

## **Introduction**

This is the first of our two special issues commemorating the bicentenary of the legislation to abolish the transatlantic trade in Africans. Its theme, “The Black Atlantic Then and Now,” relates to the term Paul Gilroy founded for the political and cultural world which has emerged, in three continents, as a result of that history. The Black Atlantic can be defined, he says, through a “desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity.”<sup>1</sup> We should, he suggests, “take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis ... and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective.”<sup>2</sup> This issue of *EnterText* we hope can take its place in that ongoing project.

The items in this collection fall into two groups: the first is specifically concerned with commemoration, while the second addresses a range of topics from all dimensions of the subsequent Black Atlantic, though many engage directly with the consequences of slavery. We begin with a focus on the creative engagement by Caribbean artists with the traumatic subject of slavery. The group includes the work of Jamaican painter Christopher Clare, Jamaican sculptor Laura Facey, and Rachel Manley writing about her grandmother, the sculptor Edna Manley, wife of one Jamaican prime minister and mother of another. We also have images of a little copy book created by children in Jamaica in 1826, powerful witness to those times between abolition and emancipation. On the other side of the Atlantic were powerful families such as the Pennants of Penrhyn in Wales who made much of their money from Jamaican sugar: an account of an exhibition about

their role in slavery is included here. The story of the abolitionists is represented by an essay on John Marjoribanks, a Scot who used his experience of Jamaica in the eighteenth century to write abolitionist verse. Movements from a new commemorative cantata first performed in Jamaica in October 2007 are also included. Together these form a group of items all with a Jamaican connection—a chance outcome rather than anything produced intentionally. However, because of the key role of the history of Jamaica in the wider history of the British empire in the region, and in the history of slavery and resistance to it in particular, such a focus for the way the creative human spirit engages elegiacally with slavery in order to combat and transcend its horrors seems appropriate. The items forming the second part open up to the wider Black Atlantic, with essays on and from Africa (West, East, and South), other parts of the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East. Topics include the histories of Sierra Leone and Liberia, the West African Students' Union, representation of the Haiti/Santo Domingo difference in nineteenth-century French literature, and of slavery in recent British Caribbean literature, as well as a critique of an African American text representing slavery. In addition we include creative work and translation. These are all introduced in more detail below. The overall range of the issue is thus very much in keeping with Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic, in which "ethnicities and political cultures have been made anew in ways that are significant not simply for the peoples of the Caribbean but for Europe, for Africa, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone, and of course, for Black America."<sup>3</sup>

In noting how central the transatlantic trade has become for artists of the Black Atlantic, Gilroy asks an open-ended question: "How do black expressive cultures practice remembrance?"<sup>4</sup> Commemorating a terrible history is a sobering task. There are those

who say that something so painful to be remembered is best forgotten. Of course, they are free to do just that. However, there are many others who recall the old adage that if we don't remember history we are doomed to repeat it. And there is the newer knowledge that the desire to bury trauma away from the conscious mind will always fail. An act of commemoration is therefore about the future. But it is also urgently about the present. It happens *now*. This issue is published in 2007, to mark the bicentenary of a particular piece of legislation passed in the British Parliament in London, a small but significant stage in an infinitely multiple process. In 1807 many people's efforts, on both sides of the racial history—many of them heroic, many of them to the point of self-sacrifice for the cause—over a long period, but systematically over the previous two decades, had gradually, incrementally, made this legislation inevitable, for fundamentally moral reasons, bitterly resisted though it continued to be by most of those whose privileges and profits it undermined. In fact, the abolition legislation was a compromise. It was a fall-back position. The greater quest for emancipation, which was as old as slavery itself, was set aside in favour of this pragmatic alternative, this staging-post on the way to the real goal. It would not be for another twenty-seven years, and more, that that goal would be reached. The emancipation legislation of 1833, enacted in 1834, introduced a four-year period of controlled labour intended to protect production. Thus, full emancipation in the British territories was not delivered until 1838—and full justice is another matter altogether.

The campaigners had been forced to recognise that some legislative change would be better than none, and that broad support might be won for the abolition bill if the British public could be persuaded that halting the transport of Africans across the Atlantic

would force plantation owners in the Americas to regard their workers as not expendable and replaceable, as before, and therefore to abuse them less and, it was hoped, ensure their welfare. It was also a sop to those plantation owners who had prophesied not only the collapse of their own incomes but the collapse of the production of commodities on which the empire had come to depend, in particular the sugar demanded by a sweet-toothed nation. The (largely shameful) double promise of the legislation, then, was that production would continue (winners: plantation owners and whites generally) and that slave conditions would improve (winners: slaves). In Britain, doubters of an antislavery persuasion might have had misgivings about the latter, doubters of an imperialist hue about the former, but the position had the merit of proposing something which a broad sector of the populace, and of parliament, could support, if only because of what it was not.

