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**Atlantic Archipelagos:
A Cultural History of Scotland, the Caribbean and
the Atlantic World, c.1740-1833.**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.**

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Abstract

This thesis, situated between literature, history and memory studies participates in the modern recovery of the long-obscured relations between Scotland and the Caribbean. I develop the suggestion that the Caribbean represents a forgotten *lieu de mémoire* where Scotland might fruitfully ‘displace’ itself. Thus it examines texts from the Enlightenment to Romantic eras in their historical context and draws out their implications for modern national, multicultural, postcolonial concerns. Theoretically it employs a ‘transnational’ Atlantic Studies perspective that intersects with issues around creolisation, memory studies, and British ‘Four Nations’ history. Politically it insists on an interrogation of Scottish national narratives that continue to evade issues of empire, race and slavery. Moving beyond a rhetoric of blame, it explores forms of acting and thinking in the present that might help to overcome the injurious legacies of the past.

Chapters include an examination of pastoral and georgic modes in Scottish-Caribbean texts. These include well-known authors such as James Thomson, Tobias Smollet, James Grainger, Robert Burns; and less well-known ones such as John Marjoribanks, Charles Campbell, Philip Barrington Ainslie, and the anonymous author of *Marly; or a Planter's Tale* (1828). Chapters two to four highlight the way pastoral and georgic modes mediated the representation of ‘improvement’ and the question of free, bonded and enslaved labour across Scotland, Britain and the Caribbean in the era of slavery debates. The fourth chapter participates in and questions the terms of the recovery of two nineteenth century ‘Mulatto-Scots’, Robert Wedderburn and Mary Seacole. Bringing ‘Black Atlantic’ issues of race, class, gender, empire and rebellion to the fore, I consider the development of a ‘Scottish-Mulatto’ identity by comparing and contrasting the way these very different figures strategically employed their Scottish heritage. The final chapter moves forward to consider current memorialisations of slavery in the Enlightenment- Romantic period. The main focus is James Robertson’s *Joseph Knight* (2003) that engages with Walter Scott’s seminal historical novel *Waverley* (1814) to weave issues of racial slavery into the familiar narratives of Culloden. Robertson also explores forms of solidarity that might help to overcome those historical legacies in a manner that is suggestive for this thesis as a whole.

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Introduction: Reflections on Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World, c.1740-1833

Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings.

➤ Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven*

A quotation from Ben Okri's *Birds of Heaven* (1995)—written in the context of a Nigeria wrestling with post-colonial nation building—opens James Robertson's historical novel *Joseph Knight* (2003). The epigraph seems apposite for the Scottish nation that voted for a devolved parliament in 1997 and is given greater currency in the current momentum towards a referendum on independence, scheduled for 2014. The changed landscape produced by a degree of national autonomy in the political and economic arena is understood as at once being inspired by, and reciprocally holding significance for, Scotland's cultural fabric. In 1998 Christopher Whyte contended that, 'in the absence of an elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers'. He suggested that 'the setting up of a Scottish parliament [would] at last allow Scottish literature to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement'.¹ Indeed, Berthold Schoene's recent *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (2007), published to mark the ten year anniversary of the referendum, builds on calls for post-devolution perspectives that re-evaluate the category of the national to engage with a plurality of forms.² These include: 'class, sexuality and gender, globalisation and the new Europe, cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality, as well as questions of ethnicity, race and postnational multiculturalism'.³ This plural vision is nurtured by the prevalent form of Scottish nationalism that has moved away from a 'blood-and-soil' ethnocentrism towards a more modern,

¹ Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34, 2, (1998), p. 285.

² For example, *Scotland in Theory*, ed. by Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004); and *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alistair Renfrew (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004).

³ Berthold Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting "Scottishness" in Post-Devolution Criticism', *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. by Schoene, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) p. 2.

sophisticated, postcolonially aware form of ‘civic nationalism’. This has been bolstered by streams of influence from ‘left nationalism’ and ‘anti-colonial nationalist’ thought. Michael Keating differentiates between ethnic citizenship which ‘presents membership of the national community as given, or ascriptive’, and civic citizenship which ‘sees individuals voluntarily constituting themselves as a collectivity’.⁴ Yet, such apparent liberal pluralism should not obscure the inequalities, prejudices and imperialist policies that can continue to exist under forms of civic nationalism, for example in the United States or indeed the present United Kingdom. The establishment of an independent nation-state, then, would not necessarily improve social cohesion, and would always carry the inherent risk of reifying the national paradigm—whether civic or otherwise.

Thus, while acknowledging the benefits of this form of national discourse, it must be emphasised that there remain elisions, distortions and exceptionalism—common to any national ideology—that make it essential that academic research maintains a critical distance, even while exploring the opportunities of the post-devolution landscape. The example of the emergence of the nation-states of the Caribbean may be instructive in this matter. In the wake of the achievement of independence in the 1960s, Guyanese historian Elsa Goveia warned:

Good intentions are not enough, and the road to hell is paved with authoritative half-truths. No one is ever liberated from the past by being taught how easy it is to substitute new shibboleths for old.⁵

The occasion for this was a review of Eric Williams’ *British Historians and the West Indies* (1964), which Goveia deemed an ill-considered critique of colonial history that could have a detrimental impact on the burgeoning areas of post-independence criticism. Indeed, both sites under consideration here—the Caribbean and Scotland—have in their own ways been ill-served by the traditional Anglo-British hegemony of ‘Whiggish history’ that Williams was confronting. ‘Whiggish history’ refers to the teleological vision of the past as a road leading inevitably to the liberal and progressive present. The Caribbean appears as a colonial outpost, marked by racial degeneracy, which enters ‘History’ only insofar as the achievement of abolition contributes to the central story of Liberty undimmed. Meanwhile, Scotland appears as a misleading Celtic sidetrack on the ‘March of Progress’. Yet Guyanese historian Richard

⁴ Michael Keating, *Nations Against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec, Catalonia and Scotland* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996), p. 3.

⁵ Elsa Goveia, ‘New Shibboleths for Old’ Review of Eric Williams *British Historians and the West Indies*, (Trinidad: P.N.M Publishing Co. Ltd., 1964) in *Caribbean Quarterly*, Vol 15, no. 2&3, June-September, (1969).

Drayton recently warned of the insufficiency of national paradigms in rectifying the deficiencies of Whiggish tradition: 'For nation history, not just in the Caribbean, is strangely similar in its rhythms to empire history.' Drayton argues that following independence, 'a new Whig history of the Caribbean arose to take the place of the old colonial version'. This time the narrative of Anglo-Saxon liberty eventually overthrowing Norman despotism and spreading the light of English liberty amongst the dark corners of the earth, shares many tropes with the 'up from slavery and colonialism' narrative. This new shibboleth traces how the freedom-loving African eventually broke the chains of subordination to achieve liberty in the independent states of Jamaica, Barbados or Trinidad. Drayton concludes that 'a presentist history that flatters the storyteller is the natural companion of political nationalism.'⁶

The lesson seems clear for Scotland as it moves towards national autonomy. Yet Schoene suggests there is a growing, if still relatively small, number of voices that express a sceptical approach: 'Following devolution, both Scottish critics and creative writers have begun to issue reminders that Scotland's assumed moral superiority as a victim of historical circumstance must not be permitted to persist un-interrogated.'⁷ This thesis proposes that an investigation into the cultural history of relations between Scotland and the Caribbean provides a prime field to interrogate established notions of the nation and problematise 'Scottishness'. This is neither an orthodox historical study nor a straightforward work of literary criticism, but rather a 'cultural history' of Scottish- Caribbean relations. Gavin Wallace argues that 'post-devolution Scottish writing is being inwardly nourished by the deep, outward reaching international tap-roots of Scottish culture.'⁸ Pursuing these roots through space and time to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in a region where they have too often been overlooked, re-casts Scotland in an Atlantic perspective. Scottish cultural studies have largely been concerned with carving out a discrete national tradition that revolves around a 'democratic intellect' and underlining its worth.⁹ Meanwhile across the Atlantic, the critical theory of the Caribbean has promoted the region as symbolic of the relational, non-hierarchical, dissolution of essentialisms pertinent to postmodern and postcolonial paradigms.

⁶ Richard Drayton, 'The Problem of the Hero(ine) in Caribbean History', *Small Axe*, 34, (March 2011), p. 37. Drayton notes his original title was 'Old and New Whig histories of the Caribbean'.

⁷ Schoene, *Contemporary*, p. 2.

⁸ Gavin Wallace, 'Voyages of Intent: Literature and Cultural Politics in Post-Devolution Scotland', in Schoene *Contemporary*, (2007), p. 27.

⁹ The term was popularised by George Davie's *The Democratic Intellect: Scotland and her Universities in the Nineteenth Century*, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 1961).

The coming together of Native Americans, Europeans and Africans (and later Asian migrants) created a crucible of modernity. Thus, discussions of Caribbean creolisation are characterised by a series of metaphors that emphasise multiplicity and interconnectivity. Rather than degeneracy or impurity, these underline the strength and creative potential that a ‘multitude of heritages’ can bestow. Edoard Glissant, the Martinican theorist of creolisation notes, ‘We are the roots of a cross-cultural relationship.’ He underlines the rhizomatic mobility and unpredictability of this concept:

Submarine roots: that is floating free, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions in our world through its network of branches.¹⁰

Therefore a ‘cultural history’ approach that ‘displaces’ Scotland onto the Caribbean permits this thesis to perform two main tasks.¹¹ Firstly, tracing the ‘taproots’ of Scottish culture amongst this creole network of submarine roots will bring together multiple narratives and perspectives on Scottish- Caribbean relations. Here, cherished national self-conceptions may be scrutinised and new perspectives on imperial mindsets, racial difference and diasporic performance explored. Secondly, there is a persistent tension in creolisation theory between whether the transnational interplay found in the Caribbean is reserved for ‘New World’ conditions, or is emblematic of a more universal feature of human society. These will be termed here the ‘New World’ and ‘universal’ forms of creolisation.¹² This thesis will argue the latter, expanding and adapting the insights of creolisation theory into the Atlantic isles of Britain and Ireland, thereby ‘archipelagising’ Europe. It will then reflect critically and comparatively on the boundaries and dissolution of boundaries between nations and peoples, between slave and free labour, and the legacies and memories of such relations in the contemporary context.

Indeed, Scotland might already claim a place amongst the roots of Caribbean creolité, as highlighted in Alan Riach’s work on Wilson Harris whose novels such as *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (1965) and *Black Marsden* (1972) are deeply entangled in Scottish fiction. The Guyanese writer’s redemptive vision of humanity rests on the ability to collapse binaries and play on the liminal borderlands between peoples, and thus countenances Glissant’s creolisation theory. Harris, very much oriented towards the ‘universal’ version of creolité,

¹⁰ Edoard Glissant, ‘Concerning Transversality’ (1981), in *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash, Caraf Books (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), p. 67.

¹¹ I will return to expand on the concepts of ‘cultural history’ and ‘displacement’ below.

¹² See the discussion in the ‘Atlantic Archipelagos’ section of the following Theory chapter.

emphasises a multi-layered vision of space and history that unites human cultures in unpredictable ways, whether in the Caribbean or Scotland:

There is a Celtic imagination there and there is a rich and complex layering of inheritance. In language, there is Gaelic, there is Scots, and there is English... The matter of 'Creative Schizophrenia' which Michael Gilkes identifies with the Caribbean, then, is pertinent in many parts of the world today.¹³

Rather than suffering from a debilitating state of 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', a creolised Scotland could enjoy instead a 'Creative Schizophrenia'. Riach invites Harris to expand on his concept of the 'intuitive imagination' which rejects linear, rational thought to 'tilt the field' between cultures, in order to find commonality between apparently disparate peoples. 'Uprooting is what I mean by "the tilting of the field": the uprooting of certain places or objects in the field that seemed immovable.'¹⁴ Unfortunately Riach's 'left nationalist' focus on Scotland's inherent 'democratic consciousness' misses the opportunity to investigate the actual history of empire and slavery that undergirds imaginative relations between Scotland and the Caribbean. Instead, his treatment of Harris leads him into a discussion of Scotland as peculiarly open and tolerant of diverse cultures.

In both Scotland and the Caribbean, the diversity that is present in the complex identity of each necessarily confers an understanding of difference, of otherness as part and parcel of the self.¹⁵

This form of theorising ignores the reality that in neither Scotland nor the Caribbean does the diversity present 'necessarily confer' any such lack of racism, sexism or other forms of oppression. Moreover, Riach's left nationalism colludes in the erasure of communal memory concerning Scotland's imperial role in the slave societies of the Caribbean.

In order to redress such theorisation this investigation, situated between literature, history and memory studies, seeks to advance and expand on Carla Sassi's proposal that suggestively brings together two key terms— '*lieu de mémoire*' and 'displacement'.

¹³ Wilson Harris, 'Unfinished Genesis: A Personal View of Cross-Cultural Tradition', *The Radical Imagination*, eds. Alan Riach and Mark Williams, University of Liege Language and Literature, (Liege:1992), p102. Harris cites as an influence Kurt Wittig's *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (1958), whose argument for a 'Celtic sensibility' in Scottish literature has been largely abandoned.

¹⁴ 'Wilson Harris Interviewed by Alan Riach', *The Radical Imagination* (1992), p. 43.

¹⁵ Alan Riach, *Representing Scotland in literature, popular culture and iconography : the masks of the modern nation*, (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 117.

The West Indies represent a powerfully destabilising *lieu de mémoire*, where Scotland might eventually lose command of its own narrative of identity, but also the place onto which Scotland might fruitfully ‘displace’ itself, and thus put into question its most resilient identity myths.¹⁶

Here, Sassi borrows from Pierre Nora’s work on the *Lieux de Mémoire* of France, such as the Court of Versailles, the Eiffel Tower and Joan of Arc. His project is designed to study ‘national feeling’ through ‘the principal lieux... in which collective memory was rooted, in order to create a vast topology of French symbolism.’¹⁷ However, this immediately runs into a number of difficulties relating to the theoretical premise of Nora’s project, which he insists could only be applicable to national identity within the boundaries of the nation-state, as well as exclusively suitable for the French nation. This has been challenged recently in an edited collection entitled *Memory, History and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts* (2009) which seeks to, ‘recover the concept of “lieux de mémoire” from the blind alley it reached as a result of the narrow Franco-French national frame of reference to which Pierre Nora restricted it.’¹⁸ The *lieux* correspond to ‘realms’ of memory, broadly conceived as, ‘a range of places, media, and practices: museums, intellectual production; emblems; heritage sites; commemorative festivals; and individuals, real and mythical.’¹⁹ Nora’s *lieux* are, then, substantially based on Maurice Halbwach’s notion of ‘collective memory’, which denotes: ‘The collectively constructed and shared signification of the past; it includes the collective knowledge circulating in a culture, is represented by shared symbols, and is passed on by successive generations’.²⁰

¹⁶ Carla Sassi, ‘Acts of (Un)willed Amnesia: Dis/appearing Figurations of the Caribbean in Post-Union Scottish Literature’, in *Caribbean-Scottish Relations*, (London: Mango Publishing, 2007), p. 135.

¹⁷ Pierre Nora, Preface to the English Edition, ‘From *Lieux de Mémoire* to *Realms of Memory*’, in *Realms of Memory*, Vol 1, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 2. The original seven volumes in French were published from 1984 to 1992. A selection has been published in three English volumes titled *Realms of Memory*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer.

¹⁸ Brigitte Reinwald, ‘Recycling the Empire’s Unknown Soldier’, in *Memory, History, and Colonialism: Engaging with Pierre Nora in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts*, ed. by Indra Sengupta, German Historical Institute Bulletin Supplement, No. 1 (2009).

¹⁹ Monica Juneja, ‘Architectural memory between Representation and Practice: Rethinking Pierre Nora’s *Les lieux de Mémoire*’, *Memory, History and Colonialism*, (2009), p. 11.

²⁰ Indra Sengupta, Introduction to *Memory, History and Colonialism*, 2009, p2.

Yet, relations between Scotland and the Caribbean have been marked more by a ‘collective amnesia’, one which ‘seeks to glorify a radical Scottish past of racial democracy’.²¹ Sassi, herself, establishes that amnesia is central to investigations of the Caribbean in Scottish culture.

One forms the impression that generations who were directly acquainted with the history of slavery in the West Indies and who, after its abolition, were keen to quickly shed historical responsibility for its horrors, performed an act of willed amnesia, followed by an (un)willed one by subsequent generations.²²

It is important to consider how the process of collective amnesia developed, in order to better redress its elisions. As Sassi notes, ‘The West Indian imperial connection, quite obviously, stood for aspects of Scottishness that did not invite either pride or celebration.’²³ The nineteenth century largely suppressed the memory of chattel slavery in British history as a whole. Scottish Victorians were adept at deflecting attention onto English slave trade ports like Liverpool and focusing instead on heroes of abolition such as David Livingstone.²⁴ The so-called Scottish Renaissance of the early twentieth century bequeathed a dominant national narrative of Scotland as a ‘minor’ nation in its relation to England, whereby the colonial past remains largely outside the national narrative, not integrated into the collective memory. Indeed, the most intense period of Scottish-Caribbean relations—the mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries—exists problematically in relation to the seminal events of the Act of Union (1707), and the battle of Culloden (1746), that are perceived as rupturing the continuity of the national story, rendering Scotland a passive entity in historical processes. The historical responsibility for Caribbean slavery is then displaced onto the British state, in which Scots themselves were supposedly marginalised.²⁵ In addition, the twentieth century mass migration of West Indians to Britain was inaugurated by the arrival of SS *Windrush* in 1948; following which large groups were dispersed to fill labour shortages around London, Liverpool, Birmingham and the Midlands. However, the post-war Scottish labour market was characterised by unemployment, indeed Scotland was itself exporting its own population;

²¹ Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic*, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 212.

²² Carla Sassi, ‘(Un)willed Amnesia’, p. 142.

²³ Carla Sassi, ‘(Un)willed Amnesia’, p. 142.

²⁴ ‘It is to Glasgow’s lasting honour that while Bristol and Liverpool were up to their elbows in the slave trade Glasgow kept out of it. The reproach can never be levelled at our city, as it was at Liverpool, that there was not a stone in her streets that was not cemented with the blood of a slave.’ ‘The West India Association in Glasgow’, *The Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1883. With thanks to Stephen Mullen for this reference.

²⁵ Although pre-Union colonial activities in Ulster, Virginia, Darien and Africa should problematise any such ‘colonial-Union’ conflation of Scottish history. [See also Historical review in the following chapter.]

therefore no corresponding sizeable West Indian communities developed there.²⁶ It was in England, then, that the Notting Hill Carnival (1959), the rise of ‘Reggae Britannia’, and artists like Linton Kwesi Johnson nurtured a sense of community that was in opposition to racist social structures in Britain. It produced movements like ‘Rock Against Racism’ (1976), and the Brixton Uprising (1981) that protested the ‘invisibility’ of ‘black British’ history in schools, and demanded an end to racial discrimination.²⁷ As it happened, this revolt against British society and intellectual history coincided with the Scots’ own critique of that British society and intellectual history. Leading figures such as Irvine Welsh and James Kelman began to explore affinities between Scottish national or specifically working class exclusion, and the articulation of African and Caribbean postcoloniality.²⁸ In the same way, critical writing began to theorise Scotland as ‘postcolonially conditioned’, resting largely on the social status of non-standard English and the sense of pre-existing Scottish ‘hybridity’ (Gaelic, Scots, and English).²⁹ In isolating these features and claiming them as peculiarly Scottish, critics closed one eye to non-standard English in England, and closed the other to hybridity and radical traditions there.³⁰ Although these critics often gesture towards the need for ‘Scottish histories of Scotland’s place at the forefront of colonial violence’ they have not produced one.³¹ Ultimately, this form of ‘postcolonial-Scotland’ avoids bearing the full weight of a critical re-

²⁶ However there are recognisable Chinese, Irish, Italian, Jewish, Polish and South Asian communities from previous waves of migration. Yet Scotland’s Atlantic ports also lack the large settled historic black populations found in Liverpool, South Shields and Cardiff’s ‘Tiger Bay’. According to the 2001 census (results from the 2011 census are not released until winter 2012), Scotland’s Black and Minority Ethnic population stands at 100,000, or 2% of the total. In 1991 it stood at 1%. The largest groups are Pakistani, Indian and Chinese. These figures may change slightly given the government policy of dispersal of refugees since 1999, however this would not increase the Caribbean population. <www.scot.nhs.uk> [accessed 21/04/2012].

²⁷ Black History Month, like Peter Fryer’s *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, (London: Pluto Press, 1984) grew directly out of the Brixton Uprising and its call for better education in terms of race and slavery, (Fryer, pxi). Fryer opened with sections on ‘Africans in Britannia’, then ‘Africans in Scotland’. The latter focussed on the Moors in the Jacobean court, some of whom appear in William Dunbar’s ‘Of a Black Moor: My Ladye with the meckle lippis.’ *William Dunbar: The Complete Works*, (Michigan: Kalamazoo Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), p. 71.

²⁸ For example, Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, (London: Vintage, 1995); and James Kelman, ‘The Caribbean Artists Movement 1966-1972’, *And the Judges Said...Essays*, (London: Secker & Warburg, 2002).

²⁹ See Berthold Schoene, ‘A Passage to Scotland: Scottish Literature and the British Postcolonial Condition’, *Scotlands*, 2.1, (1995); Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996); Michael Gardiner, ‘Interdisciplinarity After Davie: Postcolonial Theory and Crises of Terminology in Scottish Cultural Studies’, *ASLS Scottish Studies Review*, Vol 2.1, (Spring 2001).

³⁰ In a later chapter Cairns Craig would mount an interesting challenge to postcolonial conceptions of hybridity. He revisits Herder to show that notions of hybridity already existed in national paradigms, even in their nineteenth century Romantic forms. Therefore, if hybridity exists even in Herderian nationalism, the concept of hybridity as postulated by Homi Bhabha is ‘redundant’, as it relies on some nations being ‘pure’ in order for others to be ‘hybrid’. However, Craig overestimates the impact of Herderian hybridity and underplays the popularity of concepts of single-strain purity in the actual development of national paradigms. Craig, ‘Scotland and Hybridity’, in *Beyond Scotland*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 247.

³¹ Gardiner, (2001), p. 31.

appraisal of national history that postcolonialism demands. The Scottish position distanced itself from the ‘mainstream’ of British imperial history, thereby shoring up the long-standing collective amnesia in Scotland that was beginning to be dismantled elsewhere.

Therefore, this thesis participates in the establishment of the Caribbean as a *lieu de mémoire* which redresses the collective amnesia of Scottish-Caribbean relations in Scotland. This project in turn contests the neglect of historical memory in the Caribbean itself. It takes its lead from the pioneering collection of essays in *Caribbean-Scottish Relations* (2007) that revolve around the issue of the recovery of memory. Joan Anim-Addo explores the difficulties of assembling her own family history relating to her grandmother Juliana ‘Lily’ Mulzac, who raised her on stories of *Silkies*, presumably learned from the shadowy figure of the Scotsman Charles Mulzac of Union Island. The particular difficulties around genealogical history in the Caribbean seem emblematic of wider challenges to the recovery of historical memory: ‘Against a background of Atlantic slavery and post-slavery, and with so much lost, hidden, and disregarded, there were many false trails in the process of piecing together this narrative. Many gaps remain.’³² Indeed, such gaps rupture the ‘continuum’ of the ‘Euro-centric’ (Whiggish) colonial history in the Caribbean, that Glissant conceives as a form of ‘nonhistory’:

This dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all, characterise what I call a nonhistory. The negative effect of this nonhistory is therefore the erasure of the collective memory.³³

In a site defined by the ruptures of the Middle Passage and the dereliction of the plantation, the erasure of communal memory has been reinforced by an institutionalised amnesia, which has only recently begun to be redressed in historical and fictional writing. These ‘Reflections’ will suggest and explore a number of *lieux de mémoire* that might contribute to the recovery of historical memory in the Caribbean, as it relates to the obscured relations with Scotland. Yet, the aim is not to nurture a ‘residual sense of continuity’³⁴ as in Nora’s consensus-building, nation-centred approach; but rather, to consider each site within a transnational series of exchanges that contains a history of fractures.

³² Joan Anim-Addo, ‘A Brief History of Juliana “Lily” Mulzac of Union Island, Carriacou and Grenada: Creole Family Patterns and Scottish Disassociation’, in *Caribbean-Scottish Relations*, (2007), p. 51. Carla Sassi’s essay has already been cited above. Velma Pollard’s survey of the cultural history of Scots in Jamaica, and Giovanni Covi’s analysis of Scottish characters in Caribbean fiction will be referred to throughout this thesis.

³³ Edoardo Glissant, ‘The Quarrel with History’ (1981), in *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 62.

³⁴ Pierre Nora, ‘General Introduction: Between Memory and History’, *Lieux de Mémoire*, p. 1.

It is in this context that Sassi's key postcolonial term 'displacement' becomes significant, as it brings into focus the complex interaction of history, language and environment in the concept of 'place' that constitutes the 'nation'. A sense of 'displacement' can form the identity of individuals transported from a perceived ancestral homeland confronted with a 'lack of fit' between language, place and self.³⁵ Yet, in displacing a 'nation', here Scotland onto the Caribbean, this very 'lack of fit' can serve to undermine the meanings inscribed onto a unified heritage and identity, and point towards new ways of configuring place and self. Indeed, the quotation from Ben Okri that opens this thesis alludes to the significance of story-telling and the reconstruction of history in the configuration of modern nations. Recent theories of nationhood have begun to 'displace' the concept of the permanency of nations enshrined in nation-states that grew over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite the apparent modernity of these new political formations, 'primordialist' theories identify the continuity of the nation over the middle ages and beyond. It is certain that various groups have existed over history with markers that have remained remarkably durable, such as language, clothing, and stereotypes. Yet it would be anachronistic to remove such features from their contemporary context of kingship or kinship, to trace a golden thread of teleological purity to the 'birth of the nation'.³⁶ The long eighteenth century saw the emergence of modern nations and national empires; the literature under analysis here participates in the continual formation and reformation of the construction of Scotland, England, Britain and the empire. Benedict Anderson underlines that these are abstract constructs, rather than essential entities as, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. Thus a creative act is required to construct 'Imagined Communities'.³⁷ Ernest Gellner advanced a comparable thesis that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist'.³⁸ Yet Anderson distances himself

³⁵ *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 391.

³⁶ Adrian Hastings claims to identify the essence of English nationality as a feature of late Saxon kingdoms that survived the Norman Conquest of 1066. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In Scotland, the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) has often been presented as the birth of the nation, though Susan Reynolds relocates it in its political context of kingship as, 'the most eloquent example of regnal solidarity to come out of the Middle Ages.' Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 274.

³⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983), (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6. Anderson's main thesis contends that print-media played a vital role in shifting the concepts of fraternity, power and time that distinguishes concepts of community in antiquity and the middle ages to modern nations, (p. 36).

³⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 169.

from Gellner's assimilation of 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'.³⁹ This study paved the way for Homi Bhaba's collection *Nation and Narration* which foregrounds 'the nation's "coming into being" as a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*.' As nations become their narrations, so they can be deconstructed like a text:

If the problematic 'closure' of textuality questions the 'totalisation' of national culture, then its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life.⁴⁰

In narratives of the nation, history especially becomes a prime 'field of meanings' where fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality. Rather than a dead background, history becomes a vital resource for the present. Alive with stories, characters, plots and drama, history provides a deep pool from which the present draws meaning in its construction of the nation. Yet in the national, as in any form of narrative, there are elements which are emphasised and others elided: drawing from the pool of history is as much about forgetting as it is about remembering. As Ernest Renan once declared, in a now celebrated formulation, 'The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things.'⁴¹

Thus, processes of collective memory combined with collective amnesia have produced an orthodox genealogy of Scotland's national narrative constructed around what Tom Devine refers to as 'victim or hero' representations. In the 1970s, John Prebble's catalogue of national tragedies—Darien, Glencoe, Culloden, and the Highland Clearances—nurtured a sense of long-running grievances that a re-invigorated nationalism would strive to redress. Alternatively, well-remembered historical figures such as Wallace and Bruce are employed to portray an independent spirit; the Jacobites hint at a romantic rebelliousness; Burns and Scott point to the native genius that flowered during the Enlightenment; while the

³⁹ *Imagined Communities*, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Homi Bhaba, *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, (1990) (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ 'What is a Nation?' Ernest Renan (translated and annotated by Martin Thom). A lecture delivered at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882. 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' *Oeuvres Complètes* vol. 1 (Paris, 1947-61), pp. 887-907, in Bhaba, *Nation and Narration*, p. 11. In his useful essay 'Tribes within nations: the ancient Germans and the history of modern France' in the same volume, Thom is careful to contextualise these pronouncements on 'nation'. 'When, therefore, Renan emphasizes how important forgetting is for the principle of nationality, he is not simply alluding to the necessarily inventive aspect of nation-building, as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson have supposed.' (p31) In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, the Germanist Restoration Renan celebrates those feudal residues of German against French claims to rationalism. Renan was also a Breton.

nineteenth century inventors and engineers embody the industriousness that saw the nation thrive. As Okri employs the metaphor of nations ‘feeding’ themselves stories, so these are easy to digest; yet, as with any narrative, the familiar refrain is compromised and partial as those more unpalatable aspects are marginalised.⁴² Okri’s theme of a nation facing its own historical truths governs the drive of this thesis: to fracture the flattering national narratives of Scotland to locate new *lieux de mémoire* that reveal the Atlantic issues of empire, slavery, rebellion, race and class that knit Scotland and the Caribbean together. Indeed, Haitian poet René Depestre employs the resonant formula of the ‘métier à métisser’ to conceive of different national tapestries being woven together in the Caribbean. It plays on ‘métier à tisser’—weaving loom—and ‘métisser’—mixture—to produce a ‘cross-cultural weaving loom’.⁴³ The to-and-fro motion of the loom’s shuttle captures the restless mutations in the intertwining fabric of creolisation. However in Scotland, Caribbean relations represent a gap in the national narrative, a hole in the weave. This investigation promises to pull at the threads to reveal a forgotten history of Scottish involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, profits accumulated from slave produce, and ultimately, as the tapestry begins to unravel, a Scottish presence at the forefront of the British Empire in a region which bore witness to its most cruel injustices.

Cultural History: History, Literature, Memory

This thesis is positioned within the stream of recent efforts to recover the memory of Scottish-Caribbean relations. This stream has been growing over the past twenty years and accelerated following the commemoration in 2007 of both the bi-centenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and the tri-centenary of the Act of Union between Scotland and England. The title of this thesis represents a critical allusion to Douglas Hamilton’s detailed historical study of Scottish merchant activity in *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750- 1820* (2005). Yet it suggests that a ‘cultural history’ perspective provides crucial ‘reflections’ that re-connect with the creative processes identified in Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’. It also focuses on the narrative elements that produce the layers of meaning of respective *lieux de mémoire* that historical data alone misses. Yet here arises a further difficulty in terms of

⁴² D. Bell notes that a key feature of nationalism is ‘the ability to represent history in an extremely partial and digestible manner.’ D. Bell, ‘Mythscapes: Memory, mythology, and national identity’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 54 (1), (2003), 63-81, p. 67.

⁴³ René Depestre, *Le métier à métisser*, (Paris : Editions Stock, 1998).

methodology related to Pierre Nora's dichotomy of 'history' and 'memory'. For Nora's project is marked by a critique of modernity in a nostalgic mode, which gives the collection its elegiac tone of 'a certain French fin-de-siècle melancholia'.⁴⁴ Modernity was obliged to found museums, anniversaries and commemorations because 'spontaneous collective memory' had been lost. 'History' (written academic history from archives) had replaced the '*milieu* of memory' (lived, everyday, social experience with customs and rituals). A *lieu* is thus a vestige, it is all that remains once living tradition has departed; or more poetically, they are 'shells' left 'on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.'⁴⁵

Yet such a division would not seem to account for 'the complexity of the past, the conflicting nature of collective memory, and the problematic questions of collective identity that are characteristic of colonial and postcolonial contexts.'⁴⁶ Thus, Jay Winter suggests *lieux de mémoire* might better be understood as palimpsests, rather than shells. A palimpsest is a parchment on which the original writing has been partially erased and written over. Sarah Dillon notes that this has given rise to the suggestive metaphor of 'an involuted phenomenon where otherwise unrelated texts are involved and entangled, intricately interwoven, interrupting and inhabiting each other.'⁴⁷ Winter insists on the 'hybrid character of colonial and postcolonial sites of memory'. These *lieux* should be read as 'an overwritten text, with patterns emerging that varied from the intentions of the authors', a palimpsest in the sense of something that is 'reused or altered but still bears visible traces of its earlier form' in a fashion which 'layers meaning on top of meaning'.⁴⁸ Identifying a diversity of interpretations should underline the polyphonic meanings, not only in postcolonial sites (the collection focuses on British India and French West Africa), but in 'domestic sites' too, where meanings have been more fractured and transnational than conventional history (as well as postcolonial theory) has allowed.

⁴⁴ Lawrence D. Kritzman, Foreword, *Realms of Memory*, Vol 1, pxiii.

⁴⁵ Pierre Nora, 'Entre Memoire et Histoire', *Lieux de Mémoire*, pxxiv. Monica Juneja's translation, 'Architectural memory', (2009), p. 13.

⁴⁶ Indra Sengupta, *Memory, History and Colonialism*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Criticism, Theory* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 4. Dillon traces the metaphorical use to Thomas De Quincy's essay 'The Palimpsest', first published in *Blackwood's Magazine* (1845) as part of his *Suspiria De Profundis*; though it has recently been popularised by Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and Roland Barthes' conception of the text as 'a polysemic space where the paths of several possible meanings intersect.' Dillon, (p. 82).

⁴⁸ Jay M. Winter, 'In Conclusion: Palimpsests', in *History, Memory, Colonialism*, (2009), p. 167.

In order to best read the palimpsests of Scottish-Caribbean (post)colonial relations, a ‘cultural history’ can better address the problem of the silences, ellipses and disproportionate weight given to the powerful in the historical archives. Indeed, when dealing with an area such as the Caribbean where the ‘problem of history’ is so abject, an approach which goes beyond the archives (without abandoning them altogether) is not only appropriate but necessary. Literature, then, becomes a key medium through which historical memory might be recovered. From the publication of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), literature has long been implicated in the mapping of the Atlantic, encoding and disseminating the manner in which relations between these two archipelagos would be imagined. Indeed, Glissant’s poetry of the sea establishes the Atlantic itself as a *lieu de mémoire* that can redress the impact of ‘nonhistory’.⁴⁹ The focus on the sea evokes the drowned Africans of the Middle Passage which ‘sowed in the depths the seeds of an invisible presence’. Derek Walcott responds to the lack of conventional *lieux de mémoire* by relocating meaning to the submarine in ‘The Sea is History’:

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?

Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,

in that gray vault. The sea. The sea

has locked them up. The sea is History.⁵⁰

The poem progresses through the Biblical stages of Genesis as the explorer’s caravel, and Exodus as the Middle Passage. The sea with its ‘colonnades of coral’ and ‘gothic windows of sea fans’ contains the monuments equal to any European temple or cathedral, before the peoples of the Caribbean come together to forge a ‘History, really beginning.’ It has been a central feature of Caribbean writing that investigations into the past must go beyond the archives to find new ways to reveal the memories that landscape, sea-scape and peoples hold. In order to combat the sense of the occlusion from the ‘march of History’ (‘linear, hierarchical History with a capital H’), the Caribbean writer ‘must “dig deep” into this memory, following the latent signs that he has picked up in the everyday world [so that] history as a consciousness at work and history as lived experience are therefore not the business of historians

⁴⁹ The sea then becomes doubly significant: it separates the Caribbean islands into individual nation states. Yet here the sea stages instead the ‘subterranean convergence of our histories’. Glissant notes Kamau Brathwaite’s statement ‘the unity is submarine’ as this transnational unity (stretching in Glissant from the islands of the Caribbean to Central America and parts of North and South America) redoubles the sense of rhizomatic interconnectivity of Caribbean peoples as ‘submarine roots’.

⁵⁰ Derek Walcott, ‘The Sea is History’, *Derek Walcott Collected Poems: 1948-1984*. (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1986).

exclusively.⁵¹ Yet, the archives must not be dismissed entirely, and Caribbean historians such as Sir Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd have shown what can be achieved through a skilful interpretation of colonial-era documents.⁵² My title underlines, therefore, in its point of contact and departure from Douglas Hamilton's title, that the interplay between history, fiction and memory, and the meanings and implications that can be drawn from historicising cultural production will be a major methodological element throughout this thesis. I propose to at once build on and go beyond the recent proliferation of historical treatments of Scottish-Caribbean relations to offer a 'cultural history', one that engages more deeply with the 'field of meanings and symbols', their interpretative value, and modern implications.

The 'cultural history' approach provides a particularly appropriate entry point into the contemporary debates over the status of the writing of 'history' and 'fiction' in the long eighteenth century. Given that the role of the historian is always to create a narrative from the varying degrees of limited evidence available to them, in the eighteenth century, it was widely accepted that history 'shared a border with literature'.⁵³ Lionel Gossman writes,

For a long time the relation of history to literature was not notably problematic. History was a branch of literature. It was not until the meaning of the word literature, or the institution of literature itself, began to change, towards the end of the eighteenth century, that history came to appear as something distinct from literature.⁵⁴

This thesis, then, spans the era when historiography 'revoked its membership of the category of "literature"'.⁵⁵ Where the Romantics formulated literature as 'imaginative fancy', this reciprocally hardened the process of historical writing into a form of 'science' which disavowed its literary relations. History began to be conceived as an inquiry wherein the 'truth' of the past could be revealed by the impartial inquiry of the historian whose account, quarried from the written documentation of the archives, held a mimetic authority. However, 'Recent reflection on history, like recent reflection on literature... has tended increasingly to question

⁵¹ Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 65.

⁵² See for example their joint publication: *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World*, eds. Verene Shepherd and Hilary Beckles, (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).

⁵³ Consider the position of the overt authorial persona in the historical writing of Hume and Voltaire, who like Tristram Shandy, makes an ally of the reader, ironically winking at the tableau as it unfolds in front of them. In the nineteenth century, this would become gradually replaced (although not entirely) by a covert narrator in both historical and fictional writing. For Glissant, 'the surface effects of literary realism are the precise equivalent of the historian's claim to pure objectivity.' *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 74.

⁵⁴ Lionel Gossman, *Between History and Literature*, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 227.

⁵⁵ Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 126.

the mimetic ideal itself.⁵⁶ While noting the proximity between historical and fictional writing, it is equally important not to collapse the difference between the two entirely. The extreme postmodernist claim that all narratives are merely fictions, and are therefore equally valid, is shown to be intellectually impoverished when it comes to the example of the Scottish imperial presence in the Caribbean. The competing narratives of Scotland that attempt to either highlight or marginalise that presence are unequally balanced in terms of evidence and ideological perspective, so that it would be inadequate to treat them as merely alternative fictions. Rather, it appears that the writing of history and the writing of fiction exist on the same scale, measuring a textual representation of reality, and sharing many narrative techniques. Yet, good historiography retains a laudable attention to empiricism and a cautious approach to drawing conclusions from fragmentary evidence, that gives it a distinctive character to the freer licence that imaginative fiction allows. This is not to posit a hierarchical superiority of one form over the other, but to note that they perform different roles. Due to the generic differentiation that developed over the nineteenth century outlined here, it is worth retaining the sense of a border shared by history and fiction. This border, however, should be conceived as a porous barrier: a line of ‘crossings of traffic and intercourse, as well as of demarcation and dispute.’⁵⁷

Both ‘history’ and ‘fiction’ are then deeply implicated in the project to recover the memory of the Scottish-Caribbean. On the one hand they are at least partly responsible for its erasure, and on the other they hold the tools that might perform the task of a ‘textual archaeology’, as suggested by Sassi’s work in the field:

This, by necessity, is not and could not be a traditional literary investigation: cultural representations, in this particular context, have to be measured against the historical referents to which they bear relation.⁵⁸

Susan Manning suggests that it is inevitable in trans-Atlantic studies of this nature that tackle questions of empire and slavery, that literary studies must ‘inevitably go back into political history— not to do so would make any literary study of, for example, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or *Beloved* worryingly slight.’⁵⁹ It is the obscured nature of Scottish- Caribbean relations that makes it necessary to bring together obsolete traces of this history of exchange, with the

⁵⁶ Gossman, p. 246.

⁵⁷ Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ Sassi, ‘(Un)willed Amnesia’, p. 134.

⁵⁹ Symbiosis conference, University of Glasgow, Postgraduate Workshop, 23/06/11.

novels, poems and plays which speak of the unstable, forming and re-forming of (imperial) Scottish identity in this era of nation and empire building. It is the examination of the interplay between the textual, contextual and historical elements of an imperial relationship that has long been an uncomfortable area for a nation which prides itself on being built on ideals of liberty, democracy and equality, that can most fruitfully interrogate traditional notions of Scottish identity.

Reflections

The ‘reflections’ in the title of this introduction open up a number of possible interpretative paths for this thesis. Firstly, the careful consideration, contemplation and rumination on the eighteenth and nineteenth century texts, their historical ‘plane of emergence’; and, the modern recovery of their implications suggest a deeper engagement with the meanings of Scottish-Caribbean relations, that will complement the more historical approaches discussed in the following chapter. Indeed, this thesis occurs in the aftermath of the commemorative events around Union (1707) and Abolition (1807), within a devolved Scotland which is actively seeking new ways to re-shape the position of the nation within British, European and global contexts. This provides an opportune moment to critically reflect upon the different ways in which the site of the Caribbean and its peoples, both enslaved and free, entered into the imagination of Scots who were engaged in their own struggles of labour relations, gender wars, and negotiations of national identity. Therefore, rather than a straightforward model of colonial dominance and submission, this thesis will propose that Scottish- Caribbean relations can best be captured through a transnational ‘Atlantic Studies’ perspective. Bearing in mind the observation that,

Histories of the Atlantic World—even if some small slice of it—will always be extraordinarily difficult to accomplish; histories within the Atlantic world— invariably slices of it as well— inevitably will prove far more manageable.⁶⁰

Examining the ‘slice’ of the Scottish- Caribbean Atlantic world will be fruitful in re-examining Scotland’s history and sense of self, as well as providing fresh insights into the diasporas which constitute Caribbean creolité.

⁶⁰ *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 10.

Given the historical range and exploratory nature of this thesis, it cannot claim to provide an exhaustive report on Scottish-Caribbean relations. Rather, the chapters that follow focus on crucial nodes of the relations, reflecting on the modern implications and interpretations of the historical texts and figures surveyed. The approximate starting point of 1740 corresponds to Alan Karras' observation that this date marks a watershed in the migration pattern from Scotland, when the body of largely uneducated agricultural labourers, convicts or prisoners of war was replaced by a professional class of 'sojourners'.⁶¹ The closing date of 1833 marks the Act of Emancipation that ended the era of chattel slavery in the Caribbean, and altered the transatlantic relations with Scotland and Britain. However these dates should not be considered as absolute boundaries. The discussion of texts such as James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726-1730), Mary Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857), Philip Barrington Ainslie's *Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman* (1864), and James Robertson's *Joseph Knight* (2003) will transcend the chronology where appropriate. The following theory chapter discusses the relevance to this investigation of 'transnational' theory in the Atlantic world. It considers that 'transnationalism' has grown out of postcolonial insights, but employs them in a wider context, with a return to more solid strategies for global emancipation. In particular it discusses a number of vexed questions including: the position of the 'nation' within the 'transnational matrix'; the position of slavery within the black Atlantic; and the labour relations and insurrectionary politics of the red Atlantic. This chapter incorporates a 'literature review' of the modern historiography of the Scottish-Caribbean, considering the conceptualisation of 'archipelagos' and relations between archipelagos. This both extends and expands the discussion of transnational concepts, and provides a historical overview of the relevant period. It concludes that the questions of class, race, gender, nation, labour, culture and language raised by Scottish-Caribbean relations are best fleshed out from a transnational Atlantic perspective.

The nature of post-Union Britain created a triangulation between Scotland, Britain and the Caribbean. Given the predominant attention in discussions of postcolonialism and Scotland with the ways in which Scotland's position in the United Kingdom may or may not be

⁶¹ 'Sojourners' who did not intend to settle, but to make their fortune and return to the United Kingdom. Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

analogous to a colonial situation, chapters two to four form a trinity that analyse instead the development of a ‘Scoto-British’ imperial perspective as it relates specifically to the Caribbean.⁶² These chapters focus on the discourses of ‘improvement’ and social change, mediated through the modes of pastoral and georgic. The first chapter focuses on the period from around 1740 until the inauguration of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Clapham in 1787 that transformed Caribbean slavery into a vital social issue. This chapter traces the construction of the Caribbean in Scottish culture through a variety of writers employing a variety of forms: from James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1726-1730), Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random* (1748), James Grainger’s *The Sugar Cane* (1764), to James Ramsay’s *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves* (1784). This chapter raises the relation between Scotland and the Caribbean as worthy and vital member parts of the sapling British imperial state. Moreover, the key relationship between African chattel slaves and Scottish agricultural labourers and miners is explored through the representations of labour in pastoral and georgic modes.

The second chapter considers Robert Burns as a *lieu de mémoire*, noting that his intended emigration to Jamaica has become a focal point for modern studies of ‘Scotland and slavery’ and Scottish-Caribbean relations. It will make the argument that the prospect of that emigration looms large throughout his ‘Kilmarnock edition’. The Caribbean, therefore, is infused throughout this key document of Scottish culture demonstrating the extent of entanglement and transnational investments that an Atlantic approach can reveal. Rather than rehearsing the speculations on what Burns’ response to the Caribbean would have been, this chapter will employ Burns as a portal onto wider questions of ‘liberty’ and abolitionism in Scotland from 1786 to 1800. This chapter explores the ‘paradox’ of the poet of humanity considering a position within the slave economy, and will note how Burns kept a distance from the abolitionist movement that crested around him. The purpose is not to censure Burns for an indiscretion, but to consider him as a potent example of the tensions between ‘free labour ideology’, benevolence and abolitionism in the late eighteenth century. At this point the questions of social reform for slaves and commoners became predominantly mediated by the

⁶² I borrow the term ‘Scoto-British’ from Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). The term ‘Anglo-Scottish’ implies a pollution or surrender of an authentic Scottishness by which historical responsibility for the empire might be displaced onto England. ‘Scoto-British’ better captures the ‘investments’ that Scots made in constructing the new multi-national state. I will return to this in the section ‘Scottish Imperial Historiography of the Caribbean’ in the following chapter.

mode of pastoral. This chapter proposes that Burns' (dis)engagement with the 'poetics of abolition' provides ripe ground for exploring the complexities of the contemporary political and cultural field, with its rival and overlapping political and humanitarian agendas. The concept of the *lieu de mémoire* employed in this chapter, permits an exploration of the Burns story, his impact on contemporary abolitionist poets, the struggles over the meaning of 'liberty' in the 1790s, and the competing uses of his posthumous memory.

The third chapter picks up the on the modes of pastoral and georgic in examining the representations of social change in both Scotland and the Caribbean from 1800-1833, encompassing the transition from Abolition to Emancipation. It proposes that Hector MacNeill might be considered a Scottish-Caribbean writer, he is certainly producing some of the earliest verse written in Scots in the Caribbean. It notes the parallels between the mode of rural 'improvement' and gradual social change vital to both the Caribbean and Scotland. It compares MacNeill's representation of gradual improvement for Caribbean slaves, with his Stirlingshire protégé Elizabeth Hamilton's similar vision of rural 'improvement' for the Scottish peasantry. It compares the significance of 'gradualism' in the writings of Edinburgh lawyer and Jamaican sojourner, John Stewart, to the subaltern perspective of Highland-born Glasgow weaver and Jamaican book-keeper Charles Campbell. Indeed, this chapter discusses the complicating factor of the 'Gaelic-Caribbean'. The Gaels, marginalised in the Scoto-British state, nonetheless sought the same advantages as the sassenachs in the slave societies of the Caribbean. This chapter brings to a close the discussion of pastoral, georgic, abolition and gradual social change spread over the previous three chapters, with a discussion of the anonymous Scottish-Jamaican novel *Marly; or a Planter's Tale* (1828).

The fourth chapter, entitled 'Recovering "Mulatto-Scots" from the Caribbean' signals a change of tack. It considers the widespread phenomenon of Scottish 'mulattos' produced by those young, single sojourners, and (enslaved) African women. Their Scottish parenthood had significant material, political and social implications for these mulatto figures whose white heritage often granted them legal freedom, as well as access to a source of capital beyond the reach of their free black compatriots. This chapter hinges on a comparison between two prominent nineteenth-century Jamaican-Scots: Mary Seacole, who capitalised on her inheritance to go into business, and Robert Wedderburn who 'received no help in the world' from his Scottish father. It borrows insights from the project of historical recovery in the

African-American context to insist on a careful method of contextualisation in the process of exploring the meanings that these historical figures hold for the contemporary context. The latter became a significant figure in the Red Atlantic, involved in insurrection and revolutionary denunciations of capitalist-colonialist hierarchies on both sides of the ocean. The surviving writings and speeches of both figures reveal how Scottishness inflects their West-Indian autobiographies, and allow an analysis of the contrasting ways in which ‘mulatto-Scots’ strategically employ their national heritage.

The final chapter moves forward to the twenty-first century’s ‘reflection’ on this turbulent historical period to focus on the issues raised around James Robertson’s seminal novel *Joseph Knight* (2003). His skilful historical novel provides a fitting conclusion to the problems of history, memory and literature discussed in this thesis. It is based on extensive and original archival research of the long-obscured court case of *Knight v Wedderburn* (1773-78) in which a Jamaican slave won his freedom in a Scottish court and established that slavery could not exist on Scottish soil. This fine example of mnemonic fiction addresses the problem of the silences of the archives, as it attempts to recover lost voices which speak with effect to the modern day. In the novel, the Wedderburn house at Ballindean becomes itself a *lieu de mémoire*, with the fate of objects such as the painting over the fireplace and a Jamaican diary holding significance for the erasure of historical memory in the nation at large. Moreover, Robertson’s historical fiction that follows the Wedderburns from the battlefield at Culloden (1746) to the plantations of Jamaica, is in critical dialogue with the paradigmatic novel of post-Culloden Scottish historical fiction, Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814). It suggests a re-writing of national narratives that is entirely appropriate to the critical processes of memorialisation explored in this thesis. Robertson revisits Joseph Knight’s court case in a manner that suggests he is putting the nation on trial. However underpinning these considerations, in both the novel and this thesis, is a sense that recovering this painful history must not lead only to debilitating incriminations. Slavery is not so much part of our past, as part of our present. It remains a vital issue because the human relations it signified—that turning a profit takes priority over human dignity and ecological harmony—continues to define this contemporary moment. The project of recovering that abject past might also foreground examples of humanity and solidarity that foster new ways of thinking and acting in the present. Ultimately, the re-organisation of our society along lines of equality—in terms of

race, class and gender— provides the most effective way to redress the legacies of the past and continues the unfinished project of struggles for liberty in the Atlantic world.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Orientations— Transnationalism in the Atlantic World

I want to know what the Irish, the Scottish, the Welsh gave to the Creole mix as much as I want to know...what particular part of Africa is my heritage...I will solve the African riddle but who will tell me about the others?

➤ Erna Brodber, 'Where are all the Others?'¹

The relations between the Caribbean and Scotland are best understood through a 'transnational', 'Atlantic' perspective. This thesis notes that postcolonial paradigms have begun to give way recently to a 'transnational turn' that offers a global vision of multiple empires strategically manoeuvring against each other. Postcolonialism emerged in the 1970s following the success of de-colonising movements across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. Although many of these movements contained an anti-capitalist element, they largely tended to consolidate a national bourgeoisie at the expense of an earlier more radical promise. Where social struggles in the nineteenth to the twentieth century had been predominantly contested between socialism and capitalism, Aijaz Ahmad notes that postcolonialism conceived of humanity as primarily divided between 'West and non-West':

An obvious consequence of repudiating Marxism was that one now sought to make sense of the world of colonies and empires much less in terms of classes, much more in terms of nations and countries and races.²

In this way, activists and scholars launched a much needed assault on the racism that shaped European colonising societies. However the predominant focus on a 'West versus the Rest' conception of the globe could tend to perpetuate a narrative mode of villains and victims, with Western oppressors corrupting a native innocence. Promoting the validity of 'national cultures' could also tend to affirm the intellectual terms by which colonialism justified itself—national and racial difference. As post-independent nation-states began to disappoint their earlier supporters over the course of the 1980s, a counter-strand developed in the academy where postcolonial theory began to intersect with post-structuralist and post-modernist theories that

¹ Erna Brodber, 'Where Are All the Others?', in *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature and Identity*, ed. by Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 75.

² Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory, Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 41.

understood the nation as another ‘discourse’, or in some versions posited the nation as necessarily oppressive and coercive. Rather than dismissing the insights of previous theoretical formulations, Laura Doyle suggests that ‘transnationalism’ has grown out of ‘the last several decades of rich thinking about nationalism’. It takes its ‘impetus from postcolonial, diaspora, feminist, and world-system studies’ to re-situate questions of empire, colony and nation in a wider frame.³ The Atlantic world, for example, corresponds to Immanuel Wallerstein’s concept of a ‘world-economy’ defined by a common division of labour— ‘such that the various sectors or areas within are dependent upon economic exchange with others for the smooth and continuous provisioning of the needs of the area.’ As a ‘world-system’ entails multiple polities, cultures and modes of production, this model therefore de-thrones the importance of national or state development as the primary ‘unit of analysis’.⁴ Doyle proposes a transnational literary studies that builds on such ‘world-systems analysis’ to suggest a model of ‘inter-imperiality’ for all world states, communities and citizens (including writers) with, ‘multiple, jockeying empires over a very long durée and in volatile relation to anti-colonial insurgency movements.’⁵ Thus, she notes that from the medieval period, Chinese, Ottoman, Arab, African and Aztec empires, amongst others, were also expanding in collusion and competition with ambitious European empires.

Transnational literary studies might offer a fuller account of this ‘histoire croisée’ than the somewhat schematic models of difference that postcolonialism tended toward. The binary terms that were supposed to characterise colonial discourse—West/ non-west, self/other—do not adequately capture the complexity of ‘the paradox of Sameness and Difference’ that modernity continues to wrestle with in theorising the human condition. I borrow the term from Sylvia Wynter who notes that where feminism previously inserted ‘the variable *gender* into the ostensibly “universal” theories of Liberal Humanism and Marxism-Leninism’, now black ‘womanism’ might insert the variable ‘race’ into the ‘ostensibly “universal” theory of

³ Laura Doyle, ‘Toward a Philosophy of Transnationalism’, *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 1.1, (2009), p. 1. <<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9vr1k8hk>>

⁴ Immanuel Wallerstein, ‘The Rise and Future Demise of the world capitalist system: concepts for comparative analysis’, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, (1979) (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1986), p. 5. A ‘world-system’ does not necessarily mean a global reach, in fact most world-systems have a large regional base rather than the whole planet. It is more that they are a world unto themselves.

⁵ Laura Doyle, ‘Untold Returns: Cultural Dialectics in a World-Historical Frame’, Leverhulme Lecture, University of Edinburgh, 28th October 2010.

feminism.⁶ The ‘paradox of Sameness and Difference’ better captures the intersections of power and shifting relations of class, race, gender and nation that constitute the transnational world of empires and colonies. In this way, Doyle contends that ‘the power of transnational studies lies in its fundamentally dialectical approach’.⁷ She stresses that dialectics need not signify only a dyadic relationship, but that, ‘like dialogue, dialectics can comprise plural engagements, and... can entail multilateral actors as well as witnesses and listeners.’⁸ Transnational literary studies considers how ‘literature arises within a world of encounters, often within a matrix of empires, and enacts a carefully negotiated, dialectical engagement there’.⁹ Rather than literature’s primary function being to give expression to a unified national tradition, read transnationally it might reveal the constant interactions and exchanges of transculturation in ever-mutating forms of state and empire building. Rather than a ‘West/non-West’ ‘coloniser/colonised’ postcolonial model, this brings the literature of post-Union Scotland’s fraught negotiations with its larger neighbour in the construction of a Protestant, commercial, imperial state expanding into areas like the Caribbean into sharper focus.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the adoption of postcolonial terminology in Scottish cultural studies since the 1990s has not produced a body of research into Scotland’s role amongst the global colonisers. Rather, the conception of Scotland as itself an abused state, inherited from the Scottish Renaissance, has been elaborated in terms of Scotland’s affinity to other colonised nations, such as Ireland. Douglas Mack identifies a ‘colonised/ coloniser’ position for Scotland that might more accurately be applied to the experience of Ireland.¹⁰ This resembles much more closely a colonial relationship with the first ‘plantations’ of settler (Scottish) communities in Ulster in the seventeenth century, discriminatory landholding practices, warfare against a racialised Irish catholic ‘other’, laws forbidding Catholics to hold high office, etc.¹¹ In Scotland, the ‘Irish model’ has perhaps been misleading as the political and cultural relations with a much larger and more powerful neighbour, might better be

⁶ Sylvia Wynter, ‘Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Un/Silencing the “Demonic Ground” of Caliban’s “Woman”’, *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. by C. Boyce Davis and E. Savory Fido, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990), in *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*, ed. by Alison Donnell and Sarah Lawson Welsh, (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 477.

⁷ Doyle, ‘Transnational Philosophy’, p. 1.

⁸ Doyle, ‘Transnational Philosophy’, p. 2.

⁹ Laura Doyle, ‘Notes toward a Dialectical Method: Modernities, Modernisms, and the Crossings of Empire.’ *Literature Compass* 6, (March 2010), p. 195.

¹⁰ Douglas S. Mack, *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 7.

¹¹ See *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-currents of the African and Irish Diasporas*, ed. by David Lloyd & Peter O’Neill, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

understood as the *fear* of being colonised, coupled with the actual role of coloniser overseas. Liam Connell skewered many of these arguments in a devastating pair of essays which attack the predominance of an under-theorised ‘catchphrase criticism’.¹² He notes that employing postcolonial terminology immediately runs into difficulty through the dubious designation of Scotland as a colony of England. Connell argues that this misunderstanding originates in the conflation of ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’. Whereas the former is best understood as the territorial encroachment and economic extraction of one state over another, the latter is best understood as the internationalisation of capital (as defined by Lenin).¹³ Connell writes,

Although colonisation was a significant means of advancing imperialism it was not the only means. The danger of confusing these two terms is that it tends to depict all forms of social exclusion as equivalent and obscure the continuing significance of imperialism in constructing economic inequalities at the international level.¹⁴

Thus, the forms of ‘social exclusion’ and poverty suffered within Scotland are to be understood predominantly in terms of national relations with England, rather than capitalist exploitation and class. Here, postcolonialism’s unsatisfactory treatment of inequalities within the colonial power can function to obscure their cause, and therefore produce a misdiagnosis of their cure. Postcolonialism apparently provides Scottish critics with a framework in which to discuss inequalities and injustice. However, that framework is incompatible with the reality of Scotland’s position within the British Empire. It is therefore unfortunate that in the most significant collection of essays to date on the subject, the editor Michael Gardiner opens by stating that he will leave ‘behind the wearied and misleading [question] of whether Scotland “is postcolonial”’.¹⁵ This disappointingly sidesteps the issue that is surely the main stumbling block. This thesis therefore proposes that a transnational perspective will best produce an honest appraisal of Scotland’s imperial role, which also takes into account the manoeuvrings of national hegemony and the painful experience of capitalist exploitation at home. Indeed, Doyle argues that the ‘horizontal’ dialectics of ‘inter-imperiality’ must be complemented by a ‘vertical’ account ‘of the disruptions of empire from within and below’. These must equally be read dialectically, as forces that have ‘unsettled, transformed, and constituted the imperial

¹² Liam Connell, ‘Modes of Marginality: Scottish Literature and the Uses of Postcolonial Theory’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol 23, (2003), p. 41. ‘Scottish nationalism and the colonial vision of Scotland’, *Interventions: the International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 6.2, (2004).

¹³ V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism: the Last Stage of Capitalism* (London: Communist Party of Great Britain, 1916).

¹⁴ Connell, ‘Modes of Marginality’, p. 41.

¹⁵ *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, Graeme MacDonald, Niall O’Gallagher, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 1.

order of things.’¹⁶ Thus, a transnational Atlantic Studies perspective better captures the totality of capitalist and colonial processes that unite Scotland and the Caribbean.

In order to develop the discussion of Glissant’s creolisation raised in the introductory chapter, the theoretical considerations in this chapter are particularly concerned with the interplay between local, national, international and transnational perspectives; as well as the intersections of such features as class, race, gender and religion that inflect all such territorial approaches. The ‘cultural-national’ lens of Scottish studies can obscure as much as it clarifies, imposing a national homogeneity over what are disparate, diverse, fractured elements. However, Wallerstein’s ‘world-system’ emphasising supra-national trade and exchange, which is in revolt against ‘statist’ models of capitalist development, might risk countenancing ill-conceived ‘post-national’ theories.¹⁷ While attempts to move beyond the pre-eminent focus on ‘national cultures’ are welcome, the nation cannot be hastily discarded as a political unit or analytical concept. This is especially so when the ‘globalised’ or ‘regional-federal’ alternatives, like the European Union, speak more to the expansion of capital over sovereign borders than a genuinely emancipatory concept. If so much of what is posited as ‘unique’, ‘exceptional’, or ‘typical’ of nationalities tends to dissipate on closer scrutiny that does not make nations disappear completely. The national remains one of a number of lenses which can be usefully employed to provide a clearer ‘parallax’ view.¹⁸ Furthermore, this chapter incorporates a review of the historical literature concerning Scottish-Caribbean relations in order to demonstrate the benefits of a transnational perspective while providing a historical overview. A picture emerges of an impoverished but aggressive and expansionistic Scottish state that made various attempts to exploit a colonial advantage throughout the seventeenth century, though its ambitions did not match its capabilities. At the dawn of the eighteenth century, in the interests of ‘improvement’, it joined forces with a larger, bellicose neighbour in an alliance that would straddle the globe. The somewhat vexed processes of transculturation accelerated by this Union should not be misinterpreted as equating Scotland with those nations it

¹⁶ Doyle, ‘Dialectical Method’, p. 199, p. 198.

¹⁷ However Wallerstein himself could not be accused of this naivety. The ‘transition debate’ from feudalism to capitalism is not a historical technicality but becomes important as it influences the definition of contemporary capitalism. Robert Brenner emphasises changes in the ‘relations of production’ within states. Wallerstein emphasises trade and market exchange. However Henry Heller argues that this is a false dichotomy, as capitalism must be viewed as a totality that combines both production and exchange. Henry Heller, *The Birth of Capitalism: A 21st Century Perspective*, (London: Pluto Press, 2011).

¹⁸ The simultaneous view of an object from two perspectives at once that gauges range and depth, as discussed in Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

colonised. This chapter will close with a review of modern ‘popular memorialisations’ of that historical period which have complemented the academic historiography. Walking tours, television programmes and museum exhibitions have played a crucial role in disseminating the latest research and accelerating the awareness of the Scottish imperial role in popular consciousness.

Atlantic Theory

In order to focus on Scottish-Caribbean relations specifically, transnational cultural studies might drop down one level of analysis from the global to the regional, and thereby build on historical research of the Atlantic world.¹⁹ As the editors of a recent collection note, Atlantic Studies is best understood not as a ‘full-blown field’ of research, but rather as a ‘perspective’ viewing:

The emergence in the fifteenth century and the subsequent growth of the Atlantic basin as a site for demographic, economic, social, cultural, and other forms of exchange among and within the four continents surrounding the Atlantic Ocean— Europe, Africa, South America, and North America— and all the islands adjacent to those continents and in that ocean.²⁰

The focus on transnational exchange might avoid the teleology of national histories; however finding the suitable emphasis to place on nations and nation-states remains a disputed area. David Armitage criticises much Atlantic history as not truly ‘circum-Atlantic’, taking the Atlantic as a whole. Rather, it is ‘trans-Atlantic’, with a comparative approach, or ‘cis-Atlantic’, examining a particular place within an Atlantic context.²¹ By contrast, Jack Elliot objects that the majority of the focus has been on transnational connections in border zones, ‘without much concern about specifying how those connections and transnational relations affected the internal histories of the areas that they connected.’²² Indeed, Trevor Burnard complains that ‘British Atlantic historians display strong assimilationist and homogenising

¹⁹ The Scottish-Caribbean of course forms part of wider Atlantic relations between Africa, South America, Canada, and the U.S.A. These exist in conjunction with relations in Europe, the East Indies, and Australasia. In the interests of manageability, this thesis focuses specifically on the long-obscured relations with the Caribbean.

