M1 MEEF 2018-2019

Civilisation britannique

Mémoire, héritage, ruptures

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This collection of articles is to make you aware of some of the contemporary debates in Britain concerning memory and commemoration. They are difficult and delicate debates but you need to know how to explain them. This is not a series of texts of the sort you will find in the exam, but a more general introduction to how this theme is playing out in contemporary Britain.

The Guardian

Scale and splendour: volunteers work to restore Wentworth Woodhouse

After years of neglect, giant South Yorkshire stately home is undergoing a £130m restoration

Rachel Pepper
Thu 7 Dec 2018 12.55 GMT

When Reg Nash was growing up near Rotherham in South Yorkshire, he would walk along the public right of way through Wentworth Park, stop by a fence and gaze at the enormous country house across the fields.

Wentworth Woodhouse, the historic home of the Fitzwilliam family, was the biggest private residence in the UK, sitting on 23,000 sq metres (250,000 sq ft) of land and boasting the longest facade of any house in Europe - at 185 metres, twice the length of Buckingham Palace. The main part of the house dates back to the mid-18th century and it once employed up to 1,000 staff, requiring an infirmary and a dentist on site.

Nash, now 64, first saw inside the house on a rare guided tour in 2012. “It was just … wow,” he says. “The splendour and the scale of the place is just beyond anything that you can imagine. Even the stable block is huge. People see it and think it’s the house.”

From a distance, Wentworth Woodhouse looks like something from the most extravagant of period dramas, but as you get nearer you start to notice crumbling stonework and boarded-up windows. After years of neglect, the building is in a critical condition, dry rot has set in, the roof is leaking and drains have collapsed.

A derelict part of the property. Photograph: Christopher Thomond for the Guardian

Nash retired after a career in Sheffield's steelworks five years ago and is now one of 165 local volunteers helping with an ambitious project to renovate and repurpose the house. In 2016 the Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust - established after a campaign by a local business owner, Julie Kenny - bought the building from its last private owners, the Newbold family, for £7m, which was £1m under the asking price. (The architect Clifford Newbold, looking for a restoration project, had bought it for £1.5m in 1999.)

When the trust moved in to the house, the building had only a single phone line, an intermittent internet connection and a single vacuum cleaner. The government gave the project £7.6m in the 2016 autumn statement, and the chancellor, Philip Hammond, told MPs the building was said to be the inspiration for Pemberley in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice - a claim that has since been disputed.

The £7.6m sum was immediately swallowed up in fixing 20% of the roof. The final bill for the restoration is expected to be about £130m, the majority of which has not yet been raised.

So far, about 100 structural surveys have been carried out, more than 100 drains have been inspected, 110 tonnes of slate has been ordered for the roof, 200 tonnes of asphalt has been put on the new driveway, and 350 tonnes of rubbish has been removed from the site. It will take an estimated 15 to 20 years to fully restore the property.

The Marble Saloon, the principal room in the house, is regarded as one of the largest perfectly proportioned Palladian-style rooms in the country. Photograph: Christopher Thomond for the Guardian

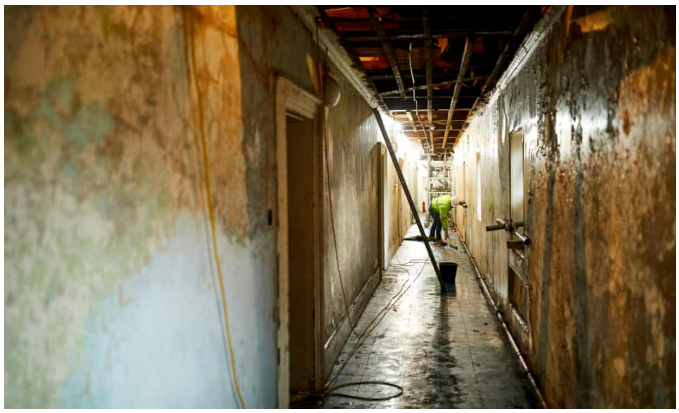
For Nash, it's about being part of something. "Because something's got to happen to it, because otherwise it'll fall down," he says.

When work on Wentworth Woodhouse is finished, the buildings will host events such as weddings (the space is big enough for multiple weddings to be held at once without the parties being aware of each other), and will offer residential accommodation, holiday flats and office space.

In the 20th century, the Fitzwilliam family's wealth took a hit when they had to pay death duties twice in quick succession (the 8th Earl Fitzwilliam died in a plane crash in

1948 along with his lover Kathleen Cavendish, the sister of the future US president John F Kennedy) and the coal industry was nationalised in 1947.

The house sits on the Barnsley seam coalfield, and the postwar Labour government ordered that coal should be mined from opencast mines within 100 metres of the back of the building, making it an unattractive place for the family to live. The house was leased to West Riding county council in 1947 and it was used as a training college for female PE teachers until 1974 when it was taken over by Sheffield City Polytechnic, which later became Sheffield Hallam University.



Repair work in progress at Wentworth Woodhouse.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond for the Guardian

For Sarah McLeod, the trust's chief executive, the restoration of the house is not just about heritage but also about regenerating the local area, much of which is socially deprived. "We're regenerating a site and we're helping to regenerate a community as part of that, so it's about creating jobs and providing training and work opportunities and work experience," she says.

Oliver White, 23, first started volunteering at the house under its previous owners in 2012. He is now a paid "house assistant", doing everything from helping to organise events to working with building contractors. He boasts that he has been in every one of the house's 365 rooms.

"This place draws you in - a lot of the other members of staff say the same. It's got a strange feeling about it," he says. Does he think he will see the project to completion in 20 years' time? "I hope so. I love this place."

McLeod says: "It's got a very patriarchal quality to it, this house. It always has and it always will have. Even though it was owned by the aristocracy and the money came from - in some ways - the blood, sweat and tears of the miners, those mining communities are incredibly proud of it. People feel like it's theirs because it is."

The Guardian

Bus shelter and cattle trough join English heritage list

Historic England's newly listed structures also include a large cockerel and a disused station

Mark Brown *Arts correspondent*
Thu 20 Dec 2018 00.01 GMT

A railway station that closed to passengers 60 years ago, a cattle trough, a thatched bus shelter on the A353 and a big cockerel on Sutton High Street are among the more unusual English buildings and structures to be listed or upgraded this year.

The sites were among the 952 new entries on Historic England's national heritage list. The public body's chief executive, Duncan Wilson, said listing was an important tool in preserving and celebrating the country's heritage.

"We encourage people to understand and enjoy the wonderful range of historic places on their own doorsteps and by listing them we are protecting them for future generations," he said.

The Cock sign on Sutton High Street. Photograph: Historic England/PA

The newly listed railway station is Otterington, near Northallerton, on the east coast main line. However, trains would have to be going particularly slowly for passengers to even notice it - most whizz by at more than 100mph.

The station building and its signal box were built by the London and North Eastern Railway company in 1932 to replace the Victorian station that had been cleared to allow the expansion of the line to four tracks.

The station was not required for long, closing to passengers in 1958 and goods trains in 1964. It survived thanks to sympathetic private ownership, and has now been awarded a grade II listing. Historic England noted the building's 1930s streamlined aesthetic, which was used "to promote a sense of modernity and speed".

