

**Displaying Caribbean Plantations  
in Contemporary British Museums:  
Slavery, Memory  
and Archival Limits**

---

**Matthew Jones**

*Práticas da História*, n.º 15 (2022): 67-100

[www.praticasdahistoria.pt](http://www.praticasdahistoria.pt)

**Matthew Jones**

**Displaying Caribbean Plantations in  
Contemporary British Museums: Slavery,  
Memory and Archival Limits**

---

Building upon Wayne Modest's work on the representation of Caribbean and enslaved people in the British Museum, this article examines the representation of Caribbean plantations in several British establishments, the Museum of London Docklands, the National Maritime Museum, the Mshed Museum, the Georgian House, and the International Slavery Museum. Drawing on Black feminist works on race, geography and identity, I argue that these museums create a homogenised vision of the Caribbean, which results in a homogenised depiction of enslaved peoples. Specifically, resistance to slavery is presented as a largely masculine endeavour and taking place only in terms of military conflict. Indeed, representations of enslaved women are largely absent in many of these museums. Only the International Slavery Museum achieves a complex rendering of the Caribbean by pushing against the limitations of abolitionist produced representations of the Caribbean and incorporating models and a multifaceted range of testimonies, including that of enslaved women.

Keywords: Slavery; Exhibitions; British Caribbean; Plantations, United Kingdom.

---

**Expondo as plantações caribenhas nos museus britânicos  
contemporâneos: escravatura, memória e a construção da britanidade**

Baseando-se no trabalho de Wayne Modest sobre a representação das Caraíbas e dos povos escravizados no British Museum, este artigo examina a representação das plantações caribenhas em várias instituições britânicas: o Museum of London Docklands, o National Maritime Museum, o Mshed Museum, a Georgian House, e o International Slavery Museum. Partindo dos trabalhos de feministas negras sobre raça, geografia e identidade, defendo que estes museus criam uma visão homogeneizada das Caraíbas, que resulta numa representação homogeneizada dos povos escravizados. Especificamente, a resistência à escravatura é apresentada como um empreendimento largamente masculino e que constitui apenas a forma de conflito militar. De facto, as representações de mulheres escravizadas estão em larga medida ausentes em muitos destes museus. Apenas o International Slavery Museum consegue uma apresentação complexa das Caraíbas ao procurar desafiar as limitações das representações produzidas pelo abolicionismo e incorporar modelos e uma variedade multifacetada de testemunhos, incluindo os de mulheres escravizadas. Palavras-chave: Escravatura, Exposições, Caribe britânico, Plantações, Reino Unido.

# Displaying Caribbean Plantations in Contemporary British Museums: Slavery, Memory and Archival Limits

Matthew Jones\*

In this article, I study displays of Caribbean plantations in British museums to understand how the experiences of enslaved peoples and anti-slavery resistance are presented, and also explore how these depictions are informed by wider representations of the Caribbean. My work draws on Wayne Modest's analysis of representations of the Caribbean in the British Museum, where he concluded that the Caribbean and its Black inhabitants were framed in narrow terms as neither modern nor premodern, but within a space outside of modernity.<sup>1</sup> Such a representation reproduced a colonial framing based on a number of tropes of the Caribbean as a space of natural splendour ready to be colonised and exploited for economic gain. However, this representation of the plantation economies of the Caribbean, and the enslaved people central to them, are ambiguous as they portray the Caribbean as a preserved place of nature rather than as a highly managed and cultivated landscape maintained through the violent control of enslaved people.<sup>2</sup> Whilst many scholars, such as Marcus Wood or Sarah Thomas, have focused on representations of enslaved people through abolitionist imagery in British museums, only Modest has looked at the broader representation of enslaved people within the context of how the Caribbean itself is represented within British museums.<sup>3</sup>

\* Matthew Jones (matthewjonesmuseums@gmail.com). Independent scholar. Original article: 4-7-2022; Revised version: 1-2-2023. Accepted: 1-2-2023.

1 Wayne Modest, "We have always been modern: museums, collections and modernity in the Caribbean," *Museum Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (2012): 86.

2 *Ibid.*, 93.

3 Marcus Wood, *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Anti-Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010); Sarah Thomas, *Witnessing Slavery: Art and Travel in the Age of Abolition* (London: Yale University Press, 2019).

Modest approached the displaying of Caribbean plantations from an anthropological perspective and the specific dynamics of anthropology museums founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exemplified by his case study of the British Museum. Yet, the displaying and representation of the Caribbean in the time of slavery does not occur solely in these anthropological museums. Indeed, following the bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition Act there was a proliferation of museums across disciplines engaging with the histories and legacies of the transatlantic slave trade in Britain. Many museums engaged with representing the Caribbean from the perspectives of social, economic, and cultural histories and in multiple local, national, and international contexts, sometimes working with various communities linked to the histories being represented. Therefore, Modest's work allows us to expand his arguments across a more varied range of museological approaches and ascertain how the Caribbean, and the enslaved people who inhabited it, are presented to contemporary audiences. Revisiting Modest's arguments also allows for discussion of the presentation of the history and memories of transatlantic slavery in the present political moment in Britain.

In contemporary Britain, the history of slavery has increasingly become a site of public debate over how central the history of slavery is to British history generally. Catherine Hall points to how, in the recent past, disavowal and distantiation have been crucial to avoiding the centrality of transatlantic slavery to Britain's history.<sup>4</sup> Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley and Jessica Moody all note the history of slavery threatens a unified vision of Britishness due to its racial, class, and gender contours. To keep this threat at bay, they argue, slavery has to be forgotten and the liberal model of freedom, free trade and democracy are to be remembered instead.<sup>5</sup> The threat the memory of slavery poses can be seen most recently in the aftermath of the toppling

4 Catherine Hall, "Gendering Property, Racing Capital," *History Workshop Journal* 78 (2014): 24-25.

5 Kate Donington, Ryan Hanley and Jessica Moody, "Introduction," in *Britain's History and Memory of Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, eds. Kate Donington, Ryan Hanley, Jessica Moody (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 2.

of the statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader, in Bristol as part of Black Lives Matter protests against ongoing killings of Black people by police forces around the globe. Anxieties about the effect of placing the history of slavery at the centre of British history can be seen in the ensuing ‘culture wars’ which aimed to continue the disavowal of slavery in British history. For example, the National Trust was widely attacked for publishing a report that found twenty-nine of its properties have links to successful compensation claims for slave-ownership and one third can be directly linked to colonial histories generally.<sup>6</sup> Although this started before 2020, the report came under attack by white right-wing commentators who framed the report as attempting to blemish the “native” culture of Britain.<sup>7</sup>

In this context, it becomes important to question displays of slavery and the Caribbean within museums as they are key arenas of public history, where memory and identity are constructed.<sup>8</sup> The notion of collective memory derives from the ideas of Maurice Halbwachs who posits that “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine recollections.”<sup>9</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo has noted the specific dynamics between how the memory of transatlantic slavery operates in museums. Araujo explains that the memory of the transatlantic slave trade is spread over time and space, plural, scattered, subject to change, and constitutes several layers.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, a principal issue is the reliance on visual imagery produced by European artists and European travel accounts means museums rely on interpretations filtered through the beliefs and ideas of Europe in the eigh-

6 Sally Huxtable, Tanya Cooper, and John Orna-Ornstein, “Introduction”, in *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, including Links with Historic Slavery*, eds. Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corrine Fowler, Christo Kefalas, Emma Slocombe (Swindon: National Trust, 2020), 5.

7 Peter Mitchell, “The National Trust is under attack because it cares about history, not fantasy,” *The Guardian*, 2020, accessed 19 November 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/12/national-trust-history-slavery>.