²⁰ *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, (2009), p. 2.

²¹ David Armitage, ‘Three Concepts of Atlantic History’, in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by Armitage and Braddick (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 12.

²² Jack Elliot, ‘Afterword’, in *The British Atlantic World*, p. 237.

tendencies in their relentless search for connections', that results in a lack of explanation of how 'the Atlantic' affected the internal histories of nations.²³

Mapping Scotland into the Atlantic world specifically addresses these concerns by engaging with the hybrid forms of plurality and mobility promoted by Atlantic studies, without dissolving the category of the national entirely. Laura Doyle's dialectical approach to transnationalism seems apposite here. She dispenses with the '*a priori*, Herderian spirit' of the 'inside' of the nation to argue instead, 'they are radically co-formed...arising from material and ideological forces that continuously transform the existence of both or all national sides.'²⁴ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's neo-Marxist theory of transnationalism, influenced by postmodernism's insistence on fundamental paradigm shifts, proposes a 'de-territorialised' vision of supranational 'circuits of power'.²⁵ By contrast, Doyle's transnationalism stresses the materiality of nations within a dialectical totality:

Nations do exist, but as trans-nations or inter-nations. They share a 'tilted' structure of orientation to other nations that is dialectical and dyadic yet also multiple and circumferential and horizontal. Nations are invested in each other, in every sense of the word, and they are invested in and attuned to each other's investments.²⁶

With necessary caveats on the sapling nature of Scottish 'nationhood' in the eighteenth century, and that the Caribbean is a region rather than a nation, this is a suggestive model for this thesis. Doyle's formulation centres on the multiple meanings of 'investment' in order to bring together the psychological, social and symbolic, as well as the financial 'investments' that undergird relations between Scotland and the Caribbean.

Indeed, recent historiography is beginning to map the networks of financial investments, that in turn provide another entry point for René Depestre's 'cross-cultural loom':

²³ Trevor Burnard, 'The British Atlantic', *Atlantic History*, p. 127-128.

²⁴ Doyle, 'Philosophy of Transnationalism', p. 10.

²⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (London: Harvard University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Doyle, 'Philosophy of Transnationalism', p. 10.

The colonies had an interdependent relationship ensuring profit at each end of the Atlantic; the cotton was grown by slaves in the Windward Islands, imported to Glasgow and weaved into a rough [osnaburg] ‘slave cloth’ by the burgeoning industrial proletariat before being re-exported to a slave workforce in Jamaica.²⁷

These networks of investment bring together agriculture and industry, metaphorically interweaving the lives of slaves with spinners and weavers in the production of textiles. Moreover, the OED reveals the etymology of ‘invest’ (from the Latin ‘investire’), that precedes the financial sense: ‘To clothe, robe, or envelop (a person) *in* or *with* a garment or article of clothing; to dress or adorn’. This meaning might bring to mind the literal exchange of textiles that clothed the respective populations of Scotland and the Caribbean outlined above. Yet donning a garb also opens up figurative possibilities relating to inner and outer selves. Due to a myriad of internal divisions, nations exist most potently and distinctly when facing outward, in relation to other nations. In tilting outwards nations both adorn themselves and are adorned in garments to self-present to outsiders; thus clad they appear ‘imbued with attributes, qualities, or a character’. Drawing on the second definition in the OED, nations are also invested in each other, in the sense of ‘enveloped’ or ‘surrounded as with a garment’. Scotland has ever been deeply ‘embedded’ in transnational relations—with England, Wales and Ireland in the construction of Britain, and ‘enwrapped’ in the Atlantic societies of the Caribbean. The idea of the Scottish nation formed and was formed by the vestments of each. Despite the sense of disparate cultures being tightly interwoven, the connotations of such clothing metaphors might seem somewhat expendable and superficial, though that is perhaps the point. If the folds of a Scottish cloak continue to provide texture to Caribbean creolité; in Scotland the once-prized West Indian robe has long lain discarded. The third and fourth definitions are ‘to endow with power, authority, privilege’ and the military sense of ‘to enclose or hem in with hostile force, to besiege’. These provide a reminder that considerations of transnational investments must take account of violent and unequal (ab)uses of power and privilege, without reducing relations of domination and subordination always to the loaded and charged connotations of a ‘colonial’ relationship.

Furthermore, considering Scotland in an Atlantic context is appropriate to the different areas of Atlantic research that have been colour coded in order to bring coherence to an

²⁷ Stephen Mullen, ‘A Glasgow West India Merchant House and the Imperial Dividend, 1768-1844’, (unpublished M.Sc thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011).

otherwise overly-capacious category. The ‘white Atlantic’ tends to examine the migration of settler colonies from Europe to the Americas and the intellectual and political currents of exchange in which the Scottish Enlightenment was key. A concern with slavery maps Scotland into the ‘black Atlantic’ which emphasises the foundational position of transported Africans in modernity. Meanwhile, the ‘red Atlantic’, associated with Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, examines the exchange of philosophies of rebellion and revolution through the ‘Atlantic Working Class’. This last approach is one in which the stories of Joseph Knight and Robert Wedderburn are best fleshed out.²⁸

Slavery and the Black Atlantic

In the era of agricultural capitalism [1600-1800], wage labour is only one of the modes in which labour is recruited and recompensed in the labour market. Slavery, cash-crop production, sharecropping and tenancy are all alternative modes.

➤ Immanuel Wallerstein²⁹

The position of slavery has been a vital if contested area in Atlantic Studies. Here, Wallerstein refutes the argument that free wage labour is the defining feature of capitalist modernity, and that slavery therefore represents an archaic anomaly that bears ‘not the slightest resemblance to the formation of a capitalist proletariat.’³⁰ By contrast, if the essential feature of capitalism is the ‘production for sale in a market in which the object is to realise the maximum profit’, then slavery represents ‘capitalism with its clothes off’. For slavery, serfdom and indentured labour still represent a relationship with the landowner where ‘labour power is a commodity (how could it ever be more so than under slavery?).’³¹ The jockeying states of the Atlantic world would employ whichever mode of labour seemed most useful, as they competed to maximise production in the New World. The initial use of indentured and convict labour was quickly supplemented and largely replaced by a stream of slave labour, for which Europeans

²⁸ Recent special issues in journals have also focused on the ‘French Atlantic’, while the Irish diaspora is known as the ‘green Atlantic’. John Coffey’s suggestion for the Scottish diaspora of the ‘tartan Atlantic’ does not seem to have caught on. John Coffey, review of *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, Houndmills, (Palgrave Macmillan: 2002), in *The Scottish Historical Review*, 85.1 (2006), [155-156], p. 156.

²⁹ Wallerstein, ‘The Rise and Future Demise of the world capitalist system’, p. 17.

³⁰ Laclau ‘Feudalism and Capitalism’, *New Left Review*, 1971. Quoted in Wallerstein, p. 16.

³¹ Wallerstein, ‘Rise and Demise’, pp. 16-17.

turned ‘Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins’. It was this that ‘signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.’³²

Alison Games details how the Atlantic perspective grew out of the innovative approach to the slave trade that ‘unfettered by state borders’ went about ‘tracking the transmission of all elements of culture, from political identity to material goods to language to religion, all around the Atlantic basin.’³³ It should be remembered that far more Africans than Europeans crossed the ocean: 2.3 million to the British colonies alone between 1600 and 1800, compared to 1 million Europeans.³⁴ Yet, if traditional understandings of slavery, influenced by the abolitionists onwards, have presented a series of binary conflicts between white and black in a domination of Europe over Africa, an Atlantic perspective has suggested a more nuanced picture. Henry Louis Gates Jr. notes the ‘inter-imperial’ role of west- African kingdoms in the slave trade:

These included the Akan of the kingdom of Asante in what is now Ghana, the Fon of Dahomey (now Benin), the Mbundu of Ndongo in modern Angola and the Kongo of today’s Congo, among several others... In recent years, some African leaders have become more comfortable discussing this complicated past than African-Americans tend to be. In 1999, for instance, President Mathieu Kerekou of Benin astonished an all-black congregation in Baltimore by falling to his knees and begging African-Americans’ forgiveness for the ‘shameful’ and ‘abominable’ role Africans played in the trade.³⁵

Gates references the work of John Thornton and Linda Heywood who estimate that 90% of those shipped to the New World were first enslaved by Africans and then sold to European buyers. Thornton explains the legal differences that characterised pre-Atlantic slavery in Africa which was ‘the functional equivalent to the landlord-tenant relationship in Europe’:

³² Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, (Chicago: Charles H Kerr & Co., 1918), ‘Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist’, Vol I, Part 8, Chapter 31, p. 823.

³³ Alison Games, ‘Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities’, AHR Forum, March 1999 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/111.3/games.html>> [accessed 12/04/2010]. Games specifically references Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Wis: 1969).

³⁴ Trevor Burnard, ‘The British Atlantic’, *Atlantic History*, p. 121.

³⁵ Henry Louis Gates Jr., ‘Slavery, Reparations and Guilt’, *New York Times*, 22 April 2010.

African law established claims on product through taxation and slavery rather than through the fiction of landownership. The African system was neither backward nor egalitarian, but only legally divergent.³⁶

This is complemented by the work of Atlantic historian Philip D. Morgan who argues,

By no means were all Africans victims or dupes. Indeed, a voluntary partnership best captures the relationship between African traders and rulers and European merchants and ship captains.³⁷

Morgan skilfully reads agency into the African slave sellers who ‘called the tune’ dictating the conduct of the trade; importantly, without exonerating blame from the European buyers. The picture emerges of a power struggle between multi-various kingdoms, states, classes and peoples within Africa, jockeying for position amongst themselves for access to trade (in textiles, metals, and weapons) with Europeans who were themselves manoeuvring for advantage. However, across the Atlantic the widespread deaths of the indigenous population created a labour shortage in New World mines. Imported indentured labour had to be complemented by a further source of cheap labour, for which Europeans tapped into a well-established market.

The ever-increasing demand for slave labour in the Americas accelerated and warped that network increasing levels of turmoil and warfare amongst African states. The centuries-old movement of people in Africa had never created a surplus reserve of slaves before the demands of the Atlantic slave trade. The greater commercial freedom demanded by non-royal groups resulted in trading settlements resisting inland court control in Benin, while Dahomey became a breakaway mercantilist state based almost entirely on the slave trade.³⁸ Thus, Stephen Shapiro suggests a model of ‘comparative capitalisms’ around the circum-Atlantic economy whereby the wresting of state-controlled slave trading to free-trade companies, tensions between royal authority and the nobility, and the burgeoning power of merchants seeking free entry to markets is a story duplicated in both the ‘coffee houses of London, and the Canoe Houses of Ijo’.³⁹ The picture of slavery that emerges portrays Africans as ‘active

³⁶ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 74-6.

³⁷ Philip D. Morgan, ‘Africa and the Atlantic, c.1450 to c.1820’, in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, p. 225.

³⁸ Morgan, p. 221

³⁹ Stephen Shapiro, ‘The Technology of Publicity in the Atlantic Semi-Peripheries: Benjamin Franklin, Modernity and the Nigerian Slave Trade’, in *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, ed. by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 130.

agents, voluntary partners, major shapers, if not actual originators of Atlantic trade'.⁴⁰ This seems ultimately more humanising and accurate than the picture of Africans as passive victims, as well as presenting an excellent example of the benefits of a sophisticated 'inter-imperial', transnational Atlantic approach.

Yet, the progress of subsequent history in the Americas has produced a constellation of a large black presence on territories dominated by ideologies of white supremacy. Therefore for Paul Gilroy, slavery is the central moment of modernity. However Neil Lazarus points out that 'indenture, wage labour, forced migration, colonisation, etc... are as inextricably conducive of the modern world as slavery is'.⁴¹ Insisting on the mutability and unfixed nature of all identities, Gilroy treads a careful line which attempts to articulate the material and psychological domination of blacks under 'white supremacist terror'; yet moves beyond 'black national' or 'ethnic' exceptionalism. He despairs at 'over-integrated conceptions' of 'volkish popular cultural nationalisms', which 'present immutable, ethnic differences as an absolute break in the histories and experiences of "black" and "white" people.' Thus, moving beyond conceptions of black people in Britain as the intrusion of one whole, fully formed 'black' culture into a fixed 'white' one, he suggests an Atlantic genealogy which creates 'a compound culture from disparate sources'.⁴² Consequently Gilroy offers 'the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organizing symbol for this enterprise' and focuses on individuals such as Martin Delaney, W.E.B Du Bois, and Richard Wright whose mobile lives criss-crossed the Atlantic ocean, making them prime examples of lives experienced as 'routes' not 'roots'.

Although regarded as a foundational text, *The black Atlantic* has also provoked a variety of criticism which has been usefully assembled by Lucy Evans.⁴³ In particular, Gilroy's focus on a de-territorialised transnationalism has been provocative, with Laura Chrisman perceptively arguing that *The black Atlantic* was a product of the mid-1990s academic climate which celebrated, 'concepts of fusion, hybridity and syncretism as explanatory tools for the analysis of cultural formation'. Indeed the focus on cultural forms

⁴⁰ Morgan, p. 240.

⁴¹ Neil Lazarus, 'Review of *The black Atlantic*', (1994). Cited in Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic*, (2003), p. 8.

⁴² Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness*, (London: Verso, 1993), p. 15.

⁴³ Lucy Evans, 'The black Atlantic: Exploring Gilroy's Legacy', *Atlantic Studies*, Vol 6.2, (2009), pp. 255-268.

might explain the lack of comment on class or gender in *The black Atlantic*, in comparison to the lengthy discussions of music. Chrisman considers the ‘risks’ involved in an intellectual climate where ‘aesthetics and aestheticism were made to function both as an explanation of and solution to social and political processes’. Thus, Chrisman postulates that Gilroy’s focus on ‘outer- or trans-nationalism’ as a corrective to national absolutes underestimates the variety of nationalisms, whereby national identity can be ‘challenged from within.’⁴⁴ Dave Gunning critiques the lack of a transnational theory which must acknowledge ‘the materiality of the nation-space,’ if it is not to become a ‘totalising abstraction’. He accuses Gilroy of coming close to ‘poststructuralist conceptions of free-floating *différance*’ which disregard the nation as a centre of power and therefore remove the black subject from ‘any location from which political change might be effected.’⁴⁵

Indeed, Peter Hallward has critiqued Glissant’s conceptualisation of creolisation from a similar standpoint. He identifies a shift from ‘early Glissant’ (1956-1981) that insisted on the *de-departmentalisation* of Martinique in order that it might take its place in the eventual post-national ‘Totalité’. However ‘later Glissant’ (1990—) loses the sense of the means with which to realise that goal, as it becomes more concerned with a rhizomatic de-territorialisation. Thus, to coin a phrase, the ‘submarine roots: floating free’ of *Le Discours Antillais* (1981) have broken loose from their moorings entirely.⁴⁶ For Hallward, this is characteristic of the dominant post-colonial trend away from concrete emancipation approaches that pertains to the ‘post-defeat’ theories ascendant since the 1970s. (i.e. the generation of scholars depressed by the defeat of the mass politicisation of Paris 1968, who began to conclude that nothing could fully change, no ‘totalising’ theory of society was possible, knowledge could only be achieved in fragments, humans have become isolated atoms, etc.) These ‘postmodern’ theories lose the sense of the possibility of fundamental social change found in previous theorists such as Lukacs, in favour of a ‘more broadly liberal agenda of plurality and inclusiveness’. ‘Glissant’s work becomes compatible with Deleuze’s at the same time and for the same reason that it becomes incompatible with Fanon’s or Sartre’s’.⁴⁷ Given that so many descendants of black Atlantic slavery continue to live in poverty in the present day, we must question the limitations

⁴⁴ Laura Chrisman, *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 73.

⁴⁵ Dave Gunning, ‘Anti-Racism, the Nation-State and Contemporary Black British Literature,’ *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 39, no. 2, (2004): pp. 29-33, p. 29.

⁴⁶ See reference in Introduction to this thesis.

⁴⁷ Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 69.

of creolisation's postmodernist emphasis on perpetual motion where, 'the energy of the imaginary's unpredictable and innovative spiraling must keep on whirling.'⁴⁸ To take the example of Erna Brodber's Miss Manda, the 'dirt poor', 'illiterate, hard-working, begging' black female figure of rural poverty whose story opens this chapter,⁴⁹ it is unclear how it will help to send her spinning into infinity in rhapsodic celebrations of the de-territorialised 'chaos-monde'. Thus, in the black Atlantic context, Gunning asserts the need for a theory of transnationalism which takes into account the 'manoeuvrings of national discourse';⁵⁰ while Chrisman desires a re-conceptualisation of the nation that might offer academic theory a pathway of return to concrete demands of political emancipation.

In this way, the collection *Beyond the Black Atlantic* (2006) attempts to rehabilitate the concept of the nation from the paradigms of both Gilroy's black Atlantic and 'later Glissant's' creolisation.⁵¹ While embracing the models of cross-cultural contact, equally it remains alert 'to what must not be lost, the nation as a necessary frame of reference for political struggle and change'.⁵² Benita Parry notes that the use of history has been criticised as the harking back to 'an archaic past and authentic communal identity' and 'as a return of the indigenous'.⁵³ By contrast, she insists,

The error of these accusations is evident when we consider the work of thinkers such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral, who articulate the aspiration to a socialist internationalism while at the same time validating native cultures for nurturing collective life.

Rather than a retrogressive ethno-centrism, she identifies the use radical anti-colonial movements make of history which 'simultaneously confront the exclusions of capitalist modernity and engage its liberatory dimensions, in this using the past to contemplate a post-capitalist tomorrow beyond both the pre-colonial and colonial.'⁵⁴ It is in this spirit that we

⁴⁸ Kathleen M. Balutansky and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, Introduction, *Caribbean Creolization*, (1998), p. 8.

⁴⁹ Erna Brodber, 'Where are all the Others?', *Caribbean Creolization*, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Gunning, p. 33.

⁵¹ It also fills the geographical gaps left by Gilroy whose 'rhetoric of inclusiveness does not match his selection of material' (Lucy Evans, *Atlantic Studies*, p. 260). The collection then includes essays on India, the African subcontinent and the Caribbean.

⁵² Saskia Schabio 'Ulysses shape shifter', *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, p. 90.

⁵³ See G. Prakash, 'Who's afraid of Postcoloniality?' *Social Text* 49/14, 1996, p. 195; and G. Gopinath, 'Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora', in J.E. Braziel and A. Mannur (eds) *Theorizing Diaspora* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

⁵⁴ Benita Parry, 'The Presence of the Past', *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, p. 17.

might fruitfully re-cast Scotland within a transnational matrix, re-examining its (post)colonial historical relations with slavery and the black Atlantic.

Red Atlantic

If Shapiro's theory of 'comparative capitalisms' suggests the contemporaneous development of economic modernity around the Atlantic basin, Linebaugh and Rediker's *The Many Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (2000) suggests a counter-culture of resistance which consequently existed on an Atlantic scale. If concepts of capitalism as 'free labour ideology'⁵⁵ drive a wedge between wage earners and the enslaved, the Red Atlantic seeks to re-unite them. Classically educated imperial rulers often conceived of their efforts in terms of the labours of Hercules. In particular, the battle with the grotesquely hybrid creature born of Typhon (a tempest or hurricane) and Echidna (half-woman, half-snake), the venomous hydra of Lerna, was particularly suggestive for their efforts at imposing imperial authority 'on an increasingly global system of labour'. When Hercules chopped off one of its poisonous heads, two more would grow in its place:

[Rulers] variously designated dispossessed commoners, transported felons, indentured servants, religious radicals, pirates, urban labourers, soldiers, sailors, and African slaves as the numerous, ever-changing heads of the monster. But the heads, though originally brought into productive combination by their Herculean rulers, soon developed among themselves new forms of cooperation against those rulers, from mutinies and strikes to riots and insurrections and revolution.⁵⁶

Invoking Christopher Hill, they intend to 'look from below' to recover the history of the 'multi-ethnic class that was essential to the rise of capitalism and the modern global economy.' They employ an Atlantic perspective to circumvent the writing of 'history that has long been a captive of the nation-state, which remains in most studies the largely unquestioned framework of analysis.'⁵⁷ Colin Kidd spells out the significance for historiography:

⁵⁵ The development of 'free labour ideology' would become crucial in the abolition movement, as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁵⁶ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 3-4.

⁵⁷ *Hydra*, pp. 6-7

How did this vivid multi-ethnic milieu become a ‘world we have lost?’ The answer is that our intellectual—and narrative—categories hardened. New notions of biological racism were forged. Nationalism was born, and history was rewritten in narrowly national terms. Even radical and working-class movements were re-conceptualised in national terms, whether English or Irish.⁵⁸

This ‘Red Atlantic’ approach has been expanded by Emma Christopher to include the multi-racial resistance found between European sailors in slaving vessels and Africans on the Atlantic coast of West Africa. She recounts cases of European sailor desertions and joint rebellions with African ‘grumetas’ to reason that, ‘the history of the slave trade seamen suggests a variant picture when the Africans they were dealing with were not part of their cargo’.⁵⁹ Christopher is careful to temper her account with examples of Africans employed by slave merchants to return runaway sailors to their ship or to crush onboard mutinies, highlighting the inter-imperial jockeying over the slave trade and the consequent resistance. Christopher enjoys undermining Euro-centric notions, postulating that, ‘there remains the possibility that strategies for rebellion, and even the spirit of rebellion itself, were adopted from Africa by European seamen.’⁶⁰ However, it seems more likely that it is the logic inherent in ‘comparative capitalist’ relations of labour that produces ‘comparative resistance’.

Yet, such accounts of the Red Atlantic have been challenged in terms of factual accuracy, and by critics hostile to the political perspective. David Brion Davis lists a number of factual errors and slips; more damagingly, he considers their framework one which resembles ‘a parody of a highly romanticised Marxism’ in which all varieties of the oppressed are merged into a single category with little differentiation.⁶¹ Peter C. Mancall mocks their ‘desperate search for a workers’ paradise’, that ‘will appeal to those readers who want to believe that capitalism’s expansion across the Atlantic basin generated the seeds of its own demise.’⁶² Meanwhile David Armitage perceives this, perhaps accurately, as an attempt to replace the dethroned Industrial Revolution in Marxist terminology:

⁵⁸ Colin Kidd, Book Review of *The Many Headed Hydra*, *Journal of World History*, Fall 2002, p. 513

⁵⁹ Emma Christopher, ‘Another Head of the Hydra? Slave trade sailors and militancy on the African coast’, *Atlantic Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, (2004), p. 146. Zachary Macauley’s journal as governor of Sierra Leone notes the frequency of desertions and fear of ‘jacobinical radicalism’ of the African sailor grumetas.

⁶⁰ Christopher, p. 153.

⁶¹ Review, *New York Review of Books* (5 July 2001).

⁶² Peter C. Mancall, ‘Atlantic Colonies’, *New England Quarterly*, Vol 75, No. 3, (Sep 2002), p. 486.

Now for 'factory', read 'ship', for 'manufacturer', read 'press-gang', and for English Working Class, read 'multi-cultural', 'multi-racial', 'multi-national proletariat'.⁶³

Beyond the political hostility, there is a serious point which these critics raise. At times, Linebaugh and Rediker draw the connections between the Atlantic Working Class rather more definitely than the evidence allows, which results in some tendentious readings. This will become clear in their treatment of Robert Wedderburn, discussed in chapter four of this thesis. Moreover, Michael Guasco points out,

The absence of a collective agenda or shared consciousness of a single body holding the hydra's heads aloft seems profoundly clear in spite of the authors' insistence otherwise.⁶⁴

Indeed, it must be remembered that the hydra myth was an emblem of rulers' anxieties, rather than a totem of self-identification for sailors, slaves or commoners. Armitage states, 'the putative members of a self-conscious, self-identified, polymorphous Atlantic proletariat exist here largely in the nightmares of their rulers.'⁶⁵ Nevertheless, despite the shortcomings, factual errors, and occasional overstatement, this remains a pioneering approach full of potential.

Doyle notes,

The key point is that there are multiple empires jockeying all at once, not always calling themselves empires, and also multiple movements of dissent, insurgency, and anti-coloniality, not always with shared values or targets.⁶⁶

The vestments of the transnational Atlantic world, then, are made up of a tight weave of threads, including the 'white', 'black', and 'red' ones discussed above. These threads are not to be understood individually, rather the task is for cultural history to interweave them on the 'cross-cultural loom', in the process taking 'account of their dialectically formed conditions'.⁶⁷

⁶³ David Armitage, 'The Red Atlantic', *Reviews in American History*, (2001), John Hopkins University Press, p. 485.

⁶⁴ Michael Guasco. Review of *The Many-Headed Hydra*, H-Atlantic, H-Net Reviews. June, 2003. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=7645>

⁶⁵ Armitage, 'The Red Atlantic', p. 484.

⁶⁶ Doyle, 'Dialectical Method', (2010), p. 206.

⁶⁷ Doyle, 'Dialectical Method', (2010), p. 206.

Atlantic Archipelagos: A Historical Review

This thesis, then, participates in and stands at the cross-section between two major recent revisionist historical paradigms that bring together two ‘Atlantic archipelagos’: both the ‘New British History’, and ‘Atlantic history’, particularly as it relates to the islands of the Caribbean. A key term for the breakdown of authoritative, hierarchical, systems in favour of polyvalent creolisation, is the ‘archipelago’. Where the original Greek term referred to the scattering of islands in the Aegean, Cuban writer Antonio Benitez-Rojo sees a ‘discontinuos conjunction’ with the Caribbean a, ‘cultural meta-archipelago without center and without limits, a chaos within which there is an island that proliferates endlessly, each copy a different one, founding and refounding ethnological materials like a cloud will do with its vapour.’⁶⁸ Thus, Glissant proposes to develop ‘une pensee archipelique’. Yet, Bill Marshall in his study *The French Atlantic*—in many ways a companion piece to this project that seeks to ‘displace’ the monolithic, universalising tendencies of ‘la Republique’ to trace ‘particles’ of Frenchness in the Atlantic World—notes the ‘fragile points’ in Glissant’s argument. These relate particularly to the versions of ‘New World’ or ‘universal’ creolisation outlined in the introduction. On the one hand, Glissant states, ‘ce que je vois aujourd’hui, c’est que les continents ‘s’archipelisent’,⁶⁹ suggesting a ‘global vision’ of cultures becoming ‘archipelagic’, as J. Michael Dash perceives it.⁷⁰ This need not correspond to the actual physical geography of island groups, but pertain to the metaphorical interplay of all societies, even on a continental landmass. On the other hand, there is a persistent suggestion that the ‘composite cultures’ of the Americas, of which the Caribbean is emblematic, is a phenomenon removed from European cultures which remain ‘atavistic’, defined by their lineage and ‘totalitarian’, ‘sedimentary’ histories.

Our historical consciousness could not be deposited gradually and continuously like sediment, as it were, as happened with peoples who have frequently produced a totalitarian philosophy of history, for instance, European peoples.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Antonio Benitez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 9. Originally published as *La isla que se repete* (1989).

⁶⁹ Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁰ ‘The Caribbean is seen in *Caribbean Discourse* as an exemplary instance of intense patterns of mutation and creolization...[that is] shared globally. Martinique is presented as a ‘solitary and absurd denial of the cross-cultural imagination by its desperate attachment to metropolitan France’. J. Michael Dash, Introduction to *Caribbean Discourse*, (1999), pxli.

⁷¹ Edoard Glissant, ‘The Quarrel with History’, (1981) *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 62.

Marshall notes that Glissant misses the opportunity to render a re-conception of European cultures: 'This "archipelagisation" of France is both refuted and suggested within the space of a few pages in *Poétique de la Relation*.' Glissant notes the existence of Breton and Norman which might render the French language and France itself a 'composite culture' which was re-constituted in different forms on 'lines of flight' into the Caribbean, North America and Canada.

However, the enumeration of examples of this 'scattering' simply leads him back to signaling the centripetal 'illusion' that overvalues 'French', rather than moving forward to an engagement with those centrifugal forces that would undo this.⁷²

Thus, Glissant does not pursue his own suggestion that the continent and 'fixed' nations of Europe might be made 'minor' and 'archipelagic', and fractured into their particles of meaning. Similarly, in a more recent collection of important essays on *Caribbean Creolization* (1998), the editors define 'Western thought' as 'from its origins' based on 'the ideology of order prevailing in all domains over chaos.' An ideology that (rightly) collapses in the face of the 'brute exploitation' that is fundamental to 'New World experience.'⁷³ However, Sylvia Wynter long ago critiqued the failure to distinguish between what she calls the 'cultural myth' and the 'cultural reality' of Europe.

The cultural reality of Europe consistently attacked and opposed this dominance, this concept of Europe as a super-culture, as the end product of Man's glorious march towards 'humanity'. The cultural reality of Europe sees the ambivalence of its own power and glory; and embodies its real creativity best when it is most self-critical.⁷⁴

Ultimately the 'New World' approach leaves intact the 'cultural myth' of Whiggish history that it is in revolt against. The implication is that the ideology of History-as-social-progress, that serves very precise ideological purposes, is somehow natural and appropriate for 'European peoples'. The 'universal' approach can better collude with modes of critical thought amongst those same 'European peoples'. Expanding the insights of transnational dialectics into the 'archipelagos' on both sides of the Atlantic will work better to undo imperialism and its hegemonic ideologies.

⁷² Bill Marshall, *The French Atlantic*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 17.

⁷³ *Caribbean Creolization* (1998), p. 1-2.

⁷⁴ Sylvia Wynter, 'We Must Learn to Sit Down Together and Discuss a Little Culture—Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism', (1969), in *Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature* (1996), pp. 311-12.

In the British and Irish context, J.G.A Pocock originated the term ‘Atlantic archipelago’ (though from a somewhat different political and philosophical position to Benitez-Rojo and Glissant). His ‘Plea for a New Subject’ in 1975 laid the ground for a move away from an Anglo-centric perspective in which the Scots, Welsh and Irish were written out of ‘British’ history, or only appeared when they impinged on the centripetal history of England. Instead, he advocates a ‘plural and multicultural’ approach wherein the internal histories of the four nations be treated ‘independently if interconnectedly’: their streams of development ‘flowing together to form a single series, but not a single phenomenon’.⁷⁵ John Kerrigan, in his recent study of the seventeenth century, has glossed the ‘interactive entities’, culturally and politically, of the ‘linked and divided’ ‘North Western Atlantic archipelago (NOWA)’:

This term, as used by the historians...does three related things: it designates a geo-political unit or zone, stretching from the Channel Islands to the Shetlands, from the Wash to Galway Bay, with ties to North America and down to the Caribbean; it does so neutrally (avoiding the assumptions loaded into ‘the British Isles’); and it implies a devolved, interconnected account of what went on around the islands.⁷⁶

The ‘archipelagic’ vision then re-invigorates the meaning of ocean water for this ‘group of islands’ surrounded by ‘quasi inland seas on the European side and an oceanic water region on the Atlantic side’.⁷⁷ Kerrigan notes, ‘the seas which we view on maps as surrounding and dividing the islands drew them together, and opened them to continental and Atlantic worlds’.⁷⁸ Thus the trans-oceanic scope, alluded to by both Pocock and Kerrigan, invites comparison with the Caribbean, that other ‘group of islands’ in the Eastern Atlantic, in a manner that connects to the figurative possibilities of water found in Glissant and Walcott’s sea-scapes.⁷⁹ Glissant’s unfulfilled suggestion of the interplay of creolised, ‘composite cultures’ in Europe might be advanced here in a study which displaces the Scottish nation, itself a composite within an archipelago, across the Atlantic into the archipelago *par excellence* of the Caribbean.

⁷⁵ John Pocock, ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 47, No. 4, (Dec 1975), p. 609.

⁷⁶ John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pvii.

⁷⁷ John Pocock, p. 609

⁷⁸ Kerrigan, p. 48.

⁷⁹ See Introduction to this thesis.

Pocock insists on a vision of English expansion over its neighbours marked by ‘an increasing English political and cultural domination’,⁸⁰ (Michael Hechter’s *Internal Colonialism* was published in the same year).⁸¹ This is replicated in his trans-oceanic vision which perceives, with the exception of Canada, largely ‘Anglo-Atlantic’ societies.

Transatlantic expansion leads to the establishment of a number of colonies of settlement. As a rule, one thinks of these, as they appear to have thought of themselves as ‘English’, but there is a Scots-Irish immigration and a Highland Scots immigration... But the pre-dominance of English political and cultural forms creates that loose circle of Anglo-Atlantic societies.⁸²

This suggests a model wherein the white settler colony of Canada retains ethnic division between archipelagic nationalities, as well as Jacobite or Hanoverian, Whig or Tory, Catholic or Protestant loyalties. Meanwhile in the Caribbean, where the majority of the population are of African descent, such divisions are subsumed into the more pressing construction of ‘whiteness’ as an over-arching category. This ‘whiteness’ is nationed ‘Anglo-British’, witnessed in the adoption, for example, of English legal codes across the Atlantic colonies. By contrast, Natalie Zazek expresses an alternative Atlantic approach that perceives, ‘the Act of Union between Scotland and England (1707) less as an English conquest of a defeated enemy than as a negotiated settlement between the commercial interests of North and South Britain.’⁸³ Accordingly, colonial spaces stage a re-configuration of archipelagic interconnectivity and interplay across the Atlantic, as addressed in Zazek’s second chapter ‘Irish, Scots and English’ in her recent *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands 1670-1776* (2010). This recognition of the importance of national collusion and collision in the British Atlantic draws on work such as Akenson’s *If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730* (1997); and David Armitage’s series of articles, such as ‘Making of the British Empire: Scotland and the Atlantic world’ (1999); that culminated in *The Ideological Origins*

⁸⁰ Returning to the issue of Anglo-centrism in a recent collection of essays Pocock criticizes the tendency to underestimate the dominant, incorporating role of England which ‘distorts the actual motor of change’, to which Kerrigan concurs. *Discovery of Islands*, p. 53.

⁸¹ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: the Celtic Fringe in British National Development*, (London: Routledge, 1975).

⁸² Pocock, p. 617.

⁸³ Natalie Zazek, *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands 1670-1776* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 46.

of the British Empire (2000).⁸⁴ Yet, the focus of such Atlantic histories on the seventeenth century can give the impression that a settled Britishness had been achieved following the Act of Union at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, this thesis intends to explore the importance of the site of the Caribbean in the continued formation and reformation of reciprocal constructions of Scottishness and Britishness over the long eighteenth century.

Scottish Imperial Historiography of the Caribbean

Forming a part of the development of these paradigms, the recent explosion of historical investigations confirms the long absence of the Caribbean in Scottish historiography. Tom Devine points out that even recent publications such as the *Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (2001) contains only one reference to the West Indies.⁸⁵ Maintaining a ‘Four Nations—Atlantic’ perspective in the Caribbean can also begin to redress the widespread effacement of archipelagic interplay in historical studies of slavery. The term ‘Britain’ must include Scotland, Wales and England. However, the typical slippage between ‘England’ and ‘Britain’ that persists especially, though not exclusively, in American historiography, has perhaps contributed to Scotland’s invisibility in studies of slavery. This contributes towards the evasion of historical responsibility in Scotland that recent efforts have sought to counteract by re-centring the imperial role into Scottish historical memory. There has recently been a wider resurgence of interest throughout Britain in the empire, as seen in the popularity of (the Scot) Niall Ferguson’s nostalgic call for an imperial revival in *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (2003).⁸⁶ Yet devolution has given greater legitimacy and purchase to specifically Scottish histories of the British Empire. Here we can synthesise the ever-growing body of research to provide a historical overview of Scottish- Caribbean relations in the long eighteenth century. Texts examined include Alan L. Karras’ *Sojourners in the Sun* (1992),

⁸⁴ Donald Harman Akenson, *If the Irish Ran the World: Montserrat, 1630-1730* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997). David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁸⁵ *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, ed. by Michael Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Reprinted in 2007. However at the ‘Caribbean-Scottish Passages Conference’, University of Stirling, 24th-25th June 2008, Geoff Palmer similarly criticised Devine for failing to devote a chapter to slavery in his *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).

⁸⁶ Ferguson’s apology for empire is unequivocally condemnatory when dealing with pernicious aspects such as Caribbean slavery. Yet these features are couched within an overall narrative of the progress of civilization brought on by the British Empire, a torch he urges the United States to carry. *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

Angus Calder's *Revolutionary Empire 1500-1780* (1981 and 1998), Michael Fry's *The Scottish Empire* (2001), T.M Devine's *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (2003), and finally, the only text dedicated solely to Scotland and the Caribbean— Douglas J. Hamilton's *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1820* (2005).⁸⁷ This will be followed by a discussion of the historical debate over the *nature* of this Scottish imperial presence—either predominantly authoritarian, or predominantly benign—in the section 'Despots or Fratriots?'

The domestic transformations to systems of landholding in the eighteenth century are understood as making imperial expansion possible. In the Highlands, 'modernising' clan chiefs phased out tacksmen and moved from communal farms to single tenancy. A system of crofting was established along with planned villages which permitted non-agricultural, industrial interests to flourish. In the Lowlands there was a similar shift from communal to private land— cotters gave way to money rent. These transformations on the land created a layer of displaced bodies which fed urban growth and created a pool of labour for growing industries, or populated the colonies across the Atlantic, engendering what Michael Fry calls *The Scottish Empire* (2001).⁸⁸ As with Ferguson, it is possible to detect a certain nostalgia for empire in Fry's sweeping narrative history written with the pace and panache of a colonial adventure tale. Reflecting a tendency to claim Scots as the more moral, benevolent wing of the imperial project, Fry accumulates copious examples of the leading role of Scots in the empire, only to draw blithe conclusions about the benign nature of their dealings with colonial subjects in comparison to their English counterparts. Scots, he argues, were 'traders, not raiders'. The implied moral superiority of such a 'commercial empire' does not stand up to scrutiny when it is remembered that in the Caribbean the trade taking place was the slave-produced sugar and cotton trades, as well as that of tobacco in North America. Although troubled by the activities of Scots in the Caribbean, Fry can excuse the profiteering on slave plantations as, 'this was, in an exotic setting, the normal Scottish quest for self-advancement.'⁸⁹

By contrast, Angus Calder's *Revolutionary Empire* is a materialist 'warts-and-all' history of the British Empire, which was initially published in 1981, building on the revisionist

⁸⁷ Ian Whyte's *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery* (2006) is less a history of the period, and will be treated in chapter two of this thesis in relation to abolition.

⁸⁸ Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2001).

⁸⁹ Michael Fry, 'A Commercial Empire' in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, ed. by T.M Devine and J.R. Young (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1999), p. 63.

scholarship of the 1970s.⁹⁰ Remarkably prescient, it engages with the nascent form of ‘Four Nations’ history, and precedes the new wave of revisionist history of the British empire, especially in the ‘world-history’ work of C.A Bailey and Marshall. Calder’s text still offers an important narrative framing of the early developments of the empire. Too often the machinations and anxieties over empire building in Scotland are set against the system in ‘England’ which represents a quintessential imperial nation. Calder’s class-based analysis frames the early days of Elizabethan exploration and buccaneering in the New World, within the context of the enclosures of common land in England. This signalled the acceleration of state-building with a powerful centralized authority providing a reminder of the great conflicts within the English state between and amongst different classes which shaped imperialism from its inception. The pressing need to populate the colonies in the seventeenth century was met largely by transporting ‘undesirables’. Thus the jails of London and particularly Bristol were regularly emptied to provide indentured convict labour for the highest bidder in Bermuda or Barbados. David Dobson suggests Scottish state connections with the Caribbean commenced in 1611 with the sailing of the *Janet of Leith* from Edinburgh. He estimates that from 1626, ‘as many as 5000 Scots settled temporarily or permanently in the Caribbean before the act of Union in 1707.’⁹¹ Most were unwilling migrants, including Royalist prisoners of war who had opposed the campaign of Cromwell’s New Model Army through England, Ireland, and Scotland. This transportation brought into common use the term ‘to barbadoes’ as a punishment.

The Scots conceived various colonisation schemes over the seventeenth century including settlements in Nova Scotia, Carolina and East Jersey that were promoted not least as voiding Scotland of the many ‘idle and dissenting persons’ in the realm.⁹² The campaign of the Stuart king James VI against the ‘barbaric’ McDonalds and his ‘plantation’ in the Hebrides are resonant with echoes of later global depredations. They were designed to, ‘reform and civilize the best inclined’, and would prove useful in, ‘rooting out or transporting the barbarous and

⁹⁰ Angus Calder, *Revolutionary Empire: the rise of the English-speaking empires from the 15th century to the 1780s* (London: Pimlico, 1998).

⁹¹ David Dobson, *The original Scots colonists of early America, 1611-1707: Caribbean Supplement*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1999), p. 3.

⁹² ‘Memorial concerning the Scottish plantation to be erected in some place of America’, presented to the Privy Council (1681). Cited in Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c.1600-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 12.

stubborn sort, and planting civility in their rooms'.⁹³ Thus Calder argues that this campaign provided the theory and practice for the combined Scottish-English colony in Ulster.⁹⁴ We might extend the argument to consider the manner in which the Stuart *mission civilisatrice*, and the long-running debate over Lowland civility versus Highland barbarity, contributed to the theory and practice of the British Empire at large. Yet, too few histories of the Scottish empire have developed Calder's suggestive framework. From this perspective, Darien may be seen as the culmination of seventeenth century Scottish attempts to exploit a colonial advantage, rather than the botched inauguration as it is usually portrayed.

Scotland's lack of muscle had left it unable to compete as a lone state in the world-system amongst the jockeying Atlantic empires, as that failure at Darien had demonstrated. Thus, it was only following the Treaty of Union (1707) when Scottish ships enjoyed the protection of the Royal Navy that Scotland's imperial ambitions flourished as part of a joint Anglo-Scottish project. The clearest call for a recognition that 'empire was fundamental to the moulding of the modern Scottish nation', appears in Tom Devine's *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (2003). He employs a detailed demographic approach—encompassing early trade networks in Northern Europe—to the global span of the British Empire. Devine, following Karras, notes the distinctive nature of emigration to the Caribbean in comparison to other Atlantic colonies. Emigration to North America tended to be 'in family and kindred units' drawn from 'every level of Scottish society' who settled permanently. Yet emigration to the West Indies had a different pattern:

In the main, Scots in the Caribbean were planters, merchants, colonial officials, attorneys, doctors, overseers and tradesmen, most of whom had no intention of spending the rest of their days in the tropics.⁹⁵

This difference may be explained by the presence of slaves to undertake the unskilled or semi-skilled tasks leaving only professional employment opportunities in the Caribbean. Douglas Hamilton's investigations have established that Scots were 'disproportionately numerous' in the slave societies of the Caribbean.⁹⁶ His estimate that 12- 20,000 Scots migrated to the Caribbean in the eighteenth century corroborates Edward Long's contemporary estimate that

⁹³ Basilikon Doron, in *The Political Works of James I* (1918), p. 22. Cited in Murdoch, p. 12.

⁹⁴ Calder, (1998), p. 34.

⁹⁵ T.M Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 230.

⁹⁶ Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 4.

roughly a third of Jamaican whites were Scots.⁹⁷ The transience of the young single men—captured in the title of Karras’ *Sojourners in the Sun*⁹⁸—created a white society which was ‘very much a man’s world’.⁹⁹

Furthermore, Devine’s provocative question ‘Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?’ has opened up the research agenda of the impact of colonial profits on the domestic economy.¹⁰⁰ He suggests four principle reasons for the absence of attention to slave history in previous Scottish historiography. Firstly, Victorian writers preferred to ascribe the new wealth to Anglo-Scottish native talent, enterprise and ingenuity—eliding the impact of the primitive accumulation of Caribbean slave labour. Secondly, he identifies a continuation of this elision in modern histories of empire which do not connect colonial profits to the economic revolution of the eighteenth century. This is not helped by an older argument that capital from empire was wasted on unprofitable landed estates, or merely frittered away on castles and banquets. Lastly, those economic historians who argue that empire was not profitable overall focus the debate too narrowly on direct profit from the slave trade, rather than the wider empire. This is perhaps due to Eric Williams’ own narrow focus in *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) on the profits of the slave trade, which, as we have seen, draws on a Marxist tradition that has long seen colonial plunder and profits as crucial to the ‘rosy dawn’ of British industrial capitalism. Williams’ argument that slavery was only abolished when it became unprofitable has been discredited. Yet the second part of the Williams thesis—that profits from slavery provided the original capital for the industrial revolution—remains a potent ‘conceptualisation of the problematic’ between capitalism and slavery ‘even if some scholars have refined his questions and offered other answers.’¹⁰¹

Devine’s call to assess the impact of slavery on the transformations of Scottish capitalism and society may be performed with the wide perspective of David Hancock’s *Citizens of the World* (1995). He follows the tale of the London-Scot, Richard Oswald of

⁹⁷ Hamilton, (2005), p. 23. Edward Long, *A History of Jamaica* Vol II (London, 1774), p. 287.

⁹⁸ Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun, Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake 1740-1800* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁹⁹ Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, p. 230

¹⁰⁰ Devine, ‘Did Slavery Make Scotia Great?’, *Britain and the World*, 4.1 (2011): 40–64.

¹⁰¹ Colin A. Palmer, introduction to Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, (1944) (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pxx. See also David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, ‘The importance of Slavery and the Slave Trade to Industrialising Britain’, *Journal of Economic History*, 60 (March 2000), pp. 123-144.

Auchincruive, Ayrshire, and his associates from Bance Island off the coast of Sierra Leone (where Africa's first golf course sported kilted black slave caddies), to Jamaica and Florida.¹⁰² Alternatively, the impact of empire may be detected through local, regional approaches such as Frances Wilkins' *Dumfries & Galloway and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (2007).¹⁰³ Stuart Nisbet re-examines the Glasgow 'sugar barons' Major James Milliken (d. 1741) and Colonel William McDowall (1678-1748) of St Kitts, raising the question of parallel processes of agricultural 'improvements' on sugar estates in the Caribbean transplanted to Scottish estates. These celebrated sojourners returned home in the 1720s, 'with thirty years' experience of intensive sugar production'. Nisbet writes,

This included cultivation, manuring, enclosure and agricultural production on a truly industrial scale. Their Castle Semple and Milliken estates were among the earliest to be laid out and improved in the West of Scotland. Although the climate and products at home were completely different, the principles were the same.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile in *Burns and the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire* (2009), Eric Graham traces the capital flow between estates such as the Hamilton's in Ayr, Scotland and Ayr Mount, Jamaica.¹⁰⁵ Commerce became geared specifically for shipping and merchandising colonial commodities and to supply overseas markets. The raw materials of cotton and sugar were brought from the Caribbean to be processed in the burgeoning factories and refineries of Scotland's nascent industrial capitalist economy. Indeed, the growth of the sugar refineries on the Clyde saw the population of Greenock rise from 2,000 in 1700 to 17,500 by 1801. In addition, as we have seen, the cheaper, coarser 'osnaburg' linen that was woven on Scottish looms, was popular in Jamaica for fashioning coarse slave garments such as shirts and shifts. The years 1765-1795 saw a ten-fold increase in Scottish linen exports to Jamaica; by 1796, 62% of all Scottish linen exports went to the West Indies.¹⁰⁶ These were profits made, quite literally, on the backs of the slaves. As such we might want to question the connotations of slavery making Scotia 'great'. Nonetheless, it is clear that 'following the money' will be a large,

¹⁰² David Hancock, *Citizens of the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 1-2.

¹⁰³ Frances Wilkins, *Dumfries & Galloway and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Wyre Forest Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁴ Nisbet's discovery of the famed Milliken and McDowell's private letters reveals that their military titles were gained in fact in the local militia in St Kitts. Stuart Nisbet, 'Early Glasgow Sugar Plantations in the Caribbean', *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 31.1-2 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 132.

¹⁰⁵ Eric Graham, *Robert Burns and the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire*, (Ayr: Ayrshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton, citing Alastair J. Durie, *The Scottish Linen Industry in the Eighteenth Century*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979), p. 152.

ongoing research agenda; as addressed in the recent symposium, ‘The Trans-Atlantic Slave-trade and Plantation Slavery in the Americas: exploring Scottish connections’.¹⁰⁷

Karras, Devine and Hamilton all note the characteristic networks of Scots, that ‘facilitated access to jobs, contacts and credit for new arrivals... and helped reduce some of the immense risk intrinsic to transoceanic commerce by entrusting key tasks to trusted associates and family members.’¹⁰⁸ The essential first step on a Caribbean career was an introduction through letters or recommendations into the ‘interest’ or circle of patronage, prompting contemporary observers to remark on the ‘clannishness’ of the Scots. Hamilton, coining the term ‘clan colonialism’, expands: ‘For Scots, the real significance of the networks lies not so much in “clannishness” but in their relation to “clanship”’.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the ascendancy of the Campbells in the parishes of Hanover and Westmoreland where they have left townships named Campleton, Argyle and Glen Islay, apparently reflect the social patterns of the clan system at home. Certainly, the observation that in Tobago one network was bounded by the towns of Elgin, Huntly and Banff lends credence to its closeness to clanship—in its flexible ties of family and kinship.¹¹⁰ Devine also points out the inherent ironies of such a feature:

The clan system may have been in its death throes at this time. But clanship was being reinvented in the colonies almost as a family corporation to deliver jobs, posts, sinecures.¹¹¹

However, this notion of ‘clan-colonialism’ as a cultural memory of Highland ‘clanship’ is worthy of caution. Contemporary observers may well have been falling back on stereotypes of Scottishness in their characterisation of networks. For the somewhat romantic notion that these were clans transported across the Atlantic to hold, a comparative study would be required. Did the English and French, the Catalans, Dutch or Danish not also function in networks? Hamilton himself references Ida Bull’s study of networks of immigrant merchants in Trondheim, and J.C Sola Carbacho’s investigations into ‘paisanaje’ amongst Madrid merchants.¹¹² He continues then that, ‘Scots were not unique. But they were distinctive.’

¹⁰⁷ The Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and Plantation Slavery in the Americas: exploring Scottish connections’, Symposium at University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow, 12-13 March 2010.

¹⁰⁸ Devine, p. 238.

¹⁰⁹ Hamilton, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Devine, p. 239.

¹¹¹ Devine, p. 239.

¹¹² Hamilton, p. 6.

However a defining feature of Highland clanship was the system of ‘heritable jurisdiction’ whereby the clan chief, rather than state courts, was responsible for settling legal disputes and levying punishments. This feature was not replicated across the Atlantic, undermining the notion that ‘clan colonialism’ bears a direct correlation to Highland ‘clanship’. Therefore Alan Karras’ original term ‘webs of patronage’ may better suit the phenomenon.¹¹³ In other words, it is a commonplace migrant experience to band together in unfamiliar, difficult and competitive commercial environments as long as there are sufficient numbers to do so. The settlement pattern of the *Windrush* generation of migrants from the Caribbean to Britain suggests ‘people from particular Caribbean islands, and even from particular parts of those islands, often came to the same towns and cities’.¹¹⁴ Is this a reflection in the twentieth century of the memory of the clan system of their Scottish ancestors in the eighteenth, or rather a common feature of economic migrancy?

Finally scholars continue to debate the formation of a Scottish identity in the Caribbean. Karina Williamson usefully problematises that ‘the criteria used in identifying men and women in the Caribbean as “Scots” are seldom if ever discussed, while even the basic sociological distinction between *nominal* (attributed) and *virtual* (experienced) social identity has been ignored.’¹¹⁵ Karras, presumably pursuing the ‘virtual identity’, argues that Scots thrived in the colonies due to the ‘ethnic solidarity’ fostered by those ‘webs of patronage’.¹¹⁶ Hamilton refines the idea of an isolated Scottish identity to argue that their success was due, rather, to their ‘flexible and multi-layered identity’, which involved a series of shifting solidarities, including local, regional, Scottish and British.

For Scots in the Caribbean to portray themselves as Britons was one thing; it was something else again for them to be accepted as such. But the institution of enslavement, and the perceptions of colour differences, helped to blur divisions in white society.¹¹⁷

This assumption of a ‘Scoto-British’ identity, combined with the strict racial hierarchy in the West Indies, ‘whitened’ the Scottish and eased their entry into the Caribbean elite. This lends weight to a larger argument about Scottish ‘investments’ in the Empire, and its effect on the

¹¹³ Karras, p. 118.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/caribbean/news/story/2008/06/080620_windrush2.shtml> [accessed 21/04/2012].

¹¹⁵ Karina Williamson, ‘Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies 1820-1826’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 4, (Spring/ Summer 2008).

¹¹⁶ Karras, p. 120.

¹¹⁷ Hamilton, p. 50.

development of British identity. Rather than ‘selling out to English values’ the activities of ‘Celtic outsiders can just as appropriately be interpreted as a purchasing into what were then the substantial profits of being British’.¹¹⁸ Finally, it is often noted that the transient nature of emigrants who hoped to make a quick fortune in the Caribbean in order to establish a landed estate in Britain, meant the Scots did not leave the same cultural impact there as elsewhere.¹¹⁹ However, this should not be overstated. Albeit not to the same extent as in the white settler colonies of the United States, Australia or Canada, the Scottish presence has left traces in surnames and place-names in the Caribbean, as well as churches and schools that will be discussed below.

Despots or Fratriots?

Once it is established that the Scottish presence in the empire was sizeable and visible, the question arises of what, if anything, was distinctive about the Scottish performance of the imperial role. The historical debate is diametrically opposed. In the ‘authoritarian school’—associated here with English scholars V.G Kiernan and Linda Colley, as well as Tom Devine—Scottishness (tinged with Jacobitism) gives a propensity towards arbitrary rule, despotic power over dominions and a ruthlessness in dealings with natives. Alternatively, the ‘benevolent school’ (that is rather more popular in Scotland) is associated here with Michael Gardiner and Murray Pittock. Here Scottish experience (tinged with Jacobitism), translates its position as a ‘minor’ culture in the United Kingdom, into the performance of a more sympathetic imperial role. Both schools appear to react proportionally in relation to the deficiencies of the other. Thus, Devine, much concerned with refuting Michael Fry’s suppositions, notes V.G Kiernan’s conclusion that:

With its stern rules, invigilation and penances the Kirk had evolved a type of Scot uniquely fitted to serve the Empire as officer, or policeman, or overseer, manager; a Scot with an inbred instinct for harrying the unregenerate poor, or negroes, or natives, for their own good as well as his employer’s.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 370.

¹¹⁹ See for example Devine, p. 237 and Hamilton p. 50.

¹²⁰ ‘Scottish Soldiers and the Conquest of India’, *The Scottish Soldier Abroad, 1247-1967*, ed. by Grant G. Simpson, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992). Cited in Devine, p. 248.

The English Marxist historian Kiernan, was himself a professor at Edinburgh University, and was possibly reacting against a myopic Scottish nationalism around him.¹²¹ Linda Colley contests Scottish nationalist grievances to argue that as Scots ‘penetrated’ London to make England ‘British’, so they penetrated the empire to make it British. These Scots ‘who had once been closely linked with Jacobitism’, brought to the empire a ‘more sympathetic attitude towards royal authority, even if their king was now George III.’ Scots who were used to a tiny electorate, military traditions, and greater power over tenants, ‘found the business of presiding over thousands of unrepresented subjects in the colonies neither very uncongenial nor particularly unfamiliar.’¹²² For Devine this cannot be dismissed as the caricatured Scottophobia of ‘Westminster politics and London journalism’. Long-surviving methods of concentrated landownership and feudal privileges shaped a Scottish mentality by which landowners were ‘used to being obeyed and their tenants were long accustomed to the firm hand of proprietorial authority’. ‘It would not be in the least surprising if these traditions were exported to all corners of the globe with Scottish governors in the vanguard of empire.’¹²³

By contrast, Michael Gardiner contends that the Scottish ‘contribution to epistemology’ could be conceived as ‘the essence of empire’:

The practical and spatial attitude to the observation and organisation of the world, the ideal of franchised universalism, the culture of the work ethic, and the necessity of free markets to a nationless state.¹²⁴

In the Caribbean, the processes of Scottish Enlightenment classification may have been an important factor in colonial knowledge, particularly amongst the medics. However ‘universal franchisement’, the Protestant work ethic (of slaves?), and free markets can hardly be conceived as a ‘Scottish’ value in the Caribbean.¹²⁵ If this is ‘the essence of empire’, it reproduces a Scottish version of the widespread myth of the ‘liberal empire’. Where Scottish

¹²¹ Janet Sorenson similarly notes that ‘Lowland Scots frequently ended up policing those areas which most expressed their own cultural and linguistic anxieties of disenfranchisement’, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth Century British Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

¹²² Linda Colley, *Britons*, p. 138.

¹²³ Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, p. 248.

¹²⁴ Gardiner, ‘A Light to the World: British Devolution and Colonial Vision’, *Interventions*, 6.2, (2004), pp. 264-81. Gardiner tends to refer to the ‘nationless state’ rather than a ‘four nations state’ for Britain.

¹²⁵ Women and workers (never mind slaves) had to battle against the prevalent epistemology for the vote in Scotland itself. Max Weber’s protestant work ethic was rather one-sided in the Caribbean: was it the Scottish work ethic that determined the amount of work to be demanded of slaves on the sugar plantations? Finally free markets are desirable for confident core states in the world-economy, which is why Scots campaigned for them in the nineteenth century, but operated its own closed markets in the seventeenth and eighteenth.

apologists for empire contrast themselves with the rapacious English; the English themselves were proud of their liberal approach in comparison to the 'Black Legend' of Spanish atrocities. The Portuguese prefer to remember their role as a commercial, hybrid empire, rather than as slave traders.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the Danish pride themselves on being the first to abolish the slave trade in 1803.¹²⁷ The collective memories of every nation more easily recall the 'flattering histories' of benevolent empires.

In Scotland, the 'benevolent school' has received its most sophisticated articulation through (Jacobite scholar) Murray Pittock's concept of 'fratriotism'—a neologism linking 'fraternity' with 'patriotism'. In *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (2008) Pittock usefully fractures the concept of Romanticism into 'culturally particularist' spheres. However, Pittock's concluding chapter argues that the position of Scots (particularly disaffected Jacobites) and Irish produced a propensity towards a sympathetic engagement with colonised natives, as 'the adoption of a patriotism as a surrogate for the loss of one's own'.¹²⁸ Thus it succumbs to the temptation to argue that Scottish and Irish involvement in empire was not only different, but better. Addressing the conflation of the Irish model with Scotland outlined above, Katie Trumpener notes, 'it fails to address the bigger problems of what it meant, politically and ethically to serve as agents of empire—or what it was like to inhabit the empire as an Irish convict or outlawed "Fenian" rather than a Scottish major.'¹²⁹ Pittock distances himself from the 'left nationalism' of popular writers Billy Kay and Tom Bryon, wherein: 'Despite the Britishness of the empire, the Scots and Irish are the good guys'.¹³⁰ However, the model of fratriotism he advances is a more sophisticated version of such celebratory narratives of Scots in the empire. This develops, as Carla Sassi warned, a late-twentieth century 'master-narrative' of subaltern Scots, linguistically and culturally inferior within the Union having 'an easier "cross-cultural" communication' with other subalterns.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Ellen W. Sapega, 'Remembering Empire/Forgetting the Colonies: Accretions of Memory and the Limits of Commemoration in a Lisbon Neighborhood', *History & Memory*, 20, (2), (Fall/Winter 2008), pp. 18-38.

¹²⁷ Nat Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St Thomas, St John, and St Croix*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992). Slavery itself was not abolished there until 1848.

¹²⁸ Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7 & p. 8.

¹²⁹ Katie Trumpener, Review, *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 6, (Spring/ Summer 2010).

¹³⁰ Pittock, p. 237. See Billy Kay's series of writings and radio programmes on Scots in the diaspora at www.billykay.co.uk. Tom Bryan explores the stories of Hugh Reid, Alexander Ross and Charles McKenzie who joined various Native American tribes in *Twa Tribes: Scots Among the Native Americans*, (Edinburgh: National Museum of Scotland Enterprise Ltd., 2003).

¹³¹ Carla Sassi, '(Un)willed Amnesia', p. 175.

Pittock (who is himself in revolt against the ‘more sophisticated Whig history’ of Linda Colley¹³²) defines fratritism as a two-fold tendency:

A mindset which arises from conflicting loyalties generated by inclusion in a state with which one does not fully identify, which takes two forms: the preservation of one’s submerged national identity in the public realm in foreign countries, and the adoption of colonised nations and cultures as a means of expressing reservations concerning the nature and development of empire, of seeing oneself in the other.¹³³

Of the first of the two forms that constitute fratritism, the Scots diaspora in Jamaica coalesced around certain societies: a ‘Scottish Society’ existed in port Antonio in the 1840s; the present ‘Caledonia Society’ is mentioned in the *Jamaica Gleaner* in the 1870s; while the Jamaican Scottish Country Dance Society was founded in 1952. The oldest institution, then, is the Presbyterian ‘Scots Kirk’ on Duke Street in downtown Kingston, which was erected in 1819 with funds collected from ‘Scotland, Jamaica and a grant from the Jamaican government.’¹³⁴ The predominantly Scottish names of the General Committee charged with fund raising—‘Alexander McCulloch, Robert McClelland, Alexander Stewart, Robert Murray, John Miller, Andrew Lunan, James Simpson, George Soherig, and A.C. Magill’¹³⁵—testify to the culturally distinct enclave of Scots within the British colony. Indeed, the Jamaican Scots would consistently apply to the Presbytery of Edinburgh for a ‘fit and proper person’¹³⁶ to take up ministerial duties.

Yet, it is unclear how examples of this kind of expatriate activity can be considered as complementary to the second form of ‘fratritism’: the sympathy or solidarity with liberation struggles born of a recognition of parallel hardships faced. The records of the Scots Kirk reveal the trauma caused by the mixed but segregated congregation, as evidenced in the spatial organisation of the church. On opening in 1819, it was ‘resolved that the ranges of pews below the Gallery be appointed as follows—South Side for white People and the north for those of Colour. The pews to be rented at £10 each.’ On 4th January 1822, it was decreed,

¹³² Pittock, ‘Jacobitism in History’, *The Bottle Imp*, 4, <http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/ScotLit/ASLS/SWE/TBI/TBIIssue4/Jacobitism.html> [accessed 14/12/2011].

¹³³ Pittock, p. 28-29.

¹³⁴ Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* (Jamaica: Twin Guinep Publishers, 2003), p. 435.

¹³⁵ St Andrew’s Scots Kirk. Minutes & Accounts General Committee 1814-1826, Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town, Ecclesiastical, 5/20/2/1, p. 2.

¹³⁶ St Andrew’s Scots Kirk, Minutes and Accounts, p. 42.

‘That the whole of the lower part of the northside shall be solely appropriated for the people of Colour—and that that part of the Gallery behind the pulpit shall be for the black people.’ By 13th March this was abandoned— ‘That the lower part of the Church be appropriated entirely for the use of White people, the rents of the Pews take the same as formerly.’¹³⁷ Furthermore, in petitions for funds, the Scots Kirk specifically positioned itself as a buttress against the rising emancipation politics associated with the Methodists in the early nineteenth century. They were perceived as preaching an inflammatory version of Christianity which would rally both the slaves and free persons of colour. Indeed, it was the 1812 Toleration Act on the ‘Grand Charter of Dissenters’ which permitted Methodist missionary work that had previously been outlawed by the Jamaica Assembly. It seems to be no coincidence that the initial proposal for the Scots Kirk was made the following year in 1813, in direct consequence of concerns over the political potential for non-whites to employ the more liberated Christianity of the Methodists.¹³⁸ In further applications for funds from the Jamaica Assembly, the Scots underline their role in fostering political quietism, against the Methodists’ proselytising amongst the slaves:

The free people of Colour and Slaves were formerly obliged for want of room to resort to Methodist meeting houses...(but due to the existence of the Scots Kirk they) have been rescued from their former Sectarianism...and thereby delivered from the Control of their former Instructors and the injurious habits acquired thro’ their influence.¹³⁹

The consistent stress on the competition the Scots Kirk provided against the proliferating Methodist chapels might be explained as the Kirk seeking leverage in their petitions to the conservative Jamaica Assembly. However in other forms of popular memory the Scots Kirk was long remembered as a particularly conservative bastion of the plantocracy. As a newspaper clipping from 1969 on the 150th anniversary of the Kirk notes, ‘In the early days too some of the Church’s members favoured the slave system and resisted emancipation. As a result the Scots Kirk was known for many years as ‘the backra church’.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the institutions designed to enhance and foster Scottishness identified as the first form of fratricide, could specifically obstruct the progressive advance claimed for the second.