The event we are commemorating with this special issue of *EnterText* does represent an historical turning-point or tipping-point, therefore, but it is a tiny moment in the terrible ocean of events taking place over five hundred years which constituted transatlantic slavery, with its infamous triangular trade. This issue, though published in London, is not concerned primarily with the legislation, and it is certainly not about patting the British on the back. It should not be forgotten that the French revolutionary ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* had led to slave uprisings and the first black-led republic of the Americas, in what became Haiti, and that it was actually the Danish who in 1792 became the first slaving nation to prohibit the slave trade.<sup>5</sup>

The question for us now is how to honour the victims of the transatlantic holocaust—Paul Gilroy urges the parallel and asserts that use of the term does not detract

from the uniqueness of the Jewish holocaust<sup>6</sup>—as well as how to enrich our understanding of it, and of the world order/disorder it founded. It matters today not least because we have inherited a world structured along similar lines. The countries which most benefited from plantation slavery remain the most prosperous and the most powerful, while those people descended from those whom they used and abused are among the poorest and the least powerful. If this does not give us pause for thought, surely we have forgotten how to think. We are not the perpetrators of those historic evils, but we do all have a relationship to them, and an ongoing responsibility to the present we share and the future we bequeath. There has been a new willingness in connection with this bicentenary for world leaders actually to apologise for the wrongs perpetrated by their countries in the past. As British prime minister Tony Blair said, “It is hard to believe that what would now be a crime against humanity was legal at the time.” The city of Liverpool apologised for slavery in 1994, but in the run-up to the anniversary, the UK’s other principal port engaged in the triangular trade, Bristol, was deeply divided over whether it should do likewise. The Church of England, on the other hand, made not only an apology but public penance for its direct involvement in slavery. It reminded us that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts owned the Codrington Plantation in Barbados, where slaves were branded with the word SOCIETY. (I will never again use the phrase “cruel irony” lightly.) For many, however, such words of apology are empty, because they fail to meet demands for reparation. The idea of justice is something we hold in common, wherever in the world we may be. And although we may differ in our perception of how it may be achieved and in our willingness to embark on difficult and personally painful paths towards it, it can be said that there is a broad

consensus as to some of its goals. A fairer distribution of wealth is one; respect for each person simply for being human, without regard to race, culture or creed, is another.

There has been much debate about how to memorialise transatlantic slavery, just as there has been in relation to commemorating the Jewish holocaust. Adorno took the view that “to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”<sup>7</sup> but as a particular history recedes, perhaps the need for new artistic engagement with it comes to the fore. And there is a difference between memorials to history, which relate to the record of the actual, and artistic responses, which involve, to some degree, imaginative re-creation—though it could be argued that some of the world’s most moving memorials are among the greatest artworks of our time. Some rightly world-famous monuments have been created, and some rightly infamous places have become sites of pilgrimage. The West African slave castles such as Elmina take their place alongside Auschwitz. We are faced with ungraspable numbers—unknowable numbers, in the case of slavery. And that, perhaps, is a primary difficulty when it comes to the history of the transatlantic trade: some records exist but countless other events were not recorded. We can calculate from the iceberg-tip of the surviving documentation that approximately a third of the Africans chained in those unimaginable holds did not survive the journey, and that a further third died in the first three years after arrival in the Americas. The enormity of such events, played out in little, over and over again, over the space of nearly five hundred years, leaves us prostrate, grief-stricken. How to react—to *respond*? Verene Shepherd argues that the fifth phase of colonialism, “that of mental liberation and iconic decolonisation, is still in action” and has called for the building of “war memorials or a remembrance wall to the unsung heroes and heroines of liberation struggles... thereby elevating the victims

of slavery to iconic status....”<sup>8</sup> A heartbreaking list of the names of some of the six hundred people executed in Jamaica after what has become known as the 1831-1832 Emancipation War illustrates her point. But, of course, the recoverable names are so incomplete, the names of the anonymous lost and the anonymous sufferers so many. However, many artists and activists have spent their creative lives engaged in just such work of recovery and commemoration.

