

An appeal to supersede the slave trade triangle in English museums

Sophie Campbell

To cite this article: Sophie Campbell (2021): An appeal to supersede the slave trade triangle in English museums, *Atlantic Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/14788810.2021.1913969](https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2021.1913969)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2021.1913969>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 25 Jun 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 236



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

An appeal to supersede the slave trade triangle in English museums

Sophie Campbell

School of Cultures, Languages and Area Studies, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

ABSTRACT

In 2007 several permanent museum galleries were created in England that discuss the subject of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery. This article critiques one recurring image within many of these sites: the diagrams of the slave trade triangle. Drawing on analyses of the slave trade by historians, from Eric Williams to recent contributions, as well as understanding of the behaviour of museum visitors, it appeals to museums for more complex diagrams to be included in future installations at public history sites. Methodologically, close analysis of current museum installations frames exploration of the historical complexities and geographic expanse of enslavement-associated commerce, a term coined within the article. Future diagrams reflecting these complications will more accurately represent historical scholarship and the importance of enslaved labour to global commerce, rather than understating this by focusing solely on the slave trade triangle.

KEYWORDS

Slave trade triangle; enslavement-associated commerce; museums; visual diagrams; transatlantic slavery

Introduction

2020 saw the subject of Britain's slavery past, and memory of it, become a topic of intermittent national conversation. In June 2020, a Victorian statue of Edward Colston (1636–1721) – who profited from early English slave trading – was torn down by Black Lives Matter protestors in Bristol, garnering international attention. In the following months, both the National Trust and Historic England have released reports highlighting sites connected to slavery, with the National Trust's interim report in particular attracting media attention.¹ The research for both reports began before the removal of the Colston statue and reflect that this recent activity is not a sudden explosion. Rather, interest and activity has been building since the 1990s and is punctuated with moments of strong public consciousness and heritage interventions – particularly 2007 and potentially 2020. This recent moment of consciousness may lead to new physical installations, such as a museum of slavery in London, which Sadiq Khan – as the Mayor of London – endorsed proposals for in 2019. On the other hand, little may be installed before 2033–2034, to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery in the British Caribbean. Whether they are acting now or will subsequently, this article encourages curators, and academic

CONTACT Sophie Campbell  sophie.campbell@nottingham.ac.uk

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

advisors, not to perpetuate simple slave trade triangle diagrams, and instead to supersede them with more complex imagery.

In her recently released book, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, Ana Lucia Araujo conceives “public history as an approach developed by professional and academic historians that seeks to make the various dimensions of the past accessible to general audiences.”² This article is intended to aid such public history by compiling various historical arguments for the consideration of those responsible for the presentation to wider audiences. Therefore, while it acknowledges scholarly work on public memory, it focuses on historical scholarship to dismantle the dominant image of a simple triangle through revealing the complexities of enslavement-associated commerce, a term coined within the article.

It views the diagrams as particularly problematic due to the perception that museum visitors “graze” exhibits. In contrast to normal visitor behaviour, this article follows close analysis of the text, visuals, interactive tools and placement used in museum installations, that have been observationally studied by the author during multiple research trips between 2018 and 2019. It does not focus on curatorial decision making, or rely on behind-the-scenes interviews, but rather it considers what the majority of visitors encounter within the space. Future visitor surveys, at the sites, would further determine what visitors are learning from these installations and how urgent the need to supersede the common slave trade triangle is. While I am conscious that these diagrams are not exclusively used in English museums, these are the focus of this critique. This is not just for researcher convenience, but because they form a relatively coherent grouping. Other international museums were not impacted by the 2007 British bicentenary, which will be discussed further; whilst within Britain, Scotland and Wales have complex variations of histories, memories, and identities. Despite the differences in governance, size and audiences among the museums discussed, there is commonality in the use of these diagrams.

The following sections outline current installations and why they are particularly problematic when considering visitor practice, before detailing the importance and complexities of enslavement-associated commerce. This leads to in-depth examination of particular elements of the current diagrams. The first section of current museum installation analysis focuses on trade in the North Atlantic and highlights the importance of enslaved labour to commerce within the region. The second section explores wider geographies, which are currently largely neglected in the museum diagrams, to stress that enslavement-associated commerce reached beyond the British North Atlantic, beyond the Atlantic Ocean and inland away from the oceans. The article closes by offering some recommendations for future exhibitions. Changing these representations will assist visitors’ understanding of the importance of enslaved labour to global commerce and the scale of involvement in enslavement-associated commerce.

Tracing and contesting the slave trade triangle

As of the end of 2020, there are numerous museums which explore transatlantic slavery within England, though the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool is the only one dedicated to the subject. Other substantial galleries on the slave trade and slavery can be found within Greater London at the Museum of London Docklands and the National Maritime Museum. In Bristol – the third largest slave-trading port in England, after

Liverpool and London, in terms of departing slaving voyages – there are also exhibits at M Shed and the Georgian House Museum. Wilberforce House Museum in Hull also has multiple small galleries exploring enslavement, and there are exhibitions in the smaller historic slaving port of Lancaster. Several of these installations – including the larger ones in Liverpool and London – opened or re-opened in 2007 for the bicentenary of the abolition of the British transatlantic slave trade. In addition to these major permanent sites, there were widespread temporary commemorations.³

Between 2007 and 2012 the bicentenary installations collectively received numerous academic responses.⁴ Since then scholarly interest in slavery memory in England, as well as internationally, has persisted. For example, Alan Rice – with Johanna Kardux – continued work on slavery’s memorial landscapes, in the introduction to a 2012 special issue of this journal, while in 2013 English Heritage published a book on *Slavery and the British Country House*.⁵ At University College London, historians, led by Catherine Hall, developed a database of plantation owners and published an accompanying edited book, highlighting how their wealth impacted Britain.⁶ Their project draws attention to the commercial, cultural, historical, imperial, physical and political “legacies of British slave-ownership.” The 2016 volume on *Britain’s History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery* also builds on that database, while focusing on memory.⁷ In 2018 and 2019, Olivette Otele – the first black woman to become a Professor in the UK – also published chapters on British memory of slavery, including that around Edward Colston.⁸ Further publications followed in 2020. Araujo’s *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, discusses Colston and the Georgian House Museum in Bristol as well as the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool.⁹ Jessica Moody has also published a new book on *The Persistence of Memory* which focuses on Liverpool, and provides a summary of other work which “interrogates slavery and memory in relation to place and identity in Britain.”¹⁰ Yet, despite their proliferation in 2007, none of this work closely critiques the focus of this article: the slave trade triangle, or triangular trade diagrams, which I will refer to simply as triangles.

The triangles are one recurring representational tool frequently used, in various forms from school textbooks to the museums discussed here, due to their “diagrammatic simplicity.”¹¹ These installations are often large and colourful visual diagrams that depict triangular trade between Europe, West Africa and the Americas, particularly the Caribbean. For example, at the Museum of London Docklands a display, entitled “Triangle Trade,” features a large simple triangular diagram with unlabelled arrows connecting London, West Africa and the Caribbean. At M Shed, in Bristol, the phrase “The Great Circuit” is used and more detail is provided on what was traded, as the arrows are made up of the goods traded as written words, but the diagram still depicts a simple triangle. The phrase “The Triangle Trade” also hangs above the main exhibit at Lancaster Maritime Museum, where further triangles are visual features within the displays. In Hull at Wilberforce House, the title “The Triangular Trade” is used again above a large, colourful triangular diagram (Figure 1).

This triangle faces visitors as they first enter the room, and clearly visually illustrates the trade of “Manufactured Goods” to Africa, “Enslaved Africans” to the Caribbean and “Raw Materials (sugar, cotton, tobacco)” to Britain, or Europe more widely. Further detail is provided in accompanying large text, but this is not embedded in the image. These triangles are recurring representational tools at present.



Figure 1. “The Triangular Trade” diagram at Wilberforce House Museum. Photo taken by author (April 2019). Courtesy of Hull Culture and Leisure Ltd.

