Roundtable: Linking the legacies of British slave-ownership to Australian colonisation

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JEREMY MARTENS AND GEORGINA ARNOTT

This is a transcription of a roundtable discussion held on 15 April 2020 between members of the Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery project team.

Zoë Laidlaw

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to our final seminar on the theme of 'Writing Slavery into Australian History'. This series has been presented by the Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery project in collaboration with the National Centre for Biography at The Australian National University. Today, we are extremely fortunate to be able to present a roundtable discussion and our intent is to reflect on the previous seminars we have had in this series, and think about what they suggest for the rest of our project. The plan for the session is that our two British partners, Catherine Hall and Keith McClelland, are going to offer some reflections on the series over the last six or seven weeks, and its intersection with their own work on the British legacies of slavery. We are then going to offer our panellists here in Australia the opportunity to respond to what Catherine and Keith have to say. And we are also very keen to take questions and comments from any of you who are watching live.

First, we are delighted that Catherine Hall is able to join us from London today. Catherine is Emerita Professor of Modern British Social and Cultural History at University College London, and she's the Chair of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery. She is also a fellow of the British Academy. Catherine's research centres on rethinking relations between Britain and Empire in the early and mid-nineteenth century and reflects on the ways that metropolitan ideas and practices have been shaped by the colonial experience. Catherine was Principal Investigator of the Economic and Social Research Council–funded project Legacies of British Slave-ownership, which ran between 2004 and 2012; then its successor project, also funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, The Structure and Significance of British Caribbean Slave-ownership 1763 to 1833. At the core of these two projects was a database

that contains the identity of all slave-owners in the British Caribbean at the time that slavery ended, amassing and analysing information about those slave-owners' activities, affiliations and legacies, and a major inspiration to the work of the Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery team.

We are also joined from London by Keith McClelland who now works part time in the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery and has a particular responsibility there for maintaining the centre's database and its website. Keith was previously co-director of The Structure and Significance of the British Caribbean Slave Ownership project, and co-founder with Catherine and Nick Draper of the original Legacies of British Slave-ownership project. He was acting director of the centre from September 2019 through to May 2020. He is a social and political historian with a long-standing interest in forms of labour: enslaved, coerced and free.

We also have three of our Australian-based researchers on the Western Australian Legacies of British Slavery project with us this evening. I am a Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, and I have a particular research interest in how imperial connections constituted colonial conditions. Jeremy Martens, who works at the University of Western Australia, has research interests including the evolution of immigration restriction legislation in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; as well as work on race, gender and the law in nineteenth and twentieth-century South Africa. Notably, Jeremy is the author of two books, *Empire and Asian Migration: Sovereignty, Immigration Restriction and Protest in the British Settler Colonies*, published 2018; also, *Government House in Western Australian Society* was published in 2011. In 2020, he was awarded the annual Marian Quartley Prize for 'The Mrs Freer Case Revisited: Marriage Morality in the State in Interwar Australia'. And finally, we are joined by Georgina Arnott, the project's postdoctoral research associate in history, who is also based at the University of Melbourne. Georgina leads the project theme 'Revisionist Biographies: Forgetting and Remembering Slavery' and is centring her research for the project on high-profile Western Australian families who arrived in the Swan River Colony with connections to various forms of unfree labour. Georgina is also a noted historian and biographer with a focus on twentieth-century Australia, her first book, *The Unknown Judith Wright*, was shortlisted for the National Biography Award in 2017, and she is currently editing a collection of Wright's non-fiction work for La Trobe University Press, and Black Inc.'s Australian Thinkers Series.