The sailing ship, for all its beauty, in the context of the Middle Passage becomes a terrible symbol of cruelty and loss, but also of resistance. It is the first of the “novel chronotopes” Gilroy proposes. He sees the ship as the “central organising symbol” of the Black Atlantic project:

ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed places that they connected. Accordingly they need to be thought of as cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade. They were something more—a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production.”<sup>9</sup>

Christopher Clare’s painting with which this issue opens plunges us straight into the unfathomable reality of the Middle Passage. It is very different from the famous painting by J. M. W. Turner of the slave ship *Zong*, with its apocalyptic colours and expressionist storm (1840). A frieze of three sailing ships heads Clare’s sombre, beautiful image, but he has liberated their human cargo like a shoal of fish in the dark ocean. Death and suffering are commemorated, but so also are survival and adaptation. The victims here, the lost, are re-envisioned as heroic swimmers, as indicated by the title “Blackboard #60: Underworld Marines—a Tribute to the Real Heroes.” Although this painting was exhibited at the National Gallery in Jamaica during 2007, it was not created for the special exhibition to commemorate the abolition bicentenary.<sup>10</sup> For this young artist that

history is not remote or irrelevant. He writes, “I have always painted about this subject. It is almost like a way of life for me, with the blackboard idea being one of the vehicles used to transport the information. So when I was invited for this exhibition I could have submitted more than a hundred images.” It is a good example of what Gilroy refers to as the artists’ need to turn to history as part of an “infinite process of identity construction.”<sup>11</sup>

The artistic theme continues with Laura Facey’s “Redemption Song” sculpture (2003), the winner of a competition to design a memorial to slavery for Emancipation Park, Kingston, Jamaica. She has said that it “is not about ropes, chains or torture; I have gone beyond that. I wanted to create a sculpture that communicates transcendence, reverence, strength and unity through our procreators—man and woman—all of which comes when the mind is free.” The image is of a man and a woman facing each other, naked, rising from a globe-like fountain. “The water,” she says, “is an important part of the monument. It is refreshing, purifying and symbolically washes away the pain and suffering of the past.” The sculpture has been controversial in some quarters, partly because of its portrayal of nudity, but also because, to some, although she is Jamaican, Laura Facey is regarded as an inappropriate winner of the (anonymous) competition because she is seen as white. The fact that she does, as she has pointed out, have slave ancestry does not silence the minority who raise the objection. It seems absurd to many that the work should be judged from such a narrow and blinkered standpoint.<sup>12</sup> Paul Gilroy deplores racial absolutism and “the tragic popularity of ideas about integrity and purity of cultures.”<sup>13</sup> David Boxer, Director Emeritus and Chief Curator of the National Gallery in Jamaica, has championed the sculptured figures: “Their nudity is part of their



potency—it is part of the meaning of their emancipation: their rebirth into freedom. They stand there as a symbol of the naked truth of the argument of emancipation: the truth that we are all equal in the eyes of God.” Around the base is the inscription, “none but ourselves can free our mind”—Marcus Garvey’s words made famous by Bob Marley in his “Redemption Song” which inspired the sculpture.

The significance of this pair of figures is also at the heart of Laura Facey’s subsequent installation (2006), which engages with the infamous iconography of the slave ship *Brookes* showing how Africans were stowed for the long transatlantic voyages. Used by abolitionist campaigners then and by historians and educators today, the notorious image of the ship crammed with human beings shackled in appalling conditions has been transformed in Laura Facey’s recreation. A cottonwood canoe replaces the European sailing ship, on a sea where the waves are represented by sugarcane, and the teeming black figures cramming it prove, close-up, to be miniature replicas of the “Redemption Song” sculpture. In acknowledging the appalling realities of those thousands of voyages, the sculpture thus reveals their inner truth: that those who survived transferred from one continent to another their full humanity, their dignity, and the freedom of their minds. It is not called “Their Spirits Gone Before Them” for nothing.

The sculpture theme continues in the next piece, extracts from Rachel Manley’s memoir about her grandparents, *Drumblair*. The passages relate her child’s eye-view of her grandmother, Edna Manley, the sculptress, deciding on the design for her statue of the Jamaican hero Paul Bogle. Once cast, the form of such a monument becomes fixed in the national consciousness, but it is salutary to be shown the process whereby that final form was arrived at. The need to capture the heroism of resistance—Bogle’s sureness—

was what shaped Edna Manley’s design of the bold, “planted” figure. The statue stands today outside the Morant Bay Courthouse where Bogle was sentenced and executed (along with hundreds of others) for leading what became known as the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. The uprising was about the refusal of the authorities to allow former slaves to have land on which to grow food. We conclude the item with a recent photograph: the Courthouse was gutted by fire in February 2007, but, appropriately, the statue stands unscathed in front of it. As Rachel Manley puts it, “the lens of the artist’s eye in its considered blink [can] have more impact on events than all the daily machinations of planning and building.”