Anyone who has passed through Sutton in south London may be familiar with the big cockerel at the top of the high street. The structure, which resembles a pub sign, dates from about 1907.

The Cock Hotel, which it represented, was demolished and the now grade II-listed cockerel sits with road signs directing drivers to Cheam and Croydon.

A thatched bus shelter in the Dorset village of Osmington, which has received a grade II listing, doubles as a memorial. It was built in the late 1940s by Harry and Ethel Parry-

Jones in memory of their son David, a lieutenant in the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade, who died aged 20 in the battle of Normandy.

Robin Hood sculpture, Nottingham. Photograph: Historic England/PA

Historic England said the bus shelter had not been significantly altered since it was built, adding: “It demonstrates that even modest and functional structures can form eloquent and valuable memorials for their local communities.”

The newly listed trough, in Hampstead, north-west London, was built in about 1916 and the structure, which provided water for cattle, horses and dogs, serves as a reminder of the once common presence of farm animals in the capital.

Other places of interest identified by Historic England include a former lifeboat house in Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex; sculptures of Robin Hood and his merry men, which were commissioned in 1949 for the outskirts of Nottingham Castle; the Florence iron mine in west Cumbria, one of the best-surviving sites of its type; and two hangars in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, used by Rolls-Royce to test aircraft in the 30s and 40s.

The new listings and upgrades include 638 war memorials, 19 scheduled monuments, eight parks and gardens and a battlefield.

The Guardian

English Heritage calls for female blue plaque nominees

Organisation wants public to help it redress low number of women represented

Nancy Astor, the first woman in parliament, now has a blue plaque. Photograph: Tunbridge/Getty Images

Mark Brown *Arts correspondent*

Tue 30 Oct 2018 06.00 GMT

English Heritage has admitted that not enough women from history are celebrated with blue plaques and has asked the public to help redress the balance.

Only 14% of the more than 900 blue plaques in London are dedicated to women, a figure that is "far too low", according to Anna Eavis, the curatorial director of English Heritage.

"The really important thing is trying to encourage people to send more nominations for women; the scheme is driven by public nomination," she said. "Although over the past two years we have managed to secure a higher percentage of proposals for women, there still aren't enough."

Eavis said this year's centenary of the first votes for women had brought about an increased urgency to rebalance the record of history. "We really hope this enthusiasm will be translated into lots more nominations and, ultimately, more blue plaques for women."

English Heritage wants more nominations but Eavis stressed selection would remain a highly competitive process. Around 80 people a year are nominated and about 12 plaques are put up.

"The bar is high, we are absolutely not wanting to hand out plaques to anyone. This is a serious thing about recording people who have made a significant contribution and there will be people who do not get through," she said.

The London blue plaques scheme was founded in 1866, with the first one unveiled at the birthplace of Lord Byron.

It took 10 years for a woman to be recognised with a plaque when one was placed on the home of the stage actor Sarah Siddons. By 1905 only five women had plaques dedicated to them, including George Eliot.

By 1986, when English Heritage took over the scheme from the Greater London Council, there were 45 plaques celebrating women.

English Heritage said it had made some progress in recent years, unveiling another 80 London blue plaques dedicated to women. They include the computing pioneer Ada Lovelace, the DNA scientist Rosalind Franklin and the first woman to sit in parliament, Nancy Astor.

More recent recipients include the cookery writer Elizabeth David, whose books such as A Book of Mediterranean Food (1950) and French Provincial Cooking (1960) transformed making meals from a matter of necessity to one of pleasure.

Another is Agnes Arber, a botanist who published more than 90 scientific papers and eight books, including Herbals, Their Origin and Evolution (1912). A blue plaque will be erected at her home in Primrose Hill on Thursday.

Three more blue plaques for prominent women are in the pipeline, English Heritage said. The women are:

The actor and Upper Norwood resident Margaret Lockwood (1916-90), one of Britain's most popular film stars in the 1930s and 40s, whose many film roles include a bored heiress in Alfred Hitchcock's The Lady Vanishes (1938) and the unfulfilled aristocrat and highway robber Lady Barbara Skelton in the Gainsborough melodrama The Wicked Lady (1945).

Dame May Whitty, left, and Margaret Lockwood in a scene from The Lady Vanishes. Photograph: Allstar Collection/Cinetext /GAINSBOROUGH/Sportsphoto Ltd./Allstar

The world war two spy Noor Inayat Khan (1914-44) who served with the Special Operations Executive and was the first female radio operator sent into Nazi-occupied France. She was captured and executed by the Gestapo in 1944. Khan was posthumously awarded the George Cross for her bravery in 1949. English Heritage said it was currently trying to find the best location for a plaque.

The traveller, archaeologist, mountaineer and diplomat Gertrude Bell (1868-1926), who played an important role in the establishment of the state known as Mesopotamia, now Iraq, after the first world war. Among her many eye-catching achievements and exploits was surviving 53 hours on a rope during a blizzard on the previously unclimbed north-east face of the Finsteraarhorn in the Swiss Alps in 1902. She was portrayed by Nicole Kidman in the 2015 Werner Herzog flop, Queen of the Desert.

English Heritage said plaques for the writer Daphne du Maurier and the Bloomsbury Group artist Vanessa Bell were likely to follow but more nominations were needed, especially in the areas of science, sport and the fine arts, where women are particularly poorly represented.

Topics

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The Guardian

Plan for Gertrude Bell blue plaque in London sparks controversy

Explorer, diplomat and writer born in north-east England 'did not have anything to do with London', says biographer

Mark Brown *Arts correspondent*
Wed 26 Dec 2018 09.00 GMT

The charity has been accused of trying to claim for London the remarkable north-east England-born explorer, diplomat, archaeologist and writer Gertrude Bell.

The charity has said it is planning a blue plaque in the capital for Bell as part of its push to get more women from history recognised. Only 14% of the more than 900 blue plaques in London are dedicated to women.

But Graham Best, who has written a biography of Bell, has said a plaque in London is inappropriate. "She didn't really have anything to do with London apart from her grandmother living there in a lovely house in Cadogan Square," he said. "Is this a case of cultural appropriation?"

Bell stayed at the Knightsbridge house on numerous occasions but her true home was the family home Red Barns in Redcar, a place where she grew up and returned to during her numerous travels and adventures abroad. A blue plaque already exists there, which means, Best argues, a duplicate is not needed in London.

"The thing with Gertrude Bell is that everyone is trying to appropriate her as a person. She is deeply misunderstood."

Best said Bell was a complex character and does not easily fit into defined narratives. She was born in 1868, in Washington, to a staggeringly wealthy northern family who made its fortune in iron.

Her extraordinary life and achievements have become known through her diaries, letters and books. Bell was a traveller, writer, linguist and archaeologist who, in her day, was as well known as her friend TE Lawrence, if not better known.

She did so much it is sometimes difficult to pick out the greatest and more eye-catching achievements of her life.

It could be the important role she played in the establishment of the state known as Mesopotamia, now Iraq, after the first world war. Or her being one of the first archaeologists to examine the Byzantine remains of Anatolian Turkey.

Or the 53 hours she survived on a rope during a blizzard on the previously unclimbed north-east face of the Finsteraarhorn in the Swiss Alps in 1902.

