

1 Transnational Memory of Slave Merchants

Making the Perpetrators Visible in the Public Space

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Over the last twenty years the public memory of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery emerged as a global phenomenon in various Atlantic centers in the Americas, Europe, and Africa. Places of remembrance of the Atlantic slave trade, such as memorials, museums, and monuments, very often emphasizing victimhood, depict naked and starving black bodies packed in slave ships. In Gorée Island, Cape Coast, Elmina, and Ouidah, these traumatic journeys are represented by gates and doors of no-return that mark the transition to confinement, forced migration, and forced labor. However, official initiatives, most of them led by UNESCO, also had unexpected outcomes. In Brazil, Benin, and England, memorialization of slavery has also helped rehabilitate the memory of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity. By considering this complex context, this chapter examines the public memory of three slave merchants who were deeply involved in the Atlantic slave trade in three different societies located in three different continents (Brazil, present-day Republic of Benin, and England): Francisco Félix de Souza (1754–1849), Joaquim Pereira Marinho (1816–1887), and Robert Milligan (1746–1809). This chapter seeks to explain how despite the official international projects aimed at promoting the memory of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, the memory of these perpetrators continues to occupy a prominent place in the public space. Although these three individuals plied their slave-trade activities in three different continents, several elements of their public memory remain very similar. Indeed, in Brazil, England, or Benin, these three slave merchants are almost never depicted as perpetrators, but rather as benefactors and great businessmen. This chapter attempts to shed light on the public representations of these slave merchants and how these three societies, which were deeply involved in the Atlantic slave trade, dealt with the memory of the victims and the memory of the perpetrators in the public space.

TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY OF SLAVE MERCHANTS

The rise of the memory of slavery not only allowed the descendants of the victims to occupy the public space to promote the heritage of their ancestors and to formulate demands to redress past wrongs, but also offered

the opportunity to the descendants of perpetrators and other auxiliaries in the slave-trade business to give their own point of view about the slave past of their families. Depending on the context, the public memory of the perpetrators and their descendants acquired political and even religious contours. In some countries, by expressing regret and addressing public apologies for the errors of their ancestors, the families of the perpetrators are also acquiring public visibility. In other countries, despite the construction of new monuments and memorials honoring the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, numerous public statues honoring individuals highly involved in the slave trade business remain intact and unquestioned.

Francisco Félix de Souza (1754–1849)

In 1727 the West African Kingdom of Dahomey seized Ouidah, the capital of the Kingdom of Hueda, gaining access to the coast. Over the years Ouidah became the second most important African slaving port after Luanda (Angola). Most enslaved men and women embarked in Ouidah were sent to Bahia, in Brazil. During the eighteenth century, numerous Brazilian and Portuguese slave merchants settled in Ouidah, where in 1721, the Portuguese founded the fortress São João Batista da Ajuda.¹

The Brazilian slave merchant Francisco Félix Souza settled in the Bight of Benin in the early nineteenth century and soon became one of the most prosperous slave merchants of the region. By that time, the Dahomean King Adandozan (r. 1797–1818) and de Souza had a disagreement related to the Atlantic slave trade. Adandozan sent the slave merchant to prison, where he had contact with Prince Gakpe, who was Adandozan's half-brother. De Souza contracted a blood pact with the prince and helped him to organize a coup d'état. In 1818, Adandozan was deposed, and Prince Gakpe was enthroned and became King Gezo. To reward de Souza, the new king conferred upon him the position of his commercial intermediary in Ouidah. Eventually, de Souza's nickname "Chacha" became the title of the highest representative of the de Souzas. After the death of de Souza, the first Chacha, the King of Dahomey selected and nominated his successor, and today the family chooses the Chacha.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, de Souza became not only one of the most important slave merchants in the Bight of Benin, but also a legendary figure who is still part of the collective memory of Republic of Benin (former Kingdom of Dahomey). Since 1835, de Souza helped former slave returnees from Brazil to settle in Ouidah. Paradoxically, some of these returnees soon became prosperous slave merchants as well, and together with the slave traders already established in the Bight of Benin, they formed an Afro-Luso-Brazilian community. The existence of descendants of former slave merchants and former slave returnees—some of whom were followed by their former slaves and who became slave merchants once established in West Africa—reinforces the plural memories of slavery in the region.² This complex configuration sometimes makes it difficult to distinguish who were the victims and who were the perpetrators.³

Like other slave merchants of his time, de Souza continued making a profit from the Atlantic slave trade after 1815, when the Anglo-Portuguese treaty had already declared illegal the slave trade from West Africa, including the Bight of Benin. Although at the time of his death in 1849 de Souza had significant debts with King Gezo, as well as with Brazilian and Cuban merchants, he was one of the wealthiest slave merchants in West Africa, his fortune essentially made in the illegal slave trade business. Today the de Souzas still keep economic and political power not only in Benin, but also in other West African countries.