Catherine Hall

Let me first say what a pleasure it has been to listen to the seminar presentations that have been given in this series. I have been so impressed by the team of people who are working on these issues, and the amount of work already done. I have not met all of you personally, but I have known everyone's work, and it is a pleasure to develop this connection. Jane Lydon's introductory overview, Emma Christopher on

Queensland sugar, Jeremy Martens on pastoralism and the struggles over labour in Western Australia, Georgina Arnott on Stirling and his family, Malcolm Allbrook on the echoes of slavery in Western Australia, Zoë Laidlaw and Georgina on national biographies—all have given me food for thought and questions to pursue. My association with Australian historians began in 1991 with Marilyn Lake and Ann Curthoys, and over the years, I have been so pleased to maintain a connection with developments in Australian history writing, and now to see the impetus that the Legacies of British Slave-ownership (LBS) has given. I very much hope that the conversation today will be part of an ongoing one; I feel that there is much to discuss. I thought I would simply raise three issues, two of them conceptual, and all connecting to my own current work which has grown out of particularly the second phase of the LBS project. I am doing a study of the English slave-owner Edward Long, who lived in Jamaica for 12 years and wrote a seminal and authoritative set of three volumes on the history of Jamaica.

My first point is about the biographical method. The limits are obvious: the focus on individuals who leave records, the difficulties of recovering the lives of the subjected, the question of the relation to the big picture, and so on. But the biographical method combined with prosopographical work has great strengths. Big data can focus our minds on the structural issues, and take on the question of how representative, for example, those descendants of slave-owners are (in comparison with other investors and capitalists). While the biographical can take us into questions of lived experience, familial and sexual relations, psychic and emotional life, the genealogical work reveals the networks over time in such significant ways. And let me note Emma Christopher's discovery of the great-nephews of Edward Long whose family lived off the slavery business for generations, seeking their fortunes in the Queensland sugar economy.

I suppose I have three questions. How significant is the big data—what we call the big data, which is the LBS database—for you? And will you be able to make some estimate of the significance of the connections of the people you're working with, the descendants of slave-owners, and those with connections to slave-owners, with other sources of capital and human labour? So in other words, what is the significance, overall, of this group of people that you are working on? Is there any equivalent movement of capital and labour on this scale? Or are the other groups who come to the Australian colonies different? I can see that those who come to South Australia, for example, are in some ways, a rather different group, though, of course, Fife Angus was absolutely part of the slave-owning connection. So that is my first question, about the possible connections between the quantitative and the qualitative material.

To my second point, in recent years there has been a serious revival of interest in the term 'racial capitalism', which I have come to find very helpful in my own work. I have drawn on three intellectual and political traditions: from Marx, from the

Caribbean, and from feminist historians, to map a definition that aims to capture the particular conditions of the circuit of people and capital in the mid-eighteenth century that connected England, the West African coast and Jamaica. The Marxist tradition is vital to an understanding of the circuit of capital. The Caribbeanists have insisted on the capitalist nature of the plantation economy, not that it was pre-capitalist, which is what Marx thought, but that it was full-born capitalist. The feminists have alerted us to reproduction, the gendering of slavery and the particular forms of exploitation of black women. I focus in my own work on the hybrid system, which developed in the mid-eighteenth-century Atlantic, resting on mercantile capital, hereditary slavery and wage labour that harnessed the circuit of people, credit, commodities and social reproduction for capital accumulation. This was a particularly racialised regime specific to time and place. I echo Patrick Wolfe here, with his emphasis on the many regimes, and the many temporalities and spatial realities of racial regimes.

I wonder if you have been thinking about the different regimes across the different colonies. There is an obvious comparison between the pastoral and pearling economies of Western Australia and sugar in Queensland. Are these areas that you are interested in thinking about? And what about the particular capitalist formation? If that is what it is? Is that how you would define it? Is racial capitalism a helpful concept for you? I found the US historian Walter Johnson particularly helpful here, especially his two wonderful books: one on the Mississippi and now the one on St Louis. In his study of the Mississippi Valley, he insists on looking at the actual existing practices of the cotton economy, with its interlocking but distinct labour regimes, rather than at abstract forms of what we might call capitalism, and what we might call slavery. I found that very helpful. And I wonder if you think that is going to be useful in your own work.