Best argues that Bell's greatest creative achievements were her translations of the Persian poet Hafez.

But there are also many uncomfortable truths in Bell's life that have been swept under the carpet, Best argues, including her fervent opposition to women getting the vote. Bell was secretary of the northern branch of National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage as well as being on its national executive committee.

Bell's remarkable life was the subject of the 2015 Werner Herzog film, Queen of the Desert, starring Nicole Kidman. Best is scathing about the film, which was a commercial and critical flop. "Queen of the desert? She would have completely hated that. It was everything that she didn't want to be.

"The thing is everyone is trying to grab hold of Gertrude Bell and say yes, she's one of us. But she's not."

Best published his book, Bezique, the Private Life of Gertrude Lowthian Bell, in the summer ahead of the 150th anniversary of Bell's birth on 14 July.

English Heritage is still seeking permissions from building owners for the London plaque for Bell but it has been approved by its panel of experts and is expected to happen in 2019.

In a statement English Heritage said the blue plaque scheme was designed to celebrate notable people and their connections to London buildings and commemorated many who have lived in other parts of the country and other countries.

Bell, the charity said, was a figure of international renown and is commemorated in various locations across England and as far afield as Iraq.

Howard Spencer, senior historian at English Heritage, said: "When considering anyone for a blue plaque, English Heritage undertakes extensive research on that person's achievements and their connections with London buildings. This is then reviewed by the independent experts who make up the blue plaques panel.

"In the case of Bell, the London address selected was a family home where she stayed regularly, and with which she was associated for over 40 years."

INSIDE HIGHER ED

‘Rhodes Must Fall’

> Editors discuss new book about drive to remove honors for Cecil Rhodes from universities in Britain and elsewhere.

By Emma Whitford // September 20, 2018

1 COMMENT (/NEWS/2018/09/20/EDITORS-DISCUSS-NEW-BOOK-RHODES-MUST-FALL-MOVEMENT-OXFORD#DISQUS_THREAD)

When a statue of Cecil Rhodes, a British mining magnate and colonizer, came down at the University of Cape Town, it was just the beginning of a now worldwide conversation about colonization in higher education. Rhodes was instrumental in founding universities and scholarship programs around the world, but he was also a noted imperialist who acted with disregard for the people who lived in much of the world. Since the statue fell in 2015, students and faculty at a number of universities have begun to argue for decolonization at their own institutions, in part by removing honors for Rhodes.

At the University of Oxford, where another statue of Rhodes still stands, student and faculty activists find themselves pushing back against those who tell them that "the past is the past" and to be grateful for Rhodes's contributions to higher education (notably, the Rhodes scholarship). Having each been involved in Rhodes Must Fall Oxford in different ways, editors Roseanne Chantiluke, Brian Kwoba and Athinangamso Nkopo put together a comprehensive story of the movement in their new book, *Rhodes Must Fall (https://www.zedbooks.net/shop/book/rhodes-must-fall/)* (Zed Books).

All three editors answered questions about the book via email.

Q: Instead of writing one narrative about the Rhodes Must Fall movements, you strung together a series of primary accounts, interviews, poetry and writings from the protests. Why did you decide to put the book together this way?

Kwoba: We wanted to give expression to a wide range of different voices and experiences, because that is ultimately what made up the movement as a whole. Not “me” but “we.”

Nkopo: The varying accounts we put together in the book are also a reflection, to a great extent, of what the movement Rhodes Must Fall has inspired and made possible not just in South Africa but throughout higher education the world over.

Q: Why did you decide to get involved with Rhodes Must Fall at Oxford?

Kwoba: I co-founded the Rhodes Must Fall Oxford movement because I was inspired by the action that black

Chantiluke: I decided to organize for Rhodes Must Fall Oxford because I was inspired by the fact that the movement did not seek to work within the university's structural framework, but sought to work outside of it, in solidarity with students from across the globe.

Nkopo: I went to Oxford from the University of the Witwatersrand, and there I had already gotten involved with the Decolonise Wits movement and in organizing some of what would result in the Fees Must Fall movements. Rhodes Must Fall Oxford was a welcome and natural step in my career as an activist intellectual. It was also very appealing that the movement in Oxford was a global one in terms of the students involved and organizing in the small city.

Q: Several voices in the book, including Roseanne and Athinangamso in your "Skin Deep" interview, discuss the need to focus on decolonizing higher education rather simply implementing greater diversity and inclusion initiatives. Can you explain how those two goals are different?

Chantiluke: Diversity operates on the higher education institution's public facing level only. It is a marketing ploy that convinces external stakeholders that a university is doing all that it can to improve the lives and experiences of brown, differently abled, LGBT+ and nonbinary people by virtue of inviting them to study there. Meanwhile, the university is allowed to operate as normal without reforming the systems, structures and attitudes that are hostile to such people. On the other hand, decolonization operates at the political, epistemic and ideological heart of the university, with reformative implications for every facet of a university's operation. It involves the decentering of Eurocentric value systems and knowledge production, the overhaul of the hierarchy of European ideologies and the reappraisal of whitewashed history. Decolonizing the university is a prerequisite for true diversity of thought and peoples to exist there fully.

Q: What's the biggest difference you observed between the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa and the protests at Oxford?

Nkopo: In a sense, there was no great difference in terms of the structure and complexity of the university. The formerly white universities in South Africa are dominated by white academic staff and the curriculum is no different in terms of representation. The perspectives, histories and epistemological outlook of universities like UCT, where I am now a TA, are Eurocentric … Similarly, students of color there experience the kind of impostor syndrome students at Oxford experience, perhaps for slightly different reasons. The institutional culture of formerly white universities in South Africa, like in Oxford, remains white and the configuration of those spaces still uphold and glorify villainous white men and women such as Cecil John Rhodes, Jan Smuts and the like.

Kwoba: We were both up against educational institutions of white supremacy and coloniality, but in Oxford

less politically) around decolonizing the iconography, curriculum and racial representation of the university.

Q: What do movements like Rhodes Must Fall need to do to be successful?

Kwoba: One thing we need to do better is to build links with university workers and working people in the larger urban environment in which the university is housed. The support and mobilization of community organizations, political parties, trade unions and oppressed people on a larger and extracurricular scale is what it took to kick the colonizers out historically.

Chantiluke: The demands for action and organizing can often leave very little time for a movement's internal education. Internal education refers to conversations that relate to the ethos and ideology of a movement: What are the core principles of a movement and why/how are they formed? Should they be open to adaptation as a movement's trajectory develops? How do we develop our thought and how do we learn? Time must be made to ensure that organizers engage in internal education as a collective with an end to ensuring consistency of ideology and ethos across organizers. Otherwise, assumptions are made about the ideological cohesiveness of organizers, which is extremely problematic.

Nkopo: We need to decentralize movements away from individuals, while preparing for a time when an organizing group have left the university as students.

Q: Similarly, where do you typically see movements falter?

Kwoba: One place that student movements often falter is by failing to train and prepare the next generation (e.g. first- and second-year students) to continue the movement. The university administration knows it can just stall until the most vocal and active students eventually graduate, and that is what often happens. Also, as one of our book chapters explains, Rhodes Must Fall Oxford really faltered on place of blackness and its relationship to feminist politics within the movement.

