

## Lines of resistance: evoking and configuring the theme of resistance in museum displays in Britain around the bicentenary of 1807

Geoffrey Cubitt\*

University of York

### Abstract

On the basis of an extensive survey of museum displays and exhibitions dealing with slavery and abolition, put on at the time of the 2007 Bicentenary of the Act of Abolition, this article explores, and suggests ways of analysing, the ways in which museums in Britain presented, evoked and interpreted the theme of resistance or rebellion by the enslaved. By recognising the importance of resistance, museums aimed to affirm the agency of the enslaved and to counterbalance the celebratory tendencies of abolitionist historiography; they were also, in some cases, seeking to position themselves less as authoritative purveyors of knowledge than as arenas for the articulation of competing narratives and the negotiation of social and cultural identities. Yet museums' efforts to foreground the theme of resistance were often limited in character: the importance of the theme was announced, but treatments of it were brief and schematic, dependent on a limited range of materials, and not always convincingly woven into the larger narratives of the exhibition. The article explores some of the reasons for this, before analysing in more detail the presentational strategies of a number of exhibitions which did develop a larger or more complex handling of the theme of resistance. Here the analysis uses a distinction between 'gestural' and 'expository' presentational emphases to map similarities and differences between these displays, and in particular between the strategies two new and major permanent exhibits opened in 2007: the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the re-designed Wilberforce House Museum in Hull.

**Key words:** 1807 bicentenary, slavery, Britain, resistance, rebellion, abolition, enslavement

During the later part of his career, the distinguished anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) lived at Playford Hall, near Ipswich. Given this local connection, it is not surprising that the Ipswich Museum should have been one of the many local or regional museums up and down Britain that felt it appropriate in 2007 to mark the Bicentenary of the Act abolishing British participation in the slave trade with an exhibition. Nothing in the title of that exhibition – 'Abolition! The Thomas Clarkson Story' – would have led visitors to expect anything other than a standard piece of abolitionist celebrationism, strongly focused on the local celebrity. Yet visitors who approached the exhibition space, having skirted the life-size model of a woolly mammoth that dominates the museum's central hallway, may well have been momentarily disconcerted. For the figure looming in view, alongside the exhibition title on the opening display panel, was not that of Clarkson himself, but the muscular, semi-naked figure of a gun-swinging African male, unidentified at this point but recognizable perhaps to well-informed visitors as a contemporary image of Leonard Parkinson, one of the leaders of the Jamaican maroons in the conflicts of the 1790s – unmistakably a figure not of white abolitionist philanthropy, but of black armed resistance. And if the visitor's gaze swung in the direction suggested by Parkinson's depicted movement, there at the bottom of the ramp leading to the exhibition area, was Parkinson again, his image reversed and disappearing round the corner, as if leading the visitor on, or perhaps – it might be imagined – withdrawing stealthily to a further position of ambush [Figure 1]. Above the extended arm of this second image, as the visitor might see on drawing closer, was displayed a quotation: 'Slaves, there is your Liberty!' – words attributed here to the Haitian



*Figure 1. Ipswich Museum: 'Abolition! The Thomas Clarkson Story' exhibition. Entrance to exhibition, with image of Leonard Parkinson*

revolutionary leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, referring not to some charter or legislative act by which liberty was to be conferred, but to firearms, the weapon by which that liberty was to be seized and upheld by the enslaved themselves.

If abolition, with its resonances of peaceful reform, was the titular theme of the Ipswich Museum's exhibition, it was references to resistance – and to armed resistance in particular – that framed the approach to that theme that the visitor was initially compelled to follow. By contriving this thematic juxtaposition in its opening passages, the exhibition unsettled the pattern of mental connections that its professed intention to focus on 'the Thomas Clarkson story' might otherwise have been expected to call into play. For the Clarkson story has not, in the past, been a story into which the theme of black resistance has been closely woven.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of telling it has been to celebrate the heroic qualities of moral dedication, determination, and campaigning energy of a prominent white abolitionist (aptly described by Coleridge as 'a moral steam-engine').

If the aim was sometimes also to rescue Clarkson's reputation from perceived neglect, and to challenge the domination of abolitionist memory by the more conservative and parliamentary figure of William Wilberforce, such adjustments took place within the frameworks of a celebratory abolitionist historiography that Clarkson himself had done much to establish (Clarkson 1808), the essential tendency of which was to enclose the credit for the abolition of the slave trade, and later of transatlantic slavery more generally, within the charmed circle of a pantheon of largely white and male British abolitionist heroes (Oldfield 2007; Wood 2000; 2010a; 2010b), only recently extended to include occasional women like Hannah More and Elizabeth Heyrick, and a few formerly enslaved Africans like Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugano. The dominant image of the enslaved African, as construed within this celebratory tradition, remained the one familiar from Josiah Wedgwood's famous abolitionist medallion of the kneeling slave imploring freedom with the words 'Am I not a man and a brother?' – the slave

as passive victim, humbly soliciting a freedom that is for whites to bestow, not for blacks to seize (Wood 2000: 35-89; Webster 2009).

The exploits of a Toussaint L'Ouverture or of a Leonard Parkinson had little place in this historical vision: they belonged to other stories, told by other voices, listened to by other audiences. Caribbean writers like C. L. R. James and Richard Hart, who made it their business in the mid-twentieth century to resurrect and narrate the histories of slave resistance and rebellion, were deliberately reacting against what they saw as the damaging denial of African agency in the mainstream tradition. James's aim in writing the history of the Haitian Revolution was to write a book 'in which Africans or people of African descent instead of constantly being the object of other people's exploitation and ferocity would themselves be taking action on a grand scale and shaping other people to their own needs' (James 1980: v), while Hart saw writing and lecturing on the history of rebellions in Jamaica as a way of counteracting the 'historical legacy of self denigration' bequeathed to the descendants of the enslaved not just by enslavement but by a post-emancipation educational system 'designed to promote a loyalty to the prevailing imperialism and an acceptance of the domination of whites over blacks' (Hart 2002 [1985]: i). In the later twentieth century, while British public memory of slavery maintained its focus on the personalities and achievements of abolitionists like Wilberforce and Clarkson and Buxton (Tyrrell and Walvin 2004; Oldfield 2007; Dresser 2007), the memorializing elements in Caribbean nationalisms gave increasing symbolic centrality to heroes of resistance: Queen Nanny, Sam Sharpe, Bussa, Cuffy (Kofi), Toussaint L'Ouverture, Delgrès and others. (Beckles 2001: 92-4; Lambert 2007, Dubois 2000; Thompson 2006).