I do not argue that a triangular trade in the Atlantic did not exist, but rather that the above triangle was one of several interwoven trades that formed a more complex geography of exchange. I also acknowledge that the slave trade triangle is a recognised abstract idea which illustrates enslavement-dependent trade between three continents, and that such triangles have become powerful “shorthand” explanations for the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.¹² However, while the triangles reflect a “basic underlying structure,” and powerfully highlight goods produced by enslaved labourers in the Caribbean, they are problematically overly simple.¹³ Especially since, as Miles Ogborn observes, “it is certainly not the case that all ships engaged in Atlantic trade sailed all legs of this triangular course like some nightmarish and never-ending merry-go-round.”¹⁴ The consequence of this simplicity is not just misinformation, but also that the triangles understate the importance of enslaved labour to global commerce.

Their problematic simplicity is exacerbated by the fact that they are often large and colourful eye-catching elements of the exhibits, which are situated prominently and framed by large text repeating the message that the trade was triangular. This is particularly concerning when considering that museums believe their visitors will not read and absorb every element of their exhibits. While some researchers have highlighted that it is difficult to observe when and what a visitor is reading and group interactions, the idea that “people don’t read labels” is “a part of museum folklore.”¹⁵ It remains widely accepted that “regardless of museum size, it is known that relatively few visitors to museums actually read textual object labels.”¹⁶ In terms of the lack of reading more broadly, Beverly

Serrell found that “it appears typical for diligent visitors [who she describes as people who stopped at more than half of the available elements within an exhibit] to make up less than one-third of the exhibition’s audience.”¹⁷ Instead visitors “skip elements” and “few exhibitions are thoroughly used.”¹⁸ To put it another way, several visitors “graze – reading a few labels and moving on, often ignoring the panels.”¹⁹ This grazing behaviour will be particularly true for visitors who cannot read English fluently. Anecdotally, whilst on research trips to my case study museums, in order to study every detail in the space, I remained much longer than the other visitors who were grazing. The belief that visitors do not absorb every element of the exhibits underpins why the simplicity of the eye-catching diagrams are particularly problematic. Further details on the complexity of transatlantic trading are often provided in text positioned nearby the large triangles, but if visitors do not read the text, they will leave with a curtailed understanding of how and why transatlantic slavery worked, and without an appreciation of the vast scale of involvement in enslavement-associated commerce.

The depictions in museums are visual representations of a common phrase: the triangular trade. It is well established in the collective vernacular, and schoolchildren are taught, when slavery is covered, that “the slave trade [...] operated in a triangular way.”²⁰ This understanding developed in the twentieth century, and is mapped by B.W. Higman in his discussion of models and metaphors in *Writing West Indian Histories*.²¹ Higman dates the “earliest identified mention” of a “triangular trade route” to F. Lee Benns and his 1920 dissertation, though it identified a triangular route between Britain, the United States and the West Indies.²² Later, in 1928, Charles W. Taussig described an eighteenth century “triangular trade in molasses, rum and slaves” with points in New England, Africa and the West Indies’ in *Rum, Romance and Rebellion*.²³ In the late twentieth century the triangular trade from New England was further examined.²⁴ The multiple uses of the phrase highlight that the Atlantic Ocean was home to several overlapping trades – including various triangles – during this period. The commonality comes in that in both England and New England, the trade in enslaved people from West Africa to the Caribbean provided “the base of the triangle.”²⁵

The triangle linking Britain, West Africa and the plantation colonies is dated by Higman to the 1930s and “this version of the concept quickly became common knowledge.”²⁶ Soon after, “the triangular-trade concept quickly entered museum culture and textbook histories” in Britain, including an exhibit in Liverpool for the 1951 Festival of Britain.²⁷ Higman notes that “this simple model soon came under question in terms of its long-term feasibility and frequency,” but that despite these challenges “the idea was not easily exterminated.”²⁸ Its power within public history was demonstrated when it came to the design and installation of the 2007 museum exhibits, within which the triangle often persisted. Here I aim to prevent a continuation of this imagery, by appealing that they be superseded by more complex visual diagrams through synthesising academic historical work.

The importance and complexities of enslavement-associated commerce

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries it is estimated that over twelve million enslaved people forcibly embarked on slaving ships on the African coast.²⁹ This notorious practice continued for centuries because the transportation of human beings for enslaved

labour was perceived as being financially worthwhile for numerous stakeholders across an interwoven trade network. Race-based enslaved labour was an integral part of the global economy from the 1500s through to the 1800s, and enslavement-associated commerce embroiled many more people than just those directly involved in the triangular trade.

In attempts to encompass this wider involvement scholars have used phrases including the “integrated transatlantic [or Atlantic] economy” and “transatlantic slave economy.”³⁰ While these reflect the economic focus, they also imply a limited geography – by including Atlantic or transatlantic – which neglects wider global connections. In her book on the northern US state of Rhode Island, Christy Clark-Pujara uses the term the “business of slavery,” which she defines as “all economic activity that was directly related to the maintenance of slaveholding in the Americas.”³¹ In earlier work on New England, Ronald Bailey used the concept of “slave(ry) trade” to encompass “the slave trade and slavery-related commerce.”³² Whilst these phrases do allude to the fact that transatlantic slavery was central to wider commerce, I use enslavement-associated commerce.

This phrasing consciously uses enslavement rather than slavery to linguistically highlight that at the centre of this narrative were enslaved human beings, and enslavers who practiced and profited from their enslavement. The contribution of the enslaved has been historically “invisibilised,” to use Lubaina Himid’s term, and this phrasing emphasises that the expansive interwoven and interdependent network of commerce should be associated with the enslaved labour of millions of African people.³³ Associated commerce is intended to cover many direct and indirect connections, as well as allowing for inclusion of wider neglected geographies beyond the Atlantic. It encompasses not only trades in enslaved human beings, but various further connected trades in supplying goods and services to plantations or for barter for enslaved Africans, as well as feeding domestic and industrial demand for goods cultivated by enslaved labourers.

This appeal for presenting more complex diagrams of enslavement-associated commerce builds on various historians’ work. One foundational influence is Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* in which he argued, nearly eighty years ago, that slaving and enslaved labour underpinned an expansive trade network. Williams’ seminal work features chapters on “British Commerce and the Triangular Trade,” and “British Industry and the Triangular Trade” which – while both using the phrase “triangular trade” – explore much more expansive connections.³⁴ The intricacies of Williams work – particularly around the link between enslaved labour and the Industrial Revolution and whether slavery had become an economic impediment at the time of abolition – have been, and continue to be, both supported and critiqued by various historians.³⁵ While it has been critiqued as a polemic piece, his work remains foundational for considering the large scale importance of enslaved labour in the Caribbean to British commerce.

Focusing on British involvement in enslavement-associated commerce, Williams observed that in addition to shipbuilders, the trading ships required ropes, candles and crews and carried manufactured goods from throughout Britain, including metal wares and textiles.³⁶ Ships also returned with cotton, for industry, and consumer goods that were enjoyed across the nation such as sugar, rum, tobacco and mahogany. These imported goods were all cultivated by enslaved labour and met increasing demand. According to B.R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane’s statistics, throughout the 1700s sugar was consistently the most significant import into Britain in terms of value until it was surpassed in value by cotton in the 1800s.³⁷ Alongside these physical imports and exports,

connected industries in banking and insurance developed.³⁸ In 2018, Klas Rönnbäck argued that while the “Triangular Trade” accounted for around 5 percent of British GDP, by the end of the eighteenth century, the wider “American plantation complex” and “dependent industries” accounted for an estimated 11 percent of British GDP.³⁹ The term enslavement-associated commerce alludes to this wider portion of estimated involvement within Britain.

While Williams focused on Britain and the Caribbean, American scholars – including Ronald Bailey, Sven Beckert and Edward E. Baptist – have highlighted the connection between slavery and the development of capitalism within the USA.⁴⁰ Though this work has been accused of being oddly disconnected from, and twisting, the British-focused work of Williams, they are “parallel debate[s] about slavery and economic development.”⁴¹ Both interlink with the work of Kenneth Pomeranz, who stresses that it was “abolishing the land constraint” – through the colonisation of the Americas and the subsequent introduction of slavery to provide the labour force, which in turn required supplying – that allowed Western Europe to boom into the capitalist modern economy we see today.⁴² As Beckert writes, “slavery, colonialism, and forced labour, among other forms of violence, were not aberrations in the history of capitalism, but were at its very core.”⁴³ This appeal draws attention to the importance of the transatlantic slave trade, as a horrific underpinning factor in early global capitalism, to highlight that its importance is understated where the narrative is overly simplified to an isolated triangle. Complicating the triangles will visually embed enslaved labour within a more expansive connected trade network, that made the trade in human beings financially worthwhile for numerous groups across the Atlantic.

