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Editorial: Caribbean-Scottish Passages

Gemma Robinson and Carla Sassi

Making a way in the world

In Scotland you can reach Guyana by taking the A81 north from Glasgow, or the A84 then A81 from the Crianlarich turnoff on the M80 Motorway at Stirling. Either way you'll find Guyana – a garden centre in Aberfoyle, specialising in plants, garden arts and crafts sourced from around the world.[1] Robert, the owner, has visited the country before and chose the name as a way of keeping hold of the 'rainforest connotation' once back in a more temperate climate. He also recognises the shop's curiosity value: 'It would be like finding a shop called "Aberfoyle" in Georgetown, Guyana, although you'd be surprised at how many connections people tell you about'. Driving through Aberfoyle (population 576) on a Sunday afternoon, a Trinidadian, two Jamaicans and two Britons, turned a corner and saw this shop: it was a singular form of Caribbean-Scottish connection.

What does it mean to track 'Caribbean-Scottish passages'? Who is involved in making the passage between the Caribbean and Scotland, historically, culturally and politically? How can we understand the significance of these passages between nations, histories, art-forms, languages and literatures? These are some of the questions that animate this special issue, and the questions that our contributors pose and answer in the articles, art-work and occasional papers that follow. To think about the Caribbean and Scotland in the same horizon of vision is to recognise it as part of a shared world. At times this shared world and horizon of vision might have been described in terms of plantation and Empire. Perhaps now we think in terms of the postcolonial, the transatlantic, circumatlantic, the Black Atlantic, the Commonwealth, the transnational, the post-national. To turn our attention to the networks of people and places that link the Caribbean to Scotland is to confront our conceptual mappings of nation, 'race' and identity. It is also to make space for the quiet epiphanies about culture that are no less significant.

As the recently relocated novelist and poet, **Kei Miller** notes in 'In Glasgow There are Plantains': 'scotch bonnet peppers, which I'd never reflected on before – these peppers I've always thought of as Jamaican peppers, but which had obviously reminded someone long time ago, about something he saw in Scotland. These connections go both ways!'

This special issue of *IJSL* is devoted to a rapidly emerging interdisciplinary area of inquiry that focuses on the (post)colonial intersections of Scotland and the Caribbean. While historiographical and archival research have over the last thirty years unveiled new areas and events of this complex and long-standing relationship,[2] and while much 'discipline-focused' work undoubtedly is still required in order to reach a deeper knowledge of the social, political and intellectual events that shaped it, there are specificities involved in this field that call for a wider interdisciplinary practice and a respect for plurality.

Contemporary poetry offers intimations of these plural passages: John Agard's poem, 'How Aunty Nansi Singularly Widened the Debate on Plural Identity' (2000), tracks apparently random cultural connections, in the name of making identities:

> What a high-brow-knitting controversy
> when Aunty Nansi on topical TV show
> presented herself as proof of plurality
> Dressed in a side-splitting sari
> a red and green necklace for Selassie
> and snazzy tartan shawl for the cold[3]

Here, the Caribbean Aunty Nansi – the West African Akan-Ashante 'spider-spirit trickster-transfigurer'[4] turned woman – puts on an outfit that has traveled from the Indian subcontinent, Ethiopia via Jamaica, and Scotland, asking, '"Now Mr Kilroy, you tell me / Am I Afro-Celto-Euro-Indo / or just beautiful byproduct of cosmos?"'[5] With a similar comic sensibility, Jackie Kay's 1998 'skipping rhyme' looks at the Scottish comic strip family, *The Broons*: 'Scotland is having a heart attack / Scotland is having a heart attack / Scotland is having a heart attack / The Broons' Bairn's Black'.[6] Cultural plurality, we know, speaks of hyphenated, interconnected existence. Kay, with a confrontational wink at past and present racism, finds another relative for the Broons. Aunty Nansi – 'byproduct' of cosmic (historical, imperial, random) forces – knows that tartan worn outside the borders of Scotland, like the sari outside of the Indian subcontinent, is necessarily refashioned. Specifically, tartan, worn outside the border of Scotland and within the context of the Caribbean, can speak of histories of passages, journeys and families that have been slow to come into public focus.

Slavery, the Caribbean and Scotland

But troubling silences mark the complex history binding the two circumatlantic regions of the Caribbean and Scotland. These result in part from the suppression of voices from Africa and the African diaspora in the slavery period and also from partial archival evidence then, and in the decades following its abolition. We know, therefore, that the 'historical truth' pertaining to these chapters of colonial history cannot be reconstructed solely through primary documentation: creative writing or the visual arts, in this context, function not simply as alternative modes of historiographical representation, but become sensitive epistemological tools that allow us to imagine, albeit imperfectly, what has been erased or forgotten. Michael Visocchi's public sculpture, *Memorial to the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (2008), created in collaboration with the poet, Lemn Sissay; James Robertson's novel, *Joseph Knight* (2003); and Andrew O. Lindsay's *Illustrious Exile* (2006) are three recent examples of attempts by Scottish artists to face these complexities of slavery, representation and epistemology. **Andrew Lindsay's** novel imagines Robert Burns as the 'Negro-driver' he almost became, and in this issue we publish Lindsay's reflections on the process of writing – through Burns's correspondence into an imagined West Indies – to address some of 'the historical omissions in the Scottish collective memory'. Focusing on Visocchi and Robertson, **Murdo Macdonald** and **Michael Morris** in their articles both tackle what Macdonald identifies as 'the inherent uneasiness of culture'. The phrase is Freud's, but the sentiment strikes at the problem of contemporary representations of slavery. For Macdonald this problem is 'the paradox of the creativity of the human condition. All artists work within this frame. It certainly applies to Michael Visocchi's abolition memorial, a work shot though by the uneasiness of its historical context and physical place'. Visocchi's sculpture draws together Sissay's historical and contemporary vocabularies of abolition and finance, with his own search for an appropriate visual form: 'the more I looked into it, the more I realised that there was a potential poetic way into the subject matter through the idea of sugar and simply the architectural shapes of sugar cane itself. [. . .] The idea was that I could somehow use these sugar cane shapes so that they could be read on the site as figures, as anthropomorphic forms — and therefore could they not then surround a pulpit as a congregation?' Morris, in his article, 'Joseph Knight: Scotland and the Black Atlantic' outlines another kind of cultural uneasiness and search for creative form. For him, Robertson's novel charts the uneasy parallels between Caribbean and Scottish rebellion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the article opens up the possibilities and problems of refiguring a combined Scottish and Caribbean colonial history out of the silences within the archival documents of the Joseph Knight case, and in terms of an Atlantic working class.

The present collection of essays in many ways represents a new step in the direction set by *Caribbean-Scottish Relations: Colonial and Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language and*

Literature (2007)[7] – a collaborative project that aimed at looking "for ways that can effectively re-figure the full complexity of different national, racial, and gendered identities and the many ways in which these interrelate",[8] but was also based on the belief that a scholarly work in this field has not only to reply to questions but, even more importantly to raise them – questions 'that are neither pleasant or reassuring, but [. . .] are mind-changing'.[9] One of the main aims of this special issue of *IJSL* is thus to widen both the scope and the depth of that first interdisciplinary dialogue between Caribbean and Scottish Studies – two disciplinary fields which have had little or no opportunity to interact in the past – as well as to bring together views from different contexts such as history, art history, the visual arts, literary criticism and creative writing. We believe that such interaction, especially within the engagement in this complex and controversial territory, may prove fruitful in more than one way. As far as Scottish Studies are concerned it is worthwhile to stress that memory of the colonial encounter with the Caribbean has been 'blinder' in Scotland (to adapt Marcus Wood's famous phrase) than, for example, in England.[10] Strikingly so: both in terms of intensity and of duration. The endemic nature as well as the striking proportions of this 'amnesia' can be partly related to Scotland's own problematical quest for a national identity in the modern age. In this sense investigations in these combined fields can provide a unique opportunity of re-reading Scottish culture and issues of 'Scottishness' from a new perspective.

Investigating not just the dynamics but also the imagination of this colonial encounter as well as its cultural and political repercussions and implications, may lead to that post-national re-construction or de-construction of national identity heralded by contemporary critics. The articles by **Karina Williamson**, **Daniel Livesay** and **Corey E. Andrews** take up the first part of this task, dealing, in the first two, directly with Scottish lives and life-writing from the colonial West Indies, and, in the third, with the imaginary of slavery as constructed by Scottish poets. In Andrews' article we find a survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poetry set within 'Scottish networks in the West Indies' – a necessary study if we are to make full sense of the rhetorical charge of slavery, abolition, empire and nation in this period. In like mind, Williamson (who has already edited the anonymously written *Marly; Or a Planter's Life in Jamaica* (first published in 1828)) argues in 'Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820-1826' that more detailed biographical and literary studies 'would provide a fuller, more nuanced picture of Scottish-Caribbean experience and Scottish identities in the West Indian colonies'. This is a direct challenge, and Williamson's study of Carmichael – as traveller and novelist – skilfully adds to this picture. Livesay's article, 'Extended Families: Mixed-Race Children and Scottish Experience, 1770-1820', begins another biographical investigation, moving us through and beyond the biographies of white migrants in the Caribbean: 'As migration studies have helped to improve dramatically our understanding of the Scottish experience in the Caribbean, increased attention on the movement of mixed-race individuals within the Atlantic will serve to refine further our notions of that experience'. If Williamson shows how Carmichael's autobiographical and fictional

identities are ‘elaborately layered’ (the narrator in *Tales of a Grandmother* is ‘Scottish-bred, English-fathered, and West-Indian-domiciled’), Livesay’s study destablises this notion of national ‘layering’, showing a set of kinship ties between Scotland and the West Indies that cut across ethnicities and bridge the different locations.

Lines of continuity: the Caribbean and Scotland beyond slavery

The articles here prove that a dialogue between different methodologies and field of study perspectives is essential. However, we must extend our gaze beyond the slavery period, when commercial and cultural relations between the Caribbean and Scotland continued, albeit less openly, and thus acknowledge lines of continuity, as well as ‘networks of reciprocal making’ or simply consonances and unwitting intersections, ways of remembering or imagining the other. This hope for further investigations of period and perspective prompted a recent conference at the University of Stirling under the same title as this special issue: Caribbean-Scottish Passages. The conference brought together the authors of *Caribbean-Scottish Relations* with researchers from Gaelic Studies, Geography, Social Policy, Literature, Language and History. Following the Guyanese novelist, Wilson Harris, and his understanding of the profound ‘cross-culturality’ of literatures and societies, the gathered researchers responded to his request to identify ‘frontiers and border lines which one might sense have been crossed in ways that are not always easily recognised’.[11]

Harris’s own novel, *Black Marsden*, draws on the shared traditions of Scotland and South America, and it is their multiple languages that operate for him as a mutual border. In a note to our conference he wrote:

> Perhaps I may venture to say that my many visits to Scotland, and books I have read, have given me the sensation of a tone or inner vibrancy that may be due to the languages (English, Scottish, Gaelic) that are present in the subconscious imagination of sensitive Scots. Epigraphs in *Black Marsden* partially illumine this unique tone and temper that make for the cross-culturality (not mono-cultural) that came into play in *Black Marsden*.[12]

Harris’s fictional approach is to follow the specific pathways channelled by cultural particularity (for example, a Georgetown or an Edinburgh topography), but simultaneously to search for and remain alert to obscured imaginative, spatial, linguistic, artistic and temporal connections. **Alan Riach’s** article, ‘Other than Realism: Magic and Violence in Modern Scottish Fiction and the Recent Work of Wilson Harris’, continues his own research on Harris, focusing on the novelist’s latest work, *The Ghost of Memory* (2006). In his pioneering 1993 article, ‘Tradition and the New

Alliance: Scotland and the Caribbean', Riach argues, '[Harris] is a revisionary writer in the best sense. What he points towards, I believe, is the possibility of reciprocal creative understandings arising from the linked dynamics of the "new literatures in English" and others'.[13] In this new article, based on a paper given at the conference, Riach sketches a set of 'reciprocal creative understandings' between Harris, Alasdair Gray, A. L. Kennedy and Robbie Kydd.

It is perhaps wise to conclude this editorial by sounding a note of caution about working between the categories of the Caribbean and Scotland, even when we seek to question them. Kei Miller, speaking at the Caribbean-Scottish Passages conference, voiced this caution in terms of personal identity negotiated between different places:

> We might try, of course, to infuse our new homes in a foreign land with a 'local' aesthetic – a sense of what is beautiful that was developed somewhere else far away – from our own 'locals'. But there are parts of ourselves – the ways in which we were always other, in that other place, that can now find the space to flourish – it is our own 'foreignness', a foreignness that was always local to our hearts, that is now growing. I'm perhaps just warning myself to be careful of these categories of foreign and local, Scottish and the Caribbean, when the nature of the individual in his travels, whether actual or virtual, whether across the world or across the road, is to see things, borrow, reject and revise himself and his tastes.

In Miller's first novel, *The Same Earth* (2008), Harry (whose mother is Jamaican and father Scottish) makes his home only in Jamaica and the waters that he travels as a sailor: 'He never disembarked. Even when they dropped anchor in Scotland and the crew rushed back to tell him there was a man in the pub who had olive skin just like his, green eyes just like his, a thick curly red afro just like his, and was named Harold James Walcott IV just like him – he knew they were telling the truth, and that this must be his half-brother'.[14] Miller's interest in a character who is not intrigued by his other Scottish life, points to both the attractions and limitations of location and history for understanding identity. That the Jamaican Harry has reason to turn away from Scotland should warn us against any easy acceptance of the explanatory power of connections drawn between the Caribbean and Scotland, but Harry's refusal should not stop our investigations. Rather, with Miller, we might focus on how individual stories of identity-in-the-making – whether in art, poetry, history or fiction – can take people 'across the world or across the road', dismantling, revising and building themselves and their homes as they go. The individual articles in this issue explore the possibilities of a comparative Caribbean-Scottish studies, and we should note that whenever we cross the Jamaica Street Bridge in Glasgow, cook

with a scotch bonnet pepper in the Caribbean, or buy a plant from ‘Guyana’ in Aberfoyle, we have, however briefly, already entered this process.

NOTES

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[1] See ‘Guyana’, http://www.guyana.ltd.uk/.

[2] See Richard Sheridan, ‘The Role of the Scots in the Economy and Society of the West Indies’, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 292 (1977), 94-106. Among the most recent publications in this field see Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) and Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

[3] John Agard, ‘How Aunty Nansi Singularly Widened the Debate on Plural Identity’, *Come Down Nansi*, in *Weblines* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 2000), p. 75.

[4] Ibid., p. 6

[5] Ibid., p. 75

[6] Jackie Kay, ‘The Broons’ Bairn’s Black’, *Off Colour* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1998), p. 61. For a reproduction of the cover of the first annual of *The Broons*, with illustrations of the family, see ‘The Broons and Oor Wullie’ webpage: http://www.thatsbraw.co.uk/Annuals/1939bf.htm.

[7] Joan Anim-Addo, Giovanna Covi, Velma Pollard, Carla Sassi (co-authors), *Caribbean-Scottish Relations Colonial and Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language and Literature*, London: Mango Publishing, 2007. Project funded by the University of Trento (2005) and co-ordinated by Giovanna Covi.

[8] Giovanna Covi, ‘Introduction’, ibid., p. 8.

[9] Giovanna Covi, ‘Introduction’, ibid., p. 10.

[10] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[11] Wilson Harris, ‘Unfinished Genesis: A Personal View of Cross-Cultural Tradition’, in *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks*, ed. Alan Riach and Mark Williams (Liege: L3 Liege Literature and Language, 1992), pp. 93-102 (p. 93). On a personal note, Harris has commented

on his education in Georgetown (then British Guiana) as an unacknowledged experience of border crossings between British Empire and nation: ‘There were English masters and students, there were masters and students of African descent, Indian descent, Portugeuse, Chinese, Welsh, Scottish. There were students and masters of mixed descent’, ‘An Autobiographical Essay’, in Joyce Sparer Adler, *Exploring the Palace of the Peacock: Essays on Wilson Harris*, ed. Irving Adler (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), pp. viii-xxxiv (p. xxiv).

[12] Wilson Harris, letter to Gemma Robinson on behalf of Caribbean-Scottish Passages Conference, 13 June 2008.

[13] Alan Riach ‘Tradition and the New Alliance: Scotland and the Caribbean’, in *Major Minorities: English Literatures in Transit*, ed. Raoul Granqvist (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 9-18 (p. 17)

[14] p. 143.

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Mrs Carmichael: A Scotswoman in the West Indies, 1820-1826

Karina Williamson

The importance of Scotland in the development of the British West Indian colonies is now widely recognised, thanks to the work of historians and demographers in the thirty years since Richard Sheridan published his seminal paper on 'The Role of the Scots in the Economy and Society of the West Indies'.[1] The broad picture which emerges from these three decades of historical study of Scottish emigration and settlement in the Caribbean in the eighteenth to early nineteenth century may be summarised as follows. The overwhelming majority of Scottish emigrants were young, white, single, and male. They did not intend to settle permanently in the Caribbean, but aimed to make enough money to enable them return to a better life in Britain, though not necessarily in Scotland: hence the label 'sojourners', which is used by Alan Karras for Scottish migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake,[2] is now applied to Scots in the Caribbean generally. While preserving strong emotional and often financial links with their home areas, they adopted for expediency a British rather than Scottish identity. 'To succeed in the empire, and to make their way in England on their return, Scots had to be British'.[3] Nevertheless, supportive networks of Scots, linked by kinship and business ties, developed throughout the Caribbean; in addition to their economic or commercial function these networks served as 'ethnic anchors', making up for the lack of support from Scottish churches, charitable societies, or other ethnic associations, in the West Indies in the eighteenth century.[4]

Many aspects of the social and domestic life of Scottish planters, merchants, doctors, public officials and other residents in the pre-emancipation period emerge as by-products of historical studies, but a domestic history of Scots in the Caribbean has yet to be attempted. As Angela McCarthy remarks of Scottish migration generally: 'by and large the experiences of those involved in the processes of relocation and settlement have been astonishingly neglected'.[5] Identities, as Douglas Hamilton rightly points out, 'are complex things: they are constructed, imagined, multilayered and, often, refashioned by circumstances. For Scots in the Caribbean, this was certainly true.'[6] Yet 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.

Whether a ‘domestic history’ would be either feasible or worthwhile is arguable. The working life of a migrant from Scotland in the sugar colonies may not have been significantly different from that of English, Irish or Welsh migrants. Nevertheless, the abundance of literary evidence available, in the shape of first-hand accounts of the West Indian colonies written by Scots – factual and fictional, in prose and in verse – suggests that an approach from a textual, anecdotal, biographical angle might throw fresh light on, or at least raise different questions about, the personal lives as well as the social identities of Scots in the Caribbean.[7] For example, to what extent (if at all) did Scots in the West Indies actively seek to maintain the domestic or social customs and practices of their homeland? Did they hope, or were they fearful, that their Scottish identity would be apparent to others? Does their experience show the submergence of Scottish identity under the hegemony of ‘English culture’? Or (reversing the binaries) did the disproportionately high number of Scots resident in the Caribbean from the seventeenth century onwards produce a discernibly Scottish-inflected culture generally?

A start has already been made in the use of literary texts for research in this field by Giovanni Covi, Joan Anim-Addo, Velma Pollard, and Carla Sassi in *Caribbean-Scottish Relations: Colonial and Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language and Literature* (2007).[8] Their essays provide a stimulating approach to the kinds of question I have posed, but the texts they draw on (mainly narrative fiction, drama and poetry) are ‘literary’ by a stricter definition than I am employing here. Meanwhile historians themselves have quarried the writings (published and unpublished) of Scottish migrants and settlers as sources of evidence supplementary to or illustrative of broader economic, social or cultural patterns. My contention is that a ‘literary’ approach, subjecting text and context to individual scrutiny, may paradoxically yield ‘historical’ rewards, by exposing the variety and complexity of self-representations and social identities of Scots in the Caribbean. For by no means all of them chose to claim a ‘British’ identity. The spectrum, *as represented in the texts*, is wide. At one extreme, ethnic identity may be narrowed down to Highland clanship, as exemplified by the Gaelic-speaking attorney in the anonymous novel *Marly* (1828).[9] At the opposite end come Scottish writers such as R.C. Dallas who identify themselves as ‘English’. Dallas, the author of two works on West Indian subjects,[10] was a descendant of the Deputy-Keeper of the Great Seal of Scotland, spent his early boyhood on his father’s estate in Jamaica, was sent to a school in London run by a Scotsman, and inherited the Jamaican estate at the age of fifteen.

Among other Scottish authors, James Grainger, Charles Leslie, Janet Schaw, John Stewart, and Mrs Carmichael herself are relatively well known to historians, but there is a list of others who

have seldom or never been consulted by scholars concerned with Scottish-Caribbean relations. They include, for example, James M. Adair, a physician and judge in Antigua, who, in *Unanswerable Arguments against the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, attacks another writer for maligning Scots in the West Indies; Hector Macneill, who published recollections of his life as a merchant in St. Kitts under the guise of fictitious memoirs; Philip Barrington Ainslie, whose *Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman* (published under the pseudonym of 'Philo Scotus') contain an extended account of his attempt to become a planter in Jamaica; and Robert Renny, whose *History of Jamaica* draws on personal observation.[11] Renny's book supplies an example of the kind of clues to (virtual) identity which texts may offer. No biographical information about the author seems to exist outside his work, and he does not identify himself as a Scot until the end, where he appends a copy of a letter sent by himself from Jamaica to a friend. In it he criticises Jamaican slave society, contrasting it to 'my native land' and quoting a few lines to similar effect from 'a Caledonian poet' (James Beattie). The letter is followed by his own sixteen-line panegyric to Scotland:

> Hail, SCOTIA! lovely land! my parent-soil!
> Dearest, though bleakest, half of this bless'd isle!
> More dear to me, thy heath on moss-grown hills,
> Than all the golden ore of Indian rills;
> Thy thatch-clad cots, and homely, healthful fare,
> Than Indian palaces, and all the luxuries there; [...]
> There, man, a slave, oft trembles at the rod,
> Here, men are free, and know, they're sons of God![12]

It is perhaps no coincidence that these lines appeared in 1807, centenary of the Act of Union.

Published accounts cannot be treated as representative of Scottish life in the Caribbean generally, since the social spectrum they reflect is too narrow. The experiences and opinions of Scottish artisans, for example, who formed a high proportion of the white underclass in West Indian society, alongside non-commissioned soldiers, seamen, and others, seldom got into print. A rare exception is Charles Campbell, whose lively narrative (written while he was in prison) of his adventures in the West Indies as a merchant seaman, and briefly as an overseer, has survived because of its interest to students of legal history.[13] Campbell relates that he received excellent schooling in Renfrewshire as a young boy but was mainly self-educated, through avid reading and discussion with a group of like-minded 'artisans and mechanics', while earning his living as a cotton-spinner.

Detailed study of all these texts and their contexts would provide a fuller, more nuanced picture of Scottish-Caribbean experience and Scottish identities in the West Indian colonies in the pre-emancipation period than we now possess. The rest of this essay is offered as a speculative case-study of one writer, Mrs Carmichael: not intended to represent her as typical of her nation, class, race or gender, but attempting to discover what kinds of evidence a 'literary' reading may yield.

I

Mrs Carmichael was the author of two works depicting life in the West Indies: *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies* (1833), and a novel, *Tales of a Grandmother* (1841).[14] It is apparent from both that she belonged to the upper end of the social spectrum of Scots in the Caribbean. She was evidently a gentlewoman, well educated, even studious, highly class-conscious, and confident to the point of dogmatism of the soundness and rectitude of her opinions. These include a firm belief in the just and humane conduct of plantation owners and managers and a low estimate of the character, morals and intelligence of 'negroes'.

Domestic Manners provides detailed if unsystematic descriptions of plantation life in St Vincent and Trinidad, the landscape, architecture, religious institutions, and administration of the islands, as well as the author's perception of the customs and manners of the black, white and coloured peoples. Her prime concern, freely expressed, is to combat what she regards as the false and erroneous picture given by abolitionist writers and politicians of the treatment of slaves in the West Indian colonies, and to show from personal experience the 'true' practices and motives of plantation-owners ('no class of men on earth more calumniated', 1.16). She repeatedly guarantees the authenticity of her facts by assurances that they are grounded on direct observation, insisting that 'I shall not attempt to describe any thing as fact to which I have not been an eye witness' (2.323). This self-imposed embargo is frequently breached, however, by the admission of 'facts' gathered from hearsay. For instance, writing of the gender ratio of imported slaves during the slave-trade, she says, 'I took some pains to inquire into this matter.[...] I was informed, by several gentlemen who could recollect the scenes which then took place, that males greatly predominated. This is one important fact' (2.19). Carmichael would have been dismayed to learn of her reputation in the post-emancipation period as a factual reporter. When an English traveller, Charles Day, was in the West Indies in 1846-50 he tried to get hold of a copy of *Domestic Manners*, having previously read 'Mrs. Carmichael's excellent book' in England and wanting to read it 'on the spot' in order to check its accuracy. He was surprised to discover, wherever he went, that the author was 'grossly and unjustly' vilified:

> Throughout the islands that I have as yet visited, she is denounced continually by some mendacious epithet or other, and even her own relations, both in Trinidad and in St. Vincent, disclaim connection with her, asserting that she was notorious in her own family for habitually not speaking the truth. Whenever I endeavoured to borrow her book, some excuse was made to prevent my seeing it—'It was mislaid,' or 'lost,' or 'destroyed,' and never forthcoming.[…] At last I obtained a loan of it from a *nearly* white young man, who, however, did not fail to caution me that it was 'full of lies.'[15]

Since Day himself fully shared Mrs Carmichael's racist opinions it is not surprising that, apart from 'a few trifling inaccuracies', he found the book to be truthful: but 'the truth did not suit the views of the political parties at home, whilst the coloured races, with their wretched vanity, are furious that people at home should have an idea of the truth.' Noting that the book had been published nearly twenty years earlier, he adds: 'it is wonderful how little the character of the black and coloured people has changed.'[16] Mrs Carmichael's views are not associated by Day with her Scottish background (if he was even aware of it), nor can they be so related. Well educated though she appears to be, her writing reflects no familiarity with Scottish Enlightenment ideas on either race or slavery.

A sketchy time-scheme of Mrs Carmichael's residence in the West Indies can be constructed from references in the text. She arrived on 31 December 1820: 'I beheld the West Indies for the first time when, at sun-rise, on the last day of December 1820, we anchored in the lovely bay of Calliaqua, in the island of St. Vincent.' 'We' evidently included her husband, two children, and perhaps others, for she notes that they were unable to get hold of horses that day 'for so large a party as ours', and so stayed on board (1.3).[17] There 'we were speedily visited by several of our own people' (enslaved workers from the estate) who 'seemed overjoyed to see their own master, telling him that if he had not come they could not have lived much longer' (1.5). The Carmichaels stayed 'nearly three years in St. Vincent' (2.19), before moving to Laurel Hill estate in Trinidad for a further period, adding up to 'five years and six months altogether' in the West Indies (2.37). At the end of that time the family returned to England, not Scotland (1.193-4).

Scattered throughout the text are hints of the author's residence before and after she lived in the West Indies. To support a comparison between the living conditions of 'the labouring classes in Britain' and the 'superior comforts hitherto enjoyed by the slaves' she explains that before going abroad she 'had lived a good deal in the country, and was pretty accurately acquainted with the comforts enjoyed by ploughmen and their families, in counties nearly adjoining Edinburgh, and also by the lower classes in that city' (1.193). Later she is more specific about her familiarity with the 'lower orders' in Britain ('I have seen country servants in the county of Mid Lothian', 1.255-6),

and in order to prove her familiarity with the 'habits and mode of life' of the 'working classes and labourers' of Scotland she refers again to 'living, as I had done in my early years, very much in the country – in the counties of Mid Lothian and Fife' (2.162-3). The most open reference comes when she is pleased to discover that the stone used for building the handsome gaol in Port of Spain came from 'my father's quarry in Callilou in Fifeshire' (2.70). References to places in England and the south are equally frequent, however. From these it appears that by 1833 she had lived in or at least visited places in Worcestershire, Dorset, Devonshire, 'the West of England', and the Channel Islands.

Who, then, was 'Mrs Carmichael'? Until very recently, she was a shadowy figure, of whom nothing was known beyond what could be gathered from her books. The fortunate discovery recently of a letter from the Scottish travel writer, Henry David Inglis, to the London publishers of *Domestic Manners*, enables us to identify her as a Scotswoman from an aristocratic family. Inglis writes from Jersey on 5 August 1833 to advise the publishers on ways in which sales of *Domestic Manners* might be increased. He suggests the following statements for use as promotion material:

> Mrs. Carmichaels book, on the domestic manners, & state of society in the West Indies, is not merely a well turned book, politically; its sketches of manners and character are most novel & interesting to all classes of readers; and certainly the Public is as much indebted to Mrs Carmichael for her "Domestic Manners of the West Indies", as to her brother for his "Three Years in North America".
>
> Much as we have all heard of the West Indies, little or nothing has been told the Public till now, of the State of society in these Colonies. Mrs Carmichaels work on the domestic manners of the population of the West Indies supplies this desideratum; & adds, to important & grave details, a world of amusing and interesting minutiæ respecting the many coloured classes of our colonial population.[18]

The author of *Three Years in North America*, which was published in Edinburgh in 1833 (the same year as Carmichael's *Domestic Manners*), was James Stuart of Dunearn, in Fife, better known in his time for his trial and acquittal for the murder of Sir Alexander Boswell, whom he killed in a duel.[19] Through him Mrs Carmichael can be identified as Alison Charles Stewart (so spelt in the Edinburgh parish register), daughter of Dr Charles Stewart and Mary Erskine Stewart. She married John Wilson Carmichael in Edinburgh in 1815, lived until 1885,[20] and must therefore have been born sometime in the 1790s. Her father, owner of the prosperous Cullalo quarry, near Aberdour in Fife, was a younger son of the fourth earl of Moray; on her mother's side she was a granddaughter of Dr John Erskine of Edinburgh, an eminent Church of Scotland

minister and author. By 1820, when Alison Carmichael went out to the West Indies, parish registers show that she had two small daughters: Mary Erskine and Alison Johanna, both born in Edinburgh, in November 1816 and April 1919 respectively. They are mentioned several times, though not by name, in *Domestic Manners*. From other biographical clues in *Domestic Manners* and external sources it is evident that after her return from Trinidad, Alison Carmichael spent the remainder of her long life as an expatriate Scot in England or the Channel Islands.