The little book made by children in Jamaica in 1826 bears eloquent testimony to the ancestors of today’s Jamaicans. Here we see young people seizing the opportunity for an education, and proudly producing beautiful work—handwriting and needlework samplers—which they signed with their names and ages, and their status as slaves or freed slaves. Such simple objects can say more than a dozen history books.

Karina Williamson’s essay uncovers the story of a Scottish writer, John Marjoribanks, who used his experience as an army officer in Jamaica as material for abolitionist poetry. His *Slavery; An Essay in Verse* (1792) is the best-known of his works but not the only abolitionist poem he produced. The direct witness it bears to some of the most appalling cruelties of slavery makes his verse grim reading, the ordered language so poignantly remote from the realities it describes.

Marian Gwyn’s contribution, about staging the exhibition at Penrhyn Castle, North Wales, which uses the family seat of the Pennant family to tell the story of where the money to build that castle came from—slave labour on Jamaican sugar estates—

reminds us of a number of the issues around the heritage industry (of which, in the UK, the National Trust is “queen”), not least being relations with the local community. In Ireland, for comparison, the “great house” Strokestown Park House in County Roscommon, was chosen to house the museum of the 1840s famine as a result of which some two million people either died or emigrated, since it was at the wrought-iron gates separating the ordinary people from the landowner and his family that the starving peasants whom he had turned off their little food-growing plots rose up and killed him, the first death of its kind at the time. When Mary Robinson, then President of Ireland, opened it in 1994, she said, “More than anything else, this Famine Museum shows us that history is not about power or triumph nearly so often as it is about suffering and vulnerability.” How to represent suffering and vulnerability, however, remains a task for curators around the world. The need to *attract* visitors can seem to be at odds with the experience they are going to be introduced to. Rebellion poses even more of a task. In the case of Penrhyn Castle, now administered by the National Trust, it was not only a question of the black experience, about which the typical National Trust visitor may have little knowledge: the ongoing bitterness of the local community about the castle, for the way Lord Penrhyn broke the slate-quarrymen’s strike not so long ago, was also something the curators felt they needed to address if they were going to tackle the question of how the family made its money. To get visitors thinking about plantation slavery which had made possible the extravagant surroundings of the castle was the exhibition’s primary target, but it could not be presented in isolation. As Charlotte Williams puts it in her extraordinary autobiography, *Sugar and Slate*, which narrates a life lived around the Black Atlantic from a starting-point in Wales and talks about this

history, “Out of the profits of slave labour in one Empire, [Richard Pennant] built another on near-slave labour. The plantocracy sponsored the slateocracy in an intimate web of relationships where sugar and slate were the commodities and brute force and exploited labour were the building blocks of the Welsh Empire.”<sup>14</sup> Community involvement was therefore put at the heart of the development of the exhibition, including the forging of links with other communities, in Jamaica itself and in Liverpool, the port from which so many of the triangular slave-trading voyages set out. Children in all three locations were encouraged to start on an empathetic journey, and adults were moved by hands-on experience with the archive material, the names of individuals in those lists of “chattels” calling out powerfully across the centuries.

The exhibition at Penrhyn Castle was billed as “leading the National Trust’s events marking the abolition of the slave trade.”<sup>15</sup> In conversation it emerged that other Trust staff, who might have mounted similar commemorative exhibitions at other historic country seats across the UK, had proved to be actively hostile to the idea of foregrounding, in “their” grand houses, the role of slavery in creating the wealth which led to such opulent life-styles. The UK heritage business is by and large not interested in looking below the surface, or perhaps is deeply afraid of the consequences of doing so, for although historians may be well aware of the truth, management of visitors who are being groomed to spend money on pretty objects in National Trust gift shops tends to stay well clear of anything morally uncomfortable or disturbing. It is partly for this reason that we have included my photographs of the massive neo-Norman “fortress” of Penrhyn Castle, built by the Pennants in the 1830s, and of the beautiful view from it, to bring into the reader’s experience something of that starting-point. They are intended to

echo the painting of their Denbigh estate in Jamaica, with its pastoral conventions concealing a cruel reality. However, Marian Gwyn's account ends with an uncompromising and just reminder of ongoing "guilt and anger."