A range of other work are pulled together here to encourage exploration of wider geographies, beginning with the mainland colonies in the North Atlantic. Pomeranz argues that, compared to other European nations, Britain benefited through a triangular trade of supply whereby it provided manufactures to the North American colonies, which in turn supplied food for the enslaved labourers in the Caribbean, who produced crops, particularly sugar.⁴⁴ This was yet another triangular trade. Pellizzari similarly recently argued that trade “between North America and the Caribbean was crucial to the economic growth of the early modern British empire.”⁴⁵ Historians have noted that the North American colonists used their trades with the Caribbean, Africa and Southern Europe, to pay financial deficits to Britain.⁴⁶ Further, Knick Harley has controversially argued, reflecting on Williams’ work, that while the “Atlantic economy” was important for the growth of the eighteenth century British economy, this was not because of the Caribbean sugar colonies but rather because of trade with the colonies in mainland North America.⁴⁷ All of this indicates that in an accurate depiction of enslavement-associated commerce North America, where enslaved labourers also worked, should not be ignored.

An important element of trade between the Americas and Britain was the prevalence of bilateral – rather than triangular – trades. Historians have highlighted that in both Liverpool and Bristol, alongside those involved in slaving voyages, were traders whose voyages did not visit Africa, but thrived off enslaved labour nonetheless. In his discussion of Bristol, Kenneth Morgan states that “bilateral trading vessels [...] took the lion’s share of return cargoes in tropical produce” in the late eighteenth century, while slaving vessels returned with bills of exchange as remittance.⁴⁸ In her discussion of Liverpool, Sheryllyne Haggerty likewise highlights the “propensity of bilateral” trade.⁴⁹ In his work on mahogany –

which was harvested by enslaved labourers – Adam Bowett also stresses that “the bulk of mahogany reaching these shores did so on vessels concerned only in the two-way trade.”⁵⁰ Bilateral trade was prominent because those trading vessels could time their arrival to coincide with the harvesting of sugar at the beginning of the year, and they benefited from the protection of sailing in fleets and convoys during wartime.⁵¹ In addition to “timing and space,” the triangular and bilateral “symbiotic trades made perfect sense” because “it would have proved impossible for food to be delivered to the West Indies on the same vessels as those delivering slaves.”⁵² The slaving vessels could not carry enough to meet the necessary volume required to supply food for the plantation population, and, moreover, they were too unhygienic to carry foodstuffs. Understanding the importance of bilateral trade further highlights the horror of the slave trade itself. Slaving ships were so gruesome that, as abolitionists historically evoked, they were followed by sharks. Marcus Rediker takes that specific element of the trade in enslaved people to highlight that “we must remember that extraordinary violence has always been central to the making of modern capitalism.”⁵³

This article also looks geographically beyond the North Atlantic Ocean to demonstrate that enslavement-associated commerce should be embedded within a narrative of global trade. It looks towards Brazil and Asia, as well as inland away from the oceans. Further, another approach which has been neglected is to study connections to the empire in India and the use of Indian textiles to purchase enslaved people in Africa. These connections reveal that it is “myopic” – as Giorgio Riello argues – to view Atlantic and Asian trade as separate.⁵⁴ When compiled together, these arguments point to a far more complex, interconnected network of enslavement-associated commerce than that suggested by the basic triangles. The complexity in turn helps explain why the slave trade, as a key supplier within global commerce, existed and persisted. Further details of that complexity will be explored in the following sections.

Enslavement-associated commerce in the North Atlantic

It has become clear that North Atlantic trade was “far more complex and interdependent” than the simple triangular image suggests.⁵⁵ Enslavement-associated commerce instead involved various overlapping bilateral and multi-faceted trades. Morgan’s diagram of “Shipping routes in the Atlantic Ocean, c. 1750” (Figure 2), is very useful as a visual depiction of the more complex narrative of Atlantic trade formed by recent historiography.⁵⁶ Morgan’s diagram includes twenty labels indicating traded commodities; three of which are labelled “slaves” while two further arrows, labelled “European products” and “Rum,” are also directed to the West African coast. Within his diagram both the British and North American triangles can be seen. However, the remaining enslavement-associated commerce depicted is less immediately explicit in its connection to enslavement. Morgan’s diagram reflects Ogborn’s observation that, “considering all the movements of goods and people in the Atlantic world means that the basic triangle soon becomes overlain by a more complex pattern of exchanges.”⁵⁷

One museum stands as an exception to the usual display of triangles discussed above, as it does currently feature a visual diagram that represents some, though not all, of the complexities depicted by Morgan. The National Maritime Museum (NMM), in Greenwich, opened an *Atlantic Worlds* gallery in 2007 to explore the “interrelationship, connections

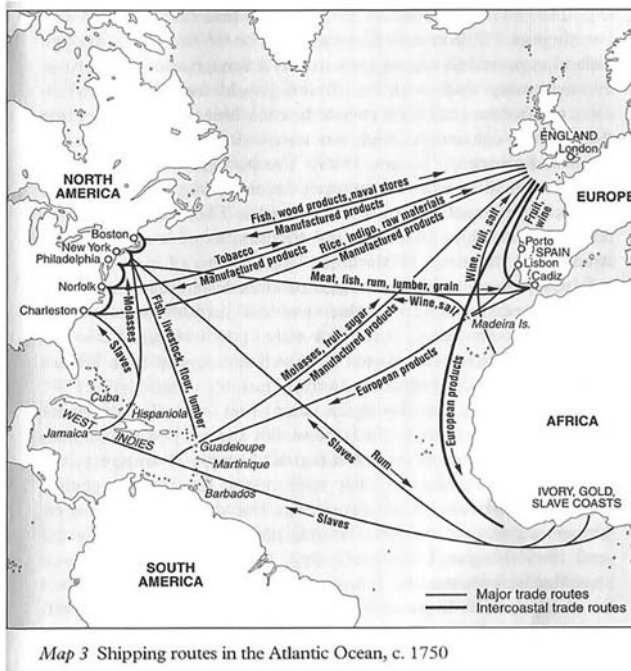


Figure 2. “Shipping routes in the Atlantic Ocean, c. 1750” from Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy 1660–1800*. Courtesy of Cambridge University Press.

and exchanges created between Britain, Africa and the Americas between 1600–1850.⁵⁸ Transatlantic slavery is one of the subjects covered within the gallery. Within the space is a diagram of the “Atlantic Trade System, 1768–1872” (Figure 3). Disappointingly, unlike the majority of triangles discussed here, this more complex diagram is set into a table rather



Figure 3. “Atlantic Trade System, 1768–72” diagram at the National Maritime Museum. Photo taken by author (April 2019). Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum.

than being displayed prominently on a wall. Nevertheless, it provides a more detailed visual explanation of trade within the North Atlantic.

Rather than visually simplifying hundreds of years of history the NMM depicts a specific moment in time: 1768–1772. These are years, as Morgan has noted, for which “fairly full data” is available.⁵⁹ Furthermore, during this period the North American colonies were still part of the British Empire. The diagram focuses on the North Atlantic, with prevailing winds and currents marked beside bold, dark, labelled arrows highlighting what was traded (Figure 4). Amongst the eleven labelled arrows, visitors may still discern a triangle with “manufactured goods” going to Africa and “enslaved people” heading to the Americas, and more particularly the Caribbean. The North American triangular trade is not depicted. Nevertheless, eight of the arrows are presented in pairs to represent bilateral trade, largely between the Americas and Europe, and nine indicate trade that did not directly include Africa.