My third question is about the way in which racial thinking works and the concept that I have found particularly helpful here, which is disavowal. What are the logics and mechanics of racial thinking in the racial regimes which you are exploring? How did pastoralists and the pearling masters, or the Queensland sugar planters, establish the practices that attempted to fix the binaries between black and white and master in the world in which they lived? The ability of these slavers to see and not see, I suggest, was fundamental. They depended on disavowal and the denial of realities. The concept of disavowal, first articulated by Freud and subsequently developed by a range of other psychoanalytic thinkers, is essential to understanding the erasure of race and empire in much British history writing. Freud asked, how do we remember, forget and reconfigure the past? And how is it that we can make a thing appear never to have happened? We can know, according to this account, something unconsciously, even as we are consciously innocent of the knowledge. Freud's thinking was based upon the idea that the mind is always conflicted, and that we actively rid ourselves, sometimes unbeknownst to ourselves, of certain mental contents. By splitting in

our minds, we may misrecognise ourselves, avoid pain, bury our guilt, and disclaim our desires. Freud's emphasis is on an unconscious process, the rejection of reality that is potentially traumatic. Forgetting is understood as actively produced, not just a matter of failed remembering. Rather, it is willed, unconsciously. Forgetting is deliberate. The knowledge or event is denied and refused and then repressed. So, disavowal is connected with a denial of external realities, a refusal to think about what is unthinkable, a wish to put aside what cannot be integrated in the mind.

But disavowal always exists alongside recognition. Whenever we are in a position to study them—wrote Freud—acts of disavowal turned out to be half measures, incomplete attempts at detachment from reality. The disavowal is always supplemented by an acknowledgement. Anne Stoler describes that what she calls the imperial dispositions constructed by colonists to legitimate their own behaviour—they learn to ignore, turn away, refuse to witness. These were the well-tended conditions of disregard that enabled slave-owners, pastoralists, etc. to live with the contradictions of their practices. They could be loving family men, and buyers and sellers of human beings, valuing them only as hands and relying on violence and coercion to extract their labour. Disavowal can also be thought about in terms of collective memory, the evasions and displacements so characteristic of English culture; for example—the will to forget a difficult past. I am interested in how you think about the different racial regimes of the colonies and echo my previous question about Western Australia and Queensland. Does the racial logic work differently in relation to Aboriginal peoples, for example, and South Sea Islanders? In attempting to understand the logics of racial thinking, what concepts have you found helpful?

So those are my three questions. Firstly, about the relation between the overall numbers, as it were, of people involved in the development of capital and labour in the Australian colonies and the constituency that you are so particularly preoccupied with; the question about the use of racial capital as a concept; and the question about the logics of racial thinking and the evasions and distortions that are associated with it. Thank you.

Keith McClelland

Well, thank you very much. And like Catherine, it is great pleasure to be here to be with you, at least in this virtual sense. Let me say also a couple of things. One is what an impressive amount and quality of work is represented in the seminar series. Extraordinary, really; I am full of admiration. The second is to say that I am so sorry that Alan is not able to speak in this session and I wish him well.

What I want to talk about is the question of biography within the LBS itself. So, I make less obvious reference to the Australian work, but I hope that this bears upon what you are all doing, and is partly a response in particular to the excellent joint paper from Zoë and Georgie about dictionaries of biography. I want to make some remarks about biography and the project, but let me start by saying something in extremely general terms about the nature of biography, and this echoes, in good part, what Catherine has just been talking about. Clearly, what a biography aspires to do is to establish the contours and narratives of a life. To fill out as much as possible what is known about a person from birth to death, the trajectory that they take, the familial and social context of that life, the dominating and animating projects which shape it, and to establish in some way the importance of that life, as an individual. This is not the place to talk in any more detail about the forms of biography; but many biographies and, of course, autobiographies are both teleological and, in some sense, tales of redemption are often. That is to say, the determination of the life is how it ends up and how somebody got there. It is almost impossible to imagine a biography which is written as if nobody knows how the life finishes. Albeit there are one or two attempts to do that, but on the whole, people do not do that. What is much more common is the biography as a tale of redemption, or a tale of a 'journey'—to use a ghastly cliché much favoured by celebrity biographies and autobiographies including, for example, that of Tony Blair—a word which in my view should be banished from the English language. But that is another point.

