande too there was an African descendant community that has been documented by Castañeda[36] based on parish records from the colonial era. These records mention the existence of two brotherhoods founded by mulatto and free black cowboys that functioned between the 16th and 18th centuries.[37] These devout groups

34 Dance is one of the most important cultural manifestations of the indigenous peoples of Mexico. Some of the pre-Hispanic dances represented cyclical time in commemorations linked to agricultural activities.

35 Alba 2010, 26

36 Castañeda 2016

37 The brotherhood of Our Lady of Solitude and Santo Ecce Homo was founded by mulatto cowboys in 1594. They had their own chapel located in the main streets of the

Figure 13.4 Ephemeral altar, indigenous dance performance in the central garden and suchil of the San Miguel Viejo Indian chapel and view of the chapel at the Atotonilco sanctuary.

gradually lost their ethnic identity by incorporating Spaniards and mestizos until they were completely assimilated. Regarding the community of African origin that lived in San Miguel, it is also worth mentioning the hypothesis according to which New Hispanic painter Miguel Antonio Martínez de Pocasangre,[38] who painted the frescoes in the Sanctuary of Jesús Nazareno in Atotonilco, was of African descent. The frescoes were included in the cultural heritage listed as part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today, the population is even more diversified due to various forms of foreign migration, including exiles, retirees, veterans and artists.

After Mexico achieved its independence, the region was plunged in a deep political and economic crisis, which caused depopulation and the decline of the city. In 1921, the municipality had just over 8,000 inhabitants. In the 1930s, the legislation for the protection of built heritage and the image of 'typical towns'[39] was improved. This initiative was the first step towards the

town of San Miguel El Grande, while the free black population established the San Benito de Palermo convent in the Franciscan convent in 1646 (Castañeda 2016, 2).

38 Miguel Antonio Martínez de Pocasangre was a self-taught painter who lived and worked in the region during the 18th century. He worked for 30 years on the decoration of the walls of the sanctuary of Atotonilco, popularly known as the Sistine Chapel of Mexico.

39 'Typical town' was the concept used locally before the introduction of the term 'Historical Site' in the 1960s.

conservation of colonial architecture and an important trigger for the early rise of cultural tourism in this city. In the post-war context, San Miguel became a haven for a small but influential group of foreign and Mexican intellectuals and artists, and US veterans of the Second World War.[40] Together they built local, national and international networks to generate a distinctive educational and artistic presence, attracting the first wave of foreign immigrants made up mainly of North American students arriving with bursaries.[41] In the following decades, hippies, beatniks, adventurers and all kinds of artists joined, attracted by the relaxed and bohemian atmosphere of this discrete town in the heart of Mexico. Some stayed to settle down or chose it as a place of retirement, re-energising the local economy with their foreign currency and contributing in various ways to creating a tourism infrastructure that, over the years, experienced expansion and diversification.

In this context, five cultural associations were founded. These are the Allende Institute (the university's school of fine arts), the Public Library, the Ignacio Ramirez Cultural Centre, the Hispano-American Academy and the Angela Peralta Theatre. These, among other places, constitute the core of the city's cultural scene today. Altruistic organisations also emerged, among which the Friends of San Miguel Allende Society stands out – one of the key agents in promoting the listing of the city as part of UNESCO's Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008. The distinction was awarded to the historic centre and the Sanctuary of Atotonilco due to its cultural and architectural contribution to the Mexican Baroque and its importance in the fight for the independence of Mexico.

The last quarter of the 20th century saw the transformation of San Miguel from a small town into a small cosmopolitan city following the conventional stages of the gentrification process.[42] Recent estimates suggest that the city receives one million visitors per year, 70% of whom are nationals.[43] In the last two decades, it has experienced accelerated urban expansion, linked to the promotion of closed residential complexes self-segregated from the

40 Arroyo (2015, 76) identifies the figures of the Peruvian intellectual Felipe Cossío del Pomar, the American artist Stirling Dickinson and the Mexican tenor José Mójica.

41 For the GI Bill scholarship program for veterans, ex-combatants or demobilised (from the Second World War, the Korean War and Vietnam) who wished to study abroad.

42 First a small community of alternative artists who shared everyday spaces with the local population. Then followed by several waves of foreign and national migrants attracted by the environment created by them and by the possibility of developing new businesses, although progressively displacing the original population towards the periphery. Finally, the massification of the cultural offer and the transformation of the historic centre into a kind of theme park almost exclusively used for tourism.

43 Flores and Guerra 2016, 191

rest of the city, with the consent of municipal authorities that privilege this type of investment over the needs of the most disadvantaged populations. It should be noted that aside from the dominant narratives of San Miguel as a sophisticated and cosmopolitan destination developed by real-estate developers and tourism promoters, more than 50% of the population lives in a situation of poverty.[44]

In the field of built heritage, exogenous populations with greater purchasing power, along with the local elite, have appropriated much of San Miguel's historic centre, since only they possessed the necessary resources to buy and restore old buildings and to convert first into primary or secondary residences, and then recycle many of them as luxury restaurants and boutique hotels. It should be noted that in recent years some further divides have become apparent between those North American pensioners who chose to spend their old age in Mexico and foreign investors who acquire properties with values exceeding one million dollars in business schemes on a global scale.[45]

Regarding the tangible heritage linked to the indigenous peoples that originally inhabited the town, indigenous labour can be distinguished in the stone carvings of some facades and in the frescoes and paintings that decorate some churches. As the teacher and professional guide Jesús Rodríguez told us in an interview,[46] in San Miguel and other surrounding municipalities there are dozens of 'Indian chapels' that constitute material evidence for the presence of native communities for centuries in the region. These are modest constructions or 20th-century reconstructions which are not catalogued and branded as built heritage. They are used as places of worship by the indigenous and mestizo population living in informal neighbourhoods and rural settlements. They play an important role during the patron-saint festivities in which the ties between the members of the Otomi communities are reinforced.

The archaeological zone of Cañada de la Virgen deserves particular attention as it preserves the remains of a ceremonial centre characteristic of the Otomi-Toltec culture that had its peak between the years 600 and 900. It was only opened to the public in 2011 after a decade of research and restoration work. Today, this site ranks second in the list of the most-visited attractions in the municipality (see Table 13.1). From the same list, other attractions can be highlighted. For instance, La Aurora is an old textile factory recycled as a shopping centre and a complex of workshops and art galleries, linked to the Charco del Ingenio, a public park managed by a private foundation that integrates into its design the desert landscape and the infrastructure built

44 Flores and Guerra 2016, 191

45 See the video documentary *Gringolandia* by Dennis Lanson, 2015.

46 Rodríguez 2021

to generate electricity at the end of the 19th century. These are ranked in positions three and five, respectively. Finally, the Jimmy Ray Chapel, the work of local artist Anado MacLauchlin and located in the rural community of Cieneguita, is ranked seventh among the most-visited sites.

These sites fall either in the categories of historical buildings and museums, or they are sites of industrial heritage and places with ties to the LGBTQA+ community. It should also be noted that at least half of these sites of attractions are cultural initiatives with private financing which have an active participation of foreign residents.

Although the source, Tripadvisor, indicates that the most-visited attractions in San Miguel are historical buildings and open spaces, during our interview with Jesús Rodríguez, the guide forcefully stated that 'Most of those who visit San Miguel are looking for party, glamor and gourmet restaurants'. In addition to visiting architectural monuments, local agencies and guides offer visits to artists' workshops, wine tastings, walking tours and tastings of traditional Mexican drinks in bars and cantinas, excursions on horseback, bicycle or ATV, cooking classes and even personalised photography sessions in the streets of the historic centre. It is noteworthy that the main cultural events that are organised throughout the year are aimed at a foreign or bilingual public, mainly residents.[47] It is evident that a deeper study is needed of the choices and motivations of visitors which are not necessarily opposed but complement each other during their journey.

Arroyo[48] points out that in addition to the multiculturalism of foreigners, there is also a local multiculturalism of indigenous communities that remains hidden most of the time in informal neighbourhoods and rural communities. However, there are some initiatives by local tourism promoters aware of the cultural value of this intangible heritage, who are able to profitably market some cultural expressions of these communities to tourists. In this sense, our interviewee tells us that the tours he organises to the Indian chapels and the rural communities are frequently requested by foreign residents and some tourists with very specific profiles interested in this type of experience.[49]

An interesting example of alternative tourism benefiting local communities is a binational group of women who call themselves 'Las Rancheritas', who offer visitors an authentic cultural experience in alliance with the inhabitants of a rural community in the municipality. The tour includes the preparation and tasting of traditional dishes made with organic products and visits to

47 This is the case of the Jazz and Blues Festival, the International Writers Festival, the International Chamber Music Festival, the Pictures of the Year International Contest or the Spring Equinox Celebration in Charco del Ingenio Park.

48 Arroyo 2015, 100

49 Rodríguez 2021

artisan workshops complemented by the opportunity to purchase handicrafts produced by women.[50] Apart from these formal initiatives, the heritage of indigenous communities is mostly visible in community festivals. The most important of these is dedicated to San Miguel Archangel and includes a spectacular procession known as the entrance of the souls and suchiles,[51] accompanied by dances and allegorical cars. The procession culminates in the central garden in front of the parish where participants are received by the religious authorities. It is one of the few occasions when local indigenous groups appropriate symbolically and physically the town's main square. Similar events, but on a smaller scale, occur throughout the year in the different neighbourhoods and rural communities of the municipality. It is recognised that these traditional festivals are endorsed by the Catholic Church and can be seen as a stronghold of the Mexican residents and a form of resistance by the indigenous population[52] to the hegemonic culture, including mass-tourism narratives. Although these popular traditions can be manipulated to turn them into new tourist products,[53] according to Jesús Rodríguez, neither these festivals nor the Indian chapels top the list of tourist attractions in the municipality.

13.6 Conclusion

The level of complexity of the process studied in this chapter meant that not all the questions raised could be discussed in sufficient depth. The questioning of built and intangible heritage in San Miguel de Allende has revealed that heritage politics are often designed as a way to support official narratives of nationhood and belonging. It has also exposed some alternative voices and perspectives which have so far failed to be integrated into dominant narratives developed for identity building or destined to be consumed by tourists. Although regional narratives and visions from below or from a gendered perspective have multiplied recently, alternative forms of heritage developed and conserved by the subaltern majority and

50 https://www.discoversma.com/events/mexico/guanajuato/san-miguel-de-allende/tour/the-rancho-tour-benefiting-las-rancheritas/

51 The souls of the generals are the ancestors represented in decorated wooden crosses. They are accompanied by the batons of command and the words that are standards of each community. The xúchiles are offerings of tortillas and wild flowers from the semi-desert (cempasúchil and cucharilla), which are mounted on wooden and reed structures and placed at the doors of the parish. Crosses and xúchiles are veiled in a prayer ritual the night before. The latest edition of this party can be seen at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTDiRyq_oms

52 Arroyo 2015, 127

53 Flores and Guerra 2016, 201

minority groups often tend to remain overshadowed by colonial-built heritage celebrated by the real-estate and tourism promoters as well as national and international organisations. Yet, based on the effervescence of informal and intangible heritage in San Miguel, we believe that today we have the resources to build a more inclusive and democratic heritage than ever before. To realise this potential, we must adopt an intersectional and decolonial historiographical perspective to free the social and territorial peripheries of cities like San Miguel from the layers of invisibility in which they have been buried by heritage politics underpinned by criteria based on ethnicity, age and gender. In Mexico, the processes of city production undertaken by often disadvantaged indigenous populations in hundreds of popular neighbourhoods are still to be integrated into the memoryscapes of recognised cultural heritage. The popular neighbourhoods where, due to rural migration from throughout the country, the tangible and intangible heritage of various indigenous ethnicities converges are, from our point of view, the main material expression of contemporary Mexican identities.[54]

In the popular neighbourhoods and rural communities of San Miguel, forms of intangible cultural heritage pertaining to native populations survive and are transformed through the assimilation of elements from other traditions linked, for example, to migratory flows to the United States or with the hybridisations typical of a cosmopolitan tourist destination. These forms of heritage exist side-by-side with the tourist offer focused on historical architecture and high culture, which supports the declaration of the cultural heritage of humanity.

Like in Bath, in San Miguel the UNESCO World Heritage status comes with a set of benefits as well as responsibilities and challenges. One of the main advantages is the economic benefit of tourism and the diversification of economic activities. The challenges include the difficulty of managing territorial heritage in an equitable and socially just fashion and the monopolistic management of tourism and its profit, gentrification processes and the devaluation of the cultural identities of certain minorities. Tourism also presents opportunities to acknowledge the historically marginalised groups' contributions to the creation of this heritage. It can pave the way for their increased involvement through greater social engagement in discussions concerning cultural heritage, thereby leading to more sustainable and inclusive tourism-related development options.

We recognise the social and spatial injustices generated by the mass-tourism model, the predation of culture heritage and the legitimacy of the claims of the population groups residing in San Miguel regarding the collateral effects of this same activity. We believe that tourism can have a positive impact on the

54 Quiroz 2014

conservation of built and intangible heritage and it can be used to strengthen cohesion between the different sectors of society. Local and international agents involved in the tourism economy are aware of the mutual benefits they can draw from this tangible heritage. For foreign residents, these consist of access to a quality of life superior to the one they could achieve in their countries of origin or the realisation of an alternative life project in adulthood. For the Mexican inhabitants, they lead to employment opportunities and the development of cultural, welfare or environmental sustainability projects that benefit broad sectors of the population.

Frequently, in the Global South, tourism is conceived as a magic formula promoting the economic development of impoverished localities that are rich in cultural heritage. Cultural heritage tourism focused on built heritage has been the engine of a profound urban and social transformation in San Miguel and other similar locations around the world. This model, as we have mentioned, has adverse effects, but we also recognise in it a potential to create alternative spaces where other heritages and other narratives can be explored. In San Miguel, partially due to tourism and ex-pats attracted by the local culture, we find that there is an awareness of the lesser-known facets of local history, as well as human and financial resources which can enable more conscious and sustainable tourism practices.

We believe that the organised or personalised tours that are part of the tourist experience can be a channel to make other narratives and other heritages known. As pointed out earlier, there is a growing interest in developing more authentic experiences with less economic impact, although for now these types of initiatives remain very limited. In the same way, it is paradoxical that foreign residents, passionate about the local culture, have played a prominent role in the rescue and conservation of the colonial-period built heritage of San Miguel, which is now a source of pride and identity for both Mexican residents and for local authorities and businesses.

What place will cultural heritage occupy in traveller expectations in the future? Around the world, thousands of people are interested in learning about the heritage of historic cities. Many tourists are attracted by vestiges of the past and travel equipped with guides packed with dates and details. In a world that is becoming increasingly uniform, historic landscapes preserve something original from the cultural diversity of humanity. Touring a city freely or with a guide is a ritual of modernity that connects us with our ancestors (as humanity), which gives us confidence in the future by verifying the achievements of humanity materialised in buildings and monuments. Spiritual needs are thus converted by marketing into a commodity that continues to mobilise millions of consumers.

In this sense, the work carried out in Bath in 2019, discussed in Chapter 2, has been an excellent starting point to reflect on the alternatives attracting new

generations of tourists who seek to deviate from the pre-established routes to venture into an authentic journey to meet again in the other. Finally, from our perspective as educators and researchers, it is important to highlight the importance of incorporating knowledge and transmitting information about local heritage that makes visible the historical injustices materialised in the built heritage in the classrooms where future architects and urban planners are trained. Reflecting on aesthetics and ethics in cultural heritage and the use and abuse of heritage by mass tourism allows us to create opportunities to question official discourses and specialised historiographies. It is about revealing what has been hidden by the hegemonic narratives and rescuing the forgotten stories of the anonymous hands that built masterpieces. Questioning official heritage narratives in Bath as well as in San Miguel de Allende or in any other part of the world is a task that not only reveals different meanings and exposes past conflicts but also allows us to build a better future by overcoming the commodification of urban heritage.

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14

A tale of two cities

Transatlantic slavery legacies in the interconnected memoryscapes of Bath, England and Bath, Jamaica

Christina Horvath

Dr Christina Horvath is the Principal Investigator on the Botanical Encounters project, funded by the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust. The project aims to expose narratives and plant-based knowledges obscured by the single narrative of Western-centric science promoted by colonial explorations and empire. In addition to a series of urban walks, art workshops and a lecture series at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, the project also included a field trip in May 2022 to eastern Jamaica to explore the colonial connections between Bath in Somerset and Bath in St Thomas, Jamaica.

This project has received funding from the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust project SRG21/210167 'Botanical Encounters: Decolonising Bath's Memoryscape through Walking, Knowledge Sharing and Arts Co-Creation'.

14.1 Introduction

On 9 March 1802, Sir George Nugent, Lieutenant General of Jamaica, and his wife Maria Skinner Nugent travelled from Kingston to St Thomas-in-the-East to visit 'a truly lovely village, at the bottom of an immense mountain', named after a popular spa town in England. In her diary, Lady Nugent described their journey to Bath as the 'most beautiful and romantic drive over mountains, on the ledges of precipices, through fertile valleys'.[1] She observed houses surrounded by coconut trees and found the immense row of cotton trees 'most magnificent, and like our finest oak'.[2] On the next day, she rode up a narrow, winding path bordered by bamboos until she reached the bathing house, a 'low West India building, containing four

1 Nugent 1839, 90
2 Nugent 1839, 90

small rooms, in each of which there is a marble bath'.[3] She first drank a cup of the extremely hot water, and then bathed in it for 20 minutes, gradually increasing the temperature. After this 'most delightful and refreshing' experience, she visited the botanical garden at the bottom of the valley to discover a great variety of plants new to the European eye, such as breadfruit, cabbage palm, jackfruit, cinnamon, star apple and Otaheite apple. After this visit to Bath, the Nugents pursued their journey towards the north-east of the island, passing numerous sugar works and observing large groups of enslaved Africans working in the plantations.