Importantly, trade between the Caribbean and Britain – which is usually depicted as a one directional final leg of the triangular trade – is depicted as one of several bilateral trades at the NMM. Similarly to Morgan, the museum shows that “manufactured goods” were supplied to the Caribbean while “sugar” returned. Morgan also includes molasses and fruit alongside sugar. The NMM’s diagram also highlights that there was bilateral trade between North America and Britain. The museum provides just one pair of arrows to depict bilateral trade with Britain, while Morgan uses three but again, they provide the same message that raw materials – “tobacco, rice and indigo” at the NMM – were shipped to Britain and manufactured products were returned. As noted, bilateral



Figure 4. Close up of the “Atlantic Trade System, 1768–72” diagram at the National Maritime Museum. Photo taken by author (April 2019). Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum.

trade between Britain and the Americas – as depicted by Morgan and at the NMM – was a core element of enslavement-associated commerce. Supplies were taken to the colonies, including clothing and metal wares, and produce from plantations was returned. In the 1700s the North American colonies imported more supplies, by value, from Britain than they exported back, but this is erased in a triangle where an arrow points only from the Americas to Britain.⁶⁰

It should be recognised that there are brief acknowledgements of the bilateral trade between Britain and the Americas at other English museum sites, though not as part of large eye-catching installations. Upstairs at the Lancaster Maritime Museum, within a room on “Lancaster and the Slave Trade,” a small diagram of Atlantic trade does note bilateral trade, between Britain and the Caribbean, which is omitted elsewhere in the site’s depictions of triangles.⁶¹ At the Museum of London Docklands, the large simple triangle displayed is also challenged by a “Rates of freight to the West Indies” excerpt which is displayed beneath it. An accompanying label explains that: “Almost everything that was needed for the plantation had to be imported from Britain.”⁶² However, this – unlike the large diagram – may be missed if visitors are grazing, and, even if the visitors do read this label, they may understandably assume that all plantation supplies were first taken to Africa and then transported with the enslaved Africans, because that is what the triangle suggests.

Opposite the “Triangle Trade” installation at the Museum of London Docklands, another display refers to the West India Docks – on which the museum now sits – as “the physical manifestation of London’s corner of the Triangle Trade.”⁶³ However, it continues to elaborate that while only “22 known slave trading ships” used the dock between 1802 and 1807, the “new dock company was granted a monopoly on all West India products shipped into London.”⁶⁴ While it is not made explicit within this display, bilateral trade contributed significantly to the volume of those West India products, particularly after the abolition of the transatlantic trade in enslaved people in 1807, just five years after the Docks opened. This is reflected in that, rather than 1807 ending trade from the West Indies, in the years immediately thereafter, there was an excess supply of sugar flooding into the West India Docks.⁶⁵ The sugar was still cultivated by enslaved labourers.

The final aspect of the NMM “Atlantic Trade System” diagram discussed here does not appear within other visual depictions of the slave trade triangle at English museums. Unlike the others, the NMM diagram highlights bilateral trade between the Caribbean and North America, with “rum and sugar” being shipped North and “rice, flour, grain, fish and timber” being delivered to the plantations in the important supply trade. In Morgan’s diagram the lines are slightly split, and “livestock” is listed as a supplied item, while “molasses” is listed as the return product. Broadly though, these are depicting the same bilateral trade that is usually ignored in diagrams at English museums, and the NMM offers a rare example of visual acknowledgement of North Atlantic bilateral trade.

Despite the importance of the mainland North American colonies, this trade is usually ignored in English triangles. Ira Berlin differentiated between “slave societies,” such as those with plantations in the Caribbean or US South, and “societies with slaves.”⁶⁶ However, that divide has been challenged by numerous scholars due to the importance of trade with the Caribbean for the US states in the North, and particularly New England.⁶⁷

As Wendy Warren writes “slavery was only ‘marginal to commerce’ [...] if the region [of New England] is examined in isolation.”⁶⁸ Therefore, vision beyond an imagined isolated triangle is essential.

Particularly before American independence, the mainland North American colonies – from Newfoundland in modern day Canada to the Carolinas – played a key role in the supply of provisions to Caribbean plantations.⁶⁹ This supply chain also continued after independence, as merchants in the Caribbean continued to use suppliers they had previously used and trusted.⁷⁰ North America also provided another market for products from the plantations, particularly molasses which was key to their own triangular trade. As noted above, the NMM depicts a moment in time (1768–1772) when the North American colonies were part of the British Empire, and this supply line is part of British history.

However, at the NMM while the trade of rum and sugar to North America is highlighted, during a period of colonial rule, the trade in enslaved people is not. The recently introduced “Intra-American” database, which is accessible in addition to the Trans-Atlantic database by *Slave Voyages*, notes that there were over 11,000 intra-American voyages between 1550 and 1841, including hundreds after 1807.⁷¹ This was Atlantic slave trading wherein the enslaved people were not taken from Africa, but rather from other areas of the Americas. In his illustration, Morgan highlights that enslaved people were taken both directly to North America from Africa, but also to the North from the Caribbean. Morgan’s diagram also features an unlabelled line to demonstrate intra-American trade up the North American coast. This is a vital omission at the NMM where the destination of the enslaved people is unclear as the labelled arrow ends before the Caribbean. While the “Atlantic trade system” diagram offers complications beyond the simple triangles, it could be further developed.

Wider neglected geographies

The NMM’s failure to mark the various destinations of enslaved people is common at several English sites, and this leads us towards the geographically focused critiques. The English museums discussed here largely illustrate a limited narrative of the slave trade that centres on the British Atlantic, and in particular the British Caribbean. The triangles preferred destination of the Caribbean reflect that the exhibits, in which they are situated, more broadly overwhelmingly focus on British plantation ownership in the West Indies. This focus may be the result of the choice to consult with members of the British African-Caribbean community before 2007, however researchers found that those consulted – who were limited in number – often “did not feel listened to” as the museums had pre-determined aims and content for the exhibitions.⁷² Instead this may suggest that museums had already decided to perpetuate the established slave trade triangle. The focus on the British Caribbean may also therefore reflect the aforementioned historical divide between histories of slavery in the USA and the former British Caribbean, which interlink with different national narratives.

The failure to clearly illustrate where enslaved people were taken to and labouring, is visible within the simple triangle at the Museum of London Docklands, where the sole destination of the arrow from Africa is the Caribbean. At Wilberforce House Museum the arrow goes over the historical colony of British Guiana in northern South America – where the labelled dot marking “enslaved Africans” falls – but again the arrow appears to terminate

in the Caribbean (Figure 5). While the arrow from Britain does split to suggest three destinations in West Africa, there is only one destination indicated in the Americas – “The Caribbean Islands.” At the M Shed in Bristol, there is also a small second arrow suggesting that some enslaved people were delivered to the area around Florida, but the return trade in the triangle appears to be originating from the Caribbean. Acknowledgement of the transportation of enslaved people to the North American continent is rare.

However, if enslavement-associated commerce, that relied on enslaved labour, is being highlighted then it must be made visually clear where enslaved labourers were transported to and working. Without this, visitors can only imply that products such as tobacco, rice and indigo – that were traded from North America for manufactured goods from Britain – were cultivated by enslaved labour. Enslavement was not confined to the Caribbean, though these diagrams visually suggest this. Within the British Empire alone slavery existed in all the North American colonies until American Independence.

Furthermore, enslavement and British involvement in enslavement-associated commerce was not restricted to the former British colonies in the Caribbean and North America. While overseas trade operated under Navigation Acts which “provided a large protected market for British manufactures,” trade did not take place solely within that sphere for the British, and other nations were involved in enslavement-associated commerce.⁷³ The NMM and International Slavery Museum (ISM) in Liverpool offer some indications of these practices. The NMM’s “Atlantic Trade System” diagram includes bilateral trade between North America and the Iberian Peninsula. They acknowledge that products such as meat, fish, flour and grain were supplied to Iberia in exchange for wine and salt, rather than other manufactured products. The interactive screens at the ISM acknowledge more widespread international involvement in direct slaving voyages by highlighting slave trading ports in Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Cuba and the USA. Elsewhere there is no visual acknowledgement in the triangles that Brazil for example was the intended destination for over five million enslaved Africans, some two million more than the British Caribbean.⁷⁴ None of the static diagrams note



Figure 5. Close up of “The Triangular Trade” diagram at Wilberforce House Museum. Photo taken by author (April 2019). Courtesy of Hull Culture and Leisure Ltd.

the transportation of enslaved people into the South Atlantic. Instead, all the previously discussed triangles, including the previous NMM “Atlantic Trade System” diagram, focus on the North Atlantic. However, enslavement-associated commerce was far more complex, reaching beyond the complex trade networks in the British North Atlantic, beyond the Atlantic Ocean, and inland away from the oceans altogether.