But there are three distinguishing features, it seems to me, of a biography. One is to establish the singularity of the individual, what Sartre once called the singular universality of an individual. Second is to establish that the person was in some way visible to the wider society. And thirdly, that in some important ways, the subject has agency in the making of their own lives. That again, to borrow a phrase from Sartre, that it is possible for somebody to make of their lives something other than what history has made of them. At the same time the biography is to situate the person as singular, and to locate them in relation to that one larger history that Catherine was alluding to or referring to. The biographer will seek to place the subject as in some way carrying that larger history, at least in some particular moment. In Legacies of British Slavery, we have people who are carrying the history of slave-ownership, on small scale or large scale. There may be people like Stirling, whom Georgie's excellent paper was about, and establishing in that regard things like family trees and so on.

But the subject may be the exemplar of a particular political tradition or political formation, or as a key figure. And of course, there are thousands of examples of that kind of thing, which range from not only the sorts of biographies that Zoë and Georgie were talking about, biographical interests in something like the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*) or the *Australian Dictionary*, but also in monumental tomes like—and I think of things that I have on my shelves—like

Monypenny and Buckle's six volumes on the history of Disraeli or 1,000-page tomes on contemporary politicians and the like. So in saying that biography is, in some sense, about singular individuals, this, of course, is also what is central to the LBS project, but so too are the tensions between situating individuals as unique, and indeed placing them as exemplars of formations, which are larger than they are. And trying to see the distinctiveness of any particular individual within that project, but also in which the distinctiveness of individuals might, in effect, disappear and be largely irrelevant, as singular individuals; they only matter as exemplars of those larger formations.

Now the determination of the individual as central to the LBS project is in good part a consequence of the very sources that we used. That is to say that if you take the compensation records, then what they do is to push us to looking at individuals in one respect, because part of the explanation of this is because the only people who could apply for compensation were to do so as individuals. That is to say, they could not apply on behalf of companies, or institutions of some kind; they had to apply as individual persons. Of course they may well have been applying in effect on behalf of institutions, but they could only do so, as I say, as individuals. So the sources themselves push us towards a focus upon singular individuals. At the same time, the degree to which these people are visible is hugely variable. They are all visible in the sense that we have the names of them, but often—and I will come back to this in a moment—we know next to nothing or indeed nothing at all about them apart from the name and, inferring from the name, the sex of the person. So to give you an entirely arbitrary example, Anne Eliza Richardson lodged two claims in Anguilla, was awarded a total of 59 pounds, 9 shillings and 7 pence, and was awarded the money on 23 November 1835. That is essentially what we know about her. We know nothing of where she lived, we know nothing of where she was born and died. We know nothing of her from the family, and so on. So she is minimally visible to us, and has significance as a consequence, and that lies not in her singularity as an individual, so much as exemplifying other things, in particular, two things. One is that she is a member of that group of about 45 per cent of claimants who were women: so her importance lies in that fact alone, or that is *one* of the key things about her. The other thing is that she was one of the numerous body of owners, many of them indeed women, who owned very small numbers of enslaved people, in her case three (two on one claim, one on the other). And what this means, at one level, is that while her visibility is in a sense pretty minimal, it rests upon the invisibility of the enslaved. They are represented, at least in the initial published account of the compensation records—the Parliamentary Paper of 1837–1838—simply as numbers on a page. In that record, you see a name, you see the date of the award, you see the claim number, where it was, and you see a number, and no more than that for the enslaved. And so her visibility, as they say, rests upon invisibility.

