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Centring transatlantic slavery in Scottish historiography

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Abstract

The historiography of Scotland's connections with transatlantic slavery across the British Empire has flourished in the last 20 years, promoting wider public discussion and civic recognition. Nevertheless, the view that historians of Scotland omitted slavery from Scottish historiography remains part of popular discourse. This article adds nuance by considering the absences and eventual centring of slavery in Scottish historiography. In the 1960s, it was argued by historians that foreign trade—and by extension Atlantic slavery—had a limited effect on the economic development of 18th-century Scotland. However, studies of the Atlantic trades and merchant capital undermined that orthodoxy in the 1970s, although works of that era that addressed Scotland's Atlantic economy tended to acknowledge slavery only in tokenistic fashion, if at all. Nevertheless, whilst slavery was not centred in these works, they established the view that Atlantic commerce and merchant capital were central to Scottish economic development. In the last 25 years, slavery has been centred in Scottish historiography and earlier works have taken on new significance. Studies after 1997 have revealed the involvement of Scots with the slave trade

Informative: This article focuses on the development of Scottish historiography in relation to transatlantic slavery, tracing the chronology of absence and eventual centring by historians in written work. Foundational texts and new approaches after 2000 have established the view that slavery was central to Scottish economic development in a way that is unique in Great Britain. These findings are now mainstream and increasingly percolating into media, museums and elsewhere.

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in Scotland and across the Atlantic world, patterns of Scottish slave-ownership in the Caribbean, the repatriation of slavery-derived wealth, the effects of West India fortunes and investments. Scottish historiography lagged behind the comparative body of work for England, although it is now generally accepted that Atlantic commerce and slavery affected Scottish economic development in a more substantial way. Historians of Scotland have led the way in transforming understandings of Scotland's Atlantic history in general, and chattel slavery in particular, and these ideas are increasingly part of popular consciousness.

1 | INTRODUCTION

During the global conversation about Black Lives Matter in the summer of 2020, Jamaica's first Honorary Consul to Scotland, Professor Sir Geoff Palmer, commented on the historiography of Scotland and Atlantic slavery, claiming he is regularly asked: 'Why has no one told us of our involvement in this slavery before?'. His response that: 'some of our historians are responsible for this omission' is representative of popular discourse.¹ This article argues that in actuality, popular understandings of Scottish involvement with Atlantic slavery have not progressed at the same rate as historiographical developments, and this is evidenced by tracing the chronology of initial absence and eventual centring of slavery in Scottish historiography. Foundational works and recent research are surveyed here—as well as the percolation of findings into wider society—which contextualises the development of the field's major debate: to what extent the Atlantic trades and chattel slavery were central to Scotland's industrial and agricultural development after 1707.

The field of Scottish history is relatively immature. The University of Edinburgh claims the establishment in 1901 of the Sir William Fraser Chair of Scottish History and Palaeography 'marked the emergence of Scottish History as a distinct academic discipline.'² Progress was impeded by three key factors. First, the Anglicisation of Scottish universities meant no Scottish historian was appointed to a general chair of History in a university in Scotland between 1903 and 1993.³ Second, and relatedly, the field of Scottish history was not professionalised until the mid-1960s. T. M. Devine, leading historian of the Scottish Empire, attended the Prof. John Hargreaves' inaugural lecture in 1964 when it was claimed that 'the history of modern Scotland is less studied than the history of Yorkshire'.⁴ Thirdly, myopic antiquarian works remained foundational texts longer than they should have. For example, *The Old Country Houses of the Old Glasgow Gentry* (1878) distanced Scotland's connections with Atlantic slavery: 'it must always be remembered to their credit that they kept aloof from the slave trade. Glasgow, alone of the four great sugar ports - London, Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow - was clean handed in this matter' (Smith & Mitchell, 1878).

2 | SLAVERY, THE ATLANTIC TRADES AND SCOTLAND'S INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* argued Atlantic slavery was central to British industrialisation (E. Williams, 1944). For Williams, the profits of the slave trade, Atlantic trades (both imports and exports) as well as investments of merchant capital and wealth returned from the colonies contributed to Britain's economic and societal development. With the West India economy supposedly in decline after 1783, however, the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and plantation slavery in 1834 were argued to have been economically rational decisions rather than for humanitarian

reasons. However, Williams is generally regarded to have been too early in dating the onset of decline (Burnard, 2020). Scotland did not feature heavily in *Capitalism & Slavery*, but Glasgow was cited as an Atlantic port with strong commercial and financial connections with slavery economies (E. Williams, 1944).