In the early 1990s, several public initiatives aiming at commemorating and memorializing the slave past were developed in the Republic of Benin. These various official projects such as the UNESCO's Slave Route project and the Vodun festival *Ouidah 92* left important marks in Ouidah's public space. As part of the Vodun festival held in February 1993, a Slaves' Route displaying one hundred monuments and memorials was unveiled in Ouidah and became a place of pilgrimage visited each year by several thousands of tourists from Benin and abroad. Although some monuments and memorials were placed along the route to mark actual historical sites, other statues do not indicate any specific point of reference but rather emphasize the idea of continuity. Most of these statues represent Vodun deities, and many others depict enchained and kneeling enslaved men and women.⁴

However, the first station of the Slaves' Route in Ouidah is not dedicated to the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, but honors a perpetrator: Francisco Félix de Souza.⁵ The station is named *Place des enchères* (Auctions Square) or *Place Chacha*.⁶ This square is located in the Adjido quarter, behind the de Souza family compound, which is the location of de Souza's old house, still occupied by the head of the family, Honoré Feliciano Julião de Souza (Chacha VIII). The *Place des enchères* is also located in the same zone in which a slave market existed in the past. However, the sculpture created by the Beninese artist Cyprien Tokoudagba that marks the square represents an amazon of Dahomey's army, a female warrior with naked breasts and horns. At first sight, the public memory of slavery underscored in this monument is not related to the Brazilian slave merchant, instead it refers to his partner, King Gezo (r. 1818–1858). Just as his predecessors did, Gezo waged military campaigns annually against neighboring kingdoms: most of these war prisoners were sold and sent into slavery in the Americas. Upon the cement base of the monument at the *Place des enchères*, one reads: "In this place and under this tree were held public slave auctions during which the slaves who would be embarked to the Americas were exchanged for shoddy goods." In 1999, six years after the festival "Ouidah 92," another commemorative plaque displaying "Place Chacha" was placed next to the monument, associating the statue of the amazon and the square with de Souza.

In 1993, when the statue representing the Amazon was unveiled, de Souza's old house was almost abandoned. In 1995, when Chacha VIII was appointed, he decided to restore Francisco Félix de Souza's house and to build a new four-story "palace" at the same place where his old residence

was located. The new imposing building, situated behind the *Place Chacha*, symbolizes the power of the de Souza family, which still persists today.

Also in the de Souza compound there is a memorial to honor the Francisco Félix de Souza. Although it has existed for many years, it became accessible to the public only in the 1990s, when the Chacha VIII was appointed. Despite de Souza's slave trade activities, his descendants are proud of their ancestor, and over the past few years the members of the family have been making efforts to rehabilitate his memory, depicting him not as a slave trader but as a great entrepreneur.⁷

During a visit to the memorial, family members emphasized the de Souzas' bonds with Brazil, and justified the merchant's activities by insisting that slave trading was indeed a legal activity at the time, even though de Souza and his sons continued trading in slaves years after its prohibition. According to the family's point of view, de Souza contributed to the development of Africa by introducing new goods and new crops to the region, including the oil palm tree. Among others, in a speech during a ceremony held in the family compound, the spokesman of Chacha VIII, stated that the late Francisco Félix de Souza "spent without count his strength and his wealth in favor of the weak against the strong, the oppressed against the oppressor."⁸

Inside the memorial, Francisco Félix de Souza's old bedroom is still intact. In it one finds not only his original Brazilian wood bed, freshly made each day as if he were alive, but also his tomb. The room reinforces the idea that he remains among his family members and has become a major symbol of the family's original connection with Brazil and reveals the political influence still exerted by the de Souza family over the Afro-Luso-Brazilian community and other communities in Ouidah. This sanctification of de Souza increases the family's authority, which reaches beyond the political, economic, and family arenas to also gain a religious dimension.

De Souza's reputation as a generous man started when he was still alive. According to some descendants of slaves who were owned by de Souza, he was not perceived negatively by his slaves, but rather seen as a benevolent man.⁹ Indeed, to British travelers of the nineteenth century, such as Frederick Forbes, de Souza's values differed from those of the indigenous population, and he was also opposed to human sacrifice.¹⁰ John Duncan, for instance, reported that de Souza was benevolent to his slaves.¹¹ According to some travelers de Souza considered himself a great philanthropist, "on the grounds of having saved the lives of the slaves whom he purchased for export," consequently preventing them from being sacrificed.¹² Among the members of the family and the local population there is also a belief that de Souza used to buy all the members of a family in order to prevent their being separated and sent into slavery to the Americas.¹³ Thus, as part of the memorialization process, de Souza's public memory is reconstructed according to moral values belonging to the present. He is depicted as concerned with human rights and disposed to liberate his slaves.