Recognition of African resistance to slavery is, of course, no longer confined to the Caribbean or to an explicitly activist historiography. A succession of historians (e.g. James 1980 [1938], Aptheker 1943, Genovese 1979; Craton 1982; Heuman 1986; Price 1996; Geggus 1983; 2001; 2002; Dubois 2004) have worked not just to highlight particular rebellions, but to build a broader conceptual understanding of resistance as an integral and constitutive feature of the larger history of transatlantic slavery. Recent indicators of this include the publication of a two-volume *Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion* (Rodriguez 2007), and the prominent inclusion of 'resistance' in the title of Yale University's influential Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, founded in 1998. If one strand in what is now a substantial historiography has continued to concentrate on episodes of violent collective resistance or rebellion, others have broadened the focus to include a host of less overt and in some cases more individualistic forms of resistance - sabotage, theft, slowness at work, illicit damaging of property, damaging of food, running away, feigning illness, infanticide - as well as resistance to cultural oppression through the maintenance of African religious belief and cultural forms. Work on these multiple forms of 'everyday' resistance has deepened historians' understanding both of the contexts out of which open insurrection might arise and of the extent to which even those who did not openly rebel were involved in complex struggles to maintain a degree of control over their own identity and existence. Although the study of 'everyday' resistance also raises complex questions about how resistance should be defined, and about the elusive relationship between resistance and accommodation (e.g. Paquette 1991), the general tendency of much recent historical work has certainly been to reinforce the idea of resistance as an endemic and destabilizing feature of life within slave-based societies - and by extension, to argue the need for resistance to be recognized as a crucial element in the causal matrix that produced abolition and emancipation. As two prominent Caribbean historians argued in a volume marking the Bicentenary: 'The campaign to end the transatlantic trade in Africans to the [Caribbean] region cannot be separated from the resistance struggle of the Africans themselves' (Beckles and Shepherd 2007: xiii). Such an understanding, by now highly familiar among British as well as Caribbean academics, is clearly in tension with the tendency - still common in British public discourse on the eve of the Bicentenary of 1807 - to view the history of slavery essentially through the history of white British abolitionism.

When the Ipswich Museum introduced prominent references to Haitian and Jamaican struggles for freedom into its rendition of 'the Thomas Clarkson story', it was thus not simply making the limited biographical point - indicated later in the exhibition - that Clarkson himself had shown some sympathy for the Haitian cause; it was also taking up a critical stance against the once entrenched and still influential separation between narratives dealing, on the one

hand, with abolitionist achievement, and on the other, with the resistance and rebellions of the enslaved. The Ipswich Museum was, however, by no means the only museum which sought, in 2007, to find appropriate ways of balancing or conjoining these histories. No less an institution than the British Museum placed the concept of resistance alongside that of remembrance in the title of the day of events and activities (Day of Resistance and Remembrance) that it hosted to mark the anniversary of the Act of Abolition on 25<sup>th</sup> March, and references of some kind or other to resistance by the enslaved were a common feature of the exhibitions on slavery or abolition mounted by museums, libraries, art galleries, archive centres and other institutions across the country in the Bicentenary year.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, museums were participants in a broader movement towards a recognition of slave resistance, which was reflected also – though scarcely uniformly and in the eyes of some still very inadequately (Wood 2010a: 182-353; 2010b) – in parliamentary speeches, governmental Bicentenary literature, and other cultural products of the Bicentenary year (Paton 2009: 279-80).

The present article draws on the materials and information relating to exhibitions that I and colleagues at the University of York gathered as part of the AHRC-funded '1807 Commemorated' project on which we worked during 2007-9.<sup>3</sup> Members of the project team visited over sixty exhibitions or displays relating to slavery and abolition during the Bicentenary year itself, and gathered data on numerous others. Exhibitions studied ranged from new permanent displays like the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, the re-opened Wilberforce House Museum in Hull, and new permanent galleries in the National Maritime Museum ('Atlantic Worlds') and the Museum of London Docklands ('London, Sugar and Slavery'), via large-scale temporary exhibitions like 'The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People' at the Palace of Westminster, 'Breaking the Chains' at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, and the 'Equiano' exhibition at the Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery, to smaller exhibitions, travelling displays or museum trails in regional or local museums or other institutions. On the basis of this wide-ranging survey, this article will explore, and suggest ways of analysing, the varied ways in which museums and other exhibiting institutions presented the themes of resistance and rebellion as part of their more general presentation of the histories of transatlantic slavery and abolitionism during the Bicentenary year. In doing so, it will seek also to suggest some of the complex relationships between historical understanding, political agendas and exhibitionary practice that the occasion of the Bicentenary brought into evidence.

With relatively few exceptions, the curators and project managers responsible for planning exhibitions on slavery in museums in Britain during 2007 were not otherwise specialists in the history of transatlantic slavery or of African and Caribbean societies. Though they sometimes had the benefit of specialist advice from historians acting as academic advisors (Prior 2007), their own sense of the importance of the theme of resistance probably owed as much to a more general political awareness and to contacts with representatives of local black organizations and communities as to a detailed previous knowledge of recent historiography. The decision to organize public commemorative activity around the Bicentenary of the 1807 Act was a contentious one. If prominent voices in Parliament and in the media were still keen to celebrate the achievements of abolitionism, many observers, both within and beyond the African and African-Caribbean communities, were deeply wary of what they feared would be a 'Wilberfest' – a self-congratulatory commemorative event, that would prevent rather than promote a due acknowledgement of Britain's long and sordid active participation in transatlantic slavery, of the major contribution which this had made to the nation's social, economic and cultural development, and of the painful and enduring legacies of racism and social exclusion which it had bequeathed.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, giving weight to the theme of resistance was important for at least three reasons. First, stressing the endemic character of resistance was a way of counteracting any residual tendency there might be in sections of British society to justify or excuse transatlantic slavery as a paternalistic system that, at its best, had had the capacity to elicit acquiescence, and even sentimental attachment, on the part of the enslaved: the figure of the resister gives the lie to the figure of the faithful slave retainer. Second, telling the facts of resistance was a way of according enslaved Africans an all-important agency in their own story, restoring their dignity as human actors and thus allowing their lives to become, in spite of the suffering and degradation heaped upon them, a source of pride and inspiration, rather than of shame, to their



descendants in present-day society. Recognizing the importance of resistance in the past might also, for some, be a way of emphasizing the importance of continuing resistance to racism in the present. Third, an emphasis on resistance was a way of deflating the celebratory tendencies of white abolitionist commemorative culture, replacing a story of passive victims and disinterested liberators with a story of struggle and survival in which the roles of victims and resisters would be intimately entangled, and in which white abolitionists would no longer be the central figures.

In responding to these concerns, museum professionals were also, in many cases, participating in a movement - within museums themselves, and within museum studies - away from traditional conceptions of the museum as an 'authoritative' formulator and purveyor of knowledge, towards a conception of them as arenas for the articulation of competing narratives, for the negotiation of social and cultural identities, and for the embracing rather than the circumvention of political contentiousness.<sup>6</sup> The Bicentenary of 1807, with its challenge of confronting the issues posed by a 'difficult' history, offered museums an opportunity, embraced with varying degrees of alacrity, of engaging more actively and less conservatively than hitherto with the complex politics of social diversity, of ethnic identity and of racism in contemporary Britain. The responsiveness of museums to the theme of resistance, and their integration of references to it into their larger narrative and presentational structures, were a key element in their response to this opportunity.