When another woman traveller, the painter Marianne North, visited Bath in 1871, little was left of the well-kept botanical garden described by Lady Nugent. The slave trade was abolished in 1807 and slavery, at least in principle, was outlawed in 1834. Twenty million pounds, the equivalent to £16 billion in today's money, was paid out to slave owners to compensate for their loss of human property, while enslaved people received nothing in reparation.[4] North, who travelled to Jamaica to paint tropical plants, depicted Bath's landscape in several of the 838 paintings she later donated to Kew Gardens.[5] In her diary, she described the island's exceptional fauna as well as the cane-crushing factories where indentured workers from India laboured after their apprenticeship ended in 1838. She too was impressed with what she saw in Bath:

> After leaving the sea the atmosphere got more and more like a hot fern-house, till we reached Bath. […] I […] walked up two miles of marvellous wood scenery to the baths, which were slightly sulphurous and very hot and delicious. […] The town of Bath consists of one long street of detached houses, having an avenue down it of alternate cabbage palms and Otaheite apples. The old botanical garden had long since been left to the care of nature; but to my mind no gardener could have treated it better, for everything grew as it liked, and the ugly formal paths were almost undiscoverable. The most gorgeous trees were tangled up with splendid climbing plants, all seeding and flowering luxuriantly.[6]

In May 2022, a grant from the British Academy and Leverhulme Trust allowed me to walk in the footsteps of Lady Nugent and Marianne North and share their admiration for the sweeping beauty of the Bath landscape. I

3 Nugent 2002, 90

4 Hall 1999

5 *Road near Bath, Jamaica, with cabbage palms, breadfruit, cocoa, and coral trees*, *Bamboos, cocoa nut trees, and other vegetation in the Bath valley, Jamaica* and *Valley of bamboos, near Bath, Jamaica* are among these.

6 North 1893, 101

Figure 14.1 Marianne North, *Bamboos, cocoa nut trees, and other vegetation in the Bath valley, Jamaica*, 1872.

travelled from Kingston at painstakingly low speed due to roadworks which enveloped the lush green vegetation in a thick, white dust. I stayed near Port Morant since the Fountain Spa hotel, completed in 1947 to replace the original bathing house erected in 1747, failed to confirm my booking. Like Lady Nugent, I drove up to Bath first thing in the morning. I visited the botanical garden, which had lost even more of its economic importance after

repeated flooding prompted the direction to transfer the valuable plants to Castleton in 1868. I wandered among royal palms introduced from Cuba, cabbage palms, breadfruit trees and Otaheite apples from Polynesia, ackee trees from West Africa, an imposing Barringtonia speciosa and the ruins of the old bath house turned into a courthouse, destroyed during Paul Bogle's uprising in 1865. Local residents, children in school uniform and chickens were leisurely roaming in the garden, but there was no sight of a single tourist. I seemed to be the only international visitor at the Fountain Spa, too, where I soaked in a boiling hot bath for 20 minutes. A plaque on the wall confirmed that the town derived its name from Bath in Britain, yet,

Figure 14.2 Bathers at the spring in St Thomas.

unlike in Somerset, there were no meandering line-ups outside the spa, nor in the forest, 200 metres above the bathhouse, where hot and cold mineral waters spurted directly from the rocks, and massages with a mix of mud and crushed herbs were offered by local therapists.

As I pursued my route along the coast towards Portland, I kept wondering how the fortunes of two sites sharing such similar geothermic properties could be so different. Bath in St Thomas seemed empty and dilapidated, while Bath in Somerset is teeming with tourists throughout the year. The COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced visitor arrivals in Jamaica from 4,234,150 in 2019 to 1,329,675 in 2020,[7] might have contributed to the absence of international tourists, just like bad roads and visitors' preference for beach resorts in the north-west of the island. But perhaps both cities' current situations are a consequence of their shared history of colonisation and empire, which continues to affect their positions as tourist destinations. This chapter will explore this hypothesis. The first section will trace their histories back to the role of hot springs in their rise as tourist destinations in the 18th century and reflect on present-day legacies of colonial history. The second will question the ethical principles underpinning heritage tourism in Britain and the Caribbean, while the final section will discuss how engagement with thermal springs as natural as well as cultural heritage sites could create opportunities for a more inclusive, sustainable and socially just memorialisation of the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

14.2 The troubled waters of two spa towns: transatlantic slavery and spa culture during the British Empire

Although the first bath complex in Bath, Somerset was built by the Romans in 60 AD, spa culture in Britain only really emerged in the 18th century,[8] not much earlier than in Bath, St Thomas. Thus, rather than simply being imported from Britain, spa tourism developed almost simultaneously at both springs under the palpable influence of transatlantic slavery, which created the material conditions for leisure culture. According to the legend, the springs in St Thomas were discovered by an enslaved African of the name of Jacob who ran away from the plantation of Colonel Edward Stanton in 1695 but returned to inform his 'master' about the healing property of the waters and was freed as a reward. In March 1696, the Assembly of St Thomas-in-the-East decided to make the springs accessible to the whole community and purchased 1,130 acres of land from Stanton to build a wooden bathhouse

7 Jamaica Tourist Board 2020
8 Wheeler 2004, 121

and a road. In 1747, a larger building was erected and 30 enslaved people were acquired to maintain the road, grow provisions and look after the sick.[9]

In Jamaica, captive Africans were introduced by the Spanish in 1510 to extract minerals. After the British took over the island in 1655, all arable land was converted into sugar plantations[10] to benefit from the sugar boom. Enslaved Africans were imported on a mass scale; however, up to a third died within the first three years due to intensive labour and harsh living conditions on the plantations.[11] Jamaica's economy witnessed a rapid expansion, illustrated by the increase of the number of plantations from 146 in 1671 to 690 in 1684.[12] By the early 18th century, many planters had amassed important fortunes and moved back to Britain to lead leisurely lives as absentee slave owners:

> Slave-grown sugar yielded large profits to a substantial planter oligarchy who, upon repatriating its wealth, purchased landed estates, intermarried with the aristocracy, and formed a bloc of Parliamentarians who […] influenced imperial policy in their own interests. […] The world of 17th and 18th century mercantilism witnessed the Caribbean sugar industry as the chief source of wealth.[13]

In Bath, Somerset, spa tourism infrastructure started developing in the early 18th century. The visits of Queen Anne in 1702 and 1703 triggered a flux of fashionable visitors. Soon after, the first theatre opened in Orchard Street in 1705, followed by the Pump Room in 1706 and the first Assembly Room in 1706. Master of Ceremonies Beau Nash presided over the city's social life from 1705 till 1761 and the large-scale construction of a carefully planned new town began in the 1730s. Much of the Neo-Palladian architecture emerged in the mid- and late-18th century. Queen Square, built in 1729–39, was commissioned by the Duke of Chandos, who made a fortune with the Royal African and South Sea companies trading enslaved Africans.[14] Other examples of speculative investment included the Circus, completed in 1754–67, and the Royal Crescent, built in 1767–74 with profits derived from Bristol's transatlantic trade.[15] Erected in 1774, Pulteney Bridge was commissioned by Sir William Pulteney, the richest man in England, who invested his inherited fortune in plantations and land speculation in the

9 Long 1774, 166–7
10 Robertson 2008; Fortenberry 2021
11 Dann and Seaton 2001, 8
12 Walvin 1992, 69–70, quoted in Dann and Seaton 2001, 7
13 Sheridan 1974, 7–11
14 Pocock 2003, 8
15 Neale 1981, 127

Caribbean, North America and Asia.[16] After completing Great Pulteney Street in 1788, he expanded his estate by building the Sydney Hotel, today's Holburne Museum, and the surrounding Sydney Garden.

As the above examples demonstrate, spa culture had multiple links with slavery not only in Bath, St Thomas, but also in Bath, Somerset, even though the importance of these connections has been consistently downplayed. Indeed, the emergence of spa tourism at Bath, Cheltenham, Tunbridge Wells and Epsom has mainly been attributed to the decline of religious beliefs which promoted the acceptance of suffering, and the rise of Enlightenment ideas which encouraged an introspective focus on the self and entrepreneurial medical professionals proposing miraculous cures.[17] Most authors engaging with the spectacular development of Bath in the 18th century share a rather myopic view of how much slavery contributed to this development. Wheeler, who acknowledges that leisure culture was a product of 'the eighteenth century's vast accumulation of capital', seems far more interested in the 'transport revolution of turnpikes and public coaches providing the middle class with the means and time to travel'[18] than in the source of that wealth. Borsay[19] mainly attributes spa culture to an emerging preoccupation with ill health and a growing interest in safeguarding one's physical and psychological wellbeing. These interpretations align with a prevailing tendency to downplay the socio-economic repercussions of British colonialism. This overlooks the fact that colonialism was also responsible for the substantial influx of wealth generated through the sugar trade, as well as the emergence of health issues resulting from the indulgent lifestyle of wealthy colonists excessively consuming sugary treats and beverages.[20] Moreover, spas also provided an ideal setting for affluent planters to interact with the aristocracy.

Between 1740 and 1776, Jamaica's sugar exports rose from £650,000 to £2.4 million and the average net worth of a non-enslaved person in the British Caribbean was £1,042, for only £42 in England or Wales.[21] This 18th-century peak in the sugar trade exactly coincided with the emergence of spa culture. It is clear that the transformation of Bath from 'little more than a muddy village'[22] into the 'hot-bed of British sociability'[23] in the

16 Pocock 2003
17 Bradley 2021, 4
18 Wheeler 2004, 122
19 Borsay 2012
20 Borsay 2012; Bradley 2021
21 Scanlan 2020, 30
22 Thompson 2010, 1
23 Cossic-Pericarpin 2017, 537

Figure 14.3 Bath hot spring, as engraved by W. Walker, 1774.

course of the 18th century was a direct consequence of capital accumulation and the emergence of a wealthy planter class. This new elite benefited from the greater social permeability provided by spa towns where 'the temporary residents stayed a month, or a season, and, though subscription fees on everything from newspaper reading rooms in coffee houses, to balls and theatre tickets attempted class regulation, social classes mingled in Bath far more than in London or the countryside'.[24]

Fuelled by wealth extracted from factory-like sugar plantations through a brutal system of repression, the new spa culture expanded rapidly both in Britain and in the Caribbean. By the early 18th century, the springs of Bath in St Thomas were heavily used by the public. Affluent plantation owners purchased lots around the springs for easy and regular access, and visitors arrived from England too to escape harsh winters. A town was laid out and facilities were built, including a public lodging house, a billiard room, a clubhouse and a courthouse.[25] Webb-Morgan notes that the new spa town was alive with activity in the 18th century: 'It was now considered fashionable to holiday in Bath. In-between the visits to the spring the patrons would pass the time at the card table or dancing – it was a scene

24 Wheeler 2004, 122
25 Long 1774, 165

of constant merriment'.[26] By the time of the Nugents' visit, the spring was 'considered of so much importance to the public that it [was] supported by a yearly grant from the House of Assembly'.[27] Shortly after the Bath Royal Mineral Hospital was built in Somerset in 1738, a St Thomas planter, Peter Vallete, offered the annual sum of £100 for a period of ten years following his death to establish a hospital. Built in 1761, the hospital was equipped to serve up to 100 poor white and free black patients.[28] In 1774, an Assembly statute ordered a botanical garden to be established and named the physician of the hot springs its superintendent.

Both spa towns flourished simultaneously in the 18th century, yet only the development of Bath, Somerset was undisturbed; that of Bath, St Thomas was often disrupted by rebellions and other forms of anti-colonial resistance. Indigenous Tainos, Spanish Moors and African runaways took to the hills and formed the so-called Maroon communities. They developed guerrilla warfare strategies and cut secret trails in the forests of the Blue and John Crow Mountains, including the Cunha Cunha Pass Trail which connected Bath with Portland. Maroons made extensive use of ambushes and inflicted great losses on the British troops. During the First Maroon War (1728–40), groups of Maroons settled in the mountainous areas of St Thomas joined with those in Portland, thus forming the Windward Maroon community. In 1739 the western Leeward Maroons signed peace treaties with the government and in 1740 the Windward Maroons followed, committing to quelling insurrections on plantations and catching new runaways in exchange for self-determination.

Halted during the Maroon wars, the frequentation of the Bath springs took off again after the peace treaties. In 1747, a stone tablet was erected at the spa and a wooden structure was built to channel the mineral water across the river into the bathing house. In the 1760s, however, hostilities restarted with the rebellion led by Tacky, an enslaved African originally from Ghana. Although the main uprising was crushed mercilessly with the help of the Maroons, spin-off rebellions went on for years. Edward Long, who visited Bath in 1768, found the town in disrepair after the bathhouse had been used as a barracks by Captain Warren of the 56th Regiment in 1767.[29] In 1795–6, during the Second Maroon War, the spring was again abandoned but its use had restarted by the time the Nugents visited it in 1802. In the 1800s, the Napoleonic wars caused a decline of spa culture everywhere. In 1805, when Lady Nugent visited Bath, Somerset, hot springs were just 'about to give way

26 Webb-Morgan 2001, 22
27 Philippo 1843, 45
28 Philippo 1843, 45
29 Long 1774, 166–7

to the seaside resort as premier leisure destination'.[30] The Napoleonic wars had an even greater impact in the Caribbean. Slavery, initially abolished by the French Revolution in 1794, was re-established in the French colonies in 1802, causing black generals trained in the fights against the British to turn against Napoleon. Toussaint Louverture was captured and died in a French prison; Louis Delgrès fell fighting for the independence of Guadeloupe; Jean-Jacques Dessalines, however, became the first ruler of an independent Haiti in 1804.

In 1830, the government once again attempted to redevelop Bath, St Thomas. A grant of £2,000 was made available to erect buildings and pipe the water down to the town so that bathers no longer had to take the dangerous road to the springs.[31] By 1831, the engineering work was completed and the water was flowing through the pipes, but by the time it reached the town, its temperature was too low. In 1837, a further £250 was spent on covering the pipes but this also ended in failure. Finally, the new in-town bath house was converted into a courthouse. In 1830, a major uprising led by Baptist preacher Samuel Sharpe mobilised 60,000 enslaved people in Jamaica. In 1858, a flood destroyed most of the Bath Botanical Garden and ten years later the remaining plants were moved to Castleton. In 1865, an uprising led by Paul Bogle destroyed the half-redeveloped Bath, causing a mass exodus among the town's white population.[32] The rebels protested against the unfair treatment of black peasants. They took control of the parish for two days, but after Moore Town Maroons captured Bogle,[33] 400 people were executed on the orders of Governor Edward John Eyre. A few months later, Eyre was dismissed and Jamaica became a Crown Colony ruled directly from Britain. Thus, it lost its Assembly, which since the 1830s had also included elected free people of colour.

Interest in the springs survived all this turmoil. In 1901, a guidebook published by the Institute of Jamaica recommended the waters of Bath, the hottest on the island and rich in sulphur, for bathers with gout, rheumatism, cutaneous affections and fevers. It suggested travelling to Bath from Kingston or Port Antonio by mail coach or hired buggy and mentioned that 'new buildings have lately been erected for the accommodation of visitors, and the management [was] creditable'.[34] After another period of decay, the bathhouse was renovated in 1947 and became the Bath Fountain Hotel. In 1965, after another period of decline, journalist Roy Reynolds

30 Wheeler 2004, 120
31 Reynolds 1967
32 Webb-Morgan 2001, 55
33 Bilby 2012
34 Guidebook 1901, Institute of Jamaica, 73

Figure 14.4a and 14.4b Ruins of the old courthouse in the Bath Botanical Garden.

complained in the *Daily Gleaner* that the 'facilities for those who do not go to the bath as lodgers are entirely unsuitable. […] Management here seems to be non-existent'.[35]

Since Jamaican independence in 1962, brief moments of hope for the redevelopment of the springs have been alternating with long periods of disrepair followed by superficial renovations in Bath, St Thomas. While

35 Webb-Morgan 2001, 35

much ink has been spent in the press about the site's wasted potential as a spa and leisure destination, the town has been repeatedly ravaged by floods and hurricanes, including Hurricane Gilbert in 1988. In 1999, however, the bathhouse was declared a historical monument by Jamaica's National Heritage. In 2008, the then Tourism Minister Edmond Bartlett announced a plan for an extreme makeover[36] but then the government decided to divest the property and let foreign investors turn it into a world-class facility[37] without any plan for preserving the site's cultural heritage.[38] In 2007, some restoration work was undertaken in the Bath Botanical Garden, including the repair of the fence, the reconstruction of the walkway and the lily pond, the rebuilding of a gazebo and the rehabilitation of bathrooms. Yet the site has no learning officer or visitor centre to showcase its cultural and botanical heritage. Moreover, the town remains difficult to access and mainly attracts Jamaican visitors, both resident and non-resident. Thus, unlike Bath in Somerset, a thriving spa city inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1987, Bath, St Thomas struggles to fulfil its outstanding potential for health, ecological and heritage tourism. However, more recently there has been some hope for change. In 2008, the Windward Maroon cultural heritage was inscribed in the Representative List of Intangible Heritage and, in 2015, the first Jamaican site, the Blue and John Crow Mountains at Hollywell, was granted World Heritage status. Bath could benefit from this increased interest in intangible and natural heritage in the region to attract attention to its unique combination of ecological and cultural heritage and geothermic assets.

14.3 Heritage justice and inequalities in heritage tourism

As we have seen above, the two heritage sites are intrinsically linked with colonial conquest and slavery, but also resistance. Both illustrate some deep-seated inequalities inherent to the global heritage landscape. They highlight how the Global South was drained of much of its heritage through colonisation by the Global North, which used the extracted resources to enhance and protect its own built heritage. The concepts of 'heritage justice'[39] and 'heritage inequality' are useful to highlight these striking inequalities and emphasise some ethical dilemmas involved in addressing slavery legacies in both Global North and Global South contexts.