In Brazil, a country that imported the majority of the slaves sold by de Souza, recent movie and television documentaries highlighting the

connections between Brazil and Benin have given visibility to the de Souza family. Moreover, with the growing interest in the slave past and the emergence of a tourism industry relying on the memory of the Atlantic slave trade, an increasing number of African Americans who visit Ouidah are intrigued about the history of the legendary Brazilian slave merchant, who was depicted in Bruce Chatwin's novel *The Vice-Roy of Ouidah* and Werner Herzog's film *Cobra Verde*.¹⁴ However, unlike other large tourist sites associated with the Atlantic slave trade, such as the Elmina or the Cape Coast Castles in Ghana or the House of Slaves on Gorée Island in Senegal, a visit to Singbomey and to a memorial honoring a perpetrator makes sense only if it is accompanied by the narration developed by the members of the family. Intentionally or not, as the point of departure on Ouidah's Slaves' Route is the *Place Chacha*, the UNESCO initiatives including "Ouidah 92" and The Slave Route project, which were intended to remember the victims of the Atlantic slave trade, indirectly helped to promote the memory of a perpetrator.

At least in the public sphere the memories of the victims and the perpetrators apparently coexist harmoniously. However, at a private level, there are persisting differences between the descendants of slave merchants and slave owners, and the descendants of those who were enslaved and remained in the region. Slave ancestry remains a source of shame, and most descendants of men and women who were locally kept under enslavement remain silent about this aspect of the past of their families, even though among the local population several marks—including their names, where they live, and their activities—reveal their slave origins.¹⁵ The local population is aware that families of powerful individuals like de Souza, who were deeply involved in the Atlantic slave trade as merchants or auxiliaries, are still economically and politically powerful. Although the official initiatives helped to bring to light forgotten elements of the Atlantic slave past of the region, the public memory of the perpetrators was not radically transformed. On the contrary, the statue of the *Place Chacha*, along with the statues honoring the *voduns* of the slaver kings of Dahomey, which were placed along the Slaves' Route, are not only helping to renew the memory of those who led the slave trade in the region, but the development of slave-trade tourism is also offering new economic and political opportunities for these wealthy families.¹⁶

Joaquim Pereira Marinho (1816–1887)

On November 7, 1831, after the signature of several treaties between Brazil and England, the Law Feijó outlawed the Atlantic slave trade to Brazil. In theory, enslaved Africans who entered the country after 1831 were considered legally free. However, the illegal slave trade continued until 1850, when the Law Eusébio de Queirós eventually abolished it. Brazil not only imported the largest number of enslaved Africans, more than five million individuals, during the Atlantic slave trade, it was also the last country to abolish slavery. Despite the importance of the Luso-Brazilian slave trade,

few initiatives aimed at making the memory and the heritage of the Atlantic slave trade visible in the public space were developed in Brazil.

The state of Bahia imported about 1.5 million enslaved Africans, almost one-third of the total Brazilian slave imports. Although in Bahia—the Brazilian state with the largest population of African descent (70 percent)—African roots are publicly celebrated, few projects underscore its slave past. The first public monument addressing the issue of slavery erected in Salvador is not a statue honoring a slave or a person of African descent, but rather a monument in bronze and granite celebrating the white abolitionist poet Castro Alves (1847–1871), author of several abolitionist poems, including “The Slave Ship,” and who became known as the “slaves’ poet.” Unveiled in July 1923, the monument has since 1971 contained the poet’s mortal remains. It consists of huge column on which lies a full-body statue of Castro Alves. At the monument’s base are two groups of figures. The first group, which leans against the column, consists of a flying angel rising up a young enslaved woman. The second group, placed at the base of the monument, is formed by an enslaved man and a black woman. Despite the presence of enslaved characters, the anonymous black women and the black man play only the supporting roles in this homage to the abolitionist poet.

Every year, Salvador receives millions of tourists, including a growing number of African American tourists, especially during the period of its famous carnival.¹⁷ The city’s slogan “Salvador: capital of joy” is confirmed by tourists who visit its historic center and are often approached by very young street children selling souvenirs or asking for money and who tirelessly repeat “smile you are in Bahia.” As the second-largest slave port in Brazil, Salvador has numerous historical sites associated with slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, but this past is not acknowledged in the public space. In 1985, when “Pelourinho”—a Salvador’s neighborhood located in the city’s historic center where criminals as well as enslaved men and women were publicly punished—was added to the World Heritage List, the UNESCO’s official document only highlighted its “colonial” architectural features, with no mention to slavery. The history of slavery is often evacuated from these sites, which do not contain a plaque or any other kind of sign indicating its role during the Atlantic slave trade, even though for the attentive observer the shadows of slavery are visible everywhere in the streets, buildings, and churches, several of which accommodated Catholic brotherhoods, such as the Blacks of the Rosary Church, that gathered together enslaved men and women, free and freed blacks.