The great majority of the exhibitions included in the '1807 Commemorated' project's survey showed an awareness of the need to say something about slave resistance or rebellion. What they said was almost always in conformity with a general understanding that may be summarized as follows:

- that the history of transatlantic slavery incorporates, as an integral element, a history of resistance;
- that this history of resistance is co-extensive with that of slavery itself: wherever people were enslaved or held in slavery, resistance occurred;
- that this resistance was both individual and collective, and was a resistance both from without and from within: a resistance to the initial threat of enslavement, and a resistance by the already enslaved, on board ship and within plantation society;
- that this resistance was multiple and varied in its forms - sometimes open and violent, sometimes clandestine or surreptitious, potentially at least encompassing everything from the massacring of plantation owners to the tacit maintenance of African cultural traditions;
- that although the more open efforts at rebellion were usually unsuccessful, and were harshly repressed, these efforts at resistance had a powerful cumulative effect, challenging slavery's moral legitimacy, impairing its economic efficiency, and destabilizing slave-based societies, in ways which contributed powerfully and materially to the advent of abolition.

But if the desire to recognize and affirm the significance of resistance by the enslaved was evident in the majority of exhibitions, a study of these exhibitions also testifies to the limited outcomes of this desire. The importance of resistance was announced, but treatments of it were often brief, schematic rather than substantial, and were not always convincingly woven into the larger narratives that exhibitions articulated. Scarcity of resources played a part here. Institutions planning exhibitions for 2007 had, in many cases, limited resources - of time, space, money and staff - for gathering information and materials (Prior 2007: 206). Aware of the need to educate a public many of whose members might have little knowledge of the basic chronologies of slavery and abolition, and of Britain's participation in them, museums had to be selective in deciding which aspects of this history to develop in any detail. For many local museums especially, the priority in 2007 - and the task to which locally available material and archival resources most readily lent themselves - was to show how the histories of slavery and abolition were locally relevant, by detailing, for example, the involvement of local landowners in plantation agriculture, the connections of local industries to the African and Caribbean trades, or the presence of enslaved or formerly enslaved Africans in the local population.<sup>7</sup> Coverage of

aspects of slavery's history that were less immediately linked to English local history, of which the history of resistance by the enslaved is an obvious example, might be sketchy by comparison.

Even where integrating the theme of resistance into the history being presented was a higher priority, the relative scarcity of objects through which to explore this dimension of slavery's history posed frequent problems. If it is true in general that the injured and dispossessed are 'object-poor' (Williams 2007: 25), the surreptitious character of everyday resistance and the brutal crushing of most efforts at open insurrection, together with the tendency of collectors in the past not to have viewed the material cultures of Caribbean slave societies as worthy of serious attention (Tibbles 2005: 138; Prior 2007: 208), meant that few exhibiting institutions in Britain could readily lay hands on objects possessing an obvious direct association with the theme of resistance by the enslaved. A few might deploy documents from the archives of slave-owning society, like the map of St James's Parish, Jamaica, showing the sites of the numerous plantations destroyed in the 1831 rebellion, which the Norfolk Record Office included in its exhibition 'Norfolk and Transatlantic Slavery'. Others, like the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, might fill a showcase with objects emanating from Caribbean maroon communities – communities whose existence was a testimony to successful resistance, even if only some of the objects bore directly on this theme. More often, however, the scarcity of objects pressed museums wishing to emphasise the themes of resistance and rebellion towards a reliance on a handful of easily available and reproducible visual images. Sometimes, these depicted episodes from insurrectionary history: scenes from the Revolution of Saint-Domingue, or images of maroon ambush. More usually, they were images of individuals: Leonard Parkinson strode purposefully across the panels of numerous exhibitions; Toussaint L'Ouverture (chosen by Anti-Slavery International to illustrate the theme of resistance in a series of posters widely used in exhibitions), Sam Sharpe and Queen Nanny also made frequent appearances, as did the anonymous insurgents of Blake's famous engravings illustrating Stedman's account of operations in Surinam. For the most part, however, the use of these figures was emblematic: the images were seldom related to the detailed contexts of the particular conflicts in which the individuals depicted had been participants, but served instead as symbols of resistance in general.

The use of symbolic or emblematic figures or visual images reduced the historical complexities of resistance to an easily digestible kind of generality. Textual references to resistance, while less overtly symbolical, were often marked by a similar compression. Most exhibitions alluded in general terms to the importance, the persistence and the ubiquity of slave resistance; few, however, devoted a very substantial proportion of their textual space to developing this theme in detail, to analysing the particularities of resistance in specific cases, or to exploring the complex relationships between resistance and other thematic strands. References to resistance, while affirmatively phrased, were often short, and in many cases confined to a single thematic panel – an encapsulation that might have the effect of highlighting the theme symbolically, but that did not necessarily assist visitors in connecting it to other areas of discussion. The following passage, from a panel in the new 'Atlantic Worlds' gallery at the National Maritime Museum, is typical of the condensed and generalizing style of many such presentations:

Through opposition and resistance, enslaved people fought to retain their families, cultures, customs and dignity. They resisted from the moment of capture onwards and throughout their lives on the plantations. Resistance took many forms: from keeping aspects of their West African identity and traditions alive – in language, music and spiritual beliefs – to escaping and plotting uprisings to overthrow the system.

On the plantations they broke tools, damaged crops and feigned injury or illness in order to frustrate plantation owners and their ambitions for greater profits. By growing and selling extra produce on their meagre 'provision grounds', they could also earn money and provide for their families.

At other times, they made bids for freedom by escaping and running away. Sometimes these 'runaways' grouped together and built their own independent, self-sufficient communities of resistance. Some of these were known as 'maroons'.

Large-scale organized uprisings were a common reaction to the cruelties of the slave system. Potential and actual armed resistance made violence a defining fact of life in the American colonies. It also contributed to the ending of the slave trade and eventually slavery itself.

Open rebellion, flight, economic sabotage, and cultural resistance are blended together here in a vision of ubiquitous and multifaceted resistance. While the prose distinguishes different kinds of resistance, its function is less to differentiate historical scenarios – by indicating, for example, how differences in topography or in demographic, administrative and cultural structures or in political and military conjunctures might make certain kinds of resistance more practicable or more successful under some conditions than under others – than to totalize and to generalize, to establish resistance as a universal and essential feature of enslaved experience, a behavioural category co-extensive with slavery itself. The generalized level at which textual passages like this were pitched left no space for any idea that collaboration or broken-backed compliance might in some cases have been included in the range of enslaved experiences, and little room in practice for any investigation of the complex relationships between resistance and accommodation in everyday existence. Nor was there space in this lumping vision of resistance for investigation of possible conflicts of interest among those resisting slavery in the various ways listed – for recognizing, for example, the fact that maroon communities, acclaimed in some exhibitions as supreme examples of successful resistance, were also, in some cases, involved in recapturing runaways or in suppressing rebellions among the still enslaved. Presentations of this kind helped to advertise the exhibiting institution's awareness of the need to foreground African agency and endurance, and may have helped visitors to appreciate the diversity of forms that resistance could take, but their capacity really to unsettle previous assumptions was bound to be limited by their compression.