36 *Jamaica Gleaner*, 2 September 2012
37 *Jamaica Gleaner*, 3 March 2022
38 Webb-Morgan 2001
39 Fortenberry 2021

As Graham and colleagues[40] remind us, heritage is a product of the present which is appropriated through practices related to its conservation and consumption. Stuart Hall sees it as the material embodiment of the spirit of a nation and a 'discursive practice […] in which the nation slowly constructs for itself a sort of collective social memory […] by selectively binding their chosen high points and memorable achievements into an unfolding "national story"'.[41] As opposed to history, which is always accumulative, this canonisation process is highly selective: it 'highlights and foregrounds, imposes beginnings, middles and ends on the random and contingent. Equally, it foreshortens, silences, disavows, forgets and elides many episodes which – from another perspective – could be the start of a different narrative'.[42]

As a discursive construct, heritage is generally intended for the members of 'imagined communities'[43] such as nations which tend to think about themselves as unified and culturally homogeneous. Informed by values and perspectives and inflected with power and authority, heritage can be considered unfair since it is 'largely narrated from the viewpoint of the colonisers'.[44] Thus, it often disadvantages and excludes those whose stories are erased from the official heritage to create national unity through selective remembering and forgetting. As a result, some members of imagined national communities might feel unfairly represented or even unrepresented by heritage narratives which do not reflect their memories. Such concerns have been voiced by British-Jamaican artist Akala who points to the injustice inherent to such uneven processes of memorialisation: 'The implications are clear – some ancestors deserve to be remembered and others do not. Those that kill for Britain are glorious, those killed by Britain are unpeople'.[45]

Fortenberry, who explores heritage from a tourism perspective rather than from the viewpoint of identity construction, calls attention to a set of ethical principles which he terms 'heritage justice'. He defines this concept as a 'fair representation and inclusive participation of diverse resident groups, especially those whose heritage is being appropriated for tourism'.[46] Fortenberry exposes forms of injustice inherent to heritage packaged for tourist consumption, in particular in postcolonial contexts. Like heritage constructed for the national community, heritage conservation for tourism purposes is also a performative practice which involves

40 Graham et al. 2000
41 Hall 1999, 5
42 Hall 1999, 5
43 Anderson 2006
44 Hall 1999, 7
45 Akala 2018, 148
46 Fortenberry 2021, 255

selecting, appropriating, interpreting and communicating aspects of the past to visitors. While conserving heritage is crucial to develop sustainable communities and identities and maintain a healthy connection to the past, it also involves relationships of power and agency. This is particularly true in the Greater Caribbean, where tourism often functions as an extension of former colonial links into a form of neo-colonialism. As a consequence of the political and economic power that developed nations exercise over their former colonial holdings, neo-colonial pressures tend to marginalise local, in particular black and minority, heritage narratives in favour of white colonialist history. The domination of Western-based companies, the underrepresentation of the histories and identities of subaltern communities and the exclusion of African descendants from the benefits of tourism and their disenfranchisement in the production of heritage narratives often lead to non-inclusive, non-equitable heritage practices. Thus, neo-colonial heritage planning frequently prioritises the conservation of colonial European-built heritage over the more ephemeral or intangible heritage of enslaved African lifeways, while the Eurocentric perspectives and rhetoric underpinning some of the UNESCO World Heritage nominations[47] risk further reinforcing these inequities.

Heritage tourism appropriating the memory of transatlantic slavery, one of the worst crimes against humanity, can also be considered a form of 'dark tourism' or 'thanatourism'. According to Dann and Seaton,[48] this form of tourism raises a specific set of ethical dilemmas linked with risks such as the 'commodification, cosmeticization or suppression of historical truth in the interests of attracting predominantly white visitors',[49] the generation of profit from past suffering, the sanitisation of the past to avoid upsetting visitors, the creation of staged authenticity where hardly any tangible heritage remains and the downplaying of African agency and resistance by predominantly focusing on victimhood. The authors also question the axiom that 'community healing occurs by keeping alive dissonant issues, rather than by "letting them rest"'.[50] They emphasise that slavery heritage sites in Britain and America are mostly initiated by white or black intellectuals rather than 'by a groundswell of popular black demand' and conclude that, unlike the descendants of Holocaust survivors, descendants of enslaved Africans may be at times wary of being 'permanently situated within historical discourses that construct their identity within a self-definition whose main feature

47 Fortenberry 2021, 261
48 Dann and Seaton 2001
49 Dann and Seaton 2001, 19
50 Dann and Seaton 2001, 21

is servitude'.[51] However, critics like Akala develop a powerful counter-argument, claiming that the 'collective, selective amnesia in the service of easing a nation's cognitive dissonance' which 'Britain has chosen to remember transatlantic slavery in particular, and the British Empire',[52] is accountable for much of the present-day discrimination against black Britons. Yet the expectation that, by memorialising slavery, heritage sites pave the way to fairer societies can only be fulfilled if they represent the past in a complex and nuanced rather than distorted way. From the comparison of our spa sites, it appears that this is rarely the case. In Bath, Somerset, where heritage narratives tend to glorify the city's Neo-Palladian built heritage, the memory of slavery continues to be silenced (see chapters 1, 2 and 12). In Jamaica, the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Holywell privileges the narrative of anti-slavery resistance, celebrating the Maroons as freedom fighters while downplaying their role in sustaining the colonial system as the allies of the British.

At the same time, this comparison also reveals some broader ethical issues which can only be grasped from a global perspective with regard to the uneven heritage development between former colonising and colonised countries. Through colonisation, Global North countries acquired disproportionate resources which allowed them to construct, gather and preserve a more compelling tangible heritage while simultaneously wiping out some of the original heritage in the countries they colonised. These heritage discrepancies tend to be further aggravated by a complex web of neo-colonial relations involving not only the former colonisers and colonies but also wider processes that 'have a direct impact on heritage narratives presented to citizens and tourists'.[53] The resulting 'heritage inequalities' play in favour of Global North countries, which tend to gain greater international recognition for their tangible, intangible and even natural heritage compared to formerly colonised countries. This is particularly striking in the sector of heritage tourism, which has been significantly influenced by neo-colonial political and economic power that Western nations exercise over their former and existing colonial holdings. An example of this systemic inequality is the striking underrepresentation of the Caribbean region in the UNESCO World Heritage list. This gap prompted UNESCO in 1994 to set up a Caribbean Action Plan to assist countries in the region in the identification, protection and conservation of their heritage, providing financial and technical support to build capacity. Although some progress has been made since – for example, the Windward Maroon cultural heritage was inscribed

51 Dann and Seaton 2001, 21
52 Akala 2018, 126
53 Fortenberry 2021, 254

in the list of intangible heritage in 2008 – the heritage gap between Britain, a Western country with 35 listed sites, and Jamaica, a Caribbean country with only one site, still persists.

These heritage inequalities are particularly tangible in Jamaica, one of the most impoverished countries of the Northern hemisphere. Although tourism represents 70% of the country's economy, cultural heritage tourism remains a rather under-developed component.[54] While there are numerous tangible cultural heritage sites of local, national and international significance on the island, as well as intangible cultural expressions such as music, art, crafts, literature, theatre, fashion and festivals,[55] government organisations are slow to develop policies of heritage protection, conservation plans, inventories of sites to be restored and nominations for consideration by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.[56] In spite of recent masterplans promoting heritage tourism,[57] the 'sun, sand and sea' model has so far remained dominant in Jamaica, and renovated plantation houses and sugar mills converted into hotels or restaurants have been valued as holiday and beach attractions rather than as significant cultural heritage sites[58] in their own right. In contrast, Britain has taken advantage of tourists' increased interest in heritage in a context in which heritage tourism is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the industry worldwide. As approximately 50% of all tourists seek to visit sites related to culture and heritage,[59] visitor surveys reveal that most tourists come to Britain to see historic buildings, famous places and art galleries.[60] Accordingly, websites promoting tourism in Bath, Somerset tend to rank historic buildings and museums alongside spas and parks as the top must-sees in the city,[61] illustrating that spa towns can simultaneously attract heritage and leisure tourism.

While most of the present-day heritage inequities can be explained by colonial legacies, economic dependency, lacking resources, failed government policies and neo-colonial pressures, the selection criteria applied by UNESCO may also be scrutinised for their Eurocentric bias. Ten criteria are currently used to recognise outstanding universal value. Sites are listed for (i) being masterpieces of human creative genius and (ii) exhibiting an important interchange of human values over a span of time; (iii) bearing

54 Harrigan 1974; Wilkinson 2004; Fortenberry 2021
55 Jordan and Jolliffe 2013, 2
56 Jordan and Jolliffe 2013
57 Fortenberry 2021, 266
58 Jordan and Jolliffe 2013, 5
59 Jordan and Jolliffe 2013
60 Visit Britain: Foresight 2014, 5
61 www.visitbath.co.uk

a unique testimony to a cultural tradition; (iv) being outstanding examples of a type of architecture or landscape or (v) a traditional human settlement or interaction with the environment. They are also recognised for (vi) being associated with events or living traditions of outstanding universal significance; (vii) containing superlative natural phenomena or beauty; (viii) representing major stages of earth's history; (ix) being examples of significant ongoing ecological and biological processes or (x) containing significant natural habitats for conservation of biological diversity. While these criteria are continuously reviewed and have evolved to increasingly include natural and ecological values as well as traditional lifeways, they continue to prioritise tangible over intangible heritage, as well as cultural sites over natural or mixed ones. This disparity is well illustrated by the disproportionately high number of cultural heritage sites (897 out of the 1,154) compared to natural (218) and mixed (39) sites.

It can be argued that the decision to grant Bath, Somerset World Heritage status in 1987 was motivated by some of these Eurocentric values. The inscription in the UNESCO list recognised the outstanding cultural value of the Roman temple and baths complex and the city's harmonious combination of architecture and landscape. The decision was based on three criteria. The first one, (i) human genius, was met through the integration of architecture, urban design and landscape to create visual homogeneity and beauty by using 'the specific opportunities offered by the spa town and its physical environment and natural resources (in particular the hot springs and the local Bath Oolitic limestone)'.[62] This one-sided celebration of 'architects and visionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries' can be rightly critiqued for erasing the role colonisation and transatlantic slavery played in creating specific opportunities for the city's development through the accumulation of wealth that enabled grand-scale construction in the 18th century. Criterion (ii) – the interchange of human values over a span of time – was achieved by creating an organic flow between the city and the surrounding landscape to generate a distinctive garden-city feel and picturesque views. It could be argued that criterion (iv) – outstanding examples of a type of architecture – also tends to gloss over the city's connections with slavery by referring to the Roman and Georgian periods as 'two great eras in human history' without acknowledging the crimes they committed against humanity.

In contrast, the decision to list Jamaica's first World Heritage Site at Holywell based on criteria (iii), (vi) and (x) can be regarded as a shift away from UNESCO's previous Eurocentric values. Criterion (iii) – a unique testimony to a cultural tradition – acknowledged the cultural heritage materialised in the Blue and John Crow Mountains' secret trails, archaeological

62 www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/428

sites and hiding places, which bear 'exceptional witness to the phenomenon of grand maronnage as characterised by Windward Maroon culture which, in the search for freedom from colonial enslavement, developed a profound knowledge of, and attachment to, their environment, that sustained and helped them to achieve autonomy and recognition'.[63] This criterion also marks an epistemological shift since it recognises transgressive, Global South knowledges emerging from anti-colonial struggle.[64] Criterion (vi), which values the site's association with events of outstanding universal significance, is justified by the site's relevance to 'the liberation, and continuing freedom and survival, of groups of fugitive enslaved Africans', while criterion (x) – conservation of biological diversity – is illustrated by the site's importance as a biodiversity hotspot and conservation site. These two criteria equally illustrate a decolonial shift; the former by explicitly valuing anti-colonial struggle as a human achievement, the latter by implicitly recognising the importance of conserving biodiversity, even though it does not directly expose the damage caused by the colonisers' efforts to create monocultures and often introduce invasive exogenous species in Jamaica.[65]

We can certainly consider the recognition of the outstanding universal value of Maroon cultural heritage and environmental knowledge as a watershed moment marking a shift towards a greater epistemological and heritage justice. Yet the continued celebration in Bath, Somerset of the colonisers whose genius converted wealth extracted through enslavement into an aesthetically pleasing cityscape, and the simultaneous recognition at Holywell of the colonised who put their talent into developing agency and resisting colonialism, is ambivalent at best. While the justification of Bath's UNESCO World Heritage status should be reviewed to better reflect the organisation's ethical condemnation of transatlantic slavery, Jamaican heritage narratives presented at Hollywell could also provide a more nuanced depiction of the Maroons as anti-colonial freedom fighters. Both narratives may be critiqued for their selective erasure of the captured and enslaved Africans. They illustrate how heritage narratives designed to hold together imagined communities tend to present partial truths reducing the complexity of the uncomfortable past. In the British case, aesthetic achievements are used to gloss over the historic atrocity of slavery; in the Jamaican case, anti-colonial resistance is celebrated without taking into consideration the Maroons' ambivalent role in crushing the rebellions of enslaved people and helping to uphold the institution of slavery in exchange for their own self-determination. In the end, both narratives could be further

63 www.whc.unesco.org/en/list/1356

64 De Sousa Santos 2018

65 Edwards 2007

nuanced to encourage audiences to critically engage with the colonial past in more complex ways.

To conclude, the spa towns of Bath, Somerset and Bath, St Thomas are interlinked through their shared history of colonialism and transatlantic slavery. The concepts of heritage justice and heritage inequality are useful to highlight the deep-seated disparities between countries that benefited from resources extracted through colonisation and countries from which these resources were drained away. This also demonstrates the importance of finding new, alternative ways of engaging with the colonial past in ethical ways which benefit local communities while simultaneously promoting complex narratives suited to relaxing hot springs situated in environments of great natural beauty. The next section will discuss how a focus on spa towns' attractive natural environment infused with cultural heritage may provide opportunities for a more nuanced questioning of the past, while also promoting heritage justice across the world.

14.4 The potential of natural heritage sites for a nuanced representation of the contested past

The final part of this chapter will focus on how the interplay of the natural environment and cultural heritage in spa towns might offer opportunities for a critical engagement with the colonial past and enslavement. Hot springs are sites fashioned by centuries of interaction between humans and the landscape. This privileged connection has been acknowledged by documents justifying UNESCO's decision to list Bath, Somerset, as well as the Blue and John Crow Mountains in Jamaica, as parts of world heritage. These documents emphasise the strong interconnectedness of natural and cultural elements in these spa sites. They justify Bath's outstanding universal value with the 'undoubted authenticity' of this town set within a beautiful and dramatic landscape[66] near a hot spring which contains over 42 minerals and reaches the surface at an average temperature of 45°C.[67] The natural environment of Bath, St Thomas is even more unique in that the site has two springs, one cold, the other flowing at 48°C, both rich in sulphur and iron salts. The contribution of a wholesome, harmonious environment to the healing properties of the springs has been recognised early on in both sites. For instance, Philippo declared Bath, St Thomas to be 'one of the healthiest and most beautiful spots on the island, and […] a great resort for the invalids recovering from sickness'.[68] Similarly, 'taking

66 www.whc.unesco.org

67 www.thermaebathspa.com/about-us/the-waters-of-bath/

68 Philippo 1843, 45

the waters' in Bath, Somerset was considered a holistic cure in which drinking the water and bathing were combined with vigorous promenades in the city's lush green spaces. Pleasure gardens like Sydney Garden or the Parade Gardens in Somerset or a botanical garden like in St Thomas were therefore considered quintessential for creating wholesome environments favourable to healing.

As suggested by Corinne Fowler,[69] green spaces across the British Empire are deeply interconnected with each other:

> Whether grand country house gardens, the cottage gardens of the rural working class, the provision grounds of the enslaved people, the allotments of the rural and industrial working class, municipal public parks, or suburban gardens, they all engage with history, with economics and social justice, with ideas about culture, with psychological needs […].

This is equally true for public and private parks in Bath, Somerset and the Bath Botanical Garden in St Thomas, Jamaica. Originally known as St James's Park, Bath's Parade Gardens was laid out in 1709 to serve as a space of leisure for spa visitors. In 2002, it became part of the Historic Heritage List for England.[70] Sydney Gardens, the former Bath Vauxhall Gardens, was created in the 1790s. It included a variety of attractions such as a maze, grotto, sham castle and an artificial rural scene with moving figures powered by a clockwork mechanism. It was a commercial pleasure garden used for promenades, public breakfasts and an annual flower show and it only became a public park after it was bought by the local council in 1908. Since 1992, it has featured on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England as a Grade II listed site. Some of the city's 18th-century gardens were private estates like the Prior Park Landscape Garden. Developed on the site of a 12th-century bishop's garden and deer park by landscape architect Lancelot 'Capability' Brown in 1750–60, it is a famous example of the English landscape-garden style. It features a Grade I listed Palladian bridge, a Gothic temple, a gravel cabinet, a grotto, an icehouse, a lodge and three pools with curtain walls as well as a serpentine lake. Listed by Historic England since 1987, it has been managed by the National Trust since 1993. Some other gardens of the city post-date the decline of spa culture in the 19th century. For instance, the 57-acre Royal Victoria Park was created in 1830 as part of the Victorian public park movement, which brought garden design to a wider public to fight overcrowding and improve the condition of the poor. A small (1.2

69 Fowler 2020, 225
70 www.historicengland.org

hectares) botanical garden opened in the park in 1887. It was established to receive 2,000 valuable herbaceous and alpine plants from the collection of the mycologist Cristopher Edmund Broome who, on his death, willed his botanical specimens and library to the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution, and his herbarium containing some 40,000 fungal specimens to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. To receive his plants, a garden was designed by J.W. Morris and laid out by John Milburn, who came from London's Kew Gardens to become its first superintendent. The garden also received a replica of a Roman temple which was used at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924.

While most of these public gardens are regarded today as deceptively peaceful parts of the English botanical heritage, they are all deeply rooted in colonial history. Designed by landscape gardeners who, from the late 17th century onwards, supplied the wealthy 'with new plant species that were part of the imperial flows of goods, capital and labour',[71] they participated in the industry of ornamental horticulture which aimed to create gardens of tropical appearance inspired by the 'picturesque' aesthetics which dominated 18th-century elite garden design and created an appetite for rare plants and an interest in plant collection as an elite occupation before the interest in botany and gardening also gained traction among working-class people.

Plants did not only travel from the colonies to Britain. Settlers were also interested in introducing English and overseas species to the Caribbean, like Captain Harrison whose Jamaican garden furnished with European houseplants impressed plant collector Hans Sloane.[72] One of the first gardens in Jamaica was designed by Hinton East, Receiver General of Jamaica. East introduced a 'prolific number of plant species from overseas'.[73] Exogeneous plants he imported to the island included the cupressus, mulberry, tulip tree, magnolia, hibiscus, azalea, oleander and jasmine. Inspired by East's garden, the government established the first botanical garden at Enfield in 1774 but, as they decided that the appointed superintendent also had to serve as resident physician at the Bath springs, in 1779 the garden was moved to Bath, 45 miles to the east. The site had a good climate to grow tropical plants, but it did not prove ideal for the island's main botanical garden, given its distance from the capital, poor soil and exposure to frequent floods from the Sulphur River, which destroyed the plants repeatedly.