¹³⁷ St Andrew’s Scots Kirk, Minutes and Accounts, p. 42-64.

¹³⁸ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries, The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society 1787-1834*, 2nd edition, (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 1998), p. 19.

¹³⁹ St Andrew’s Scots Kirk, Minutes and Accounts, 18 Nov 1820.

¹⁴⁰ Newspaper Clipping- Scots Kirk to mark 150th Anniversary by Ewart Walters, Jamaica National Archives, Scots Kirk, 5/20/2/1. ‘Backra’ is an uncomplimentary West Indian term of African origin for white people.

In the presentation of the second form there is a tension between whether fratritism is, plausibly, a ‘cultural option open to Scots and Irish’¹⁴¹ which they may at certain times and under certain conditions choose to enact (although this option should logically be open also to English dissenters). Alternatively, the subaltern consciousness of ‘heteroglossia’ and ‘altermentality’ generated under English hegemony leads disproportionately to a fratritotic solidarity (in a fashion which is implicitly closed to the English). Favouring the latter, Pittock purports to identify a ‘pattern’ which demonstrates the ‘left nationalist’ position of subaltern nations forming natural bonds of affinity. This ‘pattern’ is rather more a catalogue of instances of Scottish and Irish involvement with native peoples which ran counter to imperial demands of destruction and domination. Yet, for individuals anti-colonial political choices could be made for a number of pressing reasons, and to pin all such choices on nationality is reductive. It is curious that Wilberforce’s abolitionism, or Charles Fox’s democratic reformism, or Thomas Spence’s radical invocation of Native American and African communalism are rarely conceived of in terms of their ‘Englishness’.¹⁴²

This thesis proposes that greater attention to transnational dialectics in the Atlantic world should move us beyond this ‘despot-fratrit’ dichotomy. The history of Scots in the Caribbean undermines the dominant Scottish self-conception as a benign, benevolent or reluctant imperial presence. However, it would be inadequate and misleading to simply reverse the paradigm to argue that Scots were, in fact, disproportionately rapacious, voracious or zealous imperialists. Rather, the relationship between Scotland and the Caribbean is best viewed as a ‘slice’ of the Atlantic world in which a full spectrum of the worst excesses of colonial domination existed alongside progressive examples of human sympathy and solidarity across disparate peoples and cultures. Greater attention to transnational dialectics permit a holistic discussion of the Scottish role in Atlantic modernity— characterised by the inception of a capitalist colonial system, which created new forms of exploitation, expropriation and forced migrations for Atlantic peoples. It was a process in which the transformation of the Scottish economy, landscape and culture benefited elite Scots at the expense of their countrymen. Equally, the transformation of colonial space saw Scots fully engaged in the British imperial enterprise with the nature of colonial encounters ranging from the most

¹⁴¹ Pittock, *Romanticism*, p. 7.

¹⁴² Abolitionist leader William Wilberforce was from Hull; William Pitt’s adversary Charles Fox was born in London and was MP for Midhurst; meanwhile Thomas Spence, the radical and inspiration for Robert Wedderburn, was from Newcastle.

positive to the most pernicious. We might consider two aspects of Scottish identity within the Atlantic archipelagos. Firstly, it is instructive to consider how the Scottish enlightenment education of these sojourners influenced their practice—how ethics of human dignity and mutual sympathy vied with the devotion to agricultural and economic ‘improvement’. Secondly, especially in relation to the construction of the Caribbean in Scottish culture, we might contemplate the development of a certain ‘structure of feeling’—considering ‘meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs’.¹⁴³ Scots in the diaspora often perceived the political struggles in their new environments through lenses fashioned by their upbringing in Scotland: its institutions, churches and schools; its popular culture, legends and ballads provided a framework against which new situations could be understood. Scottish-Caribbean writing begins to articulate the emergence of a ‘presence’ of an ‘affective kind which cannot without loss be reduced to belief-systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships, though it may include all these as lived and experienced’.¹⁴⁴ This relationship is detectable in the contested employment of the modes of pastoral and georgic in the transnational context of Scottish writing of the Caribbean throughout the period in question.

Popular Memory

Historical academic studies have been complemented by a variety of lively forms of public engagement that have sought to recover the collective memory of Scotland’s place in the Caribbean and Atlantic slavery. Stephen Mullen leads a ‘Slavery Walking Tour’ for Glasgow’s Black History Month that establishes the Merchant City as a *lieu de mémoire*. Mullen’s monograph *It Wisnae Us* (2009) specifically challenges the sense of denial surrounding the role of Scots in the slave trade. Here, Mullen specialises in the forgotten history that can be teased out of the Merchant City’s built environment: the Cunninghame mansion, the Shawfield mansion and the Merchant’s House.¹⁴⁵ In addition, he investigates the stories behind the street names that celebrate the sources of slave produce in Virginia St and Jamaica St, and the merchants who most enjoyed the profits: Oswald St, Buchanan St and

¹⁴³ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 132.

¹⁴⁴ Williams, p. 133.

¹⁴⁵ See ‘Tobacco and Townhouses’, Stephen Mullen, *It Wisnae Us* (Edinburgh: The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, 2009), pp. 25-31.

Glassford St. Indeed in 2008, The People's Palace staged an exhibition on 'The Glassford Family Portrait' by Archibald McLauchlan, which is believed to have once shown the profile of a slave 'house boy' in the background who was painted out due to subsequent abolitionist sentiment. However, this seems unlikely. Black 'house boys' were usually positioned in full view in the foreground in order to advertise the exotic wealth of the household, though their lower position underlined their subservience to the paternalistic master.¹⁴⁶ It is unclear then why the painter would frame the Glassford Family Portrait with only half of the slave's profile visible—the outline of a nose, lips and tunic at the edge of the painting. It might be more understandable if the painting had originally been larger but had been scaled down. However senior conservator Polly Smith reports that the original tacking margins have been removed which means that it is difficult to be sure of the original dimensions.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Smith has established that the apparent 'boy's face', already not very distinguishable due to the tonality of the painting, had not been painted out but was covered by dust.¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless the public and press interest in the painting suggests a growing appetite for recovering this 'hidden history'.

If the title of Mullen's book, published in 2009, alludes to the sense of denial around the existence of Scotland's historical role in slavery, it is testament to such studies that that ground has begun to shift. In December 2011, the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness housed an exhibition entitled 'Looking Back to Move Forward: Slavery and the Highlands'.¹⁴⁹ Edinburgh's National Museum of Scotland, which previously made no mention of Caribbean slavery over seven floors, now has one window display with the note: 'Caribbean coins from the eighteenth century, a time when many Scottish merchants were involved in the Caribbean trade, and whose profits were dependent on slave labour.' The caption, 'Scots and Slavery' observes: 'Adam Smith (1723-90) the philosopher and economist noted that the profits created from the production of sugar 'were generally much greater than those of any other

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, the portrait of the Jacobite James Drummond with a young black boy with a silver collar around his neck. Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

¹⁴⁷ Private correspondence, 7/7/2012.

¹⁴⁸ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/6466591.stm> (19 March 2007) [accessed 13/7/10]. However Glassford's first wife had deliberately been painted out for his second. A cause for complaint rather for feminists, that was picked up by Glasgow Women's Library 'Merchant City Women's Heritage Walk', 2010. <http://history.womenslibrary.org.uk/> (accessed 10/10/2011).

¹⁴⁹ It was organised by Dr Karly Kehoe of the University of the Highlands and Islands.

<<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/media/news/exhibition-to-reveal-highlands2019-slavery-links>> [accessed 12/06/12].

cultivation.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the popular BBC TV series *The History of Scotland* (2008) devoted an entire episode to Caribbean links which involved a picturesque dramatisation of the Joseph Knight story.¹⁵¹ However, in the online poll attached to the series, 50% of respondents disagreed with the question ‘Does Scotland still need to face up to its role as a major slave trader?’ with only 43% agreeing and 7% neutral.¹⁵² Although internet polls must be treated with caution, it is clear there remains work to be done. Successive Scottish government initiatives have failed to seize the opportunity to combat the collective amnesia around slavery. The Labour government intended to produce a booklet commemorating abolition in 2007 in consultation with Eric Graham and Iain Whyte. Yet both historians were dismissed from the project for not following a ‘particular slant’.¹⁵³ The booklet’s editors refused to produce the hard-hitting account of the Scottish role in slavery recommended by the historians stating, without a hint of irony, ‘the general population in Scotland was unaware of this involvement’.¹⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the SNP’s 2009 ‘Homecoming’ project designed to entice the Scottish diaspora ‘home’ for a ‘cultural and political celebration’ was criticised for its extremely selective presentation of Scotland. The Scots-Jamaican professor-emeritus of Heriot Watt University Geoff Palmer lamented the missed opportunity to address the ‘forgotten diaspora’. ‘This event is being marketed in Canada, New Zealand, Australia. Why are they not inviting people from Jamaica with Scottish names?’¹⁵⁵ The promotional material for Homecoming featured an all-white cast until, following criticism, an Asian man reading Robert Burns was airbrushed in to one poster. Although the Homecoming events, with another one planned for 2014, should more properly be considered as commercial marketing campaigns designed to boost profits in the tourist industry, they are telling in their selective promotion of Scottishness to the outside world. This selectiveness in turn impacts on the collective amnesia over those aspects that are less easily ‘celebrated’.

¹⁵⁰ National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

¹⁵¹ *The History of Scotland*, presented by Neil Oliver, (BBC 2, 2008).

¹⁵² (29% strongly against; 21% against; neutral 7%; for 29%; strongly for 14%). The poll, open for two years until 2011, attracted 6,000 respondents. The comments section suggests many of the negative responses were focussed on the issue of an apology for slavery, which was not, in fact, the subject of the poll. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/history/debates/slavery/>> [accessed 09/07/2011].

¹⁵³ Iain Whyte, quoted in <<http://www.heraldscotland.com/executive-slave-trade-booklet-sparks-criticism-from-anti-racism-group-1.827376>> [accessed 14/12/2011].

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Stephen Mullen, ‘Ae Fond Kiss, and Then We Sever!’, *Variant Magazine*, 35, (Summer 2009), <<http://www.variant.org.uk/35texts/AeFondKiss.html>> [accessed 14/12/2011].

¹⁵⁵ Geoff Palmer, quoted in <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/nov/25/centre-study-scottish-diaspora-controversy>> [accessed 14/12/2011].

Nonetheless, the existence of a certain Scottish role in slavery is now more established in popular consciousness making outright denial less likely. However, alternative arguments which serve to minimise or excuse the role of Scots in Caribbean slavery have emerged more strongly. These take two main forms. Firstly, the invoking of painful experiences of Scottish history in general, and secondly a focus on the oppression and exploitation specifically of the Scottish working class in order to relativise the suffering of slaves. Chris Dolan's BBC programme *Barbadoed* explored the phenomenon of the Barbados 'Red Legs', a group of Scottish and Irish 'poor whites' who continue to live as a community in poverty in the present day. The picture emerged of a 'Celtic underclass' decrying the myth that 'slavery was only for the blacks', and that whites experienced equal hardship in the Caribbean.¹⁵⁶ That in the seventeenth century the experience of white indentured labourers and black slaves was very close is important; equally important is the understanding that in the following centuries whiteness had become a necessity for social advancement. This particular group of 'poor whites' who continue to live in poverty is highly unusual rather than the norm. In such treatments, working class misery can be used to minimise the sense of historical blame due to Scots as slave owners. The specific mode of oppression of chattel slavery is elided as the hardships faced by a cleared Highlander, an alienated collier, or an exiled labourer are held to be every bit as pernicious as slavery in the Caribbean. This is, in fact, an argument as old as Caribbean slavery itself. Scottish miners, in particular, hold a prominent place in the historiography of slavery: their dangerous labour and bonded conditions were long compared to the 'easier lot' of agricultural slaves. This thesis will trace the various arguments emanating from the comparison of chattel slaves to agricultural swains and colliers, chimney sweeps, and beggars on this side of the Atlantic as they arise throughout the period. However, it will argue that it is the legal code of the institution of chattel slavery that distinguishes it from other forms of oppression: buyers owned completely the kidnapped bodies of slaves whom they could maim or murder without fear of the law. These brutal working conditions were not only to be suffered for the remainder of the slave's natural life, but their children would be born into the same legal code of ownership. Nonetheless, while bearing these distinctions in mind, this thesis maintains the importance of relations between different exploited groups under Atlantic capitalism. Examining those relations must not serve to minimise, mislead, excuse, and close down the discussion. Rather, placing those relations in a transnational Atlantic context of

¹⁵⁶ *Barbadoed*, presented by Chris Dolan (BBC 2, 26 April 2009) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00k7t42>>.

multiple jockeying empires, challenged from within and below, can better open up the issue of exploitative labour to a nuanced understanding in order to imaginatively ‘tilt the field’ between disparate cultures and draw emancipatory connections.

Chapter 2: Transnational Investments: Scotland, Britain and the Caribbean, *The Scoto-British imperial view c.1740-1785*.

“Empire is epic, colonial is pastoral.”¹

As art transforms the savage face of things,
And order captivates the harmonious mind;
Let not thy Blacks irregularly hoe:
But, aided by the line, consult the site
Of thy demesnes; and beautify the whole.

➤ James Grainger, *The Sugar Cane*²

As a poetic mediation of social ideals, the rural forms of pastoral and georgic were profoundly political in the dynamically transforming and unsettling era of the ‘long eighteenth century’. Dryden’s English translation of Virgil’s *Eclogues*, *Georgics* (and epic *Aeneid*) published in 1697, built on the concerns of the preceding century, and secured the place of Virgilian forms for the forthcoming ‘new Augustan’ era of imperial Britain. Virgil’s rural poetry was composed in the aftermath of the assassination of Julius Caesar (44 B.C.E) that was followed by the disastrous civil wars that would transform Republican into Augustan Rome. Thus, although the *Eclogues* (39-38? B.C.E) represent classical pastoral, this is no idyll. Eclogue I opens with the lament of the exiled Meliboeus, his farm seized by soldiers, to the contented Tityrus who has made his peace with the new regime. Meanwhile, the political and emotional appeal of the *Georgics* (29 B.C.E) lay in the textual creation of ‘order out of disorder’, mediated through the triumph of agricultural labour over ‘savage’ nature. Virgil re-articulated Hesiod’s ‘ethics of hard work and [exaltation of] the rules-and-lines governed pattern of rural life’.³ Dryden’s translation, then, similarly appealed to the creation of order over the turbulent recent past which included the tumultuous class relations of the civil wars, regicide and restoration, wars in Ireland, and religious strife manifested in the dispute over royal succession

¹ Willy Maley’s formulation via Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 108. With thanks to Willy Maley for this reference.

² James Grainger, *The Sugar Cane* (1764) (I, 266-268). (Demesnes—land belonging to an estate).

³ Yu Liu, *Seeds of a Different Eden: Chinese Gardening Ideas and a New English Aesthetic* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 82-83.

following 1688. For Scottish writers such as James Thomson and James Grainger, the proximity to these Jacobite rebellions, the Covenanted wars and the ‘killing times’, and the national bankruptcy following Darien gave added currency to the desirability of striving for the ordered relations of ‘Man in Nature’ pursued by Virgil.

Alistair Fowler, Anthony Low and Annabel Patterson agree that by the middle of the seventeenth century the agrarian forms of pastoral and georgic had fused together to mediate rapidly changing political, social and agricultural concerns; with Patterson noting that Meliboeus had always been ‘as much a farmer as a shepherd’.⁴ Yet, we should not collapse the difference entirely, rather than a blending together, there was a fusion of distinct elements to create a hybrid form. Paul Alpers’ observation that pastoral and georgic are better understood as literary modes that can permeate a variety of genres is helpful here.⁵ Although attempts to securely define the pastoral and georgic have been vexed, it is still necessary to have a working definition for the ‘sister-modes’—that are related but not identical. Pastoral tends toward the lives of herdsmen with a minimising of the sense of the hardship of labour and rural poverty, replaced by an attention to love and eroticism, music, song and play. Yet the heteroglossic nature of the shepherd’s own voices, as in the dialogue between Meliboeus and Tityrus, retains for the pastoral a dialectical potential that might disturb the timeless idyll, even if this is not always enacted by its practitioners. Georgic (from the Greek *geōrgein*- ‘to farm’) addresses the labour of husbandmen; though the didactic element should not obscure the rhetorical purpose to represent to a more privileged audience the civic virtue that arises from the hard graft of the husbandman. The optimum methods to cultivate grain, treat cattle and keep bees on a farm, operate synecdochally for the structure of a virtuous society. While Anthony Low thus argues that georgic became in the seventeenth century the form of social protest and the New Science against the aristocratic wish-fulfilment of its pastoral sibling, the case should not be overstated.⁶ The georgic voice, with its elevated ‘soaring words’, is delivered from the privileged perspective of the landowner, rather than the labourer. Thus, the

⁴ Alistair Fowler ‘Georgic and Pastoral: Laws of Genre in the Seventeenth Century’ in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor, eds (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 138.

⁵ ‘Pastoral is a literary mode based on what Kenneth Burke calls *representative anecdote*’. i.e. for Alpers, that of herdsmen talking about their lives, rather than necessarily representations of a Golden Age or idyll. Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. iv.

⁶ Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (1985).

georgic is susceptible to the same kind of misrepresentation, in particular the erasure of rural poverty and hardship, that Raymond Williams critiqued in relation to pastoral in *The country and the city*.⁷

The Scottish writers in question here longed to leave the internecine warfare, famines and bankruptcy that dogged the previous century behind in order to embrace an era of ordered civility, enlightenment improvement and commercial prosperity that it was hoped would be found in a unified Britain.⁸ At the same time, a ‘simple’ rural ideal held particular appeal in a Scotland that ‘telescoped’ its processes of agrarian revolution, rural de-population and urbanisation, combined with trans-oceanic imperialism and colonial slavery that had been developing in England over the previous centuries. The Union accelerated and re-positioned Scotland’s entry into Wallerstein’s ‘world-system of capitalist trade’. Trotsky once noted that as local control of the economy gives way to these imperial dominated networks of global markets, the characteristic response was to resuscitate obsolete cultural forms and behaviours, and present them as authentic expressions of local identity.⁹ ‘But since these representations, in fact, belong to... residual social formations, they are necessarily reinvented in ways that meld ancient forms with the expression of modern concerns.’¹⁰ Thus, Scottish representations of rural life engaged with the dominant modes of agrarian poetry in a variety of manners which were not radically *different* from those found in England, but did speak to a *distinct* national context. The opportunities and uncertainty in the economic sphere were heightened by the optimism and fears over the sapling political formation of Great Britain. Robert Crawford argues, therefore, that Scottish writers were heavily invested in constructing what ‘Britishness’ might mean throughout the eighteenth century.¹¹ Rather than Britain being a

⁷ Raymond Williams, *The country and the city* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973).

⁸ Although the existence of a Jacobite pastoral should underline that it is not the form itself which determines the political content. We will return to this in chapter 3 of this thesis, in relation to Murray Pittock’s discussion of Allan Ramsay in *Scottish & Irish Romanticism* (2008). For a positive discussion of Ramsay and Thomson as ‘Scottish Augustans’, see Melanie Claire Buntin, ‘Augustanism in Scotland: the pastoral and the georgic in the work of Allan Ramsay and James Thomson’, (unpublished MPhil(R) thesis, University of Glasgow Library, 2011) <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/>.

⁹ Leon Trotsky, examining folk and primitive culture at the turn of the twentieth century in relation to his theory of ‘combined and uneven development’. *The History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman, (London: Pluto Press, 1979), pp. 27-37.

¹⁰ Stephen Shapiro discussing the implications for literary studies of world-systems theory and ‘combined and uneven development’ in the introduction to Charles Brockden Brown *Wieland*, ed. by Philip Barnard and Stephen Shapiro (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009), pxxv.

¹¹ As Britain cannot logically exist without Scotland, so it fell to Scots to ‘[invent] British literature’. Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, (1992) 2nd edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 45.

mere extension of England, Scots were wrestling with different, contradictory and inconsistent ways to construct the new supra-nation and its empire; in which the threads of Protestantism, anti-French wars, 'liberty' and the profits of commerce would weave the two nations together.¹² In a recent study, Nigel Leask demonstrates that Scots pastoral was undergirded by the Enlightenment commitment to 'improvement', both intellectually and agriculturally.¹³ Allan Ramsay's highly popular stage play *The Gentle Shepherd: A Scots Pastoral Comedy* (1725) established Scotland as a prime site for pastoral 'simplicity' against modern, urban 'luxury'. Leask argues,

Scots Pastoral emerged as an identifiable and culturally autonomous sub-genre in the wake of Ramsay, actively promoting Scottish cultural interests within the union, often under the banner of patriotic antiquarianism.¹⁴

Thus, Leask traces through Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns the treatment of the pastoral mode that acts as a prism through which their various political interpretations of the challenges of the eighteenth century competed. In so doing they confirmed, challenged, chipped, undermined and mocked the form itself.

The Caribbean became a vital site for Scottish constructions of 'Britannia' as a liberal and commercial empire whose strength lay in its multi-various virtues; unified in its diversity. As in Scotland, Caribbean society and landscape were represented through forms of agrarian ideals, similarly creating order out of a tropical disorder. However, the serenity of this Scoto-British imperial writing of the Caribbean was continually ruptured by the presence of racial slavery. As the tension between agrarian poetry and its referent was the actual hardship of agricultural labour and class antagonism, so the transportation, enslavement and punishments of Africans represented a persistent counterpoint to the Scoto-British imperial vision. Such issues had to be negotiated, suppressed, elided or resolved, for which the 'imperial georgic' would prove inadequate. As Karen O'Brien notes, the 'problem of slavery', 'could not be digested by georgic poetry':

With the 'problem of slavery' however the generic boundaries become porous. Pastoral becomes a way out from the problem... but its very presence broke the association between productive labor and civic virtue central to the tradition of imperial georgic.¹⁵

¹² Such are the tenets of the 'Colley thesis'.

¹³ Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral, Poetry and Improvement in Eighteenth Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Leask, *Burns and Pastoral*, p. 62. Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) is discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Thus, Scoto-British imperial writing zigzags between the pastoral and georgic modes, employing pastoralized georgic, or vice-versa, to promote the ideology of ‘improvement’ in the Caribbean. Furthermore, it became a vital feature in such eighteenth century writing to underline the worthiness of both Scotland and the Caribbean as integral parts of the Union, and the *British* Empire. In the fierce battleground of inter-imperial rivalry in the Caribbean archipelago, Scottish-Caribbean writing tends to emphasise ‘British bonding’ in competition with the Catholic French and Spanish, alongside an increasingly crucial sense of ‘whiteness’ against ‘blackness’. Finally, debates over colonial slavery would be mediated through agrarian ideals, as imperial writers present an idealised picture of slaves as pastoral swains living in relative comfort, in comparison to the conditions of the labouring classes at home.

James Thomson (Roxburgh 1700- London 1748), the poet who co-wrote ‘Rule Britannia’ with fellow Scot, David Mallet (once Malloch), clearly had an investment in Britishness. He omitted Scotticisms from his poetry, contributing to the establishment of standard English as the lingua franca of Great Britain.¹⁶ In 1746, ‘Thomson was appointed, jointly with his old college friend William Paterson, to the office of surveyor-general of customs for the Leeward Islands. Paterson went to Barbados and carried out the duties of the post for £400 per annum while Thomson remained in Richmond and received, it was said, £300 per annum as a sinecure.’¹⁷ His georgic *The Seasons* was originally published in 1730 and would become probably the most popular poem of the century.¹⁸ Thus, its formulations of Scotland, Britain and the Empire helped to establish conceptual norms for the rest of the century, as it textually wrought order out of disorder. If the Christian story of creation presents humanity as relinquishing Paradise for chaos after the Fall, Man’s earthly struggle is to improve his situation against the constant pressure of backsliding into sinful darkness. The universal scope of the poem situates Man within the aftermath of the movement from pre-

¹⁵ Karen O’Brien, ‘Imperial Georgic, 1660-1800’, in *The Country and the City Revisited*, ed. by Gerald Maclean and Donna Landray (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 173.

¹⁶ Fearing prejudice, Adam Smith and Hugh Blair instigated a lecture series in order to omit ‘Scotticisms’ from speech and writing. The erudition of Belfast-born Thomas Sheridan provided a particular ideal. Here, a single-strain, pure form of English (that used in London high society) would be promoted as a single standard for all.

¹⁷ *DNB* entry on James Thomson.

¹⁸ The publishing history is complex, and ‘Winter’, ‘Summer’ and ‘Spring’ had been published separately before 1730. The poem would go through four hundred editions, including translations, in the following half century alone with various amendments. The 1744 version in particular underwent substantial revisions, many at the hand of George Lyttleton. Thomson’s acquiescence was later emulated by James Grainger urging the amendments of Thomas Percy and Shenstone to *The Sugar Cane*: ‘I can bear to have my verses butchered as Thomson used to call it.’ Letter Grainger to Percy, 5th June 1762, in John Nichols, *Illustrations of the literary history of the eighteenth century*, Vol 7 (London: J.B Nichols & Son, 1848), p. 279.

lapsarian harmony to post-diluvian degeneracy, and moves from the perennial revolutions of the cosmic seasons, to Man's relations to the animals, soil and microscopic insects, at each level staging a constant dialectical interplay between order and disorder. As the opening movement of 'Spring' dissolves the harsh snows of winter, the georgic figures of 'happy swains' plough the fields and sow the seeds of future bounty (1.34-44). Similarly, the Union creating 'Britain' has wrought an optimistic season out of a previous era of tumultuous dis-unification. Where the Edenic 'Golden Age' once gave way to 'Iron times' (Spring 73-74; 1730), lambs now frolic across what was once a rampart:

Of iron war, in ancient barbarous times
When disunited Britain ever bled,
Lost in eternal broil; ere yet she grew
to this deep-laid, indissoluble state (Spring 789-792; 1730).

The 'deep-laid' plan complements the sense of a well-planted seed, uniting in intellect and agriculture the effect of a bind that cannot be undone, broken or dissolved (like a parliament); and perhaps recalls the Scottish play, *Macbeth*: 'a most indissoluble tye/ For ever knit'.¹⁹ The vestments of this new ordered unity are 'wealth', 'commerce', 'liberty' and 'law', which adorn the goddess Britannia who, like the georgic Sower, 'Walks through the Land of Heroes, unconfined/ And scatters plenty with unspairing hand' (Summer 530-537; 1730). Thomson stresses that, far from lowly, such georgic labours are the very source of Britannia's national and imperial grandeur, as Virgil or 'rural Maro sung/ to wide-imperial Rome' (Spring 56-57).

Scoto-British imperial writing tends to mark Scotland as a distinct, yet worthy member-part of Union, whose qualities contribute to the greater glory of Britannia and her empire. Perhaps recalling the threat of recurring famines, in 'Autumn' Thomson makes a plea, 'Is there not some patriot?' (later addressed to the Duke of Argyll and Duncan Forbes of Culloden) not to fight for independence, but to improve Highland agriculture. The Enlightenment ideals of agricultural and industrial 'improvement' would produce, 'A double harvest to the pining swain' (Autumn 852-53). This combined with imperial trade opened up by the Union would 'improve' Scotland and thereby fortify Britannia's imperial strength.

¹⁹ Banquo referring to his loyalty to Macbeth's commands. Act III, I, 17-18.

And thus, in Soul united as in Name,

Bid BRITAIN reign the Mistress of the Deep (Autumn, 938; 1744).²⁰

The georgic poem seeks a unification of the ‘souls’ of the member-nations (surpassing the unification of the parliaments in ‘name’ only) that would be achieved through mastering the ocean. Thus, the poet turns to ‘utmost Kilda’s shore’, where an eagle eyes the ‘Indian worlds’ across the Atlantic. The wild and remote Scottish isle provides a base for the imperial icon venturing ‘many a league to sea/ He wings his course, and preys in distant isles’ (Spring 86-87).

Despite the predatory image, Britannia is defined by her liberal empire in comparison to rival Oriental, African and Aztec as well as the Catholic Spanish and French empires. They are characterised by ‘greed’, ‘rapine’ and ‘plunder’, and as ‘tyrants’ ruling over their ‘slaves’: ‘Let others brave the flood, in quest of gain’ (Autumn 1179; 1735). Yet, the narrative of the liberal empire is troubled by the transatlantic slave trade, to which a stronger reference was inserted in the 1744 version. In a celebrated passage, Thomson employs the trope of the shark following the slave ship.

Here dwells the direful shark. Lured by the scent
Of steaming crouds, of rank Disease, and Death,...

And from the Partners of that cruel Trade,

Which spoils unhappy *Guinea* of her Sons,

Demands his share of prey, demands themselves.

The stormy fates descend: one death involves

Tyrants and slaves, when strait, their mangled limbs

Crashing at once, he dyes the purple Seas

With Gore, and riots in the vengeful Meal. (Summer 1003- 1014; 1744)

Marcus Rediker has detailed how slave ship captains would exploit the terror produced by sharks, who followed the ships after they left the African coast in anticipation of human waste, offal and leftovers that were disposed overboard, to prevent the desertion of their seamen and the escape of their slaves.²¹ The use of the shark as a means of repressing revolts would become a staple image of the cruelty of the slave trade for later abolitionists. The shark

²⁰ The 1730 version runs somewhat obliquely: ‘And thus united BRITAIN BRITAIN make/ Intire, th’ imperial MISTRESS of the deep.’ (Autumn 850-868; 1730)

²¹ Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p. 37-40.

provides the savage, retrogressive transgression of Thomson's presentation of the Atlantic as Britannia's relatively ordered, stable province that nurtures liberal commerce. Thus, the slave ship with its attendant demonic king of the deep, dying the seas a regal purple, suggests the forces of disorder locked in a battle over the dominion of the Atlantic, recalling both Biblical struggles between good and evil, and inter-imperial battles between European nations. Although the ferocity of the shark becomes transferred to the slave-traders themselves, rendering them 'tyrannical', this anti-slavery sentiment remains confined within the rhetoric of the liberal British empire. Thus it can only form an abstract and partial treatment of slavery, particularly as Britain was quickly becoming the leading slave trading nation from Africa to the Americas at this time.

The shark resurfaces in James Grainger's poems composed on the plantations that, with his proximity to Caribbean slavery, might be expected to advance Thomson's critical stance.²² Yet, the poet remains elusive on the subject. In this Grainger adhered to the previous example set by the prose of another Scottish man of medicine, Tobias Smollett.²³ In 1740, the Glasgow-trained doctor travelled to the West Indies as a surgeon's second mate whereupon he married a Jamaican planter's daughter, Anne Lassels, on whose family he was often dependant on money sent from Jamaica. Smollett's personal reliance on slave-produced profits goes some way to explain the lack of critical comment on slavery and the elliptical treatment of Jamaican society throughout his novels, which extends even to his modern critics.²⁴ Drawing on the picaresque tradition, *Roderick Random* (1748) like his author, crosses the Atlantic as a surgeon's second mate, though Boucé warns against the 'facile bio criticism' which plagues commentary on Smollett.²⁵ The site of the ship represents a floating microcosm of British society with the 'disease, discomfort, tyranny and incompetence'²⁶ of His Majesty's Navy representing contemporary corruption, in a similar fashion as the polluted waters at Bath would later have for Matt Bramble in *Humphry Clinker* (1771). Anticipating the magazine

²² *Sugar Cane* Book II, Ver 504, passim. Grainger's only other Caribbean poem 'Bryan and Pereene' recounts the tale of Bryan diving off his ship in port to meet his lover before 'a shark bit through his waste [sic]' (l.43). In Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), (London: Routledge/ Thoemmes Press, 1996).

²³ Although there was a considerable dispute between the two with Smollett attacking Grainger's translation of Tibullus, particularly for its neologisms. Percy reports the notoriously thin-skinned Smollett objected to Grainger printing his full name 'Tobias' rather than his preferred 'T. Smollett'. Nichols, *Illustrations*, Vol 7, p. 144.

²⁴ Despite investigating the 'moral paradoxicality' of satire, neither Watts nor Boucé explore slavery at any length, underlining perhaps the 'imaginative complicity' that encompasses both reader and critic.

²⁵ Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pxx.

²⁶ George Orwell, *Tribune*, 1944.

battles he would have in the 1760s with John Wilkes in *The Briton* and the *North Briton*, Smollett, unlike Thomson, explores the tensions of national difference within the British ship between the Scots, Welsh and English.²⁷ Indeed, it transpires that the surgeon Mackshane, described in terms of Oriental despotism as a ‘Great Mogul’ (p172), is Irish and secretly Catholic;²⁸ underlining that although Smollett explores different forms of prejudice, he does not necessarily explode them. Further disrupting Thomson’s portrayal of Britannia’s serene realm, Smollett portrays the dangers of the Atlantic crossing during which a hurricane snaps the mast and throws sailors overboard. For Thomson, ships are the harbingers of liberal commerce and imperial grandeur. Smollett’s ship, with its British intra-national disputes and prejudices, vindictive and ignorant officers, and utter squalor and filth, flounders, mast-less, across the ocean to the great military blunder at Cartagena.²⁹

The West-Indies is a site which is represented by a fundamental duality: if it holds the promise of enrichment and luxury (with Edenic connotations), it also promises disease and early death (with infernal overtones). Thus, although he works in a field hospital on that ‘fatal island’ that has been ‘the grave of so many Europeans’ (p207), Roderick’s episode in white Jamaican society is defined by comfort, even luxury. Exploiting a Scottish network on Jamaica, he is ‘sumptuously entertained’ (p202), feasting on poultry, butcher’s meat, oranges, limes, lemons, pineapples, Madeira-wine, and rum, ‘so that this small interval of ten days was by far the most agreeable period of my life’ (p205). The elliptical nature of this paradisiacal sojourn is exemplary: the slaves are almost completely absent. Roderick later makes his fortune through slave trading from Guinea to the Americas. The speed of the narrative, already quick in the picaresque tradition, accelerates through the entire project of the triangular trade. The slave dealers on the coast, the deaths and sickness of the middle passage and the slave markets of the Americas are passed over in barely a page as ‘nothing remarkable’ (p410). Considering the farcical twists and catastrophes around which the plotline is structured through his escapades in England and France, this seems a remarkable elision. One possible

²⁷ These memorably become manifested in arguments over the merits of Glamorgan over Cheshire cheese. *Roderick Random* (p. 151).

²⁸ During a hurricane, while Morgan and Roderick are tending the wounded, Mackshane is discovered: ‘by the glimmering of a lamp, [I] perceived him on his knees, before something that very much resembled a crucifix.’ The only possible conjecture is ‘doctor Mackshane (is) a member of the Church of Rome’ (p. 163).

²⁹ Smollett himself was present at the failed assault of Cartagena (now Carthage in Colombia) which critics have seen as pivotal in his early life, (Martz p. 1-27). In his account of the ‘Lamentable fiasco’ in *A Complete History of England* (1757-8), his attack on the commanding officer, Admiral Vernon was considered libellous enough to earn him a spell in prison.

reason for this may be the sense of embarrassment around the seedy nature of the triangular trade which Smollett was unwilling to tackle. However Smollett revels in the seedy and corrupt in other aspects of British society and the triangular trade would appear to be prime ground for satire. It seems more likely that slavery simply did not register with Smollett as an institution worthy of reproach. It is the upstart class of nouveau riche nabobs and ‘negro drivers’ mixing with the blue blood that most exercises Smollett’s Matt Bramble, rather than the origins of their profits in slavery. Thus *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) attacks the upstart class of Roderick Randoms as contributing to the ‘heterogeneous jamboree’ at Bath where, ‘The ball was opened by a Scotch lord, with a mulatto heiress from St. Christopher’s [St Kitts]’.³⁰ By contrast in *Humphry Clinker*, Scotland and Smollett’s birthplace of present-day West Dunbartonshire in particular remains a virtuous paradise.

James Grainger’s (Berwickshire 1727?- St Kitts 1766) closer focus on plantation life would attempt to find more sophisticated strategies to negotiate the tensions around slavery in *The Sugar Cane* (1764). In a recent scholarly edition John Gilmore insists upon the significance of Grainger’s nationality, which is often overlooked, to the poem:

Although Grainger’s Scottishness generally goes unmentioned by modern commentators, it was of real significance. It meant he belonged to a nation which was—particularly in the aftermath of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion—to some extent a victim of an English cultural imperialism in the same way as the sugar colonies in the Caribbean.³¹

Although it is worth noting Grainger was an army medic for the Hanoverian side during the forty-five, Gilmore points towards an important feature.³² Grainger’s title of ‘Father of Caribbean Literature’³³ has always been an awkward fit given his vision of St Kitts is one in which ‘the coloniser’s perspective and ownership of the land is confirmed’.³⁴ Therefore, he

³⁰ Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) (London: Penguin Classics, 2008), p. 45.

³¹ John Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire*, (London & New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 33.

³² Grainger was a surgeon for Lieutenant Pulteney’s 13th regiment of foot at Falkirk and later served in Germany. However, Grainger’s father was a gentleman from Cumberland who re-settled in Annandale. Percy reports ‘I have heard him mention that [his father] had suffered for his attachment to the House of Stuart in the year 1715, though he might not think proper to mention this to Mr. Burt.’ The letter to his wife’s brother Mr Burt, a Nevis planter who disapproved of their marriage, states that his father lost his fortune through ‘extravagance’. Nichols, *Illustrations*, p. 143 & p. 272.

³³ David Dabydeen, ‘Sugar and Slavery in the West India Georgic’, *Callaloo*, Vol 23, No.4, (Autumn 2000), pp. 1513.

³⁴ Lorna Burns, ‘Landscape and Genre in the Caribbean Canon: Creolizing the Poetics of Place and Paradise’, *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol 17, No.1, (Nov 2008), pp. 23-24.

might better be understood as standing at the beginning of a Scottish-Caribbean diasporic identity: one which attempts to combat depictions of degeneracy at the peripheries, in order to elevate both Scotland and the Caribbean (rather than only West Dunbartonshire). If the attitudes expressed by the young English naval officer Edward Thompson are at all representative, Grainger had his work cut out for him. Thompson was stationed in the West Indies in 1756-1757 where his letters suggest his shock at the conditions and punishments of the slaves. Thompson equates the cruel, haughty, ignorant tyrants of creole society with the treacherous, over-reaching, insolent 'petty kings' of Scotland. Querying 'How came *MacDuggle* here?', he speculates (wrongly) that the majority Scottish overseers 'have been transported to Virginia [i.e. following Culloden], and from thence escaped to rule here.'³⁵ Thompson makes a plea for tyrannical Scottish overseers to recognise human equality:

O cease, vain reptile, give the black his due,

The world was made for Scots and NEGROES too!³⁶

Consequently, Grainger can be said to develop an 'Archipelagic Poetics',³⁷ that stresses the virtues of both the creole Caribbean and Scotland that together contribute to the greater glory of a variegated commonwealth, under Britannia's enlightened sway. Grainger echoes Thomson's paens to commerce underlining that both regions were distinct sites within an overarching system of Britishness defined as Protestant, commercial, and increasingly white.

In order to pursue this Scoto-British imperial vision he employs the georgic form to trace the production and refinement of sugar, as Virgil did corn, cattle and bees.

What soil the Cane affects; what care demands;

Beneath what signs to plant; what ills await;

How the hot nectar best to chrystallize;

And Afric's sable progeny to treat: (I, 1-4)

³⁵ Edward Thompson, Letter XXIII, Antigua, September 22, 1756. Published in *Sailor's Letters*, (1766), in *Contrary Voices, Representations of West Indian Slavery, 1657-1834*, ed. by Karina Williamson (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2008), p. 62. Thompson's later observations on the West Indies from his tour of 1779-81 were published in *Nauticks; or, Sailor's Verses* (1783). Williamson notes that Scotsman James M. Adair would later challenge Thompson's Scotophobia in his pro-slavery *Unanswerable arguments against the abolition of the slave trade*, J.P Bateman (1790). Adair would also enter into a feud with Philip Thicknesse, the only colonial writer to apparently see Nanny Maroon.

³⁶ Letter XXVIII St Kitts, June 13, 1757, pp62-65. Williamson notes the echoes of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man*: 'This world 'tis true, /Was made for Caesar, but for Titus too'. (4:145-46).

³⁷ Markman Ellis, 'Islands of empire: the West Indies in eighteenth century georgic and pastoral poetry', in *Islands in History and Representation*, ed. Rod Edmond and Vanessa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 122.

As one of the principal commodities around which the Atlantic empire revolved, the production, circulation and consumption of sugar might serve as a prime example of the myriad meanings of transnational investment, both economic and symbolic. Landmark studies by Fernando Ortiz, Noel Deerr and Sidney Mintz have treated sugar from historical, economic and anthropological perspectives;³⁸ meanwhile Keith A. Sandiford and Carl Plasa focus on the discursive representations of sugar in texts from colonial to postcolonial eras. As Sandiford notes, texts such as Grainger's hinge upon the presentation of 'an evolving ideal of Creole civilisation' that is fatally compromised by 'its central relation to slavery and its marginal relation to metropolitan cultures'.³⁹ In this way, Grainger's 'West India Georgic' is wracked with tensions, both formal and discursive. It begins to sketch into its idealised picture of sugar production, the pernicious aspects of slave labour before continually drawing a veil over them—'Muse suppress the tale'. Grainger's poem, therefore, while purportedly explaining and exemplifying West Indian landscape and sugar production, is ultimately one of evasion and elision. Carl Plasa notes that, 'What is significant about *The Sugar Cane*'s gaps and silences is the parallels they suggest between aesthetic and economic orders, the making of the poem and the making of the sugar it celebrates'.⁴⁰ As the production of sugar he describes depends on stringently filtering out pollutants that would make it unpalatable to consumers, so Grainger's creation of *The Sugar Cane* strives to refine out the pernicious nature of Caribbean slavery for its readers. Yet, Plasa notes that 'The type of sugar on which it focusses is "strong-grain'd muscovado" (I, 29), a relatively crude brownish substance, whose name derives from the Portuguese *mascavado*, meaning "incomplete" or "unfinished"'.⁴¹ The muscovado 'was contaminated with gluten, lime and caramel', impurities that remained within the product despite the refining process.⁴² Muscovado would require further stages of refinery to eventually produce the 'whiter than white' pure chrySTALLINE sugar preferred for domestic consumption. In this way, the tension between Grainger's georgic elevation of the 'imperial cane' (II, 100) that is produced by a barbaric slave system is never resolved. 'Despite the poem's discursive vigilance, however, what it seeks to expunge remains stubbornly present,

³⁸ Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, (1940) trans. Harriet de Onis, (London: Duke University Press, 1995); Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, (New York: Viking, 1985).

³⁹ Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 3.

⁴⁰ Carl Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 3.

⁴¹ Plasa, p. 24.

⁴² Donald Jones, *Bristol's Sugar Trade and Refining Industry* (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1996), p. 4. Cited in Plasa, p. 30.

appearing in displaced, distorted and fragmentary forms, which vitiate the saccharine portrayal of slavery its author seeks to uphold.’⁴³

The form of the georgic has proved controversial. For contemporaries, the inclusion of ‘yams’, ‘plantains’ and ‘cow-itch’ from the disparaged colonies offended the periphrastic rules of the form. Joseph Addison stipulates that in order to avoid a ‘Plebian stile’, the poetry of husbandry must not appear in ‘the simplicity and nakedness of its Subject, but in the pleasantest Dress that Poetry can bestow on it.’⁴⁴ For postcolonial critics those formal requirements cannot capture the nature of the slave system it depicted. For David Dabydeen, ‘the barbaric experience is wrapped in a napkin of poetic diction and converted into civilised expression.’⁴⁵ While on one level Grainger’s georgic certainly does this, we might test Kevis Goodman’s theory that while georgic attempts ‘to contain history, something else—an affective residue— will out’.⁴⁶ It is a view that stands in the tradition of Walter Benjamin’s famous description of the ‘horror’ with which the historical materialist regards the ‘cultural treasures’ of the past because they ‘owe their existence not only to the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries.’⁴⁷ According to Goodman,

The problem is sometimes not that the plough or the pen buries what should be disclosed, but that the critic’s predicament, like that of the farmer and the poet, is the difficulty of recognising the historical meanings of what does get turned up, not under, by their lines.⁴⁸

In this way, what Raymond Williams calls the ‘presence of history’, understood as ‘that collective perception of any moment as a seething mix of unsettled elements’, threatens to reappear even in the smoothest georgic lines of Addison, Thomson and Cowper that Goodman analyses. Here, Caribbean slavery represents an extreme version of what John Barrell calls

⁴³ Plasa, p. 3.

⁴⁴ Joseph Addison, ‘An Essay on the Georgics’, in *The works of Virgil: containing his pastorals, Georgics and Æneis, Translated into English verse; by Mr. Dryden* (London, 1709), p85, (ECCO image 210).

⁴⁵ David Dabydeen, ‘On Writing “Slave Song”’, *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 8.2 (1986), p. 46.

⁴⁶ Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 9.

⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 256.

⁴⁸ Goodman, p. 3.

‘the dark side of the landscape’.⁴⁹ The reality of chattel slavery brings to the fore the ‘noise of history’ that threatens to overwhelm the smooth diction of Grainger’s ‘West India Georgic’.

Grainger drew from Virgil as well as from the contemporary popularity of the form, such as Christopher Smart’s *The Hop-Garden* (1752), and John Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1757), which themselves present a sanitised picture of English rural life. As Karina Williamson points out,

Grainger’s portrait of Montano, a prudent and benevolent plantation-owner (I, 579-646), for example, performs the same mythical function as model landowners within the rhetoric of English agrarian poetry.⁵⁰

Indeed, Grainger’s description of the wheeling circles of slaves dancing draws directly from John Philips’ description of carefree swains in *Cyder* (1708) (II, 411-23).⁵¹ For Kamau Brathwaite the transported vocabulary fails to capture the New World scene. Although Grainger doubtlessly saw slaves dance, the depiction is distorted by ‘the tyranny of the model’:

But ‘frisk’ and ‘caper’? The dancers are moving to the wrong rhythm. This really is a Scottish reel or Maypole dance. No wonder the performers seem ‘aukward’.⁵²

While acknowledging the hiatus between form and content such critics perceive, it is worth remembering that employing the exalted Virgilian georgic form was the highest compliment the eighteenth century writer could pay to his subject. Gilmore points out that, ‘While Grainger is imposing a European model on a Caribbean reality, he is also to some extent doing the reverse: the Caribbean reality is being imposed on the European model, on a scale to which there is nothing earlier which is comparable in English.’⁵³ Nonetheless, if ‘Grainger’s achievement is not Caribbean, or even creole repossession’,⁵⁴ it might best be understood as conditioned by a Scoto-British imperial perspective from the Caribbean.

⁴⁹ John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape, the rural poor in English painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁵⁰ Karina Williamson, ‘West Indian Georgic’, *Essays in Criticism*, 52 (2002), p. 81.

⁵¹ Gilmore notes the verbatim imitation of stealing kisses from lasses who ‘With neck reclined resent the ravished bliss’. *The Sugar Cane* (IV, 600).

⁵² Kamau Brathwaite, ‘Roots’, pp. 127-170. First published *Savacou*, 1.1 (June, 1970), p. 46-73.

⁵³ Gilmore p. 64

⁵⁴ Lorna Burns, p. 23.

In this way, the 'West India Georgic' transports the 'cultural myth of Europe'⁵⁵ across the Atlantic, urging Man's toil with nature in order to create order out of disorder in the Caribbean, as had been achieved in the Scottish borderlands.

The muse hath seen on Annan's pastoral hills,

Of theft and slaughter erst the fell retreat,

But now the shepherd's best-beloved walk (III, 153-155).

These lines may refer to both border raids between Scotland and England, as well as local feuds between lords in the Dumfriesshire setting near Grainger's childhood home. This strife gives way to the tread of a shepherd 'with his sylvan pipe' (III, 156) leading his flock over once hazardous turf; as Thomson's lambs now frolick over once iron ramparts. It is a feature of georgic that music might have an enlivening effect on the labourer.⁵⁶ Grainger considers specifically that which a bagpipe, 'puff'd from sonorous bellows by the squeeze/ of tuneful artist' (III, 162-163), might have on a Caribbean slave harvesting grain. Yet this hybrid georgic vision of ordered agriculture and pastoral ease is constantly threatened to be overwhelmed by the forces of disorder in the form of fires and hurricanes, as well as the destructive rampaging through cane fields of monkeys and rats. These are revealingly described in terms of a Scoto-British repulsion of invaders. In his notes Grainger recalls that monkeys were originally brought to St Kitts by the French, factually underscoring the discursive equation of Frenchmen's pony-tails with monkey tails in John Bull propaganda.⁵⁷ Repelling the invasion of the 'monkey-nation' is analogous to the 'innumerable Gallic hosts' (II, 55) who quickly retreated before 'Albion's martial sons' (II, 59) in the recent Seven Years' War (1756-63). Gilmore points to fellow Scot, Janet Schaw's proposal to deal with the St Kitts monkey problem; the simians are 'as little ashamed of defeat as a French admiral or general':

⁵⁵ Sylvia Wynter's phrase, see previous chapter.

⁵⁶ For example James Thomson's early georgic (that is a heavily ironic view of rural representations) 'On A Country Life': 'The rural mournful songs of lovesick swains,/ Whereby they soothe their raging amorous pains,/ The whistling music of the lagging plough/ Which does the strength of drooping beasts renew' (l.19-20). Originally published 1720 in *Edinburgh Miscellany*, in *The Poetical Works of James Thomson*, Vol 2 (London: Pickering, 1830).

⁵⁷ Grainger notes that according to Père Labat, monkeys were brought by the French when they owned half the island, (note 46). Grainger's letters reveal a recurring distaste for the French, as well as the Irish. Following a trip to Dublin he recalls *Gulliver's Travels*: 'I am now less surprised that Dean Swift gave such a humbling picture of human nature, in his account of the Yahoos, considering the country he lived in.' Nichols, *Illustrations*, p. 265.

I should think strong English dogs the best; as the English is your only animal to humble your French monkey and settle his frolicks.⁵⁸

Such bulldog pride offered a chance for Scottish writers to emphasise British unity against a common enemy. Where Jacobite propaganda decried ‘Hanoverian rats’,⁵⁹ Grainger reverses the characterisation. As the monkeys are coded Frenchmen, the rats similarly represent an enemy of British interests:

Nor with less waste the whiskered vermin-race,
A countless clan, despoil the low-land Cane. (II, 62-3)

As Grainger’s Scottishness is usually overlooked, so this reference to rats as Highland clans invading the Lowlands is also usually missed. The whiskers may recall the beards of Highlanders, those ‘fell marauders’ (II, 79), while their characterisation as vermin is consistent with racialised Lowland stereotyping of the Gaels.⁶⁰ At a time when Wilkesite propaganda fumed against the ‘penetration’ of London and the empire by grasping Scots, such Scoto-British imperial discourse constructs the dangers to the orderly improvement of sugar cane cultivation in the Caribbean as akin to the threat of the French swarming over the Americas or Jacobite clansmen invading south. It employs animalistic imagery to denigrate as monkeys and rats those rivals to the Georgian state, in the aptly named Georgic form. Furthermore, Grainger identifies an increasing importance of whiteness in the Caribbean, found in the similes of the cotton and coffee plants:

White as the skin of Albion’s lovely fair,
Are the thick snowy fragrant blooms it boasts. (IV, 470-4)

The Caribbean emblems of whiteness point to a further layer of racial bonding amongst ‘Albion’s fair’ in contrast to their African slaves. At this moment, the French and Spanish do not seem to fall under this construction of whiteness.

⁵⁸ Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality, being the narrative of a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina, and Portugal, in the years 1774 to 1776*, ed. by Evangeline Walker Andrews and Charles McLean Andrews, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 131-2.

⁵⁹ The stronger brown rat was supposed to come over on the ship that brought George I, and soon overwhelmed the native black rat. ‘The word (both the noun and the verb to rat) was first, as we have seen, levelled at the converts to the government of George the First., but has by degrees obtained a wider meaning and come to be applied to any sudden and mercenary change in politics.’ Lord Mahon (Philip Henry Stanhope), *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht to the Peace of Versailles, 1713-1783*, in Seven Volumes, Volume VII (Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1854), p. 338.

⁶⁰ Boswell’s well-known anecdote where at the line, ‘Shall I sing of rats?’, Dr. Johnson is supposed to have bellowed, ‘No!’ has perhaps been embellished. See Gilmore, Appendix I.

Although castigated for his ‘pro-slavery’ vision, Marcus Wood points out that, ‘Grainger is in fact a firm supporter of the benevolist position and argues throughout that a well-run plantation constitutes a social ideal for slave and slave owner.’⁶¹ As Scottish Enlightenment thinkers urged improvement in agriculture for farmers, so Grainger urged improvement in husbandry for planters, such as the use of ploughs (I, 287); as well as medical advice for the correct, humane way to maximise the labour of your slaves.⁶² Thus, the contradiction *The Sugar Cane* holds is in its plea for benevolent improvement and medical care, combined with racialised stereotypes and an unwavering belief in the natural order of slavery. In order that Scotland might prove its worth to the Atlantic Empire, he underlines the value of Scottish produce in making slaves more effective. Herring were a major element of the Scottish economy in the period and Grainger urges that slaves could be fed once a week with English beans, Carolinian rice, or ‘herrings from the main that howls tempestuous round the Scotian isles’ (IV, 233). A ‘woolly vestment’ from Wiltshire will prevent illness at night, while ‘strong coarse linen, from the Scotian loom, Wards off the fervours of the burning day’ (IV, 616). Yet the limits of the good doctor’s benevolence are soon reached; as paternalism rests ultimately on the obedience of the enslaved, he turns to address them, ‘by your toil, deserve your master’s care’ (IV, 123).

The ‘West-India Georgic’ rests on the comparison between British agricultural labourers and the enslaved in the Caribbean. In considering relative hardship of labour, Grainger establishes an alternative comparison with the labouring class of miners in Europe (who in Scotland endured a form of bonded labour) to suggest that slaves have no cause for complaint:

Nor, Negro, at thy destiny repine,..
 How far more pleasant is thy rural task,
 Than theirs who sweat, sequestered from the day...
 With what intense severity of pain
 Hath the afflicted muse, in Scotia seen
 The miners rack’d, who toil for fatal lead...
 Yet white men these! (IV, 83-100)

⁶¹ Marcus Wood, *The Poetics of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 7.

⁶² Recent developments in ‘Medical Humanities’ may bring to the fore the importance of Grainger’s position as a plantation doctor, with its inherent contradictions. Plasa’s otherwise useful account presents the Scottish doctor only as an aspirant planter, thereby missing the significance of his employment, as well as his nationality.

In the recurring feature of comparisons between the enslaved in the Americas and the working classes of Europe that this thesis will trace, here Grainger establishes the particular trope of miners in non-abolitionist discourse. Characteristically, the effect is not to connect the oppressed in a transatlantic ‘map of grievance’,⁶³ but to employ one to silence the other, and in effect, nullify both complainants. Here the suffering of miners eclipses that of slaves. Mining was itself understood by contemporaries as a harsh and unforgiving form of labour, while the blackening effects of the coal dust would suggest a visual allusion to slaves in the Caribbean. Markman Ellis elaborates that:

Finding an equivalence between the labour of the miners and the slaves, Grainger domesticates the labour of colonial slavery, and renders it less exceptional in legal and social terms... But Grainger probably has in mind a legal allusion too, as coal mining in Scotland operated a form of bonded labour called ‘life-binding’, a contract of service for life. The collier’s life-bond gave coal-masters legal right over the body of their workers, placing them and their children in indefinite servitude. Colliers could not change employment without certificate of leave from their master. Those who absconded without such a document were considered to have stolen themselves from their masters and could be ‘punishet in their bodyes’ as thieves if they were discovered within a year and a day.⁶⁴

However Ellis urges caution regarding an equivalence between colliers and chattel slaves. Indeed Christopher Whatley argues that that their position, which was certainly a form of serfdom, has been exaggerated over the years, partly as a result of the impulse of Whig history to denigrate the past in order to congratulate the progress of the present. ‘That on several estates the children of coal workers were considered to be life bound too brings the Scottish experience within the margins of a slave system... Yet the temptation to overstate the argument should be resisted’.⁶⁵ Miners received (relatively high) wages for their labour, and Whatley notes the evidence of voluntary mobility between collieries. Whatever the considerable hardships, colliers were never chattel outwith recourse to the law.

⁶³ The phrase is from geographer David Featherstone’s discussion of trans-Atlantic, trans-racial solidarity in the ‘Pan-Africanism and Anti-Fascism’ paper delivered for the Glasgow University Caribbean Discussion Group (02/06/09).

⁶⁴ Markman Ellis, “‘Incessant Labour’: Georgic Poetry and the Problem of Slavery’, *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition, Britain and its Colonies 1760-1838*, ed. by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, Sarah Salih (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), pp. 36-37.

⁶⁵ Christopher Whatley, ‘The Dark Side of the Enlightenment: Sorting Out Serfdom’, in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), p. 262.

Nonetheless, the debates over the ‘freeing up’ of the bonded labour system for colliers was understood in relation to slavery. In 1769, the abolitionist pioneer Granville Sharp discussed the bonded labour of Scottish colliers and salters and the abolishment of the legal right of Heritable Jurisdiction of Highland clans in 1747 as forms of arbitrary rule akin to slave ownership.⁶⁶ In a recent article Dana Rabin details the significance of arguments around villeinage in the legal cases concerning slavery in eighteenth century England. Villeins (from which the theatrical sense of villains is derived) were employed in the meanest rustic work such as dung carrying, and their bonded status meant: ‘the argument for the legality of slavery in England was made on the basis of an analogy between slavery and the “complete subjection to a feudal lord or superior” known as villeinage.’⁶⁷ There were two categories: villeins *regardant* who belonged to the land; and villeins *in gross* who belonged to the lord and who could be transferred by deed, this latter form comes closest to chattel slavery. In the Joseph Knight case (1773-1778) (discussed in chapter 5) John Wedderburn’s memorial conceived of the position of the slave in relation to contemporary Scottish forms of bonded labour such as apprentices, colliers and salters—‘probably descendants of the original adscripti or villeins—who from the single circumstance of entering to work after Puberty...are bound to perpetual service and sold along with the works.’⁶⁸ By contrast, Knight’s counsel denies colliers and salters could be descendants of villeins given that there are, ‘no traces in the history of Scotland or its laws whence villeinage can be proved to have existed in Scotland’ (unlike in England). Where Wedderburn’s memorial sought to categorise all levels of unfree labour together, as Grainger does, in order to invalidate Knight’s complaint; Knight’s memorial carefully underlines the specific differences between the position of colliers and chattel slaves. It argues that it is ‘the profession they [colliers] have voluntarily embraced’ in order to demonstrate the particular injustice faced by Knight.⁶⁹ Here, scribbled in the margins of the

⁶⁶ Granville Sharp, *A Representation of the Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of Tolerating Slavery* (London: Benjamin White and Robert Horsfield, 1769), p. 4 (footnote).

⁶⁷ Rana Dabin, ‘The Somerset Case in an Imperial Context’, *History Workshop Journal*, 72 (Autumn, 2011), p. 11. Dabin’s central argument is that while the blackness of the slave was not a major theme in the court cases, the detailed arguments around villeinage served to construct whiteness, by associating villeinage with ‘family, whiteness and England.’ Dabin, p. 16.

⁶⁸ NAS (National Archives of Scotland), Knight v Wedderburn, CS235/K/2/2, p. 83. A feudal serf was termed an “adscript of the soil” (*adscriptus glebae*) denoting that he was bound to the estate and could be sold or transferred with it—OED.

⁶⁹ NAS, p. 124. Similarly in the Somerset case ‘the lawyers arguing for the slave’s freedom denied the analogy between villeinage and slavery, pointing out that villeins had more legal rights than slaves.’ Dabin, p. 12.

archival document, giving the impression that it was added as more information came to the attention of the lawyers preparing the case, is the note that:

It has been found in the case of the Burgh of Paisley that they [colliers] may be counsellors and Magistrates notwithstanding their Bondage.⁷⁰

Thus, the higher wages, element of choice, and ability to stand for public office in certain regions distinguishes the position of colliers from that of chattel slaves. As such the colliers and salters cannot be considered, as Grainger insinuates, a legal precedent for slavery in Scotland.

The evasions and elisions of Grainger's saccharine portrayal of sugar production contrasts sharply to *Jamaica, A Poem in Three Parts*, published the following decade in 1777, in which pastoral celebrations of island beauty are interrupted and ultimately rendered impossible by the 'cruelty of the planters, and the miseries of the slaves'.⁷¹ As such, it functions as an anti-pastoral, that 'although it nowhere mentions Grainger... looks like a reaction to *The Sugar Cane*.'⁷² Although anonymous, we can surmise the author was an Englishman from the Johnsonian barb, 'The plantain is to the Negro what meal is to the Scots, or potatoes to the Irish' (p16). Apparently rebuking Grainger's Muse raising aloft the 'imperial cane'; here 'a British Muse disdains' to praise the 'man enslaving cane' (p33). An encomium to which is soon shattered by images of 'tortures, racks, whips, famines, gibbets', as the poet refuses to construct a 'baseless fame' (p19) for Britannia. The contrasting treatment of slave rebellion illustrates the opposed visions of pastoral slavery in each poem. Grainger was composing in the context of large scale slave rebellions in 1760 and 1765 on nearby Jamaica, and rebellion occasionally surfaces as the 'noise of history'— a suppressed threat to the plantation georgic which represents a bloody collapse into disorder. Those mirthful slaves dancing in their circle must not be permitted to get out of hand: alcohol and music, particularly the drum, hold a potential to transform gaiety into rebellion. Grainger warns,

But let not thou the drum their mirth inspire;
Nor vinous spirits: else, to madness fir'd...
Fell acts of blood, and vengeance they pursue. (IV, 602-605)

⁷⁰ NAS, p. 125.

⁷¹ *Jamaica, A Poem in Three Parts, Written in that island, in the year MDCCLXXVI. To which is annexed, a poetical epistle from the author in that island to a friend in England* (London, 1777) ECCO, p. 4.

⁷² Gilmore, p. 48.

What for Grainger is the regressive abyss of ‘bacchanalian frenzy’ (IV, 603), is for the author of *Jamaica*, ‘a brave struggle of an injured people for their lost liberties’ (p30). The English (?) author mobilises the over-determined term of ‘liberty’ to subvert British imperial rhetoric as it undermines the imperial georgic. He recovers the violence and oppression that Grainger’s poem had sought to suppress and locates it at the heart of West Indian sugar production.

Abolitionism: Georgic, Pastoral, Sentiment

Such earlier poems established the pattern of pro and anti-slavery verse that would continue to be fought out over the terms of agrarian ideals in the lead up to the founding of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in May 1787 and beyond. Yet, Kurt Heinzelman notes what he terms a ‘Foucauldian epistemic break’ as following the 1760s the georgic, ‘quite simply disappeared, at least by name, from literary practice’.⁷³ Kevis Goodman stresses that ‘at least by name’ is the key caveat, as the georgic continues to exist as ‘a rhizomatic underpresence’ through the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It remains ‘an invisible presence’⁷⁴ throughout a variety of genres, such as the treatises on slavery that would become more prominent. Nonetheless, the georgic did cede ground to pastoral as the dominant form for understanding colonial slavery. Bristol poet Thomas Chatterton wrote *An African Eclogue* (1770, pub 1778),⁷⁵ while the title of Liverpool sailor Edward Rushton’s anti-slavery *West Indian Eclogue* (July, 1787) sounds like a counterpoint to Grainger’s ‘West India Georgic’. Although a fuller discussion of abolitionist poetics is reserved for the following chapter, suffice to say that Rushton foregrounds the ‘fest’ring gashes’ (I, p4) of brutal punishments, as the slaves remember *in their own voices* a ‘former bliss’ in a pastoral Africa, compared to their ‘present woes’ (II, p8) in a depraved state of exile. This Meliboean poem of exile and dispossession therefore locates key issues that would define the debate well into the following century. It hinges on that white fear of revenge in a plot which demonstrates that it is the abuse of power, most notably the sexual abuse of slave women, which provokes a bloody revenge.