A number of museums or exhibiting institutions, especially among those with the resources to mount larger exhibitions, did, however, succeed in giving the themes of resistance and rebellion a stronger presence and a more complex development. In analyzing such cases, it may be helpful to draw a distinction – and explore a tension, or in some cases a balance – between what I shall call gestural and expository presentational emphases. By an expository presentation of a theme, I mean one that prioritizes the detailed substantiation of that theme, through the incorporation of factual detail relating to it into museum displays and into general narratives, over more polemically assertive affirmations of that theme's importance. In a straightforwardly expository presentation, the factual materials are incorporated into analytical structures that are pre-established or conventional, and that it is not the function of the presentation either to advertise or to call in question. Typically in such cases, the presentation of these materials will be couched in a relatively 'neutral' or 'objective' discursive idiom, creating the impression of an easy assimilation of fresh material into established structures of knowledge, rather than in an idiom that stridently draws attention to how these structures of knowledge may be either contested or reaffirmed. The visitor exposed to this expository kind of presentation will tend to experience the process as one of being informed, perhaps enlightened on points of detail – of having his or her awareness or understanding incrementally deepened, diversified or extended – rather than one of seeing basic assumptions radically unsettled, or alternatively forcefully reiterated. Gestural presentations, by contrast, are deliberately framed as dramatic interventions in debate, or in the politics of meaning. Whatever their specific content, such presentations are characteristically emphatic – designed not simply to challenge pre-existing perceptions or assumptions (or perhaps to re-affirm ones that are perceived to be under challenge), but to draw attention to the fact of this challenging or re-affirming, and to draw out its significance. Museums dispose of a range of methods for generating such gestural effects – through emphatic language, through the use of personal voices, through symbolism, through special effects and dramatic juxtapositions of one kind or another. All of these involve

departures from the more 'objective' or 'neutral' mode of presentation associated with the expository style.

The difference between the gestural and the expository is not a difference between the ideological and the non-ideological: the ostensibly 'neutral' and informative manner of expository presentations may conceal assumptions just as ideological as those which gestural presentations more overtly proclaim. Nor are the two categories mutually exclusive: more or less any substantial exhibitionary presentation will have a measure both of gestural and of expository significance. In the case considered here, the very fact of an exhibition including a panel on the theme of slave resistance might possess a certain gestural significance as the marker of a departure from traditional abolitionist emphases, even if the panel itself was couched in a 'neutral' expository style. Gestural and expository features are best seen, indeed, not as elements in two separate exhibitionary languages or codes of practice, but as alternative – and combinable – ways of constructing meaning within the flexible grammar of exhibitionary practice.

Gestural elements in museum text may, for example, serve to punctuate – to summarize, or to draw meaning out of – otherwise expository textual sections, as when the Ipswich Museum concluded a panel description of different forms of resistance with a sentence plainly designed to evoke the inspirational value of this history: 'They [enslaved people] never gave up and their story is one of the great human epics of endurance, survival and resistance against all the odds.' In some cases, references to resistance were gesturally introduced as a way of distancing museums from the ideological implications of standard abolitionist imagery. Thus the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, in presenting artefacts bearing the famous image of the kneeling slave in its exhibition 'Revealed: Luxury Goods and the Slave Trade', noted the image's importance as a virtual logo of the abolitionist movement, but added: 'However, the logo has also been criticised as it depicts the slave as a submissive figure begging for his freedom from his superior white owner. The iconographic status of this image, and the British abolitionist



Figure 2. British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol: 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition. Statue of Cuffy (Kofi), against backdrop of panels on the abolitionist movement



movement, overshadow the strength of slave communities and the role they played in the struggle for freedom.'

In these cases, the gestural effects were largely textual, but spatial, visual and sound effects and deployments of objects could function in a similar manner. In the new gallery at the Museum of London Docklands, for example, a sound and light show projected into the space of the gallery at regular intervals dramatically drove home the overarching themes of slavery's inhumanity and of black resistance and endurance, gesturally complementing – and implicitly interpreting the essential meanings of – the more detailed factual displays on the slave trade, plantation society, abolitionism and slavery's legacy that occupied the more conventional panels and display cases. In the 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol, themes of resistance and of African cultural endurance were informatively developed across a number of historical panels in sections dealing with the Caribbean before and after 1807, and supported by a showcase of artefacts emanating from maroon communities. As well as detailing different kinds of resistance, and highlighting episodes like the 1831 rebellion in Jamaica, textual panels alluded to the role that slave rebellions had played in preparing the ground for abolition. The effect of these panels was enhanced, however, by a more gestural feature – the positioning of a small but visually imposing statue of the resistance leader Cuffy (a replica of the one on the 1763 Monument in Georgetown, Guyana) at the point of juncture between the section of the exhibition dealing with slavery and resistance in the Caribbean, which the figure faces, and the section dealing with abolitionism in Britain, which spreads out in a series of panels around an arc-like space behind it [Figure. 2]. The statue serves as a visual pivot connecting these thematically differentiated spaces: it, rather than the also prominent portraits of Clarkson and Wilberforce, supplies the point of focus to which the visitor's gaze is drawn. Nothing in particular is said in the surrounding displays about Cuffy's particular role as a leader of the Berbice Revolt of 1763: his function here depends not on knowledge of historical context, but on the visitor's ability to recognize the figure as a generalised symbol of enslaved resistance – and thus to appreciate the message of the inherent connectedness of abolitionist and resistance histories that is being gesturally projected.<sup>8</sup>

In cases like these, gestural elements help to articulate and give direction to the thematic messages that expository elements help to substantiate or to illustrate: information and emphasis are in a kind of balance. In other cases, however, the gestural may be given a greater dominance. Listings of the dates and places of slave rebellions, sometimes with other information (names of leaders, casualty figures etc.), were a prominent feature of several 2007 exhibitions. In perhaps the most striking instance, a table in the Hackney Museum's 'Abolition 07: the Story of Slavery' exhibition listed sixty-two different conspiracies or insurrections between 1789 and 1815, with information where available on numbers participating and numbers executed or punished in the suppression. The effect of this accumulation of information was powerfully to reinforce the impression of violent rebellion as a force repeatedly and persistently threatening slave-based societies, but also, by emphasizing the terrible cost in human lives, to accentuate both the brutality with which resistance was suppressed and the heroism displayed in the long and desperate struggle for freedom. In accompanying textual panels, the museum was at pains to emphasize the intersections between the histories of resistance and of abolitionist campaigning:

The abolitionist campaign in Britain, combined with rebellions from slaves at sea and in the colonies, created an extraordinarily powerful popular movement, one that challenged, and ultimately defeated, an institution that was accepted throughout the world....

The slaves who took part in plantation revolts were encouraged by developments like the Somerset Case in London. News of the revolts and rebellions, in turn, added fuel to the debate on the morality of the slave trade in Britain. All these factors and developments fed the growing anti-slavery movement in Britain....