Having said this, let me just say something about the extent to which we have biographies in LBS. There are currently about 62,000 individual entries in the database. If one restricts the count to those associated with the Caribbean, that is, excluding people associated with Mauritius, or the Cape of Good Hope where there were of course compensation claims made, then we've got about 47,000 people. And within that, we have biographical notes of greatly varying extent, on about 20,300 people. That is, there are notes on about 43 per cent of the Caribbean-associated people. But within that, 66 per cent of the biographies are very short indeed. That is where the biographies or the biographical notes are around about 100 words or less. And the shortest of all the biographies consist of a single word, such as resident, and nothing else. Another third are between about 500 and 1,000 words, and by comparison, a typical Oxford *DNB* entry is about 800 words. So we have a third or so which are between 500 and 1,000 words, and only 1 per cent of the entries which are more than 1,000 words. Incidentally, the longest of all is for a man called Charles McGarel, which comes in at 2,700 words. In other words, something over half the individuals we have named we know next to nothing about and about something over 80 per cent of our entries, we know really very little indeed about them. But we do know, of course, and I've already said this several times, that they were associated with a compensation claim. And as we move back, particularly to analysing ownership since the mid-eighteenth century, we know that they were owners of enslaved people, or in some way within the orbit of slave-ownership.

I mentioned in relation to Anna Eliza Richardson that her visibility rested on the invisibility of the enslaved. And in a sense, of course, this is only partially true. We do have records of enslaved people in which we can see their names, most notably the slave registers, but also in some other documents; for example, in an inventory of the Harrow Plantation in St Philip, Barbados in 1811. I won't go through the whole thing, it is several pages long, but we have details of 189 enslaved people. They range from William, a carpenter, who is worth 160 pounds; to Nat who was a field labourer also worth 160; to Philly Ann who was a field labourer and she was worth 150 quid. Among the children, Harry was worth 75 pounds and worked in the third gang on the plantation. And then as a final example, Lucy Ann, who was an infant, was worth 5 pounds.

So there is a sense in which it is possible to dig deeper and find something like the visibility of enslaved people, and that is a tension which is permanent within and in my view unavoidable within LBS, that is to say the tension between two kinds of renderings. One is the visibility of people who are slave-owners, who have some kind of agency, some kind of visibility as singular individuals, although that, as I have suggested, is often very minimal. At the same time, we have the rendering of the enslaved, but the enslaved rendered within an intellectual, cultural and political context, which makes them objects of calculation. In the mania for calculation, in the early nineteenth century, that is how they are framed. They are framed, as Catherine

suggests, as racialised subjects. And that tension is something which has to inform, and yet also something which we want to go beyond, in LBS by investigating the material in the slave registers. What we want to do is to try to go beyond framing them, the enslaved, as objects of calculation, and to restore some sense of not only visibility, but humanity to those people. And in a way, this echoes the kind of thing which, for example, Emma Christopher was talking about in her paper.

Zoë Laidlaw

That was fascinating. Thank you both for characteristically leaving us with more questions to answer. We were hoping you were going to provide all the answers I think this evening! That's absolutely fantastic and so stimulating. I think that Georgie and Jeremy will both want to respond. But perhaps, given that you both spoke about a phrase that I would like to banish from the language, which is 'big data', perhaps I could start there.