8 Susan Crane, “Introduction: Of Museums and Memory,” in *Museums and Memory*, ed. Susan Crane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 2.

9 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 43.

10 Ana Lucia Araujo, “Introduction,” in *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

teenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup> My intervention contends with these two issues, the layered nature of the memory of transatlantic slavery and the practical difficulties of addressing the Caribbean displays within the framework of the European visual archive.

This article argues that several British museums displays continue to represent the Caribbean as a homogenous space. I show how the ways enslaved peoples resisted slavery also becomes homogenised into a narrow range of representational motifs. Drawing upon a Black feminist approach to understanding the intersecting nature of race, gender, and geography to pick apart these representations, I explain the ways anti-slavery resistance becomes defined in primarily masculine and military terms. Beginning with the Museum of London Docklands, I introduce the core modes of representation used to present the Caribbean as well as my overall analytical framework. In the second section, I broaden my analysis to include museums which operate as national museums and as micro-histories of individuals by setting out case studies of the National Maritime Museum in London, as well as the Mshed Museum and Georgian House in Bristol. Finally, I show how the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool deploys a complex set of competing testimonies to create a multifaceted representation of the Caribbean and the experience of enslaved peoples. By rooting them in a tangible geographic space and as complex affective beings, this museum places enslaved people and the Caribbean at the narrative centre, pushing back against narrow framings of the Caribbean as well as the archival limitations of abolitionist images and text.

### **Anti-Slavery and the “Antispace” of the Caribbean**

The Museum of London Docklands (MoLD) is located in the West India Quays, Canary Wharf, in London, in a former warehouse built to store sugar and other commodities from the British West Indies.<sup>12</sup> The museum opened in 2003 and held a small display on slavery but,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15

<sup>12</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo, *Museums and Atlantic Slavery* (London: Routledge, 2021), 20.

by 2005, the decision was taken to develop a new gallery in time for the 2007 bicentennial commemorations of the 1807 Abolition Act.<sup>13</sup> *London, Sugar and Slavery* focuses on the connections between London as a port city that economically benefitted from transatlantic slavery and a centre of a developing Black diaspora. Ana Lucia Araujo has documented the various ways the gallery connects the material wealth generated from transatlantic slavery to Britain within its displays as well as how the built environment the museum resides in, the West India Quays, has been interpreted in relation to slavery.<sup>14</sup> Araujo has also briefly examined how MoLD displays resistance to slavery through its representations of runaway slaves in Britain, noting how a recreation of London's Legal Quays with posters for runaway slaves highlights how, in European urban environments, West Indian planters, slaveholders, slave merchants and enslaved people worked together.<sup>15</sup> I am also interested in how *London, Sugar and Slavery* depicts the daily lives and mixing of the various groups caught up in the transatlantic slave trade, however, within the context of the Caribbean.

*London, Sugar and Slavery* comprises several displays depicting the Caribbean, its plantations and the people who lived and worked on them. A central image used to provide the background to a display on anti-slavery resistance in the Caribbean is of Maroon leader Leonard Parkinson (Figure 1). Parkinson was a Maroon captain in the Second Maroon War where he was regarded as a skilled young fighter, who was transported to Nova Scotia after the war.<sup>16</sup> The Parkinson image was originally published as a print created by Abraham Raimbach and published by John Stockdale in London, 1796 (Figure 2). The engraving was a frontispiece to Bryan Edwards's *Proceedings of the Governor*

13 David Spence, "Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands", in *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, eds. Laura Jane Smith, Geoff Cubitt, Kalliopi Fouseki, Ross Wilson (London: Routledge, 2011), 152.

14 Araujo, *Museums and Atlantic Slavery*, 23-24.

15 *Ibid.*, 67.

16 Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 221.

*and Assembly of Jamaica*.<sup>17</sup> The version on display is a later watercolour copy of Raimbach's by H. Smith in which the rifle is replaced by a spear and Parkinson is placed towering over a generic background. The smaller image in the MoLD display is a reproduction of François Jules Bourgoïn's painting of Maroons ambushing a plantation estate in the Trelawny Parish where Parkinson operated. The central image depicts Parkinson topless, mid spear thrust, aimed at an out of frame threat against a generic background and sky (Figure 3). It is an image that can also be found in other displays on resistance to slavery in the National Maritime Museum (NMM) in Liverpool and the Mshed Museum in Bristol. As a result, Parkinson becomes a motif to evocate how enslaved people resisted the brutal system of plantation slavery.

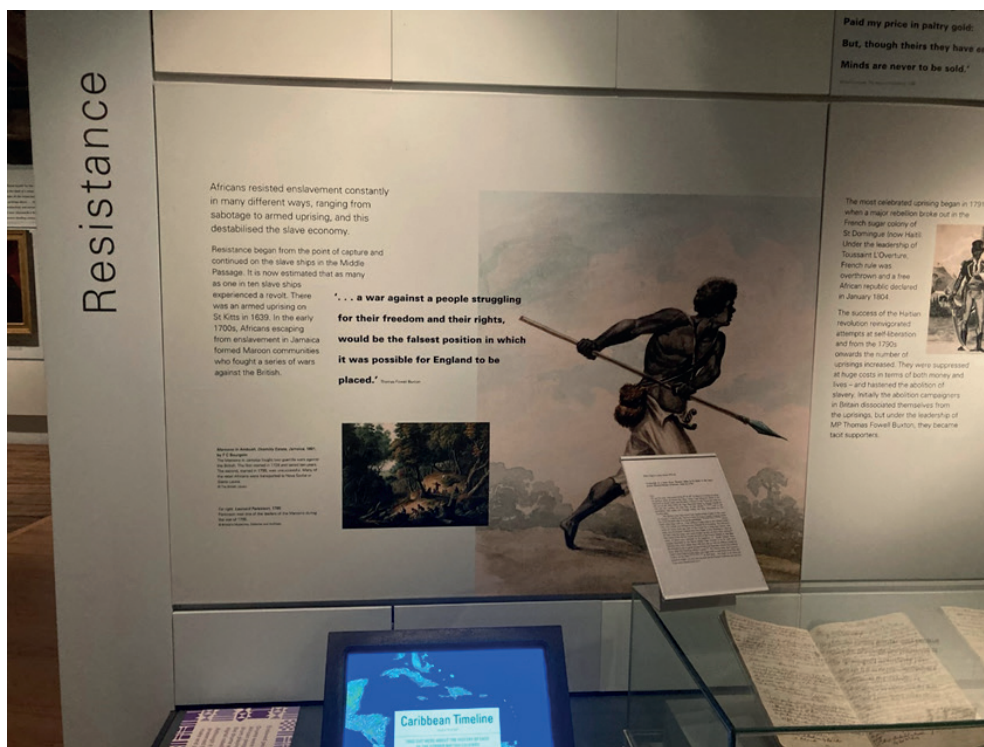


Figure 1: *Resistance display in London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery, 2022*, Photo: Matthew Jones.

17 "Leonard Parkinson, a Captain of the Maroons", British Library, accessed 27 May 2022, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/leonard-parkinson-a-captain-of-the-maroons>.





Figure 2: Abraham Raimbach, *Leonard Parkinson, A Captain of the Maroons; taken from life*, 1796, etching, paper, size unknown, British Library, London, Public Domain.



Figure 3: H. Smith, *Leonard Parkinson, Captain of the Maroons*, after 1796, watercolour, paper, size unknown, Mshed Museum, Bristol.