⁷³ Kurt Heinzelman, ‘Roman Georgic in a Georgian Age: A Theory of Romantic Genre’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33 (1991), p. 201.

⁷⁴ Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, p. 3.

⁷⁵ Based on William Collins’ *Oriental Eclogues* (1742, revised 1759).

Grainger's depiction of slavery in St Kitts is contradicted by the account of another Scottish man of medicine, James Ramsay (1733-1789) who spent fifteen years (1762- 1777) on the island as an Anglican vicar and surgeon. Ramsay was long obscure until Folarin Shyllon's biography, subtitled '*the unknown abolitionist*' (1977), drew attention to the importance of his work in the early history of the anti-slavery movement.⁷⁶ The ferocity of the attacks Ramsay endured from the pro-slavery lobby indicate the effectiveness of his eye-witness accounts.⁷⁷ Once installed as Anglican vicar at Teston under the patronage of Sir Charles Middleton, it is said he inspired Clarkson, Wilberforce and Pitt towards anti-slavery.⁷⁸ Born in Fraserburgh to an Episcopalian family, Ramsay attended the University of Aberdeen where James Beattie became a life-long friend. Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784) re-articulates Beattie's anti-slavery sentiments, combined with empirical evidence and personal testimony from the Caribbean. Like Grainger he is concerned with medical 'treatment' on plantations; however, contra-Grainger, he presents an image of relentless drudgery—hoe-digging followed by grass-picking—combined with cruel punishments that were routine rather than exceptional. Ramsay writes,

In the hands of a skilful driver [the cart whip] cuts out flakes of skin and flesh with every stroke; and the wretch, in this mangled condition, is turned out to work in dry or wet weather [which] ends his sufferings and slavery together.⁷⁹

His *Essay* serves as a conclusion to this chapter, as although it precedes the founding of the official abolitionist campaign, it brings together the Scoto-British themes of empire and improvement discussed here, with the themes of sentiment and abolition that will be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.⁸⁰ While acknowledging abolition as a remarkable feat, the compromises and limitations of the campaign cannot be ignored. In the preface to the *Essay*, Ramsay published the letter from Lady Middleton that encouraged him to write concerning the 'conversion' of slaves to the Christian faith. It 'would be the most probable

⁷⁶ Folarin Olawale Shyllon, *James Ramsay: the unknown abolitionist* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1977).

⁷⁷ These include attacks in parliament from, for example, Crisp Molyneux. See also James Tobin's *Cursory Remarks upon the Reverend Mr. Ramsay's Essay on Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the Sugar Colonies* (London: 1785); and Gordon Turnbull (see below). Ramsay countered such attacks in *Reply to Personal Invectives* (1785).

⁷⁸ Oxford DNB entry, written by J. Watt.

⁷⁹ James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London: 1784), p76. Gilmore notes the particular value of this text as it was published before the founding of the official Abolitionist society in 1787. Appendix IV, p. 208.

⁸⁰ Ramsay contributed to the Abolitionist society from its inception, before his death two years later.

means of making slaves diligent and faithful; for it would awaken conscience within them, to be a strict overseer, and a severe monitor, whom they could not evade' (pxi). This is at least part of the motivation for Ramsay as he develops 'something like a system for the regulation and improvement of our sugar colonies, and the advancement and conversion of their slaves' (piii). This thesis situates Ramsay within the slice of the Scottish-Caribbean Atlantic world. It argues for the significance of Ramsay's nationality— a characteristic Scoto-British identity—that influences his understanding and presentation of colonial slavery. If Grainger's Enlightenment education influenced his georgic apology for slavery, Ramsay's *Essay* demonstrates the advantages that a systematic Enlightened approach could contribute to anti-slavery. As with Grainger, the conclusions he drew for the improvement of Caribbean society were formulated through his Scottish education and structure of feeling.

Slavery is first viewed in historical perspective through the stages of stadial theory—savagery, Biblical/ Classical, and Gothic, to the present commercial society. Although it is argued (following William Robertson) that Christianity rid Europe of slavery, it is found that chattel slavery as practiced by European Christians in the Americas is of worse character than even the fabled tyrannies of old. Ramsay addresses the strand of Scottish Enlightenment thought that hampers his purpose. Kames and Robertson are both chided for raising the possibility of polygenesis—that Africans and Native Americans are not descended from Adam and Eve as the Bible would suggest, but from alternative origins. The biblical heresy might legitimate inhumane treatment towards Africans, now considered not only as slaves but as a different species. Ramsay maintains an orthodox Christian monogenesis that encourages humane treatment to all 'God's children'.⁸¹ Furthermore, he rebukes David Hume for his 'northern pride' in his notorious footnote on the 'natural inferiority of negroes'.⁸² He asserts that had the Caledonian been born amongst the Romans he would have been satisfied even to be considered 'on a footing of equality with the sable Africans' (p199). Ramsay also counters

⁸¹ See Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774) and Robertson's *History of America* (1777). For a discussion of the implications of the monogenesis and polygenesis debate, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races, Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁸² Hume's footnote in his essay 'Of National Characters' cuts across the thrust of the argument he is making for cultural relativity. Although the 1748 version did not contain the footnote, in 1753 he inserted—'I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.' In the 1777 version he altered the footnote to remove the overtones of polygenesis, but maintained the original meaning. Ramsay's phrase 'northern pride' may be playing to his audience now that he is installed as Anglican Vicar of Teston. Alternatively there may be a sly joke here as the Highlander Ramsay is more 'northern' than the Edinbronian Hume.

the Linnaean classification of ‘skull-measuring’, as he insists on the equal intellectual and sentimental capacity of Africans, who therefore have the capacity to be ‘improved’.

In a remarkable passage, Ramsay departs from the learned essay style to depict a vivid scene, designed to provoke the sympathy of the onlooker:

Let us imagine (and would heaven it were only imagination!) masters and overseers, with uplifted whips, clanking chains, and pressing hunger, forcing their forlorn slaves to commit every horrid crime that virtue shrinks at... But to make the representation complete, we must also draw humanity, bleeding over the horrid scene, and longing, eagerly longing, to be able to vindicate her own rights. (p104)

However, Ramsay notes the Enlightenment tension between humanitarian sentiment and economic opportunity, as ‘whatever [humanity] may urge, it will have little weight, if avarice or luxury oppose her claim.’ He goes on to pinpoint the limitations of the popular mode of sentiment—it is ‘the turn of the age’—which can so easily descend into ‘false sentiment’, as he insists on a more practical programme of improvement.

We are exceedingly ready, it is the turn of the age, to express ourselves sorrowfully, when any act of oppression or unjust suffering is related before us, the generous sentiment flows glibly off our tongues, charity seems to dictate every sympathising phrase, and vanity comes cheerfully forward to make her offering. We must not stop at gaining humanity over to our side, but go on to show that society is deeply interested in advancing the condition of slaves, and it would even be for the benefit of their immediate masters, that they should be subject only to the laws. (p104-5)

Amongst the attacks this *Essay* provoked, Gordon Turnbull a Scottish planter on Grenada published *An apology for Negro slavery: Or, The West-India planters vindicated from the charge of inhumanity* in 1786. Turnbull demonstrates his own enlightened education in his refutation of Ramsay’s depiction. He quotes Montesquieu, Pope and Smollett, and concurs with Hume’s footnote, as he argues that planters are not ‘tyrants’ but are ‘remarkable for their urbanity of manners, liberality of sentiment, and generosity of disposition’.⁸³ Their slaves are grateful to be removed from the savagery of Africa to the pastoral scene of the West Indies. Although ‘the negroes are much happier [in the West Indies] than the peasantry in most parts of the globe’ (p29), he makes his own recommendations for improvements and regulations

⁸³ Gordon Turnbull, *An apology for Negro slavery: Or, The West-India planters vindicated from the charge of inhumanity* (London: Stuart & Stevenson, 1786), p. 58.

without the unnecessary step of abolition. ‘Negro slavery is’, after all, ‘part of the great chain of being’ (p32). Turnbull’s *Apology* was significant enough to provoke responses from two leading abolitionists Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano. In what is widely credited as the first substantial anti-slavery text by an African, Cugoano (1757?- 1791?) reports that he was transported at the age of thirteen, and was a slave under one Alexander Campbell Esq. in various West Indian islands including Turnbull’s Grenada. On arrival in England in 1772 he was advised to get himself baptised as Christianity would provide safety. ‘I was called *Steuart* by my master, but in order that I might embrace this ordinance, I was called *John Steuart*’.⁸⁴ Yet, Cugoano attacks the assumptions of pagan ‘savagery’, and Catholic barbarity produced by the ‘civilised’ and ‘enlightened’ ‘philosophers of the North’, such as Hume and Turnbull. Cugoano writes,

The poor negroes in the West-Indies, have suffered enough by such religion as the philosophers of the North produce; Protestants, as they are called, are the most barbarous slave-holders, and there are none can equal the Scotch floggers and negroe-drivers, and the barbarous Dutch cruelties.⁸⁵

Similarly Equiano attacks Turnbull and Tobin for their deviation ‘from Christian precepts’, noting ‘Malignity and benevolence do not well associate, and humanity is a root that seldom flourishes in the soil of a planter.’⁸⁶ Yet Turnbull mobilises his own discourse of sentiment, warning that ‘Warm philanthropy’ should ‘begin at home’.

Humanity has no need to visit distant regions to search for objects of distress in another race of men...here let sensibility drop her tear of generous pity—here let charity stretch forth her liberal hand. (p63-64)

Thus, Turnbull invokes Grainger’s section on the Scotian miners ‘sequester’d from the day’ to argue that, ‘Compared with the miners and other subterraneous labourers, the condition of the negroes is infinitely better’ (p61-62). By contrast, Ramsay had promoted the image of the free labourer who, reliant on his own ‘industry’ and ‘vigour’, ‘will surely exert more strength, more alacrity than a starved, depressed, dispirited wretch, who drawls out his task with the

⁸⁴ Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, by Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa*, (London: 1787), p. 4. This information appears in a biographical note under the four-page edition of contents published 1787 found on ECCO. Cugoano only publishes in his African name, unlike Equiano who also used his assigned name Gustavus Vasa. Following publication Cugoano falls off the historical record.

⁸⁵ Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments*, p. 146.

⁸⁶ ‘To Mr. Gordon Turnbull, Author of an “Apology for Negro Slavery”, for the Public Advertiser, 5 February 1788. Re-printed in Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), pp. 332-3.

whip over him' (p120). This relationship between the productive, moral and psychological benefits of free labour versus bonded labour, in which Scotian miners featured prominently, would become key in the subsequent abolition debates discussed in the following chapter.

Most significantly, Ramsay's discussion of colonial slavery is preceded by and therefore filtered through a consideration of Scottish slavery, as proposed by Andrew Fletcher (1653?-1716).

Before I consider slavery as it has been introduced and established by Europeans in the western world, I shall lay before the reader a plan of that celebrated friend to liberty, Fletcher, of Saltoun, for reducing his country back into the ancient state of master and slave, in order to obviate some temporary inconveniences imagined to arise from freedom. (p36-37)

Before he became the leading Scottish patriot and opponent of Union, the improving landlord Fletcher proposed solving the disastrous problems of famine and beggary of the 1690s through mass enslavement. Fletcher notes that among the ancients there was less instances of vagabondage as the poor were slaves who were cared for by their masters, in return for devoted service. Misguided Christians broke this virtuous bond in the name of spiritual freedom. Yet this lack of paternal care results in the modern necessity of alms-houses, hospitals, poor-houses, and the increase of theft and robbery. Fletcher's ideal society then removes the temptation of property from the poor, to be replaced with the devotion to a master who cares and provides.⁸⁷ Sir John Wedderburn's memorial had also picked up on this argument as it sought to demonstrate the ubiquity and normality of slavery across Ancient Greece and Rome, 'the ancestors of our neighboring country the ancient Germans', the contemporary Spaniards, Italians and Russians and all the countries of the Americas. The memorial argues,

Plato in his Republic, Cicero in his Treatise de Legibus, Sir Thomas More in his Utopie, And our countryman Mr. Fletcher of Salton, have all considered the institution of slavery as a proper ingredient in a perfect government.⁸⁸

This fine example of a specifically Scottish post-Union Enlightenment argument enlists a pedigree of classical, English and Scottish thinkers to assert the universal legitimacy of slavery.

⁸⁷ Sir Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, 'The Second Discourse Concerning the Affairs of Scotland; written in 1698', *Two Discourses concerning the Affairs of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1698).

⁸⁸ NAS, Wedderburn v Knight, p50.

However Ramsay argues, on the contrary, that the best way to ensure fidelity and honesty is to give the poor a greater stake in society, as was successfully achieved in Scotland.

[Fletcher] remarks that the Highlanders of his days were savage thieves and beggars, because subject to their chieftains; and would not his establishment of the like subjection in the civilised low-lands, in time, produce the like effects? (p47)

In other words, would the program of enslavement not produce the same kind of vagabondage amongst the lowlanders, now dependent on their masters, as is prevalent amongst the Highlanders who are in thrall to their chiefs? Ramsay draws lessons from the Scottish experience that holds significance for the contemporary Caribbean. Instead of Fletcher's counter-productive suggestion, Scotland actually increased liberty and abolished hereditary jurisdictions; this had the effect of increasing prosperity in industry and trade, and swelling Britannia's military might. Ramsay argues,

Had his plan taken place, would so many towns have arisen, or been enlarged in various parts of the country? Should we have heard of the manufactures at Paisly? [sic] Could Glasgow have been able to have endured a loss... of perhaps a million of money, by American independency, almost without once complaining?...Would oppressed half-starved slaves have made such hardy soldiers...as the many ten thousands of Scotchmen that in every war since his time, have bled for the rights of empire? (p50-51)⁸⁹

James Tobin criticises this section on Fletcher as, 'What immediate connection this has with Mr. Ramsay's own plan...I do not easily discover';⁹⁰ yet the message is clear. The Caribbean colonies, like Scotland, would prosper under conditions of free labour, liberal laws and religious instruction. This fine example of a Scoto-British discourse of Caribbean 'improvement' weaves together the fates of the two Atlantic archipelagos. In an argument that affirms Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), it invokes the benefits of commerce and increased production, as Thomson had urged a 'patriot' to perform for Scotland. Unlike Grainger's equivocation, Ramsay promotes the healthy free labourer who would produce more sugar for the motherland than forced slaves; while merchants in Britain would gain an

⁸⁹ The reference to the million pound loss is the estimate that Glasgow tobacco merchants were owed at the time of the American War of Independence which they would no longer be able to recuperate. That the merchants of Glasgow absorbed the loss was long considered a mark of how far the city had come in strength of trading. In many cases they transferred to Caribbean sugar.

⁹⁰ Tobin, *Cursory Remarks* (1785), p. 19. Tobin's criticism of Mr. Ramsay's plan to temporarily enslave and sell British 'vagabonds' is closer to the mark. (p20)

increased market of discerning consumers, thirsty for British goods. The 'improvement' of the sugar islands would then produce a mutually beneficial relationship, bringing the Caribbean into the weave of that 'indissoluble tie' that had previously knit Scotland and England together. Towards the end of the century a consensus formed around the desirability of 'improvement' in the West Indies. Whether that improvement would be best achieved with free or unfree labour, and how that freedom should be achieved, would become the crucial feature of relations between Scotland, Britain and the Caribbean in subsequent decades.

Chapter 3: Robert Burns: Slavery, Freedom and Abolition 1786-1800

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,
By Nature's law design'd,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?

➤ Man was Made to Mourn

I am naeboddy's lord,
I'll be slave to naeboddy;
I hae a gude braid sword,
I'll take dunts frae naeboddy.

➤ I Hae a Wife o' My Ain

A negro wench under the rod of a West-Indian mistress...
(is an) enviable predicament to mine.¹

Towards the end of the eighteenth century Scoto-British imperial writing would engage more directly with discussions of slavery as the issue emerged amongst a host of key social questions that transformed the meanings of 'freedom' and 'liberty'. Burns engaged deeply with the modes of pastoral, georgic and the language of sentiment that mediated these debates over social transformation. This chapter will explore Robert Burns as a *lieu de mémoire* for Scottish-Caribbean relations, developing themes of 'improvement' and 'amelioration' raised in the previous chapter as they played out for both free labourers and slaves towards the turn of the century. Pierre Nora's evocative conceptualisation of collective memory attached to *lieux* is often translated as 'sites of memory'. However this can be misleading as Nora's *lieux* are broader than physical 'sites' alone. Therefore the translation 'realms of memory' better captures the figurative range of Nora's *lieux* that includes books, ideologies and persons. For example, he considers the historical figure of Joan of Arc as a *lieu de mémoire*, providing a suggestive model for this chapter's approach to Burns. However we must consider the element

¹ Letter to William Corbet, Dumfries, (September 1792), in *The Complete Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by James A. Mackay (Ayr: Alloway Publishing, 1990), p. 599.

of personal biography that distinguishes a personality from the competing layers of memory that fasten to, say, a monument. This chapter will consider Burns' biographical and textual (dis)entanglement with the Caribbean in relation to the subsequent competition over his memory. In this way, Burns serves here as a portal to a wider discussion of slavery, freedom and abolition in Scotland. To consider Burns as a *lieu de mémoire* for Scottish-Caribbean relations, might at first seem curious given the scanty evidence of his personal involvement with the abolitionist movement that peaked around him. In another sense, of course, the failure to recognise the wider significance of Burns' planned emigration to Jamaica renders him an entirely appropriate *lieu* for Scottish-Caribbean relations, mirroring the marginalisation of the Caribbean plantations in Scottish national historiography. The prickly defensiveness of some Burnsians echoes the anxiety around recovering the memory of Scotland and slavery, with the fear that to sully the bard is to sully the nation.² The purpose, however, is neither to heap blame on the shoulders of one man, nor discredit a people. Rather I propose that Burns provides a particularly profound example of the tensions between 'free labour ideology' and abolitionist reform at the close of the eighteenth century.

It is now better known that Scotland's 'national bard' was preparing to travel to the West Indies in 1786 to work as a 'negro driver' on a slave plantation in Jamaica, before the success of his 'Kilmarnock edition' that year provided a more palatable route out of poverty. *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) has long been seen as a crowning achievement in Scottish letters: re-invigorating the Scottish vernacular and elevating its poetical possibilities. In this way, it would certainly be possible to examine Burns as a national *lieu de mémoire* for Scotland, in the manner that Pierre Nora intended for France. Such a reading might combine his 'everyman' status, his evocations of patriotism and the worth of working man, with Burns suppers, schoolroom recitals and the Birthplace Museum, though that is not the aim of this study. Here it will be argued that the Caribbean is infused throughout this key document of Scottish culture, the prospect of Jamaican emigration resurfaces as a constant threatening underpresence throughout the collection. Since this first publication Burns has been received as a poet of natural humanity and sympathetic feeling. His work and legacy have ever been mobilised by liberal, radical and conservative interests alike in Scotland, the Caribbean, and the wider world. As such, our model of the *lieu de mémoire* is both transnational and, to

² Gerard Carruthers' magazine article, 'Burns and Slavery', *The Drouth*, 25 (2007) received a flurry of hostile media attention and drew much ire for broaching the subject.

borrow Sarah Dillon's term—'palimpsestuous'. As outlined in the introduction, Dillon's adjective is intended to invoke Thomas De Quincey's sense of the 'involved', multi-layered presence of history on the palimpsestuous parchment.³ As chemists employ reagents to render the effaced writing of a papyrus or a parchment visible again, so we can shed light on the varied layers of meaning concerning 'slavery' and 'freedom' inscribed onto the *lieu* of Burns. Dillon stresses that the layers of writing on a palimpsest that overwrite each other are rarely consistent and coherent. Thus, a palimpsestuous *lieu de mémoire* might be 'reused or altered but still bears visible traces of its earlier form' in a fashion which 'layers meaning on top of meaning'.⁴

Modern attempts to recover the memory of Scottish-Caribbean and 'Scotland and Slavery' history have consistently mined the layers of the Burns story. They note the 'paradox' of the abandoned emigration, coupled with the relative lack of comment on slavery from the author of 'A Man's a Man for a' that'.⁵ In an interesting novel of 'speculative fiction', Andrew O. Lindsay's *Illustrious Exile* (2006) is written in the form of Burns' journal had he undertaken the voyage to the West Indies. It explores the possibilities of transporting Burns' familiar Scottish mindscape into a Caribbean context. It draws parallels between non-Christian beliefs such as Halloween's bogles and kelpies in the Scotland of Burns' memory, and the voodoo duppies and hungas he encounters amongst the enslaved. Some of Burns' best known works, which themselves form part of the collective memory of the Scottish nation, are 'translated' into a new Caribbean context. 'Tam o'Shanter' becomes the drunken Dutchman on Demerara, 'Jan van Leyden'.⁶ However, the Burns in this novel moves from naivety to

³ Sarah Dillon, *The Palimpsest*, p. 4.

⁴ (Also quoted in introduction) Jay M. Winter, 'In Conclusion: Palimpsests', *History, Memory, Colonialism*, (2009), p. 167.

⁵ In popular culture, see Clark McGinn for an answer to the question, 'how could *our* Burns, the people's poet, look to become an instrument in what many now call "The Black Holocaust"', <<http://www.friendsofscotland.gov.uk/scotlandnow/issue-06/history/burns-and-slavery.html>> [accessed 12/10/2011]. Geoff Palmer evokes the Burns story in *The Enlightenment Abolished* (2007) and in the *Jamaica Gleaner* newspaper, 'Scots ashamed of role in Jamaican slavery', March 16, 2008, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20080316/news/news3.html>. See also Pat Kane on the Jamaican Burns Night with Sly and Robbie for Celtic Connections 2009: 'Murky Roots of Rabbie Reggae', *The Times* 14 December 2008. Meanwhile the Jamaican connections were not lost on the Robert Burns Birthplace Museum at Alloway the night it hosted Jamaican poet Kwame Dawes in March 2012.

⁶ Jan Van Leyden's Tale: 'As evening licht begins to wane,/ And workers trudge back frae the cane;/ While we sit bousing and succumb/ To a' the warm delights o' rum,/ We think na' on the rotted paals,/ the kokers, ditches and canals... This truth fand honest Jan van Leyden, A chiel in Goed Intent residin'./ Ah Goed Intent! There nane surpasses, Thy fragrant rum and sweet molasses!' Andrew O. Lindsay, *Illustrious Exile: Journal of my Sojourn in the West Indies* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2006), p. 290.

outright abolitionism, expressing spotlessly politically correct attitudes. The famous philanderer here forsakes the practice of concubinage prevalent amongst his companions. He settles into faithful, loving relationships, firstly with Adah an African slave, and secondly Yinta, an exiled Arawak princess through whom he achieves full awareness of the dehumanising effects of colonialism. Despite the tragic ending, Burns' impeccable anti-racism and anti-sexism constrains much of the impact the novel might have made in probing comfortable constructions of Burns' memory. Despite the 'displacement', Burns' reputation and hence Scotland's 'narrative of identity' remain intact. In this manner, the leading abolitionist Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838) is often invoked as an avatar of Burns given that he did travel to Jamaica to work as a book-keeper from 1783 to 1789.⁷ On his return he became a leading liberal reformer, devoting his life first to abolition and later emancipation, including a spell as governor of Sierra Leone.⁸ It is certainly possible that Burns might have returned a committed abolitionist. However it is worth remembering that up to 20,000 Scots travelled to the West Indies in the eighteenth century, though few were going to free the slaves. Meanwhile, in a series of projects, the artist Graham Fagen has tapped the Burns story for ways to explore connections between Scotland and Jamaica in a manner that recalls a Wilson Harris-esque 'tilting of the field' (see introduction). These include cutting a new reggae version of 'The Slaves Lament' (the original song will be examined below) for the *Clean Hands Pure Heart* exhibition at Glasgow's Tramway theatre in 2005.⁹ This was followed by the *Downpresserer* exhibition (the name taken from a Peter Tosh track) in Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art in 2007 that formed part of the commemorations for the bi-centenary of abolition that year.

⁷ See for example, Eric Graham, *Burns and the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire*, (2009), p. 94.

⁸ See Iain Whyte's new biography (discussed below) *Zachary Macaulay 1768-1838, The Steadfast Scot in the British Anti-Slavery Movement*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

⁹ The producer Adrian Sherwood provided the musician, On-U Sound regular Skip McDonald and the singer, once of *Asian Dub Foundation*, Ghetto Priest. The video is available here: <http://www.myspace.com/adrianmaxwellsherwood>.

Abolition Debates and Scotland

We are unwilling to believe that in this enlightened age, a narrow selfishness, and a sordid attention to mere profit and loss, has taken such hold of mankind, as to deaden their feelings of right and wrong, and to render them indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow creatures.

➤ *Address to the Inhabitants of Glasgow*, 1791.¹⁰

Examining abolition through the case of Burns invites a focus on the ‘free labour ideology’ that played a crucial role in the politics of both abolition and the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Immanuel Wallerstein argues that the French Revolution solidified two main features. Firstly social change and progress became possible and normal; secondly the concept of ‘sovereignty’ was moved from the monarch or legislature to ‘the people’—now conceived as a rational animal, capable of participating in political decisions. The idea that had long been growing of the sovereignty of the people prioritised ‘merit’ over inherited privilege. Although employers had their own motivations for promoting a form of ‘free labour ideology’, for workers it conveyed a sense of ‘self-worth created by dutiful work’ that improved the character of the free labourer, and led to national prosperity.¹¹ In 1767 the Jacobite political economist James Steuart had drawn a distinction between industry and labour, analogous to the distinction between the head and the hands. *Industry* was ‘the application to ingenious labour in a free man’ which ‘must be voluntary’; while mere *labour* ‘may be performed by slaves.’¹² For Steuart the figure of the slave suffered ‘the highest degree of dependence’;¹³ in contrast, Burns would later celebrate the free labourer as, ‘the man o’ independent mind’. Rather than rank and title, ‘dignity’ could be gained from honest toil, and was measured in terms of personal character. Thus, as ‘the people’ now appeared sovereign and rational, to be enslaved or enthralled to another suddenly seemed anomalous to a much wider layer of society,

¹⁰ [Pamphlet] *Address to the Inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley and the Neighbourhood, concerning the African Slave Trade, by a Society in Glasgow* (Glasgow: Alex Adam, 1791), p. 15. Signed by David Dale, founder of New Lanark and father-in-law of Robert Owen. See Whyte, p. 91.

¹¹ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 248.

¹² James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy, Being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations, in which are particularly considered Population, Agriculture, Trade, Industry, Money, Coin, Interest, Circulation, Banks, Exchange, Public Credit, and Taxes* (London: 1767), II, I, p. 166. Steuart does not advocate free labour in the ‘sugar colonies’ however. In his opinion free labour could not compete with slave labour there as the products come cheaper.

¹³ Steuart, p. 239.

in the way that it had not registered over the previous two centuries. Images of violent enslavement served to demarcate the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable forms of labour relations that united employers and workers in a common cause, although it would be understood in conflicting ways by each.

As the ‘participation in decisions, or at least appearing to have the political power to influence them, is critically important in free labour societies’, the late eighteenth century saw the first recognisably modern national campaigns to change social ills.¹⁴ In the midst of such transformations, the French revolution crystallised a trinity of political positions. Firstly the conservatives sought to suppress movements for change, rejecting popular sovereignty to extoll monarchy, church, notables and the family. Secondly the liberals accepted some change as inevitable, but sought to limit and control the rate of change. They would embrace limited progress only once ‘the people’ had been properly educated into model citizens. Thirdly the radicals would argue it was not individuals who had to change to meet the system, but the system itself which had to change. The leadership of abolitionism in Britain remained largely (although not exclusively) in the hands of the liberal reformers.

Historiographical debates over the causes of abolition fall into four main schools of thought concerning social, cultural and economic changes in Britain and the colonies. The first view, which had been dominant since Thomas Clarkson’s *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade* (1808) presents abolition within the narrative arc of the nation’s Christian and moral progress.¹⁵ Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) sought to overturn more than a century of such British Whig history, arguing that slavery was only abolished once it had become unprofitable.¹⁶ However in the 1970s, Roger Anstey and Seymour Drescher refuted the ‘decline theory’, demonstrating that the colonies were still in fact highly profitable at the time of abolition, thereby undermining the economic determinism of the Williams thesis.¹⁷ A third position focuses on the abolition and

¹⁴ *Terms of Labour: Slavery, Serfdom, and Free Labour*, ed. by Stanley L. Engerman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 14.

¹⁵ Thomas Clarkson, *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, 2 Vols (London: L.Taylor, 1808).

¹⁶ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1944). British firms refused to publish the book until 1963.

¹⁷ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810*, (London: MacMillan, 1970); Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977).

later emancipation campaigns as spaces in which previously disenfranchised groups such as the middle classes and women could assert their own interests in the political arena. David Brion Davis argued that anti-slavery reflected the ideology of the burgeoning middle class that favoured free labour in a free market. This was allied, problematically, to a collection of religious, political and humanitarian ideas that promoted ‘enlightened’ thinking revolving around benevolence and sensibility.¹⁸ Such are the tensions that animate the epigraph above from a Glasgow abolitionist pamphlet that plays enlightened sympathy off against capitalist self-interest. Meanwhile, feminist critics have highlighted the vital role of women in the anti-slavery campaigns despite their exclusion from positions of formal power.¹⁹ Finally, the fourth position transfers the focus from the metropole to developments within the colonies themselves; this approach can be traced from C.L.R James’ *The Black Jacobins* (1938), through Williams’ final chapter on ‘Slaves and Slavery’, to Robin Blackburn’s *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848* (1988).²⁰ This approach emphasises the slaves themselves as instrumental actors in the achievement of their own freedom through acts of resistance and rebellion, in combination with social and political developments in the metropole to produce an account of abolition that challenges mono-causal and Eurocentric accounts.

In recent years a ‘devolved’ historiography has begun to emerge which usefully considers the particular case of Scotland in slavery and abolition, as Jerry Hunter has done for Wales.²¹ However, although this approach successfully shifts the focus away from the ‘Clapham Sect’, it can risk repeating some of the rhythms of the original Whiggish history of national progress, this time measuring the magnitude of the Scottish ‘contribution’. Indeed, the framing of most studies address Scotland’s role in slavery within an overall narrative weighted towards abolition. This is revealed in the titles of Charles Duncan Rice’s early (1981) *Scots*

¹⁸ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770- 1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

¹⁹ See Clare Midgley, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992); Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (London: Routledge, 1992); Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender and British Slavery, 1713-1833* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

²⁰ C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938), 3rd edn (London: Allison & Busby, 1980); Williams, pp. 197- 208; Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988).

²¹ Jerry Hunter, ‘America Gaeth a’r Cymru/ The Welsh and American Slavery’, 3 part TV documentary, screened on Welsh Language Channel S4C, (2006). <http://www.bangor.ac.uk/news/full-ori.php.en?Id=56>. Nini Rodgers has also produced a study, which considers Ireland and slavery in relation to the United Kingdom. However as Ireland is an independent nation it is not strictly speaking a ‘devolved’ history. *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 1612-1865*, (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

Abolitionists 1833-1861 concerning the later emancipation campaign in the United States; and more recently Iain Whyte's pair of books, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* from 2006, and his biography of *Zachary Macauley 1768-1838: The Steadfast Scot in the British Anti-slavery Movement* (2011).²² Reflecting the changed critical landscape, Alexander Murdoch's recent (2010) *Scotland and America, c.1600-c.1800* devotes far more attention to slavery than Andrew Hook's similarly titled *Scotland and America*, first published in 1975.²³ Yet, even Murdoch's chapter titled 'Scotland and Slavery' betrays a bias towards abolition, in a manner that seems paradigmatic of a Whiggish history that portrays slavery as a shameful burden that had to be shed before the nation found its true calling in liberal modernity. The opening paragraph of the 'Scots and Slavery' chapter notes the importance of slave profits yet proceeds:

By the late eighteenth century, however, the rise of opposition to 'British' slavery in Scotland influenced the changing nature of Scottish society as Enlightenment ideas became less focussed on 'improvement' and more about equality... Scotland was no longer a politically independent state or kingdom but national identity instead became associated with an idea of a moral mission. This was one reason why Scotland was so important in the development of the Liberal Party in the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century.²⁴

As the paragraph develops the challenging issue of profits from chattel slavery raised at the opening are subsumed into a narrative of progress that closes with Scotland as the home of liberal politics, opposed to 'British' slavery. Despite a rhetoric that clearly states the central importance of slavery to Scotland in the period, this is subtly disavowed in the unfolding of evidence. It risks a continuing dislocation of historical responsibility as abolitionism becomes Scottish, while slavery remains 'British'. Here the nineteenth century is associated less with Victorian capitalism and empire, and more with Scottish liberal modernity. The following chapters of this thesis intend to question much more closely the liberal politics of abolition which did not replace Enlightenment 'improvement' as Murdoch suggests, but dovetailed with the georgic mode raised in the previous chapter to produce a georgic *mission civilisatrice*. The liberal Scoto-British insistence on gradual amelioration for Scottish labourers and Caribbean

²² C. Duncan Rice, *Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); *Zachary Macauley 1768-1838: The Steadfast Scot in the Anti-Slavery Movement* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

²³ Andrew Hook, *Scotland and America: a study of cultural relations, 1750-1835* (Glasgow: Blackie, 1975).

²⁴ Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c1600- c 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 93.

slaves, against more radical solutions, managed to prolong slavery until near the middle of the nineteenth century.

Murdoch draws heavily on Whyte who is careful to balance his account of abolition, noting the large-scale Scottish investment in the slave colonies, and the ‘countervoices’ articulating pro-slavery demands, such as those of the Glasgow West India Society that was founded in 1808. Concerning abolition, Whyte largely follows the school of David Brion Davis to emphasise the role that ideological protest, particularly that of ‘civilised and humane’ religion combined with ‘resilient and committed leadership’, can play in political movements. However he rejects one of Davis’ early arguments that Duncan Rice applied to Scotland—that anti-slavery functioned as a display of displaced bourgeois humanity at a time of increasing class inequality.²⁵ Whether Whyte’s grounds for differentiation are proven remain uncertain, as Seymour Drescher notes: ‘As it stands, Whyte’s story may actually indicate more convergence than divergence between English and Scottish abolitionism.’²⁶ Indeed a degree of distortion is detectable at times. Regarding the late eighteenth and nineteenth century abolition campaigns, England is twice held to be defined by Queen Elizabeth I’s notorious proclamation against ‘blackamoors’ in 1596, around two hundred years prior.²⁷ The sense of England as a site with its own seething mass of contradictory forces is lost, as the distinctiveness of Scotland is enhanced by downplaying the complexity of the comparative site. Whyte’s characterisation of the situation in Scotland where ‘Enlightenment ideas of benevolence fused with religious awakening to produce a distinctive response’; could certainly stand for England too. The prominence of the Scottish universities and the Church of Scotland suggest an occasionally distinct design within the same overall pattern. Abolition was, after all, the first modern, mass campaign to encompass the United Kingdom. Whyte also notes a certain ‘Scottish educated rigor to the presentation of facts’. Yet as he acknowledges elsewhere, enlightened, educated, pious Scots could just as easily turn their talents to defending slavery, an admission which does not feature in the central argument. Nonetheless, the ‘national lens’

²⁵ Whyte, p. 250.

²⁶ Seymour Drescher, review of *Scotland and the Abolition*, *English Historical Review* 497 (2007): 765-768.

²⁷ Whyte, *Scotland and Abolition*, p. 66 & p. 100. In an open letter to the Lord Mayor of London in 1596, Elizabeth I complained ‘there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are already here to manie,’ and ordered that they be deported to Spain and Portugal. An instruction she would repeat one week later, and again in 1601. For a close discussion of these proclamations in terms of race, native ‘indolence’ and war with Spain, see Emily C. Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor: From Alcazar to Othello*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), especially Chapter 4 on ‘Too Many Blackamoors’, pp. 100-117.

can bring into focus often overlooked features—where abolitionism has been understood as driven by dissenting Quakers and evangelicals in England, Whyte demonstrates how abolitionism brought together the Moderate and Popular wings of the Church of Scotland. This certainly stands for the eighteenth century campaign, though secessionists seem to take over petitioning from the established church during the campaign in the 1820s. Whyte's discussion of 'the five'—Ramsay, Macaulay, William Dickson, James Stephen, and Henry Brougham—London Scots who made their mark on the abolition campaign is subtitled the 'Scottish Stamp'. Detectable here is the tension that remains unresolved throughout. Does national background provide one filter amongst many through which political issues are distilled, or is Scottishness a vital ingredient that produces such 'steadfast' abolitionists?

Freedom, Slavery and Ayrshire

As suggested in the previous chapter, the transformations and traumas of agrarian revolution and the development of early capitalism which had crept over England over the previous centuries, were truncated in Scotland into the second half of the 18th century; an era which spans, almost exactly, the life of Burns. Rather than the settled peasant existence Burns (1759-1796) is often portrayed as enjoying, it is the combination of traditional folk culture and modern wars, politics and turbulence which defines his biography. The presence of Atlantic slavery was never far away on the west coast of Scotland. According to Whyte, 'Between 1719 and 1776, there were thirty-six newspaper advertisements for runaways who were brought from the Caribbean, the American colonies or the Indies, with nine notices of slaves for sale, four of these being in 1766.'²⁸ A series of legal cases of slaves claiming their freedom punctuate the eighteenth century, including the Scottish cases of *Montgomery v Sheddan* (1756), *Spens v Dalrymple* (1769) and *Knight v Wedderburn* (1778), as well as the *Somerset* decision in England in 1772. The first case took place in Burns' Ayrshire, though three years before his birth. James Montgomery served Robert Sheddan at Morrishill, where he had been baptised by a sympathetic minister in Beith, before Sheddan intended to sell him back to slavery in the Americas. When he refused, the three Sheddan brothers: 'bound my arms with ropes and having mounted their horses dragged and drove me along with them from the said Rob Sheddon's house in Beith to New Port Glasgow being about ten miles distant'.

²⁸ Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition*, p. 12.

Montgomery escaped though he was incarcerated at the Edinburgh tollbooth where he died before his case came to court.²⁹ Eric Graham in *Burns and the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire* (2009) demonstrates the long-term investment of Ayrshire notables such as the Hamiltons, Fergussons, and Hunter Blairs in the slave societies of the Caribbean.³⁰ In Ayrshire and Scotland, the Atlantic networks were firmly in place, then, for a young literate man to seek employment at the imperial frontiers.³¹ Burns himself complained of losing so many of his school friends who lent him books to the empire: 'Parting with these, my young friends and benefactors, as they dropped off for the east or west Indies, was often to me a sore affliction.'³² In 1786, Burns accepted a position on a sugar plantation at Ayr Mount, Port Antonio in the North East of Jamaica.³³

During this dramatic year he bade farewell to friends, family and Scotland in a number of letters, poems and songs, some of which featured in *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786).³⁴ Nigel Leask has recently shown this phenomenally successful 'Kilmarnock edition', to be skillfully engaged in the politics of the Scots Pastoral. Burns adopts the voice of a Meliboean exile facing dangers of dispossession, ruin and exile. He reports to Dr. Moore that he based his picture of the haughty, grasping factor in his opening poem 'Twa Dogs', on the 'scoundrel tyrant' who hounded his own family into penury when he was young.³⁵ Leask continues that 'Kilmarnock's pastoral politics are stated at the outset in an eclogue between two dogs (*not* two shepherds) favourably comparing the hard lives of the poor to the *otium* of

²⁹ All quotes from 'Montgomery v Sheddan' (1756), National Archives of Scotland (NAS), CS234/S/3/12, p. 3-13. In the second case, discussed in Chapter 5, it was the master Dr Dalrymple who died before the case came to court against David Spens of Methil, Fife.

³⁰ Eric Graham, *Burns and the Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire* (2009).

³¹ Mungo Park (1771-1806) was also the son of an improving tenant farmer, in Selkirk. Park would study medicine at Edinburgh University before voyaging to Sumatra and West Africa in the 1790s. He is believed to be the first European to encounter the Niger River and his accounts of the expeditions were hugely popular. See Mungo Park, *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: Performed in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London: John Murray, 1816).

³² Letter to John Moore, Mauchline, (2 August 1787), (CL, p. 250).

³³ During his spell at the University of the West Indies, Alexander Kinghorn located the deeds to Charles Douglas' Ayr-Mount, noting it was 'a smallish estate'. Alexander Kinghorn, 'Robert Burns and Jamaica', *A Review of English Literature*, Vol 8, no. 3, (July, 1967), p. 70.

³⁴ These include 'The Farewell Song to the Banks of Ayr', proclaiming 'For her I'll trace a distant shore,/ That Indian wealth may luster throw/ Around my Highland lassie, O!'. Yet, 'Farewell to Eliza' suggests he had more than Mary on his mind. Moreover, he pinpoints the origin of his woes in 'Lines Written on a Bank Note' where he curses, 'For lack o' thee, I leave this much-loved shore' (l. 11).

³⁵ See Letter to Dr. Moore explaining that after his father's 'generous Master' died... 'we fell into the hands of a Factor who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my Tale of two dogs...(whose) insolent, threatening epistles...used to set us all in tears.'

Skoblow notes the sequencing of the poems form, ‘a kind of structural narrative (even a biographical narrative, ending with the bard’s own epitaph)’.⁴⁰ Burns’ *copia verborum*⁴¹ allows him to explore such themes both with the alacrity and verve of the Scots bardie voice—‘a rhyming, ranting, raving, billie’;⁴² and in the Augustan English of the ‘graveyard poems’, that dominate the middle section. Their ominous titles: ‘The Lament’, ‘Despondency: An Ode’, and ‘To Ruin’ lead up to ‘On A Scotch Bard, Gone to the West Indies’ that, placed near the end, represents a personal nadir in the narrative arc. Thus, the doleful prospect of Caribbean emigration looms over the collection as a constant omen, portending the likely outcome for a precarious tenant farmer should the ‘best laid plans o’ mice and men gang aft agley.’⁴³ Now the wintry ‘Nor’ West’ wind has brought the ‘Misfortune’ that had blown through previous poems, as the exile that had long been forewarned has come to pass. Burns adopts the rueful voice of a fellow poet to portray the scene of mourning amongst the local community following the departure of their bardie. It is not until the penultimate stanza that the speaker mentions the West Indies, addressing the ‘Jamaica bodies’, he assures them that ‘He wad na wrang the vera deil,/ That’s owre the sea’ (l. 52-54). Carruthers points out the unconscious but galling irony that Burns would hope to live ‘cosily’ amidst the slave economy. ‘The problem, precisely, is that the Devil most certainly was at work over the sea in the plantations in Jamaica.’⁴⁴ Furthermore, in the final stanza, the speaker raises a toast to his ‘rhyme-composing billie’ wishing that he may ‘flourish like a lily’ (l.57). Is it an overly modern reading to shudder at the image of the white flower flourishing on Jamaica? Burns’ imagery here is at best ill-judged.

Indeed, not one of his ‘farewell pieces’ suggest Burns had given any great thought to his proposed destination. Such a lack of consideration lends weight to the argument that Carruthers subscribes to—that Burns never seriously intended to emigrate, that it was a fantasy produced by his humiliation at the rejection of the Armours. Yet, it begs the question that if he never intended to emigrate, what exactly were his intentions when he took the

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Skoblow, *Dooble Tongue, Scots, Burns, contradiction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), p. 174.

⁴¹ Burns’ own phrase for the enlarged linguistic register open to him as a poet of Ayrshire rural idiom and Scots literary heritage, as well as being a master of English poetic diction.

⁴² ‘The Twa Dogs’ l. 24.

⁴³ ‘To a Mouse’ l. 39-40.

⁴⁴ Gerard Carruthers, ‘Burns and Slavery’, *Fickle Man: Robert Burns in the 21st Century* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press, 2009), p. 167.

concrete step of signing his farm over entirely to his brother in July 1786, a month before the proposed voyage. Maurice Lindsay reasons that ‘from the very beginning the Jamaican plan was utterly repugnant to him’, therefore:

As the pressure of home events upon him unexpectedly slackened; his resolution not unnaturally wavered...It had been an emergency measure, and the emergency was over: which is not to say that neither emergency nor the measures to cope with it had never existed.⁴⁵

To argue that his planned emigration was merely chimerical might suggest an attempt to deflect blame from the national bard, to shield him from the smear of slavery. Yet Carruthers continues, ‘this is not to have Burns off the hook...On the contrary, in this episode of his life, Burns, I would argue, is guilty of a failure of sympathy, a failure in imagination.’⁴⁶ Indeed, if imagination might be defined as the ability to form mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses, the absence of any consideration of black slavery in poems concerning the West Indies represents a major failure of imaginative sympathy.

Abolitionism and Mutual Sympathy

Such a failure in these pieces is perhaps more understandable given that the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade was not founded in London until the following May 1787. Later that year, Thomas Clarkson published the gruesome evidence in support of abolition—sailors’ testimonies, iron-handcuffs, leg-shackles, and thumb screws—in *A Summary View of the Slave Trade and of the Probable Consequences of its Abolition* (1787). This opened the door for a flood of pamphlet wars and polemical poetry. The publication of Olaudah Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative* (1789) with the accompanying national tour through England, Scotland and Ireland was an influential contribution, purporting to be the first hand account of an African with direct experience of the slave trade and the condition of slaves.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Maurice Lindsay, *Robert Burns* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1954), p. 76. David Daiches maintains that Burns never intended to travel, though Kinghorn and Kinsley concur with Lindsay, (K, iii, p1176).

⁴⁶ Carruthers, ‘Burns and Slavery’, p. 166.

⁴⁷ Controversy over Equiano’s origins stretch back to the eighteenth century when anti-abolitionists argued he was not born in Africa, as he claimed, but North America. Vincent Carretta in searching for proof of his African birthplace uncovered instead a baptismal certificate stating his birthplace as South Carolina. This would render the portrayal of the Essaka region of Igboland, and his capture in the early sections of the *Narrative* a fictional portrayal rather than eyewitness account. However the proof is inconclusive. Vincent Carretta, ‘Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-century Question of Identity’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 20, 3

These works provided a firm basis for the first abolitionist speech of William Wilberforce in the House of Commons on 12 May 1789, only two months before the storming of the Bastille in Paris (a contemporaneity of movements which would prove fateful).

William Dickson's tour of Scotland in 1792 disseminated the powerful *Abstract of Evidence* and introduced the symbol of the kneeling slave in chains with the motto 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother?' The Abolition movement gained support from wide sections of society: academics, churches, magistrates, councils, Synods, Presbyteries, trade guilds, etc. In the Scottish context, Whyte has traced petitions from a host of communities calling for abolition including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paisley, Dundee, Aberdeen, and, indeed, Ayr. Of the 519 petitions Parliament received in 1792, 185 came from Scotland, representing 35% of the total.⁴⁸ Therefore, the textual and biographical evidence of Burns' concern with colonial slavery is surprisingly scant in the context of this widespread and vocal abolition movement. The name of Robert Burns has not been found on any of the petitions and Burns did not meet Dickson during his spell in Dumfries. It is possible that he wanted to say more but that he felt confined in his position since mid-1788 in the Excise, as a government employee was forbidden to make political statements. Yet, the treasurer for the very active Edinburgh Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was Alexander Alison of the Excise Office, and his 'colleague in that department, Campbell Halliburton, undertook the major work of the committee throughout this whole period.'⁴⁹ Their positions may have been more senior and secure than Burns' own, though we might at least expect some obvious allusions in his poetry and songs considering the powerful political messages in his work of the period that he continued to circulate amidst the climate of fear during government oppression.

Around the late eighteenth century Atlantic world, it seemed a 'many-headed hydra' threatened to overwhelm the world-system. American farmers had rejected and finally defeated the British empire in 1785; Toussaint Louverture's revolution in Saint Domingue

(December 1999), pp. 96-105. For a useful summary of the continuing debate, see <http://www.brycchancarey.com/equiano/nativity.htm> [accessed 29/03/2012].

⁴⁸ Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition*, p. 85. As Whyte notes, this striking percentage deserves some caution as Clarkson urged one petition to come from each community on his tour of England. Dickson may have been less forceful in this, resulting in a number of smaller petitions being sent from different groups in the same area. Closer examination of the number of signatories on each petition would better establish the proportions involved. Nonetheless, the popular commitment to abolition was clearly substantial North and South of the border.

⁴⁹ Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition*, p. 88.

(1791-1804) would defeat three rival empires, and threatened to overthrow the entire slave system of the Caribbean; while in January 1793 the French people decapitated their own king. ‘Critics of the [French] Revolution, with Edmund Burke at their head, saw the Saint Domingue slave revolution as an ultimate sign of the revolutionary depravity of France and the inhuman barbarity of the black Caribbean slave populations.’⁵⁰ In Britain, over the course of 1792 the government began to view the increasing agitation for reform as ‘Jacobinical’ sedition worthy of imprisonment and transportation. It was in this atmosphere that the liberal reformers of the abolitionist leadership decided to suspend public agitation for ‘liberty’ in case it developed into an alternative form of liberty that spiraled beyond their intentions. In late 1792 the Board of Excise initiated an investigation into Burns’ affairs, provoking him to confide in Mrs Dunlop: ‘I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky politics; but to you I must breathe my sentiments.’⁵¹ Yet Burns continued to take risks; in the same month of Thomas Muir’s trial for sedition, he published ‘Scots Wha Hae’ (1793). He explained to Thomson that this song related to struggles ‘not quite so ancient’. Thus, Burns invokes Scottish heroes of yore, Bruce and Wallace, interpreting their battles as ones of freedom and liberty in order to nourish and fortify contemporary struggles for democratic freedom. Burns puts into Bruce’s mouth a speech before Bannockburn which echoes the language of the French revolution, ‘Tyrants fall in every foe!/ Liberty’s in every blow’.⁵² Notably, Bruce warns his troops that the prospect of defeat by King Edward would result in ‘chains and slaverie’ (l.8). The figure of the coward slave— ‘Wha can fill a coward’s grave/ Wha sae base as be a Slave?’ (l.10-11)— is contrasted to the man who is brave enough to do battle, ‘free man stand/ or free man fa’ (l.15). Burns’ construction of the brave ‘free labourer’ would consistently collocate ‘cowardice’ with enslavement, even in the midst of the abolitionist campaign; the implications of which are discussed below.

Burns’ relative silence in the thick of the abolition movement is curious given the convergence of three main areas. Firstly the widespread popularity of that movement, outlined

⁵⁰ Wood, *Poetry of Slavery*, p. 208.

⁵¹ Letter to Mrs Dunlop, Dumfries, 2 January 1793. Those sentiments have been prudently snipped from the original letter.

⁵² *Canongate* ascribes the final cry ‘Let us do or die’ to the French Revolution’s Tennis Court Oath (p. 467). However that is, in fact, an anodyne (if significant) statement containing nothing as exciting as ‘let us do or die’. The search continues.

above, also drew support from Moderate churchmen whom Burns admired.⁵³ Secondly that movement was driven and inspired by outspoken and perceptive poets with an interest in political reform. These include, Thomas Day ('The Dying Negro', 1773), William Cowper (*The Task*, 1775), Hannah More (*Slavery: A Poem*, 1788), and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Ode Against the Slave Trade*, 1792—in Greek). Corey Andrews traces a long history of anti-slavery feeling in Scottish letters from Robert Blair (1743), John MacLaurin (1760), James Beattie (1760), through to Rev John Jamieson (1789).⁵⁴ Burns' fellow labouring class poet, the 'Bristol milkmaid' Ann Yearsley ferociously attacked her fellow Bristolians in *Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade* (1788). Finally, sentiment and sensibility were the era's language of currency—'the turn of the age'. Abolitionism made extensive use of this language that, as Carol McGuirk has shown, Burns was also heavily invested in.⁵⁵ Brycchan Carey glosses the related phenomena of sensibility, sentiment and sympathy as follows: 'Sensibility' valued the passions over the intellect, the untutored response over the considered reply, and 'natural genius' over the philosopher or critic. 'Sentiment' had more diffuse meanings relating to 'the ability to feel', 'a conscious openness to feelings', as well as a 'conscious consumption of feelings'.⁵⁶ In 1759, Adam Smith had theorised human emotions emphasising the role of mutual sympathy and benevolence as a force for personal and social improvement.

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.⁵⁷

Thus, abolitionist poetry and plays, it has long been recognised, were replete with figures groaning, sighing, lamenting, weeping, and wailing, the better to provoke the same response in

⁵³ John Russel of Irvine (Popular party), 'black Russel' in 'Twa Herds'. And William Dalrymple of Ayr (Moderate), or 'Dalrymple mild' of 'The Kirk's Alarms' who baptized Burns. Both figures met William Dickson on his 1792 tour.

⁵⁴ MacLaurin was Joseph Knight's lawyer and is discussed in chapter five. Corey Andrews, "'Ev'ry Heart Can Feel": Scottish Poetic Responses to Slavery in the West Indies from Blair to Burns', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 4, Spring/ Summer 2008, < <http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue4/andrews.htm> > [accessed 14/10/2011].

⁵⁵ Carol McGuirk, *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985).

⁵⁶ Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 4-5.

⁵⁷ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000), p. 11.

the reader or spectator. In his classic study, Wylie Sypher reflected the taste of his time in complaining that:

Many a versifier... addressed not the humanity of the reader but his sentiment. Thus anti-slavery poetry was often ethically as well as aesthetically hollow.⁵⁸

However, following the more recent rehabilitation of the reputation of the ‘the age of sensibility’, Brycchan Carey argues, contra-Sypher, that ‘the poets of anti-slavery did not address their reader’s sentiment *instead* of their humanity. They addressed their reader’s humanity *through* their sentiment.’⁵⁹ The ‘age of sensibility’ would appear to contradict the demands of the age of capitalist improvement with its ‘sordid attention to mere profit and loss.’ However Leask points out that, ‘Rather than simply representing a ‘pre-capitalist’ critique of getting and spending... sentimentalism offers a *surplus* response to people, things and events in the world whose form mirrors, just as its content critiques, the laws of the new capitalist economy. Sentimental surplus is about improving the heart, rather than the land (or one’s bank balance)’, and thereby ‘internalizing the surplus value’.⁶⁰

Indeed, Corey Andrews notes that the Scottish physician John Ferrier’s stage adaptation of *Oroonoko* for the Manchester abolition society *The Prince of Angola* (1788) rests on the principles of mutual sympathy articulated by Adam Smith.⁶¹ It is worth noting that ‘Scottish abolitionism’ whether on stage or in verse rarely privileged a particularly ‘Scottish’ perspective, preferring the rhetoric of ‘British’ or ‘universal rights’. Abolitionist poetry was not written in Scots, even by Scottish poets. This underlines that English was the lingua franca with which to influence the public sphere, highlighting again the British-wide nature of the campaign. One partial exception is found in the one act ballad, *The Negro Slaves* (1799) by the Highlander, Archibald MacLaren (1755-1826). A soldier, MacLaren had recently been discharged from military duty against the United Irishmen at Vinegar Hill in 1798.⁶² The play staged in London and Edinburgh, featured a literate slave, Quako, in the role of Oroonoko-esque sentimental hero. Interestingly MacLaren stages intra-British national disputes, as he

⁵⁸ Wylie Sypher, *Guinea’s Captive Kings: British Anti-Slavery Literature of the XVIIIth Century* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), p. 157.

⁵⁹ Brycchan Carey, *Rhetoric of Sensibility* (2005), p. 49. In a rough scheme of periodization Carey gives 1740-1790 as the ‘age of sensibility’. Sentimental techniques went into decline over the nineteenth century and were detested by modernists. Following the Second World War sentiment has been considered critically as a mode worthy of study with its own successes.

⁶⁰ Leask, *Burns and Pastoral*, p. 83.

⁶¹ Corey Andrews, ‘Ev’ry Heart Can Feel’, *IJSL*, 4, (2008).

⁶² Oxford DNB.

reverses the stereotypes of cruelty found in Edward Thompson's figure of 'MacDuggle' in *Sailor's Letters* of the 1760s (see chapter one). Here the English planter Captain Racoon is the paradigm of vanity, cowardice and cruelty (after the manner of Richard Cumberland's 1771 play, *The West-Indian*). McSympathy is a broad-Scots speaking character imbued with Smithean sentiment and benevolence. MacLaren plays on audience expectations of non-standard English on the stage as Quako from the Guinea coast speaks with sonorous English diction. McSympathy remarks to Quako, 'you speak the English language amaist as weel as I dae myself, wha taught ye the pronounciation sae weel?'⁶³ Thus, Sassi notes that 'the inscription of Scottishness in the play is intriguingly complex: on the one side the Scot's linguistic/ cultural diversity is marked as inferior and is presented as a source of amusement, on the other hand that same stance of subordination obviously works, within the play, as a privileged dialogic relation with another subordination.'⁶⁴ There are even hints of McSympathy's Jacobite leanings, as he pledges allegiance 'to my king and country... mind I say my king and country'. He also invokes the Jacobite tune 'Killiecrankie', telling Racoon that had he been out fighting the Indians as should have been then, 'ye wouldnae be sae canty, as the auld sang goes'.⁶⁵ Sassi continues,

The author also suggests the possibility of an easier 'cross-cultural' communication with other subalterns: in this way, he pioneers what will establish itself as a 'master narrative' of Scottish representations of the colonial enterprise in the late twentieth century.⁶⁶

To be sure certain representations of Scottishness have tended to isolate this feature of colonial benevolence, especially since the Scottish Renaissance. Yet McSympathy's performance appears to integrate the Scottish 'man of feeling' within a wider discourse of British sentiment and sympathy (the other English characters who also abhor Racoon should not be forgotten). In the closing speech, McSympathy answers Racoon's charge of 'false humanity' in what is at once an appeal and a challenge to the wider British audience, viewing the play first in London, then Edinburgh.

⁶³ Archibald MacLaren, *The negro slaves, a dramatic piece, of one act, with songs, performed by His Majesty's servants, of the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh; being the original of The blackman and blackbird, Performed at the Amphitheatre, Westminster Bridge* (London: 1799), p. 11. In MacLaren's play *The Highland Drover* (1790), the drover speaks only Gaelic, while the other characters speak only English.

⁶⁴ Carla Sassi, 'Acts of (Un)willed Amnesia', (2007), p. 175.

⁶⁵ MacLaren, *Negro slaves*, p. 8 and p. 20. The presence of Indians and Squaws suggest the play is set in North America (most probably the Carolinas) rather than the Caribbean.

⁶⁶ Carla Sassi, 'Acts of (Un)willed Amnesia', (2007), p. 175.

I hae seen in England, and Ireland too, many a fair bosom heave a sigh, when the sufferings of your sooty colour hae been related; and shame fa' me gin I think there was a single grain o' false humanity in a' their feelings. (p25)

Indeed, the following eight years would see a successful humanitarian campaign that encompassed all the British nations, one that persuaded Parliament to abolish the slave trade in 1807.

Yet the sentimental depiction of the suffering of the slave, whether 'seen' on stage or 'read about' on the page, remains controversial in the fraught debates over the politics of 'viewing'. The ostentatious display of emotion of the sentimental hero, mirrored in the viewer keen to parade his credentials as a 'man of feeling', leaves the form open to the charge of false or self-serving sentimentality. As seen above, it was an accusation often leveled by contemporaries at abolitionists. Following Ian Baucom, Sarah Salih employs post-modern theories of 'viewing' to argue that, 'within a Smithean sentimental framework, the sympathetic onlooker may invest in the suffering of another without abandoning the safety of her spectatorial position.'⁶⁷ Salih evokes Judith Butler's (highly debatable) account of 'the visual field' of the Rodney King video that is 'itself a racial formation...hegemonic and forceful.'

If, as Butler argues, the 'seeing' of black bodies by white onlookers is circumscribed by the racist organisation and disposition of the visible, then every act of 'seeing' is already an act of 'reading' in which the black body is produced as an object of fear. Butler's insistence that 'seeing' is a racially overdetermined hermeneutic act is highly resonant in the context of Abolition-era fictions in which readers are repeatedly invited to 'look' and 'see' the black body, either solo or en masse.⁶⁸

The willingness to problematise Smith's universalisms about sentimentalism is well received; yet the narrow characterisation of the absolute hegemony of the discourse of race is not proven for the eighteenth century texts under discussion. (Salih's argument is hampered by her choice of pro-slavery Bryan Edwards as an exemplar.) In effect such criticism reads a binary discourse of 'race' back into an eighteenth century context that requires more fluid categories.

⁶⁷ Sarah Salih, 'Putting Down Rebellion, Witnessing the Body of the Condemned in Abolition-era Narratives', *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays marking the Bicentennial of the British Abolition Act of 1807*, ed. by Brycchan Carey and Peter J. Kitson, The English Association Essays and Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 77. See Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: finance capital, slavery and the philosophy of history* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 193-4.

⁶⁸ Salih, 'Putting Down Rebellion', p. 71.

Similarly, Marcus Wood importantly warns that there is often little to distinguish between representations of Africans in either pro- or anti-slavery verse. ‘The slave was still sentimentally constructed according to a series of precepts demanding passivity and victimhood (the middle passage, domestic and plantation tortures, rape, slave auction), abstraction, animalization, and Christianization.’⁶⁹ Indeed, the paternalistic impulse to rescue the African victim would come to legitimise later nineteenth century colonial intrusions. These were understood as introducing the necessary tenets of ‘civilization, commerce and Christianity’. However to argue, as Wood does, that ‘the crime’ of slavery testimony is little more than an attempt to ‘acquire, re-inscribe, and thereby efface the voices of slavery’s victims’ leaves little room for manoeuvre:

The dirtiest thing the Western imagination ever did, and it does it compulsively still, is to believe in the aesthetically healing powers of empathetic fiction.⁷⁰

It is a totalizing conclusion that, in effect, obliterates the possibility of a politically engaged art. The point of Smithean sympathy, articulated in his example of witnessing ‘the brother on the rack’, is that actual feelings are beyond the viewer’s comprehension. Smith himself was aware of the limitations of representation: the artist essayed to create a simulacrum of feelings as it is, ‘by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations.’⁷¹ Continuing to depict human suffering in order to effect change remains a vital part of human story-telling. Although we must remain vigilant to the forms it takes, the alternative—to ignore suffering— seems infinitely worse. It is valuable that Wood raises the troubling feature of the sexual frisson produced in some viewers of some anti-slavery material. However, to conclude that the visual representation of suffering is little more than pornography designed for the erotic gratification of the viewer, fails to account for the successful political mobilisation that overturned one of the most profitable branches of the national economy.

Nonetheless, it is vital to note the compromises and contradictions inscribed in much abolitionist verse in order to better understand and combat the current legacy of slavery and colonialism in the modern era. Wylie Sypher long ago noted that the combined forms of

⁶⁹ Marcus Wood, *The Poetry of Slavery* (2003), p xvii.

⁷⁰ Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 35-6.