The main Williams thesis—that slavery and its commerce was central to the progress and timing of the Industrial Revolution—was unfashionable in the 1970s but has gathered momentum in recent times. Explanations for England's Industrial Revolution (1760–1830), according to Joseph Inikori, have been grouped under two broad classifications: internal (e.g., population growth, domestic demand and resources, agricultural advances, and technology) versus external (e.g., overseas trade, and effects on ancillary commerce and industry). In the latter view, commerce with external markets was central to the Industrial Revolution. The 18th-century Americanisation of the trades (i.e., commerce with slave economies) was deemed especially crucial. *Capitalism and Slavery* endorsed the latter position and thus fell in and out of fashion with the 'Commercial Revolution' thesis, which was in ascendancy amongst scholars between the 1880s and 1940s, and again from the mid-1980s onwards (Inikori, 2000). However, Williams characterised the Industrial Revolution as an English phenomenon, and this generated a significant historiography evolved focussing on English connections with Atlantic slavery (Morgan, 2000). In reality, Williams described a British process although Scotland's economic and societal connections with Atlantic slavery would not be addressed until later.

From 1932, the historiography of Scottish economic development adopted one of two broad approaches. Firstly, the Atlantic trades were deemed important but not central. For example, Henry Hamilton noted how the Union of 1707 provided access to Atlantic markets and capital, and West India and American cotton (slave-grown produce, although unacknowledged in text) underpinned the Scottish textile industry which was dependent upon exports to the Americas. This industry provided 'great impetus to Scottish commerce' and employed over 150,000 people, roughly 10% of the population (H. Hamilton, 1932, p. 146). Yet, Hamilton's later work situated the home market (i.e., trade within the British Isles) as the real driver of economic growth (H. Hamilton, 1963, p. 285). A second approach, from c.1956 to 1974, marginalised the importance of the Atlantic trades, and by extension chattel slavery, entirely. Historians such as R. H. Campbell (1964, 1965, 1967, 1974), M. L. Robertson (1956), Rosalind Mitchison (1970), T. C. Smout (1969) and advanced 'enclave economy' explanations, arguing Atlantic commerce did not stimulate wider processes therefore 'foreign trade affected only a small part of the economy in a minor fashion' (Devine, 1977, p. 187). R. H. Campbell's arguments were refined in *Scotland Since 1707: The Rise of an Industrial Society*, a standard undergraduate text. Republished each decade between 1965 and 1992, this author argued the 'contribution of foreign trade is of a more general and indirect kind' (Campbell, 1965, p. 46, 1992, p. 42). Scotland's enclave historians were the antithesis of the Williams school.

Mid-20th-century Scottish historiography, therefore, aligned with inward-looking models of English transformation. From the 1970s, however, T. M. Devine produced a substantial body of work focused on Glasgow's Chesapeake and West India traders which argued colonial merchant capital and the Atlantic trades had significant effects on the wider economy. Paradoxically, Devine is the only Scottish historian of that generation that has faced public criticism for not fully incorporating slavery in written work (Morris, 2013, p. 48).⁵ This is not entirely without foundation. *The Tobacco Lords*, for example, acknowledges tobacco production was based upon enslaved labour only twice in the text (Devine, 1975, p. 59) and was later criticised for not centring slavery (MacKenzie, 1999, p. 219). Devine recently told this author that chattel slavery was in the 'background', which he regarded as a failing of perspective rather than one of deliberate omission.⁶

Even so, T. M. Devine's conclusions changed Scottish historiography's terms of reference. The flow of colonial wealth, via Glasgow merchant's landed estates, was argued to have made a 'contribution of the first order' to Scotland's Agricultural Revolution 1760–1800 (Devine, 1971, p. 206). Devine cited Williams' *Capitalism & Slavery*—apparently the only late-20th century historian of Scotland to do so—and endorsed the developing view that the 'capital of tobacco lords was of major importance to Scottish industrial change' (Devine, 1975, p. 49, pp. 171–2). Merchant capital was regarded as transformative to mid-to-late 18th-century Glasgow and its environs as 'many of the ventures established perhaps might not have evolved if they had not answered specific needs in colonial markets' (Devine, 1976, p. 13). Historians of Scottish enclave economy were critiqued in print, with Devine (1977, p. 186)