If the emphasis in Hackney fell on the mutually reinforcing relationship between abolitionism and rebellion, some other exhibitions deployed similar data on slave rebellions in a more

ambitious strategy for gesturally unsettling received assumptions. In the Museum of London Docklands, for example, a prominent position was assigned to the Buxton table – the handsome piece of furniture around which, reputedly, Wilberforce’s parliamentary successor Thomas Fowell Buxton and his abolitionist associates drafted the 1833 Act of Abolition. The table’s status as a prestigious abolitionist relic, evident from the plaque inset into its surface quaintly celebrating it as a table ‘hallowed by intense labour and earnest desires now happily fulfilled’, was highlighted, but its significance was also unsettled – or at least suggestively reconfigured – by using its surface as a screen onto which the dates and details of risings among the enslaved were projected from above as part of the sound and light installation mentioned earlier [Figure 3]. The history and memory of slave resistance figured here as a ghostly presence, persistently haunting and threatening to destabilize – if only by demonstrating its partiality and insufficiency – the familiar smoothly comforting moral narrative of abolitionist achievement. Here, as in the Hackney exhibition, the effect was not to discredit abolitionist campaigning, to which significant space was given elsewhere in the gallery. But where the Hackney exhibition text sought to hold resistance and abolitionism together in a carefully balanced expository formulation, the Docklands display, through its provocative use of the Buxton table, left the relationship between them imaginatively fluid, prompting critical reflection not just on the historical processes through which abolition had come about, but on the ways in which this history had been retrospectively constructed.<sup>9</sup>



*Figure 3. Museum of London Docklands: ‘London, Sugar and Slavery’ gallery. Buxton Table*

A more obstreperous gestural use of the data of resistance and rebellion to challenge conventional abolitionist views of history occurred in the artist Keith Piper’s three-screen video installation ‘The Abolitionist’s Parlour’, commissioned for Hull Museums and shown at the Ferens Gallery in Hull in May to June 2007. Showing as part of ‘Wilberforce 2007’ (the name given to Hull’s programme of Bicentenary events as a way of marking the city’s association with

the abolitionist leader), and juxtaposing images of the splendid interior of Wilberforce House (Wilberforce's birthplace) taken during its recent refurbishment with shots of a hand allegedly belonging to an enslaved person composing a record of the struggle for freedom, Piper's installation took pointed aim at the Wilberforce legend, while also demanding to be read as a more general critique of the abolitionist narrative. (The 'Abolitionist' of the title is never in fact named in the installation itself.) In the work's incessantly repetitive visual and auditory rhythms, the anonymous 'Abolitionist' is cast always in a dilatory or purely reactive role, the description of each of his ineffective mental postures being preceded by 'an extract from the archive' instancing the more vigorous and proactive insurrectionary initiatives of the enslaved themselves. Thus:

An extract from the archive. Jamaica, Christmas 1831. Under the leadership of Sam Sharpe, 60,000 slaves wage what would become known as the 'Baptist War' against the British. The Abolitionist ponders....

An extract from the archive. Bayley's Plantation, Barbados 14<sup>th</sup> April 1816. Busso leads a rebellion of 400 slaves against troops of the First West Indian Regiment. The Abolitionist debates....

And so on, repeatedly, through to the final adjustment: 'The Abolitionist accommodates'. The message is clear, and obviously polemical: the real impetus towards the emancipation of the enslaved comes from the enslaved themselves, in the form of successive moments of violent resistance; abolitionism is not only secondary, but a sham, a veneer of humanitarian morality disguising a sequence of self-interested concessions and withdrawals. For all the facts and figures that flit across the screen as the imagined 'archive' is sampled, the approach here is one that rigorously subordinates expository to gestural development: the aim is not to develop a detailed historical understanding either of abolitionism or of resistance, but to affirm the claims of the latter while stereotypically dismissing the former.

A comparison of the ways in which the theme of resistance was articulated in two of the larger displays on slavery that captured attention in 2007 - those of the International Slavery Museum (ISM) in Liverpool, opened in September 2007, and of the redeveloped Wilberforce House Museum in Hull, reopened in March 2007 - will allow an appreciation of the different contributions that more or less gestural ways of introducing and developing this theme could make to public understanding and engagement. Unlike most of the exhibitions included in the '1807 Commemorated' project's survey, these were large-scale permanent displays, designed not simply to meet the needs of the Bicentenary moment but to stand as durable institutional articulations of transatlantic slavery's history and significance. Both were significantly located, the ISM on an upper floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum building, a former warehouse in Liverpool, once the epicentre of Britain's slaving involvement; Wilberforce House in the house which was the birthplace of Britain's most famous abolitionist. Both museums set their sights broadly, to encompass the general history of transatlantic slavery, its legacy, and the struggle against it. Both, in addressing this history, repeatedly evoked resistance and rebellion by the enslaved as significant themes. Their presentations of these themes had many common points of detail, but were nevertheless differently structured.

'Integral to the museum's interpretation of the story of transatlantic slavery is the belief that Africans, despite their oppression, were the main agents of their own liberation', affirmed the ISM in an additional display ('We are one') celebrating the first year of its opening. Even before this explicit declaration, the emphasis on African agency, and on the resistance of the enslaved more particularly, is unlikely to have been missed by most visitors to the Museum. A trio of posters outside the Museum building, replicated elsewhere in publicity materials, enjoins the visitor:

Remember not that we were freed, but that we fought.

Remember not that we were sold, but that we were strong.

Remember not that we were bought, but that we were brave.



Figure 4. *International Slavery Museum, Liverpool. Poster outside museum*

If the Museum's readiness to assume, or co-opt, the imagined voice of the enslaved African is a striking feature here, it is instructive also to note how the text, based on words apparently uttered in an interview in the 1930s by the former slave William Prescott - 'They will remember that we were sold, but not that we were strong. They will remember that we were bought, but not that we were brave' - has been strengthened and extended. Prescott's seemingly pessimistic prediction of forgetting becomes a vehement injunction to remember, and the scope of this injunction is extended by supplementing the original emphasis on fortitude and courage with a newly explicit reference to active fighting [Figure 4]. The introduction of a rhetorical antithesis between remembering 'that we fought' and remembering 'that we were freed' advertises the intention not just of recapturing the memory of resistance, but of substituting this memory for the previously accredited vision of a freedom conferred through abolitionist benevolence. Inside the building, the Museum's introductory inscription gives the Prescott

quotation in the original form (with attribution to Prescott), following it with the words 'We will remember'. Though the reference to a history of fighting back against enslavement is not explicitly repeated at this point, several of the eclectic range of generalizing quotations dealing with freedom and slavery which are presented on the adjoining wall (dubbed the 'Wall of Freedom') leading towards the core of the Museum appear designed to support an essentially activist conception of how freedom is secured: 'Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed' (Martin Luther King); 'The secret of freedom, courage' (Thucydides). A combination of gestural features thus prepare the visitor from the outset for an account of slavery that will accord the struggles of the enslaved a central place.

References to resistance in one form or another occur at several points in the central portions of the exhibition, dealing with the Middle Passage ('There were revolts on one in ten slave voyages') and with life on Caribbean plantations ('Slaves fought against their oppressors in numerous ways. There were uprisings and rebellions as well as less obvious methods of resistance. Slaves stole from their owners, damaged machinery, worked slowly and pretended to be sick'). An interactive panel on resistance, forming part of the display dealing with plantation life, encourages visitors to focus not just on moments of open resistance, but on the forms of everyday resistance that can be detected by reading between the lines of accounts left by European observers. But while these references do enough, cumulatively, to convey the idea of resistance as a persistent feature of enslaved societies and an enduring preoccupation of the enslaved, the real work of signalling resistance as the core element in the museum's narrative of freedom, and of signalling that narrative as one that exceeds the narrow limits of abolitionist history, is performed by a particular structural feature of the museum layout - the Timeline wall that extends from a point towards the end of the central gallery area which houses the displays





Figure 5. International Slavery Museum, Liverpool. Timeline wall

on the slave trade and plantation life, through into and along one side of the final ‘legacies’ gallery area [Figure 5]. The approach to the wall from within the central area brings the visitor into contact with two striking and contrasting visual images of resistance: Richard Ansdell’s painting of the ‘The Hunted Slaves’ (1861), depicting an axe-wielding African man in the act of defending himself and a female companion from the pursuing dogs – an image of resistance at its most desperate, of freedom striven for with death as the alternative -, and a nineteenth-century African wooden statue of ‘an enslaved African breaking free of his chains’ [Figure 6] – an image, seemingly, of freedom accomplished, resistance triumphant. In close proximity to these symbolically charged images, a panel entitled ‘The fight for freedom and equality’ (the text of which is replicated at the other end of the wall) sets the tone for the wall itself:

Resistance was on the minds of enslaved Africans from the first moment of captivity.