These neglected geographies also highlight that focusing on the British North Atlantic limits the chronological narrative, even if it is not explicitly stated as it is at the NMM; as it ignores ongoing trade with slaving societies including Brazil and within the South Atlantic. While slavery was abolished in the British Caribbean colonies in the 1830s, “slave societies” continued to contribute to British imports throughout the mid-nineteenth century, during the period Dale Tomich and Michael Zeuske have termed “second slavery.”⁷⁵ There was a “hidden Atlantic” – as Zeuske phrases it – after slave trading was illegalised, during a “transitional phase” from legally condoned slavery to more fluid forms of slavery that continue to the present day.⁷⁶ During this period, slavery was not abolished in the Southern USA until 1865, following the American Civil War, and not until 1880 in Cuba and 1888 in Brazil. In the interim, the USA dominated raw cotton supply in the nineteenth century, Cuba – which also provided large amounts of mahogany – became the “world’s leading sugar producer,” while “Brazil emerged as the world’s dominant producer [of coffee].”⁷⁷ Britain continued to trade with these countries after British abolition, and this continued business led Williams to conclude that British capitalists’ attitudes to slavery were “relative not absolute.”⁷⁸ Building on Williams, Joseph Inikori has more recently argued that “African slavery in Spanish America, Brazil, the United States, and the non-British Caribbean all played very important roles in the development process in England,” reinforcing the point that the Atlantic was an “interdependent economic region.”⁷⁹ Consequently, in her 2007 book, *After Abolition*, Marika Sherwood describes her “anger and frustration with historians and nationalist propagandists” for ignoring this continued trade with the USA, Cuba and Brazil.⁸⁰

The chronological narrowing can be seen in the exhibits more broadly and is reinforced by the triangles focusing on the British Caribbean. This reflects that the ISM, NMM, Museum of London Docklands and Wilberforce House Museum all opened, or reopened, their slavery galleries for the bicentenary and that in that climate, they failed to strongly break free of the abolition framework chronologically, beyond very brief acknowledgement of the English cotton industry’s continued reliance on enslaved labour. Emma Waterton concludes that by focusing on the 1807 Act other narratives were “excluded, overwritten and ultimately rejected.”⁸¹ Britain’s continued connections to enslaved labour are one example.

The triangles, which show enslaved people as being delivered to broadly the Caribbean, may generously be interpreted as including Cuba within their scope, even though the island is never labelled. However, they do not encourage any reflection on the importance of the US South or Brazil. While elsewhere in the exhibits that house these triangles, the US South and its cotton supply receive occasional brief mentions, as Sherwood has pointed out, Brazil – with its “slave-dependent economy” – does not commonly feature “in British historical imagination or interest,” or its museum displays.⁸² At the ISM it is noted as a destination for enslaved people but no diagram discusses that Brazil supplied goods, including cotton, coffee and sugar, to Britain. In the 1830s and 1840s, following Brazilian independence from Portugal in the 1820s, Brazil accounted

“for between a third and a half of the trade” between Britain and all of Central and South America.⁸³ In addition to imports, British manufacturers also continued to export to these societies. For example, Derbyshire based George Fletcher and Co. sent sugar processing machinery to Brazil and Cuba in the 1860s, before either country had abolished slavery.⁸⁴ None of this is alluded to in the current North Atlantic triangles.

To further reinforce the arguments that Britain took a “relative” approach to enslavement, Britain did not abolish slavery in the territories of the East India Company in the 1833 Abolition Act.⁸⁵ Furthermore, as Morgan highlights, “it was not until the 1920s that slavery ended in British-held parts of Nepal and Burma.”⁸⁶ This look eastwards moves us towards the next geography which is neglected within the current triangles.

Enslavement-associated commerce should not only be confined to the Atlantic sphere, but rather can be embedded within a narrative of global trade. In particular, further attention should be paid to Asia since “the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean trades were not separate.”⁸⁷ On the African coast textiles were often traded for enslaved people, and the “East India textile component of the trade” was “so important.”⁸⁸ The Portuguese were trading Indian cottons in Africa from the 1580s.⁸⁹ The Indian cottons were also used by English traders prior to the development of Britain’s own industrial cotton industry, through import substitution industrialisation.⁹⁰ England, like other European nations, prohibited the import and wearing of Asian textiles in the Calico Acts (1702 and 1721), which “ended up being a protectionist measure that facilitated processes of substitution.”⁹¹ Nevertheless, outside of England itself, “in the 1740s, at the peak of their popularity, Asian cottons accounted for up to 60 percent of all textiles exported to Africa.”⁹²

On the family level, Chris Jeppesen has also drawn attention to “the intricate networks woven by individuals, families and firms between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds,” including those involved in both plantation ownership and the East India Company.⁹³ The English East India Company “dominated the intercontinental side of operations [of trade from Asia], with cottons becoming a staple product for European markets and for consumers in the Americas and in West Africa.”⁹⁴ Jeppesen vitally links the “process of selective remembering” of the empire to the “impression of two separate empires, one in North America and another in Asia.”⁹⁵ Challenging this division, challenges the previous erasure. As Sean Kelley argues, there is a need for “historians of the transatlantic slave trade to pay much more attention to Asia,” which “will force historians beyond the familiar bounds of Atlantic history and in the direction of a truly global account of the slave trade.”⁹⁶ While by the late twentieth century intercontinental Atlantic history had “become fashionable,” historians are now looking beyond the Atlantic.⁹⁷ Within this, enslavement-associated commerce is seen as part of an “interconnected, global project.”⁹⁸

On this issue, the NMM again provides an interesting example of current practice, in the *Tudor and Stuart Seafarers* gallery which opened in September 2018. In the new gallery, there is a map of “Important Sea Trade Routes 1500–1700” (Figure 6). In this diagram, Britain remains the focus, with the majority of arrows pointing to or from the island, and an Atlantic triangle is visible. The movement of enslaved people is marked by a labelled orange line from Africa, which splits to more accurately identify destinations in northern South America, the Caribbean and North America, unlike in their *Atlantic Worlds* gallery. The triangle is completed with green lines, marking imports including sugar and tobacco, and a blue line to Africa which highlights the export of woollen

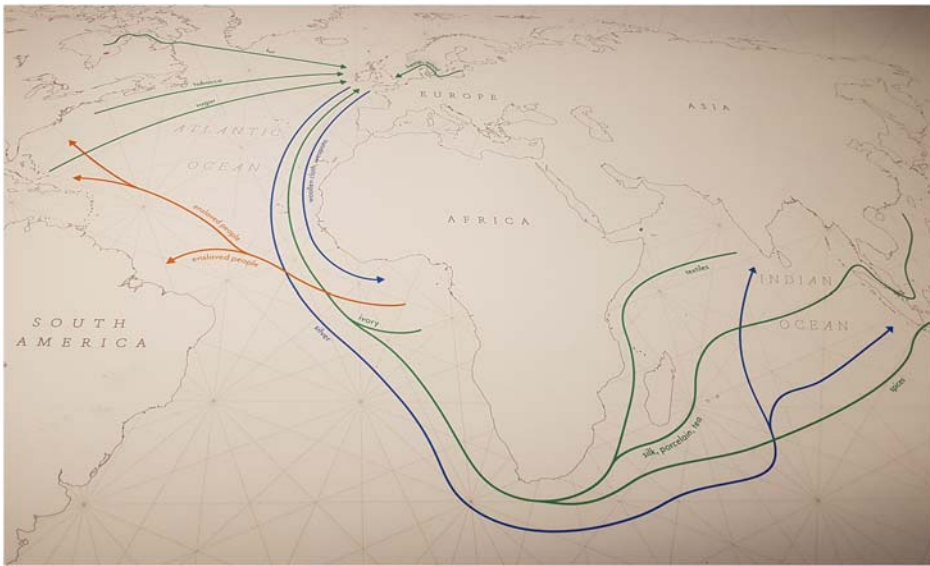


Figure 6. “Important Sea Trade Routes 1500–1700” diagram at the National Maritime Museum. Photo taken by author (April 2019). Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum.

cloth and weapons. Further green lines note that fur was imported from North America, hemp and wood from Northern Europe and ivory from Africa alongside this. The brief link to Baltic trade illustrates Haggerty’s claim that “the importance of the slave trade can be fully understood only as a component of a wider system of trading activity linking the continental colonies (later the US), to the trades with the Baltic and the Mediterranean.”⁹⁹ Exploration of connections to Mediterranean trade are yet to be visualised.