arguing transatlantic commerce was integral to Scottish economic development. The role of Glasgow-West India merchants as financiers of the slave trade was noted (Devine, 1978, p. 48). The body of work, therefore, explicitly acknowledged (a) the operations of colonial merchants were based upon transatlantic slavery, and (b) the Atlantic trades and merchant capital were significant contributors to Scottish industry and agriculture. Whilst Devine did not centre slavery, these publications established the view that the Atlantic trades and merchant capital were central to Scotland's economic development. The enclave explanations became obsolete by 1980 (Smout, 1980, p. 617), whilst Devine's body of work became foundational in later debates. Yet, whilst making classic Williamsonian arguments—which merited inclusion in Morgan (2000) survey of the Williams thesis—Devine initially took a narrow view of *Capitalism & Slavery's* historiographical significance, apparently agreeing there was 'little evidence for Williams' claims' (Devine, 2003, p. 327).

Textbooks of Scotland's 18th-century economic transformation, however, were increasingly obliged to acknowledge the importance of colonial trades. In a classic enclave explanation, Mitchison described the tobacco trades as a 'self-contained matter of purchase and re-export' that 'stimulated financial institutions and local industry' (Mitchison, 1970, p. 328). Assessing Scotland's Atlantic economy via the prism of Virginia commerce based upon tobacco imports, thus underestimating the importance of West India commerce to the development of manufacturing industries, was the key failure of the enclave school. Whilst tobacco commerce was an *entrepôt* based commodity trade undertaken by elite merchants (and could be feasibly represented as 'enclave' within a wider developing economy), West India commerce involved the importation of slave-grown materials which powered the cotton manufacturing industry to 1800. Linen and cotton-based textiles were re-exported across the Atlantic world, thus underpinning Scotland's Industrial Revolution.

The mid-1970s was a watershed moment in Scottish historiography. In addition to Devine (1975), Jacob Price outlined the sheer volume of annual imports and exports (by official value) between Scotland and the American colonies during Glasgow's tobacco monopoly in the 1770s (Price, 1975). S. G. Checkland acknowledged the significance of the West India trades to Scottish banking (Checkland, 1975). Economic histories of Scotland by Lenman (1977), Lythe and Butt (1975), and Slaven (1975) all emphasised the significance of the American or West Indian trades and importance of markets for the development of textile industries. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, R. H. Campbell nevertheless persevered with the enclave thesis (Campbell, 1980). To no avail. By 1997, Christopher Whatley listed the West India trades as one 'cause' of the Scottish Industrial Revolution—a classic Williamsonian position, without citing *Capitalism & Slavery*—noting the linen industry provided clothing for enslaved people in the West Indies (Whatley, 1997, p. 41).

Confirming the new orthodoxy, two textbooks listed Atlantic markets and colonial investments as causal factors in Scottish industrialisation (Devine, 2005; Devine & Rössner, 2011). In a study of Scottish trade 1700–1760, Rössner concluded Scotland's Commercial Revolution did not progress until after 1730, whilst noting slave trade voyages from the port of Montrose (Rössner, 2008). In 2011, Devine posed the far-from-rhetorical question 'did slavery make Scotia great?' Whilst not a huge departure from earlier arguments, the shift to unconditional acceptance of the Williams thesis was significant. In this view, Scotland's industrial take-off came after the Union of 1707. Moreover, with a smaller population and less diversified economy than England, transformation was more heavily dependent on the Atlantic trades and merchant capital (Devine, 2011). Concluding the edited collection *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past* in 2015, Devine declared slavery was likely to be 'integral to the weft and woof of the national past from the 17th to the early 19th centuries' (Devine, 2015, p. 247). These ideas went mainstream with the BBC Scotland production 'Slavery: Scotland's Hidden Shame' in 2018. Nevertheless, a recent imperially myopic history of Scottish 'industry, reform and empire' centred slavery only in relation to abolitionist movements rather than as the foundation for industrial transformation after 1790 (Hutchison, 2020).