Chantiluke: Patriarchy always finds a way of blocking progress in these movements through the toxic social dynamics of the movement, the gendering of work and the ideas of "leadership" and hierarchy that it brings. Also, to challenge a powerful white institution as a nonwhite student involves an incredible amount of physical and psychological exertion that can be extremely destructive if left unchecked. The demands for action and organizing often appear to trump the individual demands for rest, wellness and self-care. Movements need to ensure that their organizers are looked after as much as possible and must operate on a politics of radical compassion.

Read more by *Emma Whitford*

The Guardian

he real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall

After the nation's long retreat from multiculturalism and the return of a rose-tinted memory of empire, it is no accident that the Rhodes Must Fall movement has come to Britain

by

Main image: The statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College, Oxford. Photograph: Chris Ratcliffe/Getty Images

Wed 16 Mar 2016 06.00 GMT

The movement known as Rhodes Must Fall, which began with a protest action at the University of Cape Town on 9 March 2015 and quickly spread to other campuses in South Africa, and then to Oxford University, is barely more than a year old. Yet it feels like it has existed for longer, perhaps because of the enormous public attention it has attracted - or because its battles have resonated far beyond the universities where they have been staged. The first of these battles led swiftly to victory, with the removal of the large statue of Cecil Rhodes from the University of Cape Town a month after the campaign began; the latest, to frustration, given Oxford University's resistance to doing the same with the statue of Rhodes at Oriel College, where it still stands, on the facade of a building bearing his name, as an acknowledgement of the £100,000 he left the college in his will.

But another reason one might think this movement has a longer history is the nature of its ambitions *beyond* the removal of these statues, though it is the issue of the statues, and allegations that the students involved wish to rewrite history to suit their sensitivities, that have attracted controversy, particularly in the British media. These larger ambitions of the movement - that is, to bring out into the open institutional racism in university life in South Africa and Britain, and to decolonise education - speak to concerns that many have had for a while. These concerns, by now, have a long itinerary, but they have been awaiting a forum for articulation.

Most of the controversy generated by the movement has revolved around the figure of Cecil Rhodes - but Rhodes himself is not really central to its aims. What is at issue is an ethos that gives space and even preeminence to such a figure, and hesitates to interrogate Rhodes's legacy. That legacy does not merely include Rhodes's financial bequests and their educational offshoots, like the Rhodes scholarships, but the vision embodied in his will, which called for:

“the establishment, promotion and development of a Secret Society, the true aim and object whereof shall be for the extension of British rule throughout the world, the perfecting of a system of emigration from the United Kingdom, and of colonisation by British subjects of all lands where the means of livelihood are attainable by energy, labour and enterprise, and especially the occupation by British settlers of the entire Continent of Africa, the Holy Land, the Valley of the Euphrates, the Islands of Cyprus and Candia, the whole of South America, the Islands of the Pacific not heretofore possessed by Great Britain, the whole of the Malay Archipelago, the seaboard of China and Japan …”

For the movement’s vocal critics, it has been commonplace to observe, euphemistically, that Rhodes was “a man of his time”, by way of suggesting that his time has nothing in common with our own. But if you replace the word “British” with “western” and “United Kingdom” with “the west”, you find this statement in his will encapsulates not only Rhodes’s vision but a vision of the world today, one that has had a fresh lease on life in the last two decades - in which unequal access to opportunity and mobility is structurally embedded as the norm; in which the west should still have free passage to, and control of, the rest of the world, whether via business, expatriation, or military intervention - while those travelling to the west must be viewed as potential refugees or people posing as asylum seekers.

From its start in South Africa, Rhodes Must Fall announced that it intended to address this unequal vision of the world as it manifests itself within universities - declaring itself “a collective movement of students and staff members mobilising for direct action against the reality of institutional racism at the University of Cape Town. The chief focus of this movement is to create avenues for REAL transformation that students and staff alike have been calling for.”

The well-worn but enigmatic term “institutional racism” is important here. It is worth recalling that its history is more British than South African. It came into play in Britain in the 1990s and its full import was felt by many when it was used to expose the failures of the Stephen Lawrence case. Lawrence was a young black student who was murdered while waiting for a bus in south-east London on 22 April 1993. Five suspects were arrested but not convicted, and there was a general downplaying by the Metropolitan police of racism as a motive. A public inquiry took place in 1998, and Sir William Macpherson, who was in charge of it, used the term “institutionally racist” in his report to account for the grave shortcomings of the police investigation. He defined it as “the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”

The word “unwitting” is key. It points to a moral economy in which it is possible to plausibly claim, and believe, that one is not a racist, while benefiting from a system that consigns many to invisibility. In this, “institutional racism” is a resurrection of the

colonial order, which was by no means managed exclusively by racist individuals, but by people who believed that a skewed system was normal.

Those who are bewildered by the movement should place it in the context of the historic reversals that define our age. The first has to do with apartheid. Not that apartheid has been reinstated in South Africa. But it can hardly be claimed that it led to the opening up that was expected in 1994, given that, 21 years later, a black professor at the University of Cape Town, Xolela Mangcu, could tell the Cape Times newspaper that only five of the university's 200 senior professors were black. Without creating an equivalence between South Africa and Britain, one must note the gradual extinction, in the latter, of the ideals of multiculturalism. These have largely died without a requiem. Given this context, the emergence of Rhodes Must Fall is at once unsurprising and overdue.

In June last year, I was asked to address students involved in Rhodes Must Fall at Oxford. In Cape Town, the statue of Rhodes on the university campus had clearly been unmissable - an immense likeness, seated in a posture reminiscent of Rodin's Thinker. The night watchman-like Rhodes in Oxford, by contrast, occupies a crevasse in an Oriel building overlooking High Street, unobtrusively, and insidiously, guarding an always-shut door below him. Neither I nor my wife, who was once a graduate student at Oriel, could recall the existence of a Rhodes statue at Oxford (though she vividly remembered a large portrait of Rhodes glowering down on students inside the college) - a reminder that imperial legacies are not necessarily less pernicious because they may be less obviously visible.

The audience that I spoke to included students of all races, including Ntokozo Qwabe, a South African who had brought the movement from Cape Town to Oxford. At the end of my talk, the students were keen not only to ask questions, but to discuss their experiences of racism - in the university; on the street, where it can be both intangible and palpable: a glance; a name or a chicken bone thrown at you. Humiliation is always difficult to own up to, and the effort it required to make these statements was evident. Rhodes hardly came up, except when some students asked me what I thought of the movement's name - presumably because they were not certain that it accurately represented their concerns. I said I liked it for its conceptual cheekiness - there can be no politics without quixotic energy and levity.

Yet levity has receded in the last two months as the movement has escalated and its immediate aim - the statue's removal - has been halted. It is as if the movement must stand or fall by the success or failure of this ambition. But the students have persisted, which suggests, again, that their campaign transcends a battle over Rhodes's legacy. So we might consider why has it erupted at this time, in this place.

Protesters demand the removal of the Cecil Rhodes statue from the front of Oriel College, Oxford. Photograph: David Hartley/Rex/Shutterstock

I should admit that one of the reasons I was happy to give that talk at Oriel was that I was revisiting it after 25 years. I met my wife in 1990, and she was the main reason for my daily excursions to the college. It was through her that I became aware of its slightly retrograde status in Oxford at the time, its old-fogey students with monarchist enthusiasms, its conservatism. We both found this ethos uncharming but weirdly funny.