In 1998, eight impressive 22-foot-tall statues representing various *orixás* (Afro-Brazilian deities) were placed in the “Tororó Dam” (“Dique do Tororó”), an artificial lagoon in Salvador.¹⁸ For the first time African religious heritage was praised in a permanent place in the public space. Since then, other monuments have focused on the public memory of slavery and Afro-Brazilian historical figures. In November 2004, four busts honoring four Afro-Brazilian men were unveiled at Praça da Piedade in Salvador, which was the stage for the events that followed the so-called Conspiracy of the Tailors or Buzios Revolt in 1798. The conspirators, mainly free-born Afro-Brazilians, former

slaves, and slaves, promised freedom to slaves and equality among all citizens, including blacks and mulattos. The busts pay homage to four men who were condemned to death because of their participation in the revolt: Manuel Faustino dos Santos Lira (1775–1799), the freedman Lucas Dantas do Amorim Torres (1774–1799), the freemen Luiz Gonzaga das Virgens e Veiga (1762–1799), and João de Deus do Nascimento (1771–1799). Since 2009, the Bahian deputy Luiz Alberto (Workers' Party) proposed law number 5819/2009, which would mandate inclusion of these four black leaders in the Book of National Heroes. However, only on May 30, 2008, did Salvador unveil its monument honoring Zumbi, the leader of the largest Brazilian runaway slave community. The full-body bronze statue on a square granite base represents Zumbi as a warrior holding a spear. Despite these initiatives, just as in several other former Atlantic slave ports, the public memory of those wealthy individuals who largely benefited from the trade in human beings remains almost intact in Salvador. Actually, except for historians and black activists, most people are not aware of how prominent men honored in monuments and statues all over the city were actually slave merchants and owners of numerous slaves.

Among these prominent men is the slave merchant Joaquim Pereira Marinho (1816–1887), who was born in Portugal and moved to Bahia in 1828. Of modest origin, his parents were farmers, who died when he was still a child, and his oldest brother, a vicar who prepared him for a religious career, may have raised him.¹⁹ Indeed, in order to avoid the military service, at his arrival in Bahia it is likely he declared being younger than he actually was. At the time, he registered at the Portuguese consulate as a *marítimo* (maritime worker), but one of his obituaries indicates he was a *caixeiro* (shop assistant) in a textile shop, a position he probably occupied later.²⁰ As for other Portuguese immigrants, his activities as a maritime worker probably helped him to quickly become a prosperous slave merchant.²¹

Although it is hard to establish the exact year that Marinho started his career as a slave merchant, his activities began when the Brazilian slave trade was outlawed. Like de Souza, he was among those who made important profits with the illegal slave trade. Actually, by 1831 Marinho's boss Francisco Antonio de Souza Paranhos moved to Rio Grande do Sul, after being accused of killing someone. To reward his young employee for helping him to hide and escape from Bahia, Paranhos invited Marinho to join him in Rio Grande do Sul. In April 1835 Marinho, along with two slaves, were listed as passengers of the brigantine *Princeza* that sailed to Rio Grande do Sul. As Ximenes points out, the presence of the two slaves indicates an improvement in his financial situation.²² Despite the lack of evidence, it is likely that by 1835 he was already involved in the commerce of human beings, probably through the port of Montevideo, a common route at the time of the illegal slave trade. From Rio Grande do Sul, Marinho traveled to Luanda, where he is said to have sealed significant commercial relations with Angola's greatest Central African woman slave merchant, Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva (1779–1859), even though the slave trade in the Portuguese dominions was banned in 1836.²³ Also during this