The following item was also created largely in Wales. Michael Burnett's cantata *Let These Things Be Written Down* was written to commemorate the abolition bicentenary, and was given its first performances as part of Jamaica's official marking of the anniversary in October 2007. The work draws on the words of Caribbean, British and American poets and on traditional folk tunes. I have to acknowledge an interest, as I saw the movements emerge one by one as they were written by my husband. However, to hear the work taken to heart and performed in its entirety by Jamaican musicians was a great privilege. Two movements are included here, both as musical score and as audio-recording of the first performance.

At the end of this section of items all with a Jamaican connection, Africa then becomes our focus. Chantal Aboa makes a two-part contribution, an essay on the way that history has shaped the present-day societies of Sierra Leone and Liberia, and a short story. The attempts to rectify the wrongs of slavery which led to the founding of communities of freed slaves in both countries, by the British and the Americans respectively, she shows to have been naïve and insensitive. The ethnic divisions and civil conflict in both societies today are directly traceable to these high-handed interventions. It is a powerful reminder of the dangers even of well-intentioned actions, particularly when one group is privileged over another, and the responsibility for future consequences which is attendant on political action. The *insouciance* with which the European empires implemented demographic change, changing the face of the world's societies for ever, is

frightening in its arrogance, but the difficult case of the two nation-states created as a direct result of the abolitionist movement is something we hear little about. Current-affairs reporting of the desperate circumstances of child soldiers, raped women, and warlords rarely relates such atrocities to the deeper historical rifts in those societies which were created by outside intervention. Aboa's short story, which follows, takes a wry look at what it means to be an immigrant from the South in the North today: the scene is the UK but it could have been set anywhere in Europe or North America. Faced with demands for assimilation, individuals have their own moral choices to make about how to respond. Finally, the story reminds the reader, with a smile, that stereotyping can be a two-way process.

Osita Ezeliora's contribution is the text of a talk about the history of the West African Students' Union, founded in the 1920s, which was delivered at a South African university. It begins with a reflection on *Ojemba*, an Igbo word for sojourner or traveller, and recalls that West African students, as *Ojemba*, were instrumental in independence movements in many other parts of Africa during the twentieth century. It also considers how such students are often regarded as outsiders in today's South Africa. Again, it is a dimension of intercultural Africa that those outside that continent hear little about.

In the next item we return to the Caribbean. The work of poet and dramatist Derek Walcott has placed tiny St. Lucia, the pawn in so many eighteenth-century Caribbean battles between the French and the English, firmly on the world's cultural map. It was, in particular, his epic poem *Omeros*, which uses Homeric reference points to create a work of equivalent significance about the life of St. Lucian fishermen, which won him the Nobel Prize. It is a passage from this poem, explaining the name in its title (Homer in

modern Greek), which is here translated into Serbo-Croatian and Italian, by Marija Bergam and Andrea Molesini respectively (Andrea Molesini has elsewhere translated the whole poem). Marija Bergam introduces her translation with an essay about the task of translating such a passage, and some of the choices which were involved in its entry into a new language.

A number of essays on a variety of literary topics follows. Maria Cristina Fumagalli examines a work by French writer Victor Hugo for its representation of the island of Hispaniola. The early novel *Bug-Jargal* was written in 1819 and revised in 1826, but its subject is the Saint Domingue revolt of 1791. As she describes, critics have taken contrary views of the work, but her focus is on its representation of the difference between the French- and Spanish-speaking parts of the island, represented today by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, which share the longest land border in the Caribbean islands. Hugo's text demonstrates there were already well-established cultural and political differences between the two territories. The three dates in play in the text, 1791, 1819 and 1826, demonstrate some revealing points of comparison in relation to a history which is relatively little known in the English-speaking world, for all its historic importance.

The focus for Sofía Muñoz Valdivieso is two recent historical novels by Caribbean British writers, revisiting the period before abolition. Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) foreground British involvement in the slave trade, inviting a new generation of readers to engage imaginatively with the previously erased experience of black Britons. Dabydeen gives a full, interior life to a marginal figure from Hogarth's paintings of the same title, a black

boy. Both novels use voice in interesting ways, but the essay argues that they use the conventions of the slave narrative differently.