As if to confirm its courtship of the anachronistic, I discovered, one evening, that Enoch Powell was giving a talk there, about - what else - some aspect of a classical text; I forget which one. I recall peering in through a window with a mixture of amusement and horror to catch a glimpse of a learned man whose 1968 speech, in anticipation of a debate on the Labour government's race relations bill, became synonymous with a dark moment in British history - and is perhaps more striking today because its prediction was so wide of the mark. "The River Tiber will flow with much blood," Powell had said, quoting Virgil, moved to prophecy because of an annual influx of 50,000 migrants, and because one of his constituents had told him: "In this country in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man." For a moment, I observed, agog, the students listening, rapt. I could have walked in, but didn't. The scene was so unrepresentative of Oxford that I paused to take it in and then moved on.

Why did Powell seem so irrelevant when I saw him at Oriel more than a quarter-century ago? Why, for that matter, were we unaware of Rhodes above the gate to Oriel? When is it possible to ignore or laugh at statues or symbols, and when does it become hard to do so? Let me widen the scope of the question by applying it to the city in which I live much of the year, Kolkata - a city with a turbulent political history and an extraordinary cultural one, once the capital of India under the British, demoted from that status in 1911 because of its confrontational nationalism.

I go sometimes to the Bengal Club, which once had a plaque saying "Dogs and Indians Not Allowed", and still has one attesting to the fact that Thomas Macaulay - a man famous for his dismissive remarks about Indian civilisation, including the claim that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" - once lived in the building that stood formerly on the site. Today we can view

this history with detached irony, as evidence of the antediluvian, a museum-piece that does not require to be confronted since it no longer has the power to threaten. I feel the same wonder as I did when looking upon Powell in 1990: once these figures, symbols, and words were central, and it is incredible that they should have been so, and equally incredible how they have lost their potency.

What, on the other hand, has made the Rhodes statue suddenly intolerable? For an answer to this, we must look beyond the students, the statue, and the colonial past, towards the contemporary historical moment and to Britain today. It is a Britain in which, in the last 25 years there has been an extraordinary narrowing down, a closing of ranks, in favour of class and colour. This retrenchment has been accompanied by an atmosphere of denial. It has given rise to a mentality in which there is so much elision of the past and subtle prevarication about race that the bogus breast-beating about the necessity of accommodating historical complexity by leaving the statue in place frankly sounds insulting to many.

In 1990, I could afford to report my fleeting encounter with Powell to my wife with a smile because, at the time, the multicultural experiment seemed to have worked astonishingly well in Britain. This was a country that, barely a decade earlier, under Thatcher, had seriously considered subjecting South Asian women who arrived as spouses to "virginity tests" in order to prove they were genuinely married. (Real South Asian brides in an arranged marriage must be virgins, it was argued.) Now there was a new acknowledgement that respecting ethnic diversity within Britain - mosques, temples, non-European languages - would not lead to a collapse of British life. In this, Britain was singular, and was able to create a cultural context - a context of regard and equality - that, whatever its failings, had no parallel in continental Europe. A striking contrast was presented by France, which would not budge from an astringent and classic definition of what comprised the secular: a strict separation of religion from the state, or, for that matter, from the public domain.

Britain's redefinition of the secular - multiculturalism - was partly achieved through ordinary battles that were not so different from the one ensuing now over Rhodes in Oriel: for instance, Muslim women employees at shops such as Boots being permitted to retain the hijab, a measure of tolerance that would not have been admissible in France. The secular was redefined as soon as people realised that hijab-wearing employees did not transform Boots into an Islamic colony or a place of worship. You could still buy perfumes and condoms there. British multiculturalism resembled another remarkable experiment - post-independence "secularism" in India - which attempted to fashion the nation as a space that did not proscribe religion, and, while not being religious itself, allowed a multiplicity of worldviews, communities, and religions to cohabit within it.

Whitechapel High Street in 2005. Photograph: Rex Features

The nature of democracy in India and the country's large Muslim minority left political parties open to the charge of constant and cynical electoral calculation based on appeals to religion and caste. By the late 1980s, it led to the coinage of a rightwing term, "pseudo-secular", to describe liberal pandering to minorities - meaning Muslims - for electoral gain, an accusation that included the suggestion of tolerance towards Muslim religiosity, but not Hindu expressions of faith, in the name of secularism. This was, in other words, the now familiar sentiment of a majority that believes it has been oppressed by excessive accommodation of the minority.

In comparison, it would seem that British multiculturalism was, in its earlier career, possibly more idealistic than its Indian counterpart. It had no substantial ethnic constituency to keep in mind for electoral gain. Asians and black people traditionally voted Labour, but, under the free market, neither working-class nor minority votes seemed to do very much for Labour's fortunes. The fight for multiculturalism was begun by deeply committed and fearless people, white, black, and brown, in organisations that 21st-century Britain should be proud of - like the Anti-Nazi League - and was, ironically, consolidated under the Tories. However implausible it might sound, humanitarianism appears to have played a greater part in sustaining the project than an awareness of the ethnic vote. By 1990, it was, therefore, possible for me to look dispassionately into the window at Powell - as I would upon a relic.

My admiration for multiculturalism as an intellectual project and a political solution is a qualified one: like Indian "secularism", its view of what constitutes the cross-cultural encounter can be superficial (chicken tikka masala). And yet some version of it is always going to be politically fundamental to a multi-ethnic country: and can one deny Britain, like India, is a culturally hybrid nation? The reason for this in both cases is simple: history. Can you suddenly extricate yourself from your history, and start from scratch? Britain, around 1990, seemed to have adjusted to its multicultural past and present; today, it is in denial.

Here one must wonder if some of the less high-minded aspects of democracy - what in India is derisorily called "vote-bank" politics, or electoral calculations based on ethnic constituencies - could have played some role in slowing the retreat from multiculturalism. A political system attuned to the votes of minority constituencies

would never have entertained a plan as scandalous as the one Theresa May came up with in 2013, to send vans into ethnically diverse neighbourhoods warning people with no legal status to depart the country at once. ("Go home or face arrest," was the warning painted on their sides.)

Why does the political significance of the non-white minority in Britain seem so negligible today, in a way that they can be repeatedly ignored, by May and other politicians who make pronouncements on immigration, Britishness, and race, as if it did not matter how minorities perceived the issue? How is it in a country that prides itself on its party political debate having a powerful bureaucratic component - that is, a fulsome reliance on facts, figures, and policies - that politicians get away with providing very little real data about immigration and its effects?

About 10 years ago, it began to be apparent that the affirmation of multiculturalism that was noticeable in Britain from the 1970s through the 1990s had failed to evolve in the way one would have predicted. I first visited London as an 11-year-old in 1973, returned a few times that decade as a visitor, and then came here as a student in the early 1980s. I experienced threats that were both verbal and physical. I also saw the country emerge from the depredations of the National Front into one in which a greater variety of voices was heard. The print media had, for the first time, a small handful of journalists from immigrant backgrounds. Television emphasised multicultural programming: some of these shows were superb. Popular entertainment had a few nationally known minority figures.