Parkinson's image also becomes one of the central depictions of the Caribbean in these displays. Yet, the Caribbean presented in the background is a featureless generic space, unconnected to the cultures and people who lived there, a place Édouard Glissant calls an "antispace" in which non-Western space become "anthologised". Anthologised as it is a simple representation that can be reproduced to infinity so as to convey the appearance of diversity.<sup>18</sup> As Samantha Noël argues about tropical locations across Caribbean, African and Asian rainforests, the heterogenous Caribbean becomes reduced to a homogenised landscape, used only to frame a generic image of armed masculine resistance.<sup>19</sup> Regarding the representation of Caribbean landscapes specifically, Mimi Sheller has discerned three broad phases in European representations of Caribbean landscapes. In the seventeenth century, Caribbean landscapes were presented as a "production of nature" consisting of living substances with particular kinds of utilitarian value emerging from the establishment of early plantations and the collecting practices of early natural historians. In the eighteenth century, they became understood as a "scenic economy" associated with the rise of the sugar monoculture in which tropical landscapes came to be viewed through a painterly aesthetic constructed around evaluations of cultivated land versus wilderness. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the prevalent view was that of "romantic imperialism" emerging after emancipation, which stressed the untamed tropical nature of the Caribbean.<sup>20</sup> The landscape Parkinson is in and his own depiction fit into the definition of "scenic economy" as the wild opposite of the cultivated and ordered plantation. The other depictions of the Caribbean in *London, Sugar and Slavery* show the other side of the "scenic economy" centred on representing the processes of growing, cutting, and refining sugar crops with displays specifically on the sugar refining process.

18 Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 159-160.

19 Samantha Noël, *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism* (London: Duke University Press, 2021), 11.

20 Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), 37-38.

How subjective complexity is constructed through the arrangement of people in space is important, as Samantha Noël argues, the assertion and naming of a place is one's geopolitical prerogative.<sup>21</sup> The reproduction of the "scenic economy" view asserts the Caribbean is not Parkinson's space. It rather affirms that Parkinson is part of a feature of an abstracted "antispaces." This view embodies the fears Jamaican planters had of the Caribbean slipping into anarchy through anti-slavery resistance as well as the political revolutions in America and France.<sup>22</sup> The need to provide critical contextualisation when reproducing images from the European colonial archive has been noted by several scholars. Anita Rupprecht has observed that these archives tell us more about how Europeans imagined themselves and their agendas than of a trade deemed "unspeakable" as to be "unrepresentable".<sup>23</sup> An example of what Barnor Hesse describes as the "Western style" of remembering slavery where the empirical memory of slavery is bound up with its forgetting as its re-creations and replicas are made through the abolitionist archive acting in the place of the historical past.<sup>24</sup> However, the images of Parkinson used here as well the "scenic economy" of the Caribbean represent enslavement from the perspective of those who managed and oversaw plantations. Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard points to how the European archive can be subverted through acts of reading against the grain to uncover the anxieties of colonial power.<sup>25</sup> The Parkinson image was originally produced as the frontispiece for *Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica* in 1796 during the time of the Maroon insurrection and so potentially provides an entry point into the beliefs and attitudes of white Jamaicans. But the display

21 Noël, *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism*, 23.

22 Christer Petley, "Slaveholders and Revolution: The Jamaican Planter Class, British Imperial Politics, and the Ending of the Slave Trade, 1775–1807," *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 1 (2018): 58.

23 Anita Rupprecht, "'A Limited Sort of Property': History, Memory and the Slave Ship Zong," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 2 (2008): 266.

24 Barnor Hesse, "Forgotten like a Bad Dream: Atlantic Slavery and the Ethics of Postcolonial Memory," in *Relocating Postcolonialism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 163–164.

25 Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard, "Criticism as Proposition," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 121, no. 1 (2022): 93.

does not ask how this context informs the image, therefore missing the opportunity to read the image against the grain to reveal the anxieties over anti-slavery resistance at the time the image was created and disseminated.

How then is it possible to present the Caribbean as a place where slavery and anti-slavery resistance took place and challenge the limitations of the European visual archive of slavery? The answer arises from questioning how the relationships between people and the place they exist in are presented. In *Demonic Grounds* (2006), Katherine McKittrick examines Black women's geographies in relation to the Black diaspora. Observing how Black women resisted slavery by making spaces where possibilities existed outside of geographies defined by domination, McKittrick develops the argument that when the Black subject is theorised as a concept outside real spaces they continue to be thought of as unitary bodies detached from the legacies of sexism and racism.<sup>26</sup> In this, they are cast as momentary evidence of the violence of abstract space, an interruption in space in which they become metaphorical bodies detached real spatial inequalities.<sup>27</sup> Alongside this, Noël argues that, at the quotidian level, Black Atlantic peoples created alternative geographic formulations in order to have a sense of place, a rootedness which serves to give a notion of sovereignty to create a space in which they could envisage the possibility of freedom and realise the promise of freedom in nature.<sup>28</sup> It then becomes more than just presenting a more diverse range of images of resistance or the Caribbean. Instead, this becomes a task of conveying the myriad everyday decisions taken by enslaved people to resist and endure slavery created alternatives to chattel slavery and the plantation. One example is the complexity of the Maroon's existence, which is overlooked in the MoLD display. Trevor Burnard points to this when he reminds us that the Maroons provided an effective security service for Jamaican planters up until the Second

<sup>26</sup> Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2006), 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Noël, *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism*, 16.

Maroon War as they were paid to capture and return runaway slaves and fought with the British against internal and external threats.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, the introduction of enslaved people's agency has to be undertaken cautiously. Whilst Saidiya Hartman's work in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) does not engage with displays on slavery in museums, it is instructive as it challenges us to think of scenes of plantation life as both scenes of domination and agency. This paradox, Hartman argues, needs to be approached carefully because of the status of the slave as object and subject. The challenge is to imagine a way in which the interpellation of the slave subject enables forms of agency that do not reinscribe the terms of subjugation.<sup>30</sup> The watercolour depiction of Parkinson which emphasises the sensuality of his body endows Parkinson with agency but reduces him solely to his corporeality. Parkinson's actions do not transcend these conditions but rather continue the figurations of power and modes of subjection as well as the mode of the "scenic economy." For Hartman, only by disassembling the "benign" scene do we confront the everyday practices of domination represented in these images. By Hartman's method, we can begin to question if displays on plantations also critically disassemble how plantations are represented, and so also enslaved people, or if they uncritically present the systems of domination of slavery.

One aspect I want to draw particular attention to in MoLD is the lack of engagement with the gendered nature of the plantation and anti-slavery resistance. This omission is significant due to the specific nature of sexual violence in the plantation which acted in concert with race. Alys Eve Weinbaum describes the connection between the two as resulting from when human biological life is commodified through racialisation, reproductive labour is conceptualised as a gendered process where the product is "rightfully" separated and alienable from the bodies that (re)produced them.<sup>31</sup>

29 Trevor Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 124-125.

30 Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54.

31 Alys Eve Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism's Philosophy of History* (London: Duke University Press, 2019), 8.

The violence of forced breeding and, as Weinbaum also notes, how it was resisted, not only shaped the specifics of plantation slavery but of later processes of racialisation more generally. Museums, without engaging with the gendered violence of the plantation, also fail to encounter the complexities of systems of racial categorisation for mixed race peoples, despite their endurance in what Weinbaum calls the aftermath of reproductive slavery.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, this greatly restricts how MoLD can unpick the specific forms of domination enslaved women faced and how the legacies of these forms of gendered and racialized violence continue into the present.