Comparison of *Domestic Manners* with James Stuart's *Three Years in North America* indicates that Carmichael's opinions on slavery were not the product of her upbringing, for her robust support of the practice of plantation owners and overseers in the West Indian colonies stands in stark contrast to her brother's condemnation of the treatment of slaves on plantations in the southern states of America. The contrast is revealing in another way too. Where Stuart criticises American practices from the standpoint of an outside observer, Carmichael claims the privilege of her position within West Indian slave society as guarantee of the authority of her views on slave-owners and the enslaved. Such 'insider' claims are common in writings of this period,[21] and were used by authors on either side of the abolition debate. The interest to Caribbean scholars of personal accounts of West Indian 'domestic manners', however, is dependent on their descriptive and anecdotal value, not on the social or moral opinions they support, although those must be taken into account in assessing the trustworthiness of the author's perceptions. Carmichael herself is highly selective in her reportage, failing to 'see' aspects of society which would contradict her view of the benevolence of plantation-owners, as Ragatz points out,[22] and she is an unreliable *interpreter* of some of the things she does see. Nevertheless she is an acute observer of the behaviour of all classes, and her lively, individualised descriptions of enslaved children on the plantations in particular are unparalleled in Caribbean writings. In addition, she had a keen ear for the speech habits of the 'negroes', and took pains to reproduce their words and comments accurately.

Facts about Alison Carmichael's husband, John Wilson Carmichael, are harder to establish. His connection, if any, with the Clan Carmichael in Lanarkshire remains unknown, and although coincidence of names suggests that he was related to the painter, John Wilson Carmichael (1799-1868), I have not managed to trace any link.[23] From references in *Domestic Manners* it can be inferred that John Carmichael was considerably older than Alison, that he had two daughters from a previous marriage, [24] and that he was serving in Trinidad as a lieutenant in the 53rd regiment at the time when the Spanish governor capitulated in 1797.

External sources confirm and expand these references. St. Vincent's genealogical website shows that Carmichael died in 1850 at the age of seventy-five, and thus must have been born in 1775/6. In 1797 he married Margaret Ann Falside (in St George's Anglican Cathedral, St Vincent), who

died in London in 1814.[25] Baptisms of a son, Stephen (1799), and a daughter, Margaretta Jane (1807), are recorded in St Vincent. An elder daughter, Isabella Anne, was born in about 1801. Also recorded is Margaretta's marriage in St Vincent in 1821 to Pemberton Hobson, later attorney-general of St. Vincent, a fact which is mentioned with perceptible pride in *Domestic Manners* (2.40). Isabella, too, married well: her husband, Charles Warner, became Solicitor-General for Trinidad in 1840 and a leading figure in the colony, though she herself did not live to enjoy his years of eminence, dying in London in 1841.[26] The Warners were one of the most powerful families in Trinidad: this distinguished connection features in *Domestic Manners* when, after arriving in Trinidad in 1823, the Carmichaels stay for some time at Belmont, the residence of the Chief Justice, who at that time would have been Ashton Warner, an older member of the Warner family.[27] Alison Carmichael explains that she had formerly known Mrs Warner in Edinburgh (2.50). From all this we get a picture of white creole dynasty-building, which challenges the standard image of Scottish 'sojourners' but was certainly not unique: Philip Barrington Ainslie's reminiscences show the existence in Jamaica of a similar cluster of successful Scots related by blood or marriage.

John Carmichael's army career is somewhat thinly documented. He was commissioned as Ensign in the 53rd Regt. in 1794 and promoted to Lieutenant in 1795. The 53rd Regiment of Foot (also named the Shropshire Regiment from 1782) served in St Lucia, Trinidad and St Vincent from 1795 to 1805. Carmichael was wounded during the action at Morne Chabot in St. Lucia in 1796, and apparently returned to Britain with the regiment in 1805. Later references show that he attained the rank of captain, but the date at which he left the army is obscure.[28]

Information about Carmichael's other activities in St. Vincent can be recovered from other sources. He appears to have returned to the island by May 1807, when his second daughter was born. He may have bought an estate at that time, or was perhaps managing one belonging to his wife's family: 'John W. Carmichael' is on record as debtor to Philip Monoux Lucas, Esq. in St Vincent on 1 July 1810, to the tune of £733.11s.7d.[29] He and his first wife must still have been in St Vincent two years later, for according to *Domestic Manners* their elder daughter had witnessed as a child 'the awful irruption of the volcano [La Souffrière] in 1812' (2.37-8). By 24 June 1813 the debt to Lucas appears to have been discharged, probably in readiness for the family's return to Britain where, as we've seen, Margaret died in 1814.

In 1817, according to official returns, Carmichael was registered as possessor of an estate called Mousebank in St George's parish, St Vincent, formerly the property of Lady Bolton. The return was submitted by Thomas Abbott, suggesting that Carmichael was an absentee owner at that stage,[30] which is consistent with other evidence indicating that he returned to Britain in 1812/13. Mousebank was presumably the estate to which Alison Carmichael migrated in 1820. It occupied

about 250 acres and in 1817 had an enslaved population of ninety-three, all but one of whom are classified as ‘negro’. Sixty-five are listed as ‘labourer’ (thirteen of them aged between eight and twelve years); of the remainder, other than infants or a few designated as ‘invalid’, eleven were listed by trade (carpenters, masons, a cooper and a midwife), only two are designated as ‘domestic’ (house servants): seventeen-year-old Will and thirteen-year-old Betsy, the sole ‘mulatto’ in the list.

Nothing in John Carmichael’s documented history reveals that he was Scottish, but Alison Carmichael refers to him as such in the one unambiguous reference to her own nominal identity to be found in *Domestic Manners*. It occurs in the course of a conversation quoted to show the opinion of Scots held by the enslaved. ‘Generally speaking,’ she asserts, ‘negroes do not regard England and Scotland in the same light’: the reason, she suggests, is that ‘Scotchmen are more generally strict, and are proverbially active and economical, [...] and perhaps there are not two qualities which the majority of negroes dislike more thoroughly.’ She cites an occasion when she sent a house-servant to Kingstown harbour in St Vincent to inquire about passengers on board a newly-arrived ship:

> he returned saying, there was no one except one Buckra man. “And who is he?” “Me no know—me no tink it worth while to ask he name; he one Cotch-man.” “And why is it not worth while to ask a Scotchman’s name?” “’Cause they all mean, hold-purse fellows; dey go *so*,” said he, walking some paces, holding down his head, and with a slouching gait; “dey go mean—me no like dem.” Yet B. was addressing himself to his master and mistress, both Scotch; a tolerably good proof, that negro domestics speak with little restraint what they really think. (1.321-2)

Interestingly, Carmichael does not protest, or even imply, that B’s description of Scots as ‘mean’ is false, since she herself labels them, with apparent complacency, as ‘economical’. It is only noteworthy that a black servant should dare to speak derogatively of Scotsmen in front of his Scottish master and mistress.

Apart from this seemingly fortuitous moment of self-identification, Carmichael’s authorial position is normally unlocalised. She adopts the common strategy of travel writers in describing foreign places, manners or things by analogy with those familiar to readers at home. Her referents in such comparisons are normally ‘English’, ‘British’, or ‘European’, less often ‘Scottish’; for economic comparisons (of prices, kinds of produce, and so on) the referents are English throughout. Since *Domestic Manners* was published in London, this may well have been a deliberate policy, designed to ensure the marketability of the book in England. But in comparisons

of places, scenery, buildings or natural history, Carmichael chooses examples from England or Scotland almost indiscriminately. A ford on a river in Trinidad is compared with ‘the river Teme, at the village of Bransford, in Worcestershire’ (2.110), and ‘negro houses’ on Laurel-Hill estate are said to be ‘very similar in external appearance to cottages in Devonshire’ (2.116). On the other hand, the landscape of Laurel-Hill generally is described as resembling ‘some of the lovely wild scenery of Hawthorn-den, near the village of Roslyn, in Scotland’ (2.117), while Port of Spain is said to be ‘as regularly built as the new town of Edinburgh’ (2.49). In a variation of this analogical method, Carmichael takes her example not from nature but from its representation in art. Seeking to convey the beauty of the Gulf of Paria, she writes: ‘those who have ever looked at the print of Loch Lomond, in Dr. Garnett’s tour through Scotland, may form some idea of the *toute ensemble* in miniature of the Gulf of Paria’ (2.48). By focusing on Loch Lomond as viewed through the lens of a well known English travel book[31] Carmichael places Scottish landscape within the frame of a generalised British aesthetics, without laying claim to a specifically Scottish understanding of it.

Other references are less impersonal. Noting for example the disappointing lack of ‘melodious song’ from birds in the West Indies, she exclaims ‘how one’s heart would have bounded, could one have heard the note of a blackbird, or a sweet Scotch mavis’ (2.122), and on seeing huge quantities of limes lying ungathered on an estate in Trinidad, she ‘could not help thinking what the good folks of Glasgow’ would have thought if they had seen the waste of fruits which they would have cherished for making ‘their favourite punch’ (2.111). Again, during a description of cane-processing, she comments that ‘the boiling-house, after regular work was over, reminded me of a blacksmith’s shop in a Scotch village, where all the gossip of the day was sure to be retailed.’ (2.264).

II

The clues to Carmichael’s social identity from documentary and literary evidence so far seem in aggregate to confirm Douglas Hamilton’s observation that Scots in the Caribbean developed a ‘flexible and multi-layered’ notion of identity. A more complicated impression emerges from Carmichael’s second book. If, as seems probable, the title of her first was suggested by Frances Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (published a year earlier, by the same publisher), the title of the second may have been suggested by Walter Scott’s *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828), although it bears no other resemblance to his phenomenally successful work. *Tales of a Grandmother* is a moral and didactic novel, seemingly aimed at a younger audience, in which the lives and experiences of the Carmichaels are refashioned in the shape of a fictional autobiography. The only contemporary notice of the book I have traced is a backhanded compliment printed as an advertisement for the book in 1845:

> "This work has decided claims from its own merits, and from being highly approved and warmly recommended by Miss Edgeworth. There is in this little volume more knowledge conveyed than usually is spread over those of the same size and pretensions. A better work for the purposes of school prizes is not perhaps extant." *Naval and Military Gazette*.[32]

The narrator (never named) recounts to her grandchildren the story of her life down to the age of twenty: her early years in Edinburgh living with her mother, younger sister, and brother, while her father is 'on the continent with his regiment, which soon after was sent to the West Indies'(2), their migration to the West Indies, nine years' residence on a plantation in St Vincent, and eventual resettlement in England. The narrative is regularly interrupted by detailed accounts of the natural history of the West Indies, and by lectures on the value and importance of a good education (for girls as well as boys), precepts which are reinforced by the story itself. The plot is manifestly designed to provide a model of good practice for plantation owners, emphasising the virtues of honesty, uprightness, justice, industry, thrift and self-reliance, as practised and taught by the narrator's parents and emulated by the children. The family's conduct in running their estate and managing their 'negroes' is contrasted with that of their profligate English neighbours, 'Mr. Harris' and his family. Similarly, the story contains specimens of good and bad lawyers and merchants, both in St Vincent and in their role as West Indian agents in London. Good and bad families alike suffer dire economic catastrophes in the course of the plot: the former through lack of business experience and naïve trust in the honesty of others, the latter as a result of their own vices and failings. The final moral is that poverty and misfortune, accompanied by a clear conscience and trust in God, is better than worldly success achieved through greed, selfishness and dishonesty.

The autobiographical frame of *Tales of a Grandmother*, the link by authorial name with Carmichael's earlier work, the location of the narrative on a plantation in St Vincent, and the manifold similarities between the fictitious family and the Carmichaels' plantation life as it is depicted in *Domestic Manners*, all invite a biographical reading of the text. But chronology and family relationships make a straightforward mapping of the 'real' Carmichaels on to the family at the centre of the novel impossible. The author was too young in 1841 to have had grandchildren of the ages given in the novel, and *a fortiori* far too young to be identified with the narrator's mother, whose life in certain other respects resembles what we know of Alison Carmichael's own. What she seems to have done is to graft her own experience at Mousebank on to what she had learnt from John Carmichael of his first marriage and his previous experiences as soldier and planter in the West Indies, adding elements of pure invention to enliven the story and enhance its moral.

This composite narrative is nevertheless interesting as a representation of Scottish-Caribbean experience and subjectivity. The plot involves the purchase of uncleared land on St Vincent and its successful development over a period of nine years into a thriving sugar plantation by the narrator's father, assisted by the thrift, enterprise, and hard work of his wife and children. Douglas Hamilton notes that Scots were prominent among those who settled in the West Indies after the acquisition of the Windward Islands in 1763. In St Vincent especially, 'in 1765, over a third of the allotments […] were acquired by Scots', and that 'Scots in St Vincent […] bought more uncleared than cleared land'.[33] So far, then, the family conforms almost parodically to the contemporary stereotype of hard-working Scots in the Caribbean. Although the label 'Scottish' or 'Scotch' is never directly applied to their behaviour, other elements in the text reinforce the Scottish image. The most overtly Scottish character in the novel is McIntosh, 'an honest Scotch lad, a carpenter', who (on the father's instructions), is hired by the mother and accompanies her and the children on the voyage out (13). McIntosh plays an important role both in events and in the moral pattern of story, displaying exemplary courage, integrity, loyalty, and commercial enterprise. The routine references to him as 'Scotch' or a 'Scotchman' firmly associates these virtues with Scottish ethnicity.[34]

The pattern is not so simple, however. When the narrator's brother is nearly thirteen his father announces his intention to send the boy 'home' to acquire kinds of knowledge which would be 'useful to him as a planter, and for the want of which my father felt great disadvantage', especially 'some general knowledge of law and also of chemistry [...] as well as the study of botany and natural history' (113). The father's stress on practical and scientific knowledge as preparation for a career in the West Indies is consistent with contemporary Scottish ideas. Hector Macneill's *Memoirs* (1800), for example, include a lengthy debate between the hero's Scottish father and the boy's tutor, in which the father insists on the importance of a practical education for a person seeking success in the sugar colonies, while David Dobson's research shows that 'a number of Scottish residents of the West Indies sent their sons back to Scotland to be educated or serve an apprenticeship'.[35] The most influential proponent of 'practical education' was also a Scotsman, Dr Andrew Bell (1753-1832), famous in Carmichael's lifetime as creator of the 'Madras system' for the education of children which he developed and put into practice in India, expounded in *An Experiment in Education* (1797), and tirelessly promoted after his return to Britain. Carmichael was clearly a disciple, for in *Domestic Manners* she lays out her own 'plan of negro instruction', based on 'Dr. Bell's system' (2.249-50).[36]

In *Tales of a Grandmother*, however, the father has *English* ambitions for his son: he wants him to spend 'some time in a mercantile house in England, to see the way in which West Indian affairs were conducted by English West India merchants' (113). In his thinking he appears thus to match Hamilton's profile of Scots who 'had to be British' in order to 'succeed in the empire and make

their way in England on their return'.[37] But the fictitious father is *not* a Scotsman: he is the son of a wealthy but improvident landowner from Northumberland. The narrator relates that her English grandfather was found on his death to have squandered both 'an ample fortune of his own' and 'the greater part of the patrimony, that belonged by right to my father', who at that time was serving in the West Indies as a soldier (like John Carmichael). Deprived of his patrimony, the narrator's father decides to leave the army, buy a property in the West Indies, and settle down on it with his family (10).

The invention of an English father allows the narrator to speak of 'our English blood' (98), and 'good old England' (224), while yet feeling homesick for 'dear Scotland' (36), 'our native country' (108), and finally reflecting, as the family prepares to leave St Vincent, that England will be 'a new country to my sister and myself, for we had only once left Scotland, before sailing for the West Indies' (192). This stratagem enables the author to create a plausible Anglo-Scottish identity for her narrator, yet at the same time to promote the mother's Scottish ethos.

A final example shows a further level of complexity in the process of identity-construction which goes on in this text. The narrator's mother takes the personal care of her three children into her own hands, training them to be independent instead of relying on the help of servants (possibly a reflection of the author's own situation: as already noted, only two house-servants were listed for Mousebank estate in 1817, an economy which the second Mrs Carmichael may have continued to observe). One episode involves the visit of the neighbours' little girl, Elizabeth Harris, who arrives escorted by 'a young negro girl, her usual attendant'. When shown to her bedroom Elizabeth says,

> "Hannah can sleep here on the floor." My mother told her she did not like servants sleeping in our room, that we always helped each other, and never required the assistance of any one. Elizabeth was astonished; she had much to learn, for she had never put on her own stockings. (93)

The narrator's mother then shows her how to arrange her hair and manage her wardrobe, and also teaches her 'writing, arithmetic and several other things' (93). This training in self-reliance and useful knowledge leads the narrator to reflect complacently on the difference between her own upbringing and that of other West Indian families: 'we could not help feeling how much we owed to the care of our parents, when we heard every one remark, how unlike we were to children brought up in the West Indies' (100). The distinction made here is not between English and Scottish cultural practices, but between those of white Creoles and of her own Anglo-Scottish family. Thus in her self-positioning as Scottish-bred, English-fathered, and West-Indian-domiciled,

the narrator constructs an even more elaborately layered version of identity, apparently in preference to adopting an amorphous British one (the term ‘British’ is seldom used in *Tales*).

To conclude: Carmichael’s two texts are of value for the study of Scots in the Caribbean because, rather than in spite, of their untypical character. They provide rare insights into the experiences of a Scotswoman who (unlike her better known compatriot, Janet Schaw) was resident in the West Indies in the pre-emancipation era as a mother and householder; the shift from documentary mode in *Domestic Manners* to autobiographical fiction in *Tales of a Grandmother* enables the author to move from a gender-neutral representation of ‘domestic manners’ to an intimate, gendered account of family life in a West Indian household. Her texts offer a range of perspectives on Scottish identity: her own characterisation of Scots as strict taskmasters; the ‘proverbial’ thriftiness of Scots, transmuted into meanness from the enslaved man’s contemptuous viewpoint; up to the idealised image of ‘McIntosh’ as a brave, honest, hardworking and loyal Scottish artisan. Finally, at the opposite end of the social scale, Carmichael’s references in *Domestic Manners* to the marriages of her step-daughters into powerful West Indian families provide a glimpse of Scottish participation in the recently explored processes of British ‘imperial careering’.[38]

NOTES

[1] *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 292 (1977), 94-106.
[2] Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992). Another important source of information on Scottish emigrants in the Caribbean is David Dobson’s slightly misleadingly titled *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607-1785* (Athens, GA; University of Georgia Press, 1994).
[3] Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World*, *1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 50.
[4] Hamilton, 49-50: the phrase ‘ethnic anchors’ was coined by the editors of *Scotland and the Americas, c.1650-c.1939: A Documentary Source Book*, eds. Allan I. Macinnes, Marjory-Ann D. Harper and Linda G. Fryer (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 2001), p. 252.
[5] Angela McCarthy, ed., *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), p. 2.
[6] Douglas Hamilton, ‘Transatlantic Ties: Scottish Migration Networks in the Caribbean, 1750-1800’, in *A Global Clan* (see McCarthy, above), pp. 48-66 (p. 60).

[7] A full investigation would also require study of the abundance of unpublished letters, journals and other private writings of Scots in the West Indies to be found in libraries and archives on both sides of the Atlantic.

[8] *Caribbean-Scottish Relations: Colonial and Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language and Literature* (London: Mango, 2007).

[9] See *Marly; or, A Planter's Life in Jamaica*, ed. Karina Williamson (Oxford: Macmillan, 2005), pp. 7-9.

[10] (1) *A Short Journey in the West Indies*, 2 vols. (London: n.p., 1790): published anonymously, but Dallas's authorship was established by Michael Ashcroft, in 'Robert Charles Dallas', *Jamaica Journal* 44 (1980), 94–101. (2) *The History of the Maroons, from their origin to the establishment of their chief tribe at Sierra Leone*, 2 vols. (London: T. Longman and O. Rees, 1803).

[11] James M. Adair, *Unanswerable Arguments against the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: J.P. Bateman, 1790); [Hector Macneill], *Memoirs of the Life and Travels of the late Charles Macpherson, Esq. ... with a particular investigation of the nature, treatment, and possible improvement, of the negro in the British and French West India islands* (Edinburgh: Arch. Constable, 1800); Philo Scotus [Philip Barrington Ainslie], *Reminiscences of a Scottish Gentleman, Commencing in 1787* (London: A. Hall, Virtue, 1861); Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica: with observations on the climate, scenery, ... customs, manners, and dispositions of the inhabitants* (London: J. Cawthorn, 1807).

[12] Renny, 333. The lines are said to be part of an unfinished poem.

[13] *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., 1828). In Edinburgh, the only copy of this rare work belongs to the Advocates Library. There are copies also in Glasgow University Library and the British Library.

[14] *Domestic Manners and Social Condition of the White, Coloured, and Negro Population of the West Indies*. *By Mrs. Carmichael, Five years a resident in St. Vincent and Trinidad*. 2 vols. (London: Whittaker, Treacher, and Co., 1833); *Tales of a Grandmother. By Mrs. A.C. Carmichael* (London: Richard Bentley, 1841). Page references to quotations from these editions are supplied in brackets in the text.

[15] Charles William Day, *Five Years' Residence in the West Indies*, 2 vols. (London: Colburn and Co., 1852), I, p. 129.

[16] Day, II, p. 130.

[17] In *Tales of a Grandmother*, the family travel out with a nanny, servants, and a Scottish carpenter.

[18] Letter to Mr. How, Messrs. Whittaker & Co., 5 August 1833. MSS collections, National Library of Scotland (not yet catalogued). 'Mr James Stuart' is inserted in pencil in the margin opposite

'her brother'. The letter was sent from Jersey, where Mrs Carmichael herself was probably living: according to the genealogical source quoted in note 25 below, her husband died in Jersey in 1750, and her stepdaughter was married in St Helier's in 1839. She shows her familiarity with the Channel Islands earlier still when she compares the fish market in Trinidad to that of 'Peters Port, in the island of Guernsey' (*Domestic Manners*, II, p. 59). I am greatly indebted to Gemma Robinson for drawing my attention to the letter from Inglis. I am grateful also to Michael S. Moss for information about the Stuart family.

[19] See Michael S. Moss, *ODNB*, s.v. Stuart, James.

[20] Register of marriages for the parish of St Cuthbert's; *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage*, 1899.

[21] See, for example, John Stewart, preface to *An Account of Jamaica, and its Inhabitants* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1823), pp. x-xi.

[22] See L.J. Ragatz, *A Guide for the Study of British Caribbean History, 1763-1834* (Washington: US Govt Printing Office, 1932), p. 221.

[23] Although the painter was the son of a shipwright from Tyneside, according to his modern biographer his grandfather was Lord Carmichael, of the Scottish earldom of Hyndford: see Diana Villar, *John Wilson Carmichael 1799-1868* (Portsmouth: Carmichael and Sweet, 1995), p. 1.

[24] His daughters are mentioned on a number of occasions as 'my husband's', whereas children of his second marriage are referred to as 'my children'. For reference to Carmichael's army service, see *Domestic Manners*, II, p. 109.

[25] http://svgancestry.com/index.php/john-wilson-carmichael-soldier-and-planter-in-st-vincent, accessed 28/02/2008 (hereafter referred to as SVG Ancestry). The date of Margaret's death is erroneously given as '1774' in the text but correctly recorded in the footnotes, citing the *Gentleman's Magazine* 84 (July-Dec 1814), 198.

[26] SVG Ancestry, n.12. For Charles Warner, see Michael Anthony, *Historical Dictionary of Trinidad and Tobago* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press), pp. 601-3.

[27] I am grateful to Bridget Brereton for this information.

[28] He was still listed in the 53rd in 1800, but not in January 1811, which could mean that he had been posted to another regiment. By 1817 a 'John Carmichael' is listed as captain in the 6th Regt of Dragoon Guards, with army captaincy dating from 1813. The obituary notice for Margaret Carmichael refers to her husband simply as 'J. Wilson Carmichael, esq. of the Island of St. Vincent', which suggests that he had left the army by 1814. I am grateful to Peter Duckers, Curator of the Shropshire Regimental Museum, for help in tracing records of Carmichael's army service.

[29] Cambridge University Library, Add MS 8,369, Lucas family papers. I am greatly indebted to Professor Simon D. Smith for information in this and the following paragraph about John Wilson Carmichael's dealings on St Vincent.

[30] Registration returns, NA: PRO, T71/493.

[31] Thomas Garnett, *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland* (London, 1800).

[32] 'Mr. Bentley's New Publications, May, 1845', endpapers of *Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds d'Ewes*, vol. 2 (London, 1845). The *Tales* are reportedly discussed in a letter in the Maria Edgeworth Collection in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, but I have not seen it. Carmichael was an admirer of Edgeworth's own books (see *Domestic Manners*, I, pp. 40 and 250).

[33] Hamilton, *Scotland*, pp. 62-3.

[34] It is significant also that a lawyer with a Scottish name ('Mr. Fraser') is distinguished in the narrative by his honesty and kindness from other agents and attorneys.

[35] Macneill, pp. 18-49; Dobson, p.173.

[36] The strong pragmatic emphasis in the novel generally may reflect the influence of Alison Carmichael's grandfather, the Rev. John Erskine (1721-1803), transmitted through her mother, Mary Erskine Carmichael. Erskine was renowned for his practical Christianity: see Ned C. Landsman's entry in *ODNB*.

[37] Hamilton, *Scotland*, p. 50.

[38] See David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

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Joseph Knight: Scotland and the Black Atlantic

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> 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* – written in the context of a Nigeria wrestling with postcolonial nation building – opens James Robertson's *Joseph Knight*.[1] This theme of a nation facing its own historical truths points to the drive of Robertson's historical novel: to open up the established national narrative of Scotland to the black Atlantic issues of slavery, rebellion, race and class. Scottish involvement in the slave trade and slave produce has long been an uncomfortable area for a nation which prides itself on being built on ideals of liberty. Thus, the Scottish presence as plantation owners and overseers in Jamaica and the presence of black slaves in Scotland have both been largely forgotten. Indeed, Carla Sassi establishes that amnesia is a central theme of the Caribbean in Scottish literature.

> 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…The West Indian imperial connection, quite obviously, stood for aspects of Scottishness that did not invite either pride or celebration.[2]

Robertson's *Joseph Knight* is centred on the amnesia of John Wedderburn who attempts to reinvestigate the story of his slave whom he had forgotten for over twenty years. The investigations of Archibald Jamieson who digs deep into the Wedderburn family's history reflects Robertson's own investigation into Scotland's forgotten chapter. To do so he must uncover the memory of Scottish entanglement in the Caribbean and destabilise national platitudes of liberty. In a dream, the lawyer MacLaurin imagines a drunkard prattling on a familiar refrain:

> The oaf was deaving him with the kind of sentiments many Scots found hard to resist: 'Aye, sir, we've aye been hot for liberty. We focht for it against the English wi Wallace and Bruce, and we'll fecht for it against the French. It's in oor banes, it's in oor banes. Of course we'll fecht for the freedom of the Negroes, sir. We're Scotsmen. It's in oor banes. (p250)

In his dream, Maclaurin challenges the familiar national narrative 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)

As Maclaurin batters 'the drunkard' around the head, Robertson appears to be battering his reading public in an attempt to shake off the complacency of the established national narrative and face the truths of Scottish history.

Indeed, more recent historical research by Alan L. Karras, Michael Fry, Tom Devine, Douglas Hamilton and Iain Whyte[3] amongst others has highlighted the role of Scots in Caribbean slavery which has thereby begun to destabilise Scotland's overwhelmingly white historiography and its supposed innate democratic racial conscience. Robertson explores similar territory by uncovering a forgotten episode in Scottish history, the 'Knight v Wedderburn' trial which has great postcolonial significance in modern, multi-cultural Scotland and demands that the black Atlantic inflects the Scottish national narrative. Robertson offers a startling development by connecting black slavery to the battle of Culloden. Following the defeat, the Jacobite John Wedderburn fled from Scotland to Jamaica where he regained his fortune through his plantations. On his return to Scotland he brought with him a young black slave, Joseph Knight, to serve him at home. Knight, however, eventually took his master to court to win his freedom at the High Court in Edinburgh in 1778. A sensational case in its day, it occupied the minds of such as Samuel Johnson and James

Boswell who prepared arguments for Knight's court case while Lord Kames sat on the panel of judges.[4] Thus, Robertson's narrative weaves a black thread through the orthodox national narrative of Jacobite rebellions, Culloden, and Enlightenment Edinburgh. He employs two contrasting comparative representations: firstly, between the defeated Jacobite rebels and the defeated slave rebels in Jamaica; secondly between the servants and colliers of the Scottish working class and black slaves. Such representations, whose effectiveness will be discussed later, bring into focus the often avoided topic of Scots' involvement in the slave trade and the British Empire at large.

Historical analysis of the role of Scots in the British Empire has been uneven. Michael Hechter's notion that Scotland was a colony of England, although it remains a feature of popular discourse, has been largely discredited in academia.[5] However, Scotland still tends to disavow its imperial past. David McCrone claims Scotland was 'a successful junior partner in the wider process of British imperial colonialism'.[6] However, this notion of a 'junior partner' fails to face up to the *dominant* position of Scots, despite population size, in certain areas of imperial administration, such as Henry Dundas in the East India Company, and essentially evades full responsibility for the nature of the British Empire. Indeed, Michael Fry's *The Scottish Empire* collects huge quantities of evidence on the leading role of Scots throughout the British Empire only to draw blithe conclusions about the benign nature of Scots in dealings with colonial subjects in comparison to their English counterparts. Scots, he argues, were 'traders, not raiders'.[7] 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 tobacco trades. 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.'[8]

Robertson's two contrasting comparative representations between, on the one side Scottish gentry and their servants, and black slaves on the other, challenges this conception of imperial Scotland in the established national narrative and is best served by an 'Atlantic' perspective. Knight crosses the Atlantic twice from Africa to the Caribbean to Europe as a slave. Indeed, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* offers cultural historians a route out of the narrow conceptual boundaries of national criticism.

> I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective.[9]

The interconnectedness of Europe, Africa, America and the Caribbean is so often overlooked by national criticism which has seen cultural inter-mixture as peripheral to a monolithic national narrative. Furthermore, Linebaugh and Rediker have emphasised the centrality of the multi-ethnic 'Atlantic Working Class' in shaping the rise of capitalism and the modern global economy. They employ the Hellenic myth of 'the Many Headed Hydra' to express the varied threats to the building of state, empire and capitalism. Hercules battled against this sea-monster, but whenever he severed one head, two would grow in its place.

> From the beginning of English colonial expansion in the early seventeenth century…rulers referred to the Hercules-hydra myth to describe the difficulty of imposing order on increasingly global systems of labour. They variously designated dispossessed commoners, transported felons, indentured servants, religious radicals, pirates, urban labourers, soldiers, sailors, African slaves as the numerous, ever-changing heads of the monster.[10]

The transatlantic, transnational, transracial nature of the threats to the capitalist, colonial states is crucial to this novel in which Knight runs away with a Scottish servant girl and is supported in his court case by the colliers of Fife.