From that vantage-point, one would have thought that diversity would become entrenched and even substantially extended by 2015. This did not happen. For instance, the print media still has only a small handful of journalists from immigrant backgrounds. The number of MPs, national treasures, entertainment icons, QCs, journalists and commentators, and top academics (to make a random selection) from ethnic backgrounds has either not gone up noticeably since 1990, or has decreased. We have not witnessed a growing intimacy in the last four decades with minority cultures; instead, the old cliches have proved astonishingly tenacious.

'A political system attuned to the votes of minority constituencies would never have entertained a plan as scandalous as the one Theresa May came up with in 2013, to send vans into ethnically diverse neighbourhoods warning people with no legal status to depart the country at once.' Photograph: Rick Findler

As Britain distanced itself, over the course of the 1990s, from its historic ties with its former colonies in favour of a new and eager cultural subservience to the United States, there emerged a new fantasy of Britishness that was meant to echo an American's romantic notion of "England". This utopian ideal could be found in films such as Notting Hill, Bridget Jones's Diary, and Four Weddings and a Funeral, in which London was almost entirely white; it was supplemented by heritage recreations of the essence of an older England in films such as Pride and Prejudice or Sense and Sensibility. These films were a blithe rebuttal of the critic Edward Said's insight that, in a novel like Mansfield Park, the "English" story necessarily concealed the story, located elsewhere but inextricable from the main narrative, of a West Indian sugar plantation. In these films, however, what was being concealed by the soft-focus romance (very distant from Jane Austen's shrewd knowingness) was not the workings of empire, but the first stirrings of its recuperation, as a remnant of very distant history that would be tacitly acknowledged but never regretted.

When change happens and things close down for the ethnically peripheral or the less powerful, those who are being excluded - especially if they are fairly successful in their own field - will find it difficult to pinpoint the airbrushing or whitewashing. When I spoke with two British friends of Indian origin - a young, well-known journalist and an award-winning scientist - about this development a few years ago, they recognised a closing of ranks by the rich in Britain, but were not wholly sure how it affected diversity. People in Britain prefer to keep their heads down about the question of race: not just those in the majority, but minorities too, who do not, for various reasons, want to think of themselves in racial terms. In a context of persistent institutional racism, this is part of what allows one-sided declarations about immigration and integration to go unchallenged; it allows the unsettling official pronouncements of Theresa May and Ukip alike.

At least two factors have contributed powerfully to the closing of ranks I refer to. The first is free-market globalisation. Not only does it further empower the rich, it - by

privileging the right to be *seen* to be rich as much as the right to *be* rich - legitimises retrograde desire. Moral judgment about a product that satisfies the customer is seen to be bad form, an attempt to constrain a market - or an inheritance - that should ideally be, in every sense, unregulated. In Britain, beneficiaries of the legacy of empire began to resurrect that legacy as a powerful and legitimate form of capital. At the forefront of this recuperation was a new kind of aspirational history-writing - not a history written by and for rulers, but by a new kind of revisionist historian, such as Niall Ferguson or Andrew Roberts, who sought to legitimise the previously unmentionable, and in so doing to transform their approval of the imperial past into a form of present-day cultural capital, and forge their own careers in the process.

A scene from the film Notting Hill. Photograph: Clive Coote/Polygram [Free]

The forces of globalisation have also enabled a new international elite to take shape, as a kind of family cocooned from the rest of the world. Dynastic privileges - in the seat of the empire but also in its former colonies - begin once more to be celebrated over the modernist narratives of individual achievement that characterised the last century. Lineages - who knows whom, who's related to whom, who went to school with whom - are busily fashioned and recovered. It is also in the context of such recovery that we must place the protectiveness towards the Rhodes statue: as a family heirloom that, in spite of its provenance, has immense cultural and sentimental value to certain present-day networks.

When there is a threat of damage - such as the body-blow of the world financial crash in 2008 - the family of elites is, oddly, most insulated from it: though the privileged should have lost greatly with the crash, given their moral and financial investment in the market, they actually, as we now know, lost the least. In this claustrophobic atmosphere of self-perpetuation and self-interested and hugely productive friendships, the Rhodes Must Fall movement seems like the breath of fresh air that a place such as Oxford University has been waiting for.

When I spoke to the students involved in Rhodes Must Fall at Oxford last June, I suggested that their project presented an opportunity to go beyond Rhodes to address the inequalities of global privilege and the networks that sustain it - networks in which institutions such as Oxford play an essential role. I realised with alarm when I went to

Oxford in 1987 that the vast majority of Indian students there came from a very tiny number of colleges and universities in New Delhi. What had been a featureless capital, insignificant in terms of its organic cultural life, was then being primed to become the centre of India's new intellectual and academic ruling class. The formation of this class - members of which returned to India in the late 1980s and early 1990s from places such as Oxford and took charge of the new national media emerging from Delhi, and centres of higher education there - was linked directly to political access, and to a continuous give-and-take with historic western educational institutions. Meanwhile, within Britain, the fact that Oxbridge dominates so utterly points surely to the failure of higher education here, and its absorption into those networks. Why do so many prime ministers, chancellors, and ministers in this country still come from Eton and Oxford? It is a huge embarrassment for Britain.

The Rhodes Must Fall movement's ambition to decolonise education and to get Oxford to widen its curriculum is salutary. Yet decolonisation has to be a complex business when global privilege has so many platforms, including nations that comprised the erstwhile empire. The project of decolonisation in the humanities was taken up vigorously in the 1990s by postcolonial theory. Its principal text was Edward Said's polemic, Orientalism, whose central insight - that the west exercised power over the east in the time of colonisation by studying it to take ownership of it, and then misrepresenting it - is still pertinent and illuminating today. But there is a critique of postcolonial theory that cannot be wholly discounted: that it held sway in elite western institutions and was itself embedded in privileged networks. It makes Rhodes Must Fall's message about decolonisation, especially at a place like Oxford, at once particularly difficult and urgent.

One must, today, take on the legacies of empire; one must also take on the legacies of global privilege. There is also the problematic fact that postcolonial theory has, in its account of the colonial encounter, focused almost exclusively on the matter of imperial misrepresentation: it largely ignores what non-western cultures were up to in the last two centuries, unless they were seen to be actively engaged in rebutting the coloniser. Postcolonial theory, then, implicitly frames a question - "Did the empire do any good?" - to which it answers in the negative. It is a question that has now been appropriated by revisionist historians including Roberts and Ferguson. Their answer is a resounding "yes".

What enabled this turn? This brings me to the second reason for the closing down I referred to earlier: 9/11 and, in Britain, the bombings on 7 July 2005. These events gave the green light to a certain kind of reactionary opinion and self-justification, in the guise of being a much-needed riposte to political correctness. Donald Trump's remarks about refusing Muslims entry into the US have been greeted with a mix of outrage and laughter; but they were anticipated in Britain in 2007 by none other than Martin Amis, who pointed out that the "Muslim community will have to suffer until it gets its house in order", and spoke of the necessity of "not letting them travel" - words he now regrets.