The above diagram also goes further and connects Atlantic trade to trade with Asia. The new gallery is not dedicated to slavery, and no diagram within the 2007 slavery focused exhibits does this. In this new “Important Sea Trade Routes” diagram a blue line notes the exportation of silver eastwards, while green lines highlight that silk, textiles, tea, porcelain and spices were being imported from India and China in particular. There is, however, no trade indicated between Asia and West Africa, or anywhere but Britain, despite the aforementioned importance of Indian textiles. However, Riello notes that “no Indian or Asia trader was directly trading” in West Africa, and instead they were involved in “indirect trade to the Atlantic, either through Europe or through a series of intermediaries in East and North Africa.”¹⁰⁰ For example by the 1790s “a quarter of all cottons imported [by the English East India Company] from India into the port of London found their way to African consumers” – reflecting the scale of this trade.¹⁰¹ While it is not inaccurate to display Britain as an intermediary for those textiles, visitors may assume they are solely British textiles being exported. Riello also highlights that vast amounts of cotton goods were provided to plantations in the Caribbean and South America, but that again, to complicate the visual ease of these diagrams, many cottons were re-exported from Europe.¹⁰² This important narrative is not visually represented, if discussed at all, at sites dedicated to the transatlantic slave trade and slavery.

Another neglected geography within the triangle diagrams is the African continent. There is no visualisation of the capture, trade and journeys of enslaved people towards the West African coast before they were sold to the European traders. Visitors are not shown that those enslaved and supplied to the Americas originated from a broad geographic region. Thomas and Bean argue that the majority “originated in a belt approximately two hundred miles deep along the west coast of Africa.”¹⁰³ Sitwell has also more recently acknowledged that “outside West Africa, vast regions of West Central and Central Africa exported millions of slaves into the transatlantic slave trade.”¹⁰⁴ Ogborn also offers a map of the complex trans-Saharan trade routes.¹⁰⁵ While slavery already existed within the African continent, some states and individuals became “fishers of men,” who were provided with an “intensified economic incentive” by increasing European demand.¹⁰⁶ These internal journeys are not depicted within the current triangles which create an illusion that those enslaved all originated from the western coastal region or that they were captured by Europeans. Possibly, this history is deliberately neglected to avoid the divisive and evasive discussions over the involvement of various African states in transatlantic slavery. This is acknowledged as the case at the ISM, where Munroe has highlighted that “the curators of the ISM were aware of the evasive, silencing tactic of the ‘Africans sold their own’ argument.”¹⁰⁷ There is usually at least some acknowledgment of different African ethnicities, cultures and societies within the broader exhibits. In the triangles, however, the lack of representation of activity within the African continent may reinforce a homogeneous view of Africa and African people that underpinned the practice of enslavement.

More broadly, the triangles neglect inland activity on all the continents included in enslavement-associated commerce. This is the final neglected geography that will be discussed. The oceans dominate these diagrams and visually promote the “maritimization” of slavery. This term is taken from John Beech who identified that “maritimization” is problematic because “it effectively defines slavery as essentially the slave *trade*” and “it defines slavery as a *maritime* activity.”¹⁰⁸ Moody has challenged whether Beech’s *maritimization* works on a port city level.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in her recent book on Liverpool she is repeatedly critical that “the familiar image of the ‘triangular’ trade” was drawn “across the ocean” to “point the triangle of slave trading away from the city.”¹¹⁰ Consequently, Moody identifies “trading triangles” as one of mechanisms through which forgetting is achieved, as they draw attention to and across the ocean.¹¹¹ While maritime trade played an important role, the “Atlantic World” is not solely the Atlantic Ocean, but rather it contained “disparate geographies” on the land masses the ocean touched.¹¹² In Britain, as an island, the ocean has played a pivotal role in national history, but that history has not taken place entirely at sea or in the port cities. The English consumers and producers interwoven with enslavement-associated commerce, often lived many miles from the ports. The web of commerce similarly reached inland on other continents, and the enslaved labour that fuelled the network took place on land.

Yet the diagrams fail to communicate that enslavement-associated commerce involved inland activity. Elsewhere in the exhibits discussed in this article, there is some acknowledgement of associated inland trades in Britain, such as those raised by Williams, including textile manufacturing and banking. However, the information on the breadth of on land enslavement-associated commerce is left to smaller text which may be by-passed by visitors, unlike the simple eye-catching triangles which focus the visitors onto maritime

trade. The triangles also further visually reinforce this “maritimization” because the Atlantic Ocean dominates the image due to its comparative size.

Concluding comments and recommendations

This article has demonstrated that while the simple slave trade triangle diagrams can be powerful, their prevalence in museums is problematic because they suggest a limited narrative and consequently understate the importance of enslaved labour to global commerce. These simple diagrams are particularly problematic because, while visitors are unlikely to study every detail included in the exhibits, they are large eye-catching pieces. Through compiling historians’ work, it has highlighted that enslavement-associated commerce in the North Atlantic was far more complex than a simple triangle, and that it should be embedded in a more expansive geographic narrative.

Perhaps understandably English museums focus on British trade, particularly with British colonies in the North Atlantic, but by failing to embed this within the broader, more accurate, narrative of expansive enslavement-associated commerce they limit understanding of the importance of enslaved labour to British, and global, history. Highlighting only the triangle narrows the narrative onto those directly involved in slavery within the British Atlantic. Meanwhile these depictions by-pass other interwoven maritime merchants and connected land-based industries. Rejecting the simplicity of the triangle is interwoven with acknowledging that transatlantic slavery was not solely the affair of the thousands of owners and managers of plantations, or the owners and captains of the slaving voyages. Instead, more complex diagrams promote understanding that enslaved labour was an integral part of the global economy, particularly in the 1700s. This more expansive viewpoint helps promote understanding of why the transportation of human beings for enslaved labour was perceived as being financially worthwhile for various groups.

When designing future diagrams of the North Atlantic, the importance of bilateral trade and associated trades that did not include the transportation of human beings, should be included. Whilst depicting the movement of enslaved people, the destinations suggested by the diagrams should be carefully considered, as should marking where enslaved labourers were working across the Americas. When considering visual depictions of the scale and geographies of the transportation of enslaved people specifically from Africa to the Americas, further inspiration can be found in Eltis and Richardson’s *Atlas for the Transatlantic Slave Trade*.¹¹³ The *Atlas* visualises the data provided on the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, “as it existed in January 2008.”¹¹⁴ Neither of these tools were easily available to those planning for the previous bicentenary and should be invaluable for the next. Along with marking where enslaved labourers were working, all the connected traded products could also be visually marked. Ideally installations should also look beyond the British Atlantic, particularly to include Brazil, Africa and Asia, to provide the most expansive explanation of the value of enslaved labour possible.

As has been highlighted, two current more complex exhibit examples are provided at the National Maritime Museum, though neither diagram includes all aspects discussed in this article and the two diagrams feature in separate galleries. The International Slavery Museum also acknowledges more widespread international involvement in the trade of human beings over the oceans within their interactive screens. These challenge the

static illusion created by the other diagrams by including literal motion. Installations such as these are not only more engaging, but they provide a better impression of physical movement and could be replicated.

An ideal installation would not only include illustrated movement across the global oceans, but it would also include connected inland trade; as well as slavery-associated wealth such as that highlighted by the *Legacies of British-Slave Ownership* database – which has also been developed since 2007.¹¹⁵ To facilitate this a larger space would be required than is presently used for the triangular diagrams. This more complex installation could take the form of a large film which introduces an exhibit, or a similarly compulsory immersive room which uses the floor, walls and ceiling to depict this complex trade. Due to common space restrictions, acknowledgement of inland trade may include secondary diagrams, but the size and placement in comparison to a diagram showing ocean-based activity should be deeply considered so as to not perpetuate the “maritimization” of slavery.

I have drawn together many references for consideration and inspiration for future exhibit curators, and here I have offered some recommendations. Visitor surveys would also help confirm how visitors interpret the current triangles, and museums should work with public pilot groups to explore their understanding and develop future installations. Whatever different choices may be made, it is hoped that the powerful but problematic simple slave trade triangle diagrams will be superseded by diagrams which visually illuminate the importance of enslaved labour to early global capitalism within enslavement-associated commerce.