⁷¹ Smith, p. 11.

sentiment and pastoral risked creating ‘pseudo-Africans’ in ‘a pseudo-Africa’.⁷² Burns’ song ‘The Slaves Lament’ published as part of the *Scots Musical Museum* in 1792 might be considered a prime example of this.⁷³ It must be stressed that the pastoral mode provided a poetic vision that could not express the political complexities of the inter-imperial slave trade. Where pro-slavery pastoral presented a movement from the savage chaos of Africa to the ordered idyll of the West Indies; anti-slavery verse simply reversed the categories, presenting a descent from a pastoral African arcadia to the infernal depravity of the West Indies. The simplicity of the depiction was vulnerable to abolitionist attacks on slave punishments, toil and sexual abuse on the one hand; while pro-slavery writers could easily puncture naïve depictions with reference to African warfare and slave dealing on the other.⁷⁴ The refrain of ‘The Slaves Lament’, ‘Alas, I am weary, weary, o’, establishes the speaker as a sentimental hero in the ballad tradition, mourning his own trafficking across the Atlantic.⁷⁵ A contrast is established between a pastoral Senegal where ‘streams for ever flow, and flowers for ever blow’ and the ‘bitter snow and frost’ of, not Jamaica, but Virginia. However, Burns’ authorship remains ‘uncertain’.⁷⁶ While there is no conclusive proof, the balance of evidence suggests this was an older song circulating in 1792, at the height of the early abolitionist drive that Burns collected, rather than an original composition.⁷⁷ The principle reason to suppose it was written by Burns is to fill an otherwise curious gap in his ‘politically radical or progressive C.V’.⁷⁸ Robert Crawford celebrates this song in the context of other political pieces as giving voice to ‘a slave, a defeated Jacobite, a poor Scots peasant, or rebel brothers of some other sort.’⁷⁹ The significance of the song was later inflated with apocryphal tales: that Burns wrote it following the sighting of a slave ship in Dundee, or that the tune is based on an African source, neither of which is confirmed in Burns’ journals or letters.⁸⁰ Although Johnson informs us that those

⁷² Sypher, *Guinea’s Captive Kings*, p. 9.

⁷³ Although many modern versions include an apostrophe ‘The Slave’s Lament’—that would correspond to the individual speaker of the song—it is in fact plural.

⁷⁴ See for example the Scot Archibald Dalziel’s *History of Dahomey* (1793), written at the behest of the Liverpool merchants.

⁷⁵ Compare ‘The Highland Widow’s Lament’ (1794) recalling the pastoral Highlands—‘Oh I am come to this Low Country/... Without a penny in my purse/...It wis na sae in the Highland hills/...For then I had a score o’ kye...’

⁷⁶ Kinsley, p. 1405.

⁷⁷ The song appears to be based on ‘The Trepann’d maid’ from the seventeenth century.

⁷⁸ Gerard Carruthers, ‘Robert Burns and Slavery’, *Fickle Man*, p. 172.

⁷⁹ Robert Crawford, *The Bard* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2009), p. 354.

⁸⁰ See for example John Glen: ‘This song is not furnished with a Scottish tune. It is said both words and tune were communicated by Burns. The air is understood to be an African melody.’ The somewhat cautious passive voice indicates discomfort. Glen states his project is to dispel the myths around Burns editing and claims of the English over the provenance of some songs. However he is not above furnishing some myths of his own. *Early*

songs marked ‘R’ or ‘B’ were either written or substantially rewritten by Burns, that code is inconsistent and unreliable. Some editions are marked with an R while others are not. Meanwhile songs like ‘Parcel of Rogues’ are not marked. In Robert Riddell’s copy of *Scots Musical Museum* Vol. 4 which is interleaved with Burns’ notes on the provenance of some songs, ‘The Slaves Lament’ is marked ‘R’.⁸¹ However he made no notes on this song that would represent his sole vocalisation of an African slave, nor referred to its gestation in any extant letters. Secondly Eric Graham notes that transportation from Senegal to Virginia was an older slave-trading route that had not been open to British traders since the American War of Independence 1775-1783.⁸² As this would suggest it to be an older song, it would explain the distance between the devastating rhetorical power Burns could summon against the injustices of social hierarchy, and this single ‘abolitionist’ piece that seems a rather insipid response to the tyranny of chattel slavery.

This becomes particularly apparent when compared against the vigorous anti-slavery verse of John Marjoribanks’ *Slavery: An Essay in Verse*, published the same year in 1792.⁸³ Born in Kelso to a military family, Marjoribanks (c. 1759-96) was a minor poet and contemporary of Burns who also died young.⁸⁴ He studied at the University of Edinburgh, most likely under Dugald Stewart who subscribed to his *Pieces of Rhyme* (1793). His first collection, *Trifles in Verse. By a Young Soldier* (in 2 vols) was published in Kelso in 1784. Marjoribanks himself pursued a military career, gaining a commission to Jamaica between 1783-1787, and thus might be considered another avatar for Burns had he gone in 1786. Although Stewart’s lectures at Edinburgh may have had an influence, it has long been recognised that the Scottish Enlightenment, ‘contributed more to the theory than the practice of anti-slavery’.⁸⁵ Karina Williamson explains:

Scottish melodies: including examples from mss. and early printed works, along with a number of comparative tunes, notes on former annotators, English and other claims, and biographical notices etc. written and arranged by John Glen (Edinburgh: J&R Glen, 1900), p. 181.

⁸¹ Robert Burns Birthplace Museum Archive, 3.3009. d. Burns’ notes finish at no. 364 ‘Nithsdall’s Welcome Hame’, twenty songs before ‘The Slaves Lament’.

⁸² Eric Graham, *Sugar Plantocracy of Ayrshire*, p. 96.

⁸³ *Slavery: an essay in verse. By Captain Marjoribanks, of a Late Independent Company; formerly lieutenant in His Majesty's 19th regiment of foot. Humbly inscribed to planters, merchants, and others concerned in the management or sale of Negro slaves.* (Edinburgh: J Robertson, 1792).

⁸⁴ Marjoribanks’ work lay largely unregarded after his death until included by both James Basker and Marcus Wood in their anthologies of slave verse. Biographical details here are taken from Karina Williamson’s entry on Marjoribanks in the Oxford DNB. She speculates that he died of venereal disease.

⁸⁵ C. Duncan Rice, *The Scots Abolitionists 1833-1861* (1981), p. 24.

The surprise, then, is not that a young Scot imbued with the principles of Augustan humanism and Enlightenment philosophy should deplore slavery in the abstract: it is that his airy principles should survive exposure to the social life and ethos of slave-owning planters and merchants in a British colony.⁸⁶

He published some poems in the *Jamaica Gazette* where he was heralded as the ‘rising Genius of fair Scotia’s Isle’, though it was not for his anti-slavery verse. In the preface to *Slavery* (1792) Marjoribanks claims that these verses were produced from notes taken in his commonplace book that ‘were written in Jamaica, in October 1786’ (i.e. when Burns was booked on the *Roselle*) and had not been changed since. The date is significant as it precedes the foundation of the Abolitionist Society in 1787. Thus Marjoribanks emphasises the eyewitness authenticity that distinguishes his verse that is not ‘the offspring of hypothesis, the dream of theory, but the simple recital of what fell under my own senses’. Although Marjoribanks’ abolitionist arguments are largely conventional, it is the immediacy of his invective supplemented by evidence in the footnotes that differentiates it from metropolitan poets. Williamson notes, ‘he grounds his argument not on religious or humanist principles... but on conversation and face-to-face inquiry. His footnotes repeatedly refer to “Guinea negroes” or “African slaves” whom he has “conversed with” or questioned.’⁸⁷ The frontispiece is stamped with Wedgwood’s kneeling slave, and dedicated to Mr Halliburton of the Edinburgh Abolitionist society and, as we saw above, the Excise Office. However, it is ‘humbly inscribed’ to the ‘planter’s and merchants’ and thus resembles a sherriking in heroic couplets, as he forcefully refutes their arguments and publically exposes their crimes. Reversing stereotypes, Masters become ‘white cannibals’ devouring ‘Afric’s sons’ (l. 30-31), as he proceeds to counter common pro-slavery arguments that he has encountered: ‘I have frequently had these, and like *knock-me-down* arguments, dashed into my teeth’ (p25). Wars in Africa have been instigated by European avarice, while purchasing those already enslaved is like consciously buying stolen goods: ‘He who from thieves their booty, conscious, buys,/ May use an argument as sound and wise’ (p9).

⁸⁶ Karina Williamson, ‘The Anti-Slavery Poems of John Marjoribanks’, *Enter Text*, 7.1 (Autumn, 2007), p. 64.

⁸⁷ Williamson, *Enter Text*, p. 69

As a soldier on Jamaica Marjoribanks must consider his position as complicit in the system he rails against.

‘Is he not then at least as bad as we
He helps to *bind* the men he wishes *free*?’
The heavy charge I must confess too true;
I am accomplice in the guilt with you! (p27)

In the event of a slave rebellion a soldier would be required to protect the property of the planters. Yet Marjoribanks is in no doubt where the blame rests:

If by our hands their harmless blood be spilt;
With Britain’s lawgivers remains the guilt!’ (p28)

Although this might be read as Marjoribanks shunning personal responsibility, his final call to ‘Statesmen and Patriots’ to exert their influence in order to render the situation unnecessary, demonstrates an understanding of the power structures that the soldier, like the slave, is subject to. Burns himself would have had to come to terms with his own complicity in his position of book-keeper. Marjoribanks depicts the book-keepers to the Masters, however his understanding of their position is less forgiving:

Wretches by want expell’d from foreign climes;
Escap’d from debts, or justice due their crimes;
The base, the ignorant, the ruffian steer,
And find a desperate asylum *here*.
Abject and servile though themselves may be
To those above them but in one degree;
O’er the subordinate, sad, sable crew
They have as absolute control as you...
Their furious hearts a short relief procure,
To wreak on others more than they endure;
By such caprice, are negroe’s doomed to bleed,
The Slaves of Slavery—They are low indeed!

The first couplet accurately describes Burns’ motivations for emigration, though he does not fit the characterisation of an ignorant ruffian. Here two discourses of ‘slavery’ come together. The ‘slaves’, those book-keepers whose character is abject, mean and vile, hold the rod over ‘chattel slaves’ who thus become ‘Slaves of Slavery’.

Marjoribank's abolitionism rests within the framework of Enlightenment stadial theory, Smithean sentiment and pastoral depictions. Countering the Grainger-esque argument that chattel slaves are better off than British swains, he questions:

The British peasant! Healthy, bold and *free*!

The state of life, for *happiness the first*,

Dare you compare them with the most accurs'd'. (p10)

Meanwhile, according to his 'conversations', life in Africa is defined, by 'happy indolence', as 'ease and sunshine blessed every day' (p24). The humanity of the slaves is demonstrated in their sensibility—their ability to feel.

In dumb despair these helpless wretches pine,

Yet are their feelings *exquisitely fine*. (p24)

The footnote to this line states, 'If I have not had proofs sufficient to warrant this assertion, they have at least been such as to carry to my own mind the fullest conviction of its truth' (p24). The role of the poet is to 'excite one sympathetic tear,/ To make long-lost Humanity appear' (p25) in both the reader, and the planter who has lost his sensibility and therefore forfeited his humanity. In his poem, 'Deliverance of Africa' (1792)⁸⁸ Marjoribanks hopes that through a more tender relationship between Britain and Africa that continent might, like Scotland, rise out of its savage state to achieve its own Enlightenment. He imagines it might produce its own statesmen, philosophers and historians so that 'Afric's Humes, Robertson's relate/ the story of their Father's fate' (l.61-62). Africans may move, as Walter Bagehot might put it, from 'Savages to Scotsmen'.⁸⁹

One exception to the 'Abolitionist blunderbuss'⁹⁰ is James Boswell's *No Abolition of Slavery; or the Universal Empire of Love: A Poem* (1791), in some ways a reaction against what he perceives as the 'false sentiment' of abolitionists. Boswell was from Ayrshire and though Burns requested a meeting, it never materialised: 'To have been acquainted with such a man as Mr Boswell, I would hand down to my Posterity as one of the honours of their

⁸⁸ 'Deliverance of Africa' is marked April 1792—in the lead up to the vote on abolition in the Houses of Parliament, although it was published in *Pieces of Rhyme*, Edinburgh (1793).

⁸⁹ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1867). The phrase has been picked up by many including, M Höpfl, 'From Savage to Scotsman', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol 17, No 2 (Spring, 1978).

⁹⁰ Marcus Wood notes the prevalence of abolitionist poetry as the slavery lobby did not tend to present their arguments in verse form. Boswell is one of very few exceptions. *Poetry of Slavery*, p. 2.

Ancestor.’⁹¹ Murray Pittock presents Boswell’s support for Corsican independence as paradigmatic of ‘fratriotism’. Notably Pittock does not mention this poem in which Boswell’s fratriotism becomes attached to the plight of ‘the Respectable Body of West-India planters and Merchants’ to whom the poem is inscribed. The epitaphs announce the themes of satire and pastoral/love to be found in the poem. The first ‘facit indignatio versus’—‘indignation makes the verse’ is attributed to Horace (Horat) rather than Juvenal; though the humour throughout is rather more Juvenailian. Secondly, ‘Omnia vincit amor’ announces the poem’s intent to employ pastoral modes in its treatment of slavery, though it is attributed to Ovid rather than Virgil. The misattribution is presumably deliberate and raises the possibility that the poem is an ironic deconstruction of pro-slavery arguments, in the manner pursued by Alexander Geddes (1737-1802). The Scottish Catholic polymath contributed an ironic *An Apology for Slavery: 6 Cogent Arguments Against Immediate Abolition* (1792) in which he adopts a pro-slavery position in order to collapse the arguments from within. It is dedicated to Colonel Tarleton— who once opposed the American Revolutionists, and now opposes abolition— ‘It has been your chance, or your choice, to defend, more than once, the Rights of Great Britain against those who wished to shake off her gentle yoke.’⁹² Yet, we search in vain for such *double-entendre* in Boswell who lacerates abolitionist politicians in *ad hominem* attacks. Although he attended the inaugural meeting of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in May 1787, Thomas Clarkson notes that Boswell quickly ‘became inimical to it.’⁹³ James G. Basker goes as far as to argue that Boswell consistently belittled and deliberately suppressed the extent of Samuel Johnson’s anti-slavery feelings.⁹⁴

The poem conflates various ‘transfential’⁹⁵ meanings of slavery arguing that as politicians are slaves to power, and we are all slaves to love, so chattel slavery must exist as part of ‘wise subordination’s plan’ (l.187).

⁹¹ Letter to Bruce Campbell on 13th November 1788.

⁹² *An Apology for Slavery: 6 Cogent Arguments Against Immediate Abolition* (London: J. Johnson, 1792), p. 1. Geddes was a significant figure in the development of Scots pastoral with his *Linton, a Tweeddale Pastoral* (1781), and translation of Virgil’s Eclogues into Scots. His brother Bishop John Geddes met Burns. Burns wrote extra poems in John’s copy of the 1787 Edinburgh edition, which has become known as the ‘Geddes Burns’.

⁹³ Clarkson, *Rise, Progress and Accomplishment* (1808), Vol. 1, p. 253.

⁹⁴ James G. Basker, ‘Johnson, Boswell, and the Abolition of Slavery’, *The New Rambler: Journal of the Johnson Society of London* (E VI, 2002-2003, Sept, 2003), pp. 36-48.

⁹⁵ The phrase is Markman Ellis’ denoting the various use of ‘slavery’ before the abolitionists made the meaning of colonial chattel slavery prominent.

You kept me long indeed, my dear,
 Between the decks of hope and fear;
 But this and all the *seasoning* o'er,
 My blessings I enjoy the more. (l.281-284)

In this cruelly distasteful extended metaphor the lover, like the slave, endures the hardships of the Middle Passage and the period of 'seasoning' on the plantation, to now enjoy the pleasures of pastoral eroticism in the New World. The poem rehearses anti-abolitionist arguments, invoking the miserable poor in Britain—chimney sweeps, labourers and beggars—against the pastoral vision of the 'fragrant isle' with its 'cheerful gang' of slaves: 'Ev'n at their labour hear them sing,/ While time flies quick on downy wing' (l.245-6). Boswell's distress at the spectre of the rising plebian tide overwhelming the virtuous Senate is mapped onto a fear of feminisation. He decries the logic where Burke, who can 'blast the fancied rights of man', nevertheless argues those rights are, 'Allow'd to Blacks—denied to Whites!' (l. 94-6).

What frenzies will a rabble seize
 In lax luxurious days like these...
 Weavers become our Lords of Trade...
 Even *bony* Scotland with her dirk
 Nay, her starv'd Presbyterian *kirk*'. (l. 55-65)⁹⁶

For Boswell, it is a campaign based on sentiment that threatens to degenerate masculine Augustan virtues of state with, 'weak blue stocking stuff', cherishing 'feelings soft and kind/ Till you emasculate your mind' (l. 84-6). Typically, even Boswell preaches that 'improvement' should be made to slaves' conditions, but maintains that improvement is best achieved through exposure to Britannia's civilizing rays. He draws parallels with his vision of the struggle between the civilised and the savage in Scotland. In a footnote he presents the planters' line that Africa exists in a perennial night of 'savage wretchedness' that requires a British presence to enlighten. Therefore, 'an abolition of the slave trade would in truth be precluding them from the first step towards progressive civilization'. For the Africans, contact with the British, even if it is in chains, has a civilising effect, as it does for Highland Scots. He quotes the following passage from John Hall- Stevenson's 'Fables for Grown Gentlemen':

⁹⁶ Boswell's footnotes 7 and 8 specify that 'Weavers' refers to the abolitionist petitions from Manchester, and the 'kirk' to those from the Scottish presbyteries.

Tis thus the Highlander complains,
 Tis thus the Union they abuse,
 For binding their backsides in chains,
 And shackling their feet in shoes;
 For giving them both food and fuel,
 And comfortable cloaths,
 Instead of cruel oatmeal gruel,
 Instead of rags and heritable blows.⁹⁷

This lends weight to the suggestion that the theory of ethnic difference and colonial management developed out of the long-running discussion of Lowland civility versus Highland barbarity.

If Burns remained almost entirely removed from the abolitionist movement, other poets heard in Burns' poems a strident voice for human dignity that spoke to the wider meanings of freedom in the late eighteenth century. Nigel Leask skilfully reads Helen Maria Williams' *Poem Lately Passed for Regulating the Bill on the Slave Trade* (1788) as 'both a context and a source for the [Burns] song "Honest Poverty"' (1795).⁹⁸ Williams (1761?-1827) who was brought up in Berwick was a great admirer of Burns.⁹⁹ Williams remained a supporter of the French Revolution when most British poets abandoned it, and would move to France where she later died. Burns had been in correspondence with the abolitionist poet through their mutual friend Dr John Moore.¹⁰⁰ As Moore had failing eyesight, Williams read Burns' letters to Moore, including the long biographical letter in which Burns sheepishly explains his hardships that led him to apply for a post as a 'poor Negro-driver' in Jamaica.¹⁰¹ In a previous letter, Burns praised Williams' own collection of *Poems* (1786).¹⁰² Deborah Kennedy explains that:

⁹⁷ Footnote 4. The English country gentleman of Jacobite heritage, John Hall-Stevenson (1718-1785), became known for licentious verse such as here, 'Fables for Grown Gentlemen' (1761) and 'Crazy Tales' (1762).

⁹⁸ Nigel Leask, 'Burns and the Poetics of Abolition', *Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns*, ed. Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 55.

⁹⁹ Williams was the daughter of a Welsh army officer and Scotswoman Helen Hay, they moved to Berwick in 1769 following her father's death.

¹⁰⁰ Moore was a relative of Mrs Dunlop, and Burns greatly admired his novel *Zeluco* (1789).

¹⁰¹ Letter IV (125), Burns to Moore, Mauchline, 2 August, 1787 (CL, p. 248 & p. 255).

¹⁰² Letter II (85), Burns to Moore, Edinburgh, 15 Feb 1787 (CL, p. 247).

Burns' very status as a poet was caught up in the eighteenth century debate on unlettered poets, a debate on nature versus art, that took up the phenomenon of women writers too. While Burns himself was being heralded as a 'native genius', he used the same terminology to praise what he called Helen Maria Williams's 'unfetter'd wild flight of native genius.'¹⁰³

Williams was clearly moved by the prospect of Burns' emigration and wrote a 'Sonnet on reading the poem upon the Mountain-Daisy by Mr Burns'.¹⁰⁴ She recognises 'genius in her native vigour' and pleads 'Scotia! From rude affliction shield thy bard/ His heav'n-taught numbers Fame herself will guard' (l.13-14). Burns' poem 'On Turning up a Mountain Daisy', a companion poem to 'To a Mouse', is placed only three poems before 'On a Scotch Bard Gone to the West Indies'. The 'cauld' 'bitter-biting *North*' wind blows through the poem that returns to the precariousness of the poet-farmer, who, like the flower, is in danger of being uprooted. The Atlantic crossing looms large: 'Such is the fate of simple Bard, on Life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!...Till billows rage, and gales blow hard, And overwhelm him o'er!' (l.37-42) Williams, unlike Marjoribanks, is attuned to the pressures that would force a tenant farmer to become a book-keeper. In Williams' abolitionist poem 'On the Bill Lately Passed', Leask perceives an allusion to Burns as she identifies the 'paradox' of the 'native genius' considering a role amidst the slave economy. She employs the figure of the 'generous sailor'—the jolly British tar navigating a slave ship—whom she exonerates from blame.

Each cultured grace, each finer art,
E'en thine, most lovely of the train!
Sweet Poetry! Thy heaven-taught strain—
His breast, where nobler passions *burn*,
In honest poverty would spurn,
The wealth Oppression can bestow,
And scorn to wound a fettered foe.¹⁰⁵

Leask hypothesises that Burns perceived the allusion to himself (in Mackenzie's famous 'heaven-taught ploughman'¹⁰⁶ and pun on the italicized 'burns'), but was embarrassed by the

¹⁰³ Kennedy quotes from J. De Lancey Ferguson, *The Letters of Robert Burns*, (1931), Vol 1, p. 71. There is a curious incongruity as in the second edition edited by G. Ross Roy (1985) the quote runs, 'the wild, unfetter'd flight of native Poesy, and the querulous, somber tenderness of "time-fettled Sorrow".' (p. 247) Compare 'time-settled sorrow' in Ferguson, which appears to be a quote from John Home's *Douglas: A Tragedy* (1756), I,i,31. Whether native 'genius' or 'Poesy', Kennedy's point still stands.

¹⁰⁴ Second edition of her *Poems* (1791), pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁵ Helen Maria Williams, 'A Poem on the Bill Lately Passed', (l.240-247).

suggestion that he, like the sailor, spurned employment in the slave trade due to moral misgivings. In his defence, Burns had never actually claimed to renounce the position within the slave economy in order to embrace ‘honest poverty’. The movement from ‘plough-driver’ to ‘quill-driver’, permitted him to avoid the position of ‘negro-driver’, but was motivated, he maintains, by understandable ‘poetic ambition’. Burns’ reply demonstrates his understanding of the ‘unfeeling selfishness of the Oppressor’ and ‘the wrongs of the poor African’, but picks up on the compromised figure of the sailor. Burns writes,

I am not sure how far introducing the Sailor was right; for though the common characteristic is generosity, yet in this case his is certainly not only an unconcerned witness but in some degree an efficient agent in the business.¹⁰⁷

Leask argues that Burns’ discomfort over the exoneration of the ‘efficient agent in the business’, might ‘betray an awkward sense of his own complicity in planning to serve as a “Negro-driver”’.¹⁰⁸

Leask’s reading is strengthened upon examination of Hannah More’s treatment of the sailor in the highly successful *Slavery: A Poem* (1788) and an updated version that contains significant insertions, *The Black Slave Trade: A Poem* (1790).¹⁰⁹ The title of the second version suggests More’s adherence to the priority of orthodox abolitionist policy—focussing on the trade more specifically than slavery as a mode of production. Although modern feminists have been reluctant to rehabilitate the Bristol ‘bluestocking’, Charles Howard Ford gives due to the enormous success her work had, even if her strategies are currently out of favour. ‘That success still blinds some scholars to the fact that More was a reformer, not a reactionary.’¹¹⁰ Unlike Williams she abhorred the French Revolution, though she continued to engage in a variety of reforming projects including abolition and female education. In both versions *Slavery* and *The Slave Trade*, More makes an appeal to the sailor to desist on the

¹⁰⁶ This was Henry MacKenzie’s description in the *Lounger* review of 1786 that quickly became famous. Burns himself cultivated the image of the untutored pastoral genius, the epitaph to *Kilmarnock* reads—‘Gie me a spark o’ nature’s fire, That’s a’ the learning I desire.’

¹⁰⁷ Letter 353B, Late July or early August 1789, Burns to Helen Maria Williams CL, p. 534.

¹⁰⁸ Leask, ‘Burns and the Poetics of Abolition’, p. 55.

¹⁰⁹ Bristol poet Robert Southey would also focus on the figure of the sailor in ‘The Sailor Who Had Served in the Slave Trade’ (1798), a re-working of Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). Here the sailor is overwhelmed by guilt for his part in the death of a female slave—‘Oh I have done a wicked thing’. The Captain ordered him to flog her for refusing food on the Middle Passage. Although he is to return to the Guinea coast, he resolves not to follow such orders again. The poetics of abolition are certainly part of the fabric of Coleridge’s *Mariner*, though the poem defies a literal reading.

¹¹⁰ Charles Howard Ford, *Hannah More: A Critical Biography* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), pxi.

grounds of mutual sympathy, centring on love of ‘freedom’ and ‘native soil’. The original is shown here in regular type, with the insertion in bold font:

Hold, murderers, hold! Nor aggravate distress;
 Respect the passions you yourselves possess;
 Ev’n you of ruffian heart, of ruthless hand,
 Love your own offspring, love your native land.
**Ev’n you, with fond impatient feelings burn,
 Though free as air, though certain of return.
 Then, if to you, who voluntary roam,
 O dear the memory of your distant home,
 O think how absence the lov’d scene endears
 To him whose food is groans; whose drink is tears;
 Think on the wretch whose aggravated pains
 To exile misery adds, to misery’s chains.
 If warm *your* heart, to British feelings true,
 As dear his land to him is yours to you;
 And Liberty, in you a hallow’d flame,
 Burns, unextinguish’d, in his breast the same.
 Then leave him holy Freedom’s cheering smile,¹¹¹**
 The heav’n taught fondness for the parent soil;
 Revere affections mingled with our frame,
 In every nature, every clime the same;
 In all, these feelings equal sway maintain;
 In all, the love of HOME and FREEDOM reign. (l. 127-148)

If we read, as in Williams, the original’s ‘heav’n-taught fondness for the parent soil’ that is found in both the sailor and the African as an allusion to Burns, this seems expanded in the second version. The choice to place ‘Burns’ at the start of the poetic line results in the capital ‘B’ that more strongly indicates the bard’s name, in whose breast ‘the spark o’ nature’s fire’ burns with love of ‘home’ and ‘freedom’. Here Burns seems to become associated with the African. Yet if we read the first line of the insertion, ‘Ev’n you with fond impatient feelings burn’ (l. 131) equally as a pun on his name, it suggests the ‘you’ refers both to Burns and the

¹¹¹ In the original this line runs ‘Ah! leave them holy Freedom’s cheering smile’ (*Slavery*, l. 115). The later version was published in Hannah More *Collected Works* (1801).

sailor—or Burns in the figure of the sailor (compare ‘E’en thine’ in Williams). Like in Williams, the passage reads more like an address to a poet who is ‘free as air’, and explains the double referent in the italicized ‘your’: ‘If warm *your* heart, to British feelings true’ (l.139). It appears that through a cryptic play of allusion there is a triangulation between Burns, the sailor and the African. More identifies the ‘paradox’, first aired by Williams, of the ‘native genius’ who almost became an ‘efficient agent in the business’. It is unclear whether More is picking up on the Burns story, or the similar allusion to Burns in Williams’ treatment of the sailor, or both. Perhaps noting Burns’ lack of consideration of the enslaved, as he focused more on his own Meliboean exile, she urges him to ‘think’. ‘Think how absence the lov’d scene endears’, ‘Think on the wretch’ for whom ‘exile misery adds, to misery chains’, (i.e. the slave is not only exiled like Burns, but also enchained). Finally she emphasizes the comparison, invoking the moral sentiment of mutual sympathy: ‘As dear his land to him as yours to you;/ And Liberty in you a hallow’d flame,/ Burns, unextinguish’d, in his breast the same’ (l. 140-143). This is the paradox that makes Burns such a potent *lieu de mémoire* for slavery studies for the present day and his contemporaries alike.

The democratic, republican tone of the song ‘Is there for honest Poverty’ (1795) has long been recognized.¹¹² Marilyn Butler calls it ‘probably the closest rendering in English of the letter and spirit of the notorious Jacobin “Ca ira”’.¹¹³ However, Leask identifies a depth of allusion to the ‘poetics of abolition’, particularly to the Williams correspondence, that elevates the song to a more profound and complex level. Manuscripts show that in the final line ‘equals’ has been scored out and replaced with ‘brothers’: ‘Man to man, the world o’er, shall brothers be for a’ that’. Thus it simultaneously echoes the ‘fraternité’ of the French Revolution, the ‘brotherhood’ of the Masonic lodge, and the abolitionist slogan— ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’ Marjoribanks had hoped: Wide shall benevolence encircle all;/ And men their brothers all mankind shall call!’¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Eric Williams noted that ‘slavery existed under the very eyes of eighteenth century Englishmen’ in the shape of the guinea coin, with its origin in gold brought from Africa.¹¹⁵ Burns had praised Williams’ poem as containing ‘the

¹¹² In 1894, John MacCunn drew attention to the parallels between ‘Is there for honest Poverty’ and Tom Paine’s work. Although MacCunn is surprisingly hostile to Paine’s rhetoric of ‘natural rights’, he appreciates Burns’ lyrical rendering. He wonders, ‘Can we help wishing that all political philosophers could find their poets?’ John MacCunn, *Ethics of Citizenship*, (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Son, 1894), p. 68.

¹¹³ Marilyn Butler, ‘Burns and Politics’, in Crawford, p. 102

¹¹⁴ ‘Deliverance of Africa’, April 1792.

¹¹⁵ *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 44.

strongest description of selfishness I ever saw’,¹¹⁶ in relation to her castigation of the slave traders, ‘Who think in gold the essence lies’ (l. 281). Thus, in the striking metaphor ‘rank is but the guinea stamp/ the man’s the gowd’, Burns returns the ‘essence’ of value to the man. Leask notes an allusion to the Guinea coast where it was a trope in abolitionist poetry that slaves were ‘stamped’ or ‘branded’ before being transported. Compare Marjoribanks again: ‘Their quivering flesh the burning pincers fear;/ Proudly imprinting your degrading brand (*Slavery*: l. 120-21).

In the first line, Williams’ phrase ‘honest poverty’ resurfaces in a song that stages the tensions between abolitionism and ‘free labour ideology’ in the mid-1790s. Leask suggests that ‘Burns perhaps needed to disavow and acknowledge Williams’ abolitionist polemic, reflecting both his own compromised involvement in slavery, and the hi-jacking of abolition by Tory politicians.’¹¹⁷

Is there for honest Poverty
That hings his head and a’ that;
The coward-slave we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a’ that! (l.1-4)

The song abounds with the terms of ‘free labour ideology’ that Burns had long valued. Disdaining inherited privilege, he stresses, ‘the honest man, tho’ ere sae poor,/ Is king o’ men for a’ that’ (l.15-16); and upholds that ‘the pith o’ sense and pride o’ worth,/ are higher rank than a’ that’ (l.31-32). Seymour Drescher points out that Adam Smith’s version of ‘free labour ideology’ spoke only of freemen and slaves, ignoring indentured servants, apprentices, miners, convicts, etc. This simplification became standard: ‘in the age of abolition European freemen and Caribbean slaves would be juxtaposed in a stark dichotomy.’¹¹⁸ However, Burns here maintains the earlier rhetoric of free labour ‘liberty’ with a triple stratification between aristocrat, freeman, and slave (another signal of his distance from orthodox abolitionism). Unfortunately for those who would eulogise the ‘poet of humanity and all mankind’;¹¹⁹ the bold independent free labourer snubs both the nobleman above him, and the figure of the coward-slave below him. Burns uses the term ‘slave’ or ‘slavery’ thirteen times throughout his

¹¹⁶ Letter to Helen Maria Williams (1789), (CL, p. 535).

¹¹⁷ Leask, *Poetics of Abolition*, p. 57.

¹¹⁸ Seymour Drescher, ‘Free Labour vs Slave Labor: The British and Caribbean Cases’, *Terms of Labour* (1999), p. 54.

¹¹⁹ J.A Mackay, Preface to the *Complete Works of Robert Burns* (Ayr: Alloway Publishing, 1990), p. 7.

oeuvre and in six of these it is collocated with ‘coward’. Although these are generally in a transferential sense, it seems inconceivable that the ‘abolitionist’ sense of chattel slavery did not interfere, especially by the mid-1790s.¹²⁰

The ‘coward slave’ was, of course, a standard insult in the discourse of muscular British ‘liberty’ over the course of the eighteenth century, signifying a base subordinate lacking in courage.¹²¹ Indeed, the ubiquity of the collocation renders the reading of ‘coward-slave’, as ‘cowed slave’ a case of wishful thinking. There was moreover, in Burns’ hyphenation of the ‘coward-slave’, a conflation of ‘timidity’ with ‘slothfulness’.¹²² The languor of the slave in comparison to the free labourer was well established; in 1771, Glasgow University Law Professor John Millar opined, ‘A slave who receives no wages in return for his labour, can never be supposed to exert much vigour or activity in the exercise of any employment.’¹²³ In contrast to the ‘independent mind’ and moral soundness of the labouring poor, the psychological degradation of both ‘cowardice’ and ‘torpor’ was prevalent in the labour theory of the Scottish Enlightenment. Amongst his promotion of free trade and free labour, Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) also expresses fears over the moral degradation of commercial modernity.¹²⁴ Modern governments must guard against:

¹²⁰ The closest reference to the abolitionist sense of slavery is the ‘hapless wretches sold to toil’ amongst an Orientalist picture of ‘spicy forests’, ‘ruthless natives’, and ‘tyrants and slaves’ in ‘Castle Gordon’ (1787). The transferential meanings refer generally to a loss of sovereignty or control, such as that of a conquered people or a people subject to tyranny (such as the French *ancien regime*), or as a ‘slave to love’. As well as ‘Scots Wha Hae’ discussed above, other examples include: the ‘half-starved slaves in warmer skies’ in ‘The Author’s Earnest Cry and Prayer’ (1786). Intriguingly the ‘The Song of Death’ — ‘Thou grim King of Terrors! Thou life’s gloomy foe! Go, frighten the coward and slave!’ — comes immediately after ‘The Slaves Lament’ in the *Scots Musical Museum* (1792). In ‘Poortith Cauld’ (1793) he scorns the fool obsessed with material wealth: ‘My curse on silly coward man,/ That he should be the slave o’t’. These meanings overlap in the lovely song ‘Their Groves o’ Sweet Myrtle’ (1795) in which he refuses the temptations of foreign luxury in favour of the simple pleasures to be found on Scottish mountainsides — ‘The Slave’s spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,/ The brave Caledonian views wi’ disdain;/ He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,/ Save Love’s willing fetters- the chains of his Jean’.

¹²¹ Murray Pittock, ‘Slavery as a Political Metaphor in Scotland and Ireland in the Age of Burns’, in *Robert Burns and Transatlantic Culture*, Sharon Alker, Leith Davis, Holly Faith Nelson, eds (Surrey, England and Burlington, USA: Ashgate, pp. 19-31).

¹²² The O.E.D reports an older connection through the Old English ‘earg’ — ‘still current in Northern dialect’ — meaning ‘cowardly’ and ‘weak’, but also ‘slothful’, ‘lazy’, ‘inert’.

¹²³ John Millar, *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (London: 1771), p. 199.

¹²⁴ In a recent paper Leask highlighted the influence of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) on Burns. Robert Burns Conference, Glasgow University, January 2009.

That sort of mental mutilation, deformity, and wretchedness which cowardice necessarily involved in it, from spreading themselves through the great body of the people...in the same manner as it would...prevent a leprosy or any other loathsome disease'.¹²⁵

The state should similarly intervene to improve 'the gross ignorance and stupidity which... seem so frequently to benumb the understandings of all the inferior ranks of people'.¹²⁶ This 'stupidity' was especially prevalent amongst urban manual labourers following the modern division of labour. A process that Marx would later define as 'alienation' was understood at the time as 'torpor'—anathema to the free labour ideology of both Smith and Burns. Smith argued that the danger of 'cowardice' was less prevalent in agricultural labourers, especially ploughmen, who were exposed to a lower level of division of labour than workers in manufacturing: 'How much the lower ranks of people in the country are really superior to those of the town, is well-known to every man whom either business or curiosity has led to converse much with both.'¹²⁷ However, according to Burns' free labour ideology, the *enslaved* agricultural labourer is not considered to accrue the moral benefits of honest toil. Rather, the slave, deprived of personal liberty and the opportunity to work *for himself* sinks into moral degradation. There is no evidence to suggest that Burns was thinking of African chattel slaves in the Caribbean in this song; that is, however, the puzzle. In a song that alludes cryptically to the poetics of the abolitionist campaign that had shifted the terms of 'freedom' and 'slavery', Burns rehabilitates an older rhetoric that does not denounce the institution of slavery, but continues to view the condition of enthrallment as 'a qualitative judgement on the enslaved'.¹²⁸

Burns: Mobile Memory

In his essay in Pierre Nora's collection on the *Lieux de Mémoire* of France, Michel Winock traces the varied incarnations of a French national icon noting that, 'the name Joan of Arc has lent itself to a variety of purposes since the nineteenth century.'¹²⁹ Robert Burns has had a similarly mobile memory. Given the lack of textual evidence, studies exploring slavery

¹²⁵ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: 1776), Vol 2, p. 373.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol I, p. 373.

¹²⁷ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol 1, p. 231.

¹²⁸ Mitchell Miller, 'How Robert Burns never met James Boswell (and neither met Toussaint Louverture)', *Fickle Man*, p. 198.

¹²⁹ Michel Winock, 'Joan of Arc', *Realms of Memory*, (1996), p. 436.

through the memory of Burns, which proliferated in 2007, have tended to focus on the posthumous use of Burns by abolitionists. Thomas Keith traces how in North America, 'Man was made to Mourn' and 'Is there for honest Poverty' became a 'theme tune' for abolitionists.¹³⁰ Alasdair Pettinger explores how Frederick Douglass invoked the memory of Burns for his anti-slavery tour of the British Isles. His tour supported the 'Send the Money Back' campaign, urging the Free Church to forego the proceeds of North American slavery. Douglass styles Burns as a 'brute' who 'broke free from his moorings' through the power of his own eloquence.¹³¹ It is fair to say that Douglass sees a little of himself in Burns. Alan Rice shrewdly suggests that Douglass inaugurates a 'strategic Celto-philial' for black American writers and radicals that stretches through Paul Robeson to Maya Angelou's eulogisation of Burns.¹³² The construct of Southern racial slavery relied in part on its sense of a pure white Scottish heritage. There is a grain of truth to Mark Twain's playful observation that Walter Scott was to blame for the American civil war.¹³³ The Southern planter class conceived of themselves in terms of 'honour' and 'loyalty', with due deference to rank, borrowed from Scott's depiction of Highland society. Following the defeat of the Confederacy in 1865, in Pulaski, Tennessee, a group of six founded a secret society that would maintain the old ways. They adapted the Greek word for 'circle' - 'kuklos', and as all six were of Scottish descent they added 'clan', thereby founding the 'Ku Klux Klan'.¹³⁴ The Burns poem 'To a Louse' was used in Klan initiation ceremonies.¹³⁵ For Frederick Douglass to take his name from Walter Scott's 'the Black Douglas', recruits Scotland itself against the Southern construction of its white, honourable Scottish heritage.¹³⁶ Tavia Nyong'o closes his revisionist exploration of 'blackface minstrelsy' with this aspect of Douglass's political repertoire. If aspects of 'early minstrelsy' offered 'implicit possibilities of interracial affective transactions', Douglass's affinity with Burns and Scotland represented another such transaction. Douglass maintained an

¹³⁰ Thomas Keith, 'Burns in the Abolitionist's Arsenal', Robert Burns Conference, University of Glasgow (Jan, 2009).

¹³¹ Frederick Douglass, 'Letter from Scotland' (1846), in *Always Elsewhere: Travels of the Black Atlantic*, ed. by Alasdair Pettinger (London: Continuum, 1998).

¹³² Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 213.

¹³³ Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 390.

¹³⁴ This is the history of the Klan according to their websites, for example <www.mwkkk.com/history.htm> [accessed 08/08/2012]. General George Gordon wrote the original 'Precept' on the Klan's organization, purpose and principles; and its first Grand Wizard was Confederate war hero General Nathan Bedford Forrest, both of Scottish descent. The tradition of cross burning was inspired by a scene in Walter Scott's 'Lady of the Lake', popular throughout the South, in which the Scottish clans are summoned by a 'fiery cross'.

¹³⁵ Martin Gitlin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Guide to an American Sub-culture*, (California: ABC-CLIO, 2009), p. 52.

¹³⁶ It was suggested by a supporter who had recently been reading 'The Lady of the Lake'. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1995), p. 66.

erudite, dignified, respectable persona that denied the exaggerated stereotypes of minstrel clowning. Nyong'o invokes José Muñoz's concept of 'disidentification' to conceive of Douglass's 'perverse and unexpected affiliations' with Scotland.¹³⁷ Douglass's re-naming of himself and location of alternative anti-slavery sources represent 'signature acts of disidentification' that operate as 'tactical misrecognition' and work to 'demistify the dominant publicity'.

In [Burns'] romantic poetry, Douglass was able to find the full range of rhetorical expression, from abstraction to intimacy, from reason to emotion, without reinforcing race by using the folk idiom of African American slavery [i.e minstrelsy], which would have been seen as the natural source for him to have used. Douglass found in Burns's Scots English a substitute, within and against the dominant tongue, in but not of Anglo-American culture.¹³⁸

Here the 'dominant publicity' subverted is both Southern slavery's affinity with Scotland, and the equation of the black subject on a stage with minstrel idioms (think Douglass' public speaking tours). At a time when the Southern plantocracy laid claim to an honourable Scottish heritage through Burns and Scott, Douglass depicted Scottish (as well as Irish and English) society as impeccably anti-racist. This downplayed the very real 'colour prejudice' that existed, in order to give him a weightier stick with which to beat the South.¹³⁹

This example testifies to the contested nature of Burns' memory, though critics have tended to focus on his presence in humanitarian and progressive movements. As Carruthers notes, 'Work remains to be done on the conservative construction of Burns'.¹⁴⁰ Given the uneasy relationship Burns had with abolitionism, we might pay closer attention to his reception amongst slave societies such as the Caribbean in order to recognise the competing layers of meaning that constitute this *lieu de mémoire*. Velma Pollard observes that in Kingston:

¹³⁷ Tavia Nyong'o, *The Amalgamation Waltz, Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 125, p. 131. Citing José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 168.

¹³⁸ Nyong'o, p. 132.

¹³⁹ Racial prejudice was certainly a different tone in Europe than America. It would become common-place for black American sojourners to downplay its existence completely in order to better show up their home society.

¹⁴⁰ G Carruthers, *Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 2.

The Scottish society of the seventeenth century later became the Caledonian Society and held a Caledonian Ball annually as part of the St. Andrew's Day celebrations. The ball no longer exists but the Society hosts every year at the end of January, a Burns Supper in honour of Robert Burns.¹⁴¹

Indeed the present Caledonia society meets in the up-market private members 'Liguanea Club' in Kingston. It holds records from 1927, although the *Jamaica Gleaner* archives mention the Society in the 1870s.¹⁴² Douglas Hamilton also points to the presence of numerous Scottish lodges of the Freemasons in Jamaica which practiced the Scottish rites. Items of Burns' work are well-known amongst older Jamaicans thanks to his presence amongst Wordsworth and Keats in the 'Royal Reader series' of English literature that was standard issue in the colonial education system. Burns therefore existed as one thread in the cultural fabric of British imperialism that had to be reconsidered and resolved post-independence. However the poet Kamau Brathwaite, often a fierce cultural critic, referred to himself as the 'Jamaican Burns' given his combined use of vernacular and standard English in his poetry.¹⁴³ Leith Davis and Kristen Mahlis have recently explored this relationship intelligently in which they employ a rhizomatic map to consider Brathwaite's approach to oral literature in relation to Burns, and reconsider Burns in relation to Brathwaite's theory of 'interculturalisation'.¹⁴⁴

In the National Library of Jamaica there does exist one very rare, crumbling volume entitled, *Poetical Trifles, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, published in Kingston in 1792. It is anonymous and dedicated to 'Alexander Ritchie, Esq. attorney at Law, Kingston Jamaica'. Its debt to Burns is clear from the title, though it may also allude to Marjoribanks' *Trifles in Verse* (1784) that the *Jamaica Gazette* had eulogised. The collection thus announces its position within the heritage of Scottish-Caribbean poetry. Although anonymous there are some clues that suggest the author is from the North East. It appears from the Epistles that the author is one Johnny (Jock) L***n. He writes from London, Aug 20, 1788 about his escapades with

¹⁴¹ Velma Pollard, 'Scots in Jamaica', *Caribbean-Scottish Relations*, p. 125.

¹⁴² With thanks to Ian Murphy and Arthur Bogues of the Caledonia Society and the Scottish Country Dance Society of Kingston for their hospitality and for providing this material. Velma Pollard herself gave the 'Toast to the Laddies' at the Burns Supper in Kingston in 2010.

¹⁴³ He considered Burns a predecessor (1984, p. 14). Brathwaite was born in Barbados to Jamaican parents and identified more strongly with the Jamaican post-independence culture.

¹⁴⁴ Leith Davis and Kristen Mahlis, 'A "Conceptual Alliance": "Interculturalisation" in Robert Burns and Kamau Brathwaite', *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, Michael Gardiner, Graeme MacDonald, Niall O'Gallagher, eds (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), pp. 15-29.

Jock W**t [Watt?] to his friend John I***y [Islay?] at Aberdeen.¹⁴⁵ I***y had previously published a poem 'Hill of Tollo' that the poet admires (p47). The preface positions the collection within the Scots pastoral tradition of Allan Ramsay, 'That Virgil of fair Scotia's plains', who proved that 'The pleasing tale o' rural bliss,/ Appear fou weel in Scottish dress'(pvi-vii). The preface addressed to Alexander Ritchie opens with a pugnacious appeal to linguistic bonding amongst Scots in Jamaica who converse in 'far-fam'd Caledonia's tongue'.

Sour prejudice may ablins read,
 Wi' grite disgust, my mither-lied,
 And throw awa my hame-spun lays,
 Because they're nae in southren phrase. (pvi)

The poems are in Scots with some employing the Standard Habbie verse. They include one entitled 'The Seasons' derivative of Thomson, and another 'The Fly' derivative of Burns' 'To a Mouse'.¹⁴⁶ The 'Kilmarnock edition' in which, I have argued, the omen of Caribbean emigration looms large is a constant underpresence throughout the collection. In truth, however, the poems remain overwhelmingly metropolitan, nowhere mentioning Jamaican society or landscape.¹⁴⁷ It would seem they were largely written in the United Kingdom, circulated amongst friends and published once the author arrived in Jamaica. The only poem definitely written in Jamaica would seem to be an 'Elegy, to the memory of Mr. Alexander Stead, who died lately in the parish of St. Thomas in the East.'¹⁴⁸ The collection, then, nowhere mentions slavery or Africans, though it does find time to attack women in 'Lord How I Hate the Sex' (p8). A reminder of the variety of chauvinism that might also be expressed in the auld Scots leid.

To bring this chapter to a close, let us return to the ambivalence of 'liberty' in the entangled humanitarian agendas of the 1790s that animates Burns as a *lieu de mémoire* of Scottish-Caribbean relations. It is notoriously difficult to pin down Burns' politics, despite his

¹⁴⁵ Anon, *Poetical Trifles, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, Kingston: Printed for Edward Lewis, Stationer, Spanish town. MDCCXCII (1792), pp. 49-53.

¹⁴⁶ The fly is continually attracted by the light until it burns its wings: 'But ah! Poor beastie! Mony ane/ Wi reason blest like thee;/ Nor can approaching ill be seen,/ Whan cover'd owre wi glee, (p6).

¹⁴⁷ At one point he writes that 'And o myself I luik right brown' which may be a reference to his skin becoming tanned under the Jamaican sun, though it is far from certain. The context is his own despair at his inability to answer the Muse's call in 'The Poet's Reflections': 'Syne dowf and dowy I sit down, My mind wi grief out-boaking,/ And o myself I luik right brown,/ While wi vexation choaking' (p. 45).

¹⁴⁸ This final poem (p. 57-60) was deemed worthy of reproduction in 1801. A copy of that poem also exists in the British Museum according to *Supplement to Bibliographia Jamaicensis*, ed. Frank Cundall, Institute of Jamaica, (Kingston: 1908).

general engagement with reforming Whigs he also maintained a certain critical distance. At Ellisland, Burns' neighbour and friend was the improving, reforming landowner Whig Robert Riddell, whose family wealth rested on slave plantations in the West Indies. His father had been a merchant in Ayr, while his younger brother Walter married into the West Indian sugar plantocracy, first through Ann Doig, then the youthful English poet Maria Woodley (1772-1808). Maria, whom Burns admired, was the daughter of William Woodley, Governor and Captain-General of the Leeward Islands. Her portrayal of her life as a 'sequester'd Hermitage' probably accurately describes the life of a planter's daughter in the Caribbean.¹⁴⁹ Her poem 'Liberty: an Elegy', inspired by Johnson's *Rasselas*, protests her own (female) confinement. Nonetheless, her *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbee Islands* (1792), like her other poems that she showed to Burns, lack any comment on West Indian slavery. There is no record of Burns censuring Maria Riddell for this elision; instead he enthusiastically recommended publication to William Smellie. This seems characteristic of the study of Burns' memory in relation to freedom and abolition. Despite his proximity to sugar barons and abolitionist sentiment, any censure of chattel slavery in the West Indies remains frustratingly remote. It is nonetheless the difficulty of fixing Burns' attitudes that makes him a more intriguing *lieu de mémoire* for studies of Scotland and slavery than the orthodox abolitionism of a more minor poet like Marjoribanks. Although critics have been content to assume an abolitionist position on the part of Burns and Scots in general, this chapter has striven to show the contested nature of all such questions of 'freedom' and 'liberty' amongst Scots in the Atlantic world. To question Burns' writings in this way remains a controversial exercise in modern Scotland. Yet it is testament to his art that his work demands and sustains such an interrogation, and yields such complex results. Burns' version of 'free labour ideology' animates his most profound and enduring verses. Placing this ideology in a wider Atlantic context reveals both the promises and the limitations of Enlightenment humanism. The competing layers of memory of this Burns story permit a more conflicted account of freedom, slavery and abolition in late eighteenth-century Scotland. The following chapter explores the contending versions of social change and the meanings of 'freedom', that demonstrate the continuing entanglement of Scotland and the Caribbean from the turn of the nineteenth century until emancipation.

¹⁴⁹ Maria Riddell, 'Inscription Written on a Hermitage in one of the islands of the West Indies', *The Musical Miscellany* (London: 1802), p. 71. It was written when the author was sixteen, yielding a date of 1788.

Chapter 4: Not Immediate but Gradual: Abolition to Emancipation 1800-1833

[Slavery] will subside, it will decline, it will expire; it will as it were burn itself down into its socket and go out... We shall leave it gently to decay—slowly silently, almost imperceptibly, to die away and to be forgotten.

➤ Thomas Buxton, 1823¹

From the turn of the century a consensus formed around the desirability of ‘improvement’ in the West Indies. The debate then centred on whether that would be best achieved with free or unfree labour, and the rate at which that freedom should be *granted*. ‘Gradualism’ conceived of freedom as a gift, an endowment to be parcelled out when the recipient had proved their maturity. Thomas Buxton’s metaphor of the candle articulates this ‘fizzle out’ theory of emancipation-from-above. There was certainly an element of ethnic exceptionalism to this. Seymour Drescher articulates,

The abolitionist rationale for delay was straightforward: too high a proportion of Caribbean slaves were African ‘savages’, debased by both superstition and enslavement. Slaves as a group required a long transition to absorb proper work habits, religion and civilisation.²

Yet, it is vital to note that gradual amelioration was equally the desired model for social change at home. Events in France and Haiti had sharpened a fear of immediate revolution in favour of gradual evolution in Britain. Thus it is a model of social change that is not so much divided by race, as united by class. In the early nineteenth century, Scotland and Britain would see campaigns for voting rights, the abolition of the slave trade, child labour laws, factory legislation, and eventually the ending of colonial slavery. These were attempts to regulate the rate of exploitation across the Atlantic world. The powerful would at times respond to these ‘rising heads of the hydra’ with outright force—crushing slave rebellions in the colonies and charging into demonstrations at the ‘Peterloo Massacre’ (1819). However, for the most part, ‘gradualism’ would better perform the task of parcelling out social reform while maintaining gradations of rank in both Atlantic archipelagos. Ideological debates over social change would

¹ Hansard Parliamentary Papers, New Series, ix (May 15, 1823) pp. 265-266. Cited in Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), p. 182.

² Seymour Drescher, ‘Free Labour vs Slave Labour’, *Terms of Labour*, (1999), p. 61.

continue to be mediated by the modes of pastoral and georgic. This chapter will trace these threads across the cross-cultural loom between Scotland, Britain and the Atlantic world.

The Stirlingshire poet Hector MacNeill (1746-1818) is a key figure in illustrating these themes. I propose that considering MacNeill a Scottish-Caribbean writer might revive waning interest in his memory (though I note he also travelled in the East Indies). Son of a genteel but impoverished army captain, MacNeill was taken under the wing of his uncle and namesake, a slave trader in Bristol. In the 1760s, MacNeill spent time in St Kitts, Antigua and Guadeloupe, before becoming assistant to the provost-Marshall (sheriff) of Grenada for three years. On his return crossing in the 1760s he wrote the second half of the poem 'The Harp' that is based on a cautionary Highland tale of female inconstancy. The Scottish ballad written on the Atlantic crossing from the Caribbean gives added meaning to its descriptions of stormy oceans around St Kilda.³ The autobiographical poem, 'The Scottish Muse', composed on Jamaica in 1798,⁴ combines Scotland and the Caribbean under the sign of 'Scots Pastoral', with paeans to Ramsay and Burns. As we saw in chapter one, Nigel Leask argues that following Ramsay, 'Scots Pastoral emerged as an identifiable and culturally autonomous sub-genre' that engages in 'actively promoting Scottish cultural interests within the union, often under the banner of patriotic antiquarianism.'⁵ MacNeill follows Ramsay in considering the 'superior pathos and simplicity' of Scots, with its abundant 'phrases of domestic and social life; with rural scenery, sentiments, and occupations' that make it 'peculiarly fitted for pastoral poetry'.⁶ With Ramsay and Burns as literary forebears, MacNeill carves out a place between 'pastoral Tweed' and 'wandering Ayr' for the Scottish Muse to descend on Stirlingshire—'Ye haled me first in untaught strain,/ On STREVLIN'S Height'.⁷ From Stirling, the Muse follows MacNeill, 'frae east to west, frae main to main... To India's shore and sultry soil... To Carib's shores returned again' (p235-6). Unlike with Burns who did not travel, here the Muse crosses the Atlantic to furnish pastoral celebrations of Caribbean scenery in Scots (Grainger always wrote in elevated

³ 'The Harp: A Legendary Tale', *The Poetical Works of Hector MacNeill, Esq.* (Edinburgh: Wm Forrester, 1856), p. 5-16. All page references are to this edition. A footnote to 'The Scottish Muse' on p. 239 notes 'the second part of 'The Harp' was composed 'during the author's first passage home from Jamaica'.

⁴ There is a reference to 'John Graham Esq., of Three-mile-river, Jamaica; under whose kind and hospitable roof the present Poem was composed', (p. 244).

⁵ Leask, *Burns and Pastoral*, p. 62. Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) is discussed below.

⁶ Note to 'The Links of Forth', pp. 247-8. 'The Links of Forth' is itself a celebration of Stirling's history and nature, written 'previous to the author's departure from Britain to the West Indies, 1796...and was published during his absence.' It is prefaced by lines from Elizabeth Hamilton, who is discussed below.

⁷ 'The Scottish Muse', p. 231. 'Strevlin' is an archaic form of Stirling. Note too the difference between the Muse of the two lowland rivers, and the mountain-top of Stirling, 'the gateway to the Highlands'.

English), in a Standard Habbie verse that both brings the Scottish Muse to the Caribbean, and introduces rich pimentos, Banyan trees, and green plantains into Scottish letters.⁸

In 1788, MacNeill would become a 'hired hand' of the West-India lobby, combining his Scottish Enlightenment education with the aesthetics of pastoral in order to refute the growing abolitionist portrait of the West Indies. As epistemology was becoming divided between 'philosophical' and 'empiricist' methods, MacNeill's deliberately-titled *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes in the Island of Jamaica* (1788) claims the privileged position of the eyewitness against the 'idle accounts' of 'theoretical philosophers' which he declared 'twenty or thirty years' out of date.⁹ This work is specifically designed to counter the founding of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787 which he deems unnecessary given that the 'Negroes in this country are generally protected'. He cites approvingly James Tobin's 'Cursory Remarks' that is itself an attack on the abolitionist Rev. James Ramsay (see chapter one).¹⁰ It opens with reference to his previously published anti-slavery views that he has now revised given the changed conditions he is personally witness to. (However, I cannot trace any record of this previous publication, suggesting it may be anonymous or simply a rhetorical strategy on MacNeill's part). Given the improvements over the preceding decades, MacNeill argues, 'by incontrovertible proofs' that as for replacing slave with wage labour, 'nothing on earth can be more completely chimerical, nor any system more productive of mischief' (p10). Although he would become a popular writer of Scots language ballads and poetry, in this work he consistently refers only to 'England' (occasionally 'Britain') and himself as an 'Englishman'; perhaps calculating the negative impact on an English audience in signing off 'a Scotchman'.

His anti-abolitionist argument is based on dispelling the image of a pastoral Africa through reference to internal 'warfare, bloodshed and tyranny' amongst African chiefs:

But unfortunately for the poor Coromantees (as it was for the Clans of old) their battles are fought amongst themselves. (p24)

As the disordered chaos of clan warfare in the Scottish Highlands gave way to 'prosperity', so certain fortunes have been rescued from African savagery to prosper in the West Indies.

⁸ 'The Scottish Muse', p. 237.

⁹ This echoes James Beattie's 'common sense' attack on David Hume. Hector MacNeill, *Observations on the Treatment of the Negroes in the Island of Jamaica*, (London: 1788), ECCO, p. 10.

¹⁰ MacNeill, *Observations*, p. 51.

MacNeill paints a pastoral scene of slaves as cheerful swains: laughing, singing, joking, and chaffing as they merrily undertake their chores. The life of a Royal Navy sailor is ‘infinitely more dreadful than that of the Negro slave’ (p20). It is MacNeill’s confident resolution of the contradictions of his ‘plantation pastoral’ that makes this particular Enlightenment educated, tightly constructed argument so chilling. Those elements that should disturb the smooth narrative are easily contained. Runaway slaves are merely further proof of the tendency of Africans towards idleness and savagery. As for rebellion, it is inevitable that ‘certain spirits will break out with violence against order and mercy’. Descriptions of slave punishments had become a principle feature of abolitionist discourse. In 1787 Edward Rushton had written:

When the bodies of the Negroes are covered with blood, and their flesh torn to pieces with the driver’s whip, beaten pepper, and salt, are frequently thrown on the wounds, and a large stick of sealing-wax dropped down, in flames, leisurely upon them.¹¹

By contrast, MacNeill describes the punishment of a slave as ‘lashes on his posteriors, which occasion no injury to his health’, much in the way that a ‘Pedagogue’ applies ‘moderate correction’ to a ‘boy of six years old’.¹² Given the suppressed violence of MacNeill’s account it makes his 1784 poem ‘The Whip’ particularly galling. The speaker scours the globe for the best riding whip, eventually finding it in Africa, fashioning it from the hide of a rhino.¹³ The suppressed ‘spirits’ of MacNeill’s argument ‘break out’ only briefly. In an aside buried in the penultimate footnote he admits that slaves are, ‘in *general* over-worked and under-fed, even on the mildest and best regulated properties’ (p44). It is an admission that undermines the entire thrust of his argument.

A later Victorian biographer, Charles Rodgers, asserts that: ‘This pamphlet, written to gratify the wishes of an interested friend, rather than as the result of his own convictions, he subsequently endeavoured to suppress.’¹⁴ Yet MacNeill’s fictional memoirs, published anonymously twelve years later in 1800, and presented as an eyewitness account penned

¹¹ Rushton, *West-Indian Eclogue*, (1787), ‘Note g’, p. 26.

¹² MacNeill, *Observations*, p. 22.

¹³ MacNeill, ‘The Whip’, *Collected Poems*, p. 51.

¹⁴ Charles Rodgers, *The Modern Scottish Minstrel* (North Bridge, Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1855), p. 77. Similarly, Corey E. Andrews offers the 1790s song ‘Valour Shields the Brave’ as demonstrating MacNeill’s ‘abrupt change in views’ that implies that ‘the Scottish diaspora...could no longer ignore or justify’ slavery. However the attack on slavery remains abstract and jingoistic— railing against ‘Gallia’s chains’, with nothing to suggest West Indian chattel slavery. ‘Free Britons’ are protected by ‘Scotia’s freemen’, ‘brave and true’ all decked in ‘Red and Blue’. Corey E. Andrews, ‘Traces of Scotland in the West Indies: Diaspora Poetry from the Eighteenth Century’, <www.booksfromscotland.com>, [accessed 12/05/2012].

between 1773 and 1790, rehearses many of the same arguments: *The Life and Travels of Charles Macpherson, Esq, with an Investigation into the nature, treatment, and possible improvement, of the Negro in the French and British West India Islands* (1800). The French context perhaps owes a debt to Henry MacKenzie's epistolary novel of sensibility *Julia de Roubigné* (1779) in which the heroine's love Savillon returns with a fortune from Martinique. On the island Savillon had freed his slaves who now work under their leader Yambu, who is 'a second Oroonoko, a prince who is a noble savage and a victim of white brutality, and who furthermore shows that if a negro is treated with kindness and confidence, he will work better as a servant than a slave.'¹⁵ As seen in the previous chapter, Adam Smith had previously argued that slavery was economically counter-productive as free labour produced twice that of forced, so that 'work done by freemen comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves.'¹⁶ Accordingly in MacKenzie's novel, the Africans working voluntarily produce 'more than almost double their number subject to the whip of an overseer.'¹⁷ However in contrast to MacKenzie's anti-slavery sentiments, MacPherson's fictional editor specifies that these memoirs from the French Antilles are released to oppose 'the proposed *Abolition* of the *Slave Trade*, which Mr Pitt has pledged himself to bring before the British Parliament during the present session.'¹⁸ The 'suppression' is perhaps on the part of Charles Rodgers, embarrassed by the sentiments, twenty years after emancipation.

The intervening years between MacNeill's two anti-abolitionist publications saw the advance of the Abolitionist Society checked by a leadership nervous of association with the *Jacobin* version of *immediate* social change that had overthrown the French *ancien regime*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, although this text is usually presented as semi-autobiographical, the timescale is tightly structured. MacPherson supposedly ceased writing his memoirs in 1790: a year after the storming of the Bastille and the Estates General had

¹⁵ Ernest A. Baker, *The History of the English Novel, Vol 5: The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance* (Maryland: Wildside Press, 2010), pp. 111-112.

¹⁶ Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations, in three volumes* (Dublin: 1776), p. 119.

¹⁷ Henry MacKenzie, *Julia de Roubigné* (1779), ed. by Susan Manning (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1999), p. 100. MacKenzie's popular novel *Man of Feeling* (1771) also espoused anti-slavery sentiment.

¹⁸ *Memoirs of the life and travels of the late Charles Macpherson, esq. in Asia, Africa, and America. Illustrative of manners, customs, and character; with a particular investigation of the nature, treatment, and possible improvement, of the negro in the British and French West India Islands. Written by himself chiefly between the years 1773 and 1790* (Edinburgh: A. Constable, 1800), pxi. (Dedicated to Henry Dundas). A new edition edited by Srinivas Aravamudan is forthcoming. The 'editor's' preface, signed Hector MacNeill, reports that this is one section of MacPherson's larger travels which he will release should these be successful, but which were never forthcoming.

established something akin to the British constitutional assembly. However, it falls before the revolution in Saint Domingue in 1791 and the guillotining of Louis XVI in January 1793 that together raised the spectre of a more sudden, sanguinary model of social change.¹⁹ This created shifting, complex relations with the French Empire, so that in 1803 the abolitionist Edinburgh Reviewer Henry Brougham (1778-1868) would urge a pact with the enemy France against the revolted slaves of Haiti. Brougham argues that the Haitians were now ‘the Jacobins of the West’ and the ‘common enemy of Europeans’ and ‘civilised society’.²⁰ In this context, MacPherson’s fictional memoirs would bring together English, French and Scots in the West Indies to urge a process of gradual improvement in morals and character of African slaves by which means slavery may eventually ‘fizzle out’.