What does the presentation of the Caribbean in MoLD mean for how it presents the Black inhabitants of the Caribbean? The reproduction of runaway slave advertisements serves to convey a complex picture of the experience of enslaved people in Britain. The gallery builds upon this with displays on Black abolitionists in Britain, the post-emancipation history of Black diasporas in London and regular temporary exhibits on different elements of Black British experiences. The enslaved and former slaves are presented as viable geographic subjects in abolitionist Britain. Yet, in the eighteenth-century Caribbean they remain unviable due to the plantation being presented as a homogenised space lacking in a complex representation of the lives of enslaved people, particularly in regard to gender. Consequently, the Caribbean in the present continues to exist, in the words of Wayne Modest, as outside modernity and, as Lisa Lowe reminds us, being intimately linked yet differenced in the archive through an economy of affirmation and forgetting.<sup>33</sup> By not disrupting the narrative economy of the European archive, the potential to tell a more complex history of the Caribbean that illuminates the myriad connections between Britain and the Caribbean is missed. The enslaved peoples continue to be marginalised on the periphery rather than as a constitutive part of the history of the colonial metropole of London.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 4.

### Slippages and potentiality in plantation displays

In the following section, I expand upon the prior analysis by looking at different types and sizes of museum to broaden out these conclusions. As Geoffrey Cubitt has noted, how museums in Britain engage with transatlantic slavery and which narratives are focused on is often shaped by whether it is a local, regional or national museum.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, I concentrate on a museum that aims to represent the national and international story of British maritime history and a historic house museum that focuses on the micro-history of an individual slave owner.

The National Maritime Museum (NMM) in Greenwich, London, has engaged with the history of transatlantic slavery since 1999 when the *Trade and Empire* gallery was created which aimed to include the slave trade in the broader maritime history of the British Empire. Douglas Hamilton described the purpose of this initial gallery to challenge those who most needed challenging through presenting a more diverse narrative of slavery appropriate to a multi-ethnic society.<sup>35</sup> Enslaved Africans were prominently presented, however, it failed to emphasise the role of enslaved Africans in freeing themselves, instead it stressed the role of British abolitionists in the story of emancipation.<sup>36</sup> Like MoLD, this NMM gallery was chosen to be redeveloped for the 2007 bicentennial commemorations. The 2007 gallery, now called *Atlantic Worlds*, focused on the connections between Britain, the Americas, and Africa through overall themes such as migration, exchange, and conflict. Hamilton describes the new gallery as being founded on the principles of accurate scholarship, working with communities, humanising Africans, and the avoidance of white washing the horrors of slavery.<sup>37</sup>

34 Geoffrey Cubitt, "Lines of Resistance: Evoking and Configuring the Theme of Resistance in Museum Displays in Britain around the Bicentenary of 1807", *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 148.

35 Douglas Hamilton, "Representing Slavery in British Museums: The Challenges of 2007", in *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, eds. Cora Kaplan, John Oldfield (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 129.

36 *Ibid.*, 130.

37 *Ibid.*, 132.

The same image of the Maroon leader Leonard Parkinson appears in the plantation lives display in *Atlantic Worlds*, however, it is here contextualised through usage of six images in three connected pairs, mainly focused on Jamaica. Two depict Maroon encampments. The first represents the residence of Leonard Parkinson as leader of the Trelawny Maroons. The second is later, from the 1832 Christmas Rebellion, a Maroon camp in the Jamaican mountains. The next two images are satirical cartoons of the lives of white Jamaican planters published after the 1807 Abolition Act. Each mocks the decadence of planter society. *On a Visit in Style – Taking a Ride – West India Fashionables*, November 1807, depicts enslaved peoples performing unnecessary tasks to serve their white masters. In the top image the enslaved follow the carriage carrying luggage on their heads whilst a white servant sits on the carriage carrying a smaller trunk. The horse is protected from insects with a net to depict how the enslaved were treated worse than domesticated animals. In the background, a sugar refinery is shown to signify this is the Caribbean along with the presence of the enslaved Black people. Again, we see how landscape and geography serve to construct the identities of those represented as here they become metaphors for the corruption of whiteness in the Caribbean.<sup>38</sup> The second print, *Adventures of Jonny Newcome*, comments on the experiences of white planters as again they become corrupted into heavy eating, alcohol consumption and sexual promiscuity by the life of ease and luxury of being a plantation owner.

The final two images represent aspects of work on plantations, interestingly the scenes do not depict Jamaica but are taken from William Clark's *Ten Views in the Island of Antigua*. This depiction is a coloured aquatint of the planting of sugar cane by the enslaved. The image depicts an idealised image of the process, all enslaved persons are fully clothed and the overseers have whips but are relaxed and in conversation despite the specialisation of labour in the production

<sup>38</sup> Kay Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 27.



of sugar involving harsh and militaristic discipline.<sup>39</sup> Looming in the background is the military fort of Monk's Hill, a reminder of colonial control and domination over the landscape that mirrors the domination of Black bodies in the foreground. Additionally a map of the island of Barbados is presented next to the display. The mixing of Jamaica, Antigua and Barbados serves to create a generic plantation view that reduces the heterogeneity of individual Caribbean islands into easily conflated and exchangeable types as the histories of each island are not contextualised in the text of the display, further underlining how the Caribbean becomes an "antispaces" in these displays.

The text employed in the display does provide a more complicated rendering of the lives of enslaved people. Referenced are the quotidian acts of resistance, such as the breaking of tools and refusal to work, as well as hints of the domestic lives of the enslaved men and women, such as the selling of goods grown on "provision grounds" to provide for their own families. Additionally, it points to how African music, dance, and religious ceremonies flourished and evolved into new hybrid forms. Yet, these dimensions are not materially represented in the display where the only objects presented are whip and identification band (Figure 4). As in MoLD, the highly gendered nature of plantation life is never addressed. Take, for example, the map of Barbados used in the display. Barbados, as Hilary Beckles has demonstrated, relied increasingly on importing enslaved women because there were already experienced at agriculture. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, women worked in field gangs and more resources were invested in women's reproduction, particularly after 1807, which led to increased mixing of the enslaved population.<sup>40</sup> The map of Barbados then could have been a point of access to the gendered experience of enslavement rather than a tokenistic representation of a Caribbean Island.

39 Justin Robert, "The 'Better Sort' and the 'Poorer Sort': Wealth Inequalities, Family Formation and the Economy of Energy on British Sugar Plantations, 1750-1800," *Slavery & Abolition* 35, no. 3 (2014): 461.

40 Hilary Beckles, *Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados* (London: Karnak House, 1988), 144.



Figure 4: *Plantation Display in the Atlantic World Gallery, 2022*, Photo: Matthew Jones.

The NMM, whilst producing a more complex understanding of enslaved life, albeit without engaging with the intersections of race and gender, does not disassemble the benign scene of the Caribbean tied up in the creation of the Caribbean as a “scenic economy” by these images. Approaching the display through Saidiya Hartman’s notion of “critical fabulation”, the display re-enforces the view of the Caribbean from the perspective of the European archive. The method of critical fabulation as developed challenges how the archive of transatlantic slavery is presented and narrativized. Building upon Mieke Bal’s notion of “fabula,” a series of logically and chronologically related events caused and experienced by actors, Hartman takes these basic elements of storytelling by presenting sequential events in divergent stories from contested points of view.<sup>41</sup> By doing so, it challenges the status of events, disrupting the authorised account, in order to imagine what might have been.

41 Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts”, *small axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 11.

Consequently, this process can make visible the production of disposable lives in both transatlantic slavery and history.<sup>42</sup> In the NMM, the authoritative narrative of slavery presented by the European archive of transatlantic slavery is only challenged in a limited sense, through text that suggests a more complex understanding of plantation life. As seen, there is still the creation of the Caribbean from a solely European point of view as an “antispaces,” where the ways gender and race intersect are absent.