Our project is not only crippled by the fact that none of us can ever meet one another or travel to most of the archives we are interested in—but in its early days. But already, I think, any kind of sense that we were just going to be able to follow very obvious money trails from the compensation claims that were divvied up in London to Western Australia, or indeed to any of the other Australian colonies: we realise that those are pretty few and far between. So we are increasingly moving back and forth between trying to juggle these individual life stories. I think Jeremy's paper and Georgina's paper about Stirling were really good examples of where we can follow some money and wrestle with the problem of how to trace a larger injection of capital into the Australian colonies. We know that there are groups of settlers who arrived at certain times: Catherine mentioned South Australia; there's obviously also systematic colonisers who headed to Western Australia, groups of people who went from Britain to Australia taking resources with them. We are not I think yet in any kind of position to say how influential money from the slavery business was to Australia's settler foundations, or the Australian settler colonies' foundations, but I think the questions that you raise will help us to edge closer to knowing why we cannot answer that, even if we do not actually end up being able to answer that in any way that is satisfactory to us. Jeremy, would you like to speak a bit about that? Is that something that you've really been wrestling with?

Jeremy Martens

Thank you. I would also like to in answering respond to some of what Catherine was talking about in relation to racial capitalism. And I think one of the questions Catherine that you had is: have we been thinking about the different capitalist or racial capitalist regimes in Western Australia? I certainly have been, and come from a South African history background, which perhaps gives me a particular inflection,

if you like, when looking at this. For me, what really struck me doing my research on pastoralists and the way in which violence was central to the creation of labour regimes in Western Australia, is how—and this touches on this idea of disavowal and denial—is just how quick settlers were in rejecting those people who raised questions about the treatment of Indigenous Australians. And I am thinking in particular, in this case of the research that I have done, of Giustiniani, a missionary, but then later on (and Jane has written about Gribble as well), he is hounded out of the colony for pointing out that there is slavery, forced labour and all sorts of atrocities. Catherine, you are completely right, this idea of disavowal and denial is absolutely essential to creating the labour regimes in Western Australia and it is a legacy that I think we continue with. You are talking in relation to the UK, but I think the amnesia around these types of questions is huge in Western Australia. To touch on what Keith was saying, if we think of the way in which Australians (or white South Africans for that matter) like to tell stories about themselves, they often do have a kind of redemption aspect to them; it's another way in which you can kind of disavow the kinds of violence that are integral to telling these stories. I don't know if I am really answering Zoë's questions but I just really wanted to respond to what both of you had to say in relation both to racial capitalism, disavowal and denial, and also the way in which there are these tales of redemption that I think settlers are very keen to tell about themselves and their past.

Georgina Arnott

I'm particularly interested in Catherine's identification of the process of disavowal as being central to slave-ownership, which I know she has written about, and which has been influential for me. I wonder, perhaps particularly in relation to Edward Long given that you are thinking about him now, how significant you view the stories that families told themselves about themselves within this process of disavowal and of repressing recognition? I guess the question is: how significant and sustaining to British slavery overall were these family stories which embedded the values of the slave-owning family? I am clearly thinking of Stirling in this case, but I would love to hear your thoughts about other slave-owners.

Catherine Hall

Well, thank you both, and Keith for more thoughts zipping around in my head. And, of course, Jeremy, as I am sure you know, racial capitalism as a concept was first articulated in South Africa in relation to apartheid regimes. So, I increasingly think that the money is not the most important thing at all. The crucial issue about all of this is how difference is figured. And that that difference could be about enslaved Africans, or it could be about Irish labourers, or it could be about Chinese migrants, or it could be about Jewish people. The construction of otherness, I think, is what

is crucial. And the expelling of people who are not the same as us from equivalent understandings of humanity. I think that is the most important story to tell, myself. I also think that if it didn't match up to capital accumulation, it would be a very different story.

In the Australian context, it must be the case that the capital from slave-owners is not going to be 10 to 15 per cent among the rich, in the way it is in Britain, for example. That's what Nick Draper's been able to show right into the middle of the nineteenth century, 10 to 15 per cent, of the British rich, are associated with descendants of slave-owners. I am pretty sure that's not going to be the case in Australia. It is a much smaller segment. But what those settlers bring with them is already established patterns of the understandings of difference, which enable your settlers in Western Australia, Jeremy, to think that Indigenous people are, simply, not like us. That is what it comes down to. They are not like us. And so they can be treated in quite different ways.