Alison Games details how the Atlantic approach grew out of the innovative research of the slave trade by historians such as Philip D. Curtin:[11]

> This approach, unfettered by state borders, pursues the logical lines of the (slave) trade, and puts people at the centre, tracking the transmission of all elements of culture, from political identity to material goods to language to religion, all around the Atlantic basin.[12]

This article concerning 'Scotland and the Black Atlantic' may seem not to have escaped the fetters of the nation-state. Indeed, Games proceeds to detail David Armitage's criticism that much Atlantic history is 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.[13] However, in my defence, such a seemingly 'cis-Atlantic' approach is necessitated by Scotland's befuddled sense of its own role in the development of Atlantic trade, particularly in relation to the expansion of the British Empire. Furthermore, applying an Atlantic approach specifically to Scotland will be extremely useful in destabilising received wisdom of Scotland's past and in exploding some lingering myths about 'national character'.

Joseph Knight, indeed, provides a postcolonial re-imagining of Scottish history. As seen above, not ‘postcolonial’ in the sense of Scotland as a nation liberated from colonial rule, but a moment after the high period of empire, where the writer is able to look back and take stock of a history concerned with empire, race and class. As far back as the 1920s Scottish Renaissance writers sought to distance themselves from the pernicious nature of the British Empire. MacDiarmid’s rejection of England’s political and cultural hegemony in the United Kingdom incorporated an anti-imperial stance. Scotland as an abused country within the Union had more affinity with other colonised nations: the empire was the work of the English and the Scottish ruling classes; while working-class Scots had more affinity with and sympathy for colonised peoples. Thus, in ‘A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle’ the imagined revenge of black colonial subjects swarming over civilisation which caused such anxiety for literary modernists is not feared but welcomed:

> Ahint the glory comes the nicht
> As Maori to London’s ruins,
> And I’m amused to see the plicht
> O’ Licht as’t in the black tide droons.[14]

The speaker can stand back with a grin, secure in the knowledge that Scotland is outwith the scope of imperial vengeance. While the anti-imperialism in such writing is clear, it is not enough to claim special dispensation for Scotland and suggests a failure to face up to the truths of Scottish history. On slavery MacDiarmid remains largely silent.

In contrast, modern writers have signalled a willingness to inquire deeper into issues surrounding Scotland, empire and race. Carla Sassi places Joseph Knight in the literary current of Robbie Kydd’s *The Quiet Stranger* and Andrew O. Lyndsey’s *Illustrious Exile*. The former imagines a detached Scottish observer of slave societies in Tobago while the latter imagines that Robert Burns did actually take up the post of ‘negro driver’ on Jamaica where he was bound until the publication of the ‘Kilmarnock edition’ provided a more palatable route out of poverty. Sassi warns that such narratives risk 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.[15] This ‘master-narrative’ risks recreating a complacency in an essentially good Scottishness. Robertson’s *Joseph Knight* wrestles with this very issue in his two comparative representations which take into account class divisions within Scotland as well as racial divisions. The major theme of race shapes the very structure of *Joseph Knight*; it is divided into four parts entitled ‘Wedderburn’, ‘Darkness’, 'Enlightenment’, and ‘Knight’. The two middle parts suggest a movement from a Hegelian idea of the ‘darkness’ of slavery into the ‘light’ of the Enlightenment. Taking the skin colour of Wedderburn and Knight into account, this creates a chiaroscuro structure of white-dark-light-black. This structure is reflected in the

novel's opening description of the Wedderburn estate near Dundee: 'Ballindean's policies stretched out before him: the lawn in front of the house, the little loch, then the parkland dotted with black cattle, sun-haloed sheep and their impossibly white lambs' (p. 3). Beneath the seemingly idyllic Scottish scenery, the binary colours recall a bitter racial battle which scarred the landscape. *Joseph Knight* revisits that forgotten battle.

The chapters are each based in a particular time and location moving the action forward and backward in time and space, a technique Robertson also used to good effect in his first novel, *The Fanatic*.[16] These intersections underline the trans-Atlantic links between the battlefield of Culloden, the plantations on Jamaica, and the country estate in Fife. This is in marked contrast to the most famous novel concerning Culloden, Scott's *Waverley* whose chapters are laboriously chronological. The contrast in technique highlights Robertson's 'Atlantic' approach. In his influential discussion of chronotopes, Mikhail Bakhtin points out that Rabelais' texts, similarly, have a concept of life as an international, public affair which, 'unfolds under the open sky, in movement around the earth, in military campaigns and journeys, taking in various countries'. Bakhtin argues that Rabelais' technique allows the

> disunification of what had been traditionally linked, and the bringing together of what had traditionally been kept distant and disunified, is achieved…via the construction of *series* of the most varied types, which are at times parallel to each other and at times intersect each other.[17]

The series he identifies are the human body, clothing, food, drink, sex, death and defecation: earthly, corporeal subjects vital to the value of the individual in the rise of 'Renaissance man'. Rather than such individual chronotopes, Robertson intersects slave plantations, the estate at Ballindean and the offices of Enlightenment lawyers to bring together what had previously been 'distant and disunified' in the Scottish self-conception. The intersection of chapters entitled 'Dundee, May 1802' and 'Jamaica, 1762' underlines the connection between the wealth of the noble Wedderburn family in their stately home in Fife to the toil of black slaves in the Caribbean. Furthermore, there is minimal character development. John is always the austere 'Black Scot', James is the reckless 'Red Scot', and Knight is taciturn and monosyllabic throughout; a characterisation which avoids the 'sentimental identification' of much earlier abolitionist literature. Rather than the characters, it is the chronotopes which change. A scrolling background behind relatively static characters which emphasises, not the individuals, but the intersection and exchange of philosophies and ideas in the movement of bodies across the Atlantic.

This technique of static characterisation is captured visually in the central motif of the painting of the three Wedderburn brothers in Jamaica which still hangs above the fireplace at Ballindean,

their features instantly recognisable half a century later. Yet there is another figure as John's daughter, Susan, points out: 'It's very dark on that porch yet it's the middle of the day….Joseph Knight is there too. Or he once was. Papa had him painted out after the court case' (p.17). This brings into focus the dramatic irony of John's satisfied comment to Joseph, recorded in Sandy's diary, on completion of the painting. 'John says to Joseph do you see your self, you will look out from that picter for a hunderd yrs and never age a day' (p. 149). Joseph does continue to look out, though John could no longer bear to look at him. Thus, although the unchanging nature of the characters is captured in the portrait, the painting itself becomes a mutable form with the erasure of the figure, and hence, painful memory of the black slave.

The inspiration for the painting in *Joseph Knight* may be the *Glassford Family Portrait* which hangs in Glasgow's 'People's Palace'. Glassford (of Glassford St in Glasgow's Merchant City) was a famous tobacco merchant who had black servants in his household.[18] It was fashionable in the eighteenth century to be depicted with black servants; in the National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh hangs a painting of the Jacobite Duke of Perth, James Drummond, who was depicted with a black servant boy wearing a metal collar complete with a padlock around his neck.[19] In the mid-eighteenth century Archibald McLauchlan painted the Glassford family on a huge canvas in opulent surroundings. [20] However, in the space behind Glassford there was a profile of a black 'manservant' which subsequently became obscured. Controversy surrounds this figure, it was initially suggested that the servant had been deliberately painted out, perhaps due to ninteenth-century abolitionist sentiment. However, excavation work found that although Glassford's first wife was certainly painted out in favour of his second, the slave figure, rather, had been allowed to fade into the background.[21] Whether deliberately painted out as in Robertson's fiction or faded from view as in the *Glassford Family Portrait,* the story of such paintings stands as a metaphor for the project of 'Scotland and the Black Atlantic': 'Joseph Knight remained at Ballindean, yet was always missing, visible yet invisible, present yet absent' (p. 25). That the figure of the black man has become obscured and forgotten is relevant not just to the painting but also to Scottish historiography. Indeed, Jackie Kay, who has explored issues surrounding Scotland and the Black Atlantic[22], writes in an article, 'Missing Faces', that, 'Marking the abolition is also marking the missing faces: the people buried at sea, the deaths in the tobacco and sugar fields'.[23] A depiction of exiled Scots and their African slave, executed in Jamaica, transported back across the ocean to hang on the walls of a country estate in Scotland, represents an 'Atlantic' artwork. Our attempts to restore the identity of the black figure reflect the re-examination of the hidden history of Scotland's role in the Atlantic slave trade which has faded from history.

Robertson's contribution is to link the aftermath of Culloden with Jamaican slave plantations and to compare and contrast the Jacobite rebels with Jamaican slave rebels. The prevalent historical

focus is on Jacobitism as a challenge to the nascent British state. Murray Pittock details how sceptics and romantics alike are bound together in a Whig view of history, constrained both by national historical narratives and presentism:

> Romantic readings of Jacobitism ultimately do nothing to challenge the sceptics because they accept the marginalization and detachment of the Jacobite past from the mainstream of historical development. Not only do they present the Stuart cause as high drama of a colourful kind; they also implicitly show it as doomed to fail. It is also almost always detached from its international perspective: far from Jacobitism being a movement with widespread sympathy and support in Europe, it becomes a struggle of loyal Highlanders alone to restore their injured Prince. [24]

The subsequent military endeavours of once-despised Highland regiments in the service of the British Empire did much to rehabilitate their reputation and construct a romantic, militaristic Highland identity. Pittock details the complex interpretations of this identity through the ages, finding both mythologisers and demythologisers unsatisfactory. Commenting on the incorporation of Jacobitism into the national narrative of Scottish liberty, Pittock concludes, 'Over-emphasis on the radical or egalitarian qualities of Scottish cultural and intellectual life…are signs of a trend which surely grievously underestimates the power and centrality of Scotland's role as coloniser, not colonised, or even (as sometimes seems implied) entirely absent in spirit from the British Empire.'[25] Indeed, Bruce Lenman in the *Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen 1650-1784* underlines the irony of racial discourse where Highlanders who had once been equated to 'savage tribal barbarians' being used to fight the Native Americans in the expansion of the British Empire during the Seven Years' War.[26] Robertson similarly widens the scope from national narrative to, here, transnational black Atlantic issues. This undermines so much of the victim status of Jacobitism by linking the fall-out from the Battle of Culloden to the sugar plantations in the West Indies. This is not to say that Robertson underestimates the severity of the reprisals following Culloden. John's father, found guilty of treason in London, was brought out before a baying London crowd, hung until he was nearly dead, brought down, his stomach slit open, his bowels taken out, placed in a bucket and burned before his eyes. The brutality of the reprisals did much to secure the retrospective justification of the Jacobite cause.

The Wedderburn sons escape to Jamaica where their previous Jacobite transgressions are forgotten in a Caribbean society where the racial discourse of skin colour is being codified. They learn the gradations of blackness, such as creole and mulatto. There is, however, no gradation for whites, 'In the purity of your race, if you were white, lay your salvation' (p. 51). The message is clear: in Jamaica, your identity as a political criminal worthy of execution at home is subsumed

into your identity as a white man. The change in their fortune is stark as in England the reputation of all Scots as incorrigible Jacobites was growing, and Cumberland 'shared the crudest and crassest of contemporary anti-Scottish prejudices'.[27] In Jamaica, however, their Scottish accents prove to be acceptable medical qualifications, as they earn money masquerading as doctors. Yet, Robertson also suggests continuity in their new positions in the realm of memory. The gore John saw at Culloden steels him against the misery and deformity he will come across as a plantation doctor (p. 63). The amnesia which will later obscure the memory of plantations does not afflict Culloden. In Scotland the Wedderburns had been men of property, descendants of the fifth Baronet of Black*ness,* now, as James points out, in his new form of slave-owner John has become the first Baronet of *Black*-ness (p. 70). Thus, Robertson brings out the ambivalence of their position as noble rebels. The Wedderburns were a landed family yet they formed an armed uprising against the Hanoverian state. Therefore, their experience of revolt against authority might be supposed to translate into understanding or sympathy towards slaves who rebel against authority in Jamaica.

However, the difference between the two groups is brought into sharp focus by the description of the slave revolts which are depicted, significantly, as a natural phenomenon.

> He did associate rebellion with heat, as if it came *from* the heat, from tropical storms. Was that how it had been- an indefinable substance boiling up in the clouds, seeping through the air as the rains approached?...Had that been its sound rattling through the ripening cane fields, grumbling all among the slave huts, whispering over the house roof at night. (p. 109)

The effect of 'rattling', 'grumbling', and 'whispering' creates a sinister soundtrack as this immaterial force of rebellion amasses at the door of the plantation house. John's besieged imagination is unable to comprehend the material reasons for revolt: the mistreatment of the slaves by the planters. Instead, their rebellion must be attributed to the weather, or to atavistic cultures innate to their 'race' born across the Atlantic: 'Someone, possibly Underwood, made a remark that circulated with the unease: trouble among the slaves, wherever and whenever it broke out, started not in Jamaica, but in Africa' (p. 109). This tribal, elemental force of nature originating in the 'dark continent' is quite different, John explains, from the Stuart cause which was about 'honour' and 'loyalty'.

> Even now, so many years after it, he was always punctilious in describing the Forty-five as a *rising*. To call it 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. (p. 108)

The distinction drawn between the Jacobite *rising* and Tacky's slave *rebellion* on Jamaica in 1760 is significant. 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. Ironically, the modern reader would consider Tacky's rebellion to fall within the definition of a legitimate rising. The rising started with slaves symbolically shaving their heads and John questions three of his slaves why they have done so:

> 'Why did you do it?'
> 'Not feel well.'
> 'You not feel well either, Mungo? Cuffy? You all sick?'
> Cuffy nodded his head very slowly. 'Yes, massa, we all sick,' he said. 'We all sick and we all tired.' (p. 112)

The Wedderburns, however, fifteen years after the forty-five have no sympathy for the slave rebels and are incapable of interpreting the coded reason for revolt. 'They're just idle', Sandy declares, 'imbeciles' (p. 113).

Significantly, this conversation takes place in the chapter entitled, 'Ballindean, May 1802/ Jamaica 1760', thus, not only intersecting but merging the chronotopes of Scotland and Jamaica in a single chapter which discusses the painting, the forty-five, and Tacky's rebellion. Indeed, Robertson invites us to draw parallels between the reprisals following Culloden and Tacky's rebellion. Holed-up in an old woman's cottage a young John Wedderburn removed his soldier's jacket in fear of the butchery of the Duke of Cumberland: 'She signed that he must throw the tunic on the fire. He did so, watched it smoulder then catch and blaze. With a stick he stabbed at it, a cuff, a sleeve, the collar, till the evidence of his visit was all gone' (p. 42). In Jamaica, the captured slave rebels are caught and brutally executed. John questions his slave hanging from a gibbet. His name 'Cuffy' recalls the description of the slow-burning tunic and John cannot help but use a Jacobite phrase.

> 'Why did you do it?'
> 'I tole you, massa.I tole you back then. Me sick, me tired.'
> 'No, not your head, you fool. *Why did you go out?*' (p. 121) (my emphasis)

In Scottish historical usage to 'go out' means, of course, to join the Jacobite army. Yet, despite the Jacobite slip, suggesting a parallel between one set of rebels and another, two heads of the

same hydra, there is no question of lenient treatment. Another slave leader is placed over red hot coals where he slowly burns alive, first his legs, then arms, then his body (p. 121). Viewing the brutal execution, James simply says, 'I've seen worse' (p. 123). In that phrase he recognizes the parallels with his father's own execution, but shrugs them off at the same moment. Indeed, John feels no remorse, no guilt because his rebellious side went up in smoke too, long ago when he burned his tunic in the cottage near Culloden.

However, in his second comparison, Robertson suggests there are stronger connections to be made between the Scottish working class and black slaves. Such a connection is not without difficulties as it risks recreating a celebratory 'master-narrative', this time between subaltern working-class Scots and black slaves. Thus, Robertson takes care to depict the varying nature of Knight's reception when he arrives in Scotland in the third part of the novel where some of his fellow servants refuse to speak to him. Yet, a different dynamic is opened up from the previous binary positions of black slave and white master. Working at Ballindean amongst the Scottish house servants, this 'quiet, deep, thoughtful man, not coarse at all; handsome, clean, soft-voiced and smooth' (p. 211) catches the eye of a maid, Annie Thompson, who is depicted as a strong female character, articulate and fiercely class-conscious. The difficulties this relationship faces cut across classes as it is accepted neither by Wedderburn nor all those around Annie. Annie's mother on seeing the constable arrest Knight states: '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' (p. 206). While her brother-in-law Chae 'would not come into the house because of the "blackie"' (p. 207). Yet, the bond Annie feels with Joseph goes beyond physical attraction and speaks to her 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. (p.212)

Annie'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' (p. 212). Annie and Joseph would steal a few moments at the end of their labours and Joseph would tell her of Jamaica, stressing the commonality of the exploited on both sides of the Atlantic:

> Things about Sir John and his brothers, and the terrible cruelties he had seen, and the kind, harsh, feeble, strong, miserable, humorous, brave, bitter people that the slaves were. They 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)

At a stroke the Atlantic Ocean which unites oppressed groups on opposite continents, also encapsulates the distance between rich and poor whether on sugar plantations or in Scottish manor houses. Robertson's depiction of the relationship operating along the faultlines of class, race and gender must be viewed in the context of twenty-first century ethnic rapprochement. Yet, the historical reality of their marriage suggests his depiction of a strong-willed female character, unwilling to be obedient in her servitude is not in the realm of sheer fiction.

Furthermore, contemporary Scottish colliers, bound for life to their masters, experienced a form of perpetual servitude. Robertson employs a well-established depiction of these colliers who have long been portrayed as a 'race apart'. Tom Johnston's description invites parallels with black slaves:

> Buried in unconsecrated ground; some of them wore metal collars round their necks; they were bought and sold and gifted like cattle…they were wholly unlettered; they developed a jargon of their own…in every old mining district in Scotland local tradition still tells of how the 'brown yins' or the 'black folk' allowed no stranger near their habitations.[28]

The comparison to *chattel* slavery is clear, and the metal collar might recall the portrait of the Jacobite Duke of Perth, James Drummond, whose black servant wears a metal collar. Robertson portrays Knight's cause as intertwined with their plight as dirt poor labourers in brutal, inescapable working conditions. The recent 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 case.[29] Indeed, the arguments heard over their situation hold many parallels with the debates over the abolition of slavery.

> The driving motivation in the movement for change had not been the liberation of the oppressed labourer. Instead an argument had raged between conservative and modernising masters. The former resented any outside

> influence in the way they exploited their coal reserves. The latter were keen to open up mining to a much larger workforce, subject both wages and prices to competition and make far larger profits. Only by destroying the old labour system, which was in effect a closed shop, could this be achieved. (pp. 247-248)

The recently emancipated colliers of Fife had not forgotten the parallels with Knight's case. These deprived colliers had the clarity of vision to recognise the trans-racial connections of their plight. They put together what little money they had to donate to Knight. 'They see him as a fellow-sufferer' (p. 249), explains the lawyer Maclaurin.

However, Christopher Whatley has urged caution regarding this representation of colliers. He points out that their position which was certainly a form of serfdom has been exaggerated over the years and it was far from consistent throughout Scotland: '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'.[30] The parallel with slaves does not stand up to scrutiny: Whatley cites the relatively high wages and the evidence of mobility of labour between collieries. He finds the portrayal of brutish colliers a 'race apart' to be the product of a Whiggish historiography and even the use of the metal collar, that symbol of ownership, is unsubstantiated. Although many reproductions exist only one original has been found which was not necessarily used on a coal worker. Certainly, Robertson's emphasis on the parallels between the Scottish working class and black slaves is not unproblematic. In the light of Whatley's argument, Robertson's portrayal of the colliers is drawn from a skewed historiography. His willingness to accept the portrayal reveals his wish to set up a parallel between oppressed classes. The description of the encounter between a collier and Knight to hand over the money collected to fund his court case should be read in the context of a modern compensation for historical crimes: an attempt to make amends for a history of abuse with an alternative, positive encounter between oppressed groups: 'He said he was sorry for the smallness of the sum, but he hoped it might help. Joseph nearly wept at that. The collier said, "We aw ken, man, dinna be feart, we aw ken"' (p. 372). While the limitations of Robertson's comparative representation must be remembered, nevertheless, the colliers' sense of trans-Atlantic working-class solidarity is beyond doubt. Whatley makes no mention of the colliers' assistance to Knight or, indeed, his predecessor Davie Spens – a slave to a West Indian merchant of Fife who absconded when his owner wished to send him back to the Caribbean. Given shelter by a local farmer in Wemyss, the nearby colliers, salters and farmworkers donated generously to his cause. However, the merchant died before the case came to court. 'Spens returned to work for the Wemyss farmer and became a popular local figure'.[31] Thus, this is repeated historical evidence of the Atlantic working class, where colliers banded together to offer

a black slave their support both moral and financial. Following the court case Knight drops off the historical record, obliterated from history like he was in the painting. Robertson imagines him going to join those same colliers at Wemyss in Fife where Davie Spens had lived.

> It was a sair, sair life but it was true, he was one of them, a collier…They saw him black, they knew him black, and it didn't make them hate him or love him, they just accepted him. And he understood why this was.
> Slavery. It had set them together against their country, against the world. (p. 372)

Although the declaration of slavery may be exaggerated, this seems a satisfying literary conclusion drawn as it is from the previous examples of solidarity.

Moreover it is possible that the trans-Atlantic figure of Paul Robeson served as a modern inspiration. The African-American actor and singer was a sensation in Britain in the 1930s, starring on stage and screen including a play about Toussaint L'Ouverture, penned by C.L.R James. His rich baritone singing voice was instantly appreciated amongst the male voice choirs of the South Wales coal miners. Robeson stated, 'It was in Britain – among the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish people of that land – that I learned that the essential character of a nation is determined not by the upper classes, but by the common people, and that the common people of all nations are truly brothers in the great family of mankind.'[32] As a communist, the film, *The Proud Valley*, allowed him to portray his feelings of working-class fellowship. Made in 1941 it reflects that era's attempt at 'ethnic rapprochement' during WWII. He plays an unemployed ship's stoker searching for work in the coal mines of South Wales. Impressing the choir leader, Dick, he is taken on at one pit not least for his singing ability. His presence as a black man is objected to by one character but Dick responds, 'Sure, we're all black down that pit'.[33] This is echoed in the novel by James Boswell as he considers Knight's fraternity with the colliers: 'They're certainly about the same colour' (p. 122). It appears the coal dust can have an equalising effect which suggests the miners' peculiar potential to overcome racial prejudice. Jeffrey C. Stewart has argued that this film represents Robeson's shifting Atlantic consciousness.[34] To the question of what are oppressed blacks to do there are several possibilities. One can emulate the oppressor such as Booker T. Washington, or influence and appropriate current theories such as the Harlem Renaissance engagement with modernism. Yet, Robeson's experience of bonding with the Welsh miners, an encounter outwith the experience of the vast majority of his African-American contemporaries, opened up a class consciousness to mediate his racial identity. Descending into the coal pit with them suggests an attempt to mine a new identity, one which might be termed an 'Atlantic working class identity'. Robeson would retain strong links with the working class

communities he met throughout Britain, performing fundraising concerts for trade unions in Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh. In an act reminiscent of the colliers' donation to Joseph Knight, at a concert in Edinburgh's Usher Hall, the Scottish National Union of Mineworkers presented a cheque for £300 to Robeson's causes. [35] Furthermore, it was a resolution passed at the Scottish Trade Union Congress in 1954 which initiated the 'Let Robeson Sing' campaign to have his passport reinstated.[36]

The potential in working class communities to overcome racial prejudice does not mean they should be mistaken for a utopia and Robertson does not portray it as such at Wemyss. Knight can feel alone, his unhappiness can occasionally affect his view of his own children who he sometimes considers 'diluted' in their mixed race. Yet, the difference between this situation and the contemporary eminent philosopher David Hume's idea of blacks as 'naturally inferior' is clear. [37] These are possibilities generated by the connection between the oppressed servants and colliers and the black slave, two heads of the same hydra united in their resistance: the Atlantic working class opens up the possibility of a better world.

> But although there were no other African faces around him he was not alone. 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. (p. 353)

At this time of chattel slavery where binary racial identities were being forged, deep in the mines, an alternative Atlantic working class identity could also be forged.

Indeed, Knight's speech captures the mobility of the Atlantic working class. For Robertson to reproduce Knight's speech raises inevitable questions of an inappropriate ventriloquism. Yet, to conclude the novel with Knight not speaking at all would have been strange, and the little he says is deeply revealing.

> I will not attempt to reproduce the sound of Mr. Knight's voice. (It) was 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 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. (p. 322)

Robertson's description of Knight's voice as akin to a 'ship's company' is significant in terms of the Atlantic working class. Gilroy emphasises the importance of the movement of the ship in

connecting the separate chronotopes on distant sides of the ocean: ‘Ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected’.[38] Moreover, Linebaugh and Rediker’s concept of the ‘hydrarchy’, underlines the centrality of ships in early capitalism, both in terms of the organisation of the maritime state from above, and the self-organisation of the sailors from below. Indeed, they have argued that the system of labour on a ship with large numbers of workers performing complex and synchronised tasks in a dangerous environment under strict hierarchical conditions makes it a prototype of the factory.[39] Consequently, the conditions of the ship produced its own forms of contestation from below, such as strikes, marronage and piracy: ‘The ship thus became both an engine of capitalism in the wake of the bourgeois revolution in England *and* a setting of resistance’.[40] Moreover, the workforce drawn or forced into such a dangerous and harsh line of work, whether in merchant or government shipping, came mostly from the poorest and most ethnically diverse populations. The resultant ‘motley crew’ of English, African, Irish, Scottish, Portuguese, Dutch or lascar brought together their own forms of radical tradition in an internationalist grouping of the oppressed, leading Ruskin to conclude, ‘The nails that fasten together the planks of the boat’s bow are the rivets of the fellowship of the world’. [41]

The site of the ship in *Joseph Knight* serves as a fitting conclusion to this discussion. The slave ship crossing from Africa to Jamaica inscribed the codes that would define Joseph’s life: armed white men controlling shackled black men below deck with ‘the surface brutality of the white men, the submerged threat of retaliation of the black men’ (p. 349). There began also the sexual abuse of slave women by white men: ‘The sailor smiled, leant over…quite gently, he cupped the hand under her breast. She started away and his other hand, dangling the cosh, came over and seized her shoulder’ (p. 350). The second crossing from Jamaica to Scotland suggests a resistance to these violent, unequal relations destabilising the binary codes of master-slave and even sexuality. ‘Out there on the ocean, rules of behaviour – codes of ownership and obedience – reshaped themselves’ (p. 365). Knight and Wedderburn share a cramped cabin together. Wedderburn teaches Knight card games and even gives lessons in reading and writing until Knight becomes violently seasick and it is Wedderburn who cares for his slave.

> And then, after what seemed like weeks, Joseph began to piece together what had been happening to him. He had been sick, over and over and without any ability to direct what forced itself through his mouth. He had soiled himself. He had soaked his sheet with sweat. And each time he had done these things, someone had cleaned him. Someone had wiped his brow, sponged down his body. Someone had gently raised his head and helped him to drink. (p. 367)

Wedderburn sat by his side, holding his hand, praying, ‘Please God, do not let him die. Almighty God and Jesus Christ, do not take Joseph from me…on and on for hours’ (p. 367). Such a scene suggests an attempt to make amends for historical injustices. ‘Out there in the Atlantic, master and slave were reduced to this simple humanity: one man caring for another’ (p. 367). The relationship goes further, ‘He took Joseph’s left hand in his two, brought it to his mouth, kissed it’ (p. 369). While on the slave ship the two hands of the sailor held the woman and the cosh, here Wedderburn’s two hands help to make amends with a kiss, suggesting a further inflection of normative codes. However, significantly given the theme of amnesia, although Knight is too weak to resist the kiss his memory serves him well and he rejects the gesture.

> And afterwards, when the tempest died away and he began to recover, he did not forget it. He remembered it and he understood it…He remembered the kindness Wedderburn had shown all through the terrible time of bad weather and sickness, and he despised it. (p. 369)

It did not matter that a slave owner was kinder or more enlightened than another; it is the claim of ownership which ‘destroyed any possibility of goodness between them’ (p. 369). It is Knight’s voice, representative of the multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual Atlantic working class which spelled danger for elites all across the Atlantic with its inherent accent of resistance and revolt which reminds us that no easy postcolonial reconciliation between Scots and slaves is possible. Robertson does, however, point to the hidden history of the Atlantic working class which, although it could be the site for horrendous racial strife, also contains a radical tradition which deserves more attention. In the final count, such a narrative as this takes a major first step in facing up to historical truths and establishes the forgotten site of the Caribbean as a vital element in any future considerations of ‘Scottishness’, destabilising, as it does, the established national narrative, platitudes of liberty, and myths of ‘national character’.

NOTES

[1] Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven* (London: Phoenix, 1996), p. 21 and James Robertson, *Joseph Knight* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003).
[2] Carla Sassi, ‘Acts of (Un)willed Amnesia: Dis/appearing Figurations of the Caribbean in Post-Union Scottish Literature’, *Caribbean-Scottish Relations Colonial & Contemporary Inscriptions in History, Language & Literature* (London: Mango Publishing, 2007), p. 142.

[3] Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992). Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2001). T.M Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003). Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World*, *1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the abolition of black slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

[4] For documents relating to the trial see the online resource at http://www.nas.gov.uk/about/071022.asp; accessed 13/9/08.

[5] See Neil Davidson, *Origins of Scottish Nationhood* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) for a dismantling of Hechter's *Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1975).

[6] David McCrone, 'We're A' Jock Tamson's Bairns: Social Class in Twentieth Century Scotland', T.M Devine and R.J Finlay (eds) *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 103.

[7] Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Tuckwell Press: Edinburgh, 2001).

[8] 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.

[9] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 15.

[10] Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), p. 4

[11] Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

[12] Alison Games, 'Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities', *AHR Forum,* http://historynews.wordpress.com/2007/06/23/ahr-forum-on-empires-in-the-atlantic-world; accessed 13/9/08.

[13] David Armitage, 'Three Concepts of Atlantic History' in *The British Atlantic World*, ed. by Armitage and Braddick (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp. 11-27.

[14] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle' in *Selected Poems,* ed. by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 90. [Lines 1974-77]

[15] Sassi, p. 175.

[16] James Robertson, *The Fanatic*, (Fourth Estate: London, 2001) moves between the Edinburgh of the seventeenth century and the millennium.

[17] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-259 (p. 170).

[18] For images of the family portrait see *Scotland and the Slave Trade: 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act* http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/23121622/5; accessed 13/9/08.