trip, Marinho established connections with the infamous Brazilian slave trader Domingos José Martins, alias “Dominguinhos da ‘Costa,’” also known as Domingo Martinez. By 1838 Dominguinhos was established in Lagos, and Marinho became his attorney-in-fact in Salvador.²⁴ By the end of 1839, he was back to Salvador. Between 1839 and 1850, according to *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, Marinho’s slave ships *Destemida*, *Três Amigos*, *Baiano*, *Teodora Teodósia*, *Maria*, *Andorinha*, *Vivo*, *Mosca*, *Moquim*, *Espanto*, *Rosita*, *Esperança*, *Terceira Andorinha*, *Nova Andorinha*, *Bomfim*, and *Catita* made at least thirty-three voyages between Bahia and the Bight of Benin. Despite the ban of the Atlantic slave trade, the British Navy captured only some of these vessels. For example, the brigantine *Três Amigos* left Bahia to the port of Lagos (Onim).²⁵ There 1,400 enslaved persons were embarked. On March 9, 1846, the same vessel arrived in Bahia carrying 1,350 Africans.²⁶ The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* indicates that between 1848 and 1849, the yacht *Andorinha* made five voyages between Bahia and African coasts, and was captured by the British Navy only on its sixth voyage in May 1849.²⁷ According to Pierre Verger, between October 17, 1846, and August 23, 1849, this same vessel made ten voyages to Africa, and disembarked 3,800 Africans in the port of Salvador.²⁸ If some contemporary observers negatively perceive slave merchants such as Marinho and de Souza as adventurous smugglers because their illegal activities involved risks, others see them as the men who provided the nation with a slave workforce necessary to the country’s prosperity. Marinho’s involvement in the illegal slave trade allowed him to quickly build his wealth and invest the profit in other business activities. The passing of the Law Eusébio de Queirós in 1850 did not prevent Marinho from continuing the trade in human beings. In 1858, he created the *Companhia União Africana* to develop legal trade with Africa; however, thanks to his connections with Cuba—where the slave trade stopped only in 1866—the company also traded in slaves. In addition to his various commercial operations, especially the trade of *charque* (salted meat), Marinho business ventures also included real estate investments and usury activities such as lending money and supplying credit to other merchants.

Still, during his life, Marinho was engaged in fighting against the dissemination of a public negative image of himself that resulted from his slave-trade activities, considered by some contemporary observers as immoral and illicit.²⁹ Marinho and his supporters responded to each one of these accusations by enumerating the numerous occasions the slave merchant helped the province of Bahia, either by leading initiatives to help the victims of a drought, or by providing financial support to build sidewalks in the streets of Corredor da Vitória, a wealthy neighborhood where he owned several properties.³⁰

Despite Marinho’s reputation as a prominent slave merchant, his public memory as a benefactor is still visible in Salvador’s public space. Indeed, in 1847 he was admitted as member of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy), a sodality and charity institution created in Portugal at

the end of the fifteenth century that since 1549 provided health assistance to Bahian patients in financial need.³¹ By joining the members of Bahian elite in this charity institution, which also admitted as members several other slave merchants, Marinho continued developing the image of a benefactor.³² As Ximenes points out, his name appeared for the first time in the institution meetings minutes in 1860, and then only in 1881, when he was elected provider of the institution, a position occupied by individuals of great political importance that conferred on him significant powers with the president of the province and the city council.³³ In this position, kept until his death, he was able to definitely consolidate his image as a benefactor. After he received the titles of baron and viscount, on March 7, 1881, he was granted the title of count by King Luís of Portugal. On October 31, 1889, his son Joaquim Elísio Pereira Marinho (1841–1914), who had received the title of baron ten years earlier, was granted the title of Viscount of Guai. Moreover, even in his own will of 1887, Pereira Marinho depicts himself as generous and righteous man, dissociating his wealth from any illegal and inhuman activity:

[. . .] have done this will by my spontaneous will and with clear conscience to pass to the eternal life without never doing evil to my fellow creatures, and with the conviction that the wealth I leave was amassed by my perseverant work with savings and honesty and honor in my commercial transactions, never renouncing to doing good to my fellow creatures [. . .].”³⁴

On July 30, 1893, some years after Count Marinho’s death, a statue honoring him was erected at Largo de Nazaré, in front of the Hospital Santa Isabel of Santa Casa de Misericórdia inaugurated that same year (Figure 1.1). The full-body marble statue, measuring 6 feet tall and standing on a 3-foot-tall pedestal, symbolizes charity. The statue depicts Marinho as a businessman distinctively dressed and wearing a long beard. In his left hand he holds a scroll, probably the plan of the new hospital building. At his right side, a standing girl and boy express their gratitude by offering him a bunch of flowers. On the statue’s pedestal, a plaque reads: “Tribute to the Memory of the Worthy Ex Provider Count Pereira Marinho, Resolution of April 26, 1887, recognizing his relevant services offered to the Casa da Santa Mizericordia.”³⁵ In this case, the public memory of Pereira Marinho is the memory of the benefactor, the righteous businessman, and not of the slave merchant who benefited from the contraband of African women, men, and children. Some steps from Praça da Sé, where the statue of Zumbi was unveiled in 2008, and from the monument honoring the abolitionist poet Castro Alves, the Museum of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia (opened in 2006), hangs an impressive full-body oil portrait of Marinho, represented as a distinguished entrepreneur and benevolent man. As in other sites related to the Atlantic slave trade in the “capital of joy,” nothing indicates that the “charity” he did was stained by the blood and the suffering of those men, women, and children who crossed the Atlantic Ocean enchained in the hold of his numerous slave ships.