I would put the racialised ideas of difference, as they circulate around the Empire, as absolutely key for all of us to understand. And in that sense, I think one of the things I find most exciting about the Australian work is the demonstration of that happening, but also the way you are going to bring different groups into it. Because of course in the Caribbean, the number of indigenous people is absolutely tiny. Although the question of genocide in one or two of the islands is obviously incredibly important, for most of the areas of colonisation, of English colonisation, that is not key—the key is enslaved African labour.

So that is my first point. Secondly, I think we could talk about all these things for ages actually, an hour is awfully quick to deal with such big questions! But hopefully, as I said, it's the beginning of a conversation or rather the continuation, not the ending. Completely fascinating what you say Georgie, because, of course, I think the family stories are absolutely vital. And one of the stories that Edward Long tells in the history of Jamaica, though, it's not to the fore at all (and unless you knew you might not understand this), is how he is in a line of slave-owners and colonists. And in telling the story of the island, he is telling the story of his family as well, and then that story is continued in his memorial. For example, where he's buried in England, what is celebrated is his history writing and his family; not at all, you know, what he did in Jamaica, that is totally erased and repressed. I think you are onto something really interesting there, about the ways in which these family stories get reproduced as memorials, etc. and become a standard part of nineteenth-century understandings of history. I think that is another way in which these ideas get embedded and emasculated (I cannot think of the right word) but, you know, the serious questions of violence and coercion disappear from that story. So it is very productive to think about these things.

Keith McClelland

Can I just add to that very briefly, on the question of money, I agree entirely with Catherine. What happened with the money is not the most important thing. In most cases, we do not know what happened to the money. Unless you have got detailed financial records for particular families, you can often simply not establish that 'so and so' put money into 'this or that' or whatever. I think questions about race are the most important legacies. But what I wanted to comment on was the question of connectedness. It does seem to me extremely important to be able to establish, as for example as Georgie has done with Stirling, or Emma has done with the Davidson family, those kinds of connections between various specific individuals and families who are appearing in Caribbean slave-ownership, and those people who are setting up in Australia, developing businesses and all the rest of it. But I will also say that the connectedness is something which we need to look at in relation to not only Australia, but also to India, for example. The connections between the East India Company, Caribbean slavery and global capitalism seem to me extraordinarily important and under-researched, although we have got some important material in the database about it. So too, one could talk about this in relation to Canada, and so on. That connectedness in turn seems to me is necessary to situate it within the kind of framework that, for example, Alan Lester has done in *Ruling the World* where he and his co-authors are looking at the new strategies concerning labour, be it the end of slavery, the beginnings of indentured labour, or other forms of coerced labour; not only within settler colonies like Australia, but to tie that into the new strategies which are being developed within Britain itself around labour, which are not only to do with some of the repercussions of the ending of slavery (things like Factory Acts, poor law reform, strategies of labour in relation to Ireland, and so on). So, actually situating Davidson, situating Stirling, situating any one of these people within that global context of a reconfiguration of imperial labour seems to me a really important thing to be doing.

Zoë Laidlaw

Thanks, Keith, thank you all. I think one of the things that we are finding—it would be interesting to know the degree to which you have grappled with this—is we are finding connections that are sitting outside the compensation records. Georgie talked about Stirling and naval connections, those who are profiting from slavery by a career defending the slave colonies, for example, or prizes from the Admiralty. We are finding merchant houses that reorient their businesses from the Atlantic towards, you know, what they hope are new opportunities in Australasia. I guess we think these connections are important, and we think there is probably a lot more of them that we will uncover. It feels a little bit like there is a risk that we end up telling the history of everything. While I am never shy of a challenge, I wonder how

you are keeping a focus within the LBS on this question of the initial centrality of those compensation records, and then the way in which your project has grown chronologically, but also to different sorts of engagement with Empire and all the different things that you are speaking about today?