[19] *James Drummond, 2nd titular Duke of Perth, (1674-1720) with an unknown black slave*, by Sir John Baptiste de Medina, oil on canvas, c.1700, Edinburgh National Portrait Gallery.

[20] *Glassford Family Portrait*, by Archibald Mclauchlan, c.1767, (1.98x 2.21m), People's Palace, Glasgow. Glasgow's October 2006 'Black History Month' drew widespread attention to this painting. http://www.theglasgowstory.com/image.php?inum=TGSE00539; accessed 13/9/08.

[21] Senior conservator, Polly Smith, believes the figure was not painted out but faded into the background. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/glasgow_and_west/6466591.stm; accessed 13/9/08.

[22] See Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (London: Picador, 1998).

[23] Jackie Kay, 'Missing Faces', *The Guardian*, 24 March 2007. Available online at http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview25; accessed 13/9/08.

[24] Murray G.H. Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp. 5-6.

[25] Pittock, pp. 121-2.

[26] Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Clans of the Great Glen 1650-1784* (1984; London: Methuen, 1995), p. 195.

[27] Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746*, (Scottish Cultural Press: Aberdeen, 1995), p. 265.

[28] Tom Johnston, *A History of the Working Classes in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1929); as quoted in Christopher Whatley, 'The Dark Side of the Enlightenment: Sorting Out Serfdom', in *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives*, pp. 259-75 (p. 262).

[29] Their 'emancipation' owed much to the idea of 'freeing up' labour as developed in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1777), so (as Marx argued) 'surplus value' could be created.

[30] Whatley, p. 262.

[31] Peter Fryer, *Black People in the British Empire* (London: Pluto Press, 1988), p. 206.

[32] Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (New York: Beacon Press, 1998), p. 48.

[33] *The Proud Valley*, dir. Penrose Tennyson, CAPAD (for Ealing Studios), 1941.

[34] Jeffrey C. Stewart, 'The Black Adam: Paul Robeson in *The Emperor Jones* and *The Proud Valley*', paper delivered at 'African American and the Celtic Nations Conference', Swansea University, April 2007.

[35] The BBC reported 'Abe Moffat presented a cheque for £300 collected at Scottish pits for the coloured peoples' struggles'. (BBC Written Archives Centre). The *Daily Worker* of 16 May 1949 added 'Robeson was supported by the Lesmahagow miners' choir and Kilsyth Colliery Band'. Both quoted in Allan L. Thompson, *Paul Robeson Artist and Activist on Records, Radio and Television,* (Northants: Allan. L Thompson: 2004), p. IVb.

[36] Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (London: Pan Books, 1991), p. 424.

[37] See David Hume's notorious footnote in 'Of National Character' (1748), *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, Vol. III (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), p. 228.

[38] Gilroy, p. 16.

[39] Peter Linebaugh, ‘All the Atlantic Mountains Shook’, *Labour/Le Travail*, 10 (1982), 87-121, and Markus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[40] Linebaugh and Rediker, p. 144.

[41] Linebaugh and Rediker, p. 151.

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Extended Families:
Mixed-Race Children and Scottish Experience, 1770-1820

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I

Three years prior to the ending of the slave trade, Jamaica's richest and most influential merchant mused on the possible consequences of abolition. Writing to his friend George Hibbert in January of 1804, Simon Taylor offered a stark vision of the British imperial economy without slave importation, echoing scores of other pro-slavery writers who preached the financial doom and gloom of a post-abolitionist society. Economics, however, were not the only thing on either man's mind. Hibbert, in a previous letter, had asked Taylor for his thoughts on the future of Jamaica's white population if fresh supplies of slaves came to a halt. He wondered if the colony's whites could farm sugar themselves and if such back-breaking labour would further stifle the increase of the island's already meager European population. Throwing off his earlier pessimism, Taylor replied with high hopes for the growth of Jamaica's white residents. His optimism sprung from a phenomenon he had watched develop over the last two generations: 'When I returned from England in the year 1760 there were only three Quadroon[1] Women in the Town of Kingston. There are now three hundred, and more of the decent Class of them never will have any commerce with their own Colour, but only with White People. Their progeny is growing whiter and whiter every remove [...] from thence a White Generation will come'. Taylor had seen all other attempts to increase the white population fail and he believed that this process of 'washing the Blackamoor White' to be the only way to build an effective racial hedge against an overwhelming black majority on the island.[2]

If miscegenation was the answer to Jamaica's problems, Simon Taylor could claim to be doing his part for the movement. Indeed, he had earned a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic for his multiracial family. Not long after arriving in Jamaica with her husband, the new Lieutenant-Governor of the island, Lady Maria Nugent visited Simon Taylor in his Golden Grove estate. She commented in her diary that Taylor was 'an old bachelor' who 'detests the society of women', but

she seemed determined to win him over. However, she could not help but register surprise after an evening at Taylor's estate when '[a] little mulatto girl was sent into the drawing-room to amuse [her]'. Recording the event in her diary, she noted, 'Mr. T[aylor] appeared very anxious for me to dismiss her, and in the evening, the housekeeper told me she was his own daughter, and that he had a numerous family, some almost on every one of his estates'.[3] Taylor's sexual activities with slaves and women of colour were not unusual, nor was his attempt to hide them from European eyes. Like many white West Indians at the time, Taylor may have given some favours to his children of colour, but he did not treat them as full members of his family.

In contrast to Simon Taylor's inattention to his mixed-race children, John Tailyour, Simon's cousin, made a significant attempt to provide for his offspring of colour.[4] Tailyour originated from Montrose, near Simon's ancestral home in Borrowfield, and made several unsuccessful attempts at business in the colonies. Forced to abandon his tobacco trade in Virginia at the outbreak of the American Revolution, he returned to North America in 1781, but failed to establish himself in New York's dry-goods market. Rather than return home to Scotland once again, Tailyour ventured to Jamaica at his cousin Simon's invitation, where he operated as a merchant from 1783 to 1792. With very few white women on the island from which to choose, Tailyour took up residence with an enslaved woman from his cousin's plantation. The couple eventually had four children together before Tailyour finally decided to return to Scotland in 1792. Rather than leave his children in Jamaica, however, John Tailyour sent at least three of them to Britain for their education and to be brought up in a trade. His conduct toward his mixed-race offspring stands in sharp relief with that of his cousin's and reveals the complicated attitudes that whites had toward these children.

The contrasting behaviours within this family emblematise some of the most common practices amongst Scots with mixed-race families at this time. White fathers had no legal compulsion to care for their children born of enslaved women, and indeed a majority made no effort to rescue them from the shackles of slavery. However, a significant portion of those with a 'West-Indian family' took some steps toward providing for their colonial kin. For Simon Taylor, a first-generation Jamaican who decided to stay in the colonies, those steps were minimal. For Taylor's cousin, however, his Jamaican children would take the same journey from colony to metropole as their father. Like him, many Scots sent their children of colour to Britain in order to 'whiten' them along class and cultural lines, rather than subject them to the legal and racial impediments built into West-Indian society. If the Caribbean was a stepping stone for rising Scots to enter into the British landed aristocracy, as some have suggested, then the remigration back to Scotland needs to be reconsidered with these children of colour in mind.[5] For many Scottish migrants, they not only brought back colonial riches to Britain, but also colonial families. This paper argues that just as the movement back to the metropole sought to authenticate and legitimise new-found Scottish

fortunes, so too did the migration of mixed-race children to Britain seek to validate and advance a marginalised group by removing them from their colonial environment.

II

Unlike many of the migrants into the Caribbean, Simon Taylor had little wish to settle finally in Britain. His father, Patrick Tailzour, arrived in Jamaica from Borrowfield in Forfarshire, Scotland in the first half of the eighteenth century, and married a white creole before standardising the family name to 'Taylor'. Their son, Simon, was born on the island in 1740, but left for his education in Scotland as a young child, eventually moving to England to attend Eton. At the age of twenty, he returned to Jamaica and established himself as a prominent planter. He became extraordinarily wealthy, perhaps the richest man in Jamaica, and came to hold tremendous power within the colonial government. Except for occasional visits to Britain, which included stops at Westminster to lobby for the West India Committee, he enjoyed this privileged position within Jamaican society and entertained no desire to leave the island.[6] After arriving in London in 1792 in an attempt to fight off the growing abolitionist sentiment in Parliament, Simon wrote to John Tailyour, 'I assure you I do not stay here for the benefit of my Health or Pleasure for I like Jamaica ten thousand times better than England, but my reason is to see what the People in this Part of the world mean to do with the West Indies'.[7] His Scottish roots and European education had not won him over to the idea of absenteeism, and Taylor resolved to stay in Jamaica.

Having never found a wife in Britain, Simon Taylor indulged in sexual relationships with the enslaved women on his plantations, as well as free women of colour, which produced a number of mixed-race children. As he was less inclined to discuss or care for them, it is difficult to estimate the number of biracial offspring that Taylor sired. Lady Nugent's comments above seem to indicate that Taylor was quite prodigious, but he rarely spoke of his children of colour, frustrating any attempt to determine the size of his Jamaican family. Taylor did leave some clues about his mixed-race children, however, in his will. In 1763, just three years after arriving back in Jamaica from Britain, Simon Taylor drafted a will, a necessary precaution for a young man in the West Indies considering the unhealthiness of the environment. Although most of his bequests went to his white family, Taylor included a robust provision for his mistress, as well as for one of his mixed-race children. Grace Donne, Simon's housekeeper whom he described as a 'free Quadroon Woman', had moved into his residence on Orange Street, in East Kingston, soon after Taylor reestablished himself on the island. Grateful for her 'Faithful Services', Taylor gave her his land and house in Kingston, nine slaves, 150 pounds Jamaican, most of his furniture, bedding, and silverware, and finally a horse. Considering his young age, it was a large sum for such a fledgling relationship. Indeed, he admitted to his brother John, 'You will say I have made a great

Provision for the Woman who Lives with me. I own it, but She has been a Faithful Servant To me, & I never had occasion to call twice for any thing, or awake her in any of my Severe Fitts of Illness'. He also gave a small allowance to his 'Natural Quadroon Daughter' Sally Taylor, which included ten slaves and an annuity of twenty pounds Jamaican.[8] Taylor never identified Sally's mother, and owing to the fact that he classified both Sally and Grace Donne as 'quadroons' they were most likely not mother and daughter.[9] Thus, even at an early age, Simon Taylor had multiple relationships with women of colour. He showed some degree of commitment to one of these women and provided a reasonable inheritance to one of his children. Taylor may not have seen his daughter as a full member of his family but he certainly did not abandon her completely.

At the end of his life, Simon Taylor's family had grown and his female companions had changed. In 1808, Taylor revised his will as his health began to worsen. He wrote the revisions soon after the death of Grace Donne and he included a bequest of 500 pounds Jamaican to Donne's niece Grace Harris. The new will contained no alteration of Sally Taylor's inheritance and it can be assumed that Taylor felt comfortable with his original allotment to her. In the forty-five years since his first will, Taylor had taken up residence with Sarah Blacktree Hunter, a 'free Mulatto woman' who served as his housekeeper. Hunter became involved with Taylor sometime around 1778 and bore him at least one child named Sarah Taylor. When amending his will, Simon gave Hunter 500 pounds Jamaican as well as several pieces of furniture from his home. To his daughter Sarah he initially gave 1000 pounds Jamaican but increased the amount by 1500 pounds, along with a thirty pound Jamaican annuity, in an 1813 amendment to the will. This subsequent amendment was most likely a response to the Jamaica Assembly's action that year of overturning a 1761 law that capped the inheritance that an illegitimate child of colour could receive at 2000 pounds Jamaican. In addition to this bequest for his daughter, he gave 500 pounds Jamaican, a fifty pound annuity, and a slave to his granddaughter Sarah Hunter Taylor Cathcart, the child of Sarah Taylor.[10]

Despite these allocations, Simon Taylor did not care for all of his children equally. He mentioned only a handful of his mixed-race children in his will, and even then distributed his fortune disproportionately. One amendment records a bequest to an enslaved woman named Charlotte Taylor, 'a Quadroon', to whom he gave 700 pounds to care for her children. He did not, however, manumit any of them, claiming, 'I prefer this mode of providing for [her] to the purchasing [of] her freedom'.[11]> Nothing in the will specifies Taylor's reason for denying their manumission. His decisions on caring for his children of colour came more from personal preference than any kind of universal familial piety.

These endowments reveal a complicated family structure within Simon Taylor's household. While he ignored many of his children, he did express some concern for the well being of at least two of

his children, as well as two of his lovers. The amounts were enough to provide very comfortable lives to his beneficiaries and to put them in an advanced social position on the island. However, he had no desire to take them out of Jamaica for their education and employment. Despite the racial prejudice on the island, the deficiency of schools, and the limited prospect of advancement, Simon Taylor kept his biracial children in Jamaica. Just as he planned to stay in the colonies himself, so too did he expect his children to remain there as well.

Part of Taylor's reluctance in providing more fully for his children of colour might have sprung from his distrust of the mixed-race community in general. As one of the wealthiest men on the island, Taylor stood at the pinnacle of Jamaica's political and social elite. He served as a member of the Assembly for over thirty years between 1763 and 1810, acted as Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, held the position of Lieutenant Governor of the militia, and maintained a central role in the West India Committee in London. Taylor did not just *support* the policies of the Jamaican ruling class; he helped direct them. In his letters to friends and family, he revealed a common anxiety among West-Indian whites towards mixed-race peoples in the Caribbean. As whites attempted to use race as a neat delineation between enslaved and free in the West Indies, those of a hybrid ancestry greatly complicated such idealised divisions. Often free, sometimes with wealth and education behind them, mixed-race individuals took an uneasy position in this polarised society.

This tenuous position became even more problematic in the 1790s with the advent of the Revolution in St. Domingue. Believing that the island's free people of colour had orchestrated the Revolution, whites in Britain's West-Indian islands worried that their mixed-race populations might also rise up in rebellion. Simon Taylor himself expressed intense concern that Jamaica's free 'Negroes and Mulattoes' would overtake the island, after drawing inspiration from the nearby insurrection.[12] Calls from within Jamaica to raise a regiment of 'Black and Mulattoe Troops' to help defend against an enslaved revolt, exacerbated his fears even more.[13] So great seemed their power, that Taylor worried that Jamaica, 'will either fall into the hands of Negroes or Mulattoes or the [white] Inhabitants will give it up to any other European Powers who will protect their lives'.[14] As a resident Jamaican with real political power, Simon Taylor's civic concerns over the growth of the island's mixed-race population superceded his own personal and familial experience.

Holding such a powerful position in Jamaica, Simon Taylor regarded neither himself, nor his children, as imperial subjects intent on joining the upper ranks of British society on the other side of the ocean. The time he spent in Britain as a youth had not appealed to him, as it had to his brother John Taylor, who stayed in England after his education, and eventually purchased a baronetcy before draining the family fortune. Simon remained, to the end, a Jamaican, and never

sought to attain any metropolitan glory. He died in Jamaica in 1813, fulfilling his wish, ‘to lay my Bones in my Native land’.[15] In examining Taylor’s behavior toward his mixed-race children, it is easy to see a man inured to the colonial status quo of coloured mistresses and bastard children. With no direct roots in Britain he did not wish to shuttle his children off to the imperial centre. After all, his own anxieties about the racial and class transgressions of the island’s mixed-race population inhibited any compulsion to see such a group advanced yet further. Like many of his contemporaries, Simon Taylor indulged only the children of his most esteemed mistresses, but still kept them in a marginalised and controlled position. Perhaps that was his broader hope for the whole of Jamaica’s mixed-race community.

III

Attitudes toward children of colour could vary greatly from those of Simon Taylor, even amongst his own family. Taylor’s Scottish cousin, John Tailyour, came to Jamaica in 1783, and quickly followed the pattern of interracial cohabitation that prevailed amongst white residents. An enslaved woman from Simon’s estate, Mary Graham, acted as Tailyour’s housekeeper and nurse, tending to him during his many illnesses on the island. Together they had four children: James, Simon, John and Catherine; all of them born enslaved to Simon Taylor’s estate. Although Tailyour wrote very little in his correspondence about his mixed-race family, he did reveal a strong degree of affection for them in several letters to his cousin. Two years before he would return to Scotland, Tailyour wrote Simon in the hopes that he would manumit his lover and children. Offering to substitute other slaves for their freedom, Tailyour recorded, ‘Having now for several years experienced [Graham’s] care & attention both while I have been in sickness & health, I confess myself much attached to her, & I find myself very much so for her Children; which makes me very desirous of putting them in a more respectable situation’. Sensing a possible refusal on Simon’s part, Tailyour implored him, ‘I feel my self more anxious to obtain this Favour than I can describe’.[16] Unlike Simon, John Tailyour took immediate responsibility for his illegitimate children. Although Tailyour did not frame them as his ‘family’ in this appeal, his letter shows a modicum of sympathy for their status and circumstance absent from Simon’s correspondence on his children. To Tailyour’s relief, his cousin obliged the request and his family became free. His eldest child, James, was only four years old at the time, and Tailyour immediately began planning for his young children’s futures.

Whereas Simon Taylor envisioned a life of relative comfort in Jamaica for his select children of colour, John Tailyour hoped to see his children leave the island for a more advanced position in the metropole. Beginning with his oldest son, James, Tailyour sent his children one by one to Britain, and called upon his Scottish family to help establish them there. Indeed, Tailyour had

numerous offers of support from his family in Britain. After hearing news about the birth of James, Tailyour's mother proudly wrote, 'tell me what has becom of your Baby that you mentiont to me, is it alive or not[?] belive me I would be very happy to have it under my Car[e]'.[17] Despite his mother's wishes, Tailyour felt more inclined to have his children privately tutored, and appealed to his brother in London for help. After receiving this request, Robert Taylor cheerily replied, 'I approve very much of your sentiments respecting your little family & agree intirely with you as to the plan of Education, & the manner you Propose to bring them up in. It is surely incumbent on us to provide for our Offspring whether Black or White, in a manner the most likely to render their situation in Life comfortable to them'.[18] Tailyour's appeals to his British family, then, drew on a sense of sympathy for his children's disadvantaged situation in the colonies, and the need to alleviate such hardship. Robert agreed, and began looking for a tutor in England.

The decision to keep James in England came from John and Robert's uncertainty about how he would fit into the Scottish family, despite their mother's enthusiasm about the Jamaican children. Although Tailyour's mother had been forced to sell their two estates of Kirktonhill and Balmanno upon the death of her husband in 1780, the family still held a prominent position in the Scottish gentry. Robert worried that James's illegitimacy would define relations between himself and his wealthy kin, leaving him in a regular state of embarrassment at his own status. In addition, Robert anticipated complications arising from James's racial ancestry: 'as soon as he has Sense to know the disadvantages with which he has been ushered into Life, & by keeping him at a distance from his own Relations I think there is the greater chance of concealing from him his Inferiority and preventing the Mortification of being slighted by relations who from early habits he might consider himself perfectly upon a footing with'.[19] Robert's comments reveal the complications of sending mixed-race children to the metropole. On the one hand, Robert had no reservations about welcoming them to Britain, and getting them started in a school or profession. On the other hand, he understood that their racial status, and perhaps more importantly their personal history as manumitted slaves, would not allow for a smooth assimilation into their British family. This was especially true in light of Tailyour's return to Scotland, when he repurchased both of the family's Scottish estates, and greatly enhanced the family's elite social position with his newfound colonial wealth. In many ways Robert's opinions demonstrated his worry about the children's reflection on the family's rising status. If John Tailyour expected a better life for his children of colour on the other side of the Atlantic, he must have understood that it would not come easily.

Upon his children's arrival in Britain, Tailyour hoped to distance them from their colonial past, and to integrate them into British society. Of the three children known to have traveled to Britain (James, John, and Catherine), Tailyour's letters only reveal the fate of the boys once they arrived. Robert Taylor looked at tutors throughout England before settling on John Bowman's school at Byers Green Hall in Yorkshire. Northern England may have been a popular destination to send

these mixed-race children, situated at a comfortable distance from family in either Scotland or London. Sending his ‘Molatto’ boy to a Yorkshire school in 1763, one Jamaican resident commented that the institution was renowned for teaching West-Indian children.[20] Indeed, with few schools in the Caribbean, most West Indians who could afford it sent their children to British schools. Andrew O’Shaughnessy has estimated that three-quarters of Jamaica’s planters sent their children to Britain.[21] This included children of colour, and while many mixed-race students, like Tailyour’s children, studied at smaller schools or with private tutors, some attended Britain’s top institutions. Three Jamaican boys of colour, for instance, were registered in Scotland’s Inverness Royal Academy in 1806.[22] It also appears that at least one mixed-race Jamaican attended Oxford in the eighteenth century.[23] At Byers Green Hall, Bowman taught Tailyour’s children an array of subjects, including mathematics, book keeping, grammar, and the classics. Many of the lessons focused on professional skills, such as taking measurements and balancing accounts, that would help enable their careers in business and trade. The children did well, and Bowman remarked of James, ‘He is of a very mild and docile temper, and promises fair to be a good scholar’.[24]

After his children finished their education, John Tailyour asked his brother Robert to guide them in their careers. Robert Taylor put the middle son, John, in a London merchant house as a clerk, with the goal of preparing him for a future in trade. His biggest assignment, however, was to obtain a position for the eldest son, James, in the East India Company. Like his brother, and many of his fellow Scots, Robert Taylor had moved throughout the Empire in his quest for riches and social advancement. Along the way, he had set up a trade in India, and established many contacts there, both with fellow merchants, and also with the military. With John Tailyour’s prodding, and the help of his business networks, Robert won an interview for James with the East India Company Army. Both Tailyour and his brother saw the position as a vital step in conferring social legitimacy on the young James. If successful in the army, James could effectively launder his past through the channel of military accomplishment.

Securing James’s position in the East India Company would prove extraordinarily difficult, and ultimately revealed the extreme measures Tailyour would take to erase his son’s racial ancestry. From the beginning, Tailyour hid the truth about his son’s life in the West Indies. Indeed, he had good reason. The Company barred any person of African descent from serving in the army in 1800, fearing that such soldiers would be more prone to rebel.[25] James’s birth in Jamaica immediately aroused the Company’s suspicions, and they demanded information and records on his life there. Tailyour, now in Scotland, wrote to the Company confirming that James had been born in Jamaica, but lied that his absent mother was ‘born in the West Indies, but of European parents’.[26] He also demurred on confirming James’s baptism, claiming that the record for his

christening had simply not been transmitted to Britain.[27] In truth, he did not want to reveal that the baptismal entry for James listed his mother as a 'mulatto'.[28]

The family whitewashed James's record in order to manoeuvre him into place, but it still had to contend with his physical appearance, which would become an issue in James's interview with the Company's Committee of Shipping. With a white father and a 'mulatto' mother, James was a 'quadroon' – two generations removed from an African ancestor. By Robert's account, James had relatively fair skin, although this did not stop him from worrying about James's interview. Writing to his brother, Robert noted, 'His Colour altho' as you Observe [is] not darker than the Foulertons' – white family friends of the Tailyours. Despite his complexion, however, James's appearance must have indicated his descent, as Robert lamented, 'I really could not Sleep the first night after he Came', worrying that James would be found out in the interview. In order to mask James's ancestry, Robert attempted to disguise his features. He had James try on a number of different outfits to see which would diminish any standout African traits. As a last resort, he even powdered his face to hide any hint of a dark complexion, but noted, 'Powder made him much worse'. In the end, Robert stumbled upon a working formula: 'I got him a blue Coat & had his hair Cut – & in that way he Pass'd the Committee'.[29] In establishing James in the metropolis, and paving a future for him that was wholly disconnected from his former enslavement, Tailyour and his family literally disguised the young man's heritage. This was not a matter of simply downplaying his race and personal history. Rather, it was an attempt to camouflage James's colonial roots, and to conceal his lineage. For Tailyour's children, then, the voyage to Britain was a clean break from their lives in the colonies, and a step toward not only refinement, but also toward a status as legitimate whites.

IV

It is difficult to determine the regularity with which white parents sent their mixed-race children to Britain, as John Tailyour did. As many fathers were loath even to discuss their biracial progeny at all, tracing their movement and destination can be nearly impossible. Examining wills from this period, however, does give some quantitative sense of the scale of mixed-race migration to the imperial centre. In drafting their last wills and testaments, many West-Indian fathers asked that their children of colour be sent to Britain for their education, and to take up a trade. Others gave bequests to children already living across the Atlantic.

A survey of 2245 wills executed in Jamaica between 1773 and 1815 reveals the regularity of those endeavors.[30] All executed wills for the years 1773-75, 1783-85, 1793-95, 1803-05 and 1813-15 in Jamaica were counted, with each year containing an average of 150 proven wills.

Tables 1 and 2, below, display the results of that survey. Two types of bequests were recorded: explicit references to mixed-race children either being sent to Britain, or currently living in Britain, and implicit references to the same. To clarify this latter category, some wills contain bequests to individuals who, although not explicitly listed as such, were almost certainly of mixed race. Examples of this occurrence include notations for beneficiaries who were the 'natural' or 'reputed' sons of a white father and born in the island. The terms 'natural' and 'reputed' denoted illegitimacy, which almost universally meant children of colour. Most of these bastard children were also the sons and daughters of housekeepers, who were, with little exception, free or enslaved women of colour. Those who fall into the 'implicit references' category, then, were almost certainly mixed-race individuals. The totals were then split between all wills executed for white men, and only those white men's wills that contained a bequest for a child of colour. The inclusion criteria for this latter group was quite large. Individuals not listed explicitly as the benefactors' children were still included due to their mothers' status as the will writers' housekeepers, or due to significant bequests to those children of colour that exceeded ten pounds Jamaican. Therefore, the percentages in Table 2 may be lower than their true value. The wills of women and people of colour were not included in the data analysed, below, for two reasons. First, eighty per cent of all executed wills in this survey were those of white men, and including the other twenty per cent does not significantly alter the results. Second, white men were the principle agents in sending mixed-race individuals to Britain. Indeed, of the wills with bequests for mixed-race relatives in Britain for this entire period, only seven came from free people of colour.

Table 1: Percentage of white men's wills, proven in Jamaica, with bequests for mixed-race children in Britain (either presently resident, or soon to be sent there)

	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s	1810s
Explicit Reference	3.0	1.0	4.1	4.4	3.8
Explicit and Implicit Reference	6.4	3.8	7.4	7.1	7.8

Table 2: Percentage of white men's wills with acknowledged mixed-race children, proven in Jamaica, that include bequests for mixed-race children in Britain (either presently resident, or soon to be sent there)

	1770s	1780s	1790s	1800s	1810s
Explicit Reference	9.7	3.4	12.2	9.6	9.1
Explicit and Implicit Reference	17.2	13.6	22.0	15.5	18.9

These data demonstrate a not insignificant migration of mixed-race Jamaicans to Britain. As Table 1 indicates, at the opening of the nineteenth century, over seven per cent of all white male testators gave bequests to mixed-race individuals who were either in Britain, or on their way. Not every Jamaican drafted a will, so those in this survey had greater means at their disposal. Still, members from all strata of Jamaican society left wills, so the overall percentage of bequests for children of colour in Britain is impressive. Looking only at those with children of colour in their wills, Table 2 demonstrates that in the 1790s, nearly a quarter of those whites held out some inheritance to mixed-race children in Britain. While these wills do not give an accurate estimate of overall miscegenation and mixed-race birth, they do reveal the desires of those whites who provided some degree of care for their children of colour. Thus, amongst those who helped their mixed-race children to even a small degree, a substantial portion of them wished to see their children brought up in the metropole, rather than in Jamaica. Considering the expense incurred by sending a child to Britain, and remitting enough money for their maintenance while there (with the added expense of converting colonial currency into pounds sterling), this was a costly undertaking not all could afford. That so many chose to do so, in spite of these hurdles, speaks to the importance they attached to the endeavour.

This migration was perhaps most important to Scottish fathers living in Jamaica. As Table 3 reveals, below, a near equal number of mixed-race children went to Scotland as those who went to England. Rough calculations estimate that a third of Jamaica's population was Scottish by the late eighteenth century.[31] Therefore, a disproportionate number of Scots, compared to English and Irish settlers, sent their mixed-race children back to Britain. The percentage may have been even higher, as some of those listed as traveling to England were perhaps, like John Tailyour's family, children of Scots sent to English schools. If some Jamaicans felt the need to remove their

mixed-race children from the island, then those of Scottish heritage, especially wealthier Scots who had achieved financial success, felt the urge more strongly.

Table 3: Location/Destination of all mixed-race Jamaicans sent to Britain and Ireland by percentage, according to the wills of their white fathers, 1770-1820

England	Scotland	Ireland	Britain (unspecified)
34.8	32.2	3.5	30.4

Sending children of colour back to Britain may have proven an attractive option to Scottish migrants who had the same wishes for themselves. Scholars have noted that the Caribbean often served as a temporary home for Scottish travelers who hoped to build up wealth in the colonies before returning home. Alan Karras argues, 'these people usually left Scotland intending to return to their homeland with increased wealth', and that 'migration became an aid to, if not a necessity for, upward mobility' for Scottish people.[32] The Empire offered adventurous Scots economic and professional opportunities unavailable in North Britain. For impoverished Scots, as well as those pushed off their land during the Clearances, the colonies were a last chance at economic success. For those in the gentry, like Tailyour, they provided the opportunity to build a large nest egg which would catapult them into the aristocracy. Refining this notion of Scottish remigration, Douglas Hamilton maintains that success in the colonies may have contributed as much to the decision to return as any resolution made beforehand. He notes that involvement in colonial governance and administration pushed many successful Scots to send their children back to Britain for their education, in order to solemnise their family's upward mobility.[33] This certainly seems appropriate for white children, but could the same be said for children of colour sent to the metropole? Were they part of the same movement back to Scotland as their white relatives?

Remigration back to Jamaica may hold some answers to these questions on the parity between white, and mixed-race, movement to Britain. Of all the white children who left for Britain in the late eighteenth century, Andrew O'Shaughnessy estimates that a full third never returned to the West Indies.[34] Their fathers' colonial wealth funded their elite lives in the metropole. Amongst mixed-race children, the incidence of remigration is much more difficult to discern. Of the thirty-seven wills in the above survey that explicitly listed bequests for children of colour in Scotland, six demanded that their children never return to Jamaica, threatening to invalidate their inheritance if they did so. Surely others intended that their offspring stay in Britain, even if they did not record it in their wills. However, many still returned. Out of the 489 people of colour granted privileges by the Jamaican House of Assembly between 1772-1802, fifty-eight had spent time in Britain, either

for their education or to learn a trade. Out of those fifty-eight, only six were still living in Britain, and four of those had strict instructions not to return.[35] These numbers, however, do not paint a fair picture of the overall remigration back to Jamaica, as those mixed-race individuals who had decided to stay in Britain had little need to petition for privileged rights in an island to which they would never return. These data do reveal, though, that a number of elite West-Indians of colour who had gone to Britain, did eventually come back. This could prove a risky venture, especially for those who hoped to enjoy an advanced status in the Caribbean after receiving an elite British education. Robert Renny told of a 'Mulatto, who had been sent to Europe for his education' who, on a stop in Barbados on his way home to Jamaica in 1799, had been refused service at a tavern for having sat down with a group of white gentlemen.[36] John Waller recorded a similar story in 1820, of a group of lower officers who refused to sit with a mixed-race naval surgeon, trained at the University of Edinburgh, at a hospital barracks in Barbados.[37] Opportunities certainly existed for British-trained children of colour in the Caribbean. With the intensified prejudice that awaited them there, however, it is easy to see why their fathers wanted them to stay on the other side of the ocean.