The memoirs purport to be the story of a young, handsome, educated Scotsman leaving his impoverished home for the life of a Bristol slave trader. MacPherson traces his descent from an impoverished branch of the lower Highland gentry who joined the British army; the family association with the ‘King’s Life Guards’, the Duke of Argyll and Robert Walpole underline their Scoto-British credentials. Charles is a sentimental youth devoted to the *dulce otium*, despite his father favouring a practical education in arithmetic and book-keeping over a ‘lear’ in classical Latin that is equally as useful for his ‘future advancement than if he had learned *Erse*’ (p21). Charles’ father spells out the association between deferred gratification and increased virtue in Scotland that will later hold significance for the ‘improvement’ of Caribbean society. The reason that ‘our Scotch boys get on in life full as well as the English...out of their country’ (p21-22) is that their youthful training saves them from the English propensity to wealth, luxury, and feasting.

It was the superior education of early *restraint* to early *indulgence*... of rigid *economy* to *extravagance*, of habitual *temperance* to habitual *pleasure*, of examples of prudence and religion to folly, dissoluteness, and vice. (p25)

Amongst the debates over slavery that dominate the memoirs of Charles MacPherson, MacNeill foregrounds the Caribbean as an inter-cultural contact-zone through the hero’s travels on St Kitts and Guadeloupe, that had changed hands several times between Britain and

¹⁹ The Republic abolished slavery in 1794, though it was re-instated by Napoleon in 1802 and lasted in the French Empire until 1848.

²⁰ Henry Brougham, *An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European powers in two volumes*. (Edinburgh: 1803), vol 2, pp. 307-11. See also pp. 60-140. ‘Jacobins of the West’ recalls of course C.L.R James’ magisterial history, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, (1938) (London: Allison and Busby Limited, 1980).

France over the preceding century. On arrival in St Kitts he is introduced to a Scottish circle, one Highland relation exclaiming ‘Och hoich...I should have kent that laddie to have been related to the family of [MacPherson], had I met him on the tap of Brimstone Hill’ (p88).²¹ His employer, Mr Penguin, is a tyrannical, wife-beating Englishman who finds the French ‘shockingly disgusting’ (p148) and fears that ‘all the tribe of needy adventurers beyond the Tweed’ will ‘in less than twenty years...root out every other inhabitant of the West Indies!’ (p94). His colleague Garvie reassures MacPherson that ‘he hates your countrymen as the greatest part of us West Indians do’ on account of their ‘*poverty, pride, cunning and fawning servility*’ (p95). An ‘old Negro woman’ despairs of the brutal Mr Penguin, ‘Some you Boccra bad too much... Damme ! Boccra worse na Nega!’ (p105). Meanwhile the kindly Madame Bellanger tends Charles during his ‘Guadeloupe fever’: ‘nous sommes François [sic] et sans doute souvent vos ennemis. But we are not the enemies, Monsieur, of the afflicted, the weak, or the broken hearted’ (p115). Intriguingly, MacNeill puts the arguments for methods of gradual improvement of the slave’s condition in the mouth of the benevolent French woman Mme Bellanger. ‘Langer’ means ‘to swaddle a baby’ giving her name a suggestion of ‘beautiful nanny’ or ‘caregiver’ in French.²² Meanwhile Mr Penguin is a bigoted, boorish Englishman whose name recalls the somewhat absurd bird with its stark division of black and white plumage.

Henry MacKenzie’s solution for Savillon had been immediate emancipation that fostered a productive and faithful servitude (akin to the deliberately-named French servant Le Blanc). Savillon reports, ‘they work with the willingness of freedom, yet are mine with more than the obligation of slavery.’²³ However, MacNeill returns to an Enlightenment ethics of ‘improvement’ realised through georgic social ideals that ‘civilises’ the enslaved, but crucially maintains their formal ownership. Through the ‘History of Mme Bellanger’, MacNeill introduces the impetuous, naive Beaumarché whose immediate repeal of slave punishment and introduction of a two day weekend was ‘the rock he afterwards split upon, and proved the fatal cause of his ruin’ (p185). The sudden reforms could only produce vice, luxury, and idleness in Africans with ‘habits inimical to industry, and totally subversive of subordination’ (p187). Rather than fizzling out, here the candle ignites a blaze. Removing those privileges inevitably

²¹ A hill on St Kitts that held a British fort that was attacked by the French in their invasion of 1782. St Kitts and Nevis were restored to Britain at the Treaty of Paris (1783).

²² With thanks to Felisa Reynolds, University of St Thomas, Texas for this suggested translation.

²³ *Julia de Roubigné*, p. 100.

produces rebellion on the estate, leaving the whites massacred and the plantation engulfed in flames. (It is a depiction that would stir memories of Haiti for contemporary readers).

By contrast, Mme Bellanger's small coffee plantation La Cache ('the hideaway') removed from the 'infernal heat' of the plains in the 'romantic', picturesque', and 'sublime' mountain scenery is a georgic idyll of 'social and domestic peace' (p214). Mme Bellanger pursued a method of gradual amelioration and improvement: encouraging marriages between slaves, replacing punishments with rewards, combined with religious instruction to produce fidelity and piety. Indeed, piety and propriety become paramount. Counter to the concrete demands for the abolition of the slave trade, MacPherson's criticism of Creole society is neither political nor even humanitarian, but focussed on sexual morality. Mr Penguin believes in peculiar black deviancy and remarks that the British do not make 'companions' of their 'dingy nymphs' as the French do. However, Mme Bellanger's insistence on equal licentiousness amongst whites and blacks is borne out by the framing narrative of Mrs Penguin and various French women fawning over MacPherson.²⁴ Although Protestantism was usually a pillar of Scoto-British imperial ideology, Mme Bellanger's Catholicism is a muted feature here (mentioned only once), reflecting the shifting priorities of Christian bonding against rapid 'Jacobinical' social change. MacNeill stresses Christian obedience and sobriety, enwrapping the white Europeans together, as it will the 'best' of the black slaves. Thus official marriage ceremonies and prayer sessions produce 'singing, laughing, and contented' (p228) slaves who are 'so attached to me, and pleased with their condition, that they prefer it to absolute freedom; an offer which they have repeatedly refused' (p213). Rather than the explosion of luxury fostered by Beaumarché, Mme Bellanger's methods gradually attain a rejection of 'intemperance' and 'weaned the savage mind from scenes of irregularity, to order, industry, and content' (p214). Bellanger's 'retirement' to the mountains mirrors MacPherson's father removing to tend a countryside estate in Scotland. Indeed Bellanger has, in effect, imbued the slaves with the *douce* qualities of the Scottish education in restraint that his father upholds. MacPherson queries whether the effects of 'improvement'—agricultural, intellectual and moral—on Mme Bellanger's Scottish 'plantation georgic' may eventually become implemented generally: 'I would fain hope that at some future period, it might', dreams Mme

²⁴ MacNeill dwells on the particular charms of French creoles: 'they are as superior to our St Kitt's girls as a mulatto wench is to a negress' (p. 96).

Bellanger of a vague future aspiration, though ‘from the knowledge and experience I have had of Negro habits and dispositions, I am forced to confess that I have my doubts’ (p232).

This uncertainty over the possibility of general reform may hold an element of ethnic exceptionalism, as George Bouloukos argues that Mme Bellanger ‘does not initially draw this conclusion from an assessment of slave’s capabilities; instead she presents reform as politically impossible’.²⁵ However it is vital to note that the precariousness of gradual improvement was equally a fear at home. This is illustrated through MacNeill’s protégé and fellow Stirlingshire writer Elizabeth Hamilton. Hamilton shared with MacNeill an interest in gradual ‘improvement’ of morals and manners, though she supported abolition. Where MacPherson’s father located Scotland as a paradigm of the association between temperance and virtue, according to Hamilton it is an early restraint that had become lost amongst the cottagers of Glenburnie, in the novel of the same name. (The novel is dedicated to Hector MacNeill.)²⁶ *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* was published in 1808, one year after abolition; indeed that year Hamilton read Thomas Clarkson’s *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808), finding it ‘one of the most interesting books I have ever read.’ The key for Hamilton is ‘what may be accomplished by the persevering exertions of a righteous zeal’ in the efforts to ‘[rescue] millions of our fellow-creatures from a state of misery and degradation’.²⁷ Clarkson is credited as the ‘individual mind’ whose ‘unwearied exertions...have ameliorated the conditions of thousands, and removed the grand obstacle to the future civilisation and improvement of a continent more populous than Europe’. Although this can legitimately be read as the condescending discourse of European heroes rescuing feckless Africans, it is also crucial to understand that this is the same discourse of social change prevalent at home. Following her eulogy of Clarkson, Hamilton proceeds to steal his spotlight, highlighting her own unwearied exertions in improving the habits and morals of ‘my good country folks’ in her new novel.

²⁵ George Bouloukos, ‘The Horror of Hybridity: Enlightenment, Anti-Slavery and Racial Disgust in Charlotte Smith’s *Story of Henrietta* (1800)’, in *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition*, p. 89.

²⁶ Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), ed. by Pam Perkins (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2010). The dedication to MacNeill, in this didactic novel of educational improvement, refers particularly to his lamentation of the doleful effects of alcohol and radicalism on the Scottish peasantry in his popular, ‘The Skaith of Scotland; or, the History of Will and Jean’.

²⁷ Letter Hamilton to Dr S----- Ambleside, Kendal, June 12th 1808. *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Elizabeth Hamilton, With A Selection from her Correspondence and other Unpublished Writing*, ed. by Elizabeth Bengier, Vol II, London (1818), p. 70-71.

In Glenburnie, the MacClarty children in particular had become ‘idle, obstreperous, disobedient, and self-willed’ (p134), due to the lack of an early intervention of parental discipline. Clarty is Scots for ‘filthy’, underlining the moral degradation to which the Scots peasantry had sunk in the midst of their rural squalor. With elements of a prose georgic the teachings of Mrs Mason, fresh from England, will ‘train up youth to virtue’, to the extent that, ‘the briers and thorns of pride and self-will will be rooted up from your children’s minds.’ In addition to ‘sowing the seeds’ of a formal education, a ‘watchful attention’ is necessary from birth to ‘prepare the soil’, without which schooling ‘will never take root, nor vegetate’.²⁸ Although it is too late to save the MacClartys from their doom, Mrs Mason teaches their neighbours the Morisons to clean their kirns, which removes the cow hairs from their butter; in the way that Grainger removed impurities from the production of sugar. In this prose georgic, the Morisons *gradually* ‘improve’ their methods and themselves, rising to paradigms of cleanliness and virtue, symbolised in their cultivation of blooming flowers to replace the midden outside the schoolhouse. The parallels with Mme Bellanger’s ‘La Cache’ are clear, where gradual improvement and restraint increase virtue and decrease the threat of radical change. According to Mme Bellanger setting a good example in terms of religious observance crucially provides,

an object the most luminous and attractive to allure, enlighten, and guide, the darkened multitude to the paths of virtue. (p224)

The ‘darkened multitude’ resonates with echoes of Edmund Burke’s ‘swinish multitude’,²⁹ as the parallel fears of revolution amongst slaves or *sans culottes* runs high. Whether in St Kitts or Glenburnie, the Scoto-British social ideal remains a mutually beneficial model of obedient, industrious subordinates devoted to an enlightened master, with both parties dedicated to gradual improvement.

²⁸ Hamilton, *The Cottagers*, pp. 126-127. Idleness in childhood cuts across classes as it also has doleful effects on the gentry, the Stewart daughters disobey their parents’ wishes in marriage. The cad of a husband eventually realises the error of his ways and proposes to go to the West Indies to make his fortune.

²⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 1790, (London: Bell, 1814), p. 80.

Abolition to Emancipation

As momentum towards the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade gathered pace, the spectre of Haiti hung over the debates. On the one hand, it was held to reveal the dangers of granting freedom to ‘savages’; on the other, it demonstrated the fatal consequences of maintaining an intolerable slave system. Thus, in a complex situation, both pro- and anti-slavery writers encouraged amelioration: the latter as preparation for freedom, the former to postpone freedom into a future-never. In John Stewart’s fulsome *An Account of Jamaica and its Inhabitants* (1808), published a year after abolition, he claims to be ‘unconditionally an advocate for neither side.’³⁰ Although lambasting the licentiousness and decadence of creole society, he claims that this is being gradually improved, so that ‘at some distant period, *the order of things* in the West Indies will be different from what it is at the present time’. Crucially he stresses change will occur through ‘the slow operation of time, without any sudden or violent convulsion’ (p215).

But at the present moment, to loosen those bands by which dominion and order are maintained, would be to let loose the horrors of massacre and desolation... A neighbouring colony (once flourishing and happy) presents an awful example. The poison of the new politico-philosophical creed found its way across the Atlantic, and produced its wonted effects. (p215)

For Stewart, Saint Domingue, the French Republic and the ‘savage madness’ of the 1795 Trelawny Maroon War demonstrate the awful consequences of ‘insubordination’. He outlines the ‘lenient and moderate’ forms of punishment found in the British West Indies before noting, characteristically, that ‘A poor peasant or labourer in Great Britain performs twice the quantum usually performed by an able Negro’ (p218). Adam Smith’s view that freemen produce double that of enslaved labourers was publicised by abolitionists in order to promote the benefits of free labour. Here Stewart turns the observation on its head to argue that the enslaved enjoy easier conditions. In terms of agricultural improvement ‘new modes and improved ideas are fast gaining ground’ so that the lurid depiction of abolitionists may have been accurate ‘twenty-five to thirty years ago’, ‘but times are now greatly altered here’ (p196). (In other words, Stewart refers to the 1780s, when Hector MacNeill was making similar claims

³⁰ John Stewart, *An Account of Jamaica and its Inhabitants* (London: G. Woodfall, 1808), p. 214.

about the obsolete depiction of the West Indies that may have been accurate twenty years prior to his time of writing.)

John Stewart is a possible candidate for authorship of *Marly; or a Planter's Tale* (1828), though the author's nationality is muted here in comparison to the novel which I will discuss below. By contrast, a Scottish gentleman traveller Philip Barrington Ainslie (1785-?) who landed on Jamaica in 1804, flaunted his nationality in his memoirs, published later in 1861, under the nom de plume 'Philo Scotus'. He was the son of Sir Philip Ainslie and Elizabeth Gray, and the younger brother of numismatist George Robert Ainslie, who as governor of Dominica from 1812 to 1815 crushed the maroons on that island. Ainslie peppers his *Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman* with constant comparisons to home. Hunting snakes on Jamaica is 'almost more fatiguing than stalking red deer on the Highland hills'; while mosquitos are as noisy as 'the loudest pibroch ever played'.³¹ Perhaps the date of publication in the middle of the century accounts for Ainslie's confident exhibition of Scottishness, once Walter Scott's romanticisation of the Highlands had more soundly secured its place in Victorian British ideology. His account attests to a veritable Scottish network: from his cousin Robert Stirling of Keir's Hamden estate, to Mr Munroe at Kinloss, to a Mr Campbell whose father had arrived following the 1715 Jacobite rebellion, binding lowland to Highland Scot. It was in this 'rugged and hilly country' that:

with the inexhaustible love of country and a mountain home, so unfailing in the heart of a true Highlander, that the progenitor of the present proprietor settled, and named the house of his exile Duin Vale...(Celtic for the dark or shut in vale). (p178)

Ainslie draws an affinity between romanticised Scottish and Jamaican landscapes, as he portrays the cultivation of a plantation carved out of the 'primeval forest, within which the foot of man had never trod' (p179). Although he 'would have thought' the African labourers in this sublime primordial Arcadia to be 'miserable and degraded'; in fact, the jolly pastoral swains are 'merry', 'cheerful' and 'voluble' (p175). Ainslie writes,

³¹ Philip Barrington Ainslie, *Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman* (London: Arthur Hall, 1861), p. 183, p. 196. 'Philo Scotus' or 'lover of Scotland' recalls the influential medieval philosopher, 'Duns Scotus'. Duncan Forbes (1685-1747) had previously used the epithet 'Philo Scotus' in *Copy of a letter from a gentleman in Edinburgh, to his Friend in the Country, Upon the Subject of the malt tax* (Edinburgh, 1725).

I often afterwards wished that Wilberforce and his party had personally witnessed the treatment of the negro in this respect, as it might, or rather ought, to have mitigated the untruthful assertions upon which they founded their hostility to negro servitude: for, as far as I observed it, the condition of the negro appeared certainly better than that of the Scotch labourer. (p198)

Indeed, Ainslie recalls the emblematic squalor of Elizabeth Hamilton's Glenburnie, as the cleanliness of the 'Negro village', 'shone forth in most advantageous comparison with the untidiness and sluttishness of "the Mistress MacLarty's" [sic] of Scotland' (p191).³²

Ainslie's gentlemanly vision of Jamaican *dulce otium* contrasts strongly with the account of Charles Campbell (b.1793), a lower-class, Gaelic speaking Highlander whose memoirs recall the formulations of the 'Atlantic working class'. His occupations range from that of a sailor, to a book-keeper on Jamaica from 1813 to 1814, to a cotton-spinner in Glasgow.³³ Williamson notes that the memoirs survive partly out of interest for law scholars as, against the charge of murdering his wife, he pled (unsuccessfully) an early version of 'temporary insanity', to which his experiences on board and on Jamaica contribute.³⁴ Throughout a youth spent flitting between his Highland birthplace in Tarbert in Argyll, to his father's work at a cotton mill in Johnstone, to school in Lagavullin, and returning to the Lowlands to work, he stresses his engagement with the 'plebian Enlightenment'. Perhaps alluding to Robert Burns' intended occupation as book-keeper, he foregrounds their similar education as he joins a debating club, 'with regulations similar to those of the Mauchline Club, on which the name of Burns has conferred immortality' (p3). In another manifestation of Burns' 'mobile memory', Campbell depicts auto-didact artisans and mechanics who, though 'a humble race of men', are sober, industrious and curious. The second edition, produced two months later in April 1828, contains two lengthy insertions. The first is a paean to 'Burns the Homer', and 'Tannahill the Virgil of Scottish song'. Campbell claims to have met Paisley

³² Robert Fergusson considered that 'nae Hottentot, that daily lairs/ 'mang tripe an ither clarty wares' had ever seen 'sic scenes unclean' to compare with *Auld Reekie*.

³³ *Memoirs of Charles Campbell, at present prisoner in the jail of Glasgow. Including his adventures as a seaman, and as an overseer in the West Indies. Written by himself. To which is appended, an account of his trial.* (Glasgow: James Duncan & Co., Feb 22, 1828). The trial was in July 1826. Although the title states 'overseer', his description of his employment more closely resembles a book-keeper.

³⁴ Williamson, 'Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820-1826', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 4, (2008), footnote 13.

weaver poet Robert Tannahill and shared his poems with him.³⁵ He appears to draw parallels with Tannahill's 'paroxysm' of 'mental insanity' (p13) that resulted in the poet's suicide, and his own 'paroxysm of madness' (preface to 2nd edition) that resulted in a murder.³⁶ Like Ainslie, he attests to a Scottish network of shipmen and overseers fiddling across the Atlantic, before celebrating Hogmanay at Montego Bay with 'half a dozen young men from Scotland in honour of the ancient customs of their forefathers' (p10). Yet, unlike Ainslie, his sordid depiction of white society in Jamaica lists a series of degraded acts including those of the 'Dionysis of Dundee'. On the estate of 'Paisley' in the parish of St James, the overseer instructs gunpowder to be rubbed into the festering wounds of an old woman who had previously been whipped. Calling for a match he lights a 'segar' and uses it to set the gunpowder alight, engulfing the live body in flames. It is a depiction absent from Ainslie's 'plantation pastoral' reminiscences.

Despite one unfortunate reference to an overseer's 'negro wife' as an 'orang-outang' (p16), Campbell's descriptions of Africans is fraternal and sympathetic. These range from the nurse who saves him from yellow fever, to a lengthy observation that 'they are not so deficient in intellectual energy as is sometimes asserted'. In fact, it raises the question of why does Campbell devote so much of his memoirs, written in a Glasgow jail, to correcting derogatory stereotypes of enslaved Africans?

A West Indian slave is every whit as rational a creature as a Scots peasant or mechanic, and tinged with less vulgarity. I have conversed with slaves who could reason on right and wrong with as much, and sometimes more good sense than some philosophers—slaves who were conscious of the birth-right of their human nature, and eyed their own degradation with just but silent indignation. (p19)

His description of slaves is redolent with the energy of the 'plebian Enlightenment', as this narrative that invokes Burns and Tannahill equally 'eyes with indignation' the degradation of

³⁵ The second insertion on the Atlantic crossing concerns a 'white squall' in the gulph of Florida, followed by a narrow escape from the Press Gang on landing on the English coast (pp. 30-33). It seems dubious that these dramatic incidents would be omitted from the first narrative, and appears more likely they have been inserted to enrich the catalogue of hardships that induced his insanity that is the thrust of his memoirs. The second edition is found in *A Collection of Glasgow Tracts & Pamphlets*, Vol 5, Series B (Glasgow: David Murray, no date). There is a copy of both the first and second editions in the University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections.

³⁶ Indeed, Tannahill's body was taken from Candren Burn, where he had committed suicide, by his friend 'Black Peter' Burnet. *David Rowand's Paisley*, (Paisley: Paslet Publications, 2001), p. 52. We will return to Burnet and his appearance in *Joseph Knight* (2003) in the final chapter.

peasants, mechanics and spinners. The preface addresses ‘that class of workers’, the Glasgow cotton-spinners, ‘with a kind of fraternal confidence’, reminding them that:

I was one of their number in the days of their political conflict, and, that my efforts were directed in defence of their disputed rights, during the most arduous of their struggles...[at a time when they were branded] with the epithets which the public prints were once liberal in bestowing.³⁷

Campbell’s appeal to the spinners provides another entry point for René Depestre’s ‘métier à métisser’—the ‘cross-cultural weaving loom’—that knits together Scotland and the Caribbean through the ‘Atlantic Working Class’. Campbell’s memoirs intend to correct the misconceptions about slavery and Africans peddled by the likes of John Stewart and Philo Scotus; in the same way that Scottish labourers must correct the misconceptions about themselves found in the depictions of Elizabeth Hamilton.

The presence of Gaels such as Campbell adds an extra ambivalent layer to the Scottish investment in the Caribbean. Gaels first arrived as prisoners-of-war following the 1651 Battle of Worcester. However as Allan Macinnes has demonstrated, it was not only the ‘new landlords’, but also clan chiefs who expanded their economic horizons, with Cameron of Locheil, MacNeill of Taynish and some of the leading Argyll Campbells, such as Sir James Campbell of Auchinbreck, acquiring plantations. Thus, certain Gaels, with their highly ambivalent cultural and linguistic status within both Scotland and Britain, made transnational investments of their own across the Atlantic Empire, weaving another thread into the loom of Caribbean creolité. Olive Senior notes the tomb of Colonel John Campbell (d.1740) still stands at Hodge’s Pen (near to Black River, St Elizabeth Parish, Jamaica). Campbell had fled the collapsing scheme at Darien to pioneer the ‘Argyll Colony’ in Westmoreland in the early eighteenth century, which included MacNeills and Campbells, as well as the Malcolms of Poltalloch. The inscription on the tomb ‘claims that he was the first Campbell to settle on the island’. ‘He was luckier than most, for he ended up marrying a rich woman and gained a great deal of land. He became prominent in Jamaican life, was a member of the Assembly, Custos of St Elizabeth, and a member of the Privy Council.’³⁸ Macinnes’s analysis of the equally successful Malcolms of Poltalloch traces the trade networks in sugar and rum, the profits from which funded improvements on Highland landholding, along with new approaches to estate

³⁷ Preface to *Memoirs of Charles Campbell* (Feb 22, 1828), p. 2.

³⁸ Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage*, pp. 92-93.

management.³⁹ Indeed, Sheila Kidd highlights the startling statistic that in the same year that *Marly* was published in 1828, 60% of the subscribers to the Highland Society's *Dictionarium Scoto-Celticum: a Dictionary of the Gaelic Language*, were based in Jamaica.⁴⁰ 'A Gaelic dictionary largely funded by the profits of a slave-based economy.'⁴¹

Kidd locates the only surviving Gaelic poetry to have been composed in the West Indies by a soldier from Argyll, Dugald MacNicol, son of the Rev. Donald MacNicol, minister of Lismore and author of *Remarks on Dr Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides* (1779). MacNicol accepted a commission in the army and departed Greenock for the West Indies in March 1810, where his diary recounts a high life amongst the white islanders, 'riding or playing sports at the house or eating sugar cane... and all night we'd be dancing and singing.' There are five songs extant which MacNicol composed in the West Indies (4 in Barbados between 1810 and 1816 and one in St Lucia in 1816), such as 'Oran a rinneadh ann am Barbadoes'. The first of these, which runs to 84 lines, begins with the line "'S fadalach an oidhche, 's neo-choibhneil i rium". The poet, as is typical of emigrant Gaelic poetry, remembers his home and his friends in the Highlands so that Barbados only appears towards the end, albeit in negative terms:

It's time to be ending my tale
And me in this island without melody or music.
Where I hear no music except for the Drum
And where I see no one who welcomes my tongue
Unfriendly is this land to which I have come
Where I see no friend to ask after me.⁴²

It is unclear whether the drum referred to is that played by the slaves, such as the *gumbay*, or a regimental drum. Given the various balls, dances, and songs that permeate the social life of whites and blacks recorded in his diary above, MacNicol's characterisation of Barbados as a

³⁹ Allan I. Macinnes, 'Landownership, Land Use and Elite Enterprise in Scottish Gaeldom: From Clanship to Clearance in Argyllshire, 1688-c.1858', in *Communities in European History: Representations, Jurisdictions, Conflicts*, ed. by J. Pan-Montojo and F. Pedersen (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2007), pp. 47-64.

⁴⁰ Kidd credits the zealous campaigning of William MacGillviray to drum up support. Breakdown as follows: 'Home 76; Bombay 19; Nova Scotia 18; Demerara, no particulars; Berbice 16; Jamaica 243; Calcutta 20'. Even excluding Jamaica there are nearly as many subscribers from outside 'Home'.

⁴¹ Sheila Kidd, 'Turtles and Dictionaries: Cultural exchanges between Gaels in the West Indies and Scotland', paper presented at the 'Caribbean Enlightenment' conference, University of Glasgow, (April, 2010). (With thanks to Sheila Kidd for providing many of these Gaelic references).

⁴² Translation by Sheila Kidd.

land without music taps into the long traditions of elegiac poetry of ‘Gaelic Romanticism’.⁴³ The poetic performance of self in diaspora laments the West Indian experience, giving expression to a nostalgic longing for home where the mountains reverberate with music, and he would not be a linguistic outsider.

A transnational history might consider parallels between the dispossession and displacement of the peasantry across the Atlantic world. The processes of ‘improvement’ under a capitalist economy traced here since the early eighteenth century reached their terrible conclusion in the Highlands. From the 1820s, the same decade that the campaign to end colonial slavery re-awakened, the policy towards the Highland peasantry hardened. Highland landlords had previously been unwilling to lose too many of their ‘hands’, in some cases blocking voluntary emigration.⁴⁴ However, ‘in the period c.1820-1860 landlords enforced mass eviction...to rid their estates of what was increasingly seen as a “redundant” population.’⁴⁵ Now, more than a decade after the abolition of the slave trade, more ships were crossing the ocean carrying unwilling migrants to the Americas. It should be stressed that drawing this comparison does not imply equivalence between two ‘middle passages’. Whatever the considerable hardships the Highland peasantry faced, they were never transported in chains and did not arrive as chattel. Nonetheless, these experiences might be brought together to constitute a picture of an Atlantic world in which the demands of ‘improvement’ would continually privilege profitability over human dignity.

Following emancipation, a series of ‘European Immigration Schemes’ were launched in the Caribbean between 1834 and 1843. In Jamaica, it was proposed that European migrants could occupy the mountain regions in order to increase the white population and ‘set a good example’ to ex-slaves in their ‘industry, thrift and moral rectitude’.⁴⁶ Groups from Westphalia

⁴³ The phrase is Thomas Clancy’s who notes the dialogic poem of Uilleam Ros (William Ross, 1762-1791) with the mountain Blaven on Skye, ‘Còmradh eadar am Bard agus Blàth-bheinn’. It laments poetry’s loss of harp music in a land where ‘s leig a’ chlarsach bàs a fuaim’ (the clarsach has let its sound die). ‘Gaelic Literature and Scottish Romanticism’, *Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 50.

⁴⁴ Robert Burns’ ‘Address of Beelzebub’ (1786) to the Earl of Breadalbane of the Highland Society would lambast their attempt to ‘frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders’, who ‘were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. Macdonald of Glengary to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing- Liberty!’

⁴⁵ Tom Devine, *Scotland’s Empire, 1600-1815*, (2003), p. 134.

⁴⁶ Douglas Hall, ‘Bountied European Immigration into Jamaica with Special Reference to the German Settlement at Seaford Town up to 1850’, Part 2, *Jamaica Journal*, 8.4, (1974), p. 8.

began arriving in 1834 with the settlement at Seaford Town still known as the ‘German Town’.⁴⁷ In January 1837 the ship *Ada* arrived from Aberdeen with a group to found ‘Altamont’; it was hoped ‘the Highland Scots would take readily to the mountainous terrain and misty climate of Portland parish.’⁴⁸ However Altamont, like most such settlements, did not flourish. Maroon historian Bev Carey writes that in 1840, ‘a typhus epidemic took eight heads of families.’ Interestingly she notes that, ‘Their wives and offspring moved to Moore Town and Cornwall Barracks where they were welcomed by the Maroons with whom they had always enjoyed a good relationship.’⁴⁹ Olive Senior observes, ‘Over time, the remnants of this Scottish outpost became absorbed into Maroon culture, [North-eastern] family names of Brodie, Keller, Hepburn, Stevenson, Allan, Christian, and Mitchell, attesting to their presence.’⁵⁰ Indeed, the present ‘colonel’ or ‘mayor’ of the Maroons at Moore Town is one Colonel Wallace Sterling. In this way, a transnational history might begin to see plantation slavery and maroon resistance as every bit as important a part of Scotland’s national tapestry as the Highland Clearances.

The novel *Marly* (1828)⁵¹ also attests to the presence of Gaelic Scotland on Jamaica. On arrival the eponymous hero is refused employment at an estate because the owner is a Highlander and only employs Gaelic speakers. His slaves warn prospective employees, ‘Can you talk Gaelic? For, if you can’t, massa no employ you’ (p8). This novel of Scottish success in Jamaica serves as a fitting conclusion to these first three chapters that have traced a consistency in Scoto-British imperial writing, emphasising pastoral-georgic themes of social ‘improvement’ amongst the slave societies of the Caribbean. Karina Williamson suggests two possible authors for the anonymous novel, either John Stewart (discussed above), or the author of the similarly anonymous *Montgomery: or, the West Indian Adventure* (1813).⁵² *Montgomery* is itself a novel of Scottish colonial success which contrasts strongly with the

⁴⁷ The German government funded a research project to investigate the history and culture of Seaford Town. The results— such as a Catholic church of German design and traces of German vocabulary, ‘speck’ and ‘nudel-roller’— can be found on a CD in the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica in Kingston. See also the documentary ‘German Town: The Lost Story of Seaford Town Jamaica’, dir. David Ritter, *Photomundo*, 2012.

⁴⁸ Olive Senior, *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage*, p. 435.

⁴⁹ Bev Carey, *The Maroon Story: The Authentic and Original History of the Maroons in the History of Jamaica 1490- 1880*, (St Andrew, Jamaica: Agouti Press, A Maroon Publishing House, 1997), p. 555.

⁵⁰ Senior, *Encyclopedia*, p. 435.

⁵¹ Anon, *Marly*, (Glasgow: Richard Griffin & Co., 1828). 2nd edition, ed. by Karina Williamson (London: Macmillan Caribbean Classics, 2005). All subsequent references are to this modern edition.

⁵² Anon, *Montgomery; or a West Indian Adventure* (Kingston: 1813). (Very rare, there is one copy in the National Library of Jamaica.)

first Barbadian novel *Creoleana* (1812).⁵³ The hierarchical scheme of British superiority in *Creoleana* condemns ‘non-English and poorer white characters’. The villain is the Irish MacFlashby, while the incestuous Scot William Lauder is ‘by far the most shameful character who is morally guilty of seeing “but the slave in his own daughter.”’⁵⁴ Macmillan Series editor John Gilmore notes that ‘the merits of *Marly* as a novel are, to put it kindly, limited’ (pvii). Therefore its main interest lies in its depiction of a tableau of Jamaican society at a crucial period in the emancipation debate.⁵⁵ Stewart, then, seems a likely candidate as he was actively publishing broad, factual reports of Jamaica with *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* appearing in 1823.⁵⁶ Williamson notes the congruence of positions and textual resemblances between *Marly* and Stewart’s text, with the only significant difference lying in the question of the ‘gratitude’ or ‘ingratitude’ of the slaves.⁵⁷ Although Stewart seems the most likely candidate, conclusive proof of authorship remains elusive as it is certainly possible that the author was merely basing his accounts on Stewart’s work, or indeed, that Stewart is also the author of *Montgomery*.⁵⁸

Most importantly, both Stewart’s *View* (1808) and *Account* (1823), as well as *Marly*, insist on a rhetoric of impartiality on slavery, combined with an insistence on the importance of gradual amelioration rather than immediate emancipation. The epitaph from the ‘Moorish play’ *Othello* that opens *Marly*: ‘nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice’, holds significance for the ‘unvarnished’ portrayal of slavery that is purportedly the novel’s primary concern. The preface outlines that amongst the extreme depictions of either side over the nature of slavery, ‘the truth must lie between’. The author adopts a modest persona over the literary merits of the novel. The value lies, like MacNeill mitigating the accounts of

⁵³ J.W. Orderson, *Creolana*, (1812, published London: 1842), (Oxford: Macmillan, 2002).

⁵⁴ Giovanna Covi, ‘Footprints in the Sand’, *Caribbean- Scottish Relations*, p. 23.

⁵⁵ As a result critical approaches have mined it for insights into contemporary attitudes. For example, Verene Shepherd, ‘Resisting Representation: Locating Enslaved and Indentured Women’s Voices in the Colonial Caribbean’, *Caribbean Culture, soundings on Kamau Brathwaite* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2007), pp. 270-1.

⁵⁶ John Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica; with remarks on the moral and physical condition of the slaves, and on the abolition of slavery in the colonies* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1823). This work is an updated version of the *Account of Jamaica* (1808) discussed above.

⁵⁷ In addition to those mentioned by Williamson, Stewart and *Marly* both observe the slave’s justification for stealing sugar—that as the slave belonged to the master it could not be stealing as you cannot steal from yourself, ‘proving that the race is well adapted to metaphysical studies’ (p. 37). Charles Campbell also noted this argument as an example of the capacity for reasoning of the African slave.

⁵⁸ I have traced the archives of Richard Griffin & Co. Publishers to St Brides Museum in London. I hope they might be able to shed some light on the author, however they are closed for refurbishment for the foreseeable future.

‘theoretical philosophers’, in his privileged eye-witness observations that authentically detail, ‘the actual occurrences which take place on a sugar estate’ (p2-3). However, unlike MacNeill who suppresses slave punishments, here the author foregrounds the icon of the whip, noting his morally compromised position as a ‘Slave Driver’ who ‘lays down the whip to take up the pen’ (p2). Sarah Salih focusses on the ‘interrelations between and among discipline, the law and fiction’ in which literary texts such as *Marly*, ‘may be said to be *doing* the law, and not just reflecting on it or supplementing it with suggestions for legal reform.’⁵⁹ Thus the preface immediately highlights a conjunction between the whip and the pen, in a novel that discusses discipline, constitutional and legal reform, most obviously in the ‘Brown gentleman’s’ ‘harangue’ for equal rights for free people of colour (pp161-179). The ‘linkages among slave-driving, authorship, representation, discipline, law and the truth’⁶⁰ are revealed in the somewhat convoluted extended metaphor at the close of the preface. The reviewers are the ‘critics of the pen’, while he is the ‘critic of the whip’, both ‘castigate’ in their own fashion; though as a Slave Driver, ‘he is too callous to wince under the lash of the pen’ (p4).

What impact did the author hope to make on the rekindled discussions of the legal status of slavery? The timing of publication is crucial. Williamson suggests a final date of composition in 1826, given the postscript noting recent legal changes. She concludes that, ‘the text was worked on piecemeal over a period of years, from 1822 to 1826’ (pxvii). From 1822, the anti-slavery movement had been regaining momentum following the disappointment of hopes that the abolition of the slave trade would naturally evolve into a rise in the standard of living of slaves and the gradual withering away of slavery. A flurry of activity on the abolitionist side included Zachary Macaulay’s *Negro Slavery* (1823), and the founding of the deliberately named *Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery* (later Anti-Slavery Society) in January, 1823. Williamson notes that amongst the variety of speakers it is difficult to pin the novel’s position on slavery given, ‘the line separating the rhetoric of the abolitionists in 1823-4 from the rhetoric of their opponents was a narrow one’ (pxxi). The preface to the second edition adheres to the position of the West India lobby in Britain that attempted to head off the anti-slavery drive with calls for amelioration for the slaves and compensation for the owners. The resulting legislation met with widespread approbation in the

⁵⁹ Sarah Salih, *Representing Mixed Race in Jamaica and England from the Abolition Era to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 57.

⁶⁰ Salih, *Representing Mixed Race*, p57.

colonies themselves, and Williamson notes it appears it was this ‘body of reactionary opinion’ in the colonies (especially Jamaica) ‘that the author was hoping to influence’ (p. xxi). He urges the, by now familiar, course of moderate amelioration through which slavery would naturally ‘fizzle out’. Thus the novel does seem most concerned with countering the ‘immediatist’ demands articulated in Robert Wedderburn’s *Axe Laid to the Root* (1817-19) and *Horrors of Slavery* (1824) (discussed in the following chapter) and Quaker Elizabeth Heyrick’s *Immediate not Gradual Abolition* (1824).⁶¹ In this context, it is difficult not to associate the relentless consistency of every speaker stressing the crucial importance of gradual amelioration, with the voices of Grainger in the 1760s, MacNeill in the 1790s, and Stewart in the aftermath of abolition that contributed to the survival of colonial slavery through its recurrent times of crisis. With a series of natural images, Marly’s ‘Mulatto’ friend conjures images of Haiti by likening sudden emancipation to ‘the desolating effects of the hurricane and earthquake’ that ‘inevitably’ bring on ‘exterminating warfare’, ‘general massacre’, ‘blood, horror and devastation’. However, with ‘measures for the moral, religious and social instruction of the negroes... slavery will imperceptibly cease to exist, in the same manner as villianage [sic] died a natural death in England’ (p. 176-177). As the abolitionist Thomas Buxton urged emancipation to take place ‘slowly silently, almost imperceptibly’, the ‘Brown Gentleman’ similarly advises gradualism:

It is in this manner that the Ruler of the Universe, by means of the silent operations of time, effects his omnipotent purposes.—The seasons change gradually, and almost imperceptibly... and in a like silent and gentle manner, slavery should ultimately terminate. (p. 177)

The friend points, illogically, to Haiti, the Trelawny Maroon War and slave rebellions as the bloody results of sudden emancipation. (However these were not the result of a granted emancipation but rebellions against unjust authority). Yet, the gradualist seasonal metaphor is apt on another level. Seasons do not so much change as perennially revolve, as in Thomson’s georgic poem, with nothing fundamentally changing.

Marly is emblematic of the themes of the Scoto-British imperial vision discussed in chapters one to three of this thesis. The original ‘Old Marly’ (grandfather) had landed in Jamaica as a Jacobite refugee following the failure of the forty-five rising, intending to

⁶¹ Elizabeth Heyrick, *Immediate not Gradual Abolition; or an Inquiry into the shortest, safest, and most effectual means of getting rid of West Indian Slavery* (London, 1824).

establish a 'long-tailed Creole family' in order that, 'in the island, the name of Marly would become as famed as the most celebrated names in the mother country' (p18).⁶² This narrative that opens with hints towards a disordered Jacobite past, and closes with an improving landlord (grandson) stressing gradual amelioration, may be considered our final example of the Scottish-Caribbean hybridized pastoral-georgic. As such, it might bear some comparison to Allan Ramsay's extremely popular stage play *The Gentle Shepherd: A Scots Pastoral Comedy* (1725) that Leask argues inaugurated the 'Scots Pastoral' tradition. The comparison takes us full circle in the chronology of this thesis, considering the manifestations of pastoral and georgic forms from the early eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries in both Scotland and the Caribbean. Although the correspondence between the play and the novel is far from precise, their shared 'restoration' plot is worth considering in relation to Scots Pastoral. Indeed, Ramsay's sympathies lay with the exiled Stuarts, and in his 'Easy Club' he associated with the likes of Sir John Wedderburn (senior). Murray Pittock plots the Jacobite co-ordinates of the play, in which Sir William Worthy had been deposed during the Cromwellian Protectorate following which the tenants suffered 'racket rent' (II. ii. 43) and the estate fell to ruin through neglect. Thus themes of landlord oppression (through over-working), and 'Jacobite images of the true king as landlord', combined with images of 'celebration, fertility and renewal' were all 'familiar from Jacobite culture'.⁶³ Leask notes that Ramsay's vision is not merely nostalgic pastoral, but engages with the forms of georgic 'improvement' key to writings of both Scotland and the Caribbean. According to Leask,

The restoration of the 'Meliboean' Sir William guarantees responsible estate management premised equally on both agricultural improvement and social trusteeship. Pastoral critique of a disharmonious 'world-turned-upside-down' dovetails into the drama's georgic resolution.⁶⁴

Indeed, Marly's restoration will improve the state of 'agriculture as a science' in the West Indies which 'may be said to be in its infancy', 'neither more nor less than that of a race of savages or barbarians' (p144). They employ only the 'rudest of implements', the hand-hoe, bill-hook (machete), knife and basket (p145). In the play, it is Sir William himself who returns as a 'gentleman hid in low disguise', to reclaim his estate and reveal that the virtuous young shepherd Patrick is, in fact, his son and heir. In the novel, the 'restoration' is carried out by the

⁶² Presumably he would be delighted with the fame of Bob Marley.

⁶³ Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, p. 55.

⁶⁴ Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral*, p. 62.

grandson Marly, who recovers his ancestral estates on Jamaica that were in the clutches of the dishonest attorney McFathom.⁶⁵ At his death, 'Old Marly' had entrusted his estates to his neighbor McFathom to keep, while his son returned to Scotland for education. However McFathom reported that the estate was ruined during a hurricane and, while promising to repair the damage, he keeps the profits for himself (p27). 'McFathom' is not a common Scottish name, but the *OED* shows 'fathom' was Old English for 'spread out arms', 'embrace', 'surround' and 'envelop'; as the Scotch Attorney had a reputation for strangling the profits of an estate.⁶⁶ The grandson eventually returns but conceals himself in the position of a book-keeper, before revealing himself as the true heir. If Patrick is the 'Gentle Shepherd', might Young Marly be the 'Gentle Book-keeper'? The suggestion that the lessons Patrick learns amongst the honest simplicity of country folks will result in his better landlordism,⁶⁷ is translated to Marly's education at the lower levels of plantation society that inform his improving, virtuous estate management.

Although this comparison might suggest lingering Jacobite undertones to the novel, it is notable that *Marly* is written in what Ian Duncan terms 'Scott's Shadow'.⁶⁸ Like *Waverley*, it hinges more on the theme of 'reconciliation' (key to the Scoto-British vision) between Jacobites, Hanoverians, Scots and English. Indeed, the Scoto-British ideals of reconciliation and prosperity permeate from the opening scene, with two hopeful young Scots disembarking onto the new island in 1816, one year after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The first is John Campbell, a Gaelic speaking Highlander (who takes the post on the Gaelic-only estate). He shares his name with 'the first Campbell on the island', whose escape from Darien to Jamaica suggests a Scottish-Caribbean forebear who endured hardship to make his fortune in the parish of Westmoreland.⁶⁹ From his Campbell surname we might presume he was a Whig and Hanoverian. His companion Marly is from a Jacobite family, though he was raised in Edinburgh and educated in law. 'Old Marly' (grandfather) bristled at talk of the 'rebellion' of

⁶⁵ The novel is laced with allusions to *Hamlet*, with connotations of 'Old Marly' as 'Old Hamlet' in the quest of a liberally educated young man to disentangle the plot against his wronged *grandfather*. For one example, old 'Jamaica bodies' see the 'ghost of Old Marly' in the dashing young stranger (p. 112).

⁶⁶ McFathom is officially an executor, rather than an attorney but the effect is the same. In Jamaican English a 'Scotch Attorney' is the colloquial name given to a vine that enwraps a tree and slowly kills its host. It is derived from 'the success of the Scotch in acquiring properties by managing them in their own interest'. *Dictionary of Jamaican English*.

⁶⁷ *The Gentle Shepherd*, p. 50.

⁶⁸ Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶⁹ See above. Senior, *Encyclopedia*, (2003), pp. 92-93.

the 'Pretender', preferring the 'rising' of the 'Prince'. He had arrived 'about seventy years preceding the date of the commencement of this narrative' (or 'tis seventy years since). It is deduced that 'he had eloped, probably afraid of being harshly dealt with; and to prevent trouble, it is possible he had altered his name' (p17). Burying strife, Young Marly's full name, 'George Stewart Marly' suggests reconciliation between 'King George' and 'Charles Stewart'; as James Thomson once hoped the two nations of Scotland and England would be 'united in soul, as in name'.⁷⁰ In fact, there is a double unification of 'two becoming one' as Lowland and Highland Scot are united in the friendship of Marly and Campbell, as are Scotland and England.

The novel, then, brings into comparative view the cultural landscapes of Scotland, Britain and the Caribbean. The first chapter announces the Scottish-Caribbean novelist and sojourner Tobias Smollett as a literary forebear. In particular the comparison is made with Smollett's Scots Pastoral landscape:

As they proceeded towards the mountains, the country in the ascent from the sea shore became more and more romantic; and though the rural scenery was not enlivened with

'Lasses chanting o'er the pail,
And shepherds piping in the dale;'

it resounded with the sounds of civilisation and subordination, in so far as the smacking of the whips are proof. In the prospect too, numerous gangs of negroes were to be seen, apparently gently enough wrought, and if a judgment was to be inferred from their singing, they were quite happy. (p16)

The lines from 'Ode to Leven-Water', bring Smollett's pastoral West-Dunbartonshire idyll into imaginative comparison with Jamaica.⁷¹ Yet, despite the contented negro swains, the comparison is disturbed and rendered irreconcilable by the cracking of the whip. Here the 'whip-pen conjunction' breaks down, as it is the icon of the whip that produces the discrepancy between the writing of Scottish and Caribbean pastoral landscapes. The conjunction between 'civilisation and subordination' suggests an equivalence, that civilisation *is* subordination. The narrator notes that the whip cracks to start and finish each working day, as well as administer punishment. It therefore regulates time and discipline in a way that is not necessary in Smollett's Arcadian pastoral.

⁷⁰ The Seasons, see chapter 1.

⁷¹ 'Ode to Leven Water' (l.23-24), *Plays and Poems* (London, 1777), pp. 55-56.

The pastoral idyll is further disturbed by the alarming likelihood of a violent death from tropical fever, as Marly and his companion Campbell are confronted with the same Edenic/infernal duality that faced Roderick Random. The novel opens,

‘Sir’ said the lively spirited George Marly, stepping out of a boat on to a wharf, ‘Campbell, we are in Jamaica, that land emphatically denominated by Smollett, “the grave of Europeans;” but though it should be our resting place, we must e’en take our chance in’t.’ ‘A truce with such discourse, and let us think on what we are to do in this strange country’, exclaimed the more sober-minded Campbell, ‘for gold is not to be found on the highways here, more than it is in old Scotland’. (p5)

While Campbell fears the dangers from the ‘sickly climate’ in this ‘insalubrious region’; the ‘red Scot’⁷² Marly relishes the opportunity in a land as ‘flowing with rum and sugar, equivalents in my opinion, no way inferior to milk and honey... like the country of old, promised to the children of Israel’ (p6). Vincent Brown in his chapter on ‘Death and Wealth’ notes the imperial ‘gamble’⁷³ captured in the quote above, that while playing for fatal stakes, adventurer Scots notoriously excelled at ‘taking the chance’. Meanwhile, in her study of ‘sentimentalized tropical fever’, Candace Ward opens her chapter on ‘Insalubrious regions’, with this quote from *Marly*. She argues that the ‘conflicting impressions’ of disease and fortunes, ‘together with the British public’s increasing awareness that such fortunes were produced by slave labour—created a host of contradictions in colonial literature’.⁷⁴ Tracing ‘the nexus between sentimental culture, tropical disease theory, and discourses of slavery and abolition’, Ward notes the relationship between moral, psychological and physical well-being. Thus, over-indulgence in the torrid zone, combined with anxieties over sickness would usher in the fever, which would become a self-fulfilling prophesy. Women, the weak-minded, and the sentimental ‘man of feeling’ were therefore considered more at risk of contagion. Marly’s friend Campbell reports that he was nearly away ‘to the land of the leal’; though ‘I weathered

⁷² Christopher Harvie distinguishes between nationalism as ‘modernizer’ or ‘particularist reaction’. In the new arena of global imperialism, he outlines two Scottish responses that together ‘controlled the rate of their own assimilation to the greater world’. The ‘red Scot’ is the swashbuckling imperialist, cosmopolitan, ‘enlightened’, and authoritarian when needs be. The ‘black Scot’, demotic and parochial, stayed at home to preserve the culture that was in danger of becoming obsolete. *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics, 1707 to the Present*, (1977), 4th Edition (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 6.

⁷³ Sociologist Vincent Brown mines *Marly* for information throughout, *The Reaper’s Garden, death and power in the world of Atlantic slavery*, (Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 20.

⁷⁴ Candace Ward, *Desire and Disorder: fevers, fictions, and feeling in English Georgian culture* (New Jersey: Rosemont Publishing, 2007), p. 150.

the fever, and I hope I am now seasoned' (p93).⁷⁵ Campbell concludes that, 'all who die here do not die so very rich, as their friends in Britain maintain' (p95). Yet, unlike the sickly demise of 'Johnny New-Come',⁷⁶ Marly himself remains healthy enough to claim his fortune in this Scoto-British tale of colonial success.

Modern theories of 'creolization' have developed out of an attention to language patterns,⁷⁷ and the novel does stage a play of linguistic hierarchies in the creolizing landscape. As well as the Gaelic exceptionalism mentioned above, the Cambridge graduate Edward Singleton delivers his instructions in an elevated English that 'mounted on stilts' (p283). The slave, not understanding the instructions, asks the Scottish book-keeper who replies, 'I dinna weel ken, but I'll gang in and look at the dictionair'; leaving the slave none the wiser (p266). However, the primary linguistic inferiority inheres to the author's representation of the slaves' 'talkee talkee' version of English. The author's 'ventriloquism' of the slaves' speech tends to suggest stupidity or untrustworthiness. In particular, the slaves' interest in Christianity is depicted as a mere whim, with the 'talkee' version of the story of creation an infantilising parable.

Gor Amighty hab de grandy much angry, and him turn off him Adam and him Ebe from de Estate of Paradise, in de same way, as massa de attorney sends away de buckras, when dey do much bad. (p120)

Furthermore, the 'creole' girls (white females born on the island) reveal elements of 'contagion' from their close quarters with Africans. This cultural contagion countenances the anxieties over fatal fevers discussed above. At a ball, Marly's dancing partner, a 'pretty little creole', is caught unawares by a question and blurts, 'Him no savey, Massa'. The narrator frowns, 'She caught herself in a moment, and endeavored to laugh it off, but it would not do' (p185). Later, Marly finds her and her sisters eating with their hands from a pot in the middle of the room, 'completely in the negro fashion' (p186). They flee with shame on being

⁷⁵ Reference to death in Lady Carolina Nairne's (1766-1845) poem 'Land of the Leal'. 'Leal' means 'Loyal'. Nairne was daughter to the Jacobite Laurence Oliphant. The letter is signed 'Ronald Campbell' rather than 'John'; Williamson speculates that the author simply confused the names.

⁷⁶ See the print *Johnny New-come in the Island of Jamaica*, by A.J. (Abraham James), (London: William Holland, 1800). A Hogarthian tale of 'Progress' in the colonies tracing Johnny's arrival, sickness, recovery, 'creolizing' (initially meaning to sit with the feet up on a couch or table), interracial concubinage, hunting, yellow fever and death in twenty one panels. There is a colour copy here: <http://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/detail/JCBMAPS~2~2~600~100495:Johnny-NEW-COME-in-the-ISLAND-of-JA> [accessed 21/05/2012].

⁷⁷ R.B Le Page, *Jamaican Creole: An Historical Introduction to Jamaican Creole*, (London: MacMillan, 1960).

discovered. In both instances Marly has taken the creole ladies by surprise, suggesting that beneath their cultivated manners lurks evidence of a cultural ‘corruption’. While later theorists would imbue such heterogeneity with a positive theory of ‘creolization’, here they remain a sign of the degeneracy that had to be regulated by colonial policies of gradual change and improvement. Marly rebukes the dishonest McFathom, but marries his daughter, underlining the novel’s emphasis on smooth transition. Candace Ward observes that, ‘the mulatto ball was perceived in British and West Indian culture as a prelude to interracial sexual liaisons’.⁷⁸ The sense of creole women’s sexuality is further heightened by the connotations with food in the second scene. Thus Marly’s resistance to the charms of the creoles as well as his refusal to take a ‘sable wife’ retains his racial and sexual purity that he might marry the fair Miss McFathom. He reclaims Happy Fortune estate and Conch Shell penn—which are gendered as male and female, the first belonging to Old Marly, and the second his grandmother, further underlining the theme of reconciliation.

However, given the smooth georgic conclusion, we might test Kevis Goodman’s thesis that the ‘noise of history’ remains present despite the impulse of georgic to conceal.⁷⁹ It is perhaps easier to perceive this in the novel form that is inherently more heteroglossic than verse, which is the traditional vehicle for georgic. In the closing scenes of *Marly*, as in *The Gentle Shepherd*, the ‘pastoral critique’ of mismanagement ‘dovetails into the drama’s georgic resolution’, during the triumphant marriage of Marly and Miss McFathom. The description recalls the celebrations of renewal of shepherds singing and dancing at the end of Ramsay’s ‘pastoral comedy’. Here, the slaves play the part of the rejoicing peasants as, ‘homage is paid to their liege lord’.

The sounds proceeded from a large body of negroes, who had come in front of the house, exhibiting all the extravagancies of an uncivilized race, who were animated with joy, dancing in the African fashion, to the rude music, if it deserves such a name, of their favourite gumba, and from the audible exclamations which were sounding from all quarters, that they wanted to see their young massa. (p318)

The slaves assure Marly they never desired their freedom in the first place. Rather the prose georgic closes with Marly intending to establish agricultural improvements on his already sound estates. Essentially, Marly fulfills the idealised role of ‘Montano’, establishing James

⁷⁸ Candace Ward, *Desire and Disorder*, p. 194.

⁷⁹ Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism*, (2003). [See Chapter 1 of this thesis.]

Grainger's georgic plantation ideal with a benevolent landowner introducing improved techniques and 'ameliorating the conditions of his labourers' (p324). Six decades after Grainger recommended the example of Montano and the increased use of the plough, the closing paragraph of *Marly* similarly recommends abolishing hoe-husbandry for plough tillage and assures that:

Slavery will then gradually cease...and though black, a virtuous race of peasantry will inhabit these islands, and happiness, contentment, and prosperity will be the blessings which will crown the whole. (p324)

Indeed, Mrs Mason would approve of the cultivation of a 'virtuous race of peasantry' on *these* islands. And yet, against the authorial intention, we might hear with Kevis Goodman the 'noise of history' whistling through this Scoto-British imperial prose georgic. The Thomson-esque panegyric struggles to displace the history of slave rebellions, particularly of Haiti, that haunt the memories of *Marly*'s readers. Where the novel stages those contented black slaves gathering to celebrate Marly's wedding, it struggles against the 'presence of history' in the shape of the large scale slave rebellions that tore through Barbados 1816, Brazil 1822, Demerara 1823, and Cuba 1825. Jamaica itself would soon be in open revolt in Sam Sharpe's 1831-2 'Baptist Rebellion' that finally overcame the delays of 'gradualism' to force the Emancipation Act of 1833. It gives a different connotation to the image of those slaves amassing at the door of the plantation house, beating their drum, and demanding to see the master.

Chapter 5: Recovering 'Mulatto-Scots' from the Caribbean

The problem for the enslaved black woman in getting the slave master off her back in the day time and off her belly in the night time was very real.¹

Throughout the Caribbean a new complex process was set in train, of the light coloured offspring of such liaisons securing preferential treatment for themselves and their children, emerging into a full-grown 'coloured' class by the last years of slavery. They distanced themselves by colour and style from the blacks below them, but were never accepted as equal by the whites above.²

The prevalence of young, male Scots colonists in the Caribbean produced the inevitable generation of 'mulatto' offspring. Recovering these historical 'black' and 'mulatto' figures has immediate resonances in relation to Berthold Schoene's 'post-devolution' agenda of opening up Scottish national narratives to wider issues of 'class, sexuality and gender... cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality, as well as questions of ethnicity, race and postnational multiculturalism'.³ This project might draw lessons from the on-going recovery of African American voices in the United States. Frances Smith Foster observes that 'each piece of our history recovered is another part of the puzzle of our past.' However she identifies some of the pitfalls that can lead to 'bad theory and misinterpretation':

Interpretations out of context, genre misidentified... and erroneous attributions pollute the pools of knowledge from which we draw the comprehension of our past and refresh our imaginations of what can be.⁴

The project of historical recovery must face the twin dangers of presentism and teleology. Foster counsels that a closer attention to contextualisation—the 'Who, What, When, Why'—provides a more stable ground to answer the questions— So What and What Now? Accordingly, this chapter participates in and questions the terms of the recovery of two very

¹ Hilary Beckles, 'Sex and Gender in the Historiography of Caribbean Slavery', in *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton and Barbara Bailey, (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1995), p. 138.

² James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (1992), (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p. 114.

³ Cited in the introductory chapter. Schoene, 'Going Cosmopolitan' (2007), p. 2.

⁴ Frances Smith Foster, 'Forgotten Manuscripts: How Do You Solve a Problem Like Theresa?', *African American Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4, The Curse of Caste (Winter, 2006), pp. 631-645, p. 633.

different ‘mulatto-Scots’ from Jamaica. It compares the spectacular Atlantic revolutionary Robert Wedderburn (1762?-1835?)⁵ who urges the overthrow of Caribbean slavery and British class society, with the later Mary Seacole (1805- 1881) a ‘female Ulysses’ who identifies closely with British imperial codes. For ‘mulattos’ in the Caribbean, their white parentage provided potential access to a source of financial as well as ‘cultural capital’⁶ that was unavailable to their free black compatriots (although Wedderburn remained debarred from this inheritance, a feature that fueled much of his anger). This chapter will bring to the fore the contrasting ways in which both Wedderburn and Seacole exploit that cultural capital through a strategic employment of their Scottish heritage.

Given that the nature of the debates around ‘race’ and ‘multiculturalism’ remain highly charged, I would like to make my position clear before I proceed. Firstly, the politics of terminology remain contested and although ‘black’ has been largely ‘reclaimed’ as a political category, ‘mulatto’ has fallen out of favour. The OED traces its etymology to the Spanish and Portuguese for ‘cross-breed’ i.e. between that of a horse and donkey that would produce a ‘mule’. Although it is presently considered offensive, I have chosen to retain the original usage ‘mulatto’ in this context in order to inhabit the historical era as closely as possible. For example, ‘mulatto’ (henceforth denuded of its inverted commas) was itself a legal category with specific material consequences. In the Anglophone Caribbean the mulatto child automatically took the status of the (enslaved) mother. It would only become free at the behest of the father. If acknowledged, there were legal limitations on the amount of property that could be held, voting rights and ability to stand for public office. Although it would appear to avoid the animal referent, whether there is an enormous philosophical difference between our present terminology of ‘mixed race’ and that of ‘mixed breed’ is another question. For similar reasons I will retain the dated and suspect term ‘amalgamation’ in this context despite its distasteful connotations of nineteenth century racialism. The OED locates the original meaning in 1617 as, ‘the intimate combination of two metals into an alloy’. The synonym ‘miscegenation’, an equally suspect term, originates from a scurrilous pamphlet published during the mid-term U.S. presidential election of 1864 (therefore in a different region and later era than my focus). The OED traces its etymology to the Latin *miscere* ‘to mix’, and *genus*

⁵ The exact dates of his birth and death are uncertain. The last sighting of Wedderburn was at a radical meeting in late 1834 suggesting he lived to see the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 and the Abolition of Slavery Act of 1834.

⁶ The phrase is, of course, Pierre Bourdieu’s.

‘race’. It is also therefore worth considering how both terms do not seem far from what is today termed ‘inter-racial sex’.

Secondly, twenty-first century multiculturalism has been challenged from both the left and the right. Across Europe, the current right-wing assault on multiculturalism conceives of plurality as a modern anomaly of late twentieth-century globalisation, heralding an erosion of ‘identity’ and ‘Western values’.⁷ If Scotland’s past and present can still appear overwhelmingly white, the recovery of ‘mulatto-Scots’ demonstrate the long-term historical reality of a multicultural presence. However, Robert Young also critiques the reification of difference promoted by official multicultural policy under a capitalist economy:

The liberal insistence on identity politics... not only conveniently works in tandem with the strategies of a corporate and commercial multiculturalism, but can also work as a coded way of keeping people separate and different from one another in a convenient economic hierarchy.⁸

This chapter is therefore aligned with Paul Gilroy’s recovery of Aimé Césaire, Léopold Senghor and Richard Wright: ‘The story of their dissonant relationship to Europe’s political culture should become an essential part of contemporary enquiries into an ethical, less market-driven multiculturalism.’⁹ This kind of multicultural history might register both a painful Atlantic history of transportation, enslavement and coercion, as well as collaboration, affection and solidarity. In the Scottish context, Daniel Livesay notes that between 1770 and 1820, ‘a disproportionate number of Scots, compared to English and Irish settlers, sent their mixed-race children back to Britain’, mostly for the purposes of education.¹⁰ Indeed, in a 2004 poll of the ‘100 Greatest Black Britons’, nine out of twenty one of the pre-20th century figures had a

⁷ See for example Tony Blair’s attempt to blame multiculturalism for terrorism, or David Cameron’s attack on the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism in a speech warmly received by Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy. ‘Cameron: My War on Multiculturalism’, *The Independent*, 5/2/2011, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cameron-my-war-on-multiculturalism-2205074.html>> [accessed 14/6/2012].

⁸ Robert J.C Young, ‘Return to Moosburg: Sharing War Memories with Paul Gilroy’, (2003), <<http://robertjcyoung.com/Moosburg.pdf>> [accessed 24/06/2012].

⁹ Paul Gilroy, ‘The Sugar You Stir’, in *Without Guarantees: in Honour of Stuart Hall*, ed. by Stuart hall, Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg (London: Verso, 2000), p. 129.

¹⁰ Daniel Livesay, ‘Extended Families: Mixed-Race Children and Scottish Experience, 1770-1820’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 4, (Spring/Summer 2008). Douglas Hamilton notes that there were ‘three Jamaican boys of colour’ at the prestigious Inverness Royal Academy in 1806. Meanwhile 119 students from the Caribbean matriculated at Glasgow University between 1731-1810. Hamilton, p. 209, p. 211.