Notes

1. Huxtable et al., *Interim Report on the Connections*; Wills and Dresser, *The Transatlantic Slave Economy*.
2. Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 132.
3. See: Antislavery Usable Past.
4. For examples of academic responses to the bicentenary see: *Slavery and Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 161–338; *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 122–214; Hamilton, “Representing Slavery”; Cubitt, “Museums and Slavery in Britain.”
5. Rice and Kardux, “Confronting the Ghostly Legacies”; Dresser and Hann, *Slavery and the British Country House*.
6. Legacies of British Slave-ownership; Hall et al., *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership*.
7. Donington, Hanley, and Moody, eds. *Britain’s History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery*.
8. Otele, “History of Slavery”; Otele, “The Guerrilla Arts.”
9. Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 53–54, 70–87.
10. Moody, *The Persistence of Memory*, 11.
11. Ostrander, “Triangular Trade Myth,” 642.
12. Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 9.
13. Ogborn, *Britain and the World*, 116.
14. *Ibid.*
15. McManus, “Oh, Yes, They Do,” 174.
16. Bennett, “Object Label Quality,” 42.
17. Serrell, “Paying Attention,” 117.
18. *Ibid.*, 118–120.
19. V&A, “Gallery Text,” 13.
20. Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, 128–129.
21. Higman, *Writing West Indian Histories*, 188–191.
22. *Ibid.*, 188.

23. Ibid.
24. For discussion of New England's triangle see: Ostrander, "Triangular Trade Myth"; Alderman, *Rum, Slaves and Molasses*; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*.
25. Higman, *Writing West Indian Histories*, 189.
26. Ibid., 188.
27. Ibid., 189.
28. Ibid., 190.
29. Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Estimates.
30. "Transatlantic/Atlantic economy" is used in Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 12, and Haggerty, "Liverpool," 18; "Transatlantic Slave Economy" is used in Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism*, 358, and Wills and Dresser, *The Transatlantic Slave Economy*.
31. Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 2.
32. Bailey, "The Slave(ry) Trade," 373.
33. Rice, "Exploring Inside the Invisible," 24.
34. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 51–84, 98–107.
35. For examples of discussion of Williams see: Drescher, *Econocide*; Solow and Engerman, eds., *The Legacy of Eric Williams*; Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*; Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*; Drescher, "Antislavery Debates"; Neptune "Throwin' Scholarly Shade".
36. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 51–84.
37. "Overseas Trade 4: Official Values of Principal Imports – England & Wales 1700–1791, Great Britain 1792–1829 and United Kingdom 1826–1856" and "Textiles 3: Raw Cotton Imports in Total and from the U.S.A., and Re-exports – United Kingdom 1815–1938," in Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 180–181, 285–292.
38. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 51–84.
39. Rönnbäck, "Economic importance," 327.
40. For examples of the USA focused work on slavery and capitalism see: Bailey, "The Slave(ry) Trade"; Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*; Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told*; Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery*.
41. Wright, "Slavery and Anglo-American Capitalism," 353; Neptune "Throwin' Scholarly Shade."
42. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, 264–297.
43. Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 441.
44. Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence*, 267.
45. Pellizzari, "Supplying Slavery," 531.
46. Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 13–21; Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 12; Haggerty, "Liverpool," 18.
47. Harley, "British Atlantic Economy."
48. Morgan, "Remittance Procedures," 722.
49. Haggerty, "Liverpool," 26.
50. Bowett, "The English Mahogany Trade," 197.
51. Morgan, "Remittance Procedures," 722.
52. Haggerty, "Liverpool," 26.
53. Rediker, "History from Below," 285–286.
54. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 159.
55. Haggerty, "Liverpool," 19.
56. "Shipping routes in the Atlantic Ocean, c. 1750" in Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 13.
57. Ogborn, *Britain and the World*, 116.
58. Royal Museums Greenwich press release. 21 September 2007. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/work-services/news-press/press-release/national-maritime-museum-launches-new-'atlantic-worlds'>.
59. Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 12.
60. Haggerty, "Liverpool," 18.
61. Panel on "Lancaster and the Slave Trade," within the exhibition room on "Lancaster and the Slave Trade" (Lancaster Maritime Museum, Lancaster. Viewed by author July 2019).

62. Label for "Rates of freight to the West Indies, 1803" book. Within the display on "Triangle Trade." Within the "London, sugar & slavery" gallery (Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, London. Viewed by author April 2019).
63. Display on "West India Docks." Within the "London, sugar & slavery" gallery (Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, London. Viewed by author April 2019).
64. Ibid.
65. Ryden, "Sugar, Spirits and Fodder."
66. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 8.
67. For challenges to Berlin's division see: Warren, *New England Bound*, 51; Pellizzari, "Supplying Slavery," 531.
68. Warren, *New England Bound*, 51.
69. Pellizzari, "Supplying Slavery," 528.
70. Haggerty, 'Merely for Money?', 213–214.
71. Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Estimates.
72. Smith and Fouseki, "The Role of Museums," 105; Fouseki, "Community Voices."
73. Morgan, *Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, 13.
74. Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Estimates.
75. Tomich and Zeuske, "Introduction, the Second Slavery," 92.
76. Fisher-Hornung, "The hidden Atlantic."
77. Tomich and Zeuske, "Introduction, the Second Slavery," 92.
78. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 169.
79. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, 118.
80. Sherwood, *After Abolition*, 175.
81. Waterton, "Humiliated Silence," 132.
82. Sherwood, *After Abolition*, 83.
83. Platt, *Latin America*, 29.
84. Turton and Moss, *The Bitter with the Sweet*, 11.
85. Slavery in India was "delegalised" by the British Government in 1843, but the Act did not emancipate enslaved people. Slave-holding became an illegal offence in India in 1860. For further details see: Major, *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1771–1843*.
86. Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire*, 203.
87. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 148.
88. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 88–89.
89. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 137.
90. For discussion of import substitution industrialisation and cotton see: Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution*, 10, 365; Riello, "The Globalisation of Cotton Textiles," 274.
91. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 118–124.
92. Ibid., 139.
93. Jeppesen, "East Meets West," 103.
94. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 92.
95. Jeppesen, "East Meets West," 105.
96. Kelley, "New World Slave Traders," 333.
97. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 1.
98. Jeppesen, "East Meets West," 106.
99. Haggerty, "Liverpool," 29.
100. Riello, "The Globalisation of Cotton Textiles," 283.
101. Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric*, 148.
102. Ibid., 142–149.
103. Thomas and Bean, "The Fishers of Men," 901.
104. Sitwell, *Slavery and Slaving*, 52.
105. Ogborn, *Britain and the World*, 123.
106. Thomas and Bean, "The Fishers of Men," 885–914.
107. Munroe, "Negotiating Memories and Silences," 183.
108. Beech, "The Marketing of Slavery Heritage," 103.

109. Moody, "Liverpool's Local Tints."
110. Moody, *The Persistence of Memory*, 54–56, 223–226.
111. *Ibid.*, 256.
112. Carson, "When Is an Ocean Not an Ocean?," 33.
113. Eltis and Richardson, *Atlas*.
114. *Ibid.*, xxiv; *Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.
115. Legacies of British Slave-ownership.

Acknowledgements

This article was facilitated by research trips funded by the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership. I am grateful to the Wilberforce House Museum and National Maritime Museums managing companies for permission to use my photos in this article. I would also like to thank Dr Sheryllyne Haggerty and Dr Susanne Seymour for their guidance and input with this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership [grant number AH/L50385X/1].

Notes on contributor

Sophie Campbell is a PhD researcher co-supervised across the University of Nottingham's Geography, History and American Studies departments.

References

- Alderman, Clifford Lindsey. *Rum, Slaves and Molasses: The Story of New England's Triangular Trade*. Folkestone: Bailey Brothers and Swiften, 1974.
- Antislavery Usable Past: Remembering 2007. Accessed 10 November 2020. [http://www.antislavery.ac.uk/solr-search?facet=collection: "Remembering+1807"](http://www.antislavery.ac.uk/solr-search?facet=collection:Remembering+1807).
- Araujo, Ana Lucia. *Slavery in the Age of Memory: Engaging the Past*. London: Bloomsbury, 2020.
- Bailey, Ronald. "The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: The Textile Industry in New England." *Social Science History* 14, no. 3 (1990): 373–414.
- Baptist, Edward E. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2014.
- Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism*. London: Penguin, 2014.
- Beech, John G. "The Marketing of Slavery Heritage in the United Kingdom." In *Slavery, Contested Heritage and Thanatourism*, edited by Graham M.S. Dann, and A.V. Seaton, 85–105. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Bennett, Roger. "Object Label Quality and Label Readership in Small Museums." *International Journal of Arts Management* 21, no. 3 (2019): 42–56.
- Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1998.
- Bowett, Adam. "The English Mahogany Trade 1700–1793." PhD diss., Brunel University, 1996.
- Carson, James Taylor. "When Is an Ocean Not an Ocean? Geographies of the Atlantic World." *Southern Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2006): 16–45.