The out-migration and remigration of mixed-race individuals between Scotland and the Caribbean roughly follows the same pattern of white children during this period, with varying degrees of similarity between their aims. Both sets of parents wished to see their children receive an elite education and training unavailable to them in the colonies. Both saw a life in Britain as a step up in social advancement. However, those Scottish fathers who sent their children of colour across the Atlantic were motivated by much deeper concerns about their offspring's lives in the colonies. Wealth could only take those of mixed race so far in a society constructed around racial supremacy. Their skin colour precluded them from enjoying any of the advances that their Scottish fathers had made to their families' status. As Douglas Hamilton argues, Scottish settlers succeeded so spectacularly in the Caribbean due to their assumption of a British identity, rather than fostering an isolated ethnic solidarity. Hamilton rightly points out, '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'.[38] If the strict colour line in the West Indies 'whitened' the Scottish and eased their entry into the Caribbean elite, then it also immediately disqualified their mixed-race children from enjoying those spoils. Sending these children of colour back to Britain, then, was not simply an attempt to cover them in a patina of refinement, but an effort to confer a sense of Britishness and legitimacy on those who were barred from such status in the colonies. The Scots emphasised, more than anyone else in the islands, the acquisition of social legitimacy from an originally marginalised position. For some, attaining that social sanction for their children of colour was an equally important ambition.

V

The birth of children of colour provoked a variety of responses among whites in the West Indies. With the high levels of sexual predation on the plantations, it is impossible to determine what percentage of whites cared for their mixed-race progeny. Although they may have been a minority, a significant number of whites provided some degree of support for these children. Within John Tailyour's family, this support could mean either increasing a child's comfort in the colonies, as his cousin Simon did, or removing them from the islands altogether. Each man's ties back to Scotland helped to direct this decision. For Simon, who had spent most of his youth in Britain, but remained a lifelong creole, his disinterest in returning to Scotland eliminated any compulsion to spirit off his children to receive metropolitan refinement. John Tailyour, on the other hand, seems to have followed the pattern of the sojourning Scot who made Jamaica only a temporary home. His own wishes to return to Scotland as a triumphant man of means surely weighed on his opinions regarding his mixed-race children. Removing his children to Britain allowed Tailyour to close the door on his offspring's enslaved past, and to reinvent them as members of the British elite – much like Tailyour's own act of aristocratic redefinition. This depended, of course, on his Scottish family's compliance in establishing these children in the metropole. If the social networks between Scotland and the Caribbean relied upon 'fictive kinship' – ties that mimicked family relations in the absence of common ancestry – then the migration of mixed-race individuals to Scotland took advantage of these loose associations.[39] Family back in Scotland may have scoffed at the notion that these children of colour were of pure relation, but attachment to their Caribbean kin provided the bridge upon which this group could cross the Atlantic.

As migration studies have helped to improve dramatically our understanding of the Scottish experience in the Caribbean, increased attention on the movement of mixed-race individuals within the Atlantic will serve to refine further our notions of that experience. This is particularly crucial to the study of the development of the West Indies. Scholars have seen the growth of a population of biracial colonists as integral to the emergence of a 'creole' society in the Caribbean.[40] Although that term has become highly contested in recent years, the interaction between African and European elements in the West Indies still merits sustained attention. Scholars should not constrain their view of European influence on the islands solely to the presence of white migrants, but should consider the impact of racially-mixed individuals returning from the metropole to understand better the complexity of creolisation, and the strong links between the West Indies and Britain.

NOTES

[1] A ‘quadroon’ was defined at the time as a person two degrees removed from an African ancestor. He or she was the child of a white person and a ‘mulatto’ (one degree removed from an African ancestor). A person four generations removed from an African ancestor was considered legally white in Jamaica, with all the privileges that entailed.

[2] Simon Taylor to George Hibbert, 14 January 1804, MS Simon Taylor Papers, London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICS), Letter book F, no. 42,

[3] Lady Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent’s Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Thirty Years Ago*, ed. by Frank Cundall (London: Institute of Jamaica, 1934), pp. 92-93.

[4] John Tailyour standardised his surname to ‘Taylor’ in 1784, after arriving in Jamaica. For easier identification, and to contrast with his cousin Simon, he will be referred to as ‘John Tailyour’ throughout this paper.

[5] See, in particular, Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), who argues that most Scots hoped to make their fortunes in the Americas in order to establish a landed estate in Britain, which would validate their social mobility. This fits into a larger argument about Scottish involvement in the Empire, and its effect on British identity: see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

[6] Many thanks to Robert Tailyour for his family biography (unpublished). For more biographical information on Simon Taylor, see Barry Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy* (Mona, Jamaica: UWI Press, 2005), pp. 137-46; Richard Sheridan, ‘Simon Taylor, Sugar Tycoon of Jamaica, 1740-1813’, *Agricultural History*, 45 (October 1971), 285-96.

[7] Simon Taylor to John Tailyour, 4 January 1792, Ann Arbor, Michigan, The William Clements Library (WCL), MS Tailyour Papers,

[8] Simon Taylor to John Taylor, 27 January 1763, MS Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 120 II B, no. 36.

[9] Jamaica, as well as the other islands in the British West Indies, had very firm racial categories assigned to individuals based on their ancestry. If Sally Taylor was the daughter of Grace Donne, then she would have been labeled a ‘mustee’ (one degree removed from her quadroon mother). Try as they might to keep these labels ‘scientific’ and firm, however, Jamaicans regularly misidentified the ‘true’ racial category of many people of colour. An examination of parish records in Jamaica reveals individuals of colour being listed under different racial categories at various entries. See the baptismal records for Kingston Parish, 1B/11/8/9 at the Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town, Jamaica. For a contemporary list of the racial categories in Jamaica in the eighteenth century, see Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols (London, 1774), II, pp. 260-61.

[10] Simon Taylor’s Will, Kew, England, National Archives of England, PROB 10/7400/7, fols 2-4, 58-59.

[11] Ibid, folio 59.

[12] Simon Taylor to John Tailyour, 18 October 1799, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[13] Simon Taylor to John Tailyour,, 5 December 1797, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[14] Simon Taylor to George Hibbert, 31 October 1798, ICS, MS Simon Taylor Papers, Letter Book B, no. 30.

[15] Simon Taylor to Robert Taylor, 19 September 1811, ICS, MS Simon Taylor Papers, Letter Book J, no. 48.

[16] John Tailyour to Simon Taylor, 3 January 1790, ICS, MS Simon Taylor Papers, ICS 120 XIV/A/1, no. 50.

[17] Jean Tailyour to John Tailyour, 14 August 1787, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[18] Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, 27 August 1791, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[19] Ibid.

[20] JF to [More?] and Bayly, 28 April 1763, London, Guildhall Library, Attorneys Letter Books, MS 14280.

[21] Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), p. 19.

[22] Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 209.

[23] Martin Williams of St. James, Jamaica is listed as receiving a privilege grant from the Jamaican House of Assembly in 1783, National Archives of England, CO 138/38. William Cowper's notes in the National Library of Jamaica, Kingston, MS 20, include a Martin Williams of St. James, Jamaica who matriculated into Magdalen College, Oxford in 1799 at the age of sixteen. As fathers often submitted privilege petitions for their children soon after they were born, these dates correspond perfectly.

[24] John Bowman to John Tailyour, 14 April 1793, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[25] Court Minutes, London, British Library, India Office Records, B/130, folio 998.

[26] Military Department, Cadet Papers, in ibid., 1804-5, Pt. 2 FF, L/MIL/9/114/211.

[27] Ibid., L/MIL/9/114/212.

[28] Kingston Baptism Register, Central Village, Jamaica, Island Record Office, Copy Register vol 1, p. 371.

[29] Robert Taylor to John Tailyour, 5 April 1805, WCL, MS Tailyour Papers.

[30] This survey was conducted through the volumes of wills at the Island Record Office, LOS 41-42, 49-51, 57-58, 60-61, 70-75, 87-91.

[31] This comes from Edward Long's claim of 6000 Scottish inhabitants (out of 18,000 total white inhabitants) in Jamaica in 1770. See Long's *History of Jamaica*, II, p. 287. Modern scholars seem to accept this estimate; see Douglas Hamilton, 'Transatlantic Ties: Scottish Migration Networks in the Caribbean, 1750-1800', in *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the*

Eighteenth Century, ed. Angela McCarthy (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), pp. 48-66 (p. 52); O'Shaugnessy, p. 8.

[32] Karras, p. 1, p. 21.

[33] Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World*, pp. 161-69.

[34] O'Shaughnessy, pp. 19-20.

[35] This survey comes from the Jamaican House of Assembly Minutes, National Archives of England, CO 139/22-51.

[36] Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica* (London, 1807), p. 190n.

[37] John Augustine Waller, 'A Voyage in the West Indies', in *New Voyages and Travels*, 3 vols (London, 1820), III, pp. 95-96.

[38] Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World*, p. 50. Hamilton argues specifically against Alan Karras's notion of Scottish 'ethnic solidarity' in Jamaica at this time. See Karras, p. 120.

[39] Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World*, pp. 25-27. Hamilton uses the term 'fictive kinship' to describe links between Scots without firm family or clan ties.

[40] Edward Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of a Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 298-303; Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman, 'Enslaved Africans and their Expectations of Slave Life in the Americas: Towards a Reconsideration of Models of "Creolisation"', in *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture*, ed. Verene Shepherd and Glen Richards (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2002), pp. 67-91 (pp. 83-84); Percy Hintzen, 'Race and Creole Ethnicity in the Caribbean', in ibid., pp. 92-110 (pp. 94-95).

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Other than Realism:
Magic and Violence in Modern Scottish Fiction and the Recent Work of Wilson Harris

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I. Popular Realism

Violence, magic and realism – the three terms offer various possible enquiries and I might begin by suggesting two kinds of violence – the depiction of violence in story or narrative, a shooting, knifing, murder of whatever kind – and on the other hand, a violence in the text of fiction itself. The first one is easy to comprehend. In modern Scottish fiction, the novel *No Mean City* (1935) evokes the image of a Glasgow of street-violence, knife and razor-gangs, a tradition of hard lives in urban poverty that runs right through to Peter McDougall's 1970s and 1980s television dramas *Just a Boy's Game* and *Just Another Saturday* and on to contemporary TV series like *Taggart*. But mention of that tradition calls up another kind of violence, the coercive structures of formulaic realism in narrative. No writer of any episode of *Taggart* is going to surrender its reliable genre securities just as the genre fiction of Ian Rankin has secured a niche that is commercially as well as aesthetically dependable. This is not to denigrate these writers but rather to note that the maintenance of these aesthetic and commercial priorities enacts a kind of violent constraint in itself. These are familiar enough contemporary examples. Perhaps we can go further back to imagine a bigger context for them.

II. Violence and Walter Benjamin

Violence happens when you force living things to become commodities. The greatest theorist of this kind of violence in the modern world is Walter Benjamin. He is both the earliest theorist to see most deeply into this practice and the one who, in his latest and most fragmentary work, *The Arcades Project*, sees into it most prophetically. There, he says this:

Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshipped. Grandville [the nineteenth-century illustrator and caricaturist who famously depicted bourgeois

Parisian spectators promenading on an interplanetary bridge and using the rings of Saturn as a balcony as they watch the world go by] extends the authority of fashion to objects of everyday use, as well as to the cosmos. In taking it to an extreme, he reveals its nature. It couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, it defends the rights of the corpse. [1]

This sounds pretty close to the world we inhabit, a world of global exhibition glorifying the exchange value of the commodity. As Benjamin puts it, 'a phantasmagoria which a person enters into in order to be distracted'. [2] It is an age of distraction.

In Wilson Harris's 2006 novel, *The Ghost of Memory*, the first person singular, the ghost, says that he finds himself climbing a ladder on a pinnacle with two sides, one of hope, the other despair. Revolutions of the past, he notes, have led to resurgences of tyranny: the American, Russian, Chinese revolutions have gone – 'nothing remains but a narrow conservatism, complacency, democracy under the banner of crude capitalism.' Harris proposes that what his ghost will do in this novel is 'dig deep…for reverses of violence…into Fear, Fear of the grave, and to stir a seed within the womb of Art…beyond every formidable portrait of command…'. [3] What Harris is suggesting here is a culmination of many of the major themes of his earlier novels and ideas, a dramatic evocation, because it is a novel and not a piece of philosophy, of how the 'enabling space' might be stirred unpredictably beyond the absolutes of authoritarian command. Those absolutes are evidently codified and easily seen in the priorities of capitalism and the ideological context of a mass-media saturated world with its strafing commercialism. Let's go back to Walter Benjamin for a moment:

The entertainment industry makes this [phantasmagoria of distraction] easier by elevating the person to the level of the commodity. He surrenders to its manipulations while enjoying his alienation from himself and others. – The enthronement of the commodity, with its lustre of distraction…is consistent with the split between utopian and cynical elements… [4]

In *The Ghost of Memory*, the ghost is constantly pressing against the tendency to enact this split, constantly insisting on the partiality of vision, judgement and attitude. This contrasts with his main opponent, the spectator in the art gallery where the action of the novel is mainly 'located' (so to speak), who sees paintings specifically as commodities in a world of commodities.

So, what Benjamin is describing in the 1930s with reference to fin-de-siecle Paris especially, points forward to a globalised condition of twenty-first century western ideology drenched in mass-media which it is all too easy to recognise. Benjamin suggests that in the art of Grandville, under his pencil, 'the whole of nature is transformed into specialities' – that is, he presents commodified objects 'in the same spirit in which the advertisement…presents its articles.' It seems almost unnecessary to add as Benjamin does, that 'He ends in madness.' [5] It is also worth noting how appropriate the art gallery is as a location for Harris's novel, for nowhere in the world of the arts is commodity-fetishism more evident than in the commerce of paintings.

The term *violence* applies to the use of force in the organisation of category and commodity, from crude examples to necessary political applications, to the most intimate and perhaps invasive subtleties of language and sound-perception. That is, understood in this way, we might consider it with regard to narrative structure and the very organisation of language itself.

Narrative design is crucial regarding any form of storytelling and has direct political connotation. In the words of Cairns Craig, following the now familiar formulations of Homi Bhabha, 'There is a profound similarity between the modern nation, with its implication of all the people of a territory bound together into a single historical process, and the technique of the major nineteenth-century novels, whose emplotment enmeshes their multiplicity of characters into a single, overarching narrative trajectory.' [6] If violence is implied by the severity of categorisation in those terms, it's worth remembering that the opposite might be the case, that unlike the confinement of genre fiction, for example, the overarching narrative trajectory of a different kind of story might be an encompassing, accommodating and largely enabling one. It is at least arguable whether it has any necessarily inherent disposition towards encroachment or censorship. Its violence may bring about a liberation.

III. Violence and Wilson Harris

Violence has been at the heart of Harris's vision from the beginning. It seems perhaps strange to say this in the sense that Harris has been described as one of the great redemptive visionaries of recent fiction, and as Michael Gilkes said, his work presents an emphasis upon creativity, the enabling space, the imagery of womb, egg, boat, cradle and curtained room. [7] Yet from the opening paragraph of *Palace of the Peacock*, literal violence has been at the forefront of the novelist's description:

A horseman appeared on the road coming at a breakneck stride. A shot rang out suddenly, near and yet far as if the wind had been stretched and torn and had started coiling and running in an instant. The horseman stiffened with a devil's smile, and the horse reared, grinning fiendishly and snapping at the reins. The horseman gave a bow to heaven like a hanging man to his executioner, and rolled from his saddle on to the ground. [8]

The ambiguity is built into the text itself – from the word 'breakneck' through the imagery of the wind stretching and coiling and running like a whip or rope to the horseman's bow to heaven, as if before his execution. The implication that someone has been hanged is pressing up into the writing, just as the shot that rings out and the image of the horseman rolling out of his saddle suggests that he has been the victim of a gunman. Since the novel goes on to present this murdered character awakening 'with one dead seeing eye and one living closed eye…' [9] and then moves between a first person and second person narrative and takes you through a quest narrative in which the ambiguity is brilliantly sustained about whether this character and his

companions are alive and engaged in a mission of vital urgency, or whether they are dead, ghosts returning to re-enact a story that will be in a perpetual rehearsal, it seems clear that a reader accustomed to the securities of realism might be forgiven for asking, 'What's really going on here?'

This is a question that almost all of Harris's novels seem to beg. And yet if this appears to suggest a violence at work in the text, distorting the securities of realism and wrenching them away from identifiable imageries, I would like to suggest that here, too, the opposite might be the case: that it is realism, those very securities themselves, that may be the violent encroachments and pressurised coercive directives. The violence in Harris's writing is a liberation.

Modern fiction generally assumes that such realism is a reliable and welcome convention; genre fiction is predicated upon such securities – as we noted with reference to *Taggart* and Ian Rankin. All specialised and exclusive vocabularies in technologically-defined narrative media like film and television enforce the limits of such conventions. Yet the delight, the exhilaration, the real pleasure of Harris's great *oeuvre* is to engage with an imagination that seems to have no constraint of that kind.

Or perhaps it has. There is a question I will come back to. But first I would like to suggest a few ways in which modern Scottish writing deliberately grapples with these constraints.

IV. An Example from Scottish literature of the 1980s

I would like to give a brief example from the 1980s, then mention a couple more from the 1990s, before returning to Wilson Harris.

First, perhaps the most iconic modern Scottish novel, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981). Let me place this in a historical context first. In the 1980s, there was a significant body of writing and artistic production in other genres, especially painting in the work of Steven Campbell, Ken Currie, Adrian Wiszniewski and Peter Howson, and in literary and cultural criticism, which both demonstrated and helped to redefine the creative potential of Scotland and the historical achievements of the nation's cultural production. Scholarly histories of Scottish music, art and literature appeared in that decade by such as John Purser, Duncan MacMillan, Roderick Watson and others. The conventional or accepted story of Scotland's culturally marginalised status was being revised. Simultaneously, in creative writing in all the major genres various aspects of what might be described as hitherto conventional realism were being left behind. How closely these cultural works were related to the negation of the 1979 devolution referendum or the election of the Conservative government and the escalation of a disenfranchised Scotland following that is probably unquantifiable but assuredly, there was relation of some kind.

Perhaps this is the key point – writers in their work of the 1980s were saying that it was not enough to have history and the imagination in separate categories, that the work of the creative imagination is involved in the production of the future. Realism is a term bound up with the matter of perspective. Alasdair Gray in *Lanark* has his main character, the aspiring artist Duncan Thaw, set out to draw the locks in the canal:

He knew how the two great water staircases curved round and down the hill, but from any one level the rest were invisible. Moreover, the weight of the architecture was best seen from the base, the spaciousness from on top; yet he wanted to show both equally so that eyes would climb his landscape as freely as a good athlete exploring the place. He invented a perspective showing the locks from below when looked at from left to right and from above when seen from right to left; he painted them as they would appear to a giant lying on his side, with eyes more than a hundred feet apart and tilted at an angle of 45 degrees. Working from maps, photographs, sketches and memory his favourite views had nearly all been combined into one when a new problem arose. [10]

The 'new problem' is how to depict people in this landscape. Perhaps the one thing everyone knows about *Lanark* is that it takes you through two narratives, one almost conventionally realist and one fantastical, mysterious, dream-like. The constraints of the 'realist' narrative enact violence not only upon the main character, who seems to be almost suicidal by the end of the second book, but also upon the other characters by insisting upon their limitations and constraints, personal, social, national and imaginative. These constraints and tensions are viscerally connected to the dynamics and pressures in the 'fantasy'-story. Thus, it is not that one story precedes the other or predicates it, but rather that the work of the imagination liberates itself from the imprisonment of realism. In negotiating with publishers over a considerable period of time, Gray considered publishing the book in separate sections (he published individual chapters in periodicals), but finally, at considerable risk, he refused partial publication, insisting that it must be read as an integrated work. [11]

A crucial aspect of *Lanark* is the paradoxical achievement of the book itself, the long story of its composition over decades, which many people in Scotland's literary world were aware of. In that story, a crucial element is the novel's connection with its acclaimed precedent in Scottish fiction, Archie Hind's great novel, *The Dear Green Place* (1966). Famously, Hind, who died in 2008, never completed another novel and the main character in *The Dear Green Place* abandons and destroys the novel he is writing. The achievement of *The Dear Green Place* is remarkable in itself, of course, but in this context it has a further significance as a precedent for Gray's novel. It is consistently and masterfully a realist novel, syntactically secure and artfully observant of that security. It resolutely refuses to challenge the authority of that realism. When, in *Lanark*, we read that Glasgow is, like most modern cities, the place where many people live but few imagine living, we have one of the essential assertions of the value of imaginative life in modern literature. [12] In

The Dear Green Place, Mat Craig attempts to live up to that intuitive assertion of value and Hind records his struggle courageously. This struggle lies at the heart of Harris's fiction also. Violence in *Lanark* is social and one of the novel's deep enquiries is the extent to which social organisation involves pressurised channelling that produces violence. Archie Hind's brilliant depiction of the slaughterhouse where Mat Craig is employed is blood-drenched and, if it is realist in a literal sense in the narrative, it needs no emphasis as an implicit metaphor. Mat's world brutally forecloses his imaginative expressiveness. But what I want to emphasise now is the way in which the imagination might deliver different ways of living in these worlds, and in fact, changing them. Each one of these works, and not least Archie Hind's essentially because of the desperation and tragic failure it dramatises, is a memorable demonstration of this.

V. A.L. Kennedy, Robbie Kydd: Spectatorship and Violence

The work of A.L. Kennedy and Robbie Kydd, in the context of recent Scottish fiction, seems to me highly relevant here. Consider Kennedy's non-fictional work, her extended essay entitled *On Bullfighting* (1999), advertised as a dissection of 'the ultimate spectator sport'. The paradox with which I began this essay – Benjamin's description of the phantasmagoria of commodities in an age of distraction – is precisely what Kennedy forces herself to address in the opening pages of this book. After Hemingway, after the development of the whole ideology of spectator-sport in a mass-media context, how does she begin to approach her subject, to focus on the fact that 'a man faces his death while a crowd looks on' (back-cover blurb) …?
When Kennedy begins her essay *On Bullfighting*, she startles you with an unpredicted description of her own peculiar vulnerability on a Sunday afternoon in a tenement flat in Glasgow, looking out from a high window and contemplating suicide by jumping. 'It's only me I want to kill' she says: 'I don't want anyone looking when I fall' – however, what pulls her back into the impossibility of her committing suicide is the not-so-distant singing of a man's voice, delivering what Kennedy describes as a 'piece of pseudo-Celtic pap' called 'Mhairi's Wedding' (pp. 1-5). As the jaunty rhythm of the opening lines echo across Kennedy's grim sense of mortal confrontation –

> Step we gaily, on we go,
> Heel for heel and toe for toe,
> Arm in arm and row on row,
> All for Mhairi's wedding –

– she tells us that this preface to the book she is about to present to us is by way of a promise, that knowing she cannot equal the commitment of the matadors who confront their possible death every time they enter the bullring, she will try to deliver her best considered thought as a spectator with this reality imaginatively in her mind. It is, in other words, an explicitly deliberate

attempt to foreground the connection between her own life and imagination and the life and imagination of the so-called 'sport' she is about to describe as a spectator. [13] Kennedy's painstaking qualification of her act as spectator, her dwelling on her limitation or incompetence as participant, her acute observation of the responsibilities conferred upon the person making the self-conscious choice to be a spectator of violence, is deeply suggestive. It is not simply that she is describing violence in fiction but rather that she is witnessing violence in reality. But this also prompts the question of the role of writing. In writing (self-consciously crafted, literary writing, as opposed to specifically linear reportage), there is also a responsibility conferred in the choice of subject. How does a writer represent violence without merely exploiting sensational effects?

Robbie Kydd's *The Quiet Stranger* (1991) is subtitled 'the Life and Times of a Scottish Merchant, known to the world as Richard Mason, who was born in the Island of Tobago in the Year 1767, and who died in the Island of Trinidad in the Year 1849'. [14] It is thus a self-conscious chronicle ostensibly written in the first half of the nineteenth century and the account it gives of its first-person narrator growing up, his love for the slave-girl Betsy, his relations with the his tyrannical father and his French Creole mother, and his tomboy sister Tony is a palimpsest of Victorian realist fiction. What makes it self-evidently not an imitation Victorian novel, implying a realist reading, is, first, that Richard's sister Tony is in fact Antonia, the woman who will become the first Mrs Rochester and reach an international readership through not only Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) but also Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). So far, so familiar: we have another example of postcolonial metafiction and intertextuality. But what also makes the novel self-consciously different from conventional Victorian realism, is the emphasis placed in the early chapters on language, and the specifically Scots language of the major characters. Richard elucidates:

> I should explain that our family used three languages: we spoke English with Father and his overseers (though they often spoke to each other in incomprehensible Gaelic); we spoke metropolitan French with Maman; and we spoke St. Domingue patois with the Negroes, for most of them had been brought from that island. [15]

It's telling that Betsy, the slave-girl who is Richard's only childhood friend and finally becomes his wife, is told by her mother that she must only speak English to Richard when nobody else can hear them. When she offers him some 'jumbie-beads' he asks, 'Are they magic?' only to be told in a phrase Betsy has picked up from Tony, that he is 'a silly goose' and 'these are for playing games with'. [16] The emphasis in the early chapters of the novel on language, the transference of language, and the development of secrets, magical significance and playfulness, all serve to give

texture to the childhood scenes of the main characters as they grow into the world of their adult peers.

Kydd's novel is not really challenging conventional realism as narrative technique in a textually experimental way. The details I've noted are gestures towards verisimilitude which are confirmed by the book's dedication, to the author's wife, 'a true Trinidadian, without whose knowledge and help I could not even have started it'. However, it is important to note the deliberation with which these aspects of the novel have been selected. As a novel in which Scottish identity is specifically Gaelic, historicised, and hidden under the cover of English-language identity, the matters of language, monetary value, violent authority and enforced social hierarchy are not valorising national identity nor asserting exceptionalism. When Richard, in old age, dreams of reclaiming his ancient Gaelic identity as a clan chieftain, both the Edinburgh lawyer and Betsy dissuade him. The past cannot be reconsitituted in identical structure and form. Yet there is a persistence of memory – a ghost of memory – that haunts Richard, even as he settles into a comfortable domesticity in a happy marriage that belies its unconventionality. Richard's domestic triumph – and even more so, Betsy's – is to reject the conventional categories and the racial commodification their society – and indeed their business interests – insist upon. The commercial world makes them rich because they observe these conventions while their home life makes them happy because they remain true within it to the secrets and magic they learned together as children. The book does not expose them as hypocrites but it holds up the contradictions with a balance of sympathy and ironic distance.

As we noted, Michael Gilkes has drawn attention emphatically to the centrality of imageries of 'enabling space' in Wilson Harris's writing. I think this is closely related to Wilson Harris's sense that for his writing to be responsible to the lives of the illiterate men he lived and travelled with in the forests of what was then British Guyana, realism was not enough. Departures from realism and the intuitive understanding that realism was not enough, I am proposing, has been an important part of the development of the tradition of modern Scottish literature.

VI. Wilson Harris and *The Ghost of Memory*

Resolutely gentle in his own use of language, the determination of Wilson Harris to confront questions of violence and to find ways of evoking the potential of imagination and magic is remarkable. Political violence has been highlighted in his recent fiction, most explicitly perhaps in *Jonestown* (1996), but I'd like to focus on *The Ghost of Memory* for the moment.
Let's go back to our well-intentioned but unknowing reader, who asks, 'What's it about?' At a hundred pages, it is more a novella than a novel, in six chapters. It begins rather like the opening

of *Palace of the Peacock*, with a man – it seems – being shot, and falling. There is no need to specify the historic occasion which is evidently evoked by the opening of the novel. In the 'Author's Note' Harris says this man 'is shot as a terrorist' but 'claims he is no terrorist and sees himself as a sacrifice for the failure of a civilisation to recognise how it is aligned to ancient rituals that feared the Sun might never rise again and Darkness would engulf the world for ever.' [17] This is almost all we get of reference to a specific event and I think Harris is characteristically sensitive and adroit at starting from a point which anyone who was reading the news or watching television around the time the novel was published would recognise. Harris moves away from that point rapidly into an imaginary drama which surely addresses what we like to think of as the real world in a different but connected way. In this, imagination and material or historical reality are as closely connected as in the work we've considered by A.L. Kennedy in the 1990s or Alasdair Gray in the 1980s. Other examples from this period might be given from different genres, in the plays of Liz Lochhead or the poetry of Edwin Morgan, to name but two.

Material or historical reality is present in Harris's work as a matter of responsibility. There is an invaluable essay by T.J. Cribb on Harris's work as a surveyor in the forests of British Guyana in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Cribb draws attention to Harris's keeping faith with the people he worked and travelled with, whose names – Carroll, Vigilance, De Souza, Schomburgh – appear in his fiction. As Cribb points out, Harris said that he became aware of what mattered to these people, and noted that: 'realism was not the answer. Their own resources went deeper than their predicament. I became an agent for them, and they understood that – If I were to betray the vision that I have for an instant then I would betray them. But I have not. I am certain that in all my writing I have kept faith with those men and women.' [18]

In Harris's latest work, the first-person narrator describes himself as the titular character, the Ghost of Memory, and he falls into a painting in an art gallery in a big city, where he embarks on a journey along a river, through a forest, but also through the factual textures of paint and pigment, the artifice of art, its stillness and its movement. He is observed by a man in the gallery who gives his name as Christopher Columbus – not the historical Columbus but someone who has taken his name and stands for absolute objectivity in his definitions of what he sees, absolute authority in religion, and absolute security in what is real. Two other characters appear, George and Andy, to wander through the gallery, look at the painting and discuss various things with Christopher and the narrator. The narrator has now somehow slipped out of the painting and is able to suggest ideas to George and Andy, and to have a passionate, confrontational conversation with Christopher. In the end, Christopher takes a knife and destroys the painting, but the sliced-up canvas holds fragments that catch the eye, hold the memory, evoke further thought, and in the final paragraphs, although Andy departs, George remains and studies the fragments

that remain: ‘It was a skeleton of lights. It may have been there a million and more years before Man appeared on planet Earth. How could it be anything one now knew?’ George, empowered by this stellar spectrum, embarks on his wandering, ‘following a hazy skeleton of lights he could not identify.’ [19] So, like *Palace of the Peacock*, the novel begins in violence and ends in revelation. It opens with a first-person narrator and ends with third-person narration. It is based on, or begins from, reference to actual historical people and events, things that happened, but it then enters a space of dream, fantasy or magic narrative.