Scottish connection.¹¹ The goal in recovering this history is less to ‘transcend’ race, that peculiar spiritual term that suggests a ‘post-racial’ panacea. It is more to find concrete strategies to *overcome* the painful legacies of slavery and racism and to nurture the ‘political and historical resources necessary if “non-white” Europeans are to dwell peacefully in Europe in the twenty-first century.’¹²

The terms of historical recovery are always shaped by the politics of the present. The ‘first phase’ of the recovery project has been marked by a championing approach in which critics read their own racial, gender, class-based and postcolonial identity politics into the historical figures they treat, celebrating the strategies found in their texts as the ancestral roots of modern political concerns. However, theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have counselled against ‘internal’ forms of identity formation—whether racial, gender, national or otherwise— that countenance the kind of ‘onto-essentialist’ theories they purport to overhaul. Sarah Salih questions the troubling extent to which a concern with ‘rootedness’ in the recovery project is ultimately compatible with hegemonic codes—in terms of immutable racial, gender or national difference.

¹¹ See <<http://www.100greatblackbritons.com/>> [accessed 10/06/2012]. Mary Seacole came first in the poll, Ottobah Cuguano or John Steuart is discussed in chapter two, while Robert Wedderburn and Mary Prince are discussed below. Ira Aldridge, the celebrated Shakespearian actor studied at Glasgow University in 1824 for eighteen months before he made his stage debut the following year. Meanwhile, at Edinburgh University in the 1820s Charles Darwin studied anatomy with John Edmonston. Andrew Watson was the first black international footballer, gaining three caps for Scotland between 1881 and 1882. In 1889, the first black footballer to turn professional was Arthur Wharton whose father was half-Grenadian, half-Scottish. Admittedly the list is completed by the complete red-herring of King Kenneth III of Scotland who ruled from 997 to 1005. It seems Joel Augustus Rogers is responsible for spreading this rumour that survives on the internet: ‘The Moors were dominant in Scotland in the 10th century. One of them, was known as King Kenneth, sometimes as Niger or Dubh, a surname which means “the black man.” It is a historical fact that Niger Val Dubh lived and reigned over certain black divisions in Scotland - and that a race known as “the sons of the blacks” succeeded him in history.’ J.A. Rogers, *Sex and Race: Negro-Caucasian Mixing in All Ages and All Lands, Volume I: The Old World*. (New York: 1941). Others to consider might have included William Fergusson, who became the first doctor of African descent to graduate from Edinburgh Medical School (1814) before going on to become the Governor of Sierra Leone. He was closely followed by the Trinidadian, John Baptist Phillip, who graduated in 1815. Refused entry to American colleges, James McCune Smith graduated in medicine from Glasgow University in 1837. While in Scotland he was a leading member of the Glasgow Emancipation Society. Later, the Sierra Leone-born James ‘Africanus’ Horton, studied for his M.D. in Edinburgh, ‘where Robert Knox, whose racist theories Horton was later to take issue with in his book, had only two years before been teaching Anatomy.’ *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, p. 185.

¹² Gilroy, ‘Sugar’, p. 129.

‘Rootedness’, national or otherwise, is not an effective contestation of historico-racist ideas, since celebrations of the innocent, black/ Caribbean, protesting subject serve only to perpetuate essentialist theorizations whose own ‘roots’ are dubious, to say the least.¹³

In place of internal rootedness, Stuart Hall defines personal identity in relation to narratives of history, much like the forms of national identity formation discussed in my chapter on ‘theoretical orientations’.

Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are *positioned* by, and *position ourselves within*, the narratives of the past.¹⁴ (my emphasis)

It should be possible therefore to locate the ‘positioning’ of the subject within contemporary narratives of identity, reading them historically and contextually, without jettisoning their value for emancipatory politics. It pertains rather to a different form of emancipatory politics, one that uses ‘the past to contemplate a post-capitalist tomorrow beyond both the pre-colonial and colonial.’¹⁵ In reading texts from the past, we do not seek an ‘inaugural’ or ‘foundational’ black, female, or anti-colonial nationalist voice and do not necessarily expect it to ‘directly and self-consciously challenge the assumptions of a racist, patriarchal, colonial ideology’.¹⁶ (Although it is, of course, welcome when it does). Rather, we situate texts within the dialectical matrix of the transnational Atlantic world. Individuals are always understood as holding a degree of agency in this world, but we note with Anne McClintock that the employment of agency involves, ‘the dense web of relations between coercion, negotiation, complicity, refusal, dissembling, mimicry, compromise, affiliation and revolt.’¹⁷ By removing an assumption of oppositional politics a transnational approach might fruitfully consider the ‘positioning’ of the text in terms of narratives of identity, the overall affect of the text, and the strategies for emancipation employed, if any. Above all, it foregrounds the ‘collaborative’ nature of emancipatory politics between supposedly irreconcilable ‘Others’ across the Atlantic world—with all the multifarious imperfections that entails—that is as necessary in the present as it was in the past.

¹³ Sarah Salih, ‘*The History of Mary Prince*, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon’, *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition* (2004), p. 129.

¹⁴ Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in *Colonial Discourse & Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, in Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman, eds, (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 225.

¹⁵ Benita Parry, ‘The Presence of the Past’, *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, p. 17. Cited in the introductory chapter.

¹⁶ Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography, Cultural identity and Self-Representation*, (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), p. 15.

¹⁷ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 15.

Black and Red Atlantic

Robert Wedderburn was fathered by a Scotsman and his Jamaican slave, Rosanna, around 1761, the year following Tacky's Rebellion.¹⁸ His father, James Wedderburn, had fled Scotland with his brother John following the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden in 1746. They established themselves as wealthy sugar plantation owners and John Wedderburn would later return to Scotland with his slave, Joseph Knight, whose story is discussed in the final chapter. Although Robert was born free, James Wedderburn never acknowledged his mulatto son who recounts that on his one visit to Scotland to request financial assistance from his father, he was sent away by the butler with 'a draught of small beer and a cracked sixpence.'¹⁹ As part of the commemorations of abolition in 2007, Professor Geoff Palmer led a commemorative 'Robert Wedderburn Walk' that retraced his steps from Musselborough to the Wedderburn house at Inveresk Lodge.²⁰ Wedderburn is a particularly stimulating candidate for recovering the memory of 'Scotland and Slavery' in this way. His story not only details the pain and suffering caused by callous Scottish masters in a brutal system, but his strategies for emancipation underline the importance of 'collaboration' between sailors, slaves and commoners in their struggles for freedom across the Atlantic world. In this way, his story provides an antidote to the argument that modern multiculturalism has erased the identity of the 'white working class' and has left them 'voiceless'.²¹ Wedderburn in particular belies the notion that 'giving the white working class a voice' can only mean articulating a kind of proletarian ethnocentrism. By contrast, the working class in Scotland and Britain has always been multicultural and capable of both espousing the worst elements of imperial practice, as well as displaying profound levels of solidarity.²²

¹⁸ This section has been expanded from material previously published under 'Robert Wedderburn: race, religion and revolution', *International Socialism Journal*, 132 (Oct 2011).

¹⁹ 'The Horrors of Slavery' in *The Horrors of Slavery and other writings by Robert Wedderburn*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1991), p. 60. All subsequent references to Wedderburn's writings are to this edition.

²⁰ The walk was attended by 300 people including a descendent of Robert, the current Lord Professor Bill Wedderburn QC. <http://www.scotlandandslavery.org.uk/Past_Geoff_Robert_Wedderburn.html> [accessed 04/07/12].

²¹ For example the BBC's documentary series the 'White Season' (2008), which Gillian Evans points out 'will benefit only the BNP'. Gillian Evans, 'English Nostalgia', *The Guardian* 12/3/08, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/mar/12/communities.localgovernment>> [accessed 10/06/2012].

²² In a recent pamphlet on 'Black British Rebels', Hassan Mahamdallie includes Wedderburn alongside Equiano, William Cuffay (discussed below), the Indian Communist Shapurji Saklatvala who was elected MP for North Battersea in 1924 and was imprisoned during the British General Strike, the Trinidadian Communist and founder of the Notting Hill Carnival Claudia Jones, and 1970s Grunwick strike leader Jayaben Desai. *Black British Rebels: Figures from Working Class History* (London: Bookmarks, 2012).

Forgotten for around 160 years after his death, nobody has done more than Iain McCalman to revive interest in his memory. He positions Wedderburn in the London ‘Radical Underworld’ and asserts that his most telling contribution was to link the suffering of African slaves in the colonies to the privations felt by the British working class under Atlantic capitalism in the early nineteenth century.²³ Throughout this thesis I have traced the connection made between slaves and free labourers: James Grainger, James Boswell, Hector MacNeill, John Stewart, and Philip Barrington Ainslie amongst others found British miners and labourers comparatively worse off, in order to deny the need for abolition. Wedderburn made a different connection—one that eluded Robert Burns—that urged both slaves and free labourers to overthrow their respective masters and landlords to claim an equal share in land and political rights. As discussed in the previous chapter, the campaign for abolition was dominated by a gradualism that articulated a ‘fizzle out’ theory of emancipation. ‘Above all’, as Eric Williams put it, ‘pas de zèle’.²⁴ Wedderburn would adopt a different approach. He joined Thomas Spence’s radical group and would disseminate his ideas through the political magazine *Axe Laid to the Root* (1817), the more autobiographical anti-slavery tract *Horrors of Slavery* (1824), and a series of public meetings. As a political thinker, Alan Rice identifies the importance of Wedderburn’s, ‘remarkably prescient acknowledgement of the interplay between race and class in capitalism.’²⁵ He employed a pugilistic vernacular discourse drawn from his youth in Jamaica, his experience amongst the tars at sea and the proletarian streets of London to provide a voice that united the radical movement in Britain at the time of the Peterloo Massacre (1819) with the campaign against colonial slavery.

In 1980, historians such as Patricia Hollis argued that the nineteenth-century radical movement had forgotten the sympathy for slaves they had displayed up to the mid-1790s. Hollis argues that William Cobbett and Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt denounced anti-slavery societies for their hypocrisy as they ignored suffering at home, so that by Chartist times, ‘breaking up an anti-slavery meeting had become a statement of class consciousness by working-class

²³ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London 1795-1840*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Wedderburn had appeared only fleetingly as a ‘coloured tailor’ in EP Thompson’s, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), (Bucks: Pelican Books, 1968), p. 886.

²⁴ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 182.

²⁵ Alan Rice, *Radical Narratives of the Black Atlantic*, p. 8.

radicals'.²⁶ In response, James Walvin emphasised 'the need to relocate the campaign against slavery more firmly in the wider world of contemporary radical and popular politics'.²⁷ This 'relocation' has received its fullest expression in Linebaugh and Rediker's formulations in *The Many Headed Hydra* (2000). They identify Wedderburn as a 'linchpin' of the 'Atlantic Working Class'—that group of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, subaltern peoples linked by the ocean in suffering and resistance around the Atlantic continents of Africa, the Americas and Europe:

Like the linchpin, a small piece of metal that connected the wheels to the axle of the carriage and made possible the movement and firepower of the ship's cannon,

Wedderburn was an essential piece of something larger, mobile and powerful.²⁸

As discussed in the introductory chapter, *The Many Headed Hydra* situates slavery in the wider context of the imposition of capitalist methods in the imperial states of Europe, and the campaign against slavery as part of the malcontent that process engendered. The imperial reach of these states and the demands they made on a variety of labourers, slaves, sailors and commoners created a heterogeneous working class who threatened to become the 'gravediggers' of the Atlantic system. Wedderburn's story unites the political ideals, aims and discourses of what has been termed the 'black' and 'red' Atlantic. However, Bryan D. Palmer has critiqued the terms of historical recovery employed in *The Many Headed Hydra* from a more classically historical- materialist perspective. He skilfully balances an appreciation of their 'scintillatingly suggestive' approach while acknowledging that the argument can become 'rather stretched'.

Going too far, interpretively, then, is a setback in this study, but not one that repudiates its promise, for such transgression pushes us to rethink the nature of evidence and event. It brings figures such as... Wedderburn into new focus. This could be done with less hyperbole and a more nuanced appreciation of contradiction.²⁹

This chapter is written in this spirit. It is intended to maintain the political potency of Wedderburn as outlined by Linebaugh and Rediker, while it also explores some of their 'erroneous attributions' that lead to 'interpretations out of context'.

²⁶ Patricia Hollis, 'Anti-Slavery and British Working-Class Radicalism in the Years of Reform', *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, ed. by Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (Folkestone and Hamden: William Dawson & Sons, 1980), pp. 297-311.

²⁷ James Walvin, *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 19.

²⁸ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Hydra*, pp. 325-6.

²⁹ Bryan D. Palmer, 'On Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker's *The Many Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*', *Historical Materialism*, Volume 11: 4 (2003), p. 383 and p. 390.

Wedderburn castigates his Scottish father for the sexual abuse of his female slaves. His father's disregard for the welfare of his mother Rosanna and his own progeny becomes symbolic of the tyranny of the slave system itself. Thus his father James is declared a 'perfect parish bull', his house 'full of female slaves, all objects of his lust' amongst whom he struts, 'like Solomon in his grand seraglio, or like a bantam cock upon his own dunghill' (p47). The frontispiece to *Horrors of Slavery* announces his Scottish-African heritage in order to expose an instance of pre-meditated rape. Rosanna told her mistress she did not want to be sold to James Wedderburn as she knew his character, so James arranged to have her purchased through third parties. The long process of entrapment and rape of his mother displays a level of calculated cruelty that is compounded by her subsequent rejection. Wedderburn writes,

While my dear and honored father was poor, he was chaste as any Scotchman, whose poverty made him virtuous; but the moment he became rich, he gave loose to his carnal appetites, and indulged himself without moderation, but as parsimonious as ever. (p46)

The stingy Scot is exemplified in the practice of selling female slaves while pregnant as a way to increase profits, as the buyer receives 'two-for-the-price-of-one'. Wedderburn refers to his experience as a young boy witnessing the flogging of his pregnant mother by another Scottish owner, Boswell (p86). In a fascinating description he recalls that his grandmother, the well-known conjure woman and agent for smuggled goods 'Talkee Amy', took him to see if his father would assist financially in his upbringing. It is intriguing to picture this meeting of the feisty and vibrant black slave grandmother and his licentious, uncaring white planter father. Receiving only some 'abusive language', Amy remained defiant:

My grandmother called him a mean Scotch rascal, thus to desert his own flesh and blood; and declared, that as she had raised me hitherto, so she would yet, without his paltry assistance. (p49)

At the age of 11, Wedderburn observed the flogging of his grandmother by a white boy she had raised herself. The cruelty he witnessed in these formative years, by Scots amongst others, would stay with him and he would use the memory to spur anti-slavery feeling in Britain through the power of personal testimony.

Wedderburn left Jamaica serving as a 'fighting seaman' in the Royal Navy, and later as a privateer which may have formed his Atlantic Working Class outlook. Ships were vital sites for what Linebaugh and Rediker term the 'hydrarchy': a play on the imposition and

dissolution of hierarchy upon the ocean. It pertains to ‘the organization of the maritime state from above, and the self-organization of the sailors from below...The ship thus became both an engine of capitalism in the wake of the bourgeois revolution in England *and* a setting of resistance.’³⁰ Paul Gilroy identifies this ‘relationship to the sea’ as foundational for the development of an internationalist black radicalism in the early modern era as ex-slaves mixed with abused sailors. Gilroy compares the experiences of Wedderburn and William Davidson, also a mulatto of Scottish descent, whose father was the Attorney General of Jamaica. Davidson would later be executed for his part in the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1820 (discussed below). Gilroy notes,

Both Wedderburn and his sometime associate Davidson had been sailors, moving to and fro between nations, crossing borders in modern machines which were themselves microcosms of linguistic and political hybridity.³¹

Ironically, Wedderburn and Davidson learn an internationalist politics of resistance while in the service of his Majesty’s imperial fleet. Wedderburn, aged 17, docked in England for the first time in the same year that Joseph Knight won his court case (1778). He drifted into the London community of the ‘St. Giles blackbirds’, a group of poor black workers, entertainers, beggars and thieves until he became a tailor. He claims to have been involved in the 1797 naval strike at Nore as well as the Gordon Riots of 1780.³² Indeed, his fellow London-black Ignatius Sancho seems to articulate the ‘fear of the mob of a gentleman shopkeeper’, depicting:

The maddest people that the maddest times were ever plagued with...the insanity of Lord George Gordon, and the worse than Negro barbarity of the populace.³³

The irony of the phrase ‘Negro barbarity’ is apparent, though it is hard to dispel the image of Sancho cowering behind a grill while Wedderburn marauds outside.

Wedderburn became a licensed Unitarian minister and his first publication *Truth Self Supported; Or A Refutation of Certain Doctrinal Errors, Generally Adopted in the Christian*

³⁰ *Hydra*, p. 144.

³¹ Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 12

³² The Scot General George Gordon led a crowd to deliver a mass petition against the repeal of anti-Popery laws of 1698. Modern historiography identifies three stages where firstly Parliament refused to debate the petition, which triggered days of riots against high-profile Catholic residences, then thirdly against symbols of state and financial power suggesting the mood was generalising to encompass political and economic grievances. Ian Haywood and John Seed, Introduction, *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Ian Haywood and John Seed, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1-19.

³³ Letter from Sancho to John Spinks Esq. on the Gordon Riots, Charles St., 6 June 1780, in *Black Writers in Britain 1760-1890*, p. 32.

Church (1790), developed a powerful antinomian position of ‘Gospel Liberty’ free from the confines of church and state law.³⁴ By 1813, Wedderburn had become an ardent follower of Thomas Spence, born in Newcastle of Scottish descent, who advocated an earthly millennium based on the redistribution of land as a form of Biblical ‘Jubilee’. The Book of Leviticus described the recurring period of ‘Jubilee’ every fifty years during which:

Ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family... The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.³⁵

‘Spence’s Plan’ sought to make permanent this period of egalitarian communitarianism, which he described in reference to African and Native American communities. Wedderburn would have been attracted by Spence’s staunch opposition to slavery and was also impressed that he ‘drew explicit parallels between the slave system abroad and the way that English landed monopoly created inequality, hardship and oppression.’³⁶ Wedderburn would develop these parallels during his leadership of the ‘Spencean Philanthropists’ where he advocated the Atlantic working class establish Jubilee in the form of a ‘democratic republic of agrarian smallholders’ in the Caribbean and Britain.³⁷

In 1817, Wedderburn published six issues of the magazine *The Axe Laid to the Root*. The title drawn from the Bible was also redolent of Paine, Spence and Shelley.³⁸ Published and circulated in London, though addressed ‘To the Planters and Negroes of Jamaica’, it presented Wedderburn’s advice for the emancipation of slaves through the implementation of ‘Spence’s Plan’ on that island. However, it can also be read as a coded message to oppressed classes in Britain, thereby combining the issues of the ‘black’ and ‘red’ Atlantic which dictated Wedderburn’s life. The six issues of *Axe* provide a coherent if unstable vision of

³⁴ Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). However, Thomas errs in positioning Wedderburn as a Methodist in the tradition of ‘radical dissenting Protestant’ current of ‘spiritual autobiography’.

³⁵ Leviticus 25:10. Spence concludes, ‘Thus you see God Almighty himself is a very notorious leveller’. *An Interesting Conversation Between a Gentleman and the Author, on the Subject of the Foregoing Lecture*, appended to 1793 edition of *Rights of Man*. <<http://thomas-spence-society.co.uk/7.html>> [accessed 28/05/2012].

³⁶ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 69.

³⁷ McCalman, *Horrors*, p. 18.

³⁸ Luke 3:9 ‘And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.’ Paine’s *The Age of Reason* (1794) was intended to ‘lay the axe to the root of religion’, a phrase which Spence repeated in *The Giant Killer* (1814). Shelley’s ‘Queen Mab’ (1813) declared, ‘From Kings, and Princes, and statesmen, war arose/... Let the axe/ Strike at the root,/ The poison tree will fall.’ To modern ears it also recalls Bob Marley: ‘If you are the big, big tree/ We are the small axe/ Ready to cut you down, to cut you down.’ Bob Marley and the Wailers, ‘Small Axe’, *Burnin’*, (1973).

Jubilee: the question of how the Spencean redistribution of land would be realised, whether benignly handed down from heaven or necessitating violent struggle, is ambiguous. The first edition is comprised of two letters. Both letters are signed Wedderburn though they are addressed to the editor, who is also Wedderburn. McCalman speculates that he was attempting to give the impression of an active community of readers, writers and correspondents.³⁹ The first letter counsels the slaves against repeating the violence of St Domingo, yet the second invokes the Maroons and the revolted slaves of Haiti.

Prepare for flight, ye planters, for the fate of St. Domingo awaits you. Get ready your bloodhounds, the allies which you employed against the Maroons... Their weapons are their bill-hooks; their store of provision is every where (sic) in abundance; you know they can live upon sugar canes... They will slay man, woman, and child, and not spare the virgin, whose interest is connected with slavery, whether black, white or tawny.⁴⁰

The reference to bloodhounds relates to the Second Maroon War of 1795-6. Murray Pittock employs this undignified episode to differentiate between the fratricidal Scots and Irish and 'the English attitude towards the Maroons of Jamaica'.⁴¹ Yet it was the Scottish governor of Jamaica, Alexander Lyndsey Earl of Balcarres who imported bloodhounds from Cuba to track the Maroons through the mountains. Realising he could not defeat them militarily, he instead sent an English officer named Walpole to sue for peace. Balcarres invited the Trelawney Town Maroons onto a ship where they would share a banquet to symbolically secure the peace. In a manoeuvre still remembered amongst Maroons as the 'treacherous feast', Balcarres instructed the gangplanks to be drawn and the ship sailed with the Maroons on board to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Mavis Campbell notes that,

In one of their numerous engaging petitions from Nova Scotia, [the Maroons] begged the British monarch never to send 'any of dem poor crotch Lord for Gubner again'. [i.e. never send any of those poor Scotch lords to be a governor again].⁴²

Wedderburn, then, does not seek fratricidal allies in the Scots but urges the British workers to emulate the example of combative free black communities across the Atlantic in order to overthrow British landed interest. He ignores the ambivalent legacy of the Maroons as hunters of runaway slaves, foregrounding instead a remarkable inversion of symbols of colonial power.

³⁹ McCalman, *Horrors*, p. 87

⁴⁰ *Horrors*, p. 86.

⁴¹ Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, p. 244.

⁴² Quoted in Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), p. 257. The Maroons would later be shipped to Freetown in Sierra Leone where their descendants still live.

Machetes, or ‘bill-hooks’ were tools manufactured in Britain for use by slaves to harvest James Grainger’s ‘imperial cane’. Yet, he recalls that the Haitian slaves used their bill-hooks to combat their masters, and the Maroons could survive periods of hardship by sucking on the meager rations of sugar cane during their wars against the British. The source of Atlantic wealth and the tools to harvest it become the means of pursuing anti-imperial revolt. He hints that their guerrilla tactics should be employed as the United Irishmen failed to do at Vinegar Hill in 1797: ‘They want no turnpike roads: they will not stand to engage organised troops, like the silly Irish rebels.’⁴³ Finally, in a crucial insight into the dynamics of race and class which have faced all anti-colonial liberation movements, he warns of replicating hierarchies which produce tyrants, ‘A black king is capable of wickedness, as well as a white one’ (p87).

The fourth to final editions of *Axe*, are comprised of a correspondence with Wedderburn’s half-sister ‘Miss Campbell’, a ‘mulatta’ in Jamaica descended from maroons who, upon Wedderburn’s request, agrees to free her slaves in line with Spencean principles. Linebaugh and Rediker invest a great deal of faith in these letters finding in them ‘a unique source of knowledge about the Atlantic proletariat’, and ‘a transatlantic intellectual dialogue that synthesized African, American, and European voices.’⁴⁴ However, although an Elizabeth Campbell may well have existed (and Linebaugh and Rediker suggest one in Trelawney), it seems unlikely that she penned these letters. On closer scrutiny their authenticating footnotes (p405) are suspect. The Jamaica Almanack of 1818 does list an Elizabeth Campbell, but she holds 7 slaves (and no stock), not the fifteen Linebaugh and Rediker report.⁴⁵ Wedderburn’s letter thanks Campbell for buying his mother and treating her kindly and manumitting his brother John (p96). Although there are plenty of Campbells listed in the *Index of Manumissions* of 1816 that the authors point to, there is in fact no Elizabeth Campbell, no Rosanna and no John.⁴⁶ Given the similarity in the breathless tone, the breakneck speed of the style and the recurrence of familiar *bête noir* figures, it seems more likely that it was

⁴³ All quotes from second letter of *Axe*, No 1, pp. 83-87. Archibald MacLaren had been a soldier at Vinegar Hill before penning *The Negro Slaves* (1799), (see chapter two).

⁴⁴ *Hydra*, p. 301 and p. 306.

⁴⁵ *Jamaica Almanack* 1818, Spanish Town Archives, p. 105. There is also an Elizabeth Campbell listed in the Western District of St. Andrew of Mount Zion and Pen estate with 84 slaves and 12 stock, p. 57.

⁴⁶ *Index to Manumissions*, vol 1, no. 47, (Spanish Town Archives). The authors also suggest James Wedderburn’s estates were worth £302, 628, 4s, 8d at his death in 1821. However that figure is for his brother John, whose slaves include those named Scotland £80, Dundee £160, Glasgow £20, Mungo £110, Rachael £160, Aberdeen £20, Edinburgh (dead), Galloway £10, Clyde £150, and notably one Rosanna £160. *Inventory Book*, IB/11/3/135 (Spanish Town Archives).

Wedderburn himself who wrote these letters, rather in the way he attempted to give the impression of a community of correspondents to his newspaper by writing the first letters 'To the Editor'. This 'erroneous attribution' leads to an 'interpretation out of context' that represents an example of Bryan D. Palmer's 'stretched argument'. This lends weight to those critics such as David Brion Davis and David Armitage who accuse Linebaugh and Rediker of relying on questionable readings in order to draw connections between the Atlantic Working Class rather more clearly than the evidence allows.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, I argue that these letters should not be dismissed as merely inauthentic; they can still profitably be read as an extension of Wedderburn's theory and propaganda for Jubilee, in which he adopts the voice of his half-sister. The letters should be read in the well-tested tradition of philosophical and polemical dialogue. The letters report the consequences of Miss Campbell manumitting all her slaves, as Wedderburn requested. Wedderburn's wickedly ironic humour is evident in his representation of the Jamaican governor's voice, 'keep your slaves upon your own estate, for fear they should corrupt others and turn their brains to think that liberty and possession of the soil is better than slavery and the whip' (p106). Returning to another favourite target of Wedderburn's, 'Miss Campbell' reports it was suggested at the assembly that this uprising of slaves could be doused easily:

Send immediately to England for a million gags, one million yards of chain, one million iron collars, and send to Scotland for one hundred thousand starving Scotchmen to manage the slaves. (p109)

Miss Campbell distinguishes between the English officers who hate to see their mulatto offspring sold into slavery, unlike 'the Scotch negro drivers (who) never care about their children being slaves; you know what your father did' (p108).

That year, on 16th August 1819, government repression of the popular movement culminated in a cavalry charge into an unarmed demonstration of 60-80,000 people who were demanding parliamentary reform. The site of the action, Peter's Field near Manchester lent its name to an ironic inversion of the military victory over Napoleon at Waterloo. The 'Peterloo Massacre' which killed 15 and injured between 400-700 provoked shock, anger and preparations for class war. Only the previous week, on August 9th 1819, Wedderburn held a meeting on the question, 'Has a Slave an inherent right to slay his Master, who refuses him his

⁴⁷ See 'Red Atlantic' section in the theory chapter.

liberty?’ The two government spies present both interpreted the meeting, probably accurately, as having a subtext of the legitimate rising of the British poor against their oppressors in Britain. Wedderburn pointed out that slaves had been rebelling for twenty years and ‘appealed to Britons who boasted such superior feelings and principles, whether they were ready to fight now but for a short time for their Liberties.’⁴⁸ He assured the assembly that ‘he had written home to the Slaves to avoid slaying their Masters until he knew the sense of that meeting.’ Following the near unanimous vote in favour, he ‘exclaimed, Well Gentlemen I can now write home and tell the Slaves to murder their Masters as soon as they please.’⁴⁹ Following Peterloo Wedderburn, practicing the military preparation he preached to Jamaican slaves, led a band of followers in dawn drills on Primrose Hill in London. Arthur Thistlewood (the radical son of the planter Thomas Thistlewood)⁵⁰ plotted to assassinate the cabinet. Wedderburn certainly supported the conspiracy though it was his fellow Jamaican William ‘Black’ Davidson who was arrested at the scene. Davidson was born in 1781 the son of a slave and the Scottish Jamaican Attorney General, though unlike Wedderburn he had been ‘acknowledged’. In 1795, Davidson had arrived in Glasgow to study law at the age of 14, however he soon got involved in the movement for parliamentary reform and ran away to sea. On 23rd February 1820, the conspirators’ loft at Cato Street was raided by the police. While some members including Thistlewood escaped out a window, Davidson is said to have fought back fiercely before being carried out ‘damning every person who would not die in Liberty’s cause’ and singing the Burns song ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled’.⁵¹ Burns’ song was still being used for battles ‘not quite so ancient’.⁵²

During a spell in jail on a blasphemy charge, Wedderburn was visited by a stranger who lent him two books. It transpired the visitor was none other than William Wilberforce who seemingly encouraged Wedderburn to abandon the subversive republican rhetoric to

⁴⁸ Rev. Chetwode Eustace, 10 Aug 1819, in McCalman, 1991, p. 116.

⁴⁹ Sd. J. Bryant, 9 Aug 1819, in McCalman, 1991, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Thomas Thistlewood’s diaries have provided a valuable source for daily life on a plantation. See Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86*, (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 1999). See also Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World*, (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). James Wedderburn and he were neighbours.

⁵¹ *Black Writers in Britain*, p. 129.

⁵² Burns’ note to George Thomson, discussed in chapter two.

focus on anti-slavery.⁵³ The result was the publication in 1824 of *The Horrors of Slavery*. Consistent with Wilberforce's abolitionism, this text strikes a moral rather than political tone; the focus here is not on the shared oppression of slave and working classes, but rather on the 'disgusting licentiousness of the planters'. In addition, it contains the letters between Wedderburn and his more favoured brother Andrew Wedderburn-Colville (1779- ?) who sought to refute his claims. Colville had, by that time, inherited his father's sugar estates in Jamaica, establishing the sugar firm of Wedderburn and Company, and would go on to become one of the most successful governors of the Hudson Bay company, with many towns in Canada and the U.S.A still bearing his name. Meanwhile Robert complains that he had 'received no benefit in the world' from his Scottish parentage (p45). Helen Thomas draws out the irony that the benefits he sought to gain from his father had been incurred through the slave economy that he railed against. Furthermore, Thomas notes that 'the author could not claim to have suffered directly the "horrors" implied by the title of his pamphlet.'⁵⁴ Rather than the slave narratives of Cuguano or Equiano this example of what might be termed 'Mulatto discourse' strategically employs his Jacobite Scottish ancestry. He asserts his grandfather Sir John Wedderburn, 'was a staunch Jacobite, and exerted himself strenuously in the cause of the Pretender.' He continues,

He was hung by the neck till he was dead; his head was then cut off, and his body was divided into four quarters. When I first came to England in the year 1779, I remember seeing the remains of a rebel's skull which had been affixed over Temple Bar; but I never yet could fully ascertain if it was my dear grandfather's skull, or not. Perhaps my dear brother, A. Colville, can lend me some assistance in this affair. (p45)

This passage serves a number of functions through which Wedderburn is able to capitalise on the uneven, unstable position of the narrative of the Jacobite rebellions. There is, firstly, a sense that he is drawing on some of the romance of the rehabilitated Jacobites, Walter Scott's *Waverley* had appeared in 1814 and *Redgauntlet* was also published in 1824. Wedderburn is perhaps hinting at a rebellious, romantic nature inherent in his family blood. Equally, his impertinent reference to his brother identifying the skull seeks to undermine Colville's standing as a respectable gentleman by reminding the reader of his treasonous, untrustworthy Scottish Jacobite ancestry. Thus, although he castigates his slave master father, his grandfather

⁵³ Many commentators have enjoyed speculating that one of the 'calf-bound' books Wilberforce lent him was Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, though there is no evidence for this.

⁵⁴ Helen Thomas, *Romanticism*, p. 269.

provides access to an alternative narrative of identity. In this fine example of ‘Scottish-mulatto discourse’, Wedderburn is able to strategically *position himself within* narratives of the Scottish Jacobite past, as Stuart Hall might express it. Invoking both the rebellion and the degrading traitor’s death, Wedderburn is able to at once legitimate his own insurrectionary politics and undermine the respectability of his adversary Colvile who denies his family claims.

Victorian heroine

Where Wedderburn has been an important figure for labour historians, the recovery of Mary Seacole has generally been performed in feminist and postcolonial terms. However she has also provided a significant entry point for the growing discussions that recover the memory of Scottish-Caribbean relations.⁵⁵ Seacole (née Mary Jane Grant) was born free to a Scottish officer and a free black Jamaican ‘doctress’. Unlike Wedderburn, her mother was free and she was ‘acknowledged’. As a member of Jamaica’s ‘brown middle class’ Seacole self-identifies as a patriotic subject of Britannia. Modern approaches usually consider Seacole beside Mary Prince who was born a slave in Bermuda in 1788. It is noticeable that Seacole’s *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands* (1857) and *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) were first recovered and re-published in 1984 and 1987 respectively, and thus the terms of their recovery tend to reflect the prevalent identity politics of the time.⁵⁶ For example, they have been anthologised together as two ‘Daughters of Africa’, while Sandra Pouchet Paquet considers their significance for ‘Caribbean autobiography’.⁵⁷ They are the only two non-white females to have ‘autobiographies’ published in nineteenth century Britain (we will return to the thorny issue of reading these texts as autobiography below).⁵⁸ Paquet shrewdly suggests

⁵⁵ Karen Salt, ‘The Space Between Diasporas: Mary Seacole and the Formation of an African-Scottish Identity’, Society for Caribbean Studies Conference, International Slavery Museum, Liverpool (29 June, 2011).

⁵⁶ *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands*, ed. by Ziggi Alexander and Dewjee, (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1984). Sarah Salih edited a Penguin Classics edition in 2005, page references are to this later edition. *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. by Moira Ferguson, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1987) (reprinted 1997). Sarah Salih also edited a Penguin Classics edition in 2004, again page references are to this later edition.

⁵⁷ *Daughters of Africa: an international anthology of words and writings by women of African descent from the ancient Egyptian to the present*, ed. by Margaret Busby (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992). Sandra Pouchet Paquet, *Caribbean Autobiography*. Although published in 2002, this book is drawn from Paquet’s articles published since 1992.

⁵⁸ Mary Prince does not have a Scottish heritage. However her text might be considered more broadly within the framework of a Scoto-British transnational network in the Caribbean, through its association with Thomas and Margaret Pringle, and James MacQueen of the *Glasgow Courier*. Thomas Pringle (1789-1834), the London-based but Berwickshire- born poet and journalist edited Prince’s life story. The notorious James MacQueen was

these figures spoke to a need to locate a 'primal mother' and 'female ancestor' who granted a certain 'cultural legitimacy and agency', as 'women writers were reconstructing an individual and collective cultural identity in the latter part of the twentieth century around remote historical figures.'⁵⁹ Given the pressing political need for racial, gender or postcolonial 'uplift', it became common to overestimate the oppositional politics of the historical texts, based on modern concepts of identity. For critics in the nineties, black and/ or women authors were consistently heralded as articulating a voice of 'resistance', 'subversion' and 'insurrection'. Where this became difficult to argue, it was proposed that their essential voice of resistance had been silenced or obscured by the oppression of a monolithic racist, patriarchal, colonial society. Alternatively, where they fail to fulfil the criteria of ancestral protesting subject, they are to be derided, with Seacole in a rival interpretation becoming 'the lackey of male privilege and empire.'⁶⁰ It is a presentist theoretical approach that rests on the assumption of an 'internal' essence of racial, gender or national identity that must be uncovered by the critic.

Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures*, published long after emancipation had been won, apparently represents a more straightforward work of autobiography than *The History of Mary Prince*. However, John Gilmore draws attention to the mention of an editor on the title page, the shadowy 'W.J.S'. Seacole's modern biographer Jane Robinson suggests this may refer to a W.J Stewart who had previously translated a German book on the Crimean war for the same publisher, though little is known about him or his role.⁶¹ As Gilmore points out,

The possibilities range from Mary having written the narrative virtually as we have it, with the editor doing no more than adjusting spelling and grammar to conform to 'Standard English', to, at the other extreme, the narrative being in fact written entirely by the 'editor' on the basis of interviews with its subject... Unfortunately, we cannot

born in Crawford, Lanarkshire in 1788 and held a post on a plantation in Grenada, before returning to Glasgow in 1816. He would go to court to disprove the claims made in *The History*. The modern recovery of Mary Prince has been keen to read *The History* as 'autobiography'. Here the significance Frances Smith Foster places on 'genre misidentified' becomes clear. Considered as 'autobiography', postcolonial feminist approaches have found the use of Pringle's 'authenticating strategies' patronising and have decried the extent to which Prince's 'autobiography' is ventriloquized by the reformist agenda of the Anti-Slavery Society. However, the genre of *The History of Mary Prince* is better understood as a multi-authored 'tract' designed to intervene effectively in the political and legal context of anti-slavery.

⁵⁹ Paquet, p. 12. Paquet's project is not to deconstruct but to reinforce this approach.

⁶⁰ Bernard McKenna, "'Fancies of Exclusive Possession': Validation and Dissociation in Mary Seacole's England and Caribbean,' *Philological Quarterly*, 76 (1997), p. 220.

⁶¹ Jane Robinson, *Mary Seacole: The Charismatic Black Nurse Who Became a Heroine of the Crimea* (London: Constable, 2005), p. 168.

be certain of this, and, unless someone discovers some new evidence, we never will be.⁶²

The narrative was, after all, designed to rescue Seacole from bankruptcy; its rampant militarism and pungent Victorian patriotism helped it become a best-seller. Furthermore, the uncertainty over authorship throws discussions of Seacole's precise meaning of 'creole', her protestations at racial discrimination in Britain, and her own use of racial epithets into some doubt. Nonetheless a variety of constituencies have been keen to read the words as largely Seacole's own, with Salih noting that something of a 'Seacole industry' has arisen since the 1980s.⁶³ The success story of a Jamaican nurse and sutler, overcoming the odds in her travels around the Caribbean, Central America, Britain and the Crimea provide a powerful point of identification for modern concerns. Her name adorns countless public buildings in Jamaica and the UK, her face graces commemorative stamps, and in April 2012 planning permission was granted for a memorial statue outside St Thomas' hospital in London.⁶⁴ Thus Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert describes how Seacole has become a 'symbolic site of identity...into which and through which others can map themselves'.⁶⁵ Like Robert Burns, Seacole might be considered a 'palimpsestuous' *lieu de mémoire*, as she is made to stand for a variety of 'core identities': Jamaican woman, Caribbean nurse, black or mixed-race female, black-British, proto-feminist postcolonial mother, and now we might add, Jamaican-Scottish mulatta! Critical approaches tend to celebrate the ways in which she embodies these modern cultural identities, and censure her for those criteria she fails to fulfill. Salih critiques:

Seacole's military, imperial self-identifications overshadow national, cultural and racial affiliations in her own representations as well as in the representations of her contemporaries, perhaps presenting an unpalatable truth for modern critics who are

⁶² John Gilmore, 'She did it her way', *Caribbean Review of Books*, (May 2005).

⁶³ Sarah Salih, *Representing Mixed Race* (2011), p. 125.

⁶⁴ <www.maryseacole.com> [accessed 13/06/2012].

⁶⁵ Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Mrs. Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures in Many Lands* and the Consciousness of Transit', in *Black Victorians/ Black Victoriana*, ed. by Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 83.

anxious to recruit her as the *doyenne* of a black/Caribbean/postcolonial literary canon.⁶⁶

Indeed those approaches that prioritise Seacole's thrusting subaltern agency—whether transgressing Victorian racial or gender restrictions—need to account for her enormous popularity with a conservative and John Bullish reading public.

Seacole's fame had grown in Britain due to the adulatory reports of W.H Russell the correspondent for the *Times* newspaper in the Crimea. By contrast, ten years previously the treatment in the *Times* of another mulatto of West Indian descent, William Cuffay (1788-1870) the president of the London Chartists, was rather different. Cuffay's father had been born a slave on St Kitts but had earned his freedom and worked as a ship's cook. He married a woman from Kent and in 1788 William was born in Chatham. Cuffay trained, like Wedderburn, as a tailor before rising to lead the enormous Chartist demonstration of 100,000 people on 10th April 1848. *The Times* sneered at 'the black man and his party', and rained vituperation on 'half a nigger' Cuffay who was sentenced to transportation to Tasmania in September 1848.⁶⁷ By contrast in July 1857, the same month her autobiography was published, Russell and *The Times* helped organise a benefit festival for Seacole in the Royal Surrey Gardens which was attended by over 40,000 people. In 1848 *Punch* magazine had carried a poem by Thackeray mocking Cuffay as a 'blackymore rogue', while a cartoon lampooned him as a bewigged minister languidly slouching, his eyes rolling half-closed as he puffs on a pipe.⁶⁸ In 1857 however, a poem in *Punch* eulogised Seacole's 'berry-brown face, with a kind heart's trace', while a cartoon portrayed her holding a copy of *Punch* aloft beside an adoring soldier invalid.⁶⁹ Although the discrimination and prejudice Seacole's racial origins would have provoked cannot be underestimated, it is clear that there was an overwhelming acceptance of Seacole on the part of the organs of reaction that had lambasted Cuffay. When Seacole died in 1881 she left an estate valued at £2,615, while Cuffay died in an Australian poorhouse. In this way, recovering Seacole as an 'oppositional' figure is unconvincing. During

⁶⁶ Sarah Salih, *Representing Mixed Race*, p. 131.

⁶⁷ *The Times* (29 Sep, 1848).

⁶⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray also attacks the Irish Chartists in 'Three Christmas Waits', *Punch*, 23 December, 1848. The cartoon forms the frontispiece of a *Punch* production, a book titled, *The Political Life of Cornelius Cuffay, Esq., Patriot, &c., &c.* A variety of useful material on Cuffay has been assembled at <http://cuffay.blogspot.co.uk/>.

⁶⁹ Cartoon in *Punch* (May 30, 1857) with the caption 'Our Very Own Vivandière'. Vivandière' is French for sutler.

this era of ‘hardening’,⁷⁰ racist attitudes in the middle of the nineteenth century, Seacole’s emphasis on her patriotism and ‘respectability’ found favour with an establishment that despised the ‘physical force Chartism’ of Cuffay.

Unlike Wedderburn, Joan Anim-Addo notes that Seacole, ‘does not linger over the details of lineage that might readily transform high-profiled attention into censure.’⁷¹ It is the difference in ‘acknowledgement’ between Wedderburn and Seacole that accounts for the contrasting treatment of their Scottish heritage:

I am a Creole, and have good Scotch blood coursing in my veins. My father was a soldier, of an old Scotch family... Many people have also traced to my Scotch blood that energy and activity which are not always found in the Creole race, and which have carried me to so many various scenes: and perhaps they are right. I have often heard the term ‘lazy creole’ applied to my country people; but I am sure *I* do not know what it is to be indolent.⁷²

Here Seacole underscores her pride in the Scottish side of her genealogy, ‘positioning’ herself at the intersection of two narratives of cultural identity: Scottish and Creole. By the middle of the nineteenth century the cultural narrative of thrusting Scottish ‘industry’ (as opposed to Sawney-esque disease or Jacobite treachery) was well established. The Edinburgh anatomist Robert Knox’s *Races of Men: A Fragment* (1850) brought medical discourses to the question of racial difference. Knox’s unerring scientific eye perceived that ‘the Caledonian Celt of *Scotland* appears a race as distinct from the Lowland Saxon of the same country, as any two races can possibly be: as negro from American’. If the idle and doomed Caledonian, Irish and French *Celts* had fallen at Culloden, Boyne and Waterloo,⁷³ Scottish (Saxon) blood was now associated with the increased productivity of the industrial revolution in the central belt, the dynamism of railroad and steamship engineers and inventors, and the glory of conquering soldiers at the imperial frontier. By contrast, the discourse of creole indolence and degeneracy was hardening. Knox understood human history along the lines of the ‘all-pervading,

⁷⁰ It is widely recognised that from the 1840s (i.e. shortly after emancipation) discourses around racial difference became more severe and fundamentalist.

⁷¹ Joan Anim-Addo, ‘Creole Family Patterns’, *Caribbean-Scottish Relations* (2007), p. 67.

⁷² *Wonderful Adventures*, p. 11.

⁷³ Robert Knox, *Races of Men: A Fragment*, (London: Renshaw, 1850), pp. 18-19. Knox would achieve notoriety for his part in the Burke and Hare body-snatching scandal in Edinburgh. The contemporary potato famine in Ireland and the Highlands was further evidence of the Celts’ inherent ineptitude.

unalterable, physical character of race'.⁷⁴ Racial mixture, or 'amalgamation', for which the West Indies were well-known, would prove traumatic for such theories of fixed racial 'types'. Thus, the children of such relations—West Indian creole mulattos— would come under intense scrutiny for signs of their degeneracy from the ideal type of their Saxon fathers, contaminated by the luxury and indolence inherent in their mother's blood.⁷⁵ In *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young underlines the widespread animus against 'amalgamation' in Victorian ideology.⁷⁶ Robert Knox stated that the issue of 'amalgamation' were 'pale, wan, sickly' and (like a mule) infertile:

The mulatto of all shades must also cease; he cannot extend his race, for he is of no race; there is no place for him in nature.⁷⁷

By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, then, the West Indies were deeply implicated in this new 'scientific' discourse of 'cultural pessimism', a site symbolising the twilight of the race. In 1849, the prominent Scottish intellectual Thomas Carlyle had published his 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question', which he revised to 'Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question' in 1853, four years before Seacole's autobiography.⁷⁸ Carlyle attacks the ruination of the post-emancipation West Indies; where once there had been production and profit, now 'Black Quashee' sits idle 'up to his ears in pumpkins'.⁷⁹ Yet it should not be assumed that the ideologies of the past were any less fissured and unstable than our own. Ideas of essential human difference were always in contention with scriptural orthodoxy stressing the brotherhood of man as all God's children.⁸⁰ Carlyle's diatribe provoked a debate with John Stuart Mill on the nature of freedom. Seacole's 'autobiography' would navigate the waters of 'the paradox of sameness and difference' in the mid-nineteenth century Atlantic world, engaging ambivalently with these competing discourses. The ambivalence centres on the question of the representativeness of Seacole's Scottish-Creole 'activity' and 'energy'.

⁷⁴ Knox, *Races*, p. 23.

⁷⁵ Hence William Cuffay's languor in the Punch cartoon discussed above, although it was his mother who was English and his father of African descent.

⁷⁶ Robert J.C Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁷⁷ Knox, *Races*, p. 76, p. 78.

⁷⁸ *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol XL (Feb: 1849).

⁷⁹ Carlyle's argument is that servitude to the proprietor of the land is the 'sacred appointment' of all human beings. Given the propensity of Africans towards idleness, ex-slaves now refuse to labour except for extortionate wages. Given the failure of the 'European Immigration Schemes' that brought Highlanders to Portland parish (see chapter three), Carlyle attacks the solutions of 'Exeter Hall philanthropists' and 'dismal science' economists who had begun to argue for increased free African migration to the West Indies. This, he argues, could only create a 'Black Ireland': free and starving, this time lacking pumpkins instead of potatoes.

⁸⁰ As Colin Kidd argues in *The Forging of Races: race and scripture in the Protestant Atlantic world, 1600-2000*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Giovanni Covi perceives a 'militant appropriation of a Creole identity free of the racist bias against the assumed laziness of mixed-blood people'.⁸¹ Yet, it seems more likely that Seacole is interpreting her Scottish heritage as the factor which elevates her above her fellow creoles, as she *positions herself within* the Victorian narrative of thrusting Scottish 'activity'. Note the italicization of the 'I' as she stresses her individuality, 'I am sure *I* do not know what it is to be indolent.' Although on the surface this works against theories of creole degeneracy, Seacole's suggestion that it is the particular 'energy' of her Scottish blood that counteracts the indolence produced by amalgamation actually works to affirm the theories of racial types carried through bloodlines.

Seacole's *Wonderful Adventures* makes allusions to prejudice she had faced in Britain. It suggests that she was refused employment as a nurse in the Crimea by a number of organisations, including Florence Nightingale's, due to colour prejudice.

Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had taken root here? Did these ladies shrink from accepting my aid because my blood flowed beneath a somewhat dusker skin than theirs? (p73-74)

Yet colour prejudice is here presented as an American disease infecting natural British tolerance. Indeed in a key incident while travelling from Panama to Kingston, aggressive American women refuse to allow her to travel in their steamer carriage, racially and physically abusing Mary and her servant. The stewardess sides with her persecutors, stating:

'If the Britishers is so took up with coloured people, that's their business; but it won't do here.' This last remark was in answer to an Englishman, whose advice to me was not to leave my seat for any of them. (p56-7)

Although racial codes in Britain and the United States remain different, the narrative avoids a direct confrontation of British racism. Instead, British gentlemanly conduct and tolerance are posited against American vulgarity and segregation, as inter-imperial rivalries and stereotypes are played out in the seating arrangements of Central American steamships. The narrative is itself heavily invested in nineteenth century racial ideas. It consistently employs derogatory stereotypes of non-British nationalities, such as the 'lazy Maltese', 'cunning-eyed Greeks', 'deliberate, slow and indolent Turks', while Spanish Indians are 'treacherous, passionate,

⁸¹ Giovanni Covi, 'Footprints in the Sand', *Caribbean-Scottish Relations*, p. 26.

indolent, torpid and useless'.⁸² Although her repeated references to 'niggers' has been troubling,⁸³ Salih clarifies that, 'it seems clear that Seacole is using it to imply American racism rather than displaying her own prejudice.'⁸⁴ It is in this same context that she adopts the voice of American racists to describe herself as 'yaller'. Indeed, her opposition to American racism and sympathy for escaped slaves in Central America would chime very well with the discourses of contemporary British Emancipation Societies, in which middle-class women played a leading role in denouncing slavery in the United States. Although writing from an apparently liminal position, the 'autobiography' of this creole, 'yaller', itinerant female is constructed in a form which would be welcome in any Emancipation Society drawing room.

If her bloodlines are Scottish and African-Jamaican, the ideological universe the narrative inhabits is very much Scoto-British, with Jamaica a member part of Britannia. The narrative voice is a clipped, correct Standard English, albeit in a lighthearted and modest tone, which is occasionally inflected with Scots and West Indian forms. Whether this is Seacole's or her editor's narrative voice remains unclear—it is certainly possible that W.J Stewart was Scottish himself. At one point, the narrative describes the unwholesome Colombian trading post of Gorgona that is almost destroyed by a flood followed by a widescale fire:

My hotel had some interesting inmates, for a poor young creature, borne in from one of the burning houses, became a mother during the night; and a stout little lassie opened its eyes upon this waesome world during the excitement and danger of a Gorgona conflagration. (p55)

Here it employs the *douce* Scots to increase the effect of the incongruity of new-born innocence in the clamour of the citywide fire. Later, in the Crimea, there is a reference to Seacole's escaped horse as akin to Tam o'Shanter's 'Maggie' (p108). However, given the ethnic and linguistic variety of her working environments, the narrative is overwhelmingly controlled by a Standard English voice. Her native Jamaican forms are largely conspicuous by their absence, and seep through only occasionally in the language of soldiers. When a lieutenant seeks her aid against the summer flies of the Crimea which were plaguing the front lines, her affectionate name of 'Mother Seacole' is further inflected:

⁸² As noted in *Black Writers in Britain*, p. 169.

⁸³ See *Black Writers in Britain*, p. 169; and Alexander and Dewjee's introduction to *Wonderful Adventures*.

⁸⁴ Sarah Salih, 'Introduction', *Wonderful Adventures*, p. xlv.

He evidently considered the fly nuisance the most trying portion of the campaign, and of far more consequence than the Russian shot and shell. ‘Mami,’ he said (he had been in the West Indies, and so called me by the familiar term used by the Creole children), ‘Mami, these flies respect nothing. Not content with eating my prog, they set to at night and make a supper of me’. (p141)⁸⁵

Within the humorous incident, the Caribbean form is infantilised and made appropriate for this un-heroic, insignificant problem. Therefore, it is not altogether clear that Seacole would herself recognise her current memorialization as ‘black’, ‘postcolonial Caribbean’, or ‘mixed-race icon’ (a feature which does not preclude those possibilities). Attempts to read Seacole as oppositional to British imperial codes, however, are surely overstating the case. It is perhaps better to read her as she presented herself— as a Victorian heroine. The enormous significance of her life and narrative comes in the way her story demonstrates the inconsistencies and fissures of Victorian imperial ideologies. In the face of a variety of competing discourses that would position her ‘mixed-blood’ as degenerative, Seacole achieved success through her activities for the imperial war effort which were documented in a narrative which reinforces Victorian xenophobia and the superiority of Standard English as it continually emphasises her ‘feminine respectability’.

By contrast, of course, Wedderburn reveled in his ‘unrespectability’. This chapter has contrasted the ways in which these two ‘mulatto-Scots’ from the Caribbean positioned themselves within different Scottish narratives of identity that their ‘mixed-blood’ allowed them to access. Wedderburn declares of his blood:

While I think of the treatment of my mother, my blood boils in my veins; and, had I not some connections for which I was bound to live, I should long ago have taken ample revenge of my father.⁸⁶

Unlike Mary Seacole’s ‘Scottish-Mulatto’ blood carrying ‘energy’ and ‘activity’, Wedderburn’s blood is boiling with desire for revenge. The recovery of these two ‘Mulatto-Scots’ in this chapter demonstrates the diversity within Scotland’s past that legitimises its multicultural present. As Frances Smith Foster argued, the terms of this recovery are best served by a careful contextualisation that does not seek to identify either ‘saviours’ or ‘sell-

⁸⁵ It has been difficult to trace ‘prog’ the soldier slang for food. I speculate that it is connected to ‘grog’ for ‘drink’, which was a diluted beer introduced to reduce drunkenness in the army by Admiral Vernon, whom Smollett had ridiculed. Vernon was nicknamed ‘Old Grog’, after his Grogham coat.

⁸⁶ *Horrors*, p. 47.

outs'. Seacole's display of Victorian British patriotism and ambivalent attitudes to 'race' belie the notion that non-white writers were automatically oppositional in their stance to British imperial codes. Wedderburn's voice is particularly welcome then in its articulation of an Atlantic working class consciousness that rejects both colonial slavery and British class society. For the modern reader, the recovery of Wedderburn's story speaks to an 'ethical multiculturalism' that highlights the significance of transnational solidarity in struggles for freedom across the Atlantic world. The following chapter further explores this mnemonic theme in relation to James Robertson's historical novel *Joseph Knight* (2003).

Chapter 6: Joseph Knight: History, Fiction, Memory

James Robertson's skilful work of mnemonic fiction *Joseph Knight* (2003) serves as a fitting concluding chapter to this recovery of the history, memory and literature of Scottish-Caribbean relations.¹ In the Scottish National Archives legal documents of a court case survive in which Joseph Knight, a young African slave brought from Jamaica to Ballinmean by the Jacobite John Wedderburn, would establish the principle that there could be no slaveholding on Scottish soil. Until the publication of Robertson's novel the significance of this case, long buried in the archives, was dislocated from the mainstream of Scottish cultural memory. As historical and fictional writers have begun to redress the long-standing amnesia around Scotland, slavery and empire, this thesis has suggested that a cultural history approach to the palimpsest of Scottish-Caribbean relations best addresses the 'silences of the archives'. This chapter therefore considers how Robertson negotiates the 'shared border' between history and fiction, with literature becoming a key medium through which historical memory is recovered and interpreted. As argued in the introductory chapter, I do not consider historical or fictional writing to be inherently superior but note that they perform different roles. Thus, in a manner that is more open to the novelist than the historian, Robertson's fictional account allows him to more fully inhabit characters and scenes, in order to re-imagine voices that speak with significance to the present day.

Employing the genre of the historical novel form introduces a critical dialogue with Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), the foundational historical novel centred on the Jacobite rising of 1745. Yet Robertson re-casts the Forty-five in a transnational perspective, tracing Wedderburn's escape from the battlefield at Culloden, to the slave plantations of Jamaica and his return to a Scottish estate. Significantly, the novel's epigraph is from the Nigerian novelist Ben Okri, an epigraph that I have also borrowed for the present thesis:

¹ James Robertson, *Joseph Knight* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003). All subsequent references to the paperback edition (2004). This chapter has been expanded from material previously published in, 'Joseph Knight: Scotland and the Black Atlantic', *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, vol 4 (Spring/Summer 2008), <<http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue4/morris.htm>> [accessed 06/07/2012].

Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves... If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings.²

Robertson's *oeuvre* has indeed been marked by a sceptical nationalism, one that calls into question traditional narratives of Scottish national identity in order to better shape the future. This extends from his treatment of the Covenanters in his first novel *The Fanatic* (2003), to a doubting Kirk minister in *The testament of Gideon Mack* (2006), to a state-of-the-nation survey of Scotland since 1950 in *And the Land Lay Still* (2010).³ In *Joseph Knight*, the larger histories of Jacobitism, Enlightenment, and Scottish involvement in empire and slavery unfold through a meditation on time and memory, and the difficulties of 'representation' in the recovery of 'missing faces' in historical and fictional writing. It explores the processes of collective memory and amnesia, the nature of rebellion, and the relationship between slave and free labour across the two Atlantic archipelagos in a manner that is suggestive for this thesis as a whole.

Joseph Knight: the archives

Legal documents lodged in the archives reveal that the latter half of the eighteenth century was increasingly troubled by a series of court cases which tested the law of both Scotland and England on the question of slavery. These cases revolved around the legal status of slaves who had been lawfully purchased in the colonies, but had been brought to Britain to accompany the return of their masters. It was therefore the mobility of the eighteenth century Atlantic world which disturbed the territorially based legal systems. *Knight v Wedderburn* (1773-1778) was preceded in Scottish courts by *Montgomery v Sheddan* (1756) and *Spens v Dalrymple* (1769). As discussed in chapter two, Montgomery had been captured after attempting to leave Sheddan's service at Beith, Ayrshire, though the enslaved died in the Edinburgh Tolbooth before his case came to court. In the second case, David Spens refused to return to the West Indies with Dr David Dalrymple, and sought asylum with a sympathetic minister at Wemyss in Fife.⁴ Funds to pay a £30 fine for Spens were raised and presented by the Edinburgh

² Cited at the opening of the introductory chapter. Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven*, (1996).

³ *The Fanatic* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000); *The testament of Gideon Mack* (London: Penguin, 2006); *And the Land Lay Still* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2010).

⁴ *Spens v Dalrymple* (1769), National Archives of Scotland (NAS), CS236/D/4/3 box 104.

lawyers Walter Ferguson and William Chalmers, and it is believed the local colliers and salters of Fife donated to Spens' cause. 'The evidence from the court papers stops here but it is understood that David Dalrymple died soon after and as such David Spens was a free man.'⁵ The deaths of first the slave and second the master prevented these cases being heard in their entirety in a Scottish court. In England in 1772, (the Scottish-born) Lord Mansfield⁶ ruled for James Somersett against (the Scottish-born) Charles Steuart,⁷ establishing that slaves could not be transported against their will. It was upon reading reports of the Somersett case in a Scottish newspaper that Knight resolved to make his own bid for freedom.⁸ However, Mansfield had deliberately avoided the larger philosophical and political implications of the case to keep his judgement focussed singularly on the legal technicalities of transportation under English common law.⁹ Therefore the ambivalence of the decision meant it was invoked by both parties in the Knight case in Scotland where the issue of transportation was absent and English common law did not apply.

Up the steps from *Waverley* station, the Scottish National Archives house the Memorials for Wedderburn and Knight that resituate the historical narrative of Culloden within black Atlantic issues of empire, race and slavery. As this was not a criminal case tried before a jury, but a civil case before fifteen judges, the memorials submitted by both parties exercised greater freedom in expressing the philosophy behind their opposite positions, thus providing a fuller insight into conflicting Scottish perspectives on free and slave labour in the Atlantic world. It is this which makes the court papers in the archives so valuable as they provide the fullest example of, on one side, a specifically Scottish legal defence, and on the other, a specifically Scottish indictment of slavery in the eighteenth century. In the memorials, the voices of both Wedderburn and Knight are mediated by their lawyers. Wedderburn's is signed 'Ferguson', and Knight's 'Allan Maconachie' with a note from 'John MacLaurin' (later Lord Dreghorn). The voice in Wedderburn's full and detailed memorial is characterised by an

⁵ NAS website, 'A Bid For Freedom', <<http://www.nas.gov.uk/about/061010.asp>> [Accessed 25/09/2011].

⁶ Born William Murray to Scottish nobility in 1705 in Scone Palace, Perthshire, his parents were strongly Jacobite.

⁷ Steuart became an American customs official. He purchased Somersett in 1749 and brought him with him on his return to England in 1769.

⁸ There is a delicious irony in Knight using the skill of reading, presumably taught to him by Wedderburn, to inform his bid for freedom in reading the article on Somersett in 'Mr Donaldson's newspaper'. (NAS) CS235/K/2/2, p. 10.

⁹ Historians have disputed the significance of the case since. See Ruth Paley, 'After Somerset: Mansfield, Slavery and the Law in England, 1772-1830', in *Law, Crime and English Society 1660-1830*, ed. by Norman Landau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

absolute confidence throughout in his just and lawful position which cannot fail to be recognised by the court. It seeks to demonstrate the historical traditions of Scottish obedience to authority wherein modern slavery, sanctioned by biblical authority, classical precedence and Scottish, English and Colonial statutes is invaluable to the national economy. In a manner that countenances James Grainger's observations on slaves and colliers discussed in chapter one, the memorial argues that slave labour in the Caribbean is no worse than the daily toil of bonded labour on Scottish soil:

Anciently servants that were not free tenants were ad scripto Glebae and colliers and salters are a very striking instance of persons bound to perpetual service in a much more disagreeable employment.¹⁰

In its successful refutation of such arguments, Knight's memorial constructs instead a native lineage tending towards liberty, which knew neither villeinage nor slavery:

The free and haughty spirit of the Scots never stooped to a Foreign yoke, and it cannot be supposed that a nation of Aborigines would stoop to a more humbling domestic one... Few people ever showed more inclination than the Scots to rank themselves under chiefs & to form tribes & partys but it was rather as their leader or the head of their family that they considered their chief than as their Lord & Master.¹¹

Knight's memorial argues for the specificity of chattel slavery born of turmoil and injustice on the African coast and continuing in the colonies in a form infinitely more grievous than that faced by contemporary bonded labour in Europe. This position is legitimated by a citation of William Robertson's charting of the increasingly gentle influence of humane Christianity.¹² Meanwhile this final purple passage depicts a national character which, despite the occasional overreaching chieftain, is characterized by a fiery independence which cannot permit of slavery.

Yet the voices of the principal actors, represented throughout the archival records by their lawyers, remain frustratingly remote. The historian Emma Rothschild's recent study *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (2011) seeks to redress such silences through a 'microhistorical' approach. She combs a variety of 'fragments': 'copious bundles of letters, flimsy lists of things to do, parchment mortgages, plantation accounts, ledgers and

¹⁰ NAS, p. 34.

¹¹ NAS, p. 120.

¹² The memorial invokes Robertson's, *History of Charles V* (1769) which argues that the brutal slave codes of European feudalism gave way before the moral example of Christianity.

leases',¹³ of one scattered Scottish family—the Johnstones of Westerhall in Dumfriesshire. Their pursuit of fortunes carried them from Dumfries to every corner of the empire, and through them the court records of two slaves in Scotland are connected. 'Bell or Belinda' as she is referred to in her court papers, and throughout Rothschild's history, was brought from Bengal to Britain by John Johnstone and his wife. In 1771 Bell or Belinda was found guilty of killing her own newborn whose body was discovered in the River Esk. She was sentenced to transportation to the Americas 'to be sold as a Slave for Life', and told that if she returned to Britain she would be 'Imprisoned whypt and again Transported.' Rothschild indicates that this would be the last occasion when a British court would try an individual as a slave and would sentence them into slavery. Meanwhile, John's sister Margaret Johnstone Ogilvy, daughter of the staunch Jacobite Margaret Johnstone who rode with Bonnie Prince Charlie, had married John Wedderburn, the owner of Joseph Knight. Just two years after Bell or Belinda's sentence, Knight would lodge his petition with a local sheriff in Perthshire that would eventually lead to the landmark decision in 1778, just seven years after Bell or Belinda's very different outcome. Ranajit Guha once noted that recovering such subaltern histories from the archives must negotiate the 'phenomenon of fragmentation' with the 'urge for plenitude' of historical writing.¹⁴ Given that 'Bell or Belinda's petition is not very much more than a fragment or a residue', Rothschild's 'microhistorical' approach 'has come close in a number of respects to the historical novel.'¹⁵ Yet it is not a novel. 'It is a history of eighteenth century life, and one that has conveyed in a very old-fashioned respect, the restrictiveness of the historian's investigations.'¹⁶ The inescapable problem Rothschild encounters is that the Johnstones, despite their proximity to the Enlightenment, their positions of high office in the colonies, and their involvement in seminal trials over freedom and slavery, are deeply unreflective writers.