In short, while the NMM provides a more varied image of the Caribbean and plantation life, it does not draw attention to what Beth Fowkes Tobin notes as the tensions and contradictions of colonialist practises that were negotiated on an aesthetic level.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, without close interrogation, these images again act as a “true” visual testimony of slavery just as they did during the abolitionist period. Sarah Thomas has extensively detailed this phenomenon arguing that, when understood as visual testimonies, these images gain an epistemological authority which makes them believable despite them representing various ideological agendas.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the ideological underpinnings of the images of the Caribbean presented in *Atlantic Worlds* gallery are only ever partially challenged, and even then the vision of the Caribbean presented is still a generic, masculine one.

The Mshed Museum in Bristol approaches the archive of slavery through a complex rendering of the social groups entangled in transatlantic slavery. The city itself has an intricate relationship with how historical connections to transatlantic slavery have been engaged within its museums and heritage sites. Madge Dresser has detailed how Bristol’s remembrance of slavery is informed by its relationship to Edward Colston, a slave trader and MP for the city who used the wealth generated from transatlantic slavery to create philanthropic projects in the

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Beth Tobin, *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century Painting* (London: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Thomas, *Witnessing Slavery: Art and Travel in the Age of Abolition* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), 4-5.

city.<sup>45</sup> As Colston's involvement in slavery became more widely known throughout the 1990s through the work of Black activists and educators, there were increasing demands for the city's museums to engage with these histories.<sup>46</sup> In 1999, the exhibition '*A Respectable Trade?*' *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery* opened in the city and following this, in the 2000s, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum opened with displays dedicated to transatlantic slavery. While the museum has since closed, '*A Respectable Trade?*' became a permanent display within Bristol Industrial Museum before it also closed in 2006.<sup>47</sup> The Industrial Museum display was redeveloped for a new social history museum, the Mshed Museum, located in a former warehouse on Bristol Docks which was opened in 2011.

The Mshed Museum display on Bristol's relationship with transatlantic slavery differs from the other displays examined here as it focuses on the different social groups caught up in transatlantic slavery. The section "Enslaved Africans" provides the strongest insight into a more complex rendering of the quotidian lives of the enslaved in the Caribbean (Figure 5). Whilst again we find Clark's *Ten Views from Antigua*, ledgers of slaves belonging to planters, iron shackles, and the famous print of the *Brooks*, we also find a calabash bowl and a coconut scrubbing brush. The bowl and the brush point to the cultural and social lives of the enslaved away from the European visual archive of slavery. The calabash bowl represents the continuity of African cultural forms across the Atlantic as the enslaved often carried such objects with them while also conveying a continuity into the present as such calabash containers are still used. The coconut scrubbing brush is notable as it is an object that shows an aspect of the daily life of the enslaved that is not torture equipment. The use of these items creates

45 Madge Dresser, "Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol", *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 224.

46 Ana Lucia Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory: Engaging the Past* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 71-72.

47 For more on the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, see: Corinna McLeod, "Negotiating a National Memory: The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum", *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 2, no. 2 (2009): 157-165.

a form of Hartman’s critical fabulation and points to a way of fulling McKittrick’s demand for Black subjects to be presented as viable geographic subjects foregrounded in a temporal experience of the world. These are objects not used on enslaved peoples but by them, to shape their worlds. Yet, this is still in tension with the Caribbean as an “anti-space” as the calabash bowl and coconut brush are not located within a specific context or history. Olivette Otele noted this was also a problem with the prior display in the Industrial Museum where objects from Africa were placed in a context that denied historical specificity.<sup>48</sup> Now, in the Mshed museum, objects from the Caribbean are placed against generic referents such as whips, shackles and ledgers, which also deny the enslaved people who lived in the Caribbean historical specificity.



Figure 5: *Enslaved Africans Display in Mshed Museum, 2020*, Photo: Matthew Jones.

48 Olivette Otele, “Bristol, Slavery and the Politics of Representation: The Slave Trade Gallery in the Bristol Museum”, *Social Semiotics* 22, no. 2 (2012): 162.

The denial of historical specificity to the enslaved in the Caribbean is continued into the vision of the Caribbean given in the Georgian House which is framed from the perspective of the plantation owner. The Georgian House, built in 1790, in central Bristol was owned by John Pinney, a slaveholder and sugar plantation owner. Ana Lucia Araujo notes, despite the Georgian House not being a slavery museum, the building is associated within Bristol to the slave trade through public knowledge of John Pinney.<sup>49</sup> Araujo continues that the museum does not bring these connections to the surface until a small display on the second floor detailing Pinney's sugar plantation in the West Indies.<sup>50</sup> Overall, Araujo concludes the museum, despite this one display, does not engage sufficiently with the lives of the enslaved on the property rendering them an "invisible detail."<sup>51</sup> I want to extend this analysis to show how this approach of making the enslaved invisible continues into the representation of the plantation in the second floor display.

The plantation display details the development of the plantation, how Pinney operated it and how enslaved people were brought and sold (Figures 6 and 7). Part of the display does chart instances of abuse and resistance on the plantation in the panel titled "How Were Slaves Treated?" yet this is immediately framed against Pinney's "humane" approach to slavery emphasised in the first line, inoculating Pinney and the Georgian House from the worst of the gratuitous violence of slavery (Figure 7). A large part of the display is concerned with viewing slavery from the perspective of Pinney, with a text panel titled "Slavery through Pinney's Eyes." Knowledge of the enslaved people on the plantation is reduced to a list of names of all known enslaved people who worked on the plantation. The most detail is given about the life of Pero Jones, an enslaved servant who worked and lived in the Georgian House and after whom a footbridge is named in Bristol docks. However, as Araujo notes, there are no references in the museum to these

49 Araujo, *Museums and Atlantic Slavery*, 30.

50 *Ibid.*, 31-32.

51 *Ibid.*, 32.

servants or their legal status.<sup>52</sup> In the plantation display more details are given about Pero, that he had a sister called Nancy who was owned by Edward Huggins. Yet, this is presented in euphemistic terms such as “Pero stays with John Pinney” and this his sister was “unfortunate” to be owned by Huggins. Behind this language is hidden the complex lives of both Pero and Nancy as well as the structures of racial and gendered violence that operated both in the Caribbean and Britain to enslaved peoples. The Caribbean in this display is the background to Pinney’s business acumen and the perceived misfortune this was connected in some way to slavery. Therefore, it contrasts greatly to the display in the Mshed museum which treats the enslaved as a distinct social group and at least attempts to narrate slavery from their perspective. Understandably, this reflects the Mshed museum being a social history museum and the Georgian House being a historic house museum, yet both are owned and run by Bristol Council.



Figure 6: *Plantation Display in The Georgian House, 2021*, Photo: Matthew Jones.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

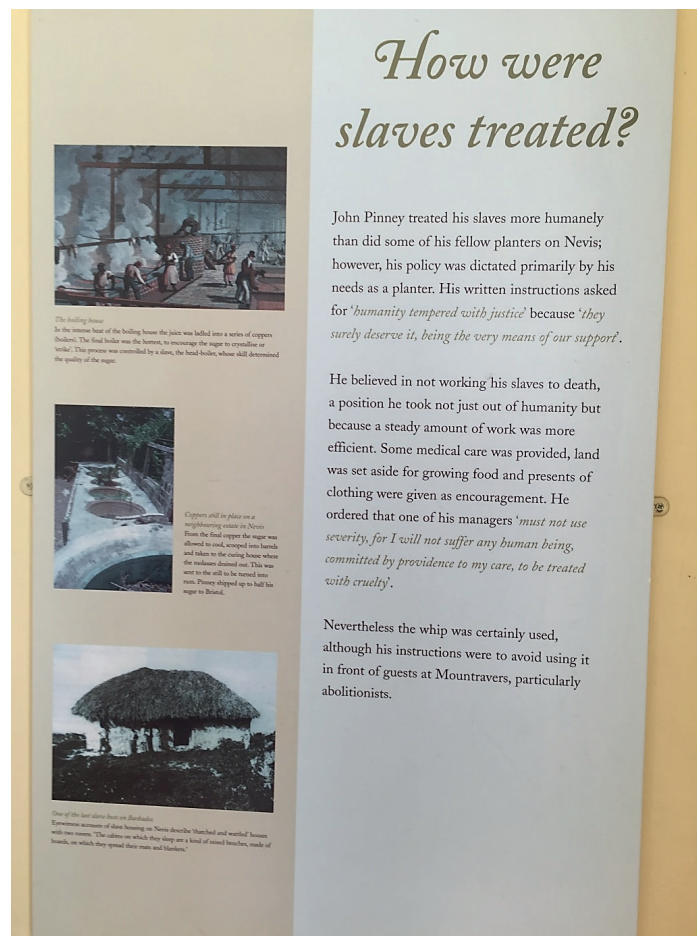


Figure 7: *Detail of Plantation Display in The Georgian House, 2021, Photo: Matthew Jones.*