Stated baldly, the plot seems minimal and decidedly unrealistic, yet it is complex and rich with imagery that interconnects in unsuspected, unpredicted ways. For example, the violence enacted by Christopher, slashing the canvas with a knife, hints back at an imagery of ‘slicing’ – Harris uses the word repeatedly – and dismembering a torso to produce contrary images of violence and music. In one passage, Jason (the mythical hero but also an urban boxer) is practising his punch. George tells us, ‘I dreamt I saw a man punching/striking a headless, limbless body – a stuffed balloon if you like – that was hanging from the ceiling.’ [20] In another, a group of Arawak women emerge from the painting: ‘They carry the sculpture of a woman who is headless, limbless, and whose remaining body in their hands is violin-shaped and beautiful. They worship her as a goddess.’ The question is ‘whether she has been sculpted as a form of cruelty or love?’ [21] The two images echo each other – each dismembered torso leading to violence or to music and love. In an unpredicted, elaborate exfoliation of images, the novel develops a vision of the imaginative exploration of the partial, taking what seems absolute and seeing it in relation to other things which then emphasise the contingent, the arbitrary, the evocative. The novel is tight and the confrontations between the Ghost and Christopher are tense, full of exclamation and the portent of violence, so there is always this sense of a world of whispers, unfinished possibilities and openness.

VII. The Skeleton of Imperialism

The partial identities Harris discloses in the novel are revealed through partial formulations of paragraph-content. It is difficult if not impossible to predict where the tension in Harris’s writing arrives from. I said I would come back to a question that is unresolved. Harris in numerous essays and interviews has drawn attention to the multivalent or multidimensional aspect of language and writing, suggesting that in many ways postcolonial writing generally is an over-writing, a writing back over the skeletons of colonial or indeed imperial narratives. In the very title of their seminal work on postcolonial literature, *The Empire Writes Back*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin imply and endorse this relation between imperial colonies and the impositions of imperial narratives. [22] Colonial writing revises the skeletons of imperial history. If

there is a grand, encompassing trajectory, then Harris's works revise it, riddle it with difference, subvert its priorities and redirect established propositions towards hierarchic power. The question that arises from a reading of Scottish writing in the context of Harris is this: where does that leave the contingent literatures that wish to dissociate themselves from the imperial, colonising master-narratives? In some respects, the work we have considered by Alasdair Gray, A.L. Kennedy and Robbie Kydd all address this question. Each author self-consciously wishes to dissociate himself or herself from imperial master-narratives, yet their writing enacts the reliance upon the authority and power of imperial certainties even as it questions them. Consider Gray's exploration of the problem of perspective in the world of the artist: who is looking? From what angle of approach? With what degree of superior height? Consider Kennedy's deliberations about spectator-sport and violence. Consider Kydd's representation of the era of slavery and the degree of sympathy or critical distance he and his readers might have towards his central characters.

Towards the end of *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, one of Harris's most opaque novels from 1965, we read this:

> The education of freedom…begins with a confession of the need to lose the base connection men seek to impose when they talk of one's 'native' land (or another's) as if it were fixed and anchored in place. In this age and time, one's native land (and the other's) is always crumbling: crumbling within a capacity of vision which rediscovers the process to be not foul and destructive but actually the constructive secret of all creation wherever one happens to be. [23]

I would read this not as absolute rejection of national identity nor as utopian universalism but as an urge towards recognising the need for openness to the partial and transforming nature we are part of. The darkness or the difficulty of its diction and tone remind us that these matters are not to be glib about. It endorses a realism, or rather, a responsibility to the real world, that allows for the unpredicted and magical. We may yet find ourselves crumbling towards new forms of self-determination out of the ruins of a former state. In the recorded conversation I had with him in 1990, published in *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks*, Harris said that he wondered whether the Scottish ethos had permeated the imperial ethos because of the involution of Calvinism and Imperialism. 'There are these different Europes. And Scotland in a way might be a microcosm of them all, more so than England perhaps. You have a whole theatre in Scotland, don't you?' [24] This is effectively an affirmation of a national identity characterised by a history of partiality and incompleteness, attachment to imperialism and difference from it, providing the imagination with 'a whole theatre'. So if Harris's vision seems in some ways to contrast with the national or even nationalist priorities in some of the texts we have considered here, maybe that distinction should not be exaggerated or polarised.

We can end on a note of optimism. To quote Cairns Craig once again, 'The national imagination […] is a space in which a dialogue is in process […] in a territory […] whose borders define the limits within which certain voices […] are listened for, and others resisted […]'. [25] That is close to a description of a world in which the dissolution, the crumbling, of certain narratives, coincides with the creation of others in 'a capacity of vision'. At the same time, it recognises the need to resist certain voices. Alasdair Gray's famous directive that we should work as if we were living in the early days of a better nation is perhaps not so far removed from the hope implicit in Harris's vision of the 'crumbling' context of all creative work. That creativity remains to be fought for, in fiction, poetry, plays, all the arts – and indeed also in the social realities with which we surround ourselves and through which, hopefully, we keep moving.

NOTES

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[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 18-19.
[2] Ibid., p. 7.
[3] Wilson Harris, *The Ghost of Memory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 11.
[4] Walter Benjamin, p. 7.
[5] Ibid., p. 7.
[6] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 9.
[7] Michael Gilkes, *Creative Schizophrenia: The Caribbean Cultural Challenge* (Coventry: The University of Warwick Centre for Caribbean Studies, 1986) p. 13.
[8] Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960; reprinted 1981), p. 13.
[9] Ibid., pp. 13-14
[10] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1981), p. 279.
[11] Rodge Glass, *Alasdair Gray: A Secretary's Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), pp. 136-137.
[12] Gray, p. 105.
[13] A.L. Kennedy, *On Bullfighting* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2000), pp. 1-16.
[14] Robbie Kydd, *The Quiet Stranger* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991), [p. i]
[15] Ibid., p. 15.
[16] Ibid., p. 16.
[17] Harris, 'Author's Note', in *The Ghost of Memory*, pp.vii-ix (p. vii).

[18] T. J. Cribb, ‘T.W. Harris – Sworn Surveyor’, in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol.XXIX, no.1 (1993), 33-46 (p. 44).

[19] Harris, *The Ghost of Memory*, p. 100.

[20] Ibid., p. 64.

[21] Ibid., p. 55

[22] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989)

[23] Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965; reprinted 1974), pp. 101-102.

[24] Wilson Harris, *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks*, ed. Alan Riach and Mark Williams (Liege: L3 – Liege, Language and Literature, 1992), p. 64. See also Alan Riach, ‘The Scottish Element in *Black Marsden*’, in *Wilson Harris: The Uncompromising Imagination*, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek (Sydney, Australia and Mundelstrup, Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1991), pp. 159-169.

[25] Cairns Craig, p. 31.

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'Ev'ry Heart can Feel':
Scottish Poetic Responses to Slavery in the West Indies, from Blair to Burns

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In 1788, the Scottish physician John Ferriar published an 'altered' stage version of *Oroonoko* that 'adapted' the play to the 'circumstances of the present times'.[1] In his preface to the play, Ferriar explains that 'when the attempt to abolish the African Slave Trade commenced in Manchester, some active friends of the cause imagined, that by assembling a few of the principal topics, in a dramatic form, an impression might be made, on persons negligent of simple reasoning'.[2] Replete with an epigraph from *Hamlet*, Ferriar's *Oroonoko* sought to awaken negligent audiences inured to the evils of slavery. As Ferriar remarks, 'when those who hear with Serenity, of depopulated Coasts, and exhausted Nations, are led by tales of domestic misery, to the forces of public evil, their feelings act with not less violence for being kindled by a single spark'.[3] Following Scottish predecessors such as Adam Smith, Ferriar argues that the audience's exposure to suffering would generate an empathetic response: 'nature will rise up within them, and own her relation to the sufferers'.[4] For this reason, Ferriar selected and modified the familiar stage play of *Oroonoko* (known primarily through Thomas Southerne's edition); he notes that *Oroonoko* 'appear'd particularly adapted to this purpose, by its authenticity, as well as its pathetic incidents'.[5]

Criticizing the 'old' stage version of the play, Ferriar states that its 'principal blemish […] consists in the total cessation of the interest and anxiety, for the principal persons, before the winding up of the catastrophe'.[6] Accordingly, Ferriar invests his hero with agency, anger, and a powerful sense of his own suffering. The play's prologue describes the character Oroonoko's sentimental impact upon his audience, noting particularly how feelings could be used to connect observers with black slaves in pain:

Let Honour that dogmatic Scorn efface,
Which sinks to Brutes the persecuted Race:
O! spurn th'unworthy Thought with gen'rous Zeal—
Mind has no Colour—ev'ry Heart can feel.[7]

Ferriar ends his preface confidently, stating that 'whatever may be the success of the present efforts, for terminating this disgraceful traffic, the sentiments of the People will still be inimical to the Tyranny and Oppression which it produces; they will still desire the relief of their unfortunate African brethren; and steadily desiring, they will in the end obtain it'.[8] He goes even further to elaborate the desired outcome of abolitionist plays like his version of *Oroonoko*—they will 'obliterate the disgrace of baffled armies, and [a] divided empire'.[9]

Such bold claims should be familiar to readers of works from the eighteenth century, but Ferriar's sentimental strategy speaks to a commonality of approach that can be found in the Scottish response to slavery, especially within the abolitionist poetry of the period.[10] Because Scots were intimately involved at home and abroad in the discourse and practice of the slave trade, they were well-positioned to respond to its effects. Scottish Enlightenment philosophy, derived from the works of Smith, Francis Hutcheson, and Dugald Stewart, had laid the groundwork for literary works that stressed the importance of feelings in the individual's response to the world. Observable phenomena became not just the source of sensory impressions but served to structure and relate experiences by means of empathetic sentimental responses. These responses could guide future actions by acting to promote the relief of suffering and dissipate the stimulus to the observer's own pain. Based on the central premise of this model—'ev'ry heart can feel'—much Scottish poetry from the eighteenth century sought to redress the sufferings of slaves by appealing to core emotions in its audience, producing as a result a body of political writing that powerfully imagined the painful experience of slavery.

Scottish Networks in the West Indies

One of Europe's most widely travelled peoples, Scots journeyed overseas as soldiers, doctors, labourers, artisans, and the like, maintaining a marked sense of their Scottish identities despite extreme distance from their homeland.[11] Part of the reason for this tendency derived from Scots' own sense of national difference; as Douglas Hamilton explains, 'while Scots were sometimes able to get ahead, their status as foreigners, despite sharing a monarch, could be an effective barrier to them. They remained reliant on English concessions'.[12] Consequently, in the outposts of empire like the West Indies, Scots created networks based on nationality and kinship, derived largely from the model of Highland clans. Such networks could conceivably counterbalance the dependency of Scots upon English favour, creating in the process a self-contained system of

networked connections. Hamilton describes the working of such a system by highlighting the operative role of the clan in organizing Scottish emigrants; he writes that '"clannishness" underpinned the networks that Scots employed to organise themselves in the islands. For Scots, the real significance of the networks lies not so much in "clannishness", but in their relationship to clanship'.[13] As Hamilton notes, the network thus formed allowed for 'a flexible notion of kinship' operating under the banner of Scottish affiliation.[14]

Scottish networks were crucial for newcomers to Scottish-dominated imperial sites like the West Indies. Without access to these networks, Scottish emigrants found themselves at a loss upon arrival. Hamilton describes the importance of networks for the assimilation of emigrants to the West Indian way of life, stating that 'in utilizing kinship and local connections, Scots on the plantations extended their links throughout the West Indies, purchasing land, engaging attorneys, managers, overseers and book-keepers, and welcoming new arrivals'.[15] Many West Indian contemporaries attested to their success in these endeavours, frequently remarking upon Scots' perspicacity and fitness for life in the Caribbean. For example, the eighteenth-century historian of Jamaica, Edward Long, singularly praised the contributions of Scots to the West Indies:

Jamaica, indeed, is greatly indebted to North Britain, as very nearly one third of the inhabitants are either natives of that country, or descendants from those who were. Many have come from the same quarter every year, less in quest of fame, than of fortunes […] To say the truth, they are so clever and prudent in general, as, by an obliging behaviour, good sense, and zealous services to gain esteem, and make their way through every obstacle.[16]

Hamilton estimates Scottish emigration to the West Indies at around 17,000 departures, claiming that 'emigration there was more likely to involve an individual shot at wealth or advancement'.[17] T.M. Devine concurs, stating that most Scottish emigrants were 'transients, hoping to make a quick fortune and return home as quickly as possible with their profits'.[18] Usually comprised of young men in their twenties, this emigrant group quickly swelled the ranks of the plantations, filling posts at every level within the work force.

Because of its great potential for individual wealth, the West Indies became a premier destination for many Scots, provided they were literate and educated. Scotland's strong educational system aided emigrants in training them for such positions, giving them an advantage over other newcomers. Hamilton states that 'most Scots were essentially managers rather than labourers, and the positions they entered, whether planter, clerk, book-keeper, manager, attorney or physician, required them to have had access to at least rudimentary education'.[19] This factor may have added to many Scots' confused reactions to life on the plantations. The most striking and controversial fact of life there was the system of slave-labour employed to harvest sugar cane. A key element in much Scottish Enlightenment thought (often presented in university

lectures) was the critique of the practice of slavery; Karina Williamson remarks that ‘it is well known that the intellectual climate in eighteenth-century Scotland favoured the development of antislavery opinion among the educated classes’.[20]

This paradox was felt by many Scottish emigrants who were daily exposed to the realities of slavery on the plantations. As John Gilmore writes, the entire Caribbean society ‘at the time […] existed for the purpose of producing slave-grown sugar for export to Europe—exports which helped to create the wealth which led to the Industrial Revolution and Britain’s commercial and military supremacy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’.[21] In *Sugar and Slavery*, Sheridan describes the profound impact of sugar in Europe, noting that ‘sugar altered European life in a number of ways. By the middle of the 18th century it had become a staple article of diet among large sections of European society’.[22] In his university lectures, Dugald Stewart descried the elevation of sugar at the expense of slave labour, questioning if it is ‘“lawful that we should reduce such numbers of our fellow creatures to a state infinitely worse than that of the brutes because we must have sugar and tobacco”’.[23] However, Stewart’s was a minority opinion as far as sugar consumption went, for the West Indies became increasingly important to the British empire over the course of the century. Devine notes that ‘in the eighteenth century Britain’s West Indian colonies were universally regarded as crucial to the imperial army’, primarily as a ready capital supply.[24] Sheridan uses the language of piracy to illuminate this relationship between the West Indies and the British empire: ‘variously described as “treasure islands” or “precious gems in the crown of trade”, plantation colonies were widely regarded in the age of mercantilism as valuable adjuncts to European nations’.[25]

In order to support this lucrative yet labour-intensive industry, plantation owners had a long history of using slave labour, having imported slaves as early as the sixteenth century. Nathalie Dessens records that ‘in 1540, the number of slaves imported to the Caribbean was about 10,000’.[26] By the eighteenth century, the numbers had dramatically risen, with an estimated two million slaves imported to the West Indies.[27] Sheridan suggests that the planters’ rationale for using slave labour derived from a cost-benefit analysis that contrasted long-term costs of slaves versus indentured servants:

Although slaves called for a larger original outlay of capital than indentured servants, slaves were perpetual instead of temporary servants, they were usually cheaper to feed and clothe, and they replaced themselves to some extent by natural breeding. It was not that whites were incapable of hard labour on West Indian plantations, but rather that they were too few and too costly.[28]

This type of economic thinking led to the development of the West Indian ‘slave society’, a concept developed in the pioneering work of historian Elsa Goveia. B.W. Higman argues that the

importance of this concept can be found in its interpretive value, claiming that 'the slave society label matters because it contains a particular interpretation of the period of slavery in the Caribbean. By pointing to the centrality of slavery, it gives that institution a determining role in the whole structure'.[29]

Michael Craton explains that the concept of 'slave society' extends to all inhabitants, regardless of race or occupation: '"slave society" is now taken to mean not merely that part of society composed entirely of slaves, but the whole social fabric of communities based on slavery, including masters and all freedmen as well as slaves'.[30] Such a broad definition allows for a better understanding of how slavery affected the entire community, from slaves to plantation owners. Higman claims that the 'slave society' concept suggests 'a similarity of experience wherever slavery was dominant, an experience that transcended and perhaps united the people of the West Indies in a common history'.[31] Nevertheless, it was 'the social relations associated with the institution of slavery that determined the overall character of these societies'.[32] The network of social relations that defined life on the plantations served to reify and naturalise the practice of slavery, particularly in a social space that operated on many levels. Sheridan observes that 'plantations were at once ecosystems, farming and industrial systems, economic systems, and social systems', factors which made for a claustrophobic atmosphere.[33]

In this social space, emphasis was placed above all on maximizing production. Robert Dirks states that 'even before the economies of refinement began taking full effect, the development of the plantation, a mode of agricultural production unique in its reliance on regiments of cheap, unskilled labour, was paving the way to substantial cost reductions'.[34] The obvious means of ensuring 'substantial cost reductions' was to create a captive labour force. Dirks writes that 'plantations proved far more successful in retaining a work force in frontier regions because of the use of active measures to immobilise people. One way to make sure they stayed put was enslavement'.[35] As Sheridan remarks, 'force was used to motivate the workers to work and to prevent them from leaving the plantations. Each plantation was, in effect, both an authoritarian political institution and a profit-making business'.[36] However, even during the period, economists questioned the ultimate value of an enforced system of slave labour. In 1788, agricultural reformer Arthur Young wrote that slaves '"employed on sugar plantations do not and cannot refund the capital sunk on them"', concluding that '"the culture of sugar by slaves"' was '"the dearest specie of labour in the world"'.[37]

Nevertheless, slave labour was practiced on plantations throughout the eighteenth century. Because slaves outnumbered white colonists six to one by the mid-eighteenth century, a very severe method of control was enforced on the plantation grounds.[38] In order to make sure that the plantation system functioned properly, draconian measures were taken to punish offenders

and ensure the obedience of slaves. Along with ensuring slaves' obedience, overseers directed their physical labour in the fields. The harvesting of the cane was primitive and labour-intensive, a process described by Sheridan as a 'sequence of operations [that] consisted of preparing the soil, planting, weeding, harvesting, crushing, boiling, curing, and distilling. No sooner was one task completed, or partially completed, than another demanded the attention of the planter and his slaves'.[39] The manual labour required of slaves was therefore essentially non-stop, involving a variety of agricultural procedures. Planters might be involved in overseeing a measure of this work, but most of their time was spent 'securing market and exchange information, buying and selling, negotiating loans and credits, hiring shipping space and insurance, and keeping records'.[40] Most direct oversight of slave labour fell to the managerial class, who (as described by Craton) were a formidable crew:

> Those whites set in immediate authority were an isolated and beleaguered minority, non-gentlemen of limited education,[41] dissolute and shiftless for the most part, outnumbered fifty to one by their charges, tied by contract and the requirement to make a profit, with only the parlous rewards of power to offset unpleasant work in a harsh climate, the ever-present threat of lethal or crippling disease, and the perils of insurrection.[42]

The extreme measures taken by this class to control slaves, demonstrates (in Dessens's words) a 'manifest intention to institutionalise the labour system by reifying slaves and subjecting them entirely to the ruling class of whites'.[43] Consequently, 'the lives of Caribbean slaves were, according to all testimony, the worst in the Western Hemisphere'.[44]

Due to their large numbers and the success of their networks, many Scottish emigrants were quickly put in control of managing the complex network of plantation operations. Such positions not only required constant slave surveillance, but also financial record-keeping and other clerical duties lumped under the category of 'bookkeeping'. Along with filling such posts, Scots also dominated the medical profession in the Caribbean; as Hamilton states, 'Scotland, with established and reputable medical schools in its universities, was especially well placed to send doctors to the islands to provide medical care to the plantations, which were increasingly being owned or managed by Scotsmen'.[45] According to Devine, by mid-century 60 per cent of the doctors in Antigua were of Scottish origin.[46] The great need for doctors resulted from the slaves' working conditions and their alarmingly high mortality rate. Dessens records that 'the death rate among the slaves ranged most of the time between 10 percent and 12 percent a year', creating a need for increased importation of slaves throughout the century.[47] Sheridan also notes the threat of disease facing Europeans in the West Indies, remarking that 'almost all newcomers came down with fevers and other ailments, with large numbers dying during the difficult periods of

acclimatization or seasoning. The health of Europeans and Africans in the New World tropics was imperiled on all sides'.[48]

Scottish doctors responded to this call, treating planters and slaves alike and writing numerous treatises about West Indian medical care. Sheridan records the efforts of James Grainger, doctor and poet:

> Writing in 1764, Dr. James Grainger of the islands of St. Kitts found it astonishing that, among the many valuable medical tracts that had been published in recent years, not one had been 'purposely written on the method of seasoning new Negroes, and the treatment of Negroes when sick'. In his *Essay on West-Indian Diseases*, Grainger laid down rules for the feeding, clothing, housing, medical treatment, and labour of new slaves.[49]

Despite its attempts to regulate their treatment, Grainger's treatise did not radically improve the lives and working conditions of West Indian slaves. As Sheridan observes, although manuals were written to 'guide planters in the medical treatment of slaves, it is doubtful whether [they] made any substantial contribution to [slaves'] improved health'.[50] A movement for improved medical care for slaves came about in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as a result of political pressure from vocal abolitionists, as well as from planters' self-interested desire for profit.[51] Sugar cane required the labour of healthy slaves, yet even so, it was (in the words of planter William Beckford) '"a treacherous plant [upon which] very little dependence can be placed on its returns"'.[52] A crop of sugar cane was subject to numerous calamities such as rats, ants, floods, and hurricanes; a single infested field could cut significantly impact proceeds from the sale of the entire harvest.[53]

Despite vagaries of production, plantations were highly profitable enterprises, enjoying considerable returns on both sugar and rum. Sheridan states that above all, 'plantations were agro-commercial and financial enterprises. They were profit-making business units commonly organised as single proprietorships and called for initiative and judgment by the owner or manager'.[54] Such owners had (in Sheridan's words) 'a complex personality […] at once landlord, slaveowner, farmer, manufacturer, and merchant'.[55] Each of these roles was subordinated to the planter's chief objective: 'to build up an income-earning property which would enable him to achieve social and political standing in the mother country'.[56] In this respect, many planters were quite adroit, assuming greater influence and power in the burgeoning trade markets. Devine observes that 'at the end of the eighteenth century, the Caribbean colonies employed, directly or indirectly, half of the nation's long-distance shipping', an economic factor that imbued the colonies

with considerable influence.[57] Along with this, planters were able to profit from a protected home market that ensured fifty percent greater returns in Britain than in continental Europe.[58]

Yet, despite their favored economic status, West Indian planters became increasingly estranged from the British mainstream as far as slavery was concerned. By the last quarter of the century, they found that they had to defend their use of slave labour to an increasingly hostile British populace. As Steven Thomas argues, 'West Indian planters had to insist repeatedly that they shared a common heritage, a common economic future, and even a "common Nature", with England'.[59] This became more and more difficult as the abolitionist movement gained ground in the 1780s. Thomas comments that 'many of the metropolitan British were morally embarrassed that their empire was built upon the backs of such labour'.[60] Such sentiments were powerfully felt in Scotland, which supplied the empire with 'slave-drivers' and abolitionists alike. Devine claims the Scottish Enlightenment did not prove influential enough within the country to short-circuit the slave trade, arguing that 'the Scottish intellectual attack on slavery seemed […] insulated from the actual practice of countless Scots in the sugar plantations and the African trade'.[61] In fact, concerning Scots' reaction to the slave trade, Hamilton states that

There was no single 'Scottish' response to enslavement. A strong sense of abolitionism belied a national ambivalence: although many Scots at home denounced enslavement, there were plenty more who happily profited from it in the colonies. There was no major difference between Scottish planters and those of other nationalities in their dealings with the enslaved.[62]

Although Scottish planters may not have differed from others who profited from slavery, a 'national ambivalence' can be detected in Scottish poetic responses to slavery. Indeed, the array of responses makes for a diverse, often discordant expression of strong feelings about the sufferings of slaves.

Scottish Poetic Responses to Slavery

Of the British empire's chroniclers, the work of Scottish poets often provides fascinatingly ambivalent cultural perceptions of the West Indies. Several Scottish poets directly confronted the practice of slavery, assessing its use against the perceived needs and demands of the empire. According to James Basker, 'poets were the most outspoken and persistent critics of slavery, and fostered massive changes in public perception and attitudes'.[63] Canonical figures like James Thomson and James Boswell addressed the issue of slavery, as did lesser-known poets like John Marjoribanks and the Reverend John Jamieson. Examining the range of such responses provides a clearer sense of the depth and extent of the Scottish poetic discourse on slavery, a body of imaginative writing that frequently employs sentiment to state its case. Sentiment assumes a

prominent role in such poems that appealed to audiences with preconceived prejudices about the subject. Scottish poets were remarkably consistent in their use of pathos to promote political ends, coupling outrage with sorrow to forcefully assault a complacent audience.

In the work of early to mid-century Scottish poets, however, there was less reliance upon overt emotional appeals than upon naturalised perceptions of common humanity, found most typically in death. In 'The Grave' (1743), Robert Blair delivers a parenthetical aside—'(As if a Slave was not a Shred of Nature, / Of the same common Nature with his Lord:)'—before offering the generalised statement that

> […] Under Ground
> Precedency's a Jest; Vassal and Lord
> Grossly familiar, Side by Side consume….
> Here the o'er-loaded Slave flings down his Burthen
> From his gall'd Shoulders.[64]

Likewise, in 'The Triumph of Melancholy' (1760), James Beattie asks, 'Will ye one transient ray of gladness dart / Cross the dark cell where hopeless Slavery lies?'.[65] In both cases, the abstract character of slavery resembles that seen in similar poetic denunciations from the period. As Karina Williamson remarks, the notion of enslavement 'as a state of generalised "sorrows" and "pains" […] owes as much to earlier eighteenth-century poetic imaginings as to Scottish moral philosophy or legal argument'.[66] In this respect, Blair and Beattie do not offer direct intervention or commentary on the subject, preferring instead to evoke a common discourse on the nature of slavery rather than its traffic.