Figure 1.1 Statue of Joaquim Pereira Marinho at Santa Casa da Misericórdia, Salvador (Bahia, Brazil). Photograph by Ana Lucia Araujo, 2009.

Robert Milligan (1746–1809)

Since the 1990s, England started publicly recognizing its slave-trading past by promoting its slave-trade heritage and developing cultural tourism in its former slave ports such as Liverpool, London, and Bristol.³⁶ During 2007 and 2008, the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade was widely celebrated in Europe and the Americas with conferences, films, documentaries, publications, monuments, and exhibitions. London hosted several exhibitions discussing the English participation in the Atlantic slave trade. From February 20 to June 17, 2007, the Victoria and Albert Museum hosted the exhibition *Uncomfortable Truths: The Shadow of Slave Trade on Contemporary Art*; from March 17 to July 22, 2007, the National Portrait Gallery organized the exhibition *Portraits, People, and Abolition*; the Westminster Hall showed the exhibit *The British Slave Trade: Abolition, Parliament and People* from May 23 to September 23, 2007. Still in London, on November 30, 2007, the National Maritime Museum opened the exhibition *Atlantic Worlds*. In Bristol, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum showed the exhibition *Breaking the Chains: The Fight to End Slavery*, from April 23, 2007, to April 23, 2009. In Hull, the William Wilberforce House was reopened on March 25, 2007. On August 23, 2007, Slavery Remembrance Day in Britain, the International Slavery Museum was opened in Liverpool.³⁷

Since the 1980s, when a project to transform the West India Docks into Canary Wharf was developed, the Museum of London was working on an initiative to create the Museum of Docklands. The new museum, which aimed to tell the 2,000-year-old story of the Thames River, would essentially show objects from the collections of the Port of London Authority and the Museum of London. Located at West India Docks, in an 1802 former sugar warehouse that was used to store goods from the Caribbean plantations, the building of the Museum of London Docklands is part of the material heritage of the Atlantic slave trade. However, as Georgie Wemyss explained, between the 1990s until the museum opened in 2003, the museum's press releases and publicity material did not mention the Atlantic slave trade. Instead, it emphasized the architectural value of the warehouses, praising them as "great monuments of European Commercial Power."³⁸

The Museum of London Docklands consists of twelve permanent galleries. The first, titled *No 1 Warehouse*, is situated in the museum's external area. The other galleries, located inside the building, cover the whole history of *London's River, Port, and People*, including the following themes: Thames Highway and Trade Expansion, Trade Expansion, The Rhineback Panorama, City and River, Sailortown, First Port of Empire, Warehouse of the World, Docklands at War, New Port, New City, and Mudlarks.

With the approaching of the commemorations of the bicentennial of the British abolition of the slave trade, the mercantile and maritime discourse

of the Museum of London Docklands was slowly modified. On November 10, 2007, the museum opened a permanent gallery named *London, Sugar and Slavery: Revealing Our City's Untold History*, which discusses London's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. The implementation of the permanent gallery was funded by several organizations, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, and evolved from debates and discussions with various African-Caribbean organizations such as the Tower Hamlets African Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO). The huge new gallery displays accounts, film, music, paintings, maps, interactive displays containing illustrations and text, as well as 140 objects explaining the history of the Atlantic slave trade and London's role in it.

As part of the gallery *London, Sugar and Slavery*, the Museum of London Docklands produced a walking-tour guide highlighting various neighboring landmarks associated with the British slave trade. A first longer itinerary starts at the museum, and the proposed first stop is the Guildhall, in Gresham Street, the headquarters of the Corporation of London, which during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries included shareholders of the Royal African Company. The proposed walking-tour guide mentions the life-statue of Sir William Beckford (1709–1770), located at the east end of the south wall in Guildhall. Beckford, who owned more than 20,000 acres of plantations in Jamaica, was twice lord mayor of London and was also a member of the Parliament for the city of London. Following London's "slaving route," the next landmark is the South Sea House building that housed the SSC (South Sea Company), which was crucial for the city's role in the Atlantic slave trade. From 1713 to 1736, the SSC sent 115 slave voyages to West African coasts.³⁹ The itinerary includes several other landmarks: the African House, site of the Royal African Company, which was located in Leadenhall Street and had the monopoly of the slave trade on African west coast; the Lloyd's of London Royal Exchange, which originated from the Edward Lloyd's Coffee House in 1688 and insured slave-trade vessels; the East India House, which housed the East India Company in Leadenhall Street that traded in slaves and goods for the Atlantic slave trade; the Jamaica Coffee House in St. Michael's Alley that not only served as meeting place for slave merchants but also as a place to advertise slave sales and reward announcements for the recapture of runaway slaves.