The historiography of the leading sectors of the 18th-century Scottish economy dependent upon colonial commerce—linen and cotton—has not yet addressed the importance of transatlantic slavery. Durie's early work (1973, p. 41) noted enslaved people as comprising a major sector of colonial markets but a later study of linen was less explicit and only briefly acknowledged the importance of West India markets—especially Jamaica—to the industry's

expansion (Durie, 1979, p. 152). Murray (1978, p. 66) noted the importance of the 'American market' to the livelihoods of Scottish handloom weavers. New Lanark Mill was owned by David Dale and Robert Owen, and the latter was in partnership with Alexander Campbell of Hallyards from 1810. Campbell was described as a 'Glasgow merchant' (Donnachie & Hewitt, 2015, p. 77) yet that generic occupational descriptor obscured his role in West India firm John Campbell senior & Co. Similarly, Caribbean slavery went unacknowledged in Anthony Cooke's studies of the Scottish cotton industry. A study of Stanley mills was devoid of colonial scope, despite being operated by Glasgow-West India firm, Dennistoun, Buchanan & Co. (Cooke, 2015). The study of Scottish cotton masters lacked any Atlantic perspective (Cooke, 2009) despite some, such as James Ewing, being absentee owners of enslaved people. Cooke's major work on the Scottish cotton industry did acknowledge the Atlantic trades as its foundation (Cooke, 2010). Perhaps mindful of absences, Cooke's article on Glasgow's West India elites aligned with the main Williams thesis (Cooke, 2012). Intertwined histories of the Scottish textile industries and Atlantic slavery are yet to be written.

3 | CENTRING SLAVERY IN SCOTTISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

American historians working on early American, Atlantic and colonial history have been integral to centring of slavery and the colonial trades in Scottish historiography. Jacob Price noted the pervasiveness of Scots as tobacco merchants in colonial Virginia and Maryland and the significance of the Chesapeake tobacco trade to the rise of Glasgow (Price, 1954). The 'New Time Series' of Scottish trade with the American colonies between 1740 and 1791 remains a key source for economic studies of transatlantic commerce (Price, 1975). Other studies placed Scots at the commanding heights of Atlantic slavery enterprise. In 1977, Richard Sheridan identified a pervasive Scottish presence across the West Indies (Sheridan, 1957, 1961, 1977). David Hancock firmly imprinted slavery into the historiography of Scotland and the Atlantic world. London-based Scots—notably Richard Oswald of Auchincruive—purchased Bance Island, a heavily fortified island off the coast of Sierra Leone, and forcibly trafficked almost 13,000 enslaved Africans into the horrors of chattel slavery in North America and the Caribbean between 1748 and 1784 (Hancock, 1997). This new awareness eventually percolated into Scottish historiography.

More remains to be understood about Scottish connections with colonial slavery in the period c.1620–1707. T. C. Smout, who pioneered the social history of Scotland, authored works related to Scotland and Glasgow's pre-Union colonial history (Smout, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1968). This body of work is an exemplar of Scottish historiography that ignored the significance of chattel slavery. Smout euphemistically described the advance of Glasgow's early merchants into the English West Indies as one of discovering the 'full potentialities of the wider Atlantic' (Smout, 1968, p. 56). *A History of the Scottish People, 1560–1830*—one of the key foundational texts in the field—is a masterclass enclave explanation of Scotland's Industrial Revolution, relegating merchant capital and the Atlantic trades to near insignificance (Smout, 1969, p. 245, pp. 247–257). More recently, Smout conceded the 'influence of slavery was ubiquitous in Scotland' between 1707 and 1830 (Smout, 2020).

John Prebble's 'victim histories' of Scotland included the 'Darien Disaster', which traced failed Scottish attempts to colonise a section of the Isthmus of Panama in the late 1690s. There are fleeting references to 'slaves' throughout, although the fiasco was characterised as a tragic disaster for Scotland rather than a failed attempt at settler-colonisation intent on the exploitation of enslaved labour (Prebble, 1969). Douglas Watt's text on the finances of the Company of Scotland responsible for the Darien Scheme added little on the coloniser's intended usage of enslaved people (Watt, 2007), whilst Julie Orr noted the implications of the Spanish Crown's *asiento* (a monopoly contract to supply enslaved people) without quantifying Scottish involvement (Orr, 2018). David Dobson traced Scottish emigrants in slavery societies in colonial America before 1707 although unfortunately conflated, on occasion, the plight of Scottish indentured servants with chattel slaves (Dobson, 1994). Macinnes offered a corrective to Smout's vision of the Union of 1707 rescuing Scotland from economic ruin, in the process noting the significance of Scotland's pre-union imperial ventures including in slavery societies such as Barbados (Macinnes, 2007b). In studies of Scots across the Atlantic

world, Stuart Nisbet (2008) and David Worthington (2019) explicitly adopted 'slavery' their titles, reflecting the new awareness amongst Scottish historians.