James Thomson's description of the hurricane in 'Summer' from *The Seasons* (1744) is much more straightforward, linking the destruction wrought by the storm to the slave trade itself. The passage is defiantly precise, detailing the cosmic justice of the hurricane's aftermath upon a shipwrecked slave ship. The agent of this justice is the 'direful shark':

> Increasing still the terrors of these storms,
> His jaws horrific armed with threefold fate,
> Here dwells the direful shark. Lured by the scent
> Of steaming crowds, of rank disease, and death,
> Behold he rushing cuts the briny flood
> Swift as the gale can bear the ship along,
> 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 straight, their mangled limbs
Crashing at once, he dyes the purple seas
With gore, and riots in the vengeful meal.[67]

As in Blair's poem, the shark shows no 'precedency', consuming both 'tyrants and slaves' in his 'vengeful meal'. Basker notes that in this passage, Thomson 'works impressionistically through images of a catastrophic storm and a giant killer shark destroying a slave ship', in the end revealing 'the inarticulate forces of Nature avenging themselves on the mortal deformity that was the slave trade'.[68]

John MacLaurin's poem 'The Walk' (1760) is even more direct, eschewing symbolism altogether. The speaker asserts that

[…] What woes
The slave-trade, e'vn, ev'n by generous Britons driv'n!
Ambition, avarice, and various ills
Allow'd to rage and ravage on earth!
The whole creation groans.[69]

MacLaurin is best remembered as Lord Dreghorn, the advocate who worked to outlaw slavery in Scotland; as Basker notes, MacLaurin successfully 'led a four-year court battle that, in January 1778, produced a Court of Session decision that officially abolished slavery in Scotland'.[70] His poetry is an impassioned indictment of British and American complacency, as in 'Thoughts Occasioned by Reading *L'Histoire General de Voyages*' (1772):

Hot Afric's sons, in grief and pain,
Who toil to rear the sugar-cane;
Th'unwarlike natives of Bengal,
Whom London citizens inthrall;
Th'Americans of ev'ry tribe,
To this position all subscribe.[71]

For MacLaurin, 'grief' and 'pain' are intensely localised and felt by suffering bodies in the West Indies. Geographic distance does nothing to alleviate this suffering or the complicity of the British and Americans who profit from slavery. 'Address to the Powers at War' (1796) shows MacLaurin at his angriest, where (in Basker's words) the poet 'condemns all regimes, past and present, that espouse the ideal of freedom yet practice slavery'.[72] He saves his bitterest invective for British

consumers of sugar, exhorting them to ‘forego the juice / Whose costly and too common use / Maintains the monstr’ous trade’.[73]

On the subject of sugar, the Scottish physician and poet James Grainger provided the best-known poetic treatment of its agricultural production in the West Indies. His long poem *The Sugar Cane* (1764) remains an essential point of reference for its detailed discussions of planting, West Indian topography, illnesses, weather, and slavery.[74] Upon his arrival to the West Indies in 1759, Grainger benefited greatly from Scottish networks on the islands. He married into a planter family and managed their plantation until his death in 1766; he lived on the island of St. Kitts, one of the smaller British colonies in the Caribbean that had roughly a ten to one ratio of slaves to whites by 1750.[75] Grainger had first-hand knowledge of sugar production and the practice of slave labour, for the majority of his patients were slaves at his own and others’ plantations. Upon publication, *The Sugar Cane* quickly found an appreciable audience and was reprinted frequently thereafter.[76] Although the poem fell out of favor by the mid-nineteenth century, John Gilmore contends that *The Sugar Cane* should be regarded as ‘both a major work in the English georgic tradition, and a major work in the early history of Caribbean literature’.[77]

The poem generated much debate about its treatment of slavery, for which Grainger was censured by contemporaries like Samuel Johnson. As Gordon Goodwin records, ‘Johnson in the *Critical Review* […] censured Grainger for not denouncing the slave trade, even though Grainger recommended throughout a humane treatment of slaves’.[78] For current readers, Grainger’s text has also garnered many negative, often hostile responses.[79] For example, Caribbean poet and critic Derek Walcott delivered a scathing assessment of Grainger and other non-indigenous Anglophone Caribbean writers in a recent article. Therein he writes that ‘not one of these pieces can claim to be art […] but they are certainly history, and if they are virtually worthless as art, as literature, our instinct to preserve them simply because they exist is the wrong instinct’.[80] Others have regarded *The Sugar-Cane* as an important literary text that foregrounds and explores cultural and national difference. In this respect, Grainger’s status as a Scot is of utmost importance; John Gilmore writes that

Although Grainger’s Scottishness generally goes unmentioned by modern commentators, it was of real significance. It meant that 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.[81]

Grainger’s own felt sense of estrangement as a Scot influenced his representation of life in the West Indian plantations. Throughout *The Sugar Cane*, Grainger argues for the value of West Indian life as a fit subject for poetry, asserting its importance to the empire and its radical

difference from the British homeland. As Gilmore states, '*The Sugar Cane* can be seen as a far-reaching attempt to rewrite the prevailing cultural discourse which, just as it relegated Scotland and Scottish concerns to a secondary position, in effect dismissed Caribbean society as unfit for literature'.[82]

Grainger's most difficult task in this regard was dealing with slavery on the plantations. In Book 4 of *The Sugar Cane*, he confronted the issue head on. He claims that slavery distresses his muse, who 'pities thy distressful state; / Who sees, with grief, thy sons in fetters bound; / Who wishes freedom to the race of man'.[83] As in other poems about slavery by Scots, the sight of suffering slaves afflicts Grainger as a fellow human being, causing feelings of empathetic distress. Later in Book 4, however, the plight of slaves also affects Grainger as a Scot, for he makes a striking comparison between slaves and Scots that serves as an important point of cultural contact. He directly connects and contrasts the plight of slave labourers in the West Indies to poor labourers in Scotland.[84] The passage reads,

> How far more pleasant is thy rurual task,
> Than theirs who sweat, sequester'd from the day,
> In dark tartarean caves, sunk far beneath
> The earth's dark surface; where sulphureous flames,
> Oft from their vapoury prisons bursting wild,
> To dire explosion give the cavern'd deep,
> And in dread ruin all its inmates whelm?—
> Nor fateful only is the bursting flame;
> The exhalations of the deep-dug mine,
> Tho' slow, shake from their wings as sure a death
> With what intense severity of pain
> Hath the afflicted muse, in Scotia, seen
> The miners rack'd, who toil for fatal lead?
> What cramps, what palsies shake their feeble limbs,
> Who, on the margin of the rock Drave,
> Trace silver's fluent ore? Yet white men these![85]

Grainger's empathy in this passage is double-edged; white Scottish miners suffer more than slaves, which can be interpreted as both a point of cultural contact and an apologia for slavery. Nevertheless, such moments as these lead Gilmore to suggest that 'Grainger is sincerely convinced of the slave's humanity, and considers that freedom for the slave is perhaps desirable in the abstract, but is something unlikely to happen for a very long time'.[86] Significantly, *The Sugar Cane* records and evaluates the ties that linked, literally and figuratively, the Briton, West

Indian, and the Scot in a chain of interdependence. As Grainger observes at the end of the poem, 'These Cane ocean-isles, / [are] Isles which on Britain for their all depend, / And must for ever; still indulgent share / Her fostering smile'.[87]

A boldly contrasting Scottish voice can be heard in James Boswell's 'No Abolition of Slavery' (1791), one of few Scottish pro-slavery poems. Boswell's blatant racism appears early in the work, where the speaker sarcastically opines that

> He shall in sentimental strain,
> That negroes are oppress'd, complain.
> What mutters the decrepit creature?
> THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE![88]

Boswell's mockery of sentiment in this passage indicates not only his disagreement with the abolitionist position, but it also signals his awareness that the appeal to common emotions was a powerful tool of their verse. His disdain for such strategies intensify in a later passage that attempts to portray slave labour as a pleasant, pastoral occasion: 'Ev'n at their labour hear them sing, / While time flies quick on a downy wing; / Finish'd the bus'ness of the day, / No human beings are more gay'.[89] The tonal irony of the last line above signals Boswell's reluctance to confer human identity upon West Indian slaves, relegating them instead to an idealised pastoral world without ties to geography, landscape, or (for that matter) reality.

Much different sentiments animate the verse of Captain John Marjoribanks, a Scottish soldier who travelled to Jamaica to join his regiment in Kingston.[90] His experiences there led him to become an abolitionist, and as Williamson states, 'he is known today (where known at all) as author of a ferocious antislavery work, *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* (1786), which would assuredly have outraged his Jamaican admirers if they ever saw it'.[91] Basker highlights the 'shock value' of the poem's imagery, a feature that differentiates Marjoribanks's poetry from many of his abolitionist contemporaries.[92] The graphic nature of *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* testifies to Marjoribanks's experiences in the West Indies, where he daily witnessed slavery on the plantations. Williamson observes that many 'Scots who went out to the West Indies with humanitarian scruples about the slave system rapidly became hardened to the customs of the country'.[93] This was not the case with Marjoribanks, who wrote *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* upon his return to Scotland; like MacLaurin, his abiding sentiment was righteous anger. For instance, about the notion that British peasants suffered more than West Indian slaves, Marjoribanks writes that

> Every slave must yield a master food,

> Who slowly fattens on his vital blood
> Blest, if at once his cruel tortures ceas'd,
> And gave white cannibals a short liv'd feast!
> […] The British peasant! healthy, bold and free!
> Nor wealth, nor grandeur, half so blest as he!
> The state of life, for happiness the first,
> Dare you compare with this the *most accurs'd*.
> *You found them slaves*…but who that title gave!
> The God of Nature never form'd a slave![94]

The cannibalistic imagery of the passage's beginning deepens the contrast between 'healthy' British peasants who enjoy freedom and West Indian slaves. Marjoribanks depicts slavery as an imposed condition of being that defies the natural order of things, an artificial 'title' conferred by white cannibal masters. Later in the poem, Marjoribanks exposes and further denaturalises the origins of the slave trade, finding the genealogy of the masters to be a decidedly bad strain:

> 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…
> By such caprice, are negroes doom'd to bleed,
> The Slaves of Slavery…They are low indeed![95]

Marjoribanks's anger in this passage combines knowledge of European transportation with an appeal to the humanity of slaves, here portrayed (as throughout the poem) as 'doom'd' victims of white avarice. When he published the poem to support abolitionist efforts, Marjoribanks explained his decision to offer his feelings about slavery in verse. Having written the poem during his stay in the West Indies, Marjoribanks had decided to publish it because '"these artless effusions, meant only at the time to give vent to the painful feelings of my heart, excited by the distressful scenes which surrounded me […] might perhaps even carry with them stronger conviction than evidence drawn forth on distant recollection, through the force of interrogation"'.[96] As witnessed in other Scottish poetic responses to slavery, the presentation of 'painful feelings' in verse was considered a more potent tool for shaping public opinion than 'distant recollection' of such emotions in prose.

Such a strategy is apparent in Reverend John Jamieson's *The Sorrows of Slavery* (1789), a long abolitionist poem in which the details of the slave trade are no less angrily recorded. In his preface, Jamieson also explains his preference for verse over prose, writing that 'the principal design of the Author hath been to represent simple historical facts in the language of poetry; as

this might attract the attention of some who would not otherwise give themselves the trouble of looking into the subject'.[97] Jamieson assures the reader, however, that 'through the whole of the poem he hath carefully avoided exaggeration', citing his use of contemporary historical accounts as the basis for his poetic description.[98] Like other Scottish poets on slavery, Jamieson appeals to shared sensations of pain that unite Europeans and slaves. He employs the vehicle of tragedy, sardonically asking audiences why they prefer the cathartic release of theater when they can witness 'real tragedy' enacted by the slave trade:

> Why purchase sorrow in the tragic scene,
> Or court it in the fancy-labour'd tale…
> While Afric forces on your sight averse;
> A real tragedy, unmatch'd in song,
> Where every village opes a dismal scene,
> Where acts of death unnumber'd chill the soul,
> And freeborn Britons act the bloodiest parts?[99]

Jamieson confronts readers who would deny slaves common human feelings, stating that although 'they are not fair like you', they suffer from the same causes: 'Does Grief ne'er wring their heart-strings? Or can Pain / Make no nerve thrill?'.[100] Focusing on key tenets of sensibility (e.g., the 'thrill' of 'nerves') allows Jamieson to establish and strengthen points of contract between slaves and Europeans, further stressing the bonds of sentiment and sensation that unite the two.

In the poetry of Robert Burns, the issue of slavery has fostered a hotly-contested debate. There has been much speculation about what Robert Burns would have 'really' thought of the West Indian slave trade. Aside from his discussion of Helen Maria Williams's 'A Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave-Trade' (1788) in a single letter, Burns did not offer an extended commentary on the subject. Williams's poem contains powerful abolitionist rhetoric, such as in the lines:

> Alas! to AFRIC's fetter'd race
> Creation wears no form of grace!
> To them earth's pleasant values are found
> A blasted waste, a sterile bound;
> Where the poor wand'rer must sustain
> The load of unremitted pain.[101]

Although he singles out the last line above for praise, Burns's criticism of Williams's poem focuses largely on issues of prosody and diction, with little direct commentary on her views of slavery.[102] Because little prose commentary on slavery exists in Burns's writing, many people have turned to his poetry to suggest that he would have been a thoroughgoing critic of the practice. Notably, in the Inaugural Burns Lecture of 14 January 2004, former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan stated that 'Burns has been described as a poet of the poor, an advocate of social and political change, and an opponent of slavery, pomposity, and greed'.[103] Annan's endorsement of Burns suggests the magnitude of the poet's international esteem and influence, particularly as it extends to human rights.

Other critics, however, have found Burns's silence on the slave trade to be damning; Gerard Carruthers states that 'Robert Burns's rather insipid "The Slave's Lament" (1792) has provided an otherwise disappointed politically correct readership for the Scottish Bard with a slender thread with which to tie him to the Abolitionist cause'.[104] Basker contends that 'the famous Scottish poet's response to slavery was muted and contradictory', finding that 'Burns was not consistent or extensive in his expression of sympathy for African slaves'.[105] The single work in Burns's oeuvre with an overt reference to slavery, 'The Slave's Lament', is a generalised account of a slave's departure from his home country; as Basker notes, the poem was 'based not on African sources (as was long rumored) but on an old English ballad'.[106] The poem offers no explicit denunciations of slavery, instead focusing on the sorrows of departure felt by the slave:

> It was in sweet Senegal that my foes did me enthral
> For the lands of Virginia, --ginia, O!
> Torn from that lovely shore, and must never see it more,
> And alas! I am weary, weary, O![107]

These sorrows multiply in the poem's last stanza, where the speaker imagines the life he will lead as a slave: 'The burden I must bear, while the cruel scourge I fear'.[108] The penultimate line is of considerable interest, for it reveals a common emotion that links Burns's experiences directly with the plight of the slave. The line reads, 'I think on friends most dear with the bitter, bitter tear', an expression of sorrow and kinship that Burns frequently employed to describe his own feelings about leaving his native Scotland for the West Indies.[109]

If the Kilmarnock edition of 1786 had not met with such instant success, it is very likely that Burns would have emigrated to Jamaica. In fact, repeatedly through his life, he seriously considered emigrating to the West Indies, either as a way of finding employment or escaping his troubles in Scotland. As a bookkeeper, Burns would have had the kind of direct contact with slaves that Grainger had experienced, dealing on a daily basis with the purchase, punishment, and death of

slaves. The only existing works we have on Burns's views of the West Indies, however, are a series of farewells to his native Scotland. In these poems, Burns rarely give hints about what he expects to find in the West Indies and instead focuses on what he is leaving behind. In this way, his technique is no different than in 'The Slave's Lament', where he assumed the character and emotions of a slave leaving his native ground. In 'The Farewell' (1786), for instance, Burns writes, 'Farewell, old Scotia's bleak domains, / Far dearer than the torrid plains, / Where rich ananas blow!'.[110] In 'The Farewell. To the Brethren of St. James Lodge, Tarbolton' (1786), Burns bids his Masonic brothers 'Adieu, a heart-warm, fond adieu; / Dear Brothers of the Mystic Tie! / Ye favoured, ye enlighten'd few, / Companions of my social joy!' before announcing that

> […] I to foreign lands must hie,
> Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba';
> With melting heart and brimful eye,
> I'll mind you still, tho' far awa.[111]

The sentiment is extreme but sincere; at this point, wishing to flee from the forces of the law and the kirk, Burns must have conceived the West Indies, with its 'torrid plains' and 'rich ananas', to be quite remote, somewhat threatening, yet alluring. Similarly ambivalent imagery appears in a poem that offers another imagined glimpse of the West Indies, aptly entitled 'On a Scotch Bard, Gone to the West Indies' (1786). The second stanza reads,

> Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
> An' hap him in a cozie biel:
> Ye'll find him ay a dainty chiel,
> An' fou o' glee:
> He wad na wrang'd the vera Deil,
> That's owre the sea![112]

Burns's wry joking inhabits this poem, replacing the adieus of his other farewells with a glimpse of the 'Jamaica bodies' he will encounter. While what Burns 'really' thought of the West Indies and the slave trade remains a source of speculation, it is clear that he adopted similar poetic strategies as his contemporaries. Like other Scottish poets responding to slavery, Burns used the common approach of pathos, appealing both to slaves and Scots that 'ev'ry heart can feel' the various pains of slavery.

CONCLUSION

Scottish poets in the eighteenth century were particularly well-positioned to write about the issue of slavery, largely due to the extensive Scottish networks in the West Indies and the role of Scots in the British empire. Scots worked on all levels of the plantations and intimately understood the economic and human costs of slave labour. Many Scots were also aware of the Enlightenment denunciation of slavery, as well as key elements that focused on common human emotions excited by the sight of suffering in others. For these reasons, Scottish poetic responses to slavery offer a unique vantage point for analysing rhetorical engagement with multiple audiences. Although there was no unanimous Scottish response to slavery, it is safe to say that many Scottish poets felt compelled to write about the issue, both at home and abroad. This compulsion resulted in many powerfully-imagined poetic responses that helped to signal the end of the slave trade in the Atlantic world.

NOTES

[1] John Ferriar, *The Prince of Angola, A Tragedy Altered from the Play of Oroonoko*, Manchester, 1788, i. For more information on adaptations of *Oroonoko* in the eighteenth century, see Iwanisziw, Susan. *Oroonoko: Adaptations and Offshoots* (Aldersgate: Ashgate, 2006).
[2] Ferriar, 1788, p. i.
[3] Ferriar, 1788, p. i.
[4] Ferriar, 1788, p. 1.
[5] Ferriar, 1788, p. i.
[6] Ferriar, 1788, p. iii.
[7] Ferriar, 1788, p. 1.
[8] Ferriar, 1788, p. viii.
[9] Ferriar, 1788, p. viii.
[10] On the use of sentiment in abolitionist works, see Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
[11] For more on the role of Scots in the Atlantic slave trade see Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and Richard Sheridan, 'The Role of Scots in the Economy and Society of the West Indies', in *Comparative Perspectives on Slavery in New World Plantations*, eds. Vera Rubin and Arthur Tuden (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1977). An extensive survey of European slave trading can be found in Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From Baroque to Modern, 1492-1800* (London: Verso, 1997).

[12] Douglas Hamilton, *Scotland, The Caribbean, and the Atlantic World, 1750-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 3.

[13] Hamilton, 2005, p. 5.

[14] Hamilton, 2005, p. 5.

[15] Hamilton, 2005, p. 78.

[16] Quoted in T.M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 231.

[17] Hamilton, 2005, p. 24.

[18] Devine, 2003, p. 224.

[19] Hamilton, 2005, p. 18.

[20] Karina Williamson, 'The Antislavery Poems of John Marjoribanks', *EnterText* 7.1 (2007), 60-79 (p. 63).

[21] John Gilmore, 'The British Empire and the Neo-Latin Tradition: The Case of Francis Williams', in *Classics and Colonialism*, ed. Barbara Goff (London: Duckworth, 2005), 92-106 (p. 93).

[22] Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), p. 21. See also Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar, and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Keith Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) for information on the global impact of sugar.

[23] Quoted in Williamson, 2007, 63. See Gordon Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart: The Pride and Ornament of Scotland* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003) for more on Stewart's lectures.

[24] Devine, 2003, p. 221.

[25] Richard Sheridan, *The Development of Plantations to 1750: An Era of West Indian Prosperity, 1750-1775* (Barbados, Caribbean University Press, 1970), p. 9.

[26]Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of Plantation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 56.

[27] See Dessens, 2003, p. 57.

[28] See Sheridan, 1973, p. 238.

[29] B.W. Higman, *The Invention of Slave Society, Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society*, ed. Brian Moore et. al. (Barbados: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), 57-75 (p. 60).

[30] Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974), p. 157.

[31] Higman, 2001, p. 60.

[32] Higman, 2001, p. 59.

[33] Richard Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographic History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 128.

[34] Robert Dirks, *The Black Saturnalia: Conflict and its Ritual Expression on British West Indian Slave Plantations* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1987), p. 10.

[35] Dirks, 1987, p. 11.

[36] Sheridan, 1985, p. 130.

[37] Quoted in Selwyn Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775-1810* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), p. 218.

[38] See Devine, 2003, p. 224.

[39] Sheridan, 1970, p. 57.

[40] Sheridan, 1970, p. 57.

[41] Craton differs from most historians on this point. Hamilton, Sheridan, and Devine concur that most Scottish overseers were well-educated by eighteenth-century standards.

[42] Michael Craton, *Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1997), p. 153.

[43] Dessens, 2003, p. 79.

[44] Dessens, 2003, p. 89.

[45] Hamilton, 2005, p. 112.

[46] Devine, 2003, p. 233.

[47] Dessens, 2003, p. 61.

[48] Sheridan, 1985, p. 42.

[49] Sheridan, 1985, p. 133.

[50] Sheridan, 1985, p. 71.

[51] See Devine, 2003, p. 233.

[52] Quoted in Dirks, 1987, p. 28.

[53] See Dirks, 1987, p. 28.

[54] Sheridan, 1970, p. 57.

[55] Sheridan, 1973, p. 360.

[56] Sheridan, 1973, p. 360.

[57] Devine, 2003, p. 221.

[58] See Devine, 2003, p. 222.

[59] Steven Thomas, 'Doctoring Ideology: James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* and the Bodies of Empire', *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4.1 (2006), 78-111 (p. 85).

[60] Thomas, 2006, p. 80.

[61] Devine, 2003, p. 247.

[62] Hamilton, 2005, p. 76.

[63] James Basker, ed., *Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems about Slavery, 1660-1810* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. xlviii. Another recent collection of abolitionist verse from a little later in the period is *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology, 1764-1865*, ed. Marcus Wood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). A more general anthology of contemporary writings about the West Indies is *Caribbeana: An Anthology of English Literature of the West Indies, 1657-1777*, ed. Thomas Krise (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[64] Basker, 2002, pp. 87-88.

[65] Basker, 2002, p. 124.

[66] Williamson, 2007, p. 64.

[67] Basker, 2002, pp. 95-96.

[68] Basker, 2002, p. xli.

[69] Basker, 2002, p. 125.

[70] Basker, 2002, pp. xlvi-xlvii.

[71] Basker, 2002, p. 126.

[72] Basker, 2002, p. 128.

[73] Basker, 2002, pp. 129-30.

[74] Grainger's poem has received much recent attention. See for example Jim Egan, 'The "Long'd-for Area" of an "Other Race": Climate, Identity and James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*', *Early American Literature* 38.2 (2003), 189-212; David Fairer, 'A Caribbean Georgic: James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*', *Kunapipi* 25.1 (2003), 21-28; Shaun Irlam, '"Wish you were here": Exporting England in James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*', *ELH* 68 (2001), 377-96; and David S. Shields, *Oracles of Empire: Poetry, Politics, and Commerce in British America, 1690-1750* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 56-92.

[75] John Gilmore, *The Poetics of Empire: A Study of James Granger's* Sugar Cane (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 14.

[76] See Gilmore, 2000, p. 1.

[77] Gilmore, 2000, p. 1.

[78] Gordon Goodwin, 'Grainger, James', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[79] See Tobias Döring, *Caribbean–English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 64.

[80] Quoted in David Fairer, 'A Caribbean Georgic: James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane*', *Kunapipi* 25:1 (2003), 21-28 (p. 23).

[81] Gilmore, 2000, p. 33.

[82] Gilmore, 2000, p. 35.

[83] Grainger, 1764, p. 126.

[84] See Thomas, 2006, p. 93.

[85] Grainger, 1764, p. 134.

[86] Gilmore, 2000, p. 71.

[87] Grainger, 1764, pp. 161-62.

[88] James Boswell, 'No Abolition of Slavery; or the Universal Empire of Love: A Poem', *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation*, ed. Alan Richardson (London: Pickering Chatto, 1999), Vol. 4, pp. 170-191 (p. 178).

[89] Richardson, 1999, p. 188.

[90] For biographical details, see Williamson, 2007, p. 62.

[91] Williamson, 2007, p. 61.

[92] Basker, 2002, p. 319.

[93] Williamson, 2007, p. 65.

[94] Basker, 2002, pp. 319-20.

[95] Basker, 2002, p. 322.

[96] Quoted in Williamson, 2007, p. 67.

[97] Basker, 2002, p. 396.

[98] Basker, 2002, p. 396.

[99] Basker, 2002, p. 397.

[100] Basker, 2002, p. 397.

[101] Helen Maria Williams, 'A Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave-Trade', in Richardson, 1999, 83-98 (p. 88).

[102] See Corey E. Andrews's forthcoming chapter, 'Robert Burns, Critic', *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns*, ed. Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), for an extended discussion of this letter.

[103] Taken from Annan's Robert Burns Memorial Lecture, available at www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2004/sgsm9112.html

[104] Gerard Carruthers, 'Robert Burns and Slavery', *Drouth* 26 (2008): 21-26 (pp. 22-23).

[105] Basker, 2002, p. 445.

[106] Basker, 2002, p. 445.

[107] Basker, 2002, p. 445.

[108] Basker, 2002, p. 445.

[109] Basker, 2002, p. 445.

[110] Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 272. The poem was composed during the summer of 1786, but it was not published until 1819.

[111] Burns, 1968, vol 1, p. 271.

[112] Burns, 1968, vol. 1, p. 239.

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Occasional Paper: 'But in Glasgow, There are Plantains'

Kei Miller

A little more than 29 years ago I was born in Jamaica. Barring a 3 month fellowship spent last year at the University of Iowa, and 12 months of post-graduate work in England in 2005, the Caribbean had been my home – the place where my mail was delivered – the place where all sounds had and continue to make immediate sense, the place where I never calibrate my accent to make it understood. For those 29 years, I lived in Hope Pastures, a suburb on the outskirts of Kingston. I lived with my parents. I have found that this can be a slightly curious fact to people who live in more developed countries, that at my age I had not yet moved out. It didn't seem so curious to me in Jamaica where the economy doesn't readily give freedom and keys and concrete and windows to young people. But while the exact age for the possibility of fight from nests might differ from culture to culture, its inevitability is consistent, and so as I approach thirty, an urgency had indeed been growing to leave (not necessarily Jamaica), just to create a home that was my own. The big problem was this: I was a writer; I had decided that anything I did had to be connected to writing in some way. In other words, I had decided to be poor.

Three years ago my books up and left me. They had also been in search of their own homes and had little success finding one in the Caribbean though they had tried. Finally, without the need to pay huge fees or join long queues to get the required visa, they moved, one by one, from a computer where they were composed in Hope Pastures, to the United Kingdom. My first poetry collection went to Heaventree Press in Coventry, my short stories went to Macmillan in Oxford, my second poetry collection moved up North to Manchester where Carcanet gave it shelter, and my novel made its home in London with Weidenfeld & Nicolson. Perhaps it was always inevitable that I would follow my work across the ocean, to be closer to them, and so 6 months ago [December 2007], I moved here, to Scotland, to Glasgow.

I map out that timeline to make the simple point that this is all new to me. I know that in me and my biography there is now an undeniable Scottish-Caribbean Connection. I know that I'm looking at Glasgow and understanding it through Caribbean eyes, but I'm not sure the few observations

I've made in six months can come with any real depth or profundity. This is necessarily an essay of first impressions.

My friends became latterly excited that I was moving to Glasgow. When news of the attempted bombing at the airport exploded onto International news, they all called, not so much concerned as they were impressed that I was moving to a city important enough to be the target of terrorists. It seemed to them then that Glasgow, and they apologized for not having known it before, was right up there with New York and London, a bustling metropolitan, a centre of all things new and forward and diverse. I must admit, even my excitement grew. And even now, when anyone in the UK finds out that I'm living in Glasgow, they say 'wow – that's a city with quite the buzz about it, isn't it?'

I'm not sure how to answer that very leading question anymore – how to say, yes and no. You see, I realize I've gotten into the habit of demanding of big and growing cities that they be multi-everything. Multi-cultural, multi-lingual. That they be diverse in economy and the peoples that populate it. Almost, it seems to me now, they be everything but themselves. Perhaps we feel rightly that variety is a sign of health and a multiplicity of ideas. And Glasgow is diverse. The staunch testimonies of people who have lived there for many more years and decades than my own paltry six months, will attest to that. There are Indian restaurants, Asian supermarkets and African communities. In 1999 Glasgow became UK's first official Dispersal City, helping to take some of the overflow of Refugees and Asylum seekers that had been crowding London. So from Vietnamese Boat people, to Bosnians, to Iraqis, Scotland as a whole and Glasgow in particular is more diverse than it has ever been.

'Wow, you live in Glasgow' the people say, 'that's a city with quite the buzz about it, isn't it?'

Yes, is all I say now. And to myself I think further thoughts. I think Glasgow is not like New York or London where I know I can always find a place because in New York are several worlds, and in London there are several worlds, and several countries, a few of which I can belong to. In Glasgow, there is only Glasgow. It is a city which will never stop being itself. You must learn to fit into that city, which doesn't mean you're not welcome. I've had to think, really critically, what it means when I've called back home and said to my inquiring friends, that Glasgow is great, it's fantastic, it's just that it's not exactly the most diverse city in the world. And I realize that the Other doesn't really look for diversity – he is only looking for himself. And in the sudden swell of immigrants and languages, I do not hear the sounds that always make sense to me. Even in the city centre, where on some days on Buchanan Street a black man strums a guitar, and sings reggae songs so convincingly you sometimes, for just a second, think it's a Bob Marley CD

playing – in those spaces where his voices reveals, not the singer who he obviously has adored and mimicked his whole life, but himself, then I realize he isn't from my part of the world at all.

I will tell you something now – and you must not laugh – but my very first impression of Glasgow was of a place that was full of the sun. I had come last year, for an interview at the University, and the day had been uncharacteristically warm. Students were lounged out in the grass, many of them shirtless, throwing Frisbees and eating icecream. As the man who would eventually become my Head of Department walked me across the lawn, he tried to sell the university to me and said, pointing at the sun and the people basking in it – 'Look Kei, this is what Heaven will be like.'

I looked at all the students and frowned. 'So it's true then, sir. There really are no black people in heaven.'

For the first time in my life, I am I living in a place of my own choosing, paying my own rent, buying my own furniture, making my own home. I am from the Caribbean, but I am living In Glasgow, and for this you must say a kind of mantra to survive. Mine goes like this:

In Glasgow my flat is red and orange and green; people who enter say, with delight, what bright Caribbean colours! They are Ikea colours – but it's true, I have been trying to make the place warm with more than just the heat from Scottish Gas. I've been trying to conjure up an Island in that tiny flat. But I also have orange and green bamboo sticks stuck behind the couch, not because they fit into the colour scheme, or because I think this is an aesthetically pleasing choice, but because my mother would be confused by it – her eyes falling glumly onto the protruding sticks, she would say, 'what the hell is that!?' – and this kind of foreignness makes the space my own. There is for every immigrant a complex interaction and negotiation between notions of local and foreign. We might try, of course, to infuse our new homes in a foreign land with a 'local' aesthetic – a sense of what is beautiful that was developed somewhere else far away – from our own 'locals'. But there are parts of ourselves – the ways in which we were always other, in that other place, that can now find the space to flourish – it is our own 'foreignness', a foreignness that was always local to our hearts, that is now growing. I'm perhaps just warning myself to be careful of these categories of foreign and local, Scottish and the Caribbean, when the nature of the individual in his travels, whether actual or virtual, whether across the world or across the road, is to see things, borrow, reject and revise himself and his tastes. What is happening to me in Scotland, as I establish home, is what is happening to everyone in this world everyday – we are still and always becoming ourselves.

In Glasgow you can be sure to see fat women on the streets in small shirts, the equators of their stomachs displayed proudly and they look on you with an attitude that says simply, 'what? What?'

and I smile because I think I've known these women my whole life, and I'm happy I didn't leave them behind in the Caribbean. In Glasgow while you are certain to always see the girth of women, you cannot always see the skies, or perhaps I should say, you cannot always see the sky's blueness. What a miracle it is when that happens. You appreciate it all the more because of how carefully blue is rationed. Whenever they hear my accent in Glasgow, the taxi men tell me what must be a shared joke in this country – they say, son if you don't like the weather, just wait five minutes. In Glasgow, you cannot always see the mountains – but they are there, the Highlands rise magnificently to the north of the city. And the fact of mountains reminds me of the Caribbean I've known. The popular Haitian proverb goes, 'behind the mountains are more mountains' which speaks of course to the never ending of trials some people have had to go through for generations - but for me it was always a simple description of the landscape of the Greater Antilles, so that I can remember vividly as a child visiting the United States, and seeing for the first time, an uninterrupted horizon on every side, feeling suddenly uncomfortable, afraid, exposed, knowing then that I'd always need mountains to hem me in.

Far, far south of Glasgow is a big city called London. There, I do not stop people on the street to ask for directions any more. I did once, and it made me depressed. I was depressed by how straight people held their heads, and how they pretended they didn't hear me as if I was some kind of street beggar. To the North of London, coming back up to Glasgow is another city called Manchester where I lived for a year and fell deeply in love with the city, because at a small moment of confusion at a traffic light, lifting my head to search for a road sign to remind myself which street I was on, two old white women reached up and they touched my hands and asked 'Are you alright, luv?' and the fact that they called me love, a black man who they'd never met, means that I will always hold that city in my heart. But Glasgow managed to top even that. It was probably the alcohol and the sense of conviviality that New Year's Day brings to the Scottish People, but that was my first day in Glasgow, and walking from Byres Road back to Kelvinbridge where my flat was, I had never been hugged by so many strangers in my life – and frankly, I do not care if they were all drunk, I've decided to accept every hug freely given on that night as an 'Aye, welcome, we're quite happy to have you here.'