### The Timeline

The timeline displays many rebellions and the names of some of the people involved.

It shows how rebellion in the Americas fuelled the campaign in Europe to abolish the slave trade, then slavery itself. Reports of these campaigns strengthened the resolve of slaves across the Americas.

### The struggle continues

Since the abolition of transatlantic slavery, many Black and white people have shown great courage and determination in continuing the struggle to remove oppression, exploitation and inequality, often in the face of ruthless and violent oppression.

As is clear from this text, the work of the wall is to affirm not simply the importance of resistance in the history of transatlantic slavery, but the essential continuity between the resistance struggles of the enslaved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (indicated on the wall by the dates of slave rebellions and more detailed references to, for example, the Revolution of Saint-Domingue, the resistance of maroon communities, and the Underground Railroad), and the struggles of blacks for freedom and equality in the twentieth century (represented by references to, for example, the Civil Rights movement in the United States, independence movements within Africa, and struggles against racism more generally). By its positioning within the Museum and by its arrangement of content, the Timeline wall embodies and performs this notion of continuity, linking the conflicts and emancipatory struggles of past and present together in a common framework. If one effect of the wall, and of the Museum's representational strategies more generally, is to extend the history of resistance to transatlantic slavery, by

making it the initiating keynote of a broader, longer, and still continuing struggle for freedom and racial equality, another – and related – effect is to displace abolitionism – and white abolitionism in particular – from its familiar position of centrality. For though the text of the panel just quoted preserves the idea of a mutually supporting relationship between resistance in the Americas and abolitionism in Europe, and though the wall itself incorporates a panel on the 'Abolition of the British Slave Trade', a display of abolitionist objects, and portraits of a number of abolitionist leaders (including Wilberforce, Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and the Liverpool MP William Roscoe), the broader presentational strategies of which the wall is the principal vehicle have the effect of disrupting abolitionism's traditionally self-centred construction of the history being narrated. The Timeline wall mixes references to abolitionist advances together with references to insurrectionary outbreaks in a loose-knit chronological flow which inhibits the development of more specific narratives privileging abolitionist agency: the work of the abolitionists, their personalities, their moments of apparent achievement appear caught up in the currents of a broader and still unconcluded history, whose detailed causal relationships are never pinned down, but whose main propulsive force (to judge by quantity of references and by their prominence in the display) is taken to be the struggle of Africans and their descendants for freedom and equality.

At Wilberforce House, the theme of resistance is, on the face of it, less affirmatively developed. Powerful gestural elements are not lacking in the revamped Wilberforce House display. Their principal function, however, is to subsume the histories of slavery and abolitionism within the broader thematics of a continuing struggle for human rights, with whose contemporary ramifications visitors are repeatedly prompted to engage. Shifting the balance within the historical account of slavery and abolition towards a greater emphasis on resistance by the enslaved appears a subsidiary objective. And indeed, the museum building's historical



*Figure 6. International Slavery Museum, Liverpool. African carving*

association with Wilberforce, and the fact that the latter's connection to Hull is the only obvious reason for locating a museum on the theme of slavery in this particular city, are not surprisingly influential in shaping the way these themes are presented. Abolitionism in general, and Wilberforce in particular, undoubtedly loom larger in the Wilberforce house display than they do at the ISM: two rooms on the ground floor of the museum present Wilberforce's life and work and personality, while two substantial rooms in the main first-floor exhibition area are devoted specifically to abolitionist campaigning.

To say this is, however, not to say that Wilberforce House, in its redesigned form, reaffirms the traditional emphases of abolitionist hagiography. The decision – not ostentatiously proclaimed but surely gesturally significant – to house the section of the display that is explicitly entitled 'Resistance and Rebellion' in the small room on the first floor where Wilberforce was actually born, rather than arranging this space as a shrine to the abolitionist hero (and indeed to focus this display on a voodoo altar, a symbol of African cultural resistance radically alien to Wilberforce's own Evangelicalism) – suggests a quite different strategic intention. If Wilberforce House largely eschews the kind of emphatic gestural affirmation of the centrality of resistance that the ISM transmits through its advertising and structural layout, and if it generally embraces a more 'neutral' and conventional style of historical presentation, the theme of resistance nevertheless emerges, through numerous points of detail, as an integral and connecting element in the stories that the museum develops. Thus, for example, an initial contextual discussion of slavery in earlier centuries refers to the resistance of Spartacus and of the Mamluks; a display on West African cultures occasions the assertion that enslaved Africans 'resisted slave owners at every opportunity and refused to give up their cultural identity'; the treatment of the Middle Passage emphasizes the frequency of shipboard rebellion and highlights hunger strikes and suicide as other forms of resistance; the section on the 'apprenticeship' system to which the formerly enslaved were subjected after 1833 also dwells on the extent of resistance to it. In the section on plantation life, resistance is mentioned repeatedly, in connection with punishment, with the plight of enslaved women ('Many women tried to end their pregnancies or kill their babies as an act of rebellion'), with the preservation of African culture ('an essential part of resistance against the plantation owner's desire to stamp out the culture of the slave'), and of religion in particular ('central to slave resistance and rebellion in the plantations'). Attention to resistance is, in short, by no means confined to the section explicitly entitled 'Resistance and Rebellion', in which the focus falls on episodes of insurrection like The Haitian Revolution, the rebellions of Bussa in Barbados and Sharpe in Jamaica, and on the long-term resistance of maroon communities.

Furthermore, while Wilberforce House does not, like the ISM, structurally prioritise the narrative theme of resistance over that of abolition, it does – again repeatedly – arrange things textually so as to diminish the conventional distance between these histories. Several panels indicate the influence of slave insurrections in preparing British abolitionist opinion. Others, in the section on abolitionism, frame the account of opposition to slavery in a way that brings references to peaceful opposition and references to revolt into a common discursive space. A panel on 'Women and anti-slavery', for example, juxtaposes the contribution of white female abolitionists like Hannah More and Elizabeth Heyrick with that of enslaved women themselves, and in describing the latter's contribution places some women's writing of poetry evoking their enslaved condition alongside others' participation in uprisings. Elsewhere in the gallery, portraits of the white working-class abolitionist Ann Yearsley and of the maroon resistance leader Nanny are hung alongside each other. The larger keynote panel entitled 'Opposition to slavery', similarly, draws references to activity by the enslaved, by former slaves, by Quakers and by abolitionist politicians together under its heading of 'opposition', which it illustrates by coupling the portrait of Wilberforce ('who led the parliamentary campaign') with that of Samuel Sharpe (whose 'resistance to slavery led him to the gallows'). A panel on the Wedgwood kneeling slave design points out that this influential abolitionist image has been criticised for its passive representation of enslaved Africans, and that it pandered to the vanities of an abolitionist public and Parliament 'who saw themselves as the sole liberators of the enslaved', but this is as far as the Museum goes in explicitly challenging the abolitionist vision. When, towards the end of its displays, the Museum presents an oaken figure of an emancipated slave carved by the Sierra Leonean sculptor Samuel Samel Marco, the accompanying panels







describe this in one place as symbolizing 'enslaved people rising up to achieve emancipation and break their own chains' and in another as 'a freed African slave making a pilgrimage to see William Wilberforce'. There is no sign, at this point, that these might be regarded as divergent readings.