Direct Scottish involvement in the trafficking of African enslaved people (historically known as the 'slave trade') was relatively insignificant, explaining the limited historiography compared to English connections (Morgan, 2000, pp. 36–49). David Hancock examined the involvement of Scots in the slave trade (Hancock, 2001). Hancock's verdict that only a 'handful of voyages' departed Glasgow and Edinburgh was superseded by findings that 27 'triangular trade' voyages departed Scottish ports between 1706 and 1766 with a further four 'Scottish' voyages leaving England in that period (Duffill, 2004). These tended to be economic failures, likely explaining why Scots preferred to trade slave-grown produce (Behrendt & Graham, 2003). However, Scots were involved in slave voyages that departed English ports and trafficking in the colonies themselves. It is estimated Scots comprised around 20% of ships captains on slave voyages departing Liverpool between 1785 and 1807. On similar voyages from the same port between 1753 and 1807, around 38% of surgeons hailed from Scotland (Schwarz, 2015). Scots were also involved in the trafficking enslaved people on the African coast. Hancock traced the fortunes of London-based Scots who owned Bance Island and trafficked enslaved people to the Americas (Hancock, 2001). Scots were heavily involved as both traffickers and owners of enslaved people in the British West Indies. John Tailyour's firm was the second-largest slave trafficker in Kingston, Jamaica, between 1785 and 1796, controlling around 11% of the overall volume (Radburn, 2015). Another Scot, Robert Cunyngham, owned Cayon House estate in St Kitts, and between 1729 and 1735 owned or rented over 330 enslaved people for labour on a sugar plantation described as a 'harrowing Hobbesian nightmare' (Behrendt et al., 2021). The activities of Cunyngham in Ayrshire were addressed by Graham (2009). Together, these works have demolished the myth that Scots were 'clean handed' in trafficking enslaved people (Smith & Mitchell, 1878), although the most substantial involvement was conducted outside Scottish ports.

Complementing new understandings about the Scottish role in the trafficking of enslaved people, the legal and material status of Black people in 18th-century Scotland has been increasingly clarified. Ian Duffield (1992) pioneered the social histories of Black people in 18th-century Scotland, providing a lucid account of the lives of people born in slavery societies such as Joseph Knight and Robert Wedderburn. Evans (1995) added fresh insights into the life of African-Caribbean people in Scotland. James Robertson's historical novel *Joseph Knight* fictionalised the life of a man enslaved in Jamaica who won his freedom in Scottish courts in 1778 (J. Robertson, 2003). Legal historian John Cairns later argued that people of African descent were held as enslaved property in Scotland before 1778. Whilst the practice was 'socially and legally anomalous', and there was no specific legislation or codification, this was 'slavery without a Code Noir' (Cairns, 2012, 2013a, 2013b). Simon Newman has recently endorsed the vision of slavery within Georgian Britain, arguing that 'slavery was as real for such people in Britain as it was for others in Jamaica or Virginia' (Newman, 2019). The transatlantic dynamics in the lives of children born of enslaved women and Scots in the colonies have been traced by David Alston (2015) and Daniel Livesay (2018).

There has been a revival of interest in Scottish connections with the Caribbean. In 1957, Checkland noted the sheer size of West India firms Alexander Houston and Co. and Evan Baillie and Co., in terms of their operations and early nineteenth-century failures (Checkland, 1957). T.M. Devine examined Glasgow's West India elite, operational in the city between 1750 and 1815 (Devine, 1978). Douglas Hamilton's case study of Alexander Houston and Co., the premier Glasgow-West India merchant firm in the late 18th century, revealed how such firms operated in the British West Indies and offered new insights into risk and failure (D. Hamilton, 2001). More recently, Anthony Cooke revisited Glasgow's West India elites arguing that merchant capital shaped Scottish industrialisation into the Victorian period and thus aligned with the Williams thesis (Cooke, 2012). Case studies of Glasgow-West India merchant firms offer new perspectives on the accumulation and dissemination of fortunes derived from Caribbean slavery (Mullen, 2013, 2015).

The role of Scots across the West Indies has also been traced. As noted by Richard Sheridan, 13 great families of Scottish descent were resident on Antigua between 1707 and 1786, alongside medical professionals such as surgeon-planter, Dr. William Tullidelph (Sheridan, 1957, 1961). Later work underlined the predominance of Scottish medical graduates across the West Indies (Sheridan, 1985). A Scottish presence across the West Indies more broadly

was noted (Sheridan, 1977). Two seminal works applied network theories to the empirical evidence of Scots in the 18th-century British West Indies. Alan Karras compared Scots in 18th-century Jamaica and the Chesapeake, arguing these young men were sojourners (transitory economic migrants) who operated in 'patronage webs' (Karras, 1992). Douglas Hamilton examined the commercial networks of Scottish sojourners across the West Indies. Whilst Karras was sceptical if Scots were able to repatriate wealth from Jamaica, Hamilton endorsed the Williams thesis—apparently the first Scottish historian since Devine to do so (D. Hamilton, 2005). Natalie Zacek confirmed the 'marked tendency' of Scots to secure employment and opportunities for acquaintances and kin helped them overcome modest status in the early English Caribbean settler colonies (Zacek, 2010). Murdoch (2010) also noted the role of Scots as slavers in America.