Regret, though, is not the defining tone of those who make such observations, or, for that matter, of those who defend the Rhodes statue. Regret for empire was never expressed by the descendants of those who undertook the colonial project. It is precisely this lack of regret, this ignoring and skewing of history, that might be termed "institutional racism" - or, as David Cameron put it in an uncharacteristic article about racial inequality in Britain earlier this year, "something ... ingrained, institutional and insidious".

Institutional racism, however, is not specific to certain nations or institutions, but characterises the parameters of the world in which we live, work, and travel. It is another name for a present-day colonial order that is weighted against the non-European, and seldom owns up to regret. In fact, 9/11 has permitted western commentators' triumphal reconfiguration of human values as western values, constantly under threat from the non-west and from Islam. It allows journalists in Paris, New York, and London to mourn attacks upon the "way of life" in their cities, as if Beirut and Baghdad had no way of life. This persistent asymmetry is what it means to live in a colonial order.

The question of whether or not imperialism had a benign side is besides the point. The question is framed misleadingly. Colonial projects do not set out to do "good"; their primary intention is to exploit the ruled on behalf of the coloniser. This does not mean that an unprecedented creative period might not emerge as a consequence of the cultural encounter that colonialism involves. For instance, the history of India in the last 200 years is an extraordinarily rich one, in science, the arts, and in politics. What kind of understanding would we have of a city like, say, Kolkata, if its history described only its colonial institutions and colonial officers, and knew nothing of the transformation that made artists like Rabindranath Tagore and Satyajit Ray possible, or of a scientist such as Satyendra Nath Bose, whose pioneering statistical method enabled quantum mechanics, or of the intellectual changes that led to social reform and the freedom struggle? What does it mean, in the context of such ignorance of what was truly exciting and unprecedented in that period, to claim that empire was "good"?

The decolonisation of British education is not just necessary: it is long overdue. Decolonisation has to do with not only openly discussing the various transgressions, and shameful moments and ambitions, that comprise colonial history. It asks for a remedy that will cure us from viewing western history as a history of culture, science, and modernity, and non-western history solely as a history of conflict and race. It would make us hesitate before we situated western politics in a history of constant evolution and redefinition and non-western politics in a history of constant borrowing and reaction. For example, the Indian parliamentary system is not a gift made by Britain to India. Not only did it have to be wrested from the British by Indians, it had to be subjected to its most radical and experimental transformation: giving the vote to everyone, including the illiterate and poor. These facts, and others, are already out there. It is just that there is no adequate framework within which to incorporate them. Decolonisation is about imagining such a framework.

In a context that points to the need for new ways of thinking about the history that we are products of, it is particularly unfortunate that those in Oxford who would have students embrace its traditions of free speech and unfettered thinking should have found, by a peculiar twist in events, an emblem in Cecil Rhodes. But it would be equally sad if Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford became identified with the statue in Oriel College alone, because it has long-term work to do.

Main photograph: Chris Ratcliffe/Getty Images

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The Guardian

The Guardian view on the restitution of cultural property

Editorial

Wed 26 Dec 2018 13.35 GMT

The world in 2019: The vexed politics of our times has obscured the view ahead. Over the holidays we will examine some big issues on the horizon. Today we look at a cultural right to return

In November, a story hit the news about one of the most emblematic objects in the British Museum - a sculpted head from Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, made in around 1200. Hoa Hakananai'a, as it is known, meaning "lost or stolen friend", is a looming and powerful presence. On its back it bears a carving of a winged figure, witness to the complex history of the object - over time the religion of the islanders changed, and they began to honour "birdmen" instead of the great carved ancestor figures.

Later, Hoa Hakananai'a was collected, under circumstances that the British Museum website does not make entirely plain, by Richard Ashmore Powell, commander of the British navy frigate HMS Topaze. It was then given to Queen Victoria, from whom it came to the museum. This autumn, Tarita Alarcón Rapu, the governor of Rapa Nui, made a tearful request for the sculpture's return. "We are just a body. You, the British people, have our soul," she said. What was less publicised was the fact that the governor

was there at the invitation of the British Museum and that meetings will continue in 2019 in Rapa Nui.

Such stories appear regularly in the press, and always have done. Indeed, the history of imperial powers helping themselves by fair means or foul to precious artefacts goes back at least to the Roman empire. Greece's temples were stripped of their ritual objects by their Roman conquerors. Transferred to the villas of the wealthy, these sculptures became aestheticised into something else: "art", the status symbols of collectors.

Identity politics

Such news stories will arrive with ever more intensity in 2019 and the years to come. Calls to restitute cultural property, like calls to topple Rhodes, decolonise university curricula, or stop cultural appropriation, are part of a wider societal trend that can be placed under the heading of identity politics. And, like identity politics, demands for restitution are not going away. Both for ethical and pragmatic reasons, they must be taken seriously.

The debate about cultural restitution has been stirred up in the past month by a report commissioned by the French president, Emmanuel Macron, as the direct result of a speech he made last year in Ouagadougou declaring that the restitution of African heritage to Africa would be a "top priority". The radical and forthright report, by the scholars Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr, has had a mixed response. Some have welcomed the authors' conclusion that all objects collected under colonial conditions ought to be restored unless evidence can be provided that they were collected legitimately - reversing the burden of proof so that it is borne by the former colonial power rather than the former colonies. Many have applauded the clarity with which Professor Savoy and Professor Sarr have described the long-term effects of the appropriation of artefacts. The removal of cultural property not only affects the generation from whom it is taken, they write, "it becomes inscribed throughout the long duration of societies, conditioning the flourishing of certain societies while simultaneously continuing to weaken others".

The report has received a less hearty welcome among the museum directors of northern Europe, however. Some point out that it was commissioned not from a sense of responsibility by Mr Macron but as a means of furthering his nation's interests in sub-Saharan Africa (the report, indeed, limits itself to that region, excluding former French colonies in north Africa and elsewhere). Others say that the blanket assertion that any and all acquisitions for museums made under colonial conditions are wrong is a gross simplification. Items entered museum collections for all kinds of reasons, they argue. These range from cases of obvious looting (as in the example of the Benin bronzes taken in the 1890s by European troops from the royal palace in Benin City) to items that were perfectly legitimately traded, or indeed freely given. They say that the report gives little or no attention to the real-world, on-the-ground cooperation between museum professionals in northern Europe and their colleagues in other parts of the world.

Imperial past

All of this is sensible. At worst, however, western museum professionals can convey the notion - even if it is not uttered out loud - that objects are somehow "better off" in Paris, London or Berlin than elsewhere, where they can, according to this unspoken assumption, be properly cared for and admired. It is unhelpful that major museum directors in this context remain almost invariably white men of similar background and education - an "all-male choir", as one African commentator has put it.

Disputes over cultural property cannot be seen in isolation. They must be taken together with an understanding that the imperial past is not dead but is a set of narratives that are still alive, still unresolved, and still bringing real-world consequences. In the end, resolving ownership of artefacts is one part of a broader project: that of former imperial powers finding the language to deal properly with the dark periods of their history. In Britain, this work is urgent, and it has barely begun.