Where the ISM corrals its references to resistance and rebellion into a meta-narrative that is geared explicitly to reconfiguring the way slavery has previously been remembered, Wilberforce House contents itself with a more piecemeal kind of narrative suggestion. This makes for a less politically assertive message, but it arguably allows the museum to concentrate on promoting a different – more exploratory, more diversified – kind of imaginative engagement in its visitors. If the ISM presents resistance as a large-scale historical epic, Wilberforce House's references allow the visitor to grasp it at a humbler level – to view resistance as a variegated set of pragmatic, contextually influenced practices, in which agency, while resourcefully striven for, was always difficult, usually opportunistic, often frustrated or problematic. Where the ISM's imaginative depiction of the torment of the Middle Passage is dominated by a close-up video projection of suffering enslaved bodies, the impact of which is almost abstract and generic, Wilberforce House's audio-visual display mixes specific eye-witness testimonies by slavers and enslaved in a way that situates maltreatment and resistance together as interconnected elements in a concretely social shipboard experience. Wilberforce House's panel on maroon communities, similarly, while fully affirming their importance as a centre and symbol of resistance to slavery, recognizes the fact that resistance of this kind was more feasible in some places than in others, and indicates the conflicts between different resistant interests that could arise from maroon negotiations with the colonial power. This attention to the micro-level complexities and human dilemmas of resistance is, however, perhaps most strikingly exemplified by the interactive panel entitled 'Resistance and Rebellion', which is prominent in the room bearing the same title [Figure 7]. The panel invites visitors to imagine themselves as enslaved people seeking to practice resistance on a sugar plantation in the Caribbean. They are offered an initial choice between four different types of resistance – violent behaviour, stealing, refusal to work, and maintenance of African traditions – each of which sets them on a path of action and experience in the course of which they are confronted with a range of apparent opportunities, agonising dilemmas and moments of decision. While the possible eventual outcomes are varied, ranging from joining a successful maroon community or escaping to freedom, via having a family and following cultural traditions in secret, or being sold and separated from loved ones, or being frequently punished, to being 'caught and killed by bloodhounds', none of the routes is painless, and many of the choices turn out to offer no release from danger and suffering. ('You collapse [under punishment] and are taken to the plantation hospital. Do you try to leave without permission?' If so, you are placed in solitary confinement for forty hours, but if not, you catch smallpox from another slave and are so weakened by disease that you end up being sold and separated from your family.) Visitors engaging in this mental game are prompted to view plantation life as a sequence of unpredictable but uniformly dangerous practical dilemmas to which responses have to be improvised in often desperate circumstances. Resistance, in these circumstances, is difficult and frustrating even when it is not desperate and fatal. If the exercise affirms the active agency of the enslaved, the impression it gives of this agency is scarcely a romantic or triumphal one.

Though most of the museums that dealt with slavery and abolition in 1807 made some acknowledgement of the importance of resistance by the enslaved, relatively few found the space and resources, or showed the firm commitment, to give this theme an extensive and substantial treatment, or to work it systematically into the structure of their displays. Those that sought to do so faced a difficult task – that of suggesting, on the one hand, to a predominantly white museum-going public that the abolitionist history it was familiar with required opening up to the theme of resistance if it was not to be partial and misleading; that, on the other hand of persuading the descendants of enslaved Africans, nowadays members of British society, that the fortitude and stubborn resistance of their ancestors (and not just their passive suffering) were truly being given due recognition, and that museums were no longer to be regarded as places for the development of narratives which reinforced the humiliation of the enslaved by excluding them from historical agency. The responses of museums to the challenge of the Bicentenary can no doubt, from one angle, be arrayed on a spectrum, with structurally

unthreatening cautious admissions of the fact of resistance close to one end, and militant affirmations of the centrality of African freedom-fighting and the relative marginality of white abolitionism at the other. Constructing such a spectrum does not, however, reveal the full complexity of museums' responses, and oversimplifies the difficulty of the choices that museums faced, in seeking to revise entrenched perceptions of a 'difficult' and divisive history. Questions of presentational strategy, which have been explored here in terms of the interaction between gestural and expository modes, complicated rather than replicated questions of political positioning. The task of displacing the traditional emphases of a previously orthodox history is not straightforward: it calls both for bold polemical gestures of acknowledgement and realignment and for a more gradual and detailed work of building new understandings. One without the other is unlikely to be enough, producing on the one hand gestures that remain chiefly rhetorical, and on the other, accretions of potentially illuminating detail that never quite cohere into fresh conceptual understandings. Combining the two creatively, so that the visitor's attention is drawn both to the politics of how the past is remembered, and to the specifics of how the past was experienced, acted, and fashioned in concrete circumstances by living human agents – and is encouraged to bring these areas of reflection together – remains, however, a substantial challenge.

Received 24th August 2010

Finally accepted 2nd November 2010

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> On the forms and development of Clarkson's reputation from his lifetime to the present, see Oldfield 2007: 33-49, 72-81, 107-8, 133-4.
- <sup>2</sup> For general observations on this museum output, see Prior 2007; Tibbles 2008; Paton and Webster 2009; Paton 2009; Cubitt 2009, Kowaleski Wallace 2009; Hall 2010; Hamilton 2010. Several of these comment on the public discourse of the Bicentenary more generally; see also Waterton and Wilson 2009; Wood 2010a: 182-353; 2010b.
- <sup>3</sup> For more on the project, see <http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/>
- <sup>4</sup> See the catalogue in Farrell et al 2007.
- <sup>5</sup> For an example of such a critique, see Agbetu 2007; for further discussion, Hall 2007; Paton 2009; Waterton and Wilson 2009. For broader discussions of the politics of remembering slavery in Britain before and during the lead-up to the Bicentenary, see Kowaleski Wallace 2006; Oldfield 2007; Wood 2010a.
- <sup>6</sup> See, among many others, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Macdonald 1998; Clifford 1997; Witcomb 2003; Crooke 2007; Littler and Naidoo 2005, Sandell 2002; 2007; Szekeres 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> For general discussion of this localising dimension of the museum effort for the Bicentenary, see Cubitt 2009. For discussion of particular local cases, see Green 2008 (Birmingham and Wolverhampton); Dresser 2009 (Bristol); Rice 2009 (the North-West); Norridge 2009 (Hackney). Publications linked to particular local exhibitions include Boyes 2007 (Richmond), Munday 2008 (Enfield).
- <sup>8</sup> For more specifically Guyanan uses and interpretations of the figure of Cuffy (or Kofi) and of the 1763 Rebellion, see Thompson 2006: 197-211.
- <sup>9</sup> For a more negative assessment of the effects of this deployment of the Buxton table, see Wood 2010a: 20-4.