A second, and shorter, walk around the region of the docklands is also proposed in the printable guide. The walk starts at the site where the dock basins and warehouses of the West India Dock were located. According to the guide, it was the "first enclosed dock built on the Thames for the purpose of cargo handling," constituting a "physical manifestation of London's corner of the Triangle trade," and was used for at least twenty-two slave vessels between 1802 and 1807.⁴⁰ The second landmark located close to the Museum of London Docklands is the Hibbert Gate, a replica of the gate of the West India Dock. Above the gate there is also a replica of the *Hibberts*, a slave vessel that traded from the dock to Jamaica and was

named after the slave merchant and slave owner George Hibbert, whose portrait is displayed in the gallery *London, Sugar, and Slavery*. The third landmark indicated in the guide is the West India Dock foundation stone dated July 12, 1800, and containing a plaque that reads:

Of this Range of BUILDINGS
Constructed together with the Adjacent Docks. At the Expencc [sic]
of public spirited Individuals.
Under the Sanction of a provident Legislature.
And with the liberal Co-operation of the Corporate Body of the
CITY of LONDON.
For the distinct Purpose
Of complete SECURITY and ample ACCOMODATION
(hitherto not afforded)
To the SHIPPRHING and PRODUCE of the WEST INDIES at this
wealthy PORT.
THE FIRST STONE WAS LAID
On Saturday the Twelfth Day of July A. D. 1800,
BY THE CONCURRING HANDS OF
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD LOUGHBOROUGH.
LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF GREAT BRITAIN
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM PITT
FIRST LORD COMMISSIONER OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY AND
CHANCELLOR OF HIS MAJESTY'S EXCHEQUER.
GEORGE HIBBERT ESQ. THE CHAIRMAN AND ROBERT MILLIGAN.
ESQ. THE DEPUTY
CHAIRMAN OF THE WEST INDIA DOCK COMPANY
The two former conspicuous in the Band Of those illustrious
Statesmen.
Who in either House of Parliament have been zealous to promote.
The two latter distinguished among those chosen to direct
AN UNDERTAKING
Which under the favour of GOD, shall contribute
STABILITY, INCREASE and ORNAMENT
TO
BRITISH COMMERCE

In addition to the plaque, two other landmarks are emphasized. The first is the building of the Museum of London Docklands, the only of the nine warehouses that originally housed the West India Dock Company. Another landmark is the statue of Robert Milligan (Figure 1.2), described in the printable guide as the son of a plantation-owning family in the Caribbean, who was a member of the Committee of West India Merchants and Planters that raised funds to build the West India Docks, without any mention of the Atlantic slave trade.



Figure 1.2 Statue of Robert Milligan in front of the Museum of Docklands, London, United Kingdom. Photograph by Ana Lucia Araujo, 2010.

After Robert Milligan's death in 1809, the West India Dock Company commissioned a full-body bronze statue to honor its creator. The statue—made by Richard Westmacott in 1810–1812, stands about 6 feet tall and cost £1,400—is a portrait of Milligan standing, wearing a doubled-breasted frock coat and cravat. His left arm is leaning on a column, his right arm is extended, and with his right hand he is holding a scroll. The bronze plaque on the pedestal below the statue shows a helmeted warrior seated on the head of a lion and holding a spear in his right hand. A female figure, holding a scepter with her right hand and surrounded by three cherubim, is greeting the warrior. This allegory represents Mercury, patron saint of the commerce, and the female figure is Britannia receiving him.⁴¹ In the background of this scene there is a sailing vessel. The plaque with embossed letters on rear of the pedestal reads:

TO PERPETUATE ON THIS SPOT
THE MEMORY OF
ROBERT MILLIGAN
MERCHANT OF LONDON,
TO WHOSE GENIUS, PERSEVERANCE AND
GUARDIAN CARE
THE SURROUNDING GREAT
WORK PRINCIPALLY OWES
IT'S [SIC] DESIGN,
ACCOMPLISHMENT AND REGULATION.
THE DIRECTORS AND PROPRIETORS,
DEPRIVED BY HIS DEATH
ON 21ST MAY, 1809
OF THE CONTINUANCE OF HIS VALUABLE SERVICES,
BY THEIR UNANIMOUS VOTE
HAVE CAUSED THIS STATUE TO BE ERECTED.