Nevertheless, I have demonstrated in this section how common approaches have developed to displaying enslaved peoples and the Caribbean across a range of British museums. Similar images of the “scenic economy” Caribbean, taken from the European visual archive of slavery, have been used across all of them. Yet, how these images have been contextualised varies from example to example. The act of contextualization has been shown to not guarantee that the images and those represented within them are critically framed. In the most extreme case of the Georgian House, the Caribbean plantation and the enslaved who worked on it are presented solely from the view of the plantation owner, resulting in his worldview being uncritically reproduced. In the



NMM and MoLD more work has been done to challenge the authority of these images to represent the Caribbean plantation and those who lived and worked on them. Nevertheless, they continue to present the Caribbean as a homogenised “antispaces” where the benign scene of enslavement is not deconstructed, resulting in the enslaved person in the Caribbean also remaining a generalised type.

### **Connecting race and gender in the plantation display**

My final case study of the International Slavery Museum (ISM) explores what occurs in a display when the barriers to historical specificity are removed through a multifaceted engagement with testimonies of plantation life as well as a more fully rendered presentation of the spatial make-up of a plantation. The ISM opened in 2007, however, it had already developed over time from a series of displays beginning in the 1980s. The earliest attempt to create an exhibition on Liverpool’s connections to transatlantic slavery occurred in the Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1987. The Gifford Commission, set up to examine race relations in Liverpool at the time, found the exhibition glossed over the city’s role in the slave trade resulting in the seriousness of the connection to slavery being lessened.<sup>53</sup> A new gallery was designed to address this, called the *Transatlantic Gallery: Against Human Dignity*. Consequently, as Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace argues, the new gallery focused on understanding, analysing and commemorating historic and modern slavery on various levels of local, national and international histories.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, as Jessica Moody notes, the displays more immediately reflected local concerns as it was responding to the exclusion of Liverpool’s Black community from the museum.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, in the *Transatlantic Gallery*, the Caribbean became a backdrop for a series

<sup>53</sup> Robin Ostow, “The Museum as a Model for a Human Rights-Base Future: The International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, UK”, *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 12, no. 3 (2020): 622.

<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *The British Slave Trade & Public Memory* (New York; Columbia University Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>55</sup> Jessica Moody, *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, ‘Slaving Capital of the World’* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), 165.

of ethnographic dioramas of chattel slavery. Wallace asserts that these displays ran counter to the humanising mission of the gallery as they presented enslaved peoples as frozen in time and as vessels in which the viewer could embody the experience of enslavement only from the perspective of pity. The enslaved were understood through the violence they experienced and, by extension, the Caribbean became a backdrop in which only violence occurred.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, viewing the gallery through the work of McKittrick, the enslaved represented are unviable geographic subjects as the place they are in defines them, rather than showing them as makers of their own spaces.

The ISM, which began development in 2005 in order to open for the bicentenary commemoration in 2007, takes a different approach as the museum wanted to use the history of slavery as a method for achieving emotional engagement with the “black experience” to create compassionate engagement and not the embodied empathy seen in the prior gallery.<sup>57</sup> The approach began with the original gallery, as curator Anthony Tibbles described how the 1994 gallery sought to make “white people not leave feeling guilty and black people feeling angry”.<sup>58</sup> For the ISM, former curator Stephen Carl-Lokko terms it in a different way. Carl-Lokko did not want the museum to become a “shop of horrors” for the visitor, instead, it should be a memorial museum and a social justice museum.<sup>59</sup> An affect centred approach was not developed by the museum alone. As Araujo reminds us, the museum was unlike any other at the time in its engagement with Black communities to conceive its permanent exhibitions.<sup>60</sup> The desire to create complex affective representation as a pedagogical tool is also expressed by the first director of the ISM, and then later director of National Museums Liverpool,

<sup>56</sup> Wallace, *The British Slave Trade & Public Memory*, 41.

<sup>57</sup> Moody, *The Persistence of Memory*, 166.

<sup>58</sup> Anthony Tibbles, “Interpreting Transatlantic Slavery: The Role of Museums,” in *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity*, ed. Anthony Tibbles (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 2005), 131.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Carl-Lokko, “International Slavery Museum: Museums and Sensitive Histories”, *Africultures* 91, no. 1 (2013): 76.

<sup>60</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 115.

David Fleming, who argued that social history should be approached with emotion at the core as museums are ultimately about people, and people communicate on a deeper level through emotion.<sup>61</sup> How then does the affective focused curatorial approach shape its displays of the Caribbean plantation and the experience of life on a plantation?

The *Enslavement and Middle Passage Gallery* typifies the affective curatorial approach. The gallery, which tells the story of enslaved Africans across the Middle Passage and into the Americas, uses dark and saturated spaces as well as sound and image to encourage visitors to connect their emotions with the enslaved African men, women and children.<sup>62</sup> Within the gallery is a diorama of a plantation based on a sugar estate at Estridge in St Kitts (Figure 8). The model is surrounded by touchscreen displays through which visitors can highlight different sections of the plantation and learn more about the types of people who lived and worked in each. By using interactive technology, the display allows an expanded description and understanding of life on the plantation. For example, one section is the Slave Village. Here the domestic and private lives of the enslaved are given space. There are several themes one can explore such as “Village Conditions,” “Social Interactions,” “African Beliefs,” and “Entertainment.” Each theme then contains smaller passages from primary sources about former slaves and their masters. Consequently, the representation of the lives of enslaved people is tied to a specific geographical space, in which they inhabit, shape and have agency over. As such they become viable geographical subjects in McKittrick’s sense as they are no longer abstracted bodies disconnected from the real inequality and real agency. Similar concretisation also occurs to the plantation overseers. In the section on the Great House, the lives of plantation overseers, their racial beliefs, and how they interacted with their slaves is fully developed. Here the effect of gendered violence is also encountered. In the section “Dining

61 David Fleming, “The Emotional Museum: The Case of National Museums Liverpool”, in *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives*, eds. Jenny Kidd, Sam Cairns, Alex Drago, Amy Ryall (London; Routledge, 2017), 35.

62 Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 166.

Conversations” is a theme on “Unsuccessful Breeding” in which Sampson Wood, a plantation manager in Barbados, reflects on how, despite great care being taken, the enslaved women have been unsuccessful in breeding and childbirth. Whilst there are many complexities hidden underneath such language, pointing to what Weinbaum described as the (re)productive processes that alienate and racialize enslaved mothers and their children.