Although the Bath Botanical Garden in St Thomas currently only occupies 0.4 hectares of land, it is not only older than the one in Bath,

71 Fowler 2020, 226
72 Delbourgo 2017, 157
73 Eyre 1966, 16

Somerset but also had more important missions in the past than offering pleasant surroundings to spa visitors. Branded as the second oldest in the Western hemisphere after the one on the island of St Vincent, it was originally established to grow medicinal plants under the influence of its first superintendent, Dr Thomas Clarke, an expert in Indian and Chinese herbalism. It also served economic purposes by growing '"plants useful to the arts" such as dyes, resins, varnishes, cabinetwoods [...] and the "simple desire to beautify yet more an already lovely land"'.[74] While it included plants imported for their aesthetic value such as the croton, jacaranda and bougainvillea, during the 18th century it mainly served as a nursery where important commercial crops were introduced to be then distributed to planters looking for profitable foreign plant species. In 1782, Thomas Clarke received valuable plants contained in a French ship which was captured by Lord Rodney's HMS *Flora* while heading from the Indian Ocean to Haiti. Taken from the ship's cargo, the mango, cinnamon, jackfruit, moringa, pandanus and oriental ebony were successfully introduced by Clarke in the Bath Botanical Garden. A decade later, the Jamaican Assembly paid Captain Bligh £1,500 for two voyages to carry plants from Tahiti to Jamaica.[75] The first voyage in 1791 ended with a fiasco due to the infamous mutiny on HMS *Bounty*. The second one, in 1793 with HMS *Providence*, succeeded, however, in introducing one of the most important crops to Jamaica. The breadfruit, or *Artocarpus incisa*, provided plantation owners with a cheap food source to 'sustain the life of Black people in Jamaica, solely for reaping profit from slavery' after an estimated 15,000 enslaved Africans perished of famine and unwholesome diet between 1780 and 1787.[76] Another popular crop which quickly became a staple on the island was the ackee, introduced from West Africa by another Bath superintendent and island botanist, Thomas Dancer, who wrote:

> The necessity for a botanical garden for promoting the knowledge of plants in general, and for the introduction and cultivation of exotics that are rare, curious, and useful, whether in medicine or the arts, is, in the present age, so universally apparent, that there is hardly any part of the civilised world wanting some such establishment.[77]

By the end of the 18th century, some 1,600 botanical gardens were established around the world to promote scientific experimentation and facilitate plant acclimatisation and transfer. Colonial botany, defined today as the science

74 Eyre 1966, 20
75 Powell 1977
76 Edwards 1793, quoted in Chambers 2020
77 Dancer 1804, 3

of studying, naming, growing and marketing plants in colonial contexts, 'reshaped global flora by moving plants across seas and climates'.[78] Born of and supported by European voyages, it connected people and plants as parts of a common political order. As Fowler noted,[79] in the colonial context of the 18th and 19th centuries, Britain and the Caribbean were not separate entities. Rather, they were equally involved in a knowledge-exchange network built to advance botanical imperialism. Under the direction of Joseph Banks, who became director of the Royal Gardens at Kew in 1772 and president of the Royal Society in 1778, Kew Gardens became the centre of 'botany research'. However, in reality, much of what was referred to as 'exploration' was in fact military and commercial ventures motivated by the British global imperial project. An example of these was Captain James Cook's first voyage (1768–71) to Brazil, Tahiti, New Zealand and Australia, which Banks, an advocate of slavery, took part in. The triumphant narratives of these voyages contributed to obscuring the devastating military violence used towards indigenous peoples whose plants were appropriated and whose intellectual acumen was extracted.[80] They contributed to silencing the voices of indigenous plant experts like the Tahitians whose help was needed for the acquisition and cultivation of the breadfruit saplings supplied to Jamaica. They also erased the successful resistance of enslaved Africans who in Jamaica were distributed some less valuable land by enslavers to grow their own provisions. They used their skills to grow yams, sweet potatoes, cassava, taro and other vegetables. As Castellano[81] suggests, they achieved 'some self-determination in diet and provided subsistence for self-emancipated individuals who fled the plantations'. In addition, they succeeded in preserving their culture and kinships.

The plants growing in the botanical and pleasure gardens of both spa towns provide abundant material for complex narratives which recognise the talent and knowledge of indigenous and enslaved populations as well as the importance of colonial botany in shaping today's environment. One can hardly think of a more potent metaphor for colonial violence and anti-colonial resistance than the extraction and displacement of plant species and their official or defiant introduction and cultivation. While the gardens of Bath, Somerset and Bath, Jamaica are pleasant places where today numerous exogeneous species can be distinguished, they also bear witness to the erasure of non-European botanical knowledges. A critical engagement with these green spaces which played vital roles in shifting around species

78 Schiebinger and Swan 2005, 13
79 Fowler 2020, 228
80 Chambers 2020
81 Castellano 2022

destined to become trophy plants, luxury products or alimentary staples offers multiple opportunities for learning about colonial history, heritage justice and epistemic justice.

Nuanced alternative narratives addressing the legacies of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans could be developed through a focus on the cash crops and food staples they were involved in growing. In Bath, Somerset, botanical inquiries could also explore how the city's landscape evolved to draw in the surrounding countryside and achieve a picturesque aesthetic developed in the 18th century through colonial encounters. In Bath, St Thomas, investigations could focus on the presence of exogenous species and their introduction for profit and enjoyment. Addressing both sites' 'green heritage' could help audiences better understand the consequences of colonial approaches to plants which resulted in the perceived superiority of European plant taxonomies and botanical knowledges in the global episteme. It would also create opportunities to question the economic consequences of colonialism for biodiversity and food justice and to develop alternative forms of tourism, such as slow tourism or agricultural tourism, which would enhance the environment and the quality of life of host communities while simultaneously providing high-quality experience for visitors. It could also help promote sustainable and socially just heritage narratives and more peaceful and in-depth engagement with colonial legacies.

14.5 Conclusions

To conclude, the North–South divide arising from colonisation continues to imprint its impact on heritage narratives in both Britain and Jamaica. Colonial exploitation in the Global South has resulted in systemic inequalities which continue to impact on today's neo-colonial tourism industry and the construction and preservation of cultural heritage across the world. Colonialism resulted in erasing much of the tangible and intangible (for instance, epistemic) heritage in former colonies while also draining away resources from these countries to create remarkable built heritage in the Global North. Criteria used to list and recognise outstanding cultural value in different parts of the world continue to be underpinned by Eurocentric viewpoints while the global tourism industry pressures heritage sites in the Global South into presenting their heritage narratives in ways likely to please and attract Global North visitors. As a result, narratives that tackle the legacies of colonialism and transatlantic slavery are often silenced, like in Bath, Somerset, or neglected, like in Bath, St Thomas, while black and minority groups' impact on narratives and economic benefits from tourism remains minimal in both places. The strikingly different fortunes of the two hot springs in Somerset and St Thomas eloquently demonstrate how

their different evolution has resulted in strongly dissimilar positions in the ranking of memorial sites. Bath in Britain has been inscribed in the UNESCO list of World Heritage since 1987. It successfully combines the spa and leisure industry with cultural heritage tourism and attracts visitors with a picture-perfect presentation of its Georgian splendour from which the uncomfortable legacies of slavery are conveniently erased. Bath, St Thomas, on the flip side, hardly benefits from its outstanding potential for spa and cultural heritage tourism in a Caribbean tourism industry dominated by beach tourism. Although the town's rich connections with both British planters and figures of anti-colonial resistance from the Maroons to Paul Bogle are currently neglected, steadily increasing interest in alternative forms of tourism (including eco, slow, agricultural models) might provide future opportunities to develop alternative forms of heritage tourism in which green spaces and botanical heritage could play a significant role.

Using the strong interconnection between the natural environment and cultural heritage could represent a unique opportunity for both spa towns to develop more complex heritage narratives acknowledging the legacies of transatlantic slavery in nuanced ways which are also mindful of the ethical challenges inherent to all forms of 'dark tourism'. The exploration of colonialism and slavery through the engagement with green spaces could help the public understand how colonialism redesigned landscapes and shifted around populations while erasing indigenous plant knowledges and creating monocultures threatening biodiversity and food justice. Engagement with the ecological and epistemological consequences of colonialism could also promote pride in anti-colonial resistance and successful plant-based practices developed by subaltern populations. It would also favour communities' needs for nuanced and diverse representations of their heritage while also providing alternatives to dominant forms of tourism repeating the asymmetric power relations reminiscent of the patterns of colonisation.

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15

Black Lives Matter then and now

Lancaster Black History Group and the politics of memory in the wake of new activism

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15.1 Introduction

Unlike many Lancashire towns whose signature architecture is Victorian back-to-back terraces, Lancaster is known for its streets of Georgian houses built in the second half of the 18th century. Looking up at its rich stone buildings, it resembles Bath and it is this grandeur that attracts tourists and encourages a kind of cloying, voyeuristic promenade around the city that focuses on opulence and plenty. There is a dark side to both cities' wealth, however, which was the direct consequence of their citizens' involvement in the slavery business, as slave-ship captains, slave merchants, plantation owners and dealers in plantation goods from the Americas. In both cities this history has been hidden, forgotten and often elided for generations while more famous port cities such as Liverpool have been foregrounded in debates about the importance of slavery to the development of modernity. Being smaller communities (having modern populations of 130,000 in Lancaster and 80,000 in Bath) with relatively low non-white populations (both less than 6%), both cities are quite visibly white in comparison to the metropoles of Bristol, Manchester or Liverpool. This means that developing resources to teach the slavery-infested and colonial histories of the cities

comes with specific challenges around ideas of representing that history in contexts of overwhelming whiteness and ignorance. Hence, the case study of Lancaster is particularly relevant as a comparator to Bath, as it shows ways that the city has used the development of walking tours and written trails building on work over two decades to move the debate forward and break the silence that surrounds its elegant streets. As 2017 Turner Prize-winner Lubaina Himid commented,

> Lancaster is a strange mixture of a place as cities often are; it has elegance but it's rough, urban and rural at one and the same time. You only have to visit the graveyards to be where slave ship owners are buried and the pubs to be where they made transactions. It feels like an important town and a tiny city, even sometimes like a small village. Often it poses as a genteel watering station, a gateway to the lakes.[1]

On 10 June 2020 the words 'Slave Trader' were spray-painted on a family grave; the red-painted graffiti on the large 18th-century gravesite memorial was a shocking intervention in the Lancaster Priory grounds, a site where summer picnickers would always gather, albeit socially distanced, at the height of lockdown. Here the veneer of respectability that Lancaster cloaks itself in is absolutely everyday in the quiet hallowed grounds, with views to Morecambe Bay and the Lake District beyond on one side and, across the town, views of its cotton mills and of terraced streets on the other. The activist had chosen their target well: the memorial was the family tomb of the Rawlinsons, who were one of the most notorious slave-merchant and West Indian trading families in Lancaster, with slave-trading business interests in Liverpool through Abraham Rawlinson Jr and Company and linked to other slave merchant families such as the Dillworths and Lindows through marriage. Indeed, William Lindow, who made his fortune in the West Indies trade and whose overseas estate included shares in three plantations in Grenada and St Vincent, was also interred alongside his business partners in 1786. Like many families, the Lindows and Rawlinsons showcased their wealth by buying large properties in town with Georgian family houses in Queen Street and High Street and by bringing from their estates in the West Indies slaves/servants to showcase their wealth. So, John Chance was baptised on 12 September 1777, 'a black, aged 22 years and upwards in the service of Mr Lindow' and on 22 January 1783 'Isaac Rawlinson, a Negro, an adult'.[2] The town's MP at the time the memorial was first commissioned in 1780 was Abraham Rawlinson, whose support of slavery and the

1 Himid 2007
2 Anon. 2007

transatlantic slave trade in Parliament was steadfast; he might not be buried at this spot but the graffiti was just as surely aimed at him too.

In the wake of such 'vandalism', the standard response would be to clean the grave as soon as possible. However, in June 2020, the context was different: there had been an outcry against the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25 May by Derek Chauvin which had galvanised and made international the Black Lives Matter movement. On 3 June in Lancaster a crowd of at least 350 took the knee in Dalton Square in front of the Town Hall in solidarity with George Floyd and against racism here in Britain. This activism was continued with weekly protests of taking the knee for the next few months. Lancaster, unlike Liverpool, London, Bristol, Birmingham, Coventry, Manchester or even Preston, does not have a significant Caribbean community to take on these issues but in this tumultuous time the community came together to speak out. Its small black community found its voice. For instance, Geraldine Onek, the daughter of Sudanese refugees and a primary-school teacher, became one of the primary spokespersons:

> When I look at what has happened over the last week, I have been overwhelmed. When I saw what happened to George Floyd, I immediately thought this is just the tip of the iceberg, and my reaction was 'that's enough'. The UK is not innocent and my frustration and anger comes from people seeing it as an isolated incident. I see comments on Facebook and quite often I get frustrated and don't say anything, I'm usually the quiet one, but after everything that has happened, I couldn't stay quiet.[3]

Onek's contention that 'the UK is not innocent' was often reiterated by black Britons at BLM demonstrations who supported the need to call out and organise against Britain's colonial past and racist present which is often hidden or conveniently forgotten. Racism is not a series of isolated incidents. Paul Gilroy has talked eloquently about the deadening legacy of this past felt across Britain:

> Once the history of empire becomes a source of discomfort, shame and perplexity, its complications and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied and then if possible actively forgotten. The resulting silence feeds an additional catastrophe: the error of imagining that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects.[4]

3 Lakin 2021a
4 Gilroy 2004, 98

Black Britons, in this context where they are seen as 'alien intruders', are fighting back through direct action. It was in this context of the BLM movement and its local manifestations that the vicar of the Priory, the Reverend Chris Newlands, was emboldened into the radical action of not employing stone cleaners. His articulate defence of his action was framed through the history of Lancaster's slave-trading past and the lack of a memorial to the victims of the slave trade in the Priory grounds, which he said would be 'a necessary corrective to trophy-memorials such as this'.[5] His description of a heretofore-hallowed grave as a 'trophy-memorial', because of its links to slave-produced wealth, was a significant calling out of Lancaster's shame-ridden history by a scion of the community. His further remarks articulated a future context too, which I want to examine more carefully as it is crucial to the way that Lancaster activists were to move forward over the next two years:

> I am not endorsing this vandalism, though I do understand the righteous anger which made it happen. People are more important than monuments, let me be clear about that. This monument is a part of the history of our city, whether we like it or not. And this graffiti is now also a part of that history, representing a moment in time when anger over the death of a black man's murder by a white policeman in the United States, spread across the world.[6]

Newlands' description of how the graffiti is itself now part of the history of the city reflecting new realities shows how the graffiti creates what I have called elsewhere a guerrilla memorialisation,[7] like intervention that seeks to change the complacency about Lancaster's slave-trade past and wake Lancastrians up to the way its history has helped create the transnational racism that affects us all now. The altered, unwashed grave means that Lancaster citizens are not allowed to forget or drift into complacency. Here they are confronted daily by the anger inherent in the graffiti, ultimately created by the historical indifference to seemingly commercial decisions

5 Lakin 2021b

6 Lakin 2021b

7 My use of this term here relates to the way I used the expression in my study *Creating Memorials, Building Identities: The Politics of Memory in the Black Atlantic* and elsewhere to describe the way memorialising sometimes takes on an overtly political character in order to challenge dominating historical narratives. I prefer the term to the idea developed in Germany around Holocaust monuments of 'counter-memorials' because it is a more active and performative expression and seems to more accurately describe the processes and creative works I describe.

taken by men categorised as respectable and deserving monuments and streets named after them in their town of birth.