The study of Scots in the West Indies has largely focused on Jamaica, an island that provided plenty opportunity for advancement in the slave economy (Graham, 2015). Richard Sheridan suggested Scots possessed disproportionately high levels of wealth and property in mid-18th-century Jamaica although these estimates are based upon the unreliable sampling method of cross-referencing Scottish surnames (Sheridan, 2007, p. 369, p. 375). Mark Quintanilla (2003) moved onto the Ceded Islands, tracing the mercantile empire of Alexander Campbell in Grenada before 1795. Further research is required on Scots and slavery-derived fortunes, especially in comparative frame: assessing colonial wealth by lower rank and elite individuals (acquired in specific colonies in the West Indies and North America), the effects of repatriation on Scottish regions, and situated in a four nations context (compared to English, Irish and Welsh returnees).

Quantifying patterns of Scottish slave-ownership has been a crucial development. Previously, studies of Scottish enslavers took the form of biographies. S. G. Checkland's study of John Gladstone centred slavery within the text, unusually for the era (Checkland, 1971). The sheer extent of Scots involved in Caribbean slave-ownership in 1834 has been clarified with the *Legacies of Slave-ownership* project and associated publications (Draper, 2010, 2015).⁷ Devine invoked this data to enhance his claim that slavery contributed to the economic development of Scotland (Devine, 2015, pp. 225–245, p. 248). The high levels of slave-ownership underpinned a powerful proslavery movement. David Lambert (2008) and Michael Taylor (2018) highlighted the role of Glasgow merchant James MacQueen at the centre of a British proslavery network. Catherine Hall's case study of Sir Archibald Alison noted how elite individuals contributed to proslavery discourse whilst resident in Glasgow (Hall, 2015). D. Hamilton (2014) noted Scotland's proslavery movement was not restricted to Glasgow. Important texts cover abolitionist arguments in Scotland: the philosophical underpinning of abolition (Webster, 2003), the political movement for the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and plantation slavery in 1834 (Whyte, 2006, 2015), as well as the campaign to abolish slavery in America in 1865 (Rice, 1981). Pettinger (2018) and Whyte (2012) traced the activities of prominent American abolitionist (and former slave) Frederick Douglass in 1840s Scotland.

The profits of slavery improved Glasgow more than anywhere else in Scotland, although this was not explicitly acknowledged until recently. Novelist James Kelman critiqued the city of Glasgow's decision to name the 'Merchant City' in 1990, noting merchants became wealthy through slavery (Kelman, 1992). Yet, a two-volume study of Glasgow—included a chapter on the 'golden age of tobacco'—failed to mention slavery at all (Devine & Jackson, 1995; Fraser & Maver, 1996). In 1999, historians responsible for the absences in Glasgow's histories were criticised, which marked a turning point in the city's historiographical reckoning with slavery (MacKenzie, 1999). Irene Maver's *Glasgow* (2000) briefly noted the presence of enslaved people in the 18th-century city, and the importance of the West India trades. Other Scottish cities have some way to go. Fry's history of Edinburgh does not mention slavery at all (Fry, 2009). More recently, Lisa Williams underlined the presence of African-Caribbean people in the city as far back as 1686 (L. Williams, 2020).

Yet, the connections with the Scottish Highlands and Atlantic slavery are increasingly well-known. However, T. M. Devine's *The Great Highland Famine* lacks colonial perspective by acknowledging a new Highland landed elite was formed after 1800, yet the implications of having made their 'fortunes in trade' was not explored (Devine, 1988, p. 94). The extent to which slavery shaped the development of the Scottish Highlands is subject to ongoing debate. In 1988, Allan Macinnes could describe the Highlands as an 'internal colony [of Britain], rather than a beneficiary of Empire