The Johnstones, who wrote to each other about so many events, about illnesses and anxieties and teacups, said nothing at all in their surviving letters, or in any that I have been able to find, about 'Bell or Belinda', or Joseph Knight.¹⁷

¹³ 'Rebels, Rulers and Rabbit-skins', Review (Jun 29, 2011) <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/features/rebels-rulers-and-rabbit-skins/> [accessed 22/09/2011].

¹⁴ Ranajit Guha reads legal documents of a murder case in rural Bengal against the grain, in order to 'recover for history' an alternative, subaltern history. 'Chandra's Death', *Subaltern Studies* V, ed. by Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 138.

¹⁵ Rothschild, p. 280-2.

¹⁶ Rothschild, p. 282.

¹⁷ Rothschild, p. 206.

Despite the title, *The Inner Life of Empires*, the reader is rarely transported into the head of any of the ‘characters’ whose voices, thoughts, opinions and feelings are never fleshed out in the manner that the historical novel *Joseph Knight* manages to achieve. Their ‘inner life’ eludes the historian.

Joseph Knight: the novel

Faced with similar fragments in the archives, Robertson creates a work of historical fiction which resonates with contemporary significance in relation to Berthold Schoene’s post-devolution agenda for Scottish writing.¹⁸ Indeed, Mariadele Boccardi points out that the ‘refreshingly sober reconstruction of the nation’s history’ is ‘arguably motivated by the actual resumption of Scotland’s historical autonomy since the successful referendum on national self-rule [in 1997]’.¹⁹ Graeme Macdonald queries: ‘does the ‘break-up of Britain’ imply the break-up of black Britain?’²⁰ In this way devolution can be seen as having fostered a re-evaluation of not only Britishness but Scottishness that departs from traditional notions of a settled ethnic heritage towards a more fluid, contingent identity. As discussed in the introductory chapter, this modern form of civic nationalism is putatively more flexible and inclusive towards minorities, yet it should be noted that ‘black Scottish’ writers continue to register the racism that exists in the gap between political rhetoric and lived reality.²¹ Indeed, Robertson himself reports that it was his shock at the racist murder of Sikh waiter Surjit Singh Chhokar in North Lanarkshire in 1998 that prompted him to explore the marginalised racial history of Scotland. *Joseph Knight*, then, would speak in a particularly telling way to a post-devolution Scotland still struggling with imperial legacies manifested in incidences of racist violence.²²

¹⁸ See introductory chapter and opening of chapter 4.

¹⁹ Mariadele Boccardi, ‘Pedlars of Their Nation’s Past: Douglas Galbraith, James Robertson and The New Historical Novel’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. Berthold Schoene, (2007), p. 98, p. 105.

²⁰ Graeme Macdonald, ‘Scottish Extractions: Race and Racism in Devolutionary Fiction’, *Orbis Litterarum*, Volume 65, Issue 2 (April, 2010), p. 80.

²¹ See for example, Jackie Kay, Luke Sutherland, and Suhayl Saadi.

²² Interview with the author, 31/08/2010. The police mishandling of the case which failed to secure a prosecution at two separate trials, the first in March 1999 two months before the first devolved elections, resulted in accusations of ‘institutional racism’ in the Scottish justice system akin to those levelled at the Metropolitan police following ‘The Macpherson Report’ (1999) on the murder of Stephen Lawrence in London in 1993. The report for the Runnymede Trust approves of the editorial line in *Scotland on Sunday* that “‘No Racism Here” is a glib and complacent slogan’, that actually hampers anti-racist work by raising a barrier of denial. Report by Dr Elinor

While it can be read as part of the literature of British multiculturalism, *Joseph Knight* should be considered more specifically as part of a modern literary current which displays a greater willingness to inquire deeper into Scottish- Caribbean relations. Robbie Kydd's undervalued *The Quiet Stranger* (1991) takes part in a fundamental postcolonial conversation between Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* by animating a detached Scottish observer of slave societies in Tobago—Antoinette/ Bertha's brother, Richard Mason. Andrew O. Lindsay's imaginative version of Robert Burns' Jamaican journal *Illustrious Exile* (2006) was discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, the latest novel by Jamaican- English writer Andrea Levy *The Long Song* (2010) opens with the rape of the black slave narrator Kitty by her white Scottish overseer, Tam Dewar. Meanwhile Chris Dolan's *Redlegs* (2012) imagines the fates of a community of Scots founding a 'New Caledonia' on Barbados at the time of emancipation.²³ Within this stream, *Joseph Knight* provides a most insightful and effective redress of the collective amnesia surrounding Scottish-Caribbean relations. Robertson imagines an elderly Wedderburn troubled by memories who hires the private investigator Archibald Jamieson to find Knight more than twenty years after the court case. Jamieson's investigations into the Wedderburn family history introduce the intrigue of the detective genre into the historical novel as his search for the missing figure of Knight drives the plot. At times Jamieson may be read as an authorial persona: his role as historical detective reveals the wider history of Scottish relations with the Caribbean which reflects Robertson's own investigations into Scotland's forgotten past. It is through this investigation that Robertson effectively interrogates and suggestively re-writes historical narratives of Scottish identity.

As mentioned above, the spectre of Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) both hangs over this historical novel and is exorcised from it. Robertson widens the scope to connect narratives of Jacobite defeat with Atlantic slavery. In the following scene, Wedderburn and his comrade-turned-schoolmaster Aeneas MacRoy join to commemorate the 16th of April 1746.

Kelly, 'Racism, Police and Courts in Scotland', *Scottish Affairs*, No. 30 (Winter, 2000), pp.141-159
 <<http://www.runnymedetrust.org/bgRacismPolice.html>> [accessed 06/08/2011]. Following the reform of Scotland's 'double jeopardy' law, the Chhokar family have been campaigning for a retrial since January 2012.
²³ Robbie Kydd, *The Quiet Stranger* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991); Andrew O. Lindsay, *Illustrious Exile* (Leeds: Peepal Tree, 2006); Andrea Levy, *The Long Song* (London: Headline Review, 2010). Chris Dolan, *Redlegs* (Glasgow: Vagabond Voices, 2012).

‘Nearly sixty years, damn it,’ Sir John said. ‘A lifetime away, a world away. Dear God, somebody will be writing a *novelle* about it next!’

‘It’ll no tell the truth a *novelle*,’ Aeneas said.

‘No, it won’t. The women will love it. But we’re still here. We know the truth.’ (p26)

Robertson’s narrative present, set in 1803, anticipates Scott’s actual commencement of the writing of *Waverley* in 1805.²⁴ Boccardi notes that, ‘*Joseph Knight* spans the period from 1746 to 1803, almost exactly the sixty years to which Scott alludes in the subtitle of *Waverley*.’²⁵ Yet the genre of the Scottian historical novel remains over the horizon of modernity for this novel’s characters. Instead, the Latinate form ‘*novelle*’, suitably in italics,²⁶ is primarily associated with Giovanni Boccaccio’s Italian romance stories collected in the fourteenth century *The Decameron* (though it is also redolent of the feminine French form ‘nouvelle’ meaning fresh, recent or new). The suggestion here that the ‘authentic’ history of Jacobitism experienced by these old soldiers will only be distorted and romanticised by a fictional account nods to Scott’s portrayal. The naïve young Englishman Waverley sets out as a feminised character steeped in Boccaccio’s romance literature, before he finally emerges as a fully formed subject of the masculine novel. In contrast to the literature that shaped Waverley’s romantic perceptions of Scotland, Scott’s actual achievement in *Waverley* created something new, or ‘novel’. Ian Duncan argues that Scott infuses his historical vision with a corresponding generic conflict whereby the Forty-five is associated with romance—redolent of foreign, particularly Latin, and feminine luxury—that is superseded, in a dialectical process, by the masculine form of the novel.²⁷ In Robertson’s re-writing, John’s daughter Susan Wedderburn displays similar ‘dainty, squeamish, and fastidious’ reading habits to the young Waverley.²⁸ However, ‘All that Jacobite passion belonged in another age, it had nothing to do with her’ (p20). Instead, the sense of romantic adventure once symbolised by the Jacobite rising would become re-formed and renewed in her quixotic vision of African slaves.

She thought of them as flitting through the shady jungle, mysterious, dangerous, beautiful as the blood-red flowers on the trees. One minute you’d see them the next they’d be gone. They were beyond her. (p22)

²⁴ However, after completing the first seven chapters Scott showed it to a friend who discouraged him from continuing. He re-commenced in 1814.

²⁵ Boccardi, p. 102.

²⁶ The sloping calligraphy of ‘italics’ is derived from ‘Italian type’ to distinguish it from ‘Gothic’. OED.

²⁷ Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 9.

²⁸ Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. by Andrew Hook (London: Penguin Classics, 1985), p. 50.

The exotic indiscernibility of the Africans, always on the periphery of perceivable reality, recalls romantic descriptions of mysterious Highland ‘Children of the Mist’. Indeed, Joseph’s name relates him in Susan’s imagination to the Jacobite prince, both cast in the half-light of Arthurian romance: ‘The Black Knight. I think of him as the chevalier of darkness’ (p16). While their enemies sneered at James and his son Charles Stuart as the ‘Old’ and ‘Young Pretender’ respectively, Jacobite supporters preferred the chivalric French noble title ‘Chevalier de St. George’. Here Robertson is able to imaginatively weave together the threads of Jacobitism and racial slavery in a manner that remains beyond the reach of the historian. Yet he notes the limits of Susan’s romantic vision, once her father dies so does her interest in Knight (p343). The romance of Susan’s sentimental abolitionism misrepresents the African slaves and, in its vicarious egoism, can never truly be useful to the anti-slavery movement; in the same way that romantic portrayals mis-serve the Jacobite cause.

Where Scott’s narrative focus preferred the victorious battlefield at Prestonpans, Robertson has no qualms in describing the bloody defeat of the Jacobite cause at Culloden. Dispelling Scott’s ‘romantic Jacobite mists’, Boccardi argues that the novel operates as, a programmatic reaction against the elegiac treatment of Scotland’s past by asserting itself as a representation of both the horrors of defeat [Culloden] and the moral ambiguities of imperialism.²⁹

Thus in a manner that recalls James Hogg’s *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823), Robertson depicts the battlefield as ‘a carpet of bodies and body parts’ (p39).³⁰ In an interesting approach, Marjorie Rhine considers such representations of brutalised bodies in the novel in relation to Julia Kristeva’s psychosexual notion of the corporal ‘abject’. In *The Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva defines the ‘abject’ as the typical human reaction to the threat of a breakdown in meaning or identity caused by the erasure of barriers between subject and object, or self and other.³¹ Thus, ‘corpses, human waste, open wounds, putrid smells, a reduction of the human to animality, even, for Kristeva, the skin on heated milk’,³² destabilises boundaries that we have in place to protect us from a full awareness that we are material, mortal, and vulnerable. Rhine questions whether this can be extrapolated to an abstract level of national identity:

²⁹ Boccardi, p. 102.

³⁰ The combination of comic and horror at Culloden in James Hogg’s, *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823) itself reads as a ‘programmatic reaction’ against Scott’s romantic evasion of warfare.

³¹ Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

³² Marjorie Rhine, ‘Looking at an “Abject” Past: Robertson’s *Joseph Knight* and its Implications.’ Paper presented at *Symbiosis* Conference, University of Glasgow, 25/6/2011, p. 3. (Paper sent privately).

Can the abject help us better understand how a nation's sense of identity, one sustained by its shared national narrative, might similarly recoil in disgust from abject reminders of how this narrative was shaped or affected by practices that include the abuse and violation of other human beings?³³

The novel, then, delves into the 'abject history' of both Culloden and Caribbean slavery from which Scott and Wedderburn recoil in disgust. It details Wedderburn senior's execution in London, 'cut down alive and his Bowels be then taken out and burnt before his face' (p50); and the proximity to black bodies in the slave market and operating table, 'touching black flesh, cutting into it, gangrenous rot, infestation, flux, fever (p65). In the opening scene, when Jamieson suggests that Wedderburn seeks Knight in order to offer compensation he sees Wedderburn react with such a start that, 'Jamieson thought of a dog with its birse up, but the image did not quite fit. It was more as if the raw thing in Wedderburn had suddenly manifested itself on his skin, like a disease' (p11). This striking image of the abject, in which Wedderburn is first animalised then infected, takes place in the apparently settled house at Ballindean. It suggests the visceral power that Knight and Culloden continue to hold for Wedderburn, disturbing memories of the abject past that continue to trouble the collective memory of the nation.

Moreover, Cairns Craig has persuasively located the genre of the Scottish historical novel as the most 'problematic legacy from nineteenth century to twentieth century Scottish culture', as it fortified the enduring sense of Scotland as a site removed from the main processes of historical progress.³⁴ Colin Kidd argues that Enlightenment historians such as William Robertson and David Hume chose an Anglo-centric model of progress, in order to distance themselves further from Jacobite 'barbarity'.³⁵ Therefore, come the twentieth century, T.S Eliot could only perceive a unified national 'tradition' in the major cultures of England and France whereby the continuity of the past nurtures the present within the unified space of the nation.³⁶ In Scotland however, Craig describes a persistent malaise in the vision of history as a broken national thread:

³³ Rhine, p. 4.

³⁴ Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 117.

³⁵ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁶ T.S Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', *The Sacred Wood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921).

The constant erasure of one Scotland by another makes Scotland unrelatable, un-narratable: past Scotlands are not gathered into the being of modern Scotland; they are abolished by it.³⁷

Joseph Jackson underlines that Robertson addresses the inheritance of this concept of a 'suspended Scotland' by returning Scotland to 'the causality of real history'.

In stark terms, slavery redefines a significant element of Scotland's romanticised Jacobite past as excessively colonial, placing deracinated Scots firmly within the political economy of the slave trade.³⁸

It should be stressed, however, that Craig's notion of Scotland as 'Out of History',³⁹ has always been a problem of *representation*, one that has elided real Scottish involvement at the forefront of real world-history, such as Atlantic slavery. Scotland has ever been fully immersed in the industry, technology, expansion, exploitation, expropriation, warfare and revolutions of capitalist modernity and has its own (occasionally triumphalist) nationalist, left nationalist and, in Deleuze and Guattari's term, 'major' perspectives on national history.⁴⁰ Although both Boccardi and Jackson insightfully deconstruct 'romantic Jacobite mists', they do not sufficiently address the myopia over Atlantic slavery that is re-inscribed in modern left nationalist historical perspectives which hold greater importance in post-devolution Scotland. Indeed, Craig's analysis works less to deconstruct the essentialist meta-narrative of the timeless nation, and more to insist on the legitimate existence of Scotland's own hidden golden thread which writers must seek to recover. Craig suggests J.M Barrie's fantasy 'Never Never Land' of eternal youth in *Peter Pan* might be seen as symbolic of Scotland's suspension from the real to a realm of childlike fantasy. Accordingly, Jackson draws attention to the 'extended metaphor of Wedderburn's life as dream-like flight that began on Drumossie moor' and extends to his exile in an 'unreal' Caribbean landscape.⁴¹ Wedderburn hopes to make a return journey 'through the looking glass' from the fantasy world of Jamaica to the 'real' world of Scotland:

³⁷ Craig, *Modern Scottish Novel*, p. 21.

³⁸ Joseph Jackson, 'Captain Thistlewood's Jacobite: Reading the Caribbean in Scotland's Historiography of Slavery', in *Scottish Literature and Postcolonial Literature: Comparative Texts and Critical Perspectives*, (2011), p. 234.

³⁹ Cairns Craig, *Out of History* (1996).

⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, (1987), (London: Continuum, 2008).

⁴¹ Jackson, p. 237.

But like the hero in a fairy tale, he could not pass from the unreal back to the real (if that was where he was going) without taking with him a token. (p167)⁴²

Joseph Knight is that token. Robertson's historical novel certainly works to re-connect the 'unreal' 'Never Never Land' of Scotland to 'real' world-history. It is perhaps the enormity of the implications of Caribbean slavery that has rendered it 'unrelatable, un-narratable' in the presentation of Scottish history from nationalist perspectives, which have largely consolidated a sense of Scotland as 'un-imperial'.

Robertson's historical novel, then, stages a dialogue between competing theories of history on such themes. Scottish Enlightenment historian Dugald Stewart's concept of 'theoretical' or 'conjectural history' provides an early analysis of the 'shared border' between history and fiction. Stewart noted the problem of 'fragmentation', where the 'silences in the archives' had to be filled by the 'conjectural' narrative of the learned historian. Stewart employed a series of cartographic metaphors, where the historian would seek the high ground in order to better map the terrain of the past. Mortera notes that Stewart is heavily invested in a Whiggish 'teleological optimism' on the idea of a coherent narrative of 'progress'. The historian provides the reader pathways of meaning through an otherwise disorientating landscape, through which fragments or 'detached facts' are transformed into 'landmarks to our speculations'.⁴³ However, both Boccardi and Jackson shrewdly focus on Wedderburn's philosophy on the passage of life which can be read as an interrupted mapping of history.

Life, the poets said, was a splashing mountain burn becoming a deep, smooth river flowing to the sea. Sir John did not see it like that. For him life was a broken expanse of land without design or cultivation, patchworked with bog and rocky outcrops. A trackless moor covered by low cloud—or by smoke. What connected one memory to another, this moment to that moment? You turned around and lost sight of someone, your bearing went astray, you could only dimly see what you thought was a certain landmark. (p27)

Unlike Stewart's Whiggish history, the continuity of the flowing stream is replaced by a 'torn, faded, incomplete map of wilderness' (p27). The sense of linear, progressive time is dislocated in Wedderburn's vision that resembles the disorientating terrain of the battle of Culloden on

⁴² As the quote suggests Scotland's status as 'real' in the novel is far from stable.

⁴³ Dugald Stewart, *Selected Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Emanuele Levi Mortera (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), p. 11, p. 189.

Drumossie Moor, enshrouded by the smoke from guns. Thus Jackson notes, ‘Culloden represents the rupture that the battle and its subsequent imaginative treatment inflicted on coherent national narratives’.⁴⁴ For Boccardi, Wedderburn’s disorientation reflects the absence of a ‘larger national trajectory of progress and constitution’ in which to participate.⁴⁵

However, as accurate as these observations are, neither critic mentions Wedderburn’s rejection of this vision in the following paragraph:

He didn’t really believe that idle nonsense anyway, about the trackless moor. It made everything so pointless. Better to think of God, and, God willing, a place in heaven.

There was the stream of life, *there* was the eternal sea into which all must flow. He had been hirpling about just now like some kind of atheist! (p27)

Wedderburn embraces a religious understanding to give coherence and meaning to life and history. This points to alternative visions of Scottish history which are equally as important as the ‘national trajectory’ ruptured at Culloden and replaced by Scott’s ‘romantic’ Jacobites. In this way, Wedderburn’s relationship to Knight represents his attempt to secure a meaningful narrative in an otherwise dislocated, fragmented life. If Wedderburn’s life might be conceived as a tale with a narrative arc, the exposition before the climax at Culloden has been lost, thus the disorientating battlefield at Drumossie Moor is repositioned as the beginning. As a replacement narrative, Wedderburn seeks to re-script a Crusoe-esque triumph over adversity on an exotic island: his adventures in Jamaica form the rising action in a fantasy land, overcoming challenges of agricultural sugar production, climatic disease, and slave rebellions for which his return to Scotland represents the successful conclusion. The return of his regimental colours, rescued from Culloden and preserved by the drummer boy Aeneas MacRoy seemed to ‘close a circle...that felt like fate’ (p192-3). The restored colours as a token of Culloden would stay in the house at Ballindean alongside Knight, the token from Jamaica. Together these tokens would symbolise Wedderburn’s successful reconciliation of his Scottish and Jamaican lives underlining his restoration to his estate, position and status at the close of the tale. Yet, this neat denouement is denied by the insubordination and missing whereabouts of Knight which preserves the circle unclosed. For the story of Wedderburn, as for Scotland, ‘Knight embodies the irreconcilable past.’⁴⁶ Robertson voices in his novel a

⁴⁴ Jackson, p. 237.

⁴⁵ Boccardi, p. 104.

⁴⁶ Jackson, p. 238.

number of competing historical narratives that struggle for prevalence. Indeed the novel itself operates to re-situate the ‘landmark’ of Culloden as a coordinate in the mapping of Scottish-Caribbean relations. Murray Pittock has persuasively critiqued the persistent ‘primitivist’ and ‘romantic’ interpretations of Jacobitism that perceive either ‘the last spasm of uncontrolled violence from hairy Gaels’, or ‘the sad inevitability of Gaeldom’s defeat and the moral superiority of those who were defeated.’ Both schools ‘share much in common’, stemming from the Enlightenment Whig historiography, popularised by Scott, that would define modernity against its Scottish Jacobite antecedent.⁴⁷ Pittock rightly stresses that ‘Scottish Jacobitism, even in the Gaidhealtachd, does not belong in Tir nan Og, but in eighteenth century British society.’⁴⁸ Robertson’s achievement is to bring the narrative thread of Jacobitism into the ‘cross cultural weaving loom’ of the eighteenth century Atlantic world. He brings the traumatic memory of Culloden into imaginative comparison with the slave societies of the Caribbean, and questions Scotland’s wider processes of collective memory and amnesia around Atlantic slavery. Crucially, he is able to make the comparison between Culloden and Caribbean slavery without drawing an equivalence between the memories of the ‘abject past’ that would continue to haunt the apparently settled estate at Ballindean, as they do Scotland’s modern collective memory.

In this account of a long-forgotten court case, Robertson negotiates those ‘fragments’ available to him as ‘landmarks’ around which he orientates his historical fiction. In this recovery and interpretation of an abject past, the themes of time and memory are central to his meditation on historical and fictional writing. In the novel, Ballindean house acts as a *lieu de mémoire* for Scottish-Caribbean relations. Recent developments in ‘memory theory’ highlight the role of ‘objects’ in the construction and organisation of personal memories:

Material culture (e.g. diary keeping, photographs, external mnemonics) is the broader ecology in which discursive practices of recollection are situated.⁴⁹

Ballindean house is replete with objects that operate as mementos of an abject past for a rapidly deteriorating Wedderburn. His own failing memory recalls the national amnesia over unflattering Caribbean connections. His brother Sandy’s Jamaican journal—an embarrassing

⁴⁷ Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, (1995), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁸ Murray Pittock, *Jacobite Clans*, p. 35.

⁴⁹ Steven D. Brown and Paula Reavey, ‘From collective remembering to a social psychology of experience’, Inaugural Lecture of the Glasgow Memory Group, 19/04/2012.

textual source of weakness and depravity on that island—lies concealed in the drawer of a grand Jamaican mahogany desk. The public face of imperial quality and success veils the corruption within. Two paintings dominate the walls, firstly a portrait of John's father hangs behind the writing table. Secondly a depiction of the Wedderburn brothers in Jamaica with a shadow over the figure of Knight hangs above the large fireplace; Susan explains, 'Papa had him painted out after the court case' (p17). In *Waverley*, the painting of the young hero revealed at the close of the novel signifies the consignment of the Jacobite rising into the romantic past. Here the two paintings provide representations of the crucial nodes of Wedderburn's (and Scotland's) abject past, Culloden and the Caribbean: 'Knight was like Culloden—a knot in time that he could not untie but could not leave alone' (p277). Indeed, the wag-at-the-wa with its swinging pendulum provides a dominating sense of time running out for Wedderburn. The alternative meaning of the Scots wag-at-the-wa is, 'A spectre supposed to haunt the kitchen, and to take its station on the crook. It is seen to wag backwards and forwards before the death of any one of the family.'⁵⁰ As Wedderburn's death approaches he is preoccupied by the memory of Knight, the missing 'memento of his Jamaican days' (p75). However, 'Joseph Knight remained at Ballindean, yet was always missing, visible yet invisible, present yet absent' (p25). Like a spectre in the corner of the painting, Knight watches the nation 'tell themselves stories that are lies' for which, 'they will suffer the future consequences of those lies.'⁵¹ The house at Ballindean, like Scotland, is haunted by these memories of a hidden abject past that fester rather than are healed by the passage of time.

The paintings symbolise the 'self-conscious reflections on storytelling'⁵² in relation to historical and fictional writing that revolve in the novel around the problem of 'representation'. In eighteenth century theories of historical writing, Lionel Gossman notes the recurring comparisons between good historical writing and the 'peinture d'histoire':

As it was unfolded, the narrative would assume the characteristics of a painting or tableau which could be embraced in a simultaneous vision similar to that enjoyed by the eye as it moves over the canvas.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Supplement to the Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, ed. by John Jamieson, D. D., Vol II, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1825), second definition for 'Wag-at-the wa', p. 637.

⁵¹ From Ben Okri's epigraph.

⁵² Boccardi, p. 98.

⁵³ Gossman, *Between History and Fiction*, p. 238.

‘Neoclassical historiography’ aimed to ‘re-cast the mere succession... of chronicle narrative in the same way that the masters of perspective had transformed painting’.⁵⁴ Moreover, as frozen images these pictures should represent an accurate depiction of a historical truth which act as a secure repository, holding the crucial memories of Culloden and Jamaica respectively.

Wedderburn and MacRoy’s private annual ceremony of commemoration under the portrait of Sir John is designed to preserve a stable authenticity to the memory of the past against the romantic fictions of a ‘*novelle*’. However, memory itself is notoriously unstable and slippery, as are its representative ‘objects’ in the novel. If the memory of Sir John had become ‘less than a shadow’, in the Jamaican painting there was a shadow covering Joseph Knight. The painting itself, then, becomes a mutable form with the erasure of the figure, and hence, painful memory of the black slave, recalling the controversy around the *Glassford Family Portrait*.⁵⁵ Meanwhile Wedderburn casts Sandy’s journal into the fire beneath the painting. He destroys the evidence that would sully his legacy and rupture his attempt to script his own smooth denouement and secure his memory for posterity. It is an action that suggests ‘the willed amnesia of one generation, followed by the (un)willed one of the next’, that is paradigmatic of Scottish-Caribbean relations.⁵⁶ The deliberate erasure of Knight draws attention to Robertson’s theme of the instability and imperfection of ‘representation’ in historical and fictional writing which must inevitably be in some ways partial and incomplete. Indeed, the ‘problem of representation’ is central to the recovery of the memory of Joseph Knight who is represented in the archives through the voice of his lawyer. The archival Memorial’s legalistic representation of Knight is mirrored in Robertson’s later novelistic representation. In the novel, ‘Black Peter’ Burnet comments, on finding that Henry Dundas and Lord Dreghorn John MacLaurin ‘spoke for’ Knight: ‘You were well represented then’ (p323). However, the character of Knight raises an objection in the novel:

[MacLaurin’s] Latin motto, [As black as he is, so you should be white—meaning of course fair, impartial, candid] designed to impress the court, hurt. His invitation to the old men to look on his client and see if he were a man or a thing, that hurt. (p355)

⁵⁴ Gossman, p. 238.

⁵⁵ Discussed in ‘Popular Memory’ section of the theory chapter. Andrea Levy explores similar terrain in a conversation between a Jamaican landscape painter and a slave that underlines the unreliability of storytelling. ‘No one wished to find squalid negroes within a rendering of a tropical idyll’... ‘But you paint an untruth’. *The Long Song*, p. 232.

⁵⁶ Previously cited in introduction. Sassi, ‘(Un)willed Amnesia’, p. 142.

Thus, there is something imperfect in the representation which points perhaps to Robertson's awareness of the inevitability of imperfection in the novelist's representation of Knight and his story.

The painting, then, both foregrounds the novel's concerns around representation in the recovery of historical memory, and stands as a metaphor for the collective amnesia around Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic world that this thesis has sought to redress. That the enslaved black figure became concealed and forgotten is relevant not only to the painting but also to Scottish historiography. In an article from 2007 'Missing faces', Jackie Kay notes that, 'Marking the abolition is also marking the missing faces: the people buried at sea, the deaths in the tobacco and sugar fields'.⁵⁷ Jamieson's attempt to restore the identity of the 'missing face' in the painting reflect the re-examination of the hidden history of Scotland's role in the Caribbean that had been obscured from the historical tableau.

Recovering Voices, Overcoming Legacies

However, one aspect of Robertson's recovery of Knight's 'missing face' has proved controversial. In the earlier parts of the novel Knight exists only in the memories and representations of other characters, much like his representation in the court papers outlined above. In the final section, Robertson inhabits the character of Knight, 'giving voice' to the now liberated black slave. This voice articulates themes around transnationalism, rebellion, free and slave labour, the Atlantic working class, reconciliation and memorialisation germane to discussions of Scottish-Caribbean relations in previous chapters. Therefore a consideration of this voice, and the controversy it has aroused, will bring this thesis to a close. An early hostile review of the novel complained that 'Joseph Knight might gift his name to the book, but he only gets to speak for himself in the last 30 pages... its structure ensures the black man has to wait until all the whites have spoken before he can have his say'.⁵⁸ Mindful of the legacy of colonial inscriptions of African slave voices, such as that which mocked the 'talky talky' English in *Marly* (1828) (discussed in Chapter 3), Carla Sassi warns of an inappropriate

⁵⁷ Jackie Kay, 'Missing Faces', *The Guardian*, (24 March, 2007).
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview25> [accessed 13/9/11].

⁵⁸ Colin Waters, 'Slaveheart', *The Sunday Herald*, (6 April, 2003).

ventriloquism, 'as it stages the "appropriation" of a subaltern's voice'.⁵⁹ Jackson compares *Joseph Knight* to David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999), a satire on the struggle to construct a biographical narrative between an ex-slave Mungo and an abolitionist amanuensis Mr. Pringle. The name alludes to Thomas Pringle and the controversies around his 'appropriation' of Mary Prince's 'autobiography' discussed in the previous chapter.⁶⁰ Jackson finds that, 'The sudden use of Knight's "own" voice is a key difference from *A Harlot's Progress*; Robertson's eventual use of Knight to flesh out the subjectivities of a former slave actually echoes Pringle's attempted appropriation, rather than Mungo's resistance.'⁶¹ Jackson also suggests that Knight outliving Wedderburn may suggest 'a progressive "resolution" of the issue of how to understand Scottish slavery'. I concur with Jackson that the issue 'must instead remain open and continuously engaged within a devolved Scotland'.⁶² Jackson appears to prefer Dabydeen's more self-consciously postmodern narrative strategy which produces a 'swirling chaotic vortex of events' which 'shatters colonial representations and expectations'.⁶³ For my part, I argue that Robertson's comparatively more settled art of storytelling remains equally effective in undermining legacies of colonial writing and maintaining slavery as an unresolved, contestable issue. Unlike the reconciliation and restoration of *Marly*'s Scottish-Caribbean pastoral-georgic conclusion that features dancing and contented 'negro swains', it is Joseph Knight's truculent voice that insists that no easy postcolonial reconciliation between Scots and the descendants of slaves is possible.

As discussed in chapter four, critical treatment of Thomas Pringle's role in *The History of Mary Prince* (1828) has tended to see the tensions produced by the multi-authored text as insurmountably problematic. The issue, as with Joseph Knight's voice, stems from a legacy of distortion committed by hegemonic writers that has brought a certain sensitivity over male authors voicing a female character, heterosexual writers voicing homosexual characters or white writers voicing black characters. However, to automatically limit the imaginative range of artists to only those characters within their own perceived social group is surely a recipe for poor writing that subsumes all political, social and aesthetic questions into the narrow terms of 'internal' identity politics and 'authenticity'. (Dabydeen also vocalizes Mungo, though this is

⁵⁹ Sassi, '(Un)willed Amnesia', p. 197.

⁶⁰ David Dabydeen, *A Harlot's Progress* (London: Vintage, 1999).

⁶¹ Jackson, p. 244.

⁶² Jackson, p. 244.

⁶³ Jackson, p. 235.

presumably permissible due to his Guyanese background). Instead, the question must be how sensitively and effectively does the writer manage to voice that character, and what does the voice articulate?⁶⁴ This is not to absolve authors of all responsibility in their aesthetic rendering of that character's voice which must wrestle with the injurious legacies of colonialism. Robertson's careful exploration of the inevitable imperfections of 'representation', discussed above, prepares the ground for his vocalisation of Knight and goes to the heart of the importance of fictional writing in the recovery of Scottish-Caribbean memory. In a manner that remains beyond the scope of the historian, Robertson can explore the perspective and subjectivity of an African ex-slave character, and in doing so adds political insight, emotional depth and aesthetic balance to his mnemonic fiction of an abject past. Furthermore, although fraught with tensions, multi-authored texts and sensitive representations of 'other' voices might be positively interpreted as generative of the kinds of collaboration and solidarities that all liberation movements require.

It is salutary to consider Robertson's initial experiment with writing the entire final chapter in Knight's own voice, in which he attempted to represent the mixture of Knight's African, Jamaican and Scottish accents.

He wake at nicht an lie for a minute, panickin an alane, till the soonds inside an ootside his heid sort demsels. Ootside: Ann, braithin regular at his side; a moose skelterin ahint de wa; de laddie hoastin in de tither room. Inside: animal skraichs; sailors dem speakin in strange tongs; some men dem arguin; anither man him greetin. Dis last ane mek him bite a fi him lip, pit fingirs tae his fess, find it weet. Again. Thon's aye how it is wi him. Maun be twa-tree o clock. Wee pickney laddie said tae him yestreen, Man, ye're bleck as de howe o de nicht. Him lauch an say, Ah, but whaur dis de coal stap an me stert?⁶⁵

The marriage of Scottish and Jamaican vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures is not altogether satisfying aesthetically and comes closer to an 'inappropriate ventriloquism'. Instead, Robertson opts for a mixture of third person and first person perspectives, and represents Knight's speech in English and Scots. Compare the published version: 'It must have been two, three o'clock. A wee laddie had said to him yesterday, 'Man, ye're black as the howe o the nicht. He had laughed and said, 'Ah, but whaur does the coal stop and me stert?'

⁶⁴ In his latest novel *And the Land Lay Still* (2010) Robertson's central character Michael is homosexual. In *Redlegs* (2012) Chris Dolan's central protagonist Elspeth Baillie is a woman.

⁶⁵ Material provided privately by the author, 01/09/2010.

(p346). Dropping the Jamaican forms avoids a suspicion over his intent in rendering ‘the’ as ‘de’ as had so often been previously used to mark the speaker as less intelligent or sophisticated. However, the lack of visible Jamaican forms in the published version leads Jackson to argue that, ‘his language and accent demarcate Knight as Scottish’. This contributes to his analysis of the function of language in the novel wherein Jackson posits a ‘colonial division’ between, ‘Correct English’ which ‘represents interpellation into the institutions of the British state and the master-narrative of British colonialism’, opposed to Scots which represents ‘anti-colonial resistance’.

The use of Scots also figuratively represents the idealised unification of a black and white Atlantic working class, and links a significant Scottish national constituency to an egalitarianism diametrically opposed to an Anglo-centric British colonialism.⁶⁶ This is certainly a feature at times, for example in the opening scene between the English speaking slave-owner Wedderburn who denigrates the detective Jamieson’s ‘couthy’ Scots proverbs. This scene holds a sub-textual suggestion of the Scottish Robertson interrogating the slaving interests of the British Empire through his authorial persona. Furthermore, in the key court room scenes MacLaurin delivers his anti-slavery speeches in Scots, while Robert Cullen articulates the pro-slavery arguments in Standard English; a linguistic opposition that is not justified by reference to the archival memorials which are both in Standard English, nor to the historical MacLaurin’s abolitionist poetry which is similarly in English.⁶⁷

However, a novel featuring ‘progressive’ Scots speakers against ‘oppressive’ English speakers would run the risk underlined by Carla Sassi of developing a late-twentieth century ‘master-narrative’ of subaltern Scots, linguistically and culturally inferior within the Union having ‘an easier “cross-cultural” communication’ with subaltern black slaves.⁶⁸ However, this analysis of the function of language is overly schematic for a novel which takes care to portray a spectrum of opinions amongst Scots-speakers and depicts the varying nature of Knight’s reception when he arrives in Scotland. For example, Knight finds love with a fellow

⁶⁶ Jackson, pp. 242-3.

⁶⁷ ‘The Walk’ (1760) takes the form of a pastoral corrupted. Opening with a scene of innocent animals grazing: ‘Yet, the cruelty these animals face ‘fatten’d for the butcher’s knife’ (l. 14) pales into insignificance as no creature feels ‘the severer usage of mankind, than man.’ (l. 30) ‘What woes/ the slave trade ev’n, ev’n, by generous Britons driv’n!/ Ambition, avarice, and various ills/ Allowed to rage and ravage on the earth!/ The whole creation groans! (l. 31-36). *The Works of the Late John MacLaurin Esq. of Dreghorn*, Vol 1 (Edinburgh: J. Ruthven & Sons, 1798), pp. 19-21.

⁶⁸ Carla Sassi, ‘(Un)willed amnesia’, p. 175.

servant at Ballindean Ann Thompson, who is depicted as a strong female character, articulate and fiercely class-conscious, though other servants refuse to speak to him due to his colour. In the charged scene of Knight's arrest by Justice of the Peace Alexander Puller—'Sandy' in the novel—Robertson stages a contest between Scots speakers who display a range of political positions.

'Noo, lass,' Pullar said, 'let's no hae ony bather. I'm here for your man. It's his name wrote here clear as ye can see, and if there's anither runaway Negro in Scotland cried Joseph Knight I'd like tae see ye produce him.' ... 'Shame on ye, Sandy, tae sinder a man frae his wife and bairn!' (p204).⁶⁹

However, Ann's impoverished spinner mother only offers a resigned acquiescence: 'I'm wae for ye and Joseph, and nae man should be treated in that way, but ye mairrit on a black man and ye maun thole the consequences' (p206). Meanwhile Ann's brother-in-law Chae finds Knight 'unco, no chancy' and 'would not come into the house because of the "blackie"' (p207). Jackson equates Scots with working class speech which elides the class antagonism between colliers, servants and landlords. The working class then becomes simply a 'national constituency' that is folded into a generalised juxtaposition of imperialistic English speakers and 'fratritotic' Scots speakers. However the novel's most forceful Scots speaker, Lord Dreghorn John MacLaurin, specifically attacks such a characterisation in a memorable scene. In a dream, MacLaurin imagines a drunken oaf 'deaving him with the kind of sentiments many Scots found hard to resist': 'Of course we'll fecht for the freedom of the Negroes, sir. We're Scotsmen. It's in oor banes' (p250). MacLaurin challenges him with evidence from the Caribbean:

It's Scots that run the plantations...the place is rife wi us. Look at the names...He whipped the cloot from its place and began to thrash the drunkard about the face with it, a blow for every name: 'Wedderburns!' Skelp! 'Wallaces!' Skelp! 'Aye, Wallaces' Skelp! 'Kerrs!' Skelp! 'Campbells!' Skelp! 'MacLeans!' Skelp! 'Gordons! Gillespies! Grants!' Skelp! Skelp! Skelp! (pp. 250-1)

It is clear that despite Scots at times being used to undermine imperial interests expressed in Standard English, it is inadequate to posit a straightforward 'colonial division' in the language spoken.

⁶⁹ In a skillful piece of historical fictional writing Robertson depicts Annie reading the words found on the actual arrest warrant from the archives, but pausing to pour scorn on its language, p. 205.

Indeed, Knight's voice is more complex and suggestive than his demarcation simply as Scottish suggests. Robertson (perhaps speaking of his own artistic decision) has Peter Burnet say: 'I will not attempt to reproduce the sound of Mr. Knight's voice'. However he does describe it as a 'veritable patchwork':

There was, if I may express it in this way, a rich Jamaican ground, overlaid with Scotch sounds and occasional Scotch words, probably pronounced in the tones of Dundee or Perth; and I daresay the stitching itself may have been done with an African needle. Listening to him was like listening to a ship's company all speaking at once, yet in a kind of harmony. (p322)

It is strange that the fictional Knight's vocalisation has caused such consternation, while 'Black Peter' Burnet's voice has passed without mention. Burnet (1764?- 1847) was born a slave in Virginia but escaped to New York where he eventually made his way to Paisley in 1781. In his biography of Burnet, John Parkhill paints an intimate, homely picture of the ex-slave finding acceptance and community amongst Robert Tannahill and the Paisley weavers:

Peter was sitting in my father's armchair, with all the family gathered round him... and he was laughing as freely and heartily as any of them, and in the course of an hour or two he seemed to be quite at home. And truly to a great extent it did become his home.⁷⁰

The insistence on hospitality in Parkhill's account gives especial pathos to the passage and accordingly, in Robertson's portrayal, it is Burnet who feels more 'at home' in Scotland while Knight remains unreconciled. In an imagined conversation, Burnet suggests Knight might appreciate the country which set him free, yet Knight refuses the sentimental abolitionist role of 'grateful negro'. 'What has Scotland been for me? It has been the source of my tormentors and the wellspring of my torment' (p327). Burnet's metaphor of the motley crew to describe Knight's speech recalls Paul Gilroy's focus on the ship as the breeding ground for early modern 'black internationalism' in the lives of Robert Wedderburn and William Davidson, as well as Linebaugh and Rediker's formulations of the onboard 'hydrarchy' of the Atlantic working class, discussed in the previous chapter. It is Knight's voice, then, with its inherent accent of resistance and revolt that suggests the multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Atlantic working class which spelled danger for elites all across the Atlantic world. Robertson's representation of Knight's voice points towards the two key comparative

⁷⁰ Burnet was previously mentioned in relation to Charles Campbell's invocation of Robert Tannahill in chapter 3. John Parkhill, *The Life of Peter Burnet, A Negro*, (Paisley: J. Neilson, 1841), pp. 14-15.

representations in the novel. Firstly the ‘rebellions’ of Jacobites in Scotland are compared to those of slaves in the Caribbean. Secondly, Knight’s voice points to the hidden history of solidarity amongst working class communities which, although they could be the site for horrendous racial strife, also contain a radical tradition which provides a key to future emancipation.

The comparison in the novel between a young Joseph Knight transported from Africa, and a young John Wedderburn disorientated and distressed on the battlefield forms part of a larger comparison between Jacobite and slave ‘rebels’. However, critics have tended to see the comparison without the contrast. Graeme MacDonald summarises the novel as a story of ‘Scots forced into exile for anticolonial resistance in the Jacobite Rebellion [who] become part of the slaveowning plantocracy in eighteenth-century Jamaica.’⁷¹ Jackson notes Wedderburn’s apparent sympathy for the rebellious slave Charlie who is accepted back to the house on the condition his name is changed to ‘Newman’.

John sees a reflection of his own subjectivity in the slave, and imagines a common experience of anti-colonial uprising that links Charlie the slave to Charles Stuart.⁷²

The Jacobite soldiers are here conceived as anti-colonial resistance fighters. Although neither essay offers an explanation for this claim, it must be presumed that the Hanoverian government represents the coloniser and the supporters of the Stuart monarchs the colonised, presumably mapped onto a colonial relationship of England over Scotland. Indeed, Boccardi displays a constant slippage between ‘Jacobite’ and ‘Nationalist’ in her framing of nation and empire: ‘the Wedderburn’s compromise in terms of their nationalist commitment manifests itself in their whole-hearted and ruthless exploitation of the Empire’s economic possibilities.’⁷³ It seems the Jacobites have been obliged to forego an innocent Scottishness for the sake of the financial opportunities on offer with the British Empire.

However, as argued above, Robertson is able to sensitively explore the parallels between the experience of rebellions in Scotland and Jamaica, without drawing an equivalence in terms of ‘anti-colonial resistance’. Although a Jacobite victory may have restored a Scottish parliament under a regal union, it is difficult to accept the attempt to restore the Stuart line of

⁷¹ Graeme Macdonald, ‘Postcolonialism and Scottish Studies’, *New Formations*, 59, 1 (2006), p. 119.

⁷² Jackson, p. 239.

⁷³ Boccardi, p. 103, p. 104.

kings to the throne of England and Scotland as anything more than fundamentally a dynastic struggle that harnessed support in different ways. It was one in a long series of competing claims for crowns and power throughout Europe that has little to do with the attempts by masses of transported Africans to escape from enslavement. Indeed in a revealing exchange in the novel, the Jacobite Wedderburn equates anti-slavery with duplicitous Hanoverian defences of Edinburgh; while MacLaurin equates Jacobitism with the ‘tyranny’ of slaving interests:

‘(My father) stood against tyranny, however gallant it seemed and however bonnie it looked wi its cockades and plaids. It was on accoont o tyranny, sir, that the Pretender’s grandfather lost his throne. But it seems tyranny is alive and weel, and needs tae be cowpit again. (p277)

In Scotland the Wedderburns had been men of property, immediately making any comparisons with chattel slaves difficult. Chattel slaves were themselves legally owned as ‘property’. The Wedderburns were descendants of the fifth Baronet of *Blackness*, now, as James points out, in his new form of slave-owner John has become the first Baronet of *Black-ness* (p70). Like Old Marly, Wedderburn himself ‘was always punctilious’ on differentiating between a slave ‘rebellion’ and the Jacobite ‘rising’ which was about ‘honour’ and ‘loyalty’.

To call [the Forty-five] a rebellion was to debase the cause and its motives, to make it sound like something quite different. He had never been a rebel; nor had his father.

When he thought of rebels, he thought of slaves. He thought of Joseph Knight. He thought of Tacky. (p108)

While ‘rising’ has connotations of a legitimate struggle of people who have been kept on their knees rising to their feet in a justified revolt against an oppressive power, ‘rebellion’ connotes an illegitimate, unjustified usurping of proper authority. Given Jackson suggests that ‘mutual rebellions draw the subjectivities of master and slave closer together’, we might expect Jacobite refugees to support Tacky’s slave rebellion in 1760.⁷⁴ With memories of ‘Butcher Cumberland’s’ brutal reprisals following Culloden still fresh, we might at least expect the Jacobites to encourage more lenient punishments in the aftermath of the slave rebellion, a recognition of the shared fates between one set of rebels and another— two heads of the same hydra. However, a rebel slave leader is placed over red hot coals where he slowly burns alive (p121). Viewing the brutal execution, James Wedderburn simply says, ‘I’ve seen worse’ (p123). In that phrase he recognizes the parallels with his father’s own execution, where his

⁷⁴ Jackson, p. 239.

bowels were burnt before his eyes, but shrugs them off at the same moment. Robertson's exploration of the nature of rebellion underlines that revolting chattel slaves could expect no fratriotic solidarity from their Scottish Jacobite masters.

However, in his second comparison, Robertson suggests that there are closer connections to be made between the colliers of the Scottish working class and enslaved labourers. This returns to the key relationship that this thesis has traced between free, bonded and slave labour to explore what David Featherstone calls 'solidarities from below'.⁷⁵ Since James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764) the relationship between colliers and slaves was often invoked in order to deny the severity of slavery; however Robertson's comparison steers closer to Robert Wedderburn's collaborative politics of solidarity across the Atlantic working class. This thesis has argued against Murray Pittock's notion of 'fratriotism' whereby those belonging to a particular nation have an innate predisposition for solidarity towards others who are suffering. Unfortunately Scottish-Caribbean relations, like wider human history, suggest this is not an automatic or even frequent occurrence. Featherstone, by contrast, conceives solidarity as a 'political skill' born of movements against oppression. It is important not to simply substitute 'class' for 'nation' and Featherstone demonstrates the 'political skill' to be hard-fought and fraught with tensions, both internal and external. Nonetheless, he foregrounds the inventive and generative history of 'solidarities from below' that help to form 'usable pasts for engagement with political activity in the present.'⁷⁶ He argues that recovering accounts of solidarity 'can change the terms on which people understand themselves and their histories'. This holds significance for the project of recovery of an abject past in which this thesis participates. In truth, there is only a brief mention of the colliers' donation to Knight in the archival memorial. Indeed, Knight drops off the historical record following the court case, obliterated from history like he was in the painting. Therefore Robertson's conclusion, where he imagines Knight going to live and work amongst the colliers with his wife Ann should be read as a form of memorialisation that emphasises internationalist 'solidarities from below'. As discussed in chapter one, the court decision to 'emancipate' the colliers from their peculiar bonds of servitude would act as a precedent and influence the judges in Knight's own court

⁷⁵ David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism* (London: Zed Books, 2012), p. 8.

⁷⁶ Featherstone, p. 9.

case.⁷⁷ The arguments over their position of bonded labour would become key in the debates over the abolition of slavery, and in the novel the colliers have not forgotten the parallels. The relationship between Knight and the colliers imagined in the novel points towards a form of memorialisation that goes beyond a rhetoric of blame to engage with the ‘generative and inventive’ solidarities that provide a key to overcoming the divisions of race, class and gender in the abject present.

Therefore, in the house at Ballindean which functions as a *lieu de mémoire* for Scottish-Caribbean relations, a different dynamic is opened up from the previous binary positions of black slave and white master on the plantations. Robertson presents the relationship between Knight and Ann Thompson as cutting across racial boundaries as their bond speaks to Ann’s sense of class-consciousness:

The story was that he had been plucked from ignorance and savagery by Sir John, had been hand-plucked to be raised from field bondage to a position of trust and safety. But Ann, never having benefited from charity, had an ingrained suspicion of such tales. She did not believe that many people, least of all the rich, did things out of the goodness of their hearts. If Joseph had been plucked from anything, it was not from ignorance but from his home, not from savagery but from his family. (p212)

Ann’s sense of sympathy with Knight and her instinctive mistrust of the narrative of benevolent master come, crucially, from her not dissimilar class position: ‘She understood this because the gentry used the same kind of terms to describe people like her’ (p212). Knight describes Jamaica to Ann, stressing the commonality of the exploited on both sides of the Atlantic:

[The slaves] were people just like all of them there at Ballindean, he said, good and bad in unequal, changeable portions, leading lives that the white people in the great houses never even knew about. That, too, was like Ballindean, like anywhere – there were the great and rich and there were the rest of the world and a gulf like the ocean lay between the two. (pp. 212-213)

The house at Ballindean is owned and ruled by the slave-owning John Wedderburn ensconced in his study with paintings of his father and his brothers in Jamaica; yet alternative, creative, internationalist ‘solidarities from below’ find expression and take root outwith his control.

⁷⁷ Their ‘emancipation’ owed much to the idea of ‘freeing up’ labour as developed in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776), so (as Marx argued) ‘surplus value’ could be created.

This recalls Linebaugh and Rediker's description of the 'hydrarchy' on the ship with the tyrannical rule of the captain, and the solidarities of motley sailors combining in resistance at sea. Indeed in the metaphor employed here, the Atlantic Ocean both unites oppressed groups on opposite continents, and encapsulates the distance between rich and poor whether on sugar plantations or in Scottish manor houses. Robertson's depiction of the relationship must be viewed in the context of twenty-first century ethnic rapprochement, while his portrayal of Ann Thompson is influenced by modern feminist politics. Yet, the historical reality of their marriage should not be underestimated. As discussed in the previous chapter, the unofficial 'amalgamation' of white men with black women was widespread in the colonies; however the greatest ire was directed toward relations between black men and white women around which cultural fears can still run deep. Therefore, the courage and perseverance of working class women like Ann Thompson who risked isolation and condemnation from their communities for endogamous relationships should not be undervalued. It appears that Robertson's depiction of a strong-willed female character, unwilling to be obedient in her servitude is not in the realm of sheer fiction.

The motif of hands is prevalent throughout the novel. They are the part of the body where the varying degrees of toil and labour most visibly take their toll, and provide a symbol of friendship and solidarity. Aeneas MacRoy, the bitter lower class dominie recalls the labourer Wull Wicks' sharp distinction between an 'indulged' personal servant like Knight, and the toil of a free labourer.

Look at ye in your finery. Look at your hauns. The loofs o them are as saft as a lady's. They cry ye a slave but it's clear enough tae me wha the slaves is aboot here. No you wi your work-shy hauns an hoose-bred ways, Joseph Knight... And the neger never said a word back, jist sat there wi a sneer on his mouth. He was a slave but he thocht he was better nor the rest o us, that's certain. (p95)

The use of the Scots form 'neger' throughout manages to avoid the shock value of the 'n' word for modern audiences, while remaining historically accurate.⁷⁸ Indeed, the delivery of this embittered observation on class stratification and agricultural and domestic labour in broad working class Scots further undermines the notion that in the novel the Scots-speaking working class participate in an 'idealised' form of solidarity. The transformation of Joseph's

⁷⁸ *Online Etymological Dictionary*, entry for 'nigger': 1786, earlier *neger* (1568, Scottish and northern England dialect), from Fr. *nègre*, from Sp. *Negro*.

‘soft loofs’ to a ‘harsh texture of his palm’ (p327), provides one of the clues that leads Jamieson to locate Knight amongst the coal pits of Fife. The location at Wemyss is carefully chosen. It was where Knight’s predecessor David Spens had sought sanctuary and there Robertson develops the solidarities that existed surreptitiously at Ballindean.

He was surrounded by the faces of men who had also once been slaves, near as damn it.

They were all around him, and when they went down to the shore and into the earth together there was a joining of their souls that was like no other feeling. (p353)

Although this thesis would maintain the specificity of chattel slavery even while exploring parallels of hardship and labour, the dynamic at Wemyss opens up a generative expression of solidarity that holds significance for the present. Wemyss is a coastal town that brings together the mines and the sea. The movement of Knight and the colliers underground ‘into the earth’ suggests the development of ‘subterranean solidarities’⁷⁹ that undermine the hegemonic identities on the surface. Through the likes of David Hume, William Robertson and Lord Kames, Colin Kidd has identified the ‘forging’ of the idea of ‘races’ at this time.⁸⁰ Yet this suggests an attempt to mine a new identity, deep underground amongst the black coal dust an alternative, Atlantic Working Class identity could also be forged. The potential for solidarity amongst some in working class communities does not mean they should be mistaken for a utopia and Robertson notes Knight can still feel alone and haunted by memories. Nonetheless, Knight does feel more ‘at home’ amongst the colliers, not because of their fratiriotic Scottishness, but because ‘slavery’ had ‘set them together against their country’ (p372). This is reinforced by the proximity of the coal pits to the sea. As discussed in the theory chapter, John Kerrigan underlined the significance of the sea for the conception of the ‘North Western Atlantic Archipelago’: ‘the seas... drew [the islands] together, and opened them to continental and Atlantic worlds.’⁸¹ The North Sea port connects Scottish merchants to trading networks in Europe and the Americas. But as Knight’s voice recalls the ‘harmony’ of the ship’s motley crew, so the port connects Scotland with the ‘maritime solidarities’ identified by Linebaugh and Rediker in the red Atlantic world. Furthermore, as discussed in the introductory chapter, Glissant and Walcott identify the Atlantic sea-scape itself as a *lieu de mémoire* through which imaginative literature might redress the shortcomings of the archive. To the question, ‘Where

⁷⁹ S. Buck Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), p. 133.

⁸⁰ Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (2006).

⁸¹ John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English*, (2008), p. 48.

is your tribal memory?', Walcott responds, 'in that gray vault... The sea is History'.⁸² As the sea becomes an archival 'grey vault', it enables the recovery of the memory of the drowned Africans of the Middle Passage pertinent to Joseph Knight's experience of transportation and enslavement. Glissant notes the bodies cast overboard, 'sowed in the depths the seeds of an invisible presence',⁸³ much like Knight remained an 'invisible presence', 'always missing, visible yet invisible, present yet absent' in the painting at Ballindean (p25). The novel's conclusion at Wemyss suggests a recovery of memory through 'maritime' and 'subterranean solidarities' that explores the 'subterranean convergence of our histories'⁸⁴ in a manner that might forge a new 'History, really beginning'.⁸⁵

Stories we feed ourselves

Knight, like Wedderburn, struggles to retain the memories that constitute his life story. This struggle to secure a personal narrative serves as a fitting conclusion for this thesis that has analysed the processes of collective memory and amnesia that form the national stories that 'we feed ourselves', and suggested new ones that might 'free our histories for future flowerings'. As Culloden rendered Wedderburn and Scotland's narrative progress ruptured and disorientated, so Knight's knowledge of his childhood in Africa returns only in fragments—'glimpses of a beginning' in a dream.

There were huts with gardens, and low clay walls... a green river sliding through great trees thick with the screams of...birds, monkeys? He didn't know, didn't remember.

For this was the beginning of a story that had never happened, that had come to a sudden and complete stop. (p347)

Ann comforts Knight that his amnesia is an understandable form of repression as he struggles to script the beginning and forge the end of his personal narrative. The parallels with Wedderburn's fragmented youth and his attempt to reconcile his Jamaican and Scottish selves are clear. However, as argued above, comparisons in this novel do not imply equivalence. As the comparison between Jacobite and slave rebels is ultimately rejected, so is the bond between these individual representatives. On the ocean crossing to Scotland Wedderburn takes

⁸² Cited in the introductory chapter. Derek Walcott, 'The Sea is History', (l. 2-4).

⁸³ Cited in the introductory chapter. Edoard Glissant, (1981), *Caribbean Discourse*, p. 67.

⁸⁴ Glissant, p. 65.

⁸⁵ Walcott, 'The Sea is History', (l. 80).

care of his sea-sick slave, cleaning him, tending him and praying for his recovery. The relationship goes further, drawing attention to the recurring motif of hands: ‘He took Joseph’s left hand in his two, brought it to his mouth, kissed it’ (p369). Here Wedderburn’s two hands intend to make amends with a kiss, highlighting the undercurrent of Wedderburn’s sexual feelings towards Knight that runs throughout the novel. Sandy questions Knight, ‘have you been in his bed, if he commanded it you would’ (p157). Meanwhile, some of the servants at Ballindean whisper that he is Sir John’s ‘very personal servant’ (p211).⁸⁶ In this way, Robertson registers how the sexualised violence enacted against enslaved women, discussed in the previous chapter, is carried over to all chattel slaves like Knight. This sexualised violence continues to linger in contemporary novels as a form of Atlantic memory. It is a memory that speaks to the ‘silence of the archives’ precisely because these moments are the experiences lie amongst the quotidian and ubiquitous horrors of slave life that rarely make it to the archive of written knowledge. Moreover, the literary representation of homo-erotic love in an imperial context immediately recalls the character of Aziz in E.M Foster’s *A Passage to India* (1924) that suggests a benevolence that compensates and amends processes of imperial exploitation. Indeed, Wedderburn’s paternalistic love and care recalls the imperialist rhetoric of benevolence. It is a rhetoric that downplays systemic inequalities. The narrative voice suggests that, ‘Out there in the Atlantic, master and slave were reduced to this simple humanity: one man caring for another...For a moment there on the ship, they were two sides of the same coin’ (p367). However Knight rejects the gesture:

He remembered the kiss... He remembered the kindness Wedderburn had shown all through the terrible time of bad weather and sickness, and he despised it. (p369)

It is such forceful rejections of the narrative of benevolent master combined with the problematisation of representation throughout the novel, that distinguish Robertson’s voicing of Knight’s character to the ‘appropriation’ of slave narratives by paternalistic abolitionists working ‘in their best interests’.

In the closing pages, Knight scripts his own patriot historiography, constructing a rebel identity that ‘positions himself within’ certain historical narratives. His memories flit over his encounters with a series of contrasting Scottish characters who shaped his life story: a vicious Scots-speaking slave ship sailor, his anti-slavery lawyer MacLaurin, and the sinister and

⁸⁶ Robertson reports that he conceived of the relationship as akin to the intimate masculine proximity of WWI captains and their Batmen. Interview with the author, 31/08/2010.

threatening James Wedderburn. Finally, he distinguishes his national hero narrative from that of those same Scots:

He thought of Newman, and Tacky, and Apongo, and the Maroons. He thought of Toussaint L'Ouverture... These men were heroes. The Scots had their heroes too: Wallace and Bruce and now the young chevalier, Charles Edward Stewart, the one John Wedderburn had fought for. They were nothing to do with him. (p371)

As Knight continually rejects the suggested bond between himself and Wedderburn, so his alternative identity rejects the historical narratives of Scottish patriotism. Had Knight gripped Wedderburn's hand on the ship in a symbol of friendship and forgiveness, the denouement of the two characters' personal narratives would dovetail neatly with the reconciliation of their national narratives as the novel draws to a close. However, it is one of the novel's strengths that Knight's voice (or Robertson's representation of it) truculently refuses the kind of sentimentalised reconciliation that characterise the Scottish-Caribbean pastoral-georgic texts analysed in previous chapters. Knight rejects Wedderburn's paternalistic tenderness, knowing it 'was not a mark of kindness but of guilt' (p369), and that the nature of benevolent ownership is always conditional on the obedience of the owned. Yet, on the final page of this 'first truly post-devolution'⁸⁷ historical novel, Knight remembers his encounter with the 'tiny, wizened' collier in 'threadbare working clothes' who delivered the money collected to fund his court case. The collier offers Knight a hand of friendship, one that he accepts.

When Joseph grasped it he felt it rough and cracked and hard, and when he looked at it he saw it black, deep-grained with coal-stour. That stour was never going to come out. (p371-2)

The description of this encounter should not be read as a modern 'compensation' that makes amends or even elides a history of abuse. Rather it acknowledges that abject history but foregrounds an alternative, positive encounter of solidarity as the key to overcoming oppression, both historical and contemporary. As Robert Wedderburn understood, it does not matter whether that oppression is experienced differently—such as between free labourers and chattel slaves—for effective forms of 'solidarity from below' to flourish.

⁸⁷ Gregor Steele, 'I had a Knight but no Herald', (9 Jan 2004), <<http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/I-had-a-Knight-but-no-Herald-389011/>> [accessed 24/10/2011].

This thesis opened with a quote from Ben Okri, borrowed from *Joseph Knight*, about the role the stories we ‘feed ourselves’ about our pasts play in forming our futures, and it will close with another. Okri writes,

[Stories] can sow the seeds of the creation of empires, can undo them, can re-shape the psychic mould of a people, can re-mould the political and spiritual temper of an age.⁸⁸

This thesis participates in the modern recovery of the memory of Scottish-Caribbean relations at a time when the forthcoming independence referendum (2014) promises an opportunity to ‘re-shape’ our ‘psychic mould’. It has analysed the processes of collective memory around Scottish (his)stories of empire in the Caribbean, and has sought to counter a long-standing collective amnesia by foregrounding alternative narratives that undo the damaging legacies of colonialism and slavery. It has traced Scotland as a thread on the ‘cross-cultural weaving loom’ of Caribbean creolité, bringing both Atlantic archipelagos into imaginative comparison. Given the abject history of slavery under question, the terms of this recovery might easily be blame, guilt and rage. These emotions will play their part as that recovery progresses, though in isolation they can only lead to impotence. It is essential in this project of memorialisation to develop strategies of acting and thinking that move forward to engage with methods that might overcome those abject, imperial legacies and ‘re-mould the political and spiritual temper of an age’. Our role is not only to unravel the inadequate and misleading narratives that make up the national tapestry, but to find tools and threads that can re-weave a new tapestry that might ‘free our histories for future flowerings’. In this way, the historical narratives presented here have consciously sought to use ‘the past to contemplate a post-capitalist tomorrow.’⁸⁹ Like the past abolition of slavery, this will ultimately be a project of collaboration connecting apparently disparate ‘others’. While remaining vigilant of the tensions and imperfections this will inevitably produce, it remains the most fruitful way to wage the continuing struggles for emancipation across our transnational world.

⁸⁸ Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven*, (1996), p. 33.

⁸⁹ Cited in the theory chapter. Benita Parry, ‘The Presence of the Past’, *Beyond the Black Atlantic*, p. 17.

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