15.2 Refocusing the Lancaster Trail on Black agency

In the wake of the protests, Lancaster Black History Group (LBHG) was formed in June 2020 with the express aim of creating not 'a moment, but a movement'. It established a constitution that would never allow a black minority membership on its steering group and was eventually to consist of teachers, schoolchildren, academics, social workers, councillors and community activists of various professions. It deliberately foregrounded history because of Lancaster's status as the fourth-largest slave port in Britain and what they saw as the amnesia in the wider community about that history. LBHG is best seen as a campaigning, grassroots group which is decidedly independent of establishment organisations and aspires to Paul Gilroy's description of valuable organisations in the decolonial project that work against the 'postcolonial melancholia' he has identified as the defining narrative in British culture. He looks to groups 'close to the centre of Britain's vernacular dissidence, lending energy to an ordinary, demotic multiculturalism that is not the outcome of government drift and institutional indifference but of concrete oppositional work: political, aesthetic, cultural, scholarly'.[8]

Our endeavours were concerned with Gilroy's four key phrases and within three months LBHG had gained funding to run a community history project (the Lancaster Slavery Family Trees Project), taken a lead role in community activism around racial discrimination in the city (including being key founders of the commissioning board at the Priory for a new memorial for enslaved African victims) and supported the development to print of a new version of the Lancaster, Slave Trade, Abolition and Fair Trade Trail. The history project was to involve investigations by seven different community/school groups into key slave-merchant families such as the Rawlinsons, Satterthwaites, Lindows, Hindes and Gillows involving over 30 individuals, from teenagers to pensioners. The idea was to feed new, reliably sourced information about the wide extent of the slave trade into initiatives like the Slave Trail and to do so constantly trying to find evidence of black agency in the city to counteract the majoritarian narrative of passivity. In doing this we would create new knowledge which would enable learning as an adjunct to memorial projects, for as Richard Price has asserted, 'memorials [should] run less to bricks and mortar than to knowledge and its diffusion. What if we tried to make sure that every schoolchild in Europe, the Americas

8 Gilroy 2004, 108

and Africa is exposed as fully as possible to the history of slavery and its legacies?'[9]

Our project in Lancaster would be one small part of the jigsaw that creates this knowledge base and our logo that places a black jigsaw piece into the red rose of Lancaster was a visual symbol for this endeavour. The Priory commissioning board was galvanised by the presence of these activists and the coalition between churchgoers and BLM-inspired individuals has enabled ground-breaking, fully funded projects which are literally changing the landscape of the city and the interiors of its museums.[10] The Facing the Past project, funded by the National Lottery to the tune of over £200,000, will support educational projects including pedagogic materials on slavery for all Lancaster Key Stage 2 schoolchildren and the development of the trail into a dynamic digital version.[11]

Although both the community history project and the Priory memorial initiatives are important markers in the development of Lancaster's responses to BLM – and I will return to them in this essay – I want to mainly concentrate on the trail/tour as its development enables an interesting discussion about confronting amnesia in the everyday memoryscape. Walking tours are a particularly useful performative action to interrogate a cityscape and its seeming neutrality. The Lancaster walking tour is particularly performative and participatory, as I will discuss. The cultural critic Susan Stewart has talked about how modern cities have a silencing function:

> To walk in the city is to experience the disjuncture of partial vision/partial consciousness. The narrativity of this walking is belied by a simultaneity we know and yet cannot experience. As we turn a corner, our object disappears around the next corner. The sides of the street conspire against us; each attention suppresses a field of possibilities. The discourse of the city is a syncretic discourse, political in its untranslatability. Hence the language of the state elides it. Unable to speak all the city's languages, unable to speak all at once, the state's language becomes monumental, the silence of headquarters, the silence of the bank. In this transcendent and anonymous silence is the miming of corporate relations.[12]

9 Price 2001, 61

10 Between 15 October 2022 and 26 February 2023 an exhibition based on the research undertaken in the Lancaster Slave Family Trees Project was displayed in the Lancaster City Museum: https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/lancaster-black-history-group-and-lancaster-city-museums-launch-slavery-family-trees-exhibition-3863109 [accessed on 14 November 2022]

11 https://lancasterpriory.org/uncategorised/major-funding-boost-for-lancaster-slave-trade-project/ [accessed on 1 July 2022]

12 Stewart 1993, 2

15.3 Dialogic work with communities

The tour works against such silencing, providing information the buildings do not reveal in themselves, of past slave-merchant activity and black residents working against the unthinking 'miming of corporate relations'. In investigating these hitherto-hidden histories, the trail followed the lead of the Turner Prize-winning artist Lubaina Himid, whose 2007 exhibition, 'Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service', at the Judges' Lodgings with its 100 overpainted 18th- and early 19th-century plates, jugs and tureens made an inspiring intervention for us, illustrating both the slave owners in their caricatured finery and the slaves/servants shown as a presence in a city where they had largely been ignored. Himid characterised the research for her project thus:

> I have looked at documents, ship designs, prints, watercolours, more details and more splendid doorways. These led into the houses of Lancaster ship owners such as Dodshon Foster, William Lindow and John Satterthwaite. I have tried to imagine the lives of the almost invisible slave servants these men owned, brought from the plantations to work in quiet isolation in this chilly place. I looked for clues, connections, ghosts and heroes.[13]

Our praxis was similar, to try to reveal the hidden histories, but through a walking and printed tour. The Lancaster Trail had been in existence in the city since around 2006–7 as part of the same 'Abolished?' project as Himid's 'Swallow Hard'. With the assistance of the historian of the Lancaster Slave Trade, Melinda Elder and the local artist Sue Flowers, schoolchildren from Dallas Road Primary School wrote and illustrated a written tour of slave sites (see Figure 15.1). This had been added to by the charities Global Link and the Fig Tree in 2015, making for a tour that included more references to Fair Trade. These were great initiatives. However, as a local cultural historian and veteran slave-site tour giver, I felt the trail needed an overhaul to include a greater emphasis on black agency, to foreground abolition to a greater extent and, crucially, to take the story beyond the 18th century to include the 19th-century cotton mills whose use of American-produced cotton placed Lancashire at the centre of the network of economic relations that supported the continuation of the horrors of plantation slavery until 1865. Those of African descent who undertook the trail with me had been critical of the volume of stories of black agency there were in the original trail and it was important to undertake extra research to find these stories. Histories of abolition in Lancaster are particularly hard to find. At the time

13 Himid 2007

Figure 15.1 Professor Alan Rice leading his Lancaster Slave Trade Trail, in front of the Judges' Lodgings Museum and adjacent to the Gillows warehouse, 18 July 2023.

of petitioning against slavery it had been one of the few towns to organise a petition in favour of the trade, which was so important to its economic wellbeing. We did, however, unearth new abolitionist visitors, including Sarah Parker Remond who spoke at the Palatine Hall in 1860. The expanded timeline to include plantation slavery through the story of cotton and the industrial revolution was also useful to highlight the issue of wage slavery and child exploitation in the mills and the ways that exploitations abroad were linked to those at home, an issue that local people felt was important in telling the full story of the effects of the transatlantic slave trade.

In terms of black agency, in the tour I am able to use the setting of the Priory to enact a guerrilla memorialisation. Taking to the pulpit I first pointed out the memorials to slave owners inside the church, the Hindes and the Satterthwaites, the latter right at the core of the church on the floor beside the pulpit, then I read out the names of those without memorials, the 39 black slave servants baptised in the church in the late 18th century. My aim was to make their absence present again in a building where they, unlike their oppressors, have been forgotten. By doing so, I wanted to enact a change, to work towards a new history where their contributions can no longer be ignored. A focus group after one of my tours, led by Daniel

Harrison and colleagues, showcased how participants were moved by this guerrilla memorialisation:

> I think it is really easy to like walk past like plaques and stuff […] when you were talking about it being sensory and like important to listen I do really feel that. When we were in the church and Alan was reading out all [the enslaved Africans] names, I found that much more impactful than seeing names written down in a list. There's something about hearing somebody's name or hearing somebody whose name is forgotten or not recorded.[14]

Making these names matter is enabled on a tour more readily as the embodied experience of being in the place makes for a more visceral reaction to the history, one where you are literally placed where those baptisms happened. As Sarah Pink states, 'it is these multi-sensory bodily experiences which render us either in place or out of place'[15] – there in the Priory close to the font, the audience can imagine those ceremonies with their conflicted meanings for people often miles from their original homes. What we want to do in the tour is a kind of haunting of the contemporary with its amnesiacal history with these ghosts from the past, to conjure new histories through the introduction of these formerly absent presences:

> What kind of case is a case of a ghost? It is a case of haunting, a story about what happens when we admit the ghost – that special instance of the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present – into the making of worldly relations and into the making of our accounts of the world. It is a case of the difference it makes to start with the marginal, with what we normally exclude or banish, or, more commonly with what we never even notice.[16]

By bringing the marginal to the centre, the trail hopes to dialogise hegemonic historical narratives and create new narrative realities. Another way the agency of enslaved Africans is brought into the tour and trail is through runaway advertisements, which show Africans as so rebellious against their conditions that they just upped and ran. The most effective of the Lancaster district runaway adverts to read out from the pulpit in the context of the Priory concerns an Igbo boy who ran away in 1765, not because he was baptised there but actually because he was not. Owned by the clergyman Thomas Clarkson of St Peter's Church, Heysham, who is venerated in his

14 Harrison et al. n.d.
15 Pink 2008, 179
16 Gordon 1997, 24–5

home church for his long service (1756–89), the boy was never baptised, showing, one might conjecture, a lack of care for him allied to him being bereft of a Christian name. I read his advertisement from the pulpit as a guerrilla memorialisation to revel in his escape from this so-called Christian master: the advert appeared in the 10 September 1765 edition of the London-based newspaper the *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*:

> RUN away from the House of the Rev- Mr. Clarkson, Rector of Heysham, near Lancaster, early in the Morning of Monday the 26th of August last, a Negro Boy, of the Ebo Country, slender made, about five Feet three Inches high, his Left Knee bending inwards, which makes him ha[l]t, a small Lump on his Forehead, with his Country Marks on his Temples; had on, when eloped, a blue Jacket, a grey Waistcoat, and Leather Breeches; he speaks broad Lancashire Dialect.
>
> Whoever brings him to his Master at Heysham, or to his Master's Brother, Mr. William Clarkson, Surgeon, in Drury-Lane, Leverpoole, shall be handsomely rewarded, and all Charges paid; but whoever harbours him shall be prosecuted with the utmost Rigour of the Law.[17]

The advertisement shows the abuse the Igbo boy has suffered at the hands of the Rector, with his limp and the lump on his forehead. It also places in clear daylight the historic complicity of the Church of England in slaveholding, which by reading it from the pulpit I emphasise. The Legacies of British Slaveholding project enumerates numerous church beneficiaries of compensation and calculates that about 5% of the total money distributed went to the Anglican Church. Here where numerous clergymen have stood before me, some have been slave owners themselves. Interestingly, the Igbo boy has scarification marks on his forehead ('Country Marks on his Temples') which shows he was born in what is now Nigeria. By the time of his escape, however, he speaks 'broad Lancashire Dialect'. Almost certainly, trying to get to London to merge into the crowds, his 'country marks' would be two-a-penny in an African crowd; however, his 'broad Lancashire Dialect' would make him very easy to spot among all the cockneys.

Another runaway advertisement I read out from the pulpit is that of Henry (Harry) Hinde, who had been baptised in the Priory: 'Henry Hind, an adult Negro, May 31 1761'.[18] I read out this baptismal record just underneath the memorial in the church to the Hinde family, a notorious trading family in enslaved Africans in the city. This did not stop them from

17 https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/display/?rid=796 [accessed on 1 July 2022]

18 Anon. 2007, 7

being pillars of the community, and Thomas Hinde (1720–99) was twice mayor of Lancaster. He was such a successful captain on voyages bearing enslaved Africans that he elevated himself to become a rich merchant. He sent more ships to West Africa and stayed in the trade longer than anyone else at Lancaster. He conducted five voyages himself as captain, including in the inaptly named *Jolly Bachelor* in 1748, before becoming a merchant and investor in slave-trade voyages and the West Indian trade. His brother James, who was involved in the slavery business too as a mercer in the city[19] and an investor in voyages, was Henry's so-called master and when he escaped in 1764, he placed a runaway advertisement in the *St. James Chronicle*, determined to recapture him.

> RUN away from Lancaster, on Friday the 23d Day of November last, a Negro Man named Harry, about twenty Years old, five Feet four Inches high, strong made, and one of his Ears bored; the Colour of his Clothes is unknown, as he absconded in the Night without his Clothes, and is supposed to be gone for London. Whoever secures the said Negro shall be well rewarded, and all Expences paid, upon applying to Mr. James Hinde, Merchant, in Lancaster, or Mr. Smith, Book-keeper, at the Swan-with-two-Necks, Lad-Lane, London.[20]

The description of Henry 'with one of his Ears bored' is telling as this indicates he had already been punished for some kind of rebellious act. Reading out this advertisement in the Priory in close proximity to the Hinde memorial is a powerful act of reparative history, ventriloquising rebellious black agency in a place where passivity and amnesia had previously held sway. The action is designed to make the audience question the veneration the church historically has given to those involved in the slavery business and aims to be part of the movement for change exemplified by the vicar of the Priory's response to the graffitied gravesite outside its doors. The tour, by telling such stories, seeks to give agency to these black Lancastrians whose life experiences are only now finally being plucked from the shadows of the archives and to use that agency in the present as a guerrilla memorialisation for change that is based on revealing black histories through ongoing community research. Lancaster Black History Group's purpose is not to cancel history but to challenge the hegemonic national and imperial narratives that still all too often hold sway by dialogising them through the uncovering of counter-histories/memories that create new, more inclusive and multivocal narratives. As Jean Fisher articulates, such work of recovery

19 For more on the Hinde Family, see Elder 1992.

20 https://www.runaways.gla.ac.uk/database/display/?rid=340 [accessed on 1 July 2022]

and discovery in the archive is vital to reconstructing historical frames that do justice to the multiple histories of a multicultural Britain. She describes how

> hegemonic culture has assembled the historical archive, withheld or released its contents and authorised its interpretive discourses as 'history' […]. As such historical representation is never impartial, but always mediated and manipulated by the ideological biases that reflect the needs and desires of a particular historiographic moment. The archive is, therefore, open to the abuse of institutional concealment, disavowal or wilful amnesia, to a blurring of the boundaries between historiography and mythography and hence a potential ideological weapon by which the place of power obliterates the experience of the marginal.[21]

The tour works against such obliteration and to make the hitherto marginal central to the narratives Lancastrians have access to. Central to this endeavour are black Lancastrians who have also been explored through the Lancaster Slavery Family Trees History Project, where their links to the major slave merchants in the city are revealed. As this project developed, local craftworkers at the Sewing Café, Lancaster offered to make a banner graphically illustrating their stories.[22] Lancaster Black History Group ran a series of workshops for the Sewing Café members outlining the research on numerous black Lancastrians before they started the work. Under the direction of designer Victoria Frausin, it took over 1,000 collaborative hours to complete. With the title 'Lancaster Black History', it links black Lancastrians to their local and international geographies, names those baptised and in a brightly coloured collage tells the stories of key individuals (see Figure 15.2). Henry Hinde is named but also depicted, not unclothed as mentioned in the advertisement but dressed in archetypical clothing as described for the Igbo boy, with his bored ear showing. This was a way of making him stand for all of those runaway enslaved people, and his pose with cloth bag over his shoulder approximates the graphical depiction of runaways on some of the slave advertisements. Another enslaved servant depicted, who was brought from St Kitts by her mistress Mary (Polly Rawlins) in 1777 and baptised '2nd April 1778 Frances Elizabeth Johnson, a black woman servt. To Mr John Satterthwaite, an adult aged 27 years'[23] is shown resplendent in a St Kitts flag headdress. A third, Thomas Anson, is shown blowing a trumpet. This instrument encapsulates his freedom because, after

21 Fisher 2008, 204

22 https://www.lancasterslaveryfamilytrees.com/the-slavery-family-tree-banner-a-collaboration-with-sewing-cafe-lancaster/ [accessed on 1 July 2022]

23 Anon. 2007, 7

Figure 15.2 Lancaster Black History Group banner, made by Lancaster Sewing Café, designed by Victoria Frausin.

escaping from his so-called master, Edmund Sill, in Dent (a small village up the Lune Valley from Lancaster) in 1758, he managed to join the 4th Dragoons of the British Army in London as a musician in 1760. When invalided out in 1768, he was awarded a pension.[24] The Igbo boy is shown too, in the top corner, as if breaking through the material itself in his quest for freedom. His revolutionary breaking of the frame is a symbol of the way black people have to make their own history, breaking through the white framing of majoritarian historical narratives. This brightly coloured and pedagogical banner is used as a mobile memorial, travelling between educational establishments, museums and community venues foregrounding a black history that hitherto had not been readily available. An accompanying leaflet explicates all these formally unacknowledged black lives.

The banner has been broadly welcomed in Lancaster but there has been mixed reaction to the BLM protests, the formation of Lancaster Black History Group and the efforts of the Priory at reparation. This has probably been best seen at the Rawlinson grave memorial where there has been much pushback at the decision to leave the graffiti unwhitewashed. For instance, when the tour has stopped in front of the memorial, sometimes there has been confrontations with locals opposed to the Priory's stance. In one particular

24 Dewjee 2022

heated argument, a resident shouted that we were cancelling culture, not admitting to African tribes' and states' involvement in the transatlantic slave trade by selling 'their' people. After participants in the tour told the resident that, indeed, African merchants' role had been outlined in the opening remarks, he changed tack, saying that the desecration of graves was a heinous act on a par with slavery itself: 'that what's happened on the grave is worse than what happened in the history of slavery because you know that this is a disgrace because it is a desecration'. Such comments compelled us to alter the schoolchildren's version of the tour into using the Rawlinson tomb as an occasion for a moral philosophy debate – splitting the children into groups, we asked them to discuss the morality of the decision of the graffiti being left in place and whether this was right. In March 2022, a year-six Bowerham school pupil said that graffiti was antisocial and he did not like it, but that it was important here as it highlighted a historical wrong. In June 2022, a year-six girl from Willow Lane Primary School astutely commented 'While the graffiti isn't acceptable, it does show the real history of the statue. This man disrespected an entire culture and that needs to be recognised'. The pupils' discussion of 'disrespect' highlights the way the graffiti enables debate across chronologies, showing that memorial meaning is often mobile and not static; veneration from one era might well change into vilification in another and historical actors like the spray-paint wielder have an important role to play in ongoing debates around Lancaster's history.

The pupil's articulation of the complex issues around the graffiti was picked up by the focus groups a local MA student, Daniel Harrison, set up, many of whom found the Rawlinson memorial a very effective part of the tour because it dramatised the debates unleashed by the BLM movement and the local Lancaster demonstrations. In describing what happened at the Rawlinson memorial, I told Harrison how

> I see the emotion of the person who chose to graffiti it […] we talk about whether we think the history of Lancaster is hidden. Obviously these people have thought that it's so hidden that they need to take it into their own hands to make people aware that these people were slave traders.[25]

The graffiti has highlighted the city's past amnesia, during which time the Rawlinson memorial has stood untouched by any official or unofficial counter memorialisation. The graffiti refuses the sweeping of this history under the carpet, naming and shaming Lancaster's historical residents as complicit in crimes against humanity. This graffiti and its guerrilla memorialisation dialogise dominant historical narratives with a history from below that refuses

25 Harrison et al. n.d.

amnesia and complacency. As one of the participants in the focus groups put it, 'You can almost see two histories here. You can see the memorial. And then you can see the history of the aftermath of George Floyd'.[26] These two conflicting histories could be said to be contestatory on the very stone of the memorial, with it becoming an exemplar of the way narratives and actions set loose by the reaction to contemporary racism challenge widely accepted hegemonic historical narratives such as those that have long accepted Lancaster slave traders as pillars of their community deserving memorial plaudit. And, of course, such actions provoke pushback from conservative forces for whom BLM narratives are a threat to their worldview. It is only by such actions that minority histories and the memories that underpin them can challenge such pushback. As Michael Rothberg asserts,

> varied strategies of aggressively foregrounding the 'haunting past' do not produce divisiveness but rather seek to uncover already existing unresolved divisions. Their acts of uncovering hidden histories, traumas and social divisions constitute the ethical dimensions of multidirectional memory.[27]

Rothberg articulates that silence in the face of historical injustice is not the answer, even if it is convenient and comforting to many citizens whose forgetfulness is a default position that is strongly defended. Rothberg's positing of a multidirectional memory envisages a different, more multivocal city narrative which can be part of a healing of the past trauma of slavery and colonialism. One focus-group participant outlines how important it is that the graffiti stays to reflect the way BLM narratives have challenged the status quo. In doing so, he compares the guerrilla action in Lancaster to the larger and more famous collective action against the Colston statue in Bristol, which led to its downfall and launching into the Avon. He sees the graffiti as essential to making people aware of a hidden history:

> there are people whose families are probably still benefitting from the wealth that was accumulated during the slave trade and like the property as well, probably came with that and so to have the Rawlinson memorial that is still glorifying that, it doesn't sit right with me. And like thinking about the Colston statue and how it was pulled down and there's all these conversations about that and um yeah. I understand the controversial debate around it and like I'm still open to hearing different sides but for me like its yeah, I would rather just keep the graffiti and I think that says a lot.[28]

26 Harrison et al. n.d.
27 Rothberg 2009, 172
28 Harrison et al. n.d.

For Lancaster, then, this challenging of the status quo with parallels to the Colston statue toppling enables a debate that is maybe missing in polities where contestation has not taken such a visible form, such as in Bath. The discussions provoked by such actions might be difficult and sometimes even dangerous; however, they do seem to help move the discussion forward. Maybe it is only through contestation that true reconciliation can be aimed for. An honest discussion can only be had after there has been challenge to the visible status quo.