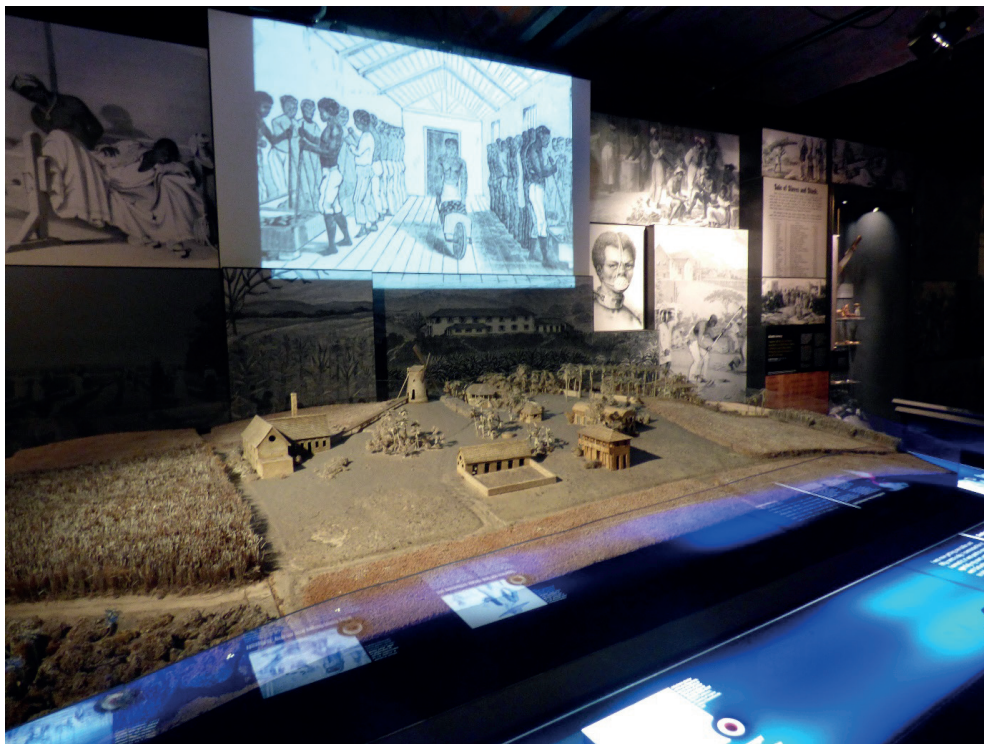


Figure 8: *Plantation Display in the International Slavery Museum, 2022*, Photo: Matthew Jones.

Through the application of various technologies to provide an expanded range of testimonies of life on plantations, the ISM roots individual actors into the world by their affective understandings of it. Leanne Munroe terms this style of curatorial practice as “narrativization,” the process in which a matrix of affective entanglements is constructed to anchor the emotional in the material foundations of

history.<sup>63</sup> In the case of the plantation display, each testimony is rooted to a tangible location on the model in front of the visitor. As a consequence of this approach, museums can adopt a “grounded” model in which mediations of the bodily experience of enslavement can be not just a physical experience for the viewer but additionally a thoughtful experience.<sup>64</sup> An important result of an affective focused approach is how it can then challenge the limitations of archives as it expands what is sayable through representation. As Munroe points out, in displays on transatlantic slavery, silence will always be a fundamental problem as the experience of slavery is beyond living memory, therefore, any usage of historical testimony will always be full of silences. Yet, Munroe posits, silences are also crucial in making meaningful and affective narratives.<sup>65</sup> Take, for example, the silence of the experience of enslaved women in the displayed quote by Sampson Wood on “Unsuccessful Breeding”. The gendered experience of slavery is not expressed by those who experienced it. However, when read in tandem with testimonies from enslaved women in the section on the Slave Village, the reader is equipped with a broader contextual knowledge as well as an alternative narrator to read the anxieties of colonial power into the archive.

The plantation model is contextualised in the gallery against a wall layered with images of violence towards enslaved peoples, plantation landscapes, and work scenes produced by European artists across the Caribbean as well as North and South America. As such, it creates an understanding of the various ways violence was enacted on the enslaved, the various spaces it occurred in and the brutality of plantation work. Araujo has brought attention to these displays noting the victimisation of enslaved Africans is a major theme of this gallery and rightly notes that, following Achille Mbembe, when the slave enters

63 Leanne Munroe, “Constructing Affective Narratives in Transatlantic Slavery Museums in the UK”, in *Heritage Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, eds. Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton, Steve Watson (London: Routledge, 2017), 115.

64 *Ibid.*, 116.

65 Leanne Munroe, “Negotiating Memories and Silences: Museum Narratives of Transatlantic Slavery in England”, in *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance*, eds. Alexandre Dessingué, Jay Winter (London: Routledge, 2016), 176.

the museum through the use of torture equipment, they often become the footnote of someone else's story.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, by making them the centre of the narrative this is avoided. Sarah Thomas agrees in arguing the display epitomises the dangers of scenes of subjection that Hartman warns about as it centres the suffering of the Black body as the spectacle of transatlantic slavery.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, Thomas finds this is necessary as we (white people) need to see how we are implicated in this violence. However, on the other hand, it avoids falling into the dangers Hartman warns of as it is strategically re-contextualized in the museum. By placing these images in contestation with the testimonies described above, as well as later displays in the museum on the civil rights movement and anti-racist activism, Thomas suggests these images become subverted through an acknowledgment of the pain they contain.<sup>68</sup>

Many of the analyses of the ISM described above focus on the important political questions of how to display the violence of enslavement, how to challenge nationalistic and triumphalist stories of abolition, and how to fill archival silences through contextualisation. As Araujo notes, drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's collective memory, when the memory of slavery enters the public space, it is used as a political instrument to build, assert and reinforce identities.<sup>69</sup> The display on life on plantations in the ISM serves to bolster Black identity, Jessica Moody notes how the ISM was created through extensive consultation with Liverpool's Black community, and uses Black experience to challenge dominant narratives.<sup>70</sup> The role of complex displays of the Caribbean, the plantations and the lives of those entangled within it, is then central to this political task of the slavery memorial museum as a social justice museum. The display provides the grounding for complex affective narratives of the plantation to be shown. In doing so, it

66 Araujo, *Museums and Atlantic Slavery*, 56.

67 Sarah Thomas, "Violence and Memory: Slavery in the Museum," in *World Art and the Legacies of Colonial Violence*, ed. Danial Rycroft (London: Routledge, 2013), 121.

68 *Ibid.*, 124.

69 Ana Lucia Araujo, "Introduction," 1.

70 Moody, *The Persistence of Memory*, 163.

creates viable geographic subjects that have both agency within spaces of domination but also the ability to make their own spaces away from domination. The danger of the benign scene of subjection is countered through this more complex representation of the Caribbean beyond the “scenic economy” as it conveys how enslaved people were caught in the paradox of being both objects and people and how this was negotiated and resisted.

In comparison to the previous case studies, the ISM plantation display most extensively engages in Hartman’s framework of critical fabulation as it repeatedly narrates the experience of enslavement in the Caribbean from the perspective of the enslaved. The Caribbean is represented as a heterogenous space, presenting a multiplicity of actors, including the gendered experience of enslavement. It is through focusing on the affective experience of enslavement that the display presents a range of multiple narrators and perspectives that are otherwise not present in the other case studies analysed in this article. Additionally, unlike the Mshed museum, this counter-narration to the European archive does have sufficient historical specificity through the materialisation of the plantation in the form of the model and the interactive displays.

## **Conclusion**

Across these case studies, I have described how each represents the Caribbean in the time of slavery, and the consequences this has for how the Caribbean plantation and the enslaved peoples who lived and worked on them are presented. By exploring how the Caribbean is presented, I have argued that it is common across British museums for the Caribbean to be represented from the perspective of Europeans, replicating the imagined geographies of the Caribbean of the time of slavery into the present for contemporary audiences. Consequently, whilst the importance of the economics of the plantation system for the British empire are gestured at, the Caribbean itself, and consequently the enslaved, are presented generically as an “antispaces.” Of particular

importance is how enslaved resistance becomes generalised into certain motifs pushing the complex histories of resistance in the Caribbean outside of the boundaries of British history.