like the industrialised Lowlands' (Macinnes, 1988, p. 85). Within 10 years, Macinnes described Highland landlords as 'active members of the imperial exploiting classes as planters, slave traders, colonial officials, military commanders and merchant adventurers'. Macinnes traced how profits acquired via slavery in Jamaica improved the Malcolm of Poltalloch family estates in the lower Highlands of Scotland (Macinnes, 1998, pp. 172–3, 2007a). David Alston's outputs have transformed understandings of the role of Highland Scots in the Dutch/British colonies of Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo (Alston, 2004, 2015, 2016, 2021). S. Karly Kehoe's analysis of charitable enterprise reminds how the profits from Caribbean slavery often improved the wealth of families, as well as the economies and societies across the Scottish Highlands more broadly (Kehoe, 2015). The rise of John Lamont in Trinidad reveals major planting fortunes could still be made in the nineteenth century, although questions of representativeness remain (Mullen, 2018). Indeed, the economic failure of the enslaver Lord Seaforth in Berbice might be more representative of Highland entanglement with Atlantic slavery than the Malcolms or Lamont (McKichan, 2018). And Alston (2018) demonstrates the Scottish Highland's connections with slavery in Suriname endured long after the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies.

New literary approaches aim to recover the memory of slavery in Scotland. Michael Morris addressed Scotland's memory of slavery via the activities of former slave Joseph Knight, and Robert Burns who mooted travel to the West Indies in 1786, but had no tangible connection to Caribbean slavery. Sites such as Glasgow's Merchant City were invoked as *lieu de mémoire* (site of memory; Morris, 2015a). Despite recent civic acknowledgements in Glasgow, Craig Lamont (2021) reminded how myths around the city's public memory of slavery, especially the Glassford portrait, still prevail. Morris' analysis of contemporary literature revealed how Walter Scott and others deliberately eschewed any mention of slavery by invoking euphemisms such as 'yonder awa' to describe colonial activities (Morris, 2015b). Morris led the scholarly re-assessment of individuals memorialised in statues in Glasgow's George Square (Morris, 2016). This author's scope extended to the cotton industry, accurately noting that 'Atlantic slavery represents a fundamental part of the fabric' of New Lanark cotton mill (Morris, 2018, p. 112). However, 'recovery' remains partial: Morris did not address Robert Owen's partnership with several Glasgow-West India merchants—co-partners between 1810 and 12—or the implications of this relationship for the mill's development (Butt, 1971, p. 174).

The way historic figures with connections to slavery are memorialised in statues and street names is a live issue in modern British society. The public conversation about Glasgow and Scotland's historic connections with slavery has been led by activist group Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance who have organised a slavery walking tour of Glasgow's 'Merchant City' from 2001. This organisation commissioned the popular text *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery* (Mullen, 2009). From 2017, a campaign (led by successor body, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights) highlighted the absence of slavery in Scottish museums. The University of Glasgow launched a study of their own historic connections with slavery, responding with a 'reparative justice' strategy in 2018 (Mullen, 2021a). The city of Glasgow itself followed with a study of slavery and its built heritage in 2019. Glasgow's lead influenced other developments and the Black Lives Matter summer of 2020 provided impetus for national introspection. Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities launched slavery and colonialism investigations. In 2020, Edinburgh City Council appointed Professor Sir Geoff Palmer to lead 'Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group'. The Scottish Government commissioned a review of national museum collections that same year. However, the new historiographical orthodoxy has not permeated all modes of learning: the teaching of slavery and Empire in Scottish secondary schools remains some way behind the respective English curriculum (Mullen, 2020a).

The role of Scots in Atlantic slavery is currently being re-assessed in scholarly studies which attract media attention as they influence how Great Britain memorialises. In 1992, Michael Fry could claim the actions of Henry Dundas, Home Secretary in the Pitt administration, secured rather than impeded the abolition of the slave trade between 1792 and 1807 (Fry, 1992). New research has led to Dundas being described as a 'great delayer' of the transatlantic slave trade (Mullen, 2021b).⁸ David Phillip Miller examined the life of the 'great improver' of the steam engine, James Watt, yet failed to address the implications of his father's Atlantic business (Miller, 2019). Recent scholarship has shown that James Watt was a beneficiary of his father's enterprise, which included the occasional trafficking of enslaved people, and was himself involved with trafficking a young black child in Glasgow in 1762 (Mullen, 2020b).