15.4 Engaging with difficult legacies in museum collections

Contested history is not just present in Lancaster at the graffitied grave, but also in more comfortable spaces such as the Judges' Lodgings, an early-17th-century dwelling used later for circuit judges. It is now a museum with the largest collection of Gillows' fine mahogany furniture in Britain. The Gillows company was formed by Robert Gillow in around 1730, and he and his brother Richard, as well as owning a share of the slave ship *Gambia* which made two voyages in the 1750s, used slave-forested timber from the West Indies, Honduras and elsewhere in the Caribbean basin. Lancaster slave ships which supplied Gillows were implicated in the direct trade of mahogany for enslaved Africans. This is best illustrated by an event of 1785 when the slave-ship captain William Keirson Harrison, acting for the merchant James Sawrey, exchanged his entire cargo of 174 enslaved Africans on board the ship *Fenton* for 541 planks of mahogany. One of the most important pieces made by Gillows is the bookcase commissioned by Mary Hutton Rawlinson (1715–86) in 1772. A Quaker, Mary was a member of the slave- and West Indian-trading Dillworth family and widow of Thomas Hutton Rawlinson (1712–69), who owned the Goyave plantation in Grenada and left her more than £49,000 (over £4 million at current values) in his will.[29]

According to the Art Fund website, the piece made for their 'rich and powerful' client has 'wholly exceptional carving, marquetry and superb veneers' and cost 20 guineas (£1,800).[30] Many of the plantation products used in the slave trade have now been consumed or have not survived, such as sugar, tobacco, rum, cotton, rice and indigo. However, mahogany survives as luxury antiques. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Lancaster, where the concentration of mahogany imports from the West Indies makes it the most important port for the commodity in 18th-century Britain. Worked at

29 Elder 1992

30 https://www.artfund.org/supporting-museums/art-weve-helped-buy/artwork/10115/rawlinson-bookcase [accessed on 1 July 2022]

so that its slavery origins are obscured – there are no signs of the cuts made by enslaved Africans labouring and dying in tropical rainforests – mahogany, nevertheless, survives as witness to the super-exploitation of black bodies for the luxurious comfort of rich British families. As Simon Gikandi discusses,

> The line dividing cosmopolitan culture and the moral geography of slavery was not […] as wide as the images of the salon and the slave port […] might suggest […] it was precisely the proximity of these two spheres of social existence – a cosmopolitan culture and the world of bondage – that necessitated their cultural separation. For if the goal of the project of taste was to quarantine the modern European subject from contaminating forces associated with the political economy of slavery and commerce in general, the desire for cultural purity was consciously haunted by what it excluded or repressed.[31]

The 'contamination' of the slavery business in the world of fine taste is revealed through new interpretations of objects in the museum to reveal their hidden narratives. The invisibility of African labour here spans geographies as tropical labourers and black servants are both 'excluded or repressed'. Although we cannot be sure that the baptised slave/servant Isaac Rawlinson belonged to Mary's family, his surname leaves little doubt as to his ownership by one of the many Rawlinsons with West Indian connections. The irony of a bookshelf being made of mahogany forested by enslaved Africans existing as a status symbol in a slave merchant's house where literacy is denied to those of a darker hue is one that enables us to link conspicuous consumption and boastful learning to the exploited labour of enslaved Africans thousands of miles away and the exploitation of slave labour in Lancaster too. In the wake of BLM and the formation of Lancaster Black History Group, the local musician Gordon Walker added his song 'The Cutter' to the repertoire of his group Peloton. The allusive lyrics make a link from the abuse of labour that forests the trees by overseers and colonial soldiers to the way the mahogany adds value to Lancaster hallways and to an environmental discourse about the destruction of Jamaica's natural landscape through the despoilation of the mahogany resources:

> The cutter cut the tree, the branches and leaves
> The soldier cut the father, the brother and the child
> The trees lost to the soil, the blood stain on the sand
> But wood shines in the Hall
> Who cut the cutter
> Who cut the tree

31 Gikandi 2011, 100

Who cut Jamaica
Our history
Who cut the cutter
Who cut the tree
Who cut Jamaica
Mahogany…
From Jamaica to Lancaster, the wood piled high, 500 dark and strong
Mahogany for high society, for Lancaster's Prosperity.[32]

This song is performed in local venues, highlighting how a company Lancastrians have been encouraged to be proud of was in fact complicit in human rights abuses and environmental despoilation. The beauty of the Gillows furniture in the Judges' Lodgings cannot now be so innocently enjoyed. Again, majoritarian history has been dialogised from below in this song that refuses to see historical furniture as merely wondrous articles but wants to interrogate who was harmed to create aesthetically beautiful objects and, through this, aims to decolonise this particular institution.

It is not just the furniture that illuminates difficult legacies for the museum. Throughout the museum are portraits of slave-merchant members of the Satterthwaite, Rawlinson and Lindow families. At a talk I gave at the museum in 2020, I was asked in the Q&A what the museum could do to more fully reflect the history of black Lancastrians. I had a short answer: 'you should get some portraits of historical black figures on the walls'. I was thinking particularly of the portraits of the Rawlinsons, Mary and Thomas, by the famous portraitist George Romney, which are often shown in the midst of luxurious Gillows furniture and other plush furniture. Mary's portrait is placed next to the bookcase she commissioned and shows her in an unshowy pose, dressed with Quaker restraint. Mary was no shrinking violet, though, and Rawlinson account books from the 1750s show her owning one-sixth of the business. In Lancaster, some of the slave merchants were women and Quaker women at that. My intervention and other calls by LBHG members for reparative measures at our museums galvanised curators and museum managers at Lancaster venues into devising projects that would lead to achieving the aim of gaining better representation of black agency in our museums. In January 2022, the Judges' Lodgings obtained £62,000 from the Art Fund and the Association of Independent Museums New Stories, New Audiences fund for a Facing the Past project to decolonise and reinterpret their collections relating to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, with LBHG as key partners. They have commissioned a series of portraits of historical black Lancastrians from the Kendal-based artist Lela

32 Walker 2021

Figure 15.3 Artist Lela Harris leading a tour of her exhibition, 'Facing the Past', at the Judges' Lodgings, 18 July 2023. She is standing in front of her portrait of the black Lancastrian John Chance with George Romney's portrait of Lancaster MP Abraham Rawlinson in the background.

Harris to be displayed opposite existing portraits like that of Mary Hutton Rawlinson (see Figure 15.3). She has based her choice of characters on the existent Slave Trail and community research undertaken by LBHG. The wider community will be engaged by school workshops that will make portraits to be displayed in the museum in an accompanying exhibition.[33] The work will conjure presences that have hitherto been absent (and in previous generations wilfully suppressed) in the museum, foregrounding those whose labour had made possible the luxurious surroundings. Young describes such 'guerrilla memorialisation' or counter memorialisation thus: '[the] aim is not to reassure or console, but to haunt visitors with the unpleasant – uncanny – sensation of calling into consciousness that which has been previously – even happily – repressed'.[34]

Such dialogic work with community engagement as a means of decolonising can serve as an exemplar for other museums in slave ports such as Bristol and towns built on significant slave wealth such as Bath. Hopefully,

33 https://ibaruclan.com/judges_lodgings_commissions_lela_harris/ [accessed on 1 July 2022]
34 Young 2001

work in the wake of BLM through community history projects, enhanced slave trails and tours, art exhibitions that foreground forgotten black lives and the Priory's Facing the Past project (working towards a permanent memorial to those black lives in its grounds, to counter the slave merchants' grave memorials) will fulfil the agenda Lubaina Himid outlined for her 'Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service' project:

> Hopefully the intervention will explain what makes Lancaster the complicated place it is. It is a city in which traders became abolitionists and in which Quakers owned slave ships. There are beautiful buildings designed by men involved in horrible deeds. Behind doors in attics and underground are the hidden histories of a few almost invisible African people who were owned by families engaged in an immoral strategy to make a lot of money fast. This work is not a memorial but more an encouraging incentive for everyone committed to restoring the balance, revealing the truths and continuing the dialogues.[35]

With thanks to Daniel Harrison and his colleagues for their help in running feedback sessions that have contributed to the ideas here. This essay is dedicated to my colleagues in the Lancaster Black History Group, whose comradeship has contributed so much to a fulfilling academic and social life.

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16

Discussion panel

'How to engage with the uncomfortable past'

With contributions by Nicole Kairinos, Alan Rice, Shawn-Naphtali Sobers, Jillian Sutherland and Richard S. White; edited by Christina Horvath

This concluding chapter features an edited transcript of an online discussion panel held on 25 March 2021. It was organised by students from the University of Bath who were involved in creating the Bath's Uncomfortable Past walking tour, as detailed in Chapter 12. The introduction was given by Nicole Kairinos, the student lead of the project, and the panel was moderated by Christina Horvath. Four contributors to this volume participated in the discussion. The panel began with insights from photographer, filmmaker and academic researcher Shawn-Naphtali Sobers, whose perspectives were previously discussed in Chapter 8. Following that, Alan Rice, Director of the Research Centre in Migration, Diaspora and Exile at the University of Central Lancashire and Co-Director of the Institute for Black Atlantic Research (see also Chapter 15), shared his thoughts. Jillian Sutherland, at that time an Artisa Curatorial Fellow at the Holburne Museum, discussed her reinterpretation of a plantation day book from Barbados in 1722, as explored in Chapter 9. Richard White, a freelance artist-researcher at Bath Spa University and author of Chapter 10, concluded the discussion.

The event, conducted amidst the third COVID-19 lockdown, drew an audience of nearly 300 individuals. It sparked the idea of an edited volume reflecting a diversity of perspectives and bringing the voices of academics, artists, practitioners and activists into a multisectoral dialogue. Its edited transcript is included in this volume to remind readers about the ongoing discussions that took place in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's tragic death. As time progresses, this chapter can serve as a point of reference to evaluate the extent to which Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes have evolved since 2020 and the removal of Edward Colston's statue, and establish whether indeed the silence was only broken momentarily or whether those events added further momentum to the processes of acknowledgement, apology and repair.

16.1 Freeing our minds, institutions and practices from colonial ideology

Nicole Kairinos

Good evening. I am Nicole Kairinos, master's student at the University of Bath studying international development and I am the facilitator of the Uncomfortable Bath walking-tour project. Our project seeks to decolonise British history. Specifically, we have been addressing the legacies of colonial slavery in the city. 'Decolonisation' is a term that traditionally referred to the undoing of colonial rule, that is, the physical action or the process of the state withdrawing from a formal colony which would achieve independence. However, more recently, it has been understood that decolonisation doesn't only involve the physical act of leaving a formal colony; it also entails efforts to address the cultural and ideological inheritances that colonialism leaves in its wake. Essentially, decolonisation is about freeing our minds, institutions and practices from colonial ideology. It involves challenging existing power relations within society and reflecting more critically about histories of the dominants and those who have been marginalised. And in this context, it means analysing the content of history and how it has been taught. As an illustration, discussions about Britain's colonial history frequently highlight the achievement of abolition through narratives centred around white figures like William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson. However, these discussions often overlook the fact that Britain profited from transatlantic slavery for centuries. We don't hear about the lives of enslaved people in the Caribbean and their contributions to Britain, and we don't hear about influential black abolitionists in Britain and British colonies during this time. Thus, we are only given one dominant perspective, and this is a white, Eurocentric narrative. This is precisely the aspect we want to challenge here. Decolonisation is based on a concern about how the forces of colonialism have shaped both our past and our present.

The common question that comes up when we talk about decolonising British history is 'why should we talk about this now?' Telling this story is important because, for hundreds of years, Britain was largely built on colonial slavery. It helped Britain develop its economy, institutions, infrastructure, society and so on. The problem is that we tend to think of this history as a distant one. As the majority of these events unfolded not in Britain itself but in its colonies, it is easy to detach ourselves from this history. The truth is, nobody is separate from this story. All of us who live in this country have been affected and touched by this history in different ways. And as we have already discussed, colonialism continues to reverberate in the present day. Hence, it becomes our collective responsibility to confront this history, to be truth-telling and to decolonise our understanding of British colonialism.

Delving into history also enables us to develop a better understanding of the world in which we live today. And we cannot selectively adopt the parts of history that serve us, that make some of us feel good about ourselves and conveniently disregard those that challenge us. This would create a distorted reality, which isn't the purpose of history. History serves as a tool to learn from the past, so that we can build a better present and future.

The way that history is told in Britain is politicised. It is used to preserve a deep sense of patriotism. And as David Olusoga said before, it is used for recreational purposes rather than for education. We also need to tell more BAME stories, and that is black, Asian and other minority ethnic stories, as British history does not only belong to white people. With this in mind, I would like to quote Navasha Wray,[1] who says:

> For our society to cohere, to find a successful identity in the 21st century with a vision to carry us all forward, we need to shake off some of the shibboleths of the past. Otherwise, our vision will be unbalanced by a false sense of what Britain has been, by omission of the contributions of far too many of our citizens.

For the purpose of orientating this conversation in the modern-day context, we can look to the events of last summer, when Black Lives Matter movement protesters and Bristol protested against institutionalised and systemic racism and they argued that the UK needs to confront its colonial legacy. This resulted in the removal of the Edward Colston statue by protesters. In the 17th century, Edward Colston bequeathed a substantial sum of money to Bristol, which led to his commemoration through the establishment of monuments, architectural structures and thoroughfares named in his honour. However, these contributions were funded by his involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, and this was ignored. This was a contentious event. Some even argued that this was 'erasing history'.

But there is an irony here because statues cannot tell a story – that is not their function. Their function is to honour someone and to become part of the city's memoryscape. So really, Black Lives Matter protesters merely brought this discussion to the public sphere. Alongside protest, petitions were initiated around the country arguing to change Britain's colonial history in schools, which got tens of thousands of signatures, which signifies that there is a growing understanding of the need to engage with this history.

It is essential to acknowledge that this debate is not novel. Many BAME writers, artists and academics have been calling for this change for decades.

1 https://greenworld.org.uk/article/decolonizing-curriculum-why-black-history-matters

However, the events of last summer propelled these discussions into the public spotlight. Therefore, the current question we face is: What is the most effective approach to decolonise this history?

Here is a brief overview of Britain's links to colonial slavery. The first English slave trader can be traced back to 1562, to a man named John Hawkins, but British slave trade became dominant around 1640. The three most dominant ports where slave trade was carried out were London, Bristol and Liverpool, but slave-ownership existed across the country. It is estimated that Britain transported 3.1 million Africans to the British colonies in the Caribbean, North and South America and to other colonies. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 formally freed approximately 800,000 Africans within the legal property of British slave owners. When this act was passed, there were 46,000 slave owners in Britain. A common misconception is that it was just the rich upper class who owned slaves, but slave-ownership actually was much more common than this in Britain. It existed among middle- and even lower-middle-class citizens.

Another largely unknown fact about British abolition is that it was achieved through a compensation programme where the British government distributed 20 million pounds to compensate for the loss of British slave owners. This translates to about 16 to 17 billion pounds in modern times, and this was 40% of Britain's economic budget during this time. Former enslaved individuals received no compensation and were often forced to work for a further five years following abolition. Another very important fact to highlight here when we talk about abolition is that it was not solely accomplished by British abolitionists. There were resistance movements among the enslaved in places like Jamaica and Haiti, which helped to achieve abolition.

This brings us on to Bath's links to colonial slavery. Through our project, we tried to show the contrast between the lives of those enslaved on plantations, who were helping to fund the development and wealth of Bath, and the picturesque, airbrushed portrayal of Georgian Bath. We attempted to highlight that there were many links to Bath's colonial past, including the architecture around the city and the many lives of people who were slave owners, enslaved, abolitionists or who just benefited from the products and the wealth generated from the slave trade. We tried to capture this diversity of stories in our project.

16.2 Bringing forward unheard stories

Shawn-Naphtali Sobers

Black history has been neglected by the mainstream because it is not deemed to be as important or significant as other areas of history, even though it is as

central to British history as any other area, so this is a subjective judgement. It hasn't been invested in with the same attention and time as, for example, the Tudors, even though this county's involvement in the enslavement and trafficking of African people began with Elizabeth I. The type of research and historical work I do often gets called 'untold stories', and I went along with that description for quite a while, but I kind of resist that label now. What they actually are, are 'unheard', not untold stories – in most cases, I was not the first person who discovered the stories that I've made films or done research about. The stories just haven't been given that due attention before and that level of focus – by publishers or TV stations – because they think they're marginal. They don't think it is interesting, they don't think it is important. So, those stories always get re-buried and remain unheard – but they are not completely untold. Bringing forward unheard stories is vitally important. It's the same as what you students are doing here with your Bath's Uncomfortable Past project. You're not the first people to do that research, but you're bringing them to new audiences and hopefully wider attention, which is necessary.