Returning to Modest's arguments about the representation of the Caribbean in anthropological museums, it has been seen that museums across disciplines also produce homogenised version of the Caribbean and its inhabitants. Moreover, as I have shown, this is particularly limited in terms of representations of enslaved women and the gendered experience of slavery and racialisation. Across these case studies, the representational problem is often ascribed to the limitations of the European visual archive produced during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the final case study of the ISM has shown this does not have to be. When combined creatively and thoughtfully with varying modes and means of communication, different forms of historical testimony combine to render a complex picture of the Caribbean and the various groups who lived and worked there. The ISM, in its desire to be a museum of social justice, specifically uses multiple perspectives in dialogue with each other to equip museum visitors with the tools to think critically about the narratives being communicated to them. The importance of which is underlined by Catherine Hall who argues complex representations of the history of slavery may awaken a sense of the responsibilities of "implicated subjects" who have benefitted culturally, economically, and politically from the hurt slavery inflicted on others, in the hope that change can happen in the present.<sup>71</sup>

71 Catherine Hall, "Doing Reparatory History: Bringing 'Race' and Slavery Home", *Race and Class* 60, no. 1 (2018): 15.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Araujo, Ana Lucia. "Introduction." In *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, edited by Ana Lucia Araujo, 1–11. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Araujo, Ana Lucia. *Museums and Atlantic Slavery*. London: Routledge, 2021.
- Araujo, Ana Lucia. *Slavery in the Age of Memory: Engaging the Past*. London: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- Beckles, Hillary. *Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados*. London: Karnak House, 1988.
- British Library. "Leonard Parkinson, a Captain of the Maroons." <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/leonard-parkinson-a-captain-of-the-maroons>.
- Burnard, Trevor. *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.
- Carl-Lokko, Stephen. "International Slavery Museum: Museums and Sensitive Histories." *Africultures* 91, no. 1 (2013): 70–77.
- Crane, Susan. "Introduction: Of Museums and Memory." In *Museums and Memory*, edited by Susan Crane, 1–16. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Craton, Michael. *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*. London: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Cubitt, Geoffrey. "Lines of Resistance: Evoking and Configuring the Theme of Resistance in Museum Displays in Britain around the Bicentenary of 1807." *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 143–164.
- Davis, Janae, Alex A. Moulton, Levi Van Sant, e Brian Williams. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene,... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises." *The Geography Compass* 13 (2019): 1–15.
- Donington, Kate, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody. "Introduction." In *Britain's History and Memory of Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, edited by Kate Donington, Ryan Hanley, Jessica Moody, 1–18. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.
- Dresser, Madge. "Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol." *Slavery & Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 223–246.
- Fleming, David. "The Emotional Museum: The Case of National Museums Liverpool." In *Challenging History in the Museum: International Perspectives*, edited by Jenny Kidd, Sam Cairns, Alex Drago, Amy Ryall, 32–41. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. Translated by J. Michael Dash. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1996.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992.
- Hall, Catherine. "Gendering Property, Racing Capital." *History Workshop Journal* 78 (2014): 22–38.
- Hall, Catherine. "Doing Reparatory History: Bringing 'Race' and Slavery Home." *Race and Class* 60, no. 1 (2018): 3–21.
- Hamilton, Douglas. "Representing Slavery in British Museums: The Challenges of 2007." In *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, edited by Cora Kaplan, John Oldfield, 127–144. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Hartman, Saidiya. "Venus in Two Acts." *small axe* 12, no. 2 (2008), 1–14.
- Hesse, Barnor. "Forgotten like a Bad Dream: Atlantic Slavery and the Ethics of Postcolonial Memory." In *Relocating Postcolonialism*, edited by David Theo Goldberg, Ato Quayson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Huxtable, Sally, Tanya Cooper, and John Orna-Ornstein. "Introduction." In *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, including Links with Historic Slavery*, edited by Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corrine Fowler, Christo Kefalas, Emma Slocombe. Swindon: National Trust, 2020.

Kriz, Kay Dian. *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2006.

McLeod, Corinna. "Negotiating a National Memory: The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum." *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 2, no. 2 (2009): 157–165.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. "New Legal Protection for England's Heritage." 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-legal-protection-for-england-s-heritage>.

Mitchell, Peter. "The National Trust is under attack because it cares about history, not fantasy." *The Guardian*, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentis-free/2020/nov/12/national-trust-history-slavery>.

Modest, Wayne. "We Have Always Been Modern: Museums, Collections and Modernity in the Caribbean." *Museum Anthropology* 35, no. 1 (2012): 85–96.

Moody, Jessica. *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Munroe, Leanne. "Negotiating Memories and Silences: Museum Narratives of Transatlantic Slavery in England". In *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance*, edited by Alexandre Dessingué and Jay Winter. London: Routledge, 2016. Munroe, Leanne. "Constructing Affective Narratives in Transatlantic Slavery Museums in the UK." In *Heritage Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, edited by Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, 114–132. London: Routledge, 2017.

Noël, Samantha. *Tropical Aesthetics of Black Modernism*. London: Duke University Press, 2021.

Ostow, Robin. "The Museum as a Model for a Human Rights-Base Future: The International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, UK." *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 12, no. 3 (2020): 620–641.

Otele, Olivette. "Bristol, Slavery and the Politics of Representation: The Slave Trade Gallery in the Bristol Museum." *Social Semiotics* 22, no. 2 (2012): 155–172.

Parsard, Kaneesha Cherelle. "Criticism as Proposition." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 121, no. 1 (2022): 91–108.

Petley, Christer. "Slaveholders and Revolution: The Jamaican Planter class, British Imperial Politics, and the Ending of the Slave Trade, 1775–1807." *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 1 (2018): 53–79.

Robert, Justin. "The 'Better Sort' and the 'Poorer Sort': Wealth Inequalities, Family Formation and the Economy of Energy on British Sugar Plantations, 1750–1800." *Slavery & Abolition* 35, no. 3 (2014): 458–473.

Rupprecht, Anita. "'A Limited Sort of Property': History, Memory and the Slave Ship Zong." *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 2 (2008): 265–277.

Sheller, Mimi. *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Spence, David. "Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands." In *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, edited by Laurajane Smith, Geoff Cubitt, Kalliopi Fouseki and Ross Wilson, 149–165. London: Routledge, 2011.

Thomas, Sarah. "Violence and Memory: Slavery in the Museum." In *World Art and the Legacies of Colonial Violence*, edited by Danial Rycroft, 113–132. London: Routledge, 2013.

Thomas, Sarah. *Witnessing Slavery: Art and Travel in the Age of Abolition*. London: Yale University Press, 2019.

Tibbles, Anthony. "Interpreting Transatlantic Slavery: The Role of Museums." In *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity*, edited by Anthony Tibbles. Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 2005.

Tobin, Beth. *Picturing Imperial Power: Colonial Subjects in Eighteenth Century Painting*. London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Wallace, Elizabeth Kowaleski. *The British Slave Trade & Public Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve. *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism's Philosophy of History*. London: Duke University Press, 2019.

Wood, Marcus. *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Anti-Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

#### Referência para citação:

Jones, Matthew. "Displaying Caribbean Plantations in Contemporary British Museums: Slavery, Memory and Archival Limits". *Práticas da História, Journal on Theory, Historiography and Uses of the Past*, n.º 15 (2022): 67-100. <https://doi.org/10.48487/pdh.2022.n15.30055>.