- Clark-Pujara, Christy. *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.
- Coughtry, Jay. *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade 1700–1807*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.
- Cubitt, Geoffrey. "Museums and Slavery in Britain: The Bicentenary of 1807." In *Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space*, edited by Ana Lucia Araujo, 159–177. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Donington, Katie, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody, eds. *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.
- Drescher, Seymour. "Antislavery Debates: Tides of Historiography in Slavery and Antislavery." *European Review* 19, no. 1 (2011): 131–148.
- Drescher, Seymour. *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977.
- Dresser, Madge, and Andrew Hann, eds. *Slavery and the British Country House*. Swindon: English Heritage, 2013.
- Eltis, David, and David Richardson. *Atlas for the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Fischer-Hornung, Dorothea. "The Hidden Atlantic: Michael Zeuske Reflects on His Recent Research." *Atlantic Studies* 15, no. 1 (2018): 136–147.
- Fouseki, Kalliopi. "'Community Voices, Curatorial Choices': Community Consultation for the 1807 Exhibitions." *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 180–192.
- Haggerty, Sheryllyne. "Liverpool, the Slave Trade and the British-Atlantic Empire, c.1750–75." In *The Empire in One City? Liverpool's Inconvenient Imperial Past*, edited by Sheryllyne Haggerty, Anthony Webster, and Nicholas J. White, 17–34. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.
- Haggerty, Sheryllyne. *'Merely for Money?' Business Culture in the British Atlantic 1750–1815*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012.
- Hall, Catherine, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel Lang, eds. *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Hamilton, Douglas. "Representing Slavery in British Museums: The Challenges of 2007." In *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, edited by Cora Kaplan, and John Oldfield, 127–144. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Harley, Knick. "Slavery, the British Atlantic Economy and the Industrial Revolution." In *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy: Circuits of Trade, Money and Knowledge, 1650–1914*, edited by Adrian Leonard, and David Pretel, 161–183. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Higman, B. W. *Writing West Indian Histories*. London: Macmillan Education, 1999.
- Huxtable, Sally-Anne, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe, eds. *Interim Report on the Connections Between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* (September 2020). Accessed 30 November 2020. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/addressing-the-histories-of-slavery-and-colonialism-at-the-national-trust>.
- Inikori, Joseph E. *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Jeppesen, Chris. "East Meets West: Exploring the Connections Between Britain, the Caribbean and the East India Company, c. 1757–1857." In *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, edited by Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody, 102–125. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.
- Kelley, Sean M. "New World Slave Traders and the Problem of Trade Goods: Brazil, Barbados, Cuba and North America in Comparative Perspective." *The English Historical Review* 134, no. 567 (2019): 302–333.
- Klein, Herbert S. *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Legacies of British Slave-ownership. Accessed 10 November 2020. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>.
- Major, Andrea. *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1771–1843*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012.

- McManus, Paulette M. "Oh, Yes, They Do: How Museum Visitors Read Labels and Interact with Exhibit Text." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 32, no. 3 (1989): 174–189.
- Mitchell, B. R., and Phyllis Deane. *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.
- Morgan, Kenneth. *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Morgan, Kenneth. "Remittance Procedures in the Eighteenth-Century British Slave Trade." *Business History Review* 79 (2005): 715–749.
- Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy 1660–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Moody, Jessica. "Liverpool's Local Tints: Drowning Memory and 'Maritimising' Slavery in a Seaport City." In *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a 'National Sin'*, edited by Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody, 150–171. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016.
- Moody, Jessica. *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.
- Munroe, Leanne. "Negotiating Memories and Silences: Museum Narratives of Transatlantic Slavery in England." In *Beyond Memory: Silence and the Aesthetics of Remembrance*, edited by Alexandre Dessingue, and Jay Winter, 175–194. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Neptune, H. Reuben. "Throwin' Scholarly Shade: Eric Williams in the New Histories of Capitalism and Slavery." *Journal of the Early Republic* 39, no. 2 (2019): 299–326.
- Ogborne, Miles. *Britain and the World 1550–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Ostrander, Gilman M. "The Making of the Triangular Trade Myth." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1973): 635–644.
- Otele, Olivette. "The Guerrilla Arts in Brexit Bristol." In *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain*, edited by Stuart Ward, and Astrid Rasch, 133–141. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.
- Otele, Olivette. "History of Slavery, Sites of Memory, and Identity Politics in Contemporary Britain." In *A Stain On Our Past: Slavery and Memory*, edited by Abdoulaye Gueye, and Johann Michel, 189–210. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2018.
- Pellizzari, Peter. "Supplying Slavery: Jamaica, North America, and British Intra-Imperial Trade, 1752–1769." *Slavery and Abolition* 41, no. 3 (2020): 528–554.
- Platt, D. C. M. *Latin America and the British Trade 1806–1914*. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972.
- Pomeranz, Kenneth. *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Rediker, Marcus. "History from Below the Water Line: Sharks and the Atlantic Slave Trade." *Atlantic Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 285–297.
- Rice, Alan. "Exploring Inside the Invisible: An Interview with Lubaina Himid." *Wasafiri* 18, no. 40 (2003): 20–26.
- Rice, Alan, and Johanna C. Kardux. "Confronting the Ghostly Legacies of Slavery: The Politics of Black Bodies, Embodied Memories and Memorial Landscapes." *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 3 (2012): 245–272.
- Riello, Giorgio. *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Riello, Giorgio. "The Globalisation of Cotton Textiles: Indian Cottons, Europe and the Atlantic World, 1600–1850." In *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles 1200–1850*, edited by Giorgio Riello, and Prasanna Parthasarathi, 261–287. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Rönnbäck, Klas. "On the Economic Importance of the Slave Plantation Complex to the British Economy During the Eighteenth Century: A Value-Added Approach." *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 2 (2018): 309–327.
- Ryden, David Beck. "Sugar, Spirits, and Fodder: The London West India Interest and the Glut of 1807–15." *Atlantic Studies* 9, no. 3 (2012): 41–64.
- Ryden, David Beck. *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783–1807*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

- Schermerhorn, Calvin. *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815–1860*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015.
- Serrell, Beverly. "Paying Attention: The Duration and Allocation of Visitors' Time in Museum Exhibitions." *Curator* 40, no. 2 (1997): 108–125.
- Sherwood, Marika. *After Abolition: Britain and the Slave Trade Since 1807*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.
- Sitwell, Sean. *Slavery and Slaving in African History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Slave Voyages: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Estimates. Accessed 10 November 2020. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>.
- Smith, S. D. *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648–1834*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Smith, Laurajane, and Kalliopi Fouseki. "The Role of Museums as 'Places of Social Justice': Community Consultation and the 1807 Bicentenary." In *Presenting Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements*, edited by Laurajane Smith, Geoff Cubitt, Laurajane Smith, and Ross Wilson, 97–115. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Solow, Barbara L., and Stanley L. Engerman, eds. *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Thomas, Robert Paul, and Richard Nelson Bean. "The Fishers of Men: The Profits of the Slave Trade." *The Journal of Economic History* 34, no. 4 (1974): 885–914.
- Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Tomich, Dale, and Michael Zeuske. "Introduction, the Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories." *Review* 31, no. 2 (2008): 91–100.
- Turton, Alison, and Michael Moss. *The Bitter with the Sweet: The History of Fletcher and Stewart 1838–1988*. Derby: Fletcher and Stewart Ltd, 1988.
- V&A Museum. "Gallery Text at the V&A Ten Point Guide." Accessed September 2013. http://www.vam.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/238077/Gallery-Text-at-the-V-and-A-Ten-Point-Guide-Aug-2013.pdf.
- Warren, Wendy. *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016.
- Waterton, Emma. "Humiliated Silence: Multiculturalism, Blame and the Trope of 'Moving On'." *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 128–142.
- Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944.
- Wills, Mary, and Dr Madge Dresser. *The Transatlantic Slave Economy and England's Built Environment: A Research Audit*. Accessed on September 2020. <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/audit-of-slavery-connections-with-englands-built-environment/>.
- Wright, Gavin. "Slavery and Anglo-American Capitalism Revisited." *The Economic History Review* 73, no. 2 (2020): 353–383.