There appears to be a substantial amount of denial when it comes to the Black presence in Britain and the relationship with the slave trade. This is partly due to how the system of enslavement was aggregated. The British government and state owned the ships, but enslavement did not happen on British soil. It was outsourced to the British overseers working in the Caribbean and the Americas, in the name and interests of the British state. So, there was a façade, a very polite gloss on the English landscape, where we have stately homes and landed gentry societies that seem very genteel and romantic. But you are not seeing the brutality that funded that seeming English genteel society, because that was all happening overseas, that was someone else's problem. The prevailing narrative accredits the British with abolishing slavery, conveniently masking the reality that they only did that after Britain had already accumulated considerable wealth over centuries of engagement in the trade. As a result, denial has persistently characterised the discourse, the acknowledgement of this history is more overt. The plantations are on the same soil that the people are living on – the same in the Caribbean. The arm's length system Britain developed helped build the narrative of its positive role. There is a whole range of different reasons why this history continues to be side-lined, this is just some of the historical roots of why that's the case.

In 2020, the Black Lives Matter protests and, locally, the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol have influenced these debates. I think that Bristol is a very specific case, thus it has been interesting to observe the impact from local events on wider debates nationally and internationally. In Bristol, people have been debating and campaigning for the removal of that statue for

over 20 years. The first time Bristol really publicly acknowledged its history of the slave trade was in 1999, with the 'A Respectable Trade' exhibition in the city museum. Certain other initiatives and acknowledgements have followed and projects have been funded, but they have all been temporary, never permanent. So, a vacuum of acknowledgement has always existed in the city, which breeds an ongoing resentment and frustration. In recent times, we have seen how this accumulated resentment ended with the fall of the Colston statue.

When the 7 June 2020 Black Lives Matter protests and the statue toppling happened in the city, there were headlines and politicians calling it 'mindless vandalism' and 'rioting', whereas when you look at what actually happened in Bristol, it was very specific, not at all a mindless act of violence. People were on the march, having walked for quite a distance, they congregated around the Colston statue, brought it down, put it in the water and then they carried on the march. They didn't take down anything else. They didn't take down any other statues or road names in that area surrounded by Colston in road names. So, I believe the action they took was a very specific symbolic gesture. Obviously, the statue toppling was controversial, there is no doubt about it. Also, there are people who oppose slavery and hold no admiration for William Colston, yet they still disagree with the manner in which the statue was removed. The event has undeniably sparked polarisation.

Bristol has definitely had a lack of very real leadership over the past 20 years when it comes to how the city's involvement in the trafficking and enslavement of African people should be acknowledged. There have been attempts at rewording the Colston statue plaque or they could have taken it down legally. I was part of those conversations for the last 20 years about what should happen with it, and I wasn't always in favour that it should be taken down. I started off thinking it should be re-plaqued, and a new statue put up close to it. So, I've gone on a journey with it. In 2019, when I wrote an academic paper about it, that's when I started to get more comfortable with the idea that it should be just taken down. So, my generation has been wringing our hands and trying to work legally around it and having conversations. Whereas the younger generation, they're just like 'we've had enough! Let's just get the bloody thing down' you know what I mean? [*Laughs*] And I kind of respect that energy. You know, there is no doubt about the focus of that motivation.

I am heavily drawn to work with unheard stories, and I think it will always be a part of my academic research and creative projects, in some form. However, I will move away from telling stories related directly to enslavement, as there are other time zones in the history and presence of African heritage people that needs coming to light, not just between the years of 1562 to 1834. I won't ignore slavery-related narratives, but they

won't be my sole focus, as they have never been really. There are still many other stories to tell, but even though I say that I would like to see Bristol have a dedicated museum telling the story of its involvement in the trafficking of African people, coming up to the present day and stories and experiences of the African heritage populations of the city. I do feel the city needs to take that step, lest another vacuum of frustration erupt in a generation's time.

16.3 Recovering Black agency

Alan Rice

It is lovely to be invited to this panel. I hold cherished memories of Bath, although I have always been aware of the concealed history of slavery intertwined with its charm. Today I will talk about Lancaster and 'Black Lives Matter Now and Then', rescuing Black agency and Lancaster's slave history. For the past two to two-and-a-half decades, I have been actively engaged in Lancaster's attempts to expose its historical ties to slavery, trying to restore agency to the Black community. Over the course of the last two decades, I have led over 100 slavery site tours in Lancaster. From the early stages, we began developing a slavery trail. Yet a significant challenge emerged – the trail lacked a substantial representation of Black agency. This was, in part, due to the ongoing process of uncovering history; many crucial elements were still hidden and were exceedingly difficult to discover. Some of these critical pieces have only recently come to the surface within the past couple of years.

A very exciting development in Lancaster was that we had a Black Lives Matter demonstration early in June 2020, which galvanised our small and usually ignored Black population in Lancaster. They came together and there was an amazing moment in that demonstration of recognition and solidarity. In the wake of that demonstration, a Lancaster Black History Group was set up. This coincided with my efforts to create a new slavery trail, one that incorporates a significant amount of recently reclaimed Black agency. The trail was designed by Ivan Frontani at the Lancaster Maritime Museum, who did a marvellous job. We've got 22 different stops. We could have gone for 30 or even 40, but we settled on 22. And one of the things about Lancaster is that it was involved in all stages, really. From the era of trade with slave merchants, then abolition through the advent of industrialisation underpinned by fortunes made through the slavery business and the development of cotton mills, and then right through to the Lancaster Cotton Famine. And we include all of those stories here with lots of new Black agency in them.

As well as the slave trade and abolition, we make a point to talk about Fair Trade in Lancaster as well. And that's a legacy, a great legacy of the work

we'd done on earlier slave-trade maps. We worked with Global Link, a local third-world charity, and included information on how people can engage in modern politics as well as consumers. The trail takes people to places where they can buy Fair Trade goods as well. It's not merely looking at the past. It's highlighting exploitation in the present as well.

While the walking tour takes us to many different places important to the history of the slavery business, it also highlights Lancaster's history of representing this past in the last 25 years. For instance, it takes us to the quayside where we learn about Dodshon Foster, who was one of these early Lancaster traders and a Quaker. In Lancaster, many of the early slave merchants were Quakers, which is obviously a great paradox as traditionally the emphasis has been on the great work Quakers did against slavery. In contrast, in a city like Bath, they are seen as on the right side of history. The artwork by Sue Flowers, which was part of the 'Abolished?'[2] exhibition, speaks to this paradox. This was shown at the Maritime Museum, where she put stencils of Dodshon Foster as though a criminal on the walls. The Maritime Museum, a building built in 1764 as the Old Customs House, was a key landmark for trading in the city. His depiction as a criminal is obviously a means of talking about the historical crime of slavery and its resonances today.

Lancaster, like Bath, is famous for its beautiful Georgian houses. At 20 Castle Park, home to the Satterthwaite family from 1781, I relate the story of their enslaved servant Frances Elizabeth Johnson. There is a baptismal record for her, which is the only written thing about her life. And this memorial is at the Priory. It's the only memorial to a Black individual at the Priory. And yet, like in your Bath Abbey, there are many memorials to slave traders and slave merchants in the Priory.

Outside Lancaster on the peninsula between Morecambe Bay and the Lune River at Sunderland Point is Sambo's Grave, which has been an important 'lieux de memoire' for Lancastrians to think about the historical legacies of slavery. And there are handmade memorials at these grave sites and have been for generations. I see these as a form of 'guerrilla memorialisation'. Most poignantly, in 2008 a schoolchildren's memorial was left there. And it's a beautiful, beautiful piece. Each child had written a message on a stone and stuck them on bamboo canes that were then placed together in a circle. Eventually as an organic memorial it was designed to weather away into the earth. In the early 2000s the Slave Trade Art's Memorial Project (STAMP) was a local Lancaster project which led to the building of the first purpose-built quayside memorial for victims of the slave trade

2 Sue Flowers, 'One Tenth', installation as part of the 'Abolished?' exhibition, Lancaster City Museums, July–October 2007.

in Britain, designed by Kevin Dalton-Johnson and unveiled in 2005. It lists 25 slave-ship voyages, naming and shaming the captains whose Lancastrian names can still be found in school class lists today. Through this pedagogy, the memorial wants Lancastrians to know on whose backs their individual and collective wealth was built.

More recently, we have gathered more information on enslaved servants in Lancaster, which enables new stories to be told. In particular, the University of Glasgow Database of Runaway Slaves in Britain enables us to tell more nuanced stories about Black agency. For instance, Harry (Henry Hinde) who escaped in 1764 had only previously had a baptismal record showing his relation to the infamous slave-trading family, the Hindes. In the Priory, there is a memorial to Harry's 'master' and his brothers, Thomas and James Hinde. And as yet there's nothing for Harry. We're now starting to try and tell the story of these enslaved servants who had agency in Georgian Lancaster and we campaign for a proper memorial to them. In the meantime, we tell their stories through the trail.

The most interesting, because he had never appeared before in any histories of Lancaster, is an Igbo boy. He was owned by a respectable clergyman, Thomas Clarkson, in Heysham, a town just outside Lancaster. As the runaway advertisement describes, he had African scarification marks on his face. So, he was born in Africa and inducted into his tribal group there. And here he is in Lancaster, with African scarification marks and a broad Lancashire dialect. I make the claim that this is the first document which shows a Black person in Lancashire speaking with a Lancashire dialect.

The trail also relates Black lives into the 19th century, so that we don't talk just about slavery. Ira Aldridge was discussed earlier as he played in the theatre in Bath. He played in our theatre, too. He got very good reviews and was the first Black man to play Othello on the British stage. Lancaster was not a hotbed of abolitionists, partly, I think, because of its legacy of slavery. However, Moses Roper spoke here, as did Sarah Parker Remond, which allows us to foreground a feminist narrative in the trail.

I am also a curator and at the moment I'm curating an exhibition, Lubaina Himid's 'Memorial to Zong'. She is a Preston-based artist who won the Turner prize in 2017. The exhibition at the Lancaster Maritime Museum and its online component, together with the trail being prominent on the Visit Lancaster website,[3] shows a commitment from the city to promote this troubled history despite the negativity this can bring to the city. The owning of this history is, I believe, much better than the silence that had gone before. And I'm very, very proud of Lancaster Black History Group's

3 https://visitlancaster.org.uk/museums/maritime-museum/memorial-to-zong/

contribution to this. So, what I am trying to show you here really is that, you know, it is about activism and the way in which we can use activism to change what happens on the ground. To change people's ideas about this history, to make it a history about all people in these spaces. Thank you very much.

16.4 Telling the whole truth

Jillian Sutherland

Thanks for having me. My name is Jill Sutherland and I am a PhD student. My thesis deals with curatorial perspectives on audience engagement, particularly in smaller museums in the South West. I have been working at the Holburne Museum for the past year or so, with a bit more time on top of that due to COVID-19. I'm looking at our permanent displays and how the interpretation is currently presented, and also, I've been creating a new display.

I will share my general thoughts on decolonising in the museum world and then touch on my experience at the Holburne Museum. Nicole, at the beginning, already went through definitions of what 'decolonising' and what 'decolonial' mean. It's worth saying that it is a bit of a buzzword at the moment, as I'm sure you all agree. It's important to really think about what we mean when we say it, because it means different things to different people. We can view it as a historical juncture, a rejection of conventional imperialist and colonial ideologies, a shift in power dynamics, but also, we can see it as looking at a more collective sense of humanity. One that is global and international, rather than just looking at single-country histories, if you like, or single-race histories. It can be innovative and about originality. This shift represents a departure from a dominant and uniform stance to one that is characterised by diversity and multiplicity.

Current talks in the museum world are centred around the repatriation of objects and where objects came from, how museums were founded and where the money came from with regard to the slave trade. While those aspects are undoubtedly significant in the context of decolonisation, they don't actually apply to all museums. So, for example, if we take a small museum in a rural village, maybe somewhere in the South West, let's say Devon, they might not possess any objects from Africa. So, how can we talk about repatriation or how culture has been appropriated there? Instead, their collection might be made up of objects donated by members of the local population. How does decolonising play into a museum like that? And what other things could the museums that the first three aspects apply to also be thinking about, if decolonising is under discussion?

In response, I would suggest considering elements that fall in between.

Let's think about our narratives. What stories are you telling? Who are the people, what do they look like – the people on the walls in our museums: local, regional, national or not? And the physical arrangement of our displays might not immediately seem subject to decolonisation, but as I will illustrate, it is. And to think about these sorts of issues is to think about the social context of objects and museums. Engaging with these considerations involves understanding the social context surrounding objects and museums. When we start thinking about social context, that means we need to think about social history. So, for me, decolonising museums requires understanding Britain's social history, and that can be applied to a museum that doesn't have objects that need to be debated about whether they should remain in situ or not. It's also about recognising the ongoing legacy of colonialism, as Alan's talk also said – it's about connecting issues from the past to now.

Taking this kind of social aspect into consideration, I will turn to my work at the Holburne Museum. It was founded in 1893. It is at the end of the very grand Great Pulteney Street in Bath, and it moved to this present building in 1916. The collection was initially founded by Mary Anne Barbara Holburne, who was a sister of William Holburne, the man who the museum is named after, as she bequeathed it to him. The collection is made up of examples of what we would call decorative art: paintings, ceramics, metalware, spoons and things like that. So, on my walk around, when I was doing my initial review, looking for objects to potentially redisplay or ways to improve the current interpretation, I came across the Fletcher Gallery.

Currently, this gallery is focused on arts and elegance and Georgian Bath. It is all about taste, luxury, goods that were imported, so, tea, sugar. And you can see that case there, it's got teapots, plates, tea memorabilia. And in those drawers, we've got some spoons. When I opened the drawer labelled 'Sugar and Slavery', I discovered a book inside. This book is the Plantation Book, which I believed would be a valuable item to bring out and reexhibit. The current display is covered in glass, laid flat on top of the *Brookes* image, that traditional image of slaves squashed into a ship. That's the current place where the book 'lives', shall we say. An intriguing aspect of this book is that some pages have been removed, which struck me as a symbol of the significant gaps in our museums' historical narratives. Well, when I realised this, not only the current display, but also the fact that pages are missing, it just really sort of spoke to me as representative of this complete lack of history in our museums. And actually, when I joined the Holburne Museum, there was relatively little content discussing connections to the slave trade or the origins of sugar. And I just thought this has to come out. And yeah, I think it's very poignant, the fact that pages are missing. We don't actually know why. I should also explain that books like this would have been used

by the plantation owners or whoever was running a plantation at the time, to take notes of the names of enslaved people, potentially their productivity, and the products that were coming in and out of the plantation. The reason why we have this book is that William Holburne's great grandfather, Guy Ball, actually owned this plantation for a time in Barbados in the 1720s. Inside the book, one page remains, which just lists some products: cocoa, beef and candles. The rest has been savagely cut out. There are no names left in the book. That's a huge part of history that's missing potentially for people from Barbados who were trying to look for their family histories.

In the redisplay, the ledger book is going to have its own case, rather than its current backdrop, which shows cartoons – illustrations that are satirical, poking fun at fashionable Georgian Bath. It's all about taste and consumption. Quite a few of those figures who have actually been mentioned and feature in the walk will appear in the backdrop on the right. The backdrop will also acknowledge the links between the Holburne family and Caribbean plantations through their marriages, through their naval links, and it will show that there were people around at the time who resisted colonialism, who resisted slavery and who campaigned against it. But in this display, the aim is to show that it wasn't just white individuals that did this. It was black and white individuals. And they came together to fight racism, essentially, which I think we can relate to today.

I would say there are three primary themes within this context. The first one is acceptance. Acceptance that the Holburne family were involved with the slave trade, and these are the reasons why and how. Accepting that and feeling confident so everyone at the museum will not be scared about admitting it – it's kind of there for everyone to see. The second theme is remembrance for the lost history, to reclaim that sort of silence about those narratives and to recover a sense of identity for people of colour. And the third theme is empowerment. I'd like it to – I hope that it will – instil an empowering sense of unity and a connection to British society today.

In terms of challenges, I think there has been a bit of resistance, as one might expect. There has been resistance in a few forms. Firstly, I'd say overt resistance, where people that I've come into contact with about this have said that 'slavery's in the past' and that it's something that isn't an issue now; 'we don't need to talk about it'. I've had covert resistance, as in not intentional, where I haven't maybe felt very heard in terms of how to deal with these topics, or the object maybe hasn't been given an appropriate level of respect. There has been difficulty with language, so it's been described as a 'celebratory opportunity', bringing this book out, and that it's an 'exciting opportunity'. And while I do think that it is exciting to finally have exposure to something like this, I think using language like 'exciting' and 'celebratory' is difficult when it comes to a document that can be quite painful to a lot

of people. I think another issue is perhaps fear and shame. Colleagues have been afraid of getting things wrong. I've been scared of… being direct. We've had to negotiate ways to understand each other and talk about it. And I feel like persistence has helped, but also introducing voices of those affected.

I did actually speak to a group of African and Caribbean students about this display, and I recorded it – with their permission – and it was really frank, open, honest conversation, and, you know, I shared that with my colleagues at the museum. And I think that, combined with the Black Lives Matter protests of last summer, that really sort of showed the need for something like this. It wasn't just me, the single voice. So, I think introducing other people into the conversation is a really good way to help deal with these issues internally. I also have collaborated with the Barbados Museum & Historic Society on the display, so, they have been putting a little bit of interpretation together for us and we've been discussing about reproducing some names of enslaved people from the plantation on the plinth of the book as a memorial, as a way of showing respect to the people who are missing.

I would say, ultimately, decolonising is just about telling the truth. It's about telling the whole truth, and I would encourage museums to think about who is best placed to communicate this – how best to present it. How can we view this, dealing with issues of decolonising, as an opportunity to be innovative? And rather than thinking that there's a debate pitting one side against the other, where you might think that you're dividing audiences into who is racist and who is not racist or who is woke and who is nationalist, I think we should try and think more of it as an opportunity to change people's minds or, giving people the opportunity to change their minds – our minds. By that I also mean my perception of myself, our perceptions of ourselves, as people of colour, and your perceptions of us. These are opportunities for us to share and to acknowledge our shared history. Ultimately, it's about recovering: recovering something that's been lost, erased, omitted, cut out, ignored and silenced.