4 | CONCLUSION

Historians of Scotland have recognised—although not centred—slavery as the foundation of the Atlantic trades from the 1970s onwards. Checkland (1971) was a pioneer in placing slavery at the centre of John Gladstone biography, and Devine explicitly noted enslaved people as the basis for the Atlantic trades and colonial investments which powered Scotland's economic transformation. Devine's 'commercial revolution' arguments of Scottish economic change superseded the 'enclave economy' explanations of Smout, Campbell and Mitchison which downplayed the significance of the Atlantic trades and ignored slavery entirely. Modern orthodoxy now suggests that transatlantic commerce, and the labour of enslaved people, underpinned Scottish economic transformation after c.1760 in a far more significant manner compared to England. The new orthodoxy is supported by earlier works that considered the Scottish Atlantic economy but did not centre slavery—Cooke (2009), Durie (1979), Murray (1978) and Whatley (1997, 2000).

Taking notice of scholarly and societal developments, Atlantic slavery was eventually centred in Scottish historiography. American historians revealed Scots at the pinnacle of colonial exploitation. Mackenzie's (1999) critique about the lack of scholarly recognition of slavery in Glasgow was matched by public awareness campaigns from 2001. Several works by historians after 2000 centred slavery and literary scholars have also added fresh insights. Knowledge of the distinctive Scottish role in trafficking in enslaved people, the accumulation of wealth from Caribbean slavery and its repatriation, as well as influence on the development of Glasgow, the west of Scotland and other regions is increasing. Macinnes (1998) pioneered the model of capital in-flow from the Caribbean to the Scottish Highlands, a position developed by Alston (2004), D. Hamilton (2005) and Kehoe (2015). Historians have long argued that Atlantic commerce and slavery was central to Scotland's transformation: this has been one of the key developments in Scottish historiography over the last half-century, and with greater public discussion and embryonic civic recognition, these views are now mainstream.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ Sir Geoff Palmer (a Professor of Brewing Science) is quoted: 'HISTORY is part of national pride. It is now well-known that the history of Scotland is linked to the history of British slavery. Since 2007 I have given many lectures on Scottish-Caribbean slavery connections. One of the frequently asked questions by the audience is: "Why has no one told us of our involvement in this slavery before?". Some of our historians are responsible for this omission'. See 'Lessons on racism from Scotland's shameful past', *The National*, 7 June 2020, Available: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18501284.lessons-racism-scotlands-shameful-past/>; Accessed: 6 April 2021.
- ² Foundation of Sir William Fraser Chair of Scottish History and Palaeography, 1901, *University of Edinburgh: Our History*, Available: http://ourhistory.is.ed.ac.uk/index.php/Foundation_of_Sir_William_Fraser_Chair_of_Scottish_History_and_Palaeography_1901; Accessed: 13 September 2021.
- ³ On Professor Allan Macinnes' appointment as the Burnett Fletcher Chair of History at the University of Aberdeen in 1993, it was reported he was the 'first Scottish historian to hold a general chair of history in a Scottish university' since 1903. See 'Sharp end of history', *The Herald*, 13 December 1993, Available: <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12705915.sharp-end-of-history/>; Accessed: 13 September 2021.
- ⁴ 'Tom Devine on his landmark book: The Scottish Nation', *The National*, 7 June 2020. Available: <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18501314.tom-devine-landmark-book-scottish-nation/>; Accessed: 13 September 2021.
- ⁵ For example, at the 'Caribbean-Scottish Passages Conference', University of Stirling, 24–25 June 2008, Geoff Palmer criticised T.M. Devine for not devoting an entire chapter to slavery in *The Scottish Nation 1700–2000* (London: Allen Lane, 1999).
- ⁶ I am grateful for permission to quote email communication with Professor Tom Devine on 3 June 2020. Devine: 'The book was an economic history written at a time in the 1970s when that was the mainstream approach in modern Scottish history. I assumed a slavery background (the paperback version had an image of black slaves loading tobacco on the Chesapeake) rather than dealt with it in any detail. There was certainly no conscious intention to conceal the fact that the sugar and tobacco commerce could not have existed without chattel slavery. But my focus was the dynamics of the trade and the

merchant community which managed it. So, if there a fault, it was one of perspective rather than unawareness or ignorance. Virtually all the original manuscripts I consulted referred to slavery in some form or another. Only the Victorian hagiographies of the merchant dynasties were totally silent on the subject.

⁷ 'The Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery', Available: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>; Accessed: 13 September 2021.

⁸ 'David Leask, Dundas "key" to Britain's slave army, investigation finds', *The Herald*, 29 March 2021. Available: <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/19194356.dundas-key-britains-slave-army-investigation-finds/>; Accessed: 13 September 2021.

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