Catherine Hall

For a long time, actually, I have thought that this work that Keith just mapped out about the connections across the Empire, you know it can only be an absolutely major collaborative project over many years. Already quite a lot of it has happened in the last 10 years, but there is so much more to be done. I think that all any of us can do is do one piece of it, do one small piece of it. But each of the small pieces will add up to this bigger rethinking of the history of Empire, which will be a history of connection, a history of difference, a history of capital; it will be all these things. But, you know, there is no way you can work on all the things at the same time, as you are saying Zoë. So what is exciting from where I am is to look at what all you are doing as the pieces of the puzzle, that you are gradually adding to the beginnings of this bigger story that we have. I mean, people have been doing this work for a long time. If I think of Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell's book, you know, I mean an absolutely major intervention in understanding the development, not just to Australia, but understanding the development of the relation between metropole and colony. I've just read Jane Lydon's excellent new book *Anti-slavery and Australia: No Slavery in a Free Land*, which makes some of the connections that Keith's been talking about. It is a very productive field of work that we are all in, in our different ways, and I think that makes the connections between us, and the ongoing conversations tremendously important.

Keith McClelland

I think, of course, it is not possible to do all the history. I mean, in one sense, telling the history of a particular location, for example, we have a woman who lived in a house in Highshore and McDuff in north-east Scotland—being able to identify that is very important, but it is also identifying that and that person as part of a hugely larger story. It is not that we can do or would want to do the empirical work, because that is impossible. What we need to do, it seems to me, is to be able to constantly come back to the conceptual frameworks within which we are thinking about these particular instances, whether it is a merchant house or particular person. Developing that conceptual framework is a way of getting into dealing with very particular instances while never forgetting that larger picture.

Zoë Laidlaw

I was just about to read out Alan's comment: we are very glad that he can be with us in part and sorry that he was unable to participate as we originally envisaged. Alan Lester says:

> On racial capitalism, I think the resolution, as much as there was such, of the 1980s debate between Marxist and liberal historians of South Africa is instructive here. The Marxists were right in that until the late 20th century, apartheid served the interests of capitalist regimes based largely on industrialists' demands for keeping African labour. But by the 1980s mechanisation, the need for fewer and more skilled labourers, and the requirements of a larger consumer market made much of apartheid's racially capitalist structure redundant.

He notes that: 'Afrikaners catching up with English speakers' prosperity also had much to do with this change. What this shows, I think, is how dialectic the relationship between racial economic structures, not the same thing as racism, and capitalism is.' Thank you very much, Alan, that's typically incisive.

Georgina Arnott

Rowena Hall asks a stimulating question. She's an artist wanting to represent invisible colonial histories and asks how other historians have approached what she calls *sharing histories of the enslaved*, and have we had ethical concerns about that?

Zoë Laidlaw

I will ask one of our British speakers to speak to that, because I know that Keith you spoke generally to that problem just before—but perhaps Catherine or Keith?

Catherine Hall

I would say that there's been such an important set of issues for artists about how to represent difference, how to represent blackness, how to represent invisibility. There is a great body of artistic work on that in Britain now, which I could not hope to speak about, but I would say it has been an issue that has been on the surface, certainly since the 1980s—how to represent difference.

Thank you very much.

Zoë Laidlaw

I want to note that we have also had a comment from Emma Christopher, who of course also contributed to this series, saying that she agrees very much in terms of Queensland. The influence and legacies of slavery are about much more than money and that she finds resonances in the way that the planters in Queensland disavowed their past and their families' pasts. I think that is something that we are finding at every turn, actually, as we go through this project.

I would like to conclude by thanking especially Keith and Catherine for their presentations, Alan for joining us also from London, and Jeremy and Georgie for their contributions this evening, but also, all of our speakers through the series.

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