Lyn Graham Barzilai takes a fresh look at a cameo work by Pulitzer Prize winner and, from 1993, poet laureate of the United States, Rita Dove. “Kentucky 1833” (from *The Yellow House on the Corner*, 1980) portrays a group of slaves on their day off. The critique argues that this “short prose poem,” spoken from the slaves’ position, while it can be seen as a conventional account of victimage actually tackles deeper questions of enlightenment and self-realisation, particularly through the provocative image of sheep. The date of 1833 is significant as the year when the US state of Kentucky prohibited the importation of slaves, a move which had implications which were not fully realised at the time.

Our excursus around the Black Atlantic thus brings us to the USA. The Kentucky story may remind us that in 1830 the USA and Brazil each had a quarter of the African-descended people of the Americas. Emancipation in the United States followed on the heels of victory for the north in the Civil War, finally reaching the last slaves in 1865 (the date of Paul Bogle’s Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica). The last New World territory to emancipate its slaves proved to be Brazil, in 1888. However, the lived experience of slavery is not as remote as we often assume. Barely a year ago the oldest person in the world was Elizabeth Bolden, the daughter of freed slaves; born in 1890 in Tennessee, she died in December 2006.

This issue concludes with a timely reminder of how far the reach of the Black Atlantic can, in fact, be—further perhaps than Paul Gilroy envisaged. Saddik Gohar demonstrates how the work and the example of another icon of African American culture,



Langston Hughes, has shaped the poetry of a black Arab writer, Mohamed Al-Fayturi. Born in Sudan in the 1930s of mixed descent from slaves and slave-traders of Libyan background, he attributes his formative experience to the colonial Egypt of the 1940s. The work of Langston Hughes, central to the Harlem Renaissance, struck echoes with him, as he recognised a language of protest and assertion which lent itself to expressing his own situation in a racialised society. His Arabic poetry is here brought into an English-language context for discussion. While he might have asserted an identity as an Arab, he chooses instead to embrace the black African identity which in today's Sudan tends to be marginalised, as we see in the ongoing humanitarian disaster of Darfur, and which he sees reflected in the culture of black America.

It may seem at first surprising that a poet of the Arab world should revere the example of an African American poet, but, on reflection, we have to acknowledge that the cultural example of those who have made a stand, who have asserted their identity and that of their group in the teeth of a majority culture which would deny it or relegate it to the margins, can inspire us across borders, across continents, and eras. The reality of the Black Atlantic is typified by exactly that sort of creative intercultural exchange. Artists and thinkers of the region can seize with both hands the stimulus and the opportunity it offers. It illustrates what Gilroy champions as “the inescapability and legitimate value of mutation, hybridity, and intermixture en route to better theories of ... black political culture....”<sup>16</sup> Recovery of the past through research and creative engagement with the experience of history is one part of it. Some of the little-known texts and icons of the past are being made available now by enterprising publishers, some of them new. The Heaventree Press in Coventry, UK, for instance, is to be commended for

bringing out a range of landmark reprints. But above all what is needed is for the talented young artists of the Black Atlantic, like Christopher Clare and Chantal Aboa and so many others, to engage with that testing and continuous process of self-creation through their work which can bring the past, however painful, to bear constructively on the future.

## Paula Burnett

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, London and New York: Verso, 1993, 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>5</sup> The edict was issued in the name of his father King Christian VII by Fredrik VI (who was then Regent because of his father's mental illness), though it did not come into effect until 1803. See [www.anti-slaverysociety.addr.com](http://www.anti-slaverysociety.addr.com)

<sup>6</sup> Gilroy, 213-217.

<sup>7</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Cultural Criticism and Society" from *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 34.

<sup>8</sup> Verene A. Shepherd, "Monuments, Memorialisation and Decolonisation in Jamaica" (*Jamaica Journal* 29.3, Dec. 2005-April 2006), 41, 38.

<sup>9</sup> Gilroy, 4, 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> The exhibition "Materialising Slavery: Art, Artefact, Memory and Identity" opened in September 2007 at the National Gallery and at the Institute of Jamaica. Laura Facey's "Their Spirits Gone Before Them" was also part of this exhibition.

<sup>11</sup> Gilroy, 223.

<sup>12</sup> It is in my view as absurd as to argue that, for instance, only women should be allowed to portray women in art, or that only Jewish artists have the right to engage with the holocaust, which would mean that a writer such as Thomas Keneally, an Australian of Irish Catholic descent, should not have written the novel *Schindler's Ark* (1982) which led to Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* (1993). Surely that way lies fascism.

<sup>13</sup> Gilroy, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte Williams, *Sugar and Slate*, Aberystwyth: Planet, 2002, 175.

<sup>15</sup> See [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

<sup>16</sup> Gilroy, 223.