I'll end by saying that I think part of the fear is loss. I feel that a lot of people I've spoken to who are not people of colour feel that there's something to be lost and that something's being attacked. I'm not really sure why they feel that way. I think the only thing that is going to be lost here, is exclusivity – exclusive rights and preferential treatment. We all like to feel special, totally get that! But, I mean, we all deserve to feel special, too.

16.5 Walking and questioning

Richard White

Christina, you asked us to think about a whole load of questions that you distilled at the start of the session. I want to address two of those questions. I'm doing it very broadly in the context of the creative work I've been doing. I've lived in Bath now for 17 years. When I first moved here, I was more than just struck by the beauty of the architecture, I wanted to know who paid for it, and why, and where did this sudden burst of wealth come from? I could easily find out where Jane Austen had lived in the city but asking questions about money and wealth was not welcomed.

The work that I've been doing, walking and asking questions, has involved a discovery of that unwelcome. There is a silence, nobody wants to talk about the sources of the wealth materialised in the city architecture and certainly the social justice legacies of slave-ownership. Up until last summer and the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol, there was nothing on any of the heritage websites. There was nothing on the Bath Preservation Trust website. There was nothing on the Holburne website, the Abbey website or the UNESCO World Heritage site for Bath. So much has changed in a very short period of time. But even now, more than a year on, if you go to the World Heritage site for Bath, there is nothing about plantations, sugar, slavery, sources of wealth in the Georgian city, whatever search term you use to get under the marketing speak.

I would like to say a bit more about silence, and then I'll say a bit about art. So, to respond to your first question, how does this silence impact our city? Well, first of all, it is not just a general silence. It seems to me that it is a White silence, held by and perpetuated by White people. Not always an informed silence, sometimes a difficult silence of shame and embarrassment, but it's interesting that, of the Black people I talk to, often somebody knows something about it. There will be a story that you can kind of tap into. Fairfield House, for instance, and Haile Selassie, the richness of the Black experience in Bath, are all part of the story that nobody White and in authority knows about or wants to talk about. Until very recently.

What are the consequences of this silence? Edward Said famously picked up on Jane Austen talking about the dead silence on slavery in her novel *Mansfield Park*. Even today it is still like that, you ask a question, you make a point in a conversation and the response is dead, 'oh', and the silence absorbs it. I really hope in the last 12 months what has happened is that these things are beginning to be opened up and the conversation will be sustained.

Today, Bath, this UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site has nothing to say about where the money came from or its many legacies. You don't have to dig all that deep to discover Bath's slave owners and their plantations in

the Caribbean. You don't have to dig all that deep to find out the story of the riches that flowed into Bath from the Empire, whether East India Company loot or wealth generated in the blood and sweat of captured Africans.

While Bath has been chasing a further designation that links up the spa towns of Europe, UNESCO has been running the Slave Route project. Its master statement is: 'ignorance or concealment of major historical events constitutes an obstacle to mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation of peoples'. Where's Bath? Why is there nothing about Bath in this at all? We have a moment now when we can make those kinds of international connections and we can tell those stories. I'm really very proud and excited to be associated with the map project. I think the people, the students and young people that have been involved in the project have done an astonishing job. I see that Bathscape has already pledged that they'll put it up for the walking festival, and I hope all the different organisations here will take it on and develop it. It's a beginning. I really hope that this now rolls out, this is a moment when Bath, as a UNESCO-designated World Heritage Site, could fulfil the social justice responsibilities that come with that designation.

In the absence of Bath taking up that historic role, one of the consequences of the silence is the pride many of us could feel living in this city is diminished. The consequence of that silence is that all the stories of resistance to capture and enslavement and the campaigns that turned into modern ideas of human rights and social justice here in this city just get lost. All we get, if there is any venture into this heritage, is reverence for the White man hero, Wilberforce, but you don't hear any of the rest of it.

What are the consequences of that silence for people? It allows racism to grow. It's permissive of intolerance. It just seeps in. If you don't talk about it, it grows. We've had, in a Bath secondary school, not so long ago, where some White kids staged some kind of slave auction involving a Black student. Appalling. I hope we're at a new stage this year, it feels like we're moving on. At least we're talking about institutional racism. At least we're talking about decolonisation, albeit in a broad and rather fluffy way, but at least it's something that we are starting to talk about. So that's my thought on a silence that may at last have been broken.

In my creative work as a walking artist, a movement artist, I'm very interested in how we learn differently and think differently when we're walking. I'm particularly interested in what happens in that moment of almost involuntary thought when we stumble upon something, when a new idea comes into our head, what then happens? How does that process develop and how can I work creatively with it?

I began a project back in 2017, 'Sweet Waters', and it's kind of continued. It was about sensing legacies of slave-ownership in Bath and along the river

Avon. The information is out there, I went onto the UCL database and very quickly came up with a Google map of the residencies of compensated slave owners in Bath. If you join up the dots you get a fairly similar circuit as in the beautiful 'Bath's Uncomfortable Past' map that we started with.

Bath was awash with the wealth generated by captured and enslaved Africans and the loot of Empire, and all this is a snapshot. This map is a snapshot at the end of the status of slavery, and a great sum of taxpayers' money went into compensation to the slave owners. Not a penny of it went to the enslaved people. And there's never even been an apology. Now, if you think how fast the Allies turned around Germany at the end of the Second World War and reparations were paid out. You know, my mother-in-law, a Holocaust survivor, received reparations within a lifetime. Reparations were being paid out by the German government within a lifetime. Not a penny of reparation has been paid out to the enslaved Africans emancipated in the 1830s or their descendants.

As I developed the ideas, I began imagining and layering. Try this one, if you imagine the triangle, the famous gruesome triangle of that trade in captured and enslaved people, and the return of their wealth that those people had generated. I mapped that onto the water cycle. Because it struck me that water connects the whole lot. So, in the middle of the Atlantic, two million, three million captured African lives were ended and their bodies were dumped. And then you think about the water cycle and the weather. Where does our weather come from? When the weather is wet, it blows in off the Atlantic. I began to think water and memory, the idea that a raindrop carries the entire history of the universe. A raindrop in England carries that story of colonisation and enslavement, atoms of the dead, a story of murder. When it rains in Bath, that's what I think.

I walked with those ideas in 'Sweet Waters'. Sensing legacies of slave-ownership. We began at the Holburne Museum at Gainsborough's famous Byam portrait. The Byam family were slave owners, although the gallery stewards very often won't tell you anything about it. Last time I was there, however, I noticed they'd changed the captions, another little change since the toppling of the Colston statue.

In Bath, and along the river, they were making stuff that was going out on the slave ships from Bristol to West Africa. Up the road in the Woolley Valley they were making gunpowder from the night soil of the gentlemen of Bath, fuelling the arms race that was to trash the economies of the region. On the edge of Bath, and then all the way down the river, there were brass mills, they were making manillas; it was the mint of the slave trade. They were making the currency, the wearable currency of the slave trade. If you've not visited Saltford Brass Mill, I really encourage you to do so, it is one of the few Bath heritage institutions that has come out about it, 'this is what

we made'. As Jill said, they are quite really relaxed in the perspective, 'so that's what happened. Now we need to talk about it'.

Over several days we walked all the way from Bath down the river to the Avonmouth bridge. On Midsummer's Day in June 2017, we walked the journey all the way back up the river again in one go. It was an endurance piece, a resonance of the journey down a river that captured people would have been forced on; that was how they were shifted down to the West African seaports. If they survived the crossing, many enslaved people had to walk up another river valley on their way to where they were going to be forced to work. That day on the 'Sweet Waters' project when we walked upriver it happened to be very, very hot. We chose to walk and we were comfortable in our shoes and the knowledge of a rest at the other end, but there were powerful resonances and uncomfortable juxtapositions. There were points where we ate bitter chocolate. There were points where we were so hot and exhausted. There were points where we were cold, and the wind was blowing in our faces. I offer that in terms of the map, the walking, it's not just simply joining the dots. It's actually about doing the walking and inviting the thinking.

Christina, you ask what the role of the artist is in this? Well, I don't know what the role of an artist is, but I can tell you what I do and what I'm trying to do. What I'm trying to do is to create a space, to create an experience whereby people become story carriers, that they carry on that story. For instance, people said to me, 'I didn't know this'. A tour guide joined one of the walks and she said, 'this is not on my script!' There were several Black people with African Caribbean heritage who had grown up in Bath, and they said, 'they never told us this about Bath'. The walks were an opportunity for people to discover their city in a different way, to explore what I call reluctant heritage. We did quite a bit of work exploring that uncomfortable space of being White, in that context.

Walking and questioning, that's the core of the process, fundamentally it's a somatic experience. It's moving and sensing and experiencing in a different way. This is not a museum experience. This isn't a 'reading out of a book' experience. This is about learning and discovering and thinking, live with other people, and sensing it with our whole bodies.

Just to close, this is what this walker said, who really didn't know very much about the history of Bath. 'It completely transformed the way that I saw and understood the city I grew up in and now live in as an adult. It is fascinating to see how we can make huge aspects of history disappear because they are uncomfortable. It also led me to have insights about current-day exploitation in completely different ways by people who have large amounts of money around the world'. So, it is uncomfortable. It's particularly uncomfortable for White people or for me as a White person.

But now is the time to bring that out and work it through. There are reparations to make and social repairs to do.

16.6 Conclusions/end note

Christina Horvath and Richard White

By the time this book is released to the public, some three years may have elapsed since the panel discussion that ignited the idea of publishing a collective volume aimed at fostering a dialogue through diverse voices. The members of the panel attempted to make sense of their artistic, academic, curatorial and grassroot experience of Bath and Bristol's memoryscapes. They suggested elements for future strategies to help involve communities in telling more inclusive, diverse and complete stories about the painful legacies of slavery in Bath, Bristol and other cities in Britain. They stressed the importance of revealing the full story, transforming institutional practices from below, bringing forward and endorsing narratives that are less unheard than not listened to, emphasising the agency of the enslaved Africans and their descendants, and taking the time for questioning, sensing past injustices and their legacies through embodied and participatory practices.

Following the discussion recorded above, new voices joined the conversation, developing initial ideas into a review of practices offering propositions towards a more representative and socially just memoryscapes of slavery, slave-ownership and empire. Drawing on their own lived experiences, practices and analyses comparing different contexts, in this volume they have outlined and discussed strategies aimed at addressing colonial legacies through educational, curatorial and institutional means. The work discussed encompasses museum exhibits, community-conceived walks and artworks exploring approaches for creating alternative narratives that challenge authorised heritage. Implicit throughout, and in some cases explicitly articulated, are broader proposals for cultural reparations through actions such as public apologies, targeted funding initiatives, the overhaul of school curricula, the renaming of streets and institutions, as well as the establishment of novel memorials and communal spaces dedicated to the acknowledgement of the complex layers of colonial heritage and raising awareness of their contemporary resonances.

In this volume we sought to chart and contribute to key debates informing the future shape and scope of global and national memory politics and local memoryscapes. In particular, we wanted to measure the progress that has been accomplished by moving away from previous top-down approaches towards new, more democratic and transparent forms of engagement with the past. Change is slow, punctuated by heated moments such as the events of the summer of 2020; we are currently in a transitory period in which

collections are reinterpreted and previously marginalised artistic approaches gain increasing visibility. We suggest that despite the resistance of institutional racism, white fragility and the culture wars privileged social groups have initiated, a change in attitudes and sensibilities opening to previously silenced voices is emerging. The book set out to document and contribute to this process, showcasing a variety of perspectives informed by different positionalities and experiences.

The process continues as we write and some institutions have been actively exploring alternative approaches to grapple with their 'uncomfortable' historical legacies. In both Bath and Bristol, a wave of new exhibitions and art projects was created. In 2023, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery opened a temporary exhibition, 'Peter Brathwaite: Rediscovering Black Portraiture', while Bristol Cathedral dedicated the exhibition 'All God's Children' to exploring the impact of the slave economy on Cathedral life, past and present. In September 2023, as a digital follow up to its temporary exhibition, 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery' (2021), Bath Abbey launched its Memorials database, a catalogue of the almost 1,500 wall tablets and gravestones in the Abbey, many of which memorialise slave owners.

Dyrham Park, a National Trust property just outside Bath, now offers an orientation entitled 'the world of William Blathwayt and the birth of modern Britain' identifying Blathwayt's role in bringing colonial wealth back to Britain. The National Trust has reinterpreted its collection at the house, including two stands depicting chained and enslaved Africans. As part of the reinterpretation, they commissioned an artistic response from Andre Bagoo in the form of the poem 'Litany for Two Boys' (2021). Some of these reinterpretations involved collaborations between institutions, artists and civil society groups. A noteworthy example is the Bath and Colonialism Archive Project, a partnership between Bath Record Office, Bath Abbey and Bath Preservation Trust. Many of these endeavours incorporated community consultations and other forms of collaborations with grassroot groups like BEMSCA and the former B in Bath, recently renamed the Belonging Network.

These efforts have extended internationally, fostering connections with Caribbean institutions and artists such as Scottish-Barbadian artist Alberta Whittle, the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, and various national trusts across the Caribbean. Heritage Lottery funding has also played a role in incentivising and facilitating collaborations between institutions and local artists including Richard White's soundscape-enhanced walking artwork in Bath's Sydney Gardens or Beckford's Tower's collaboration with State of Trust, which involves a dance performance inspired by Alex Wheatle's novel *Cane Warriors* to link the story of Tacky's Rebellion, an uprising in Jamaica in 1760, with the history of Beckford's Tower. In Bristol, numerous initiatives are under way, including Bristol Legacy Foundation and Project

T.R.U.T.H.,[4] as well as the University of Bristol's Bristol Capital and Enslavement project and Decolonising Memory, which since 2021 has been researching Bristol's memory of transatlantic enslavement through historical and creative methodologies, and collaboratively designing new performance-based memorial interventions centring African culture.[5] These projects – and ongoing dialogues spurred by formal and informal groups including Countering Colston, BACA (Bath and Colonialism Action Group) initiated by Bath Abbey, Bristol Radical History Group, the National Trust, the Holburne Museum and initiatives by academics from the University of Bath, Bath Spa University, the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England – suggest that the democratisation of local memoryscapes is indeed in progress. We could therefore conclude that the momentum sparked by the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 remains resonant and its legacy lives on.

It is worth noting, however, that despite these encouraging developments, the impact of this change has not yet significantly permeated institutions or altered commemorative practices in either city. Recent projects in Bristol such as the World Re-imagined Art Trail have not received the level of publicity they deserved and Colston's plinth in Bristol still stands vacant. The petition advocating for a permanent space dedicated to addressing the legacies of slavery has not received approval, and as of now, there are no concrete plans in place for the creation of an Abolition Shed. Bath remains far more hesitant to confront its 'uncomfortable' past than Bristol. In the Georgian city, not even a plaque, let alone a monument, acknowledges the contributions of enslaved Africans. Unlike in Bristol, where streets memorialising slave owners were renamed, in Bath recent developments and new streets have been named after them, with local authority approval. While the universities located in Bristol have undertaken significant initiatives attending to the legacies of slave-ownership and empire, neither of Bath's two universities have seen fit to do so. Similarly, despite being the custodians of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Bath and North East Somerset Council have yet to formally acknowledge the sources of the wealth manifest in the Georgian city. The opening in 2022 of Bath's World Heritage Centre, offering an orientation to the UNESCO designated site, can be considered as a missed opportunity in this respect since the new display included only a small and significantly muted section on the sources of its wealth, and even this was removed shortly after the opening. The 'Monuments, Empire & Slavery' exhibition at Bath Abbey, although well received, was temporary,

4 https://www.bristollegacyfoundation.com/

5 https://decolonisingmemory.co.uk/

and currently there is no material annotation bringing attention to the memorial stones or the great stained-glass window installed in memory of a slave owner and pro-slavery propagandist.

Epistemic decolonisation is at the heart of any decolonial project and is vital for the reshaping of memoryscapes. As De Sousa Santos suggests,[6] opening meaningful social justice conversations is necessary to be able to feel and know the memory of colonial exploitation, extraction and enslavement, to sense ancestral voices and the silenced ways of knowing and bring them into the present. Creating heritage dissonance presents a challenge to museification and forgetting. Democratic memoryscapes require active agents who continuously stage and engage in discussions and debates. These controversies help repoliticise the urban landscape and produce agonistic moments in which dominant narratives are critically questioned. Although not all voices are equally audible, powerful stakeholders' attempts to silence the past can be resisted. This discussion and the experiences described inspire new strategies to expose and transform the crisis of representing the imperial past in post-Brexit Britain. The 2022 defeat of the Restore Trust campaign,[7] set up to rid the National Trust of its 'woke' tendencies, seen by some as a 'threat to British civilisation',[8] at the organisation's annual general meeting has demonstrated that the National Trust's 5.4 million members are interested in richer, more complex truth-telling heritage stories rather than redacting and silencing the past. As both the case of the National Trust and the Heritage Lottery exemplify, while the 'culture war' for the control of memory narratives is far from over, alliances between large organisations with funding and multiple actors involved in decolonising and diversifying narratives have good chances of succeeding.

Lessons drawn from the 2007 exhibitions commemorating the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade teach us that temporary exhibitions quickly fade from institutional memory, while even permanent displays can disappear within a mere decade due to structural changes within institutions. Many of the exhibitions and interventions referred to here were temporary or ephemeral; genuine and lasting transformation of memoryscapes requires sustainable funding and unwavering institutional backing. These initiatives

6 De Sousa Santos 2018

7 The RT's campaign against the National Trust began in 2021, in the wake of the publication of a report by the Trust that highlighted connections between 93 of its historic places and slavery. The RT took exception to the report, claiming it 'presents a strongly negative view of Britain, […] which does not properly represent the scholarly consensus'. https://leftfootforward.org/2022/11/anti-woke-insurgents-restore-trust-fail-miserably-in-bid-to-take-control-of-national-trust/

8 https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/31/national-trust-set-for-fresh-battle-over-culture-wars

need well-supported, effectively connected vibrant grassroots movements, diversification of decision-makers in pivotal institutions and an encompassing progressive reparations-oriented approach spanning education, tourism, public establishments and municipal bodies. The endeavour to effect meaningful and enduring change remains incumbent upon us. Sustaining the current momentum in the coming years and decades and maintaining pressure on our institutions to earnestly pursue decolonisation is essential if substantial transformation from acknowledgement, awareness and apology to repair and social justice is to be successfully realised.

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