## References

- Agbetu, T. (2007) 'My Protest was born of Anger, not Madness', *The Guardian*, 3 April 2007.
- Aptheker, H. (1943) *American Negro Slave Revolts*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Beckles, H. (2001) 'Emancipation in the British Caribbean', in Gert Oostindie (ed.), *Facing Up To the Past: Perspectives on the Commemoration of Slavery from Africa, the Americas and Europe*, 90-4, Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle
- Beckles, H. and Shepherd, V. (2007) *Saving Souls: the Struggle to End the Transatlantic Trade in Africans*, Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle
- Boyes, V. (2007) *Trading in Human Lives: the Richmond Connection*, Richmond: Museum of Richmond
- Clarkson, T. (1808) *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, 2 vols., London: Longman
- Clifford, J. (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Crooke, E. (2007) *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges*, London: Routledge
- Cubitt, G. (2009) 'Bringing it Home: Making Local Meaning in 2007 Bicentenary Exhibitions', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2): 259-75
- Dresser, M. (2007) 'Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London', *History Workshop Journal* 64 (1) 162-99
- Dresser, M. (2009) 'Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2) 223-46
- Dubois, L. (2000) 'Haunting Delgrès', *Radical History Review*, 78, 345-71.
- Dubois, L. (2004) *Avengers of the New World: the Story of the Haitian Revolution*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Farrell, S., Unwin, M., and Walvin, J., eds. (2007) *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Geggus, D. (1983) 'Slave Resistance Studies and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt: Some Preliminary Considerations', LACC Occasional Papers series (1981-1990) no. 4
- Geggus, D., ed. (2001) *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, Columbia: University of South Carolina University Press
- Geggus, D. (2002) *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Genovese, E. (1979) *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press
- Green, A. (2008) 'Remembering Slavery in Birmingham: Sculpture, Paintings and Installations', *Slavery and Abolition* 29 (2) 189-201
- Hall, C. (2007) 'Introduction', *History Workshop Journal*, 64 (1): 1-5.

- Hall, C. (2010) 'Afterword: Britain 2007, Problematising History', in Cora Kaplan and John Oldfield (eds.) *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery, 191-201*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Hamilton, D. (2010) 'Representing Slavery in British Museums: the Challenges of 2007', in Cora Kaplan and John Oldfield (eds.) *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery, 127-44*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Hart, R. (2002 [1985]) *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery: Blacks in Rebellion*, Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press
- Heuman, G., ed. (1986) *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World*, London: Frank Cass
- James, C. L. R. (1980 [1938]) *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London: Allison and Busby
- James, C. L. R. (1980) 'Forward', in C.L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, v, London: Allison and Busby
- Kowaleski Wallace, E. (2006) *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Kowaleski Wallace, E. (2009) 'Uncomfortable Commemorations', *History Workshop Journal* 68 (1) 223-33
- Lambert, D. (2007) 'Part of the Blood and Dream': Surrogation, Memory and the National Hero in the Postcolonial Caribbean', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 14 (3-4) 345-71
- Littler, J. and Naidoo, R. (eds.) (2005) *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of 'Race'*, London: Routledge
- Macdonald, S. (1998) 'Exhibitions of Power and Powers of Exhibitions: an Introduction to the Politics of Display', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.) *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, 1-24, London: Routledge
- Macdonald, S. and Fyfe, G. (eds.) (1996) *Theorizing Museums*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Munday, V., ed. (2008) *Enfield and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, Enfield: Enfield Museum Service
- Norridge, Z. (2009) 'Finding a Home in Hackney? Reimagining Narratives of Slavery through a Multicultural Community Museum Space', *African and Black Diaspora*, 2 (2) 167-79
- Oldfield, J. (2007) *'Chords of Freedom': Commemoration, Ritual and British Transatlantic Slavery*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Paquette, R. (1991) 'Slave Resistance and Social History', *Journal of Social History*, 24, 681-5.
- Paton, D. (2009) 'Interpreting the Bicentenary in Britain', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2): 277-89
- Paton, D. and Webster, J. (2009) 'Remembering Slave Trade Abolitions: Reflections on 2007 in International Perspective', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2): 161-7
- Price, R., ed. (1996) *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press



- Prior, K. (2007) 'Commemorating Slavery 2007: a Personal View from Inside the Museums', *History Workshop Journal*, 64 (1): 200-11
- Rice, A. (2009) 'Revealing Histories, Dialogising Collections: Museums and Galleries in North West England Commemorating the Abolition of the Slave Trade', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2) 291-309
- Rodriguez, J., ed. (2007) *Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion*, 2 vols., Westport: Greenwood
- Sandell, R. (2002) 'Museums and the Combating of Social Inequality: Roles, Responsibilities, Resistance', in Richard Sandell (ed.) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, 3-23, London: Routledge
- Sandell, R. (2007) *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, London: Routledge
- Szekeres, V. (2002) 'Representing Diversity and Challenging Racism: the Migration Museum', in Richard Sandell (ed.) *Museums, Society, Inequality*, 142-52, London: Routledge
- Thompson, A. O. (2006) 'Symbolic Legacies of Slavery in Guyana', *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 80 (3-4) 191-220
- Tibbles, A. (2005) 'Interpreting Transatlantic Slavery: the Role of Museums', in Anthony Tibbles (ed.) *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 131-40, Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool
- Tibbles, A. (2008) 'Facing Slavery's Past: the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the British Slave Trade', *Slavery and Abolition*, 29 (2) 293-303
- Tyrrell, A. and Walvin, J. (2004) 'Whose History Is It? Memorialising Britain's Involvement in Slavery', in Pickering, P. and Tyrrell, A (eds.) *Contested Sites: Commemoration, Memorial and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 147-69, Aldershot: Ashgate
- Waterton, E. and Wilson, R. (2009) 'Talking the Talk: Policy, Popular and Media Responses to the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Using the 'Abolition Discourse'', *Discourse and Society*, 20 (3): 381-99
- Webster, J. (2009) 'The Unredeemed Object: Displaying Abolitionist Artefacts in 2007', *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2) 311-25
- Williams, P. (2007) *Memorial Museums: the Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocity*, Oxford and New York: Berg
- Witcomb, A. (2003) *Re-Imagining the Museum: Beyond the Mausoleum*, London: Routledge
- Wood, M. (2000) *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1856*, New York: Routledge
- Wood, M. (2010a) *The Horrible Gift of Freedom: Atlantic Slavery and the Representation of Emancipation*, Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press
- Wood, M. (2010b) 'Significant Silence: Where Was Slave Agency in the Popular Imagery of 2007?', in Cora Kaplan and John Oldfield (eds.) *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, 162-90, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

**\*Geoffrey Cubitt**

Geoffrey Cubitt is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of History, and a member of the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies, University of York. He was co-director of the AHRC funded *1807 Commemorated Project*, based at the University of York. His research interests lie partly in the political, intellectual, religious and cultural history of nineteenth-century France, and partly in issues of social memory and in the political, social and cultural aspects of relationships to the past in modern societies more generally.

## Address:

Department of History  
University of York  
Heslington, York  
YO105DD, UK

Tel 01904 434991

Email: [gtc2@york.ac.uk](mailto:gtc2@york.ac.uk)