In Glasgow I am learning how to cook the Caribbean. It is not really that some sudden wave of homesickness has come over me, or that I never cooked before. I've always loved cooking but in the Caribbean I had never tried to cook mackerel rundown, or gungo peas soup, or escoveitch fish, partly because so many people could do it better than I could ever even attempt. In Scotland the Caribbean becomes a cuisine that I can master – and as I said before, I find this is often the case, that we can become our home-selves most in places away from that home – like my middle class Jamaican friends who having migrated to places in the United States like Ohio found the sudden ability to speak a Caribbean dialect they had never dared speak in their very proper

houses, or even like the man I met years ago in Toronto, who had lived there for over twenty years, dismissed the possibility of ever going back to Jamaica, 'Me' he said, 'Mi naah guh back deh? No sah! Mi naah tell nuh lie. Mi hate Jamaica, Mi bitter it. Me'd a nevah guh back!' And in a voice that had firmly rooted itself in a country, he was declaring his exile from it. Impossible, I thought, you've already taken the island with you.

So it is, in my current cooking and the smells that come from my kitchen, I am self-identifying with the Caribbean – but also, it must be said immediately, with Scotland. You see, it is not enough to learn how to make red peas soup – if you are good, you must make it your own, with your own special touch. I am learning to cook the Caribbean with Scottish ingredients, and dare I say, I'm becoming good at it. I think I now prefer my Johnny cakes to anything served at that house in Hope Pastures – something about the self-rising flour from Lidl, the sprinkle of fine cornmeal from the delicatessen on Great Western Road, all these combine to make a fried dumpling so much softer and lighter and sweeter than the version my mother made. When I tell my mother the things I've been making, she says that I am becoming stoosh – because sometimes I can't find the exact things I need so I make do. My first attempt at escoveitch fish, I couldn't find the tiny sprats that we usually deep-fry so I confessed to my mother that I had discovered instead, escoveitch salmon. I told her that curried lamb tastes every bit as good as curried goat – and without the hassle of bones. I have found that my plantain tarts baked in a kind of muffin cup, with amoretta liqueur mixed into the filling and shredded coconut covering the top tastes better than any plantain tart I have had back home. And when I tell my mother this, she asks, 'are there really plantains in Glasgow?'

In Glasgow it is cold. In Glasgow it rains a lot. In Glasgow, when I moved, the trees were like skeletons. In Glasgow the sounds have not begun to pour gently in my ears, rather, they bang hard against the side of my head. But in Glasgow, mother, there are plantains. And it is these simple things. Plantains more consistently than you find them in Jamaica – as if they import them from a place untouched by hurricanes. In Glasgow, I buy plantains from a little shop on Great Western Road called Solly's, and there you can also find scotch bonnet peppers, which I'd never reflected on before – these peppers I've always thought of as Jamaican peppers, but which had obviously reminded someone long time ago, about something he saw in Scotland. These connections go both ways! Mother, at Solly's you can buy fresh goat meat, and packets of Maggie soup; you can get tinned callaloo and tinned ackee, and the fact of these items, these traces of the Caribbean in Scotland, makes me confident there must be others of us here – in Scotland, in Glasgow, even in the West End. I haven't met them yet. Solly's seems to cater to a mainly African clientele. But one day I will go there and linger for a long while, I will stand all day by the shelf where the tinned ackees are kept, and finally when a young woman or man comes in and reaches for a tin, asking the proprietor, 'Uncle– how much yu selling de ackee dem for?' then,

I will introduce myself, one immigrant from the Caribbean to another 'hey, how you been finding it here?'

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Occasional Paper: 'The uneasiness inherent in culture: A note on Michael Visocchi's Memorial to the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade'

Murdo Macdonald

In spring 2007, Scottish artist Michael Visocchi [1] was awarded a public commission to design a memorial artwork to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. This was jointly commissioned by the City of London and Black British Heritage, curated and managed by Futurecity. Talking about this commission Visocchi recalled the teaching of David Harding at the Glasgow School of Art: 'the context is half the work'. Nothing could be truer of this project set in the heart of the City of London, a place which like Glasgow owes so much of its development to the commercial exploitation of commodities such as sugar — commerce made possible by the labour of African slaves transported to the islands of the Caribbean.

The commissioners' key aims were both to recognise the impact of the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, and to explore local connections with slavery and the abolitionist movement within the City of London. The site selected, to the north of Fenchurch Street, near Richard Rogers' Lloyds building and in the heart of the financial district of the City of London, satisfies both aims. Fen Court is the former churchyard of St. Gabriel Fenchurch, destroyed during the 1666 Great Fire of London. Three raised tombs are the only remaining visual evidence of ecclesiastical activity within the site. The immediate physical context of Michael Visocchi's work is thus a lane which contains an old graveyard. A site devoted to matters of life and death within the wider structure of a city which now serves a globalised economy and seems to be unconcerned with either. This is indeed an appropriate place for reflection on slavery, its abolition and its continued existence. Visocchi notes the tombs remaining within the site and thus his thinking had to respect both the abolition of slavery with the actuality of the graveyard. He took the idea of the context being half the work to the Fen Court site and brought it together with his established interest in ecclesiastical architecture. He says: 'I managed to utilise the fact that this previous church site

could in someway enhance the actual sculpture' not least because the abolition movement was centred round the churches of the time. Visocchi became acutely aware that many Quaker abolitionists had met not far from the site of the memorial, and a few hundred yards away was the church where John Newton preached to William Wilberforce.

As Visocchi notes this close Newton-Wilberforce link gives this small area of London something of its abolitionist force. Newton had a strong influence on the young Wilberforce, encouraging him to remain in politics to achieve his goal of abolition, rather than give up in favour of a quieter life in the clergy. Newton's life sums up the ironies of the British slave trade. He was himself forced into service with the Royal Navy at the age of eleven, an early brutalisation which gives context to his later commercial success in that most brutal of naval professions, that of a slave ship captain. But coming close to death in Africa changed the course of his life. He became a Christian and in due course he was ordained. He is well known as the author of the enduring hymn *Amazing Grace*, but more important here is that Wilberforce used Newton's public confession of his role in the slave trade to support the abolition campaign.

Visocchi is keen to stress that the emotional energy of the site comes also from its location close to the disused printing workshop where the abolition movement first met, giving metaphorical emphasis to the importance of print as a medium for the abolitionists. This importance of words – printed, spoken and listened to — also resonates with the poetry of Lemn Sissay which is integral to the sculpture. But for Visocchi the key to the work was in the unlocking of its form. His artwork

incorporates seventeen cylindrical granite columns erected before a granite platform. The columns take the form of stylised sugar cane stems with segmented growth rings, and **[their?]** [they comprise] different widths and heights allude to a congregation of figures positioned in front of the platform. Seventeen reflects the number of years activists lobbied Parliament before the bill was passed in 1807. Visocchi thus found the key to the work in the structure of sugar cane, which in the sculpture itself will be transformed into that enduring stone, granite. 'The more research I did on the whole anti-slavery moment – I was slightly intimidated by it to begin with – but the more I looked into it, the more I realised that there was a potential poetic way into the subject matter through the idea of sugar and simply the architectural shapes of sugar cane itself. It is something I remember when I was a child – getting a bit of sugar cane from a relative, I don't know where they got it …. I remember being fascinated by this plant that could be crushed and distilled and was incredibly sweet.' 'The idea was that I could somehow use these sugar cane shapes so that they could be read on the site as figures, as anthropomorphic forms — and therefore could they not then surround a pulpit as a congregation? Of course the pulpit or certainly the raised platform has associations with the auctioneer's stance, the parliamentary stand and the courtroom dock as well. These are all linked into the story, so this pulpit form has a multiple meaning. The job was then to stylise these canes so that they read as sugar cane but had a more sculptural feel about them, a more volumetric feel. Sugar cane is like bamboo in a way, slightly convex. I have slightly increased the volume of each segment on these columns partly for aesthetic reasons but also to reference the idea of sugar barrels which would have come into the dock near by, so they are very slightly barrel shaped elements; they all sit vertically one on top of the other.'

Although my focus here is Visocchi's sculptural work, the pulpit form within this columnar congregation is another reminder of the importance of the word. Not just for Wilberforce as an orator and parliamentarian, but for Lemn Sissay whose poem is carved into the granite of both the pulpit and, in fragmentary form, into the columns. A line of text adorns each column as a band or collar, further anthropomorphising the columns and calling to mind the physical restraints placed upon the enslaved. The resonance and contrast of this poetry with the engraved words which characterise an old religious site is very clear. In addition the poetry uses the language of the City of London, trading floors and the like. This is, of course, the chillingly dispassionate language of the slave trade, also.

It is worth noting here that Michael Visocchi is a younger member of that remarkable group of Italian-Scots artists that includes such figures as Richard Demarco and Eduardo Paolozzi. Sitting in the Café Royal in Edinburgh we were conscious as we talked that we were within a few hundred yards of Paolozzi's *Manuscript of Monte Cassino*, one of the most uncompromising of all that artist's public sculptures. It has a resonance with Visocchi's London project for it is one of Paolozzi's most deliberate memorial works. The largest element of it is the damaged foot of the being whom Paolozzi took as best representing the condition of the artist, the Greek god Hephaistos, the maker of things. The entire work recalls not only classicism but medieval Latin poetry and the physical and cultural fragmentation of war. Paolozzi knew that the artist and the psychoanalyst work with the same material, what Freud called 'the uneasiness inherent in culture', the paradox of the creativity of the human condition. [2] All artists work within this frame. It certainly applies to Michael Visocchi's abolition memorial, a work shot though by the uneasiness of its historical context and physical place.

A more direct influence on Visocchi than the agglomeration and sorting of cultural fragmentation that characterises the work of Eduardo Paolozzi, is the formal and intellectual elegance of the work of Ian Hamilton Finlay. The classical references that inform Finlay's work are again resonant for the time of the slave trade at its height was also the time when London architects, led by Scots like Robert Adam and James Gibbs, were actively transforming that city into a place of classically proportioned buildings fit for the work and relaxation of the leadership class of an imperial power. The uneasiness inherent in culture again could hardly be clearer. It might be inaccurate to call this an architecture built on slavery, but it is certainly an architecture funded by a careless exploitation of resources, human and otherwise.

As human beings we try to remember these things. One way we do this is through visual art. I would suggest that all works of art can be considered to be kinds of memorial and thus what Michael Visocchi is engaged with here is an activity fundamental to the artist. It is interesting to look at public art in this way, because it allows one to see it as central to the activity of the artist rather than as a kind of civic add-on. That is why such works, if they are any good, are important. They are not only central to the artist, they are central to all of us. They make us reflective. Sometimes the thinking required is regarded by some as so intolerable that the monument is destroyed, as with Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in New York in 1989, or the ancient Buddhist sculptures at Bamiyan in Afghanistan in 2001. But more often those able to contemplate outweigh those who are angered by the challenge of thinking. A work like Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* helps us, slowly, to think. So also with Michael Visocchi's commemoration of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

NOTES

[1] Since graduating from Glasgow School of Art in 2001, Michael Visocchi has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad, and has won many awards and bursaries for his work. In 2004 Visocchi was elected the youngest ever Academician of the Royal Scottish Academy. He currently lives and works in Edinburgh and Angus, Scotland. The present article is based on a conversation with the artist in Edinburgh, on 27 February 2008. Images by courtesy of the artist.
[2] The phrase comes from the title of one of Freud's famous texts: *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (*The Uneasiness Inherent in Culture*), usually translated in English as *Civilisation and its Discontents*.

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Occasional Paper: '"Negro-driver" or "Illustrious Exile": Revisiting *Illustrious Exile: Journal of my Sojourn in the West Indies* (2006)'

Andrew O. Lindsay

In 2004, Kofi Annan gave the inaugural Robert Burns Memorial Lecture on the theme of 'The State of the World and Brotherhood of Man' at the UN headquarters.[1] On that occasion he declared that the words of 'A Man's a Man for a' that' should form the basis of a universal plea for tolerance in the face of prejudice and ignorance. There can be no doubt that Burns articulates the grievances and sorrows of the ordinary individual. In his poetry and correspondence, however, we read of his interests not just in universal 'man' but in the particular politics of the eighteenth century. Writing from Ellisland in 1789, the poet thanked Helen Maria Williams for sending him a copy of her own poem on the Slave Trade.[2] He describes it as 'excellent' and says that he read it 'with the highest pleasure'.[3] During the course of some minor technical quibbles he mentions 'the wrongs of the poor African' and 'the unfeeling selfishness of the Oppressor' engaged in 'this infernal traffic'.[4] One verse of her poem describes a crewman on a slave ship who has a kind heart, for which Williams gives him credit. But Burns questions his place in the poem, for despite his apparent 'generosity' he is 'not only an unconcerned witness but in some degree an efficient agent in the business'.[5] 'Efficient agents' in the slave trade become the target in his vitriolic 'Ode, Sacred To The Memory Of Mrs Oswald Of Auchencruive', referring obliquely to the huge fortune made by her late husband from his trading in slaves: 'See these hands ne'er stretched to save, / Hands that took, but never gave'.[6] In a letter to Dr Moore, Burns wrote how 'she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality',[7] and that she was surely bound for perdition, where her 'Ten thousand glittering pounds a-year' would be of no comfort to her. However, the actual source of her 'bursting purse' is not directly stated.[8]

What can we infer about the attitude of Burns to the politics of slavery? It is reasonable to suppose that he opposed the slave trade. What is not so easy to determine is how he viewed the people he understood as 'Negroes' or 'Africans', their place in the world, and the new world in the

Caribbean that was being made as he wrote. Burns invariably uses the word ‘slave’ in a figurative sense. For example, in a 1792 letter to William Nicol he signed himself ‘thy devoted slave’.[9] The reference to the ‘coward slave’ – in the first verse of ‘A Man’s a Man for a’ that’ – refers to one who would willingly debase himself and allow himself to be dominated by another. Hence his famous rhetorical question, ‘Wha sae base as be a slave?’[10] The use of the word implies an element of complicity and cowardly acquiescence, and may have nothing to do with the contemporary trade in captured Africans.

Questions of slavery and society are contentious, even provocative. But they would be hardly worth raising it were it not for something that happened to Burns in 1786. He had determined to emigrate to Jamaica and his letters indicate that preparations were well under way: he had obtained a post as book-keeper on a sugar plantation near Port Antonio, the passage had been arranged and he had put his affairs in order. He fully intended to sail from Greenock with Captain Cathcart on board the *Bell* on 20 September, bound for Kingston. As it happened, the Kilmarnock Edition of his *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* was a great success; he headed for Edinburgh, and the voyage was forgotten.[11]

A year later, in August 1787 he returned to this aborted future and wrote a long letter to his friend Dr Moore. Thinking back to what might have happened if he had gone to Jamaica, he casually remarks that in that case he would have been ‘a poor negro-driver’:

> Before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my Poems.---I weighed my productions as impartially as in my power; I thought they had merit; and 'twas a delicious idea that I would be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears a poor Negro-driver, or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of Spirits![12]

It is hard for us to reconcile the iconic figure of Robert Burns with such an occupation, and harder still when we think of how, a few years later, he berated Helen Maria Williams for finding excuses for a man who was ‘not an unconcerned witness but in some degree an efficient agent in the business’. How could someone who had willingly signed up to be a ‘poor negro-driver’ later write with such passionate intensity about ‘the unfeeling selfishness of the Oppressor’?

Firstly, there were thousands of Scots already well established in Jamaica. Cromwell had exiled large numbers of Scottish prisoners of war to the colony in the mid-seventeenth century. They were later followed by deported criminals and Covenanters, and finally by those who, like Burns, would have been prepared to travel to the colony as indentured servants, book-keepers, or simply

in search of a better life. In 1763, it was estimated that a third of the white population of Jamaica were Scots.[13] Like Barbados, Jamaica has its St Andrews parish, and Scottish surnames and place-names are common. The plantation at Port Antonio was managed by Charles Douglas, the brother of Dr Patrick Douglas of Old Cumnock in Ayrshire, who owned the plantation – and its slaves – and who offered Burns a position there. So this would by no means have been a voyage into the unknown.

Secondly, it is unlikely that he would have regarded the move from Scotland as a permanent one. Despite Burns's poetic description in 'Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?' heat, humidity, malaria, mosquitoes and yellow fever often made the colonies uncomfortable and potentially hazardous places. He had been told as much by a Jamaican couple whom he had met at the home of Dr Douglas.[14] His salary of £30 was modest, but his accommodation would have been provided, and on the plantation there would have been little opportunity to spend money. It is fair to suppose that, like many other young men of the time, he anticipated making the return trip to Scotland after a few years with a useful sum in his pocket.[15]

Of course, this is pure conjecture: there are no real facts with which to connect Scotland's national poet more solidly with the Caribbean. However, I feel a particularly strong interest in the issue. I am an Ayrshire-born Burns enthusiast who spends substantial periods of time in the West Indies. The publication in 2006 of my novel, *Illustrious Exile: Journal of my Sojourn in the West Indies*, was part of my effort to consider the legacies of colonialism, slavery and Scottish colonial activity.[16] In it I began a creative engagement with the question of how Burns would have reacted to the realities of plantation life. But when I started on the book several years ago the 'negro-driver' reference had not been widely picked up; perhaps it had been avoided. The novel was published by the Leeds-based Peepal Tree Press, home of prize-winning literature from the Caribbean and Black Britain, and I cannot speak highly enough of the support and encouragement I was given by Jeremy Poynting and Hannah Bannister, not to mention their courage in accepting a first book from a white author. In Scotland the reaction has been muted. One newspaper declined to review the book, but hinted that they might carry a prominent news feature on it – but only on the condition that I would go on record as accusing Robert Burns of being 'a racist'. In any construction of Scottish stories there are evasions and omissions, and the slave trade has been one of them. From the outset my novel presents the reader with a familiar character of whom we have preconceptions and expectations. It tells a story, but it also recounts real historical events, and uses Burns in this difficult and controversial context to confront his own assumptions. My 'biofiction' sets Burns on a journey across the Atlantic uncertain of what he is going to find on the other side. He is an idealistic and optimistic 27-year-old who, in his haste to leave Scotland, has not fully thought through the consequences of his decision.

It is written in the first person, in the form of a diary, conveniently ‘discovered’ in the late 1990s. Just as Burns’s letters vary greatly in tone and content, so do the diary entries. My own role in the book is ostensibly that of editor, which gave me the opportunity to supply an introduction, footnotes, a bibliography and a glossary. This was not *faux* scholarship for its own sake: I was concerned that as a piece of historical reconstruction the novel should be as accurate as possible, and that the reader should see it as more than just a work of speculative fiction. The phrase ‘illustrious exile’ is one that Burns uses in verses about Bonnie Prince Charlie entitled ‘Birthday Ode for 31st December 1787’:

> Afar the illustrious Exile roams
> Whom kingdoms on this day should hail,
> An inmate in the casual shed
> On transient pity’s bounty fed
> Haunted by busy Memory’s bitter tale![17]

I felt it was appropriate as a title since on the West Indian plantations everybody was an exile of some kind, voluntarily or otherwise. My fictional version of the poet takes up the phrase, not to describe royalty without kingdom, but an enslaved man within plantation society:

> Illustrious exile on a foreign strand
> Bereft of honour or acclaim;
> No refuge from his dark despair:
> As one who should taste freedom fair
> Is ground to servitude and shame –
> A wretched menial in a foreign land.[18]

In writing the book my models were the published letters of Robert Burns. These are a delight to read. His writing’s deeply personal nature enabled me to create what I hope is a credible Burns *alter ego*. Those familiar with his letters will see where I have borrowed and adapted ideas and turns of phrase. For example, I pick up Burns’s notion of the ‘scale of good wifeship’ that appears in a letter from 1792.[19] But the letters could not provide the full context: in relation to gender it would not have been honest to write this book without including the issue of sexual exploitation in the colonies, which intersected with endemic racism. Jamaica was a pigmentocracy and a succession of mixed-race children could, through generations, lead through a pseudo-scientific spectrum of increasingly ‘acceptable’ skin tones, via mulatto, quadroon, octroon, mustafee and mustafino, to pure white descendants. Burns’s reputation as a lover would have made it easy for me to represent him as an inveterate womaniser. However, Burns is, in my biofiction, shocked by the way in which some of his plantation colleagues treat young black women, but he is unable to

stop this or stand outside it. Plantation society and the plantocracy, together with the enormous commercial interests it served, were infinitely more complex and powerful than Burns – real or fictional – could possibly have imagined. It would have been facile and unconvincing to have my version of Robert Burns confront and defeat slavery, and emerge as a heroic crusader alongside Wilberforce and Clarkson. As a 'negro-driver' and an 'efficient agent in the business' I decided that he would have found it difficult to extricate himself from the structures of plantation society.

From 1786 to 1791 he is at the Douglas plantation at Port Antonio. I portray Charles Douglas as an ameliorationist who detests cruelty. However, Douglas accepts without question the principle that schemes for 'improving' people must inevitably depend on making 'them' more like 'us'.[20] The negative effects of this colonial notion of 'improvement' persist, and Ambrose, a Negro overseer in the novel, takes up this point. He has been a slave in white households and has acquired an education which he has found it necessary to conceal. However, he eventually feels he can confide in Burns. Speaking of white men, he says:

> 'In dressing us in their clothes; making us use their language; converting us to Christianity, and binding us to their laws, they do little more than patronise. You assume, though you may not perhaps realise it, that *equality* means black people resembling white ones so closely that no difference remains, except for the colour of their skin. We must become like them. But does this not also beg the question that the ways of the white man are superior? Does it not deny us the dignity of a culture and an identity to call our own? Would I ask you to adopt the habits of Negroes?'
> 'I had not thought of that.'
> 'Of course not. You assumed it without thinking.'[21]

Ambrose's point is important, for its relevance is not diminished even today, when stereotypical notions of 'them' and 'us' – British and Caribbean – are still to be found. As the same character observes:

> Where is my native land? […] Saint Domingue? France? England? This benighted colony? Or perhaps a place in Africa where I have never been and whose name I do not even know? I have been a stranger in every land I have ever lived in. Where can I call home? Who are my people? […] But now I am just one black man amongst countless thousands who are everywhere and who belong nowhere. We are your slaves for now – mere possessions – but your children shall inherit us and our unmet desires Robert.[22]

This wide and lasting inheritance is something that the colonists and the British public at large had not properly anticipated. Readers of Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* will recognise the literary, cultural and historical implications of 'native land', but the fictional Burns is only able to imagine in the vaguest terms the terrible legacy that slavery would leave.

In Edinburgh the real Burns became infatuated by Agnes M'Lehose – Clarinda – and they had a relationship for about four years, which remained platonic, though Burns would have wished otherwise. Agnes was married, but had left her husband James on the grounds of his cruelty towards her. James had gone to Jamaica where he obtained a position as a lawyer. Agnes followed him there in 1791, hoping to reconcile, but this proved impossible since James had formed a relationship with a free mulatta, and fathered a daughter, Ann Lavinia M'Lehose. I introduce them as characters in the book, where Agnes's arrival at Port Antonio precipitates a disastrous chain of events that compels Burns to leave Jamaica, and the remainder of the story is set in 'Demerary' in the harsher, less regulated Guianas – now Demerara, a region of Guyana, but at that time a Dutch colony. He finds himself in another plantation run by a Scot. Readers should not be surprised by this. In 1800 there were sugar plantations in the colony called Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathspey, Perth, Dundee, Caledonia, Hibernia, Aberdeen, Dunkeld, Montrose, Dumbarton and Annandale, and many of these survive as village names. A Donald Stewart is recorded as the owner of Plantation Dunoon on the West Bank of the Demerara in 1759, the year in which Burns was born.[23] Although the colony was nominally Dutch, there was widespread settlement from other European countries, not least Scotland.

Eventually he flees into the dense rainforest interior, accompanied by a young Amerindian woman who acts as a psychopomp, leading him on a spiritual journey into a real and symbolic 'heart of darkness'. It was hard to avoid being influenced by Wilson Harris here, particularly his use of allusion and metaphor, and his masterly evocation of the interior in *The Guyana Quartet.* As the journal reaches its last few pages the colony has been taken over by the British (who will later name it British Guiana) and he is in the remoteness of the jungle being cared for in a Wai Wai village, in the grip of the fever that will eventually kill him. But for the first time in his life he is truly free. Jeremy Taylor writing about *Illustrious Exile* in the *Caribbean Review of Books* focused on 'the exile or expatriate groping for a new grounding and a new source of being. The book suggests that exile can be left behind, […] and that there are rites of passage for those rare individuals and societies that want to cut away cultural impositions and arrive at some sort of Caribbean authenticity'.[24] At the same time, I want to challenge notions of a narrow authenticity driven by nationalism. Like Jackie Kay, I feel it is important to address the historical omissions in the Scottish collective memory.[25] However, the novel is not always charged with such serious interests. Burns was a master of humour, and I welcomed the opportunity to write such poems as 'Jan van Leyden: A Tale' which is a ribald re-telling of 'Tam 0' Shanter' with a much less fortunate

outcome. There is also an account of Burns's ineffectual attempts to make a haggis with local ingredients.

Recent research continues to reveal links between Scotland and the Caribbean: 'Among the Sutherland-born planters was John Ross of Golspie who, when he died in Inverness in 1849 at his home, Berbice Cottage, was described as "chairman of Caledonian Bank", "founder of Inverness savings bank" and a local benefactor'.[26] He was one of many Scots who had gone to what is now Guyana to make 'very rapid and splendid fortunes'.[27] The place-name Inverness is found in Guyana, in neighbouring Suriname, and twice in Jamaica. Barbados has its Scotland district. Glasgow has its Jamaica Street. There were many who never set foot in the Indies – the merchants, the bankers, the manufacturers; the shipping magnates – who were culpable. My Robert Burns is compelled to question himself deeply on questions of race, slavery and empire and then act. In the book he has a moment of terrible epiphany: 'Slavery cannot be undone. We have sown the seed, and the fearful harvest thereof shall be as bitter ashes in our guilty mouths'.[28] Equally though in this alternative life journey is a drive towards self-discovery and social change. Kofi Annan was right in highlighting the continuing relevance of Scotland's national poet. As we approach the 250th anniversary of his birth, we should remind ourselves of Burns's philosophy, summed up in a letter to Mrs Dunlop in 1789:

> Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or an individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.[29]

NOTES

[1] Kofi Annan, 'The State of the World and Brotherhood of Man', http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sgsm9112.doc.htm. Accessed on 20 July 2008.
[2] Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827), 'On the Bill Which Was Passed in England For Regulating the Slave-Trade' (1788), in *Revolutions in Romantic Literature: An Anthology of Print Culture, 1780-1832*, ed. Paul Keen (Peterborough, ON.: Broadview Press, 2004), p. 323.
[3] Robert Burns, letter to Helen Maria Williams, [late July or early August] 1789, in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, 2 vols, ed. J. De Lancey Ferguson and G. Ross Roy, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 427-431 (p. 427).
[4] Burns, letter to Helen Maria Williams, p. 430.
[5] Ibid., pp. 430-31.

[6] Robert Burns, 'Ode, Sacred To The Memory Of Mrs Oswald Of Auchencruive', *The Complete Works of Robert Burns* ed. James A. Mackay (Ayr: Alloway Publishing, 1986), pp. 342-343.
[7] Robert Burns, letter to Dr Moore, 23 March 1789, in *Letters*, vol 1, pp. 385-386 (p. 386).
[8] Robert Burns, 'Ode, Sacred To The Memory Of Mrs Oswald Of Auchencruive', pp. 342-343.
[9] Robert Burns, letter to William Nichol, 20 February 1793, in *Letters*, vol 2, p. 183-184 (p. 184).
[10] Robert Burns, 'A Man's a Man for a' that', in *Complete Works*, p. 500.
[11] Burns first mentions his forthcoming journey in a letter to John Arnot of Dalquatswood in April 1786: 'I intend to earth among the mountains of Jamaica', *Letters*, vol 1, pp. 33-37 (p. 37). His song 'Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?' is also dated to around this time.
[12] Robert Burns, letter to Dr Moore, 2 August 1787, in *Letters*, vol 1, pp. 133-146 (p. 144).
[13] David Dobson, 'Scottish Jamaica Testaments', *The Scottish Genealogist*, 35.1 (March 1988), www.scotsgenealogy.com/online/scottish_jamaica_testaments.htm. Accessed 20 January 2008.
[14] See Robert Burns, letter to James Smith, [14 August] 1786, *Letters*, vol 1, pp. 47-48. It describes his meeting with 'Mr and Mrs White, both Jamaicans'. Burns had originally intended to travel to Savannah-la-Mar, but they assured him that the overland journey to Port Antonio would be expensive, and that he might run the risk of contracting 'pleuratic fever', *Letters*, vol 1, p. 47.
[15] See Gerard Carruthers. 'Robert Burns and Slavery', *The Drouth*, 26 (2007), 21-26.
[16] Andrew O. Lindsay, *Illustrious Exile: Journal of my Sojourn in the West Indies* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2006).
[17] Robert Burns, 'Birthday Ode for 31st December 1787', *Complete Works*, pp. 303-304.
[18] *Illustrious Exile*, p. 346.
[19] Robert Burns, letter to Mr Cunningham, 10 September 1792, in *Letters*, vol 2, pp. 145-148 (p. 147).
[20] Drumming and dancing were commonly banned as the nervous colonial authorities tried to stamp out any manifestation of 'primitive' culture that physically excited the slaves. See Mark Knowles, *Tap Roots: The Early History of Tap Dancing* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2002) p. 39, where he refers to the contents of the Negro Act of 1740.
[21] *Illustrious Exile*, p. 320.
[22] *Illustrious Exile*, p. 322.
[23] See J. Graham Cruickshank, *Pages from The History of The Scottish Kirk in British Guiana* (Georgetown: Argosy, 1930).
[24] Jeremy Taylor, 'You can't go home again', *The Caribbean Review of Books*, 9 (2006), http://www.meppublishers.com/online/crb/past_issues/index.php?pid=3000&id=cb9-1-28.
[25] Jackie Kay, 'Missing Faces,' *The Guardian*, Saturday 24 March 2007. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview25. Accessed 20 July 2008.

[26] David Alston, ‘A Slave called Sutherland’, *The Northern Times*, 28 September 2007, p. 7, http://www.northern-times.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/2744/A_slave_called_Sutherland....html. Accessed on 13 October 2008.

[27] David Alston, ‘“Very rapid and splendid fortunes”? Highland Scots in Berbice (Guyana) in the early nineteenth century’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 63 (2006 for 2002/4), pp. 208-367.

[28] *Illustrious Exile*, p. 369.

[29] Robert Burns, letter to Mrs Dunlop, 21 June 1789, in *Letters*, vol 1, pp. 418-420 (p. 419).