Provenance research

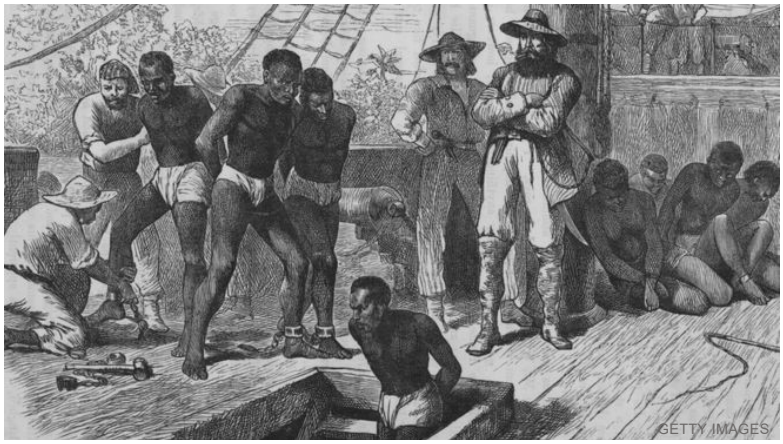
There is no point pretending that there are simple blanket rules, or simple possible answers. It is a meaningless absurdity to suggest that all objects held in museums should be returned to their point of origin; in most cases it would be impossible as well as undesirable (think of those Greek sculptures acquired by Roman conquerors now in Italian museums). To suggest that none may go is equally absurd: there are thousands of objects scattered through Britain alone, and very few are subject to restitution claims - there is no immediate danger of *après moi le déluge*. Equally, this is not a question only for national museums but significantly, in Britain, for regional collections and university museums such as Glasgow's Hunterian and Oxford's Pitt Rivers.

There can be no resolution without knowledge. This is not glamorous, nor is it cheap; it is the slow, arduous work of provenance research, and museums must be equipped and resourced to undertake it. History, memory and dignity must to be restored to artefacts. Better, deeper stories need to be told to the public; the archive needs to be enriched. Where items are found to have been acquired wrongfully, restitution must follow. Museums lie at the root of these difficult and painful disputes over memory; they are also the places best able, in the end, to resolve them.

London university calls for £100m slavery reparation

By Sean Coughlan
BBC News education and family correspondent

25 October 2018



Universities in the UK which benefited in previous centuries from the slave trade should contribute to a £100m fund to support ethnic minority students, says a university leader.

Geoff Thompson, chair of governors of the University of East London, says it would be "ethical and right" for universities to contribute.

He says it would help young people who otherwise could not afford to graduate.

Last month, Glasgow University revealed it had received slave-related funding.

Glasgow University **discovered that up to £198m in today's value had been donated in the 19th Century by people who had profited from the slave trade**.

In response it announced a "reparative justice programme", including creating a centre for the study of slavery and a memorial to the enslaved.

'Historic opportunity'

But Mr Thompson says there should be a collective university fund to support today's black and ethnic minority students through university.

The University of East London has been sending Freedom of Information requests to other UK universities to see if their institutions had received money from the

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slave trade between the 16th and 19th Century - with the findings to be gathered next month.

He said in the wake of the Windrush scandal, it was "prescient, ethical and right" to "seize this historic opportunity to invest in those who cannot afford or cannot see themselves graduating with a life-changing qualification".

- **Glasgow University honours first African American medical graduate**
- **Anti-slavery campaigner recognised in exhibition**
- **From slavery to Windrush: My family's story**

Mr Thompson says that even if universities are too recent to have been open during the slavery era, many might be a continuation of older institutions that could have benefited from profits from slavery.

"Every university has historians, archivists and researchers who can help institutions inform them about their past," said Mr Thompson.

"It is about how seriously we take the past to inform our future, and what we can do to help change lives."

In the United States there have been arguments over how to reconcile universities with historic links to slavery and slave-owning.

Georgetown University has given extra support in its admissions process to the **descendants of a group of slaves sold by the university** in the 19th Century.

Harvard University put up a plaque in commemoration of slaves who had lived and worked at the university.

The university also **ended the use of "master" in academic titles**, because of connotations of slavery.

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Sean Coughlan
BBC News education and family correspondent

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Margaret Thatcher could beat Stephen Hawking and Alan Turing to become new 'science-based' face of £50 note because she was a chemist before launching political career

- **Margaret Thatcher could be on the new polymer £50 after making the shortlist**
- **The former prime minister helped with the creation of soft scoop ice-cream**
- **Her competitors include Alan Turing, Stephen Hawking and Helen Beatrix Potter**

By ZOIE O'BRIEN FOR MAILONLINE
PUBLISHED: 10:33 GMT, 25 December 2018 | **UPDATED:** 11:15 GMT, 25 December 2018

Margaret Thatcher could be the next face on the money in your wallet after the controversial former prime minister made the final shortlist to be on the new £50 note.

The Conservative leader is in the last 1,000 contenders after votes for the design of the note, which will be the last to be made with polymer instead of paper, were closed.

Mrs Thatcher's competitors include cosmologist Stephen Hawking, father of theoretical computer science Alan Turing, Rosalind Franklin the woman whose work helped discover DNA and author and natural scientist Helen Beatrix Potter.

The new £50 must use the face of someone who has contributed to science in the UK - and thanks to the politician's past in chemistry, she fits the bill.

Before becoming Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher worked as a research chemist for food company J Lyons and Co - as part of a team of people that developed soft-scoop ice cream in the UK.

There were a total of 230,000 nominations to replace the current £50 which features industrial revolution pioneers Matthew Boulton and James Watt.

Professor Brian Cox was quick to nominate Prof Hawking, the renowned theoretical physicist who died in March, for inspiring 'thousands of scientists' and 'millions' of others.

Royal Society president Venki Ramakrishnan said he would choose 'remarkable individual' Prof Hodgkin, the chemist who died in 1994.

The names will be reviewed next by the Banknote Character Advisory Committee which will reveal the winner in the summer.

In 2020 the £20 will be replaced with a design featuring artist JMW Turner.

The 330 million £50 notes in circulation will be replaced at a later date.

More than 200 people, including Lord Victor Adebowale and Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, signed a letter sent to the deciding panel – encouraging them to pick a person of ethnic minority.

So far, there are no BAME people featured on British bank notes.

"We do not lack candidates, and arguably their achievements were the greater for having been made at a time when many careers and were effectively closed to them, whether through colonial rules, racism, or the legacy of slavery," the letter states.

Among those put forward were Crimean War nurse Mary Seacole and wartime secret agent Noor Inayat Khan, the first female radio operator sent into Nazi-occupied France.

To be eligible, the individual must be real, deceased and have contributed to any field of science in the UK.

Who are the faces of current British notes?

£5: The polymer £5 note featuring **Sir Winston Churchill** entered circulation on 13 September 2016

£10: The new polymer £10 note, featuring **Jane Austen,** entered circulation on 14 September 2017

£20: The current £20 note features the economist **Adam Smith**. It will be replaced by one featuring landscape painter **JMW Turner** in 2020

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Bronzed glow

Casey Batchelor exhibits her FOUR stone weight loss in summery yellow dress on festive night out
Made the most of the festivities

Emma Roberts looks effortlessly chic as she styles a cord jacket with leopard print trousers at John Mayer and Dave Chappelle gig
Chic display

RHOBH star Camille Grammer goes paddleboarding as she spends Christmas in Hawaii... after losing her $3.28million Malibu home to wildfires

'If Lara Croft can't sort the world out, who can?': Radio 4 listeners