The statue, unveiled in 1813, was placed at south of the dock office, close to the entrance gate. Over the years the statue became an obstacle, blocking the traffic and other activities that took place in the site, which led to its removal in 1875. The statue was then placed at the top of the central pier at the West India Dock Road entrance, but in 1943 when the pier was demolished the statue was removed again. In February 1997, after negotiations between the London Docklands Development Corporation and the Museum of London, the ancient Milligan's statue was reestablished in its original place and original granite base. Because the original plaque depicting Britannia receiving Mercury was destroyed, in 1998 Vincent Butler created a new bronze relief based on the plaque's original design. Despite this addition, the original plaque, without any mention of Milligan's slave-trade activities, remained intact. By this action, in a

period when international projects such as the UNESCO's Slave Route project were already in progress, London public authorities decided to simply conceal the fact that one of the city's prominent men, honored in the public space, was a slave merchant.

This situation started changing in 2007, with the commemoration of the bicentennial of the British abolition of the slave trade and the opening of the gallery *London, Sugar and Slavery*. During the BBC Radio 4 program "You and Yours" in 2008, the museum director David Spence called upon the community to reinterpret the statue of Robert Milligan. In the appeal, which was posted on the museum's website, it was stated that the "wealth Milligan and his colleagues enjoyed was directly related to the suffering of many thousands of enslaved Africans who were forcibly removed from their homes in West Africa to work and die on the plantations." By acknowledging that Milligan was remembered only for his wealth and for the accomplishment of the West India Docks, a project titled "Public Arts Project in Response to the Statue of Robert Milligan in May 2008" to reinterpret Milligan's statue was scheduled. However, the project was accomplished only three years later. In March 2011, the initiative titled "In the Picture," consisting of a display containing twelve pictures of artworks produced by Londoners from eleven boroughs, was finally unveiled. The artworks attempted to answer the proposed question: "A statue of Robert Milligan stands outside the Museum of London Docklands. Robert Milligan was an 18th century sugar trader. His business was inextricably linked to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Is this statue appropriate? If not, who, or what else could stand in his place?"⁴²

Through an innovative approach aiming to reinterpret Milligan's statue, for the first time Londoners had the opportunity to create virtual slavery countermonuments, spaces which, as James E. Young defined them, are "conceived to challenge the very premise of monument."⁴³ Despite this initiative, no plaque explaining Milligan's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade was added to his statue.

CONCLUSION

The wealth of Francisco Félix de Souza, Joaquim Pereira Marinho, and Robert Milligan resulted from their deep involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, and mainly when this activity was declared illegal. Despite the international official projects developed by UNESCO and other institutions and the numerous initiatives commemorating the bicentennial of the abolition of the British slave trade, in Benin, Brazil, and England, the public memory of these slave merchants remains alive and in some places almost intact, as they are still depicted as great businessmen and benefactors.

In various societies where the legacies of slavery are still visible, several organized groups pressured governments and official agencies to

commemorate the memory of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade. However, acknowledging the Atlantic slave past in the public space has also had unexpected consequences. On the one hand, in countries such as Benin, Brazil, and England, the stigma of being a descendant of slaves, as well as the social and racial inequalities associated with it, still persist. On the other hand, political and economic elites do not wish to publicly blame the descendants of perpetrators and prefer to not reconsider their public image of benefactors because they largely financed an important number of institutions, including hospitals, universities, banks, and companies, which still exist. Moreover, most of the descendants of these perpetrators continue to occupy prominent positions in these societies. Arraigning the perpetrators could provoke division and instability and lead the descendants of the victims to demand financial reparations. By building monuments and organizing exhibitions honoring the victims of the Atlantic slave trade former slave societies are certainly starting a process of recognizing the crucial contribution of the populations of African descent to their economic, political, cultural, and artistic prosperity, sometimes helping to foster self-esteem among the populations of African descent. At the same time, by circumscribing the public memory of slavery to a few specific places, governments and institutions also attempt to control the rise of this memory and the social groups who convey it. Because the memory of the victims and the memory of perpetrators are in competition, it is impossible to harmoniously reconcile them. However, in some former slave societies like Benin the memories of slavers and the slave returnees are closely intertwined, because among the latter group several individuals became slave merchants, even though the descendants of slaves kept locally are still stigmatized. In other countries, such as England, the process of identifying some perpetrators in the public space was a fruitful way to foment the discussion about the Atlantic slave past. However, in a former slave society such as Brazil the process of acknowledging the country's slave past is just beginning.

NOTES

1. See Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port" 1727–1892* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).
2. Robin Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 3–21. Recent studies have focused on the individual trajectories of these former slave returnees; see Lisa Earl Castillo, "Between Memory, Myth and History: Transatlantic Voyagers of the Casa Branca Temple (Bahia, Brazil, 1800s)," in *Paths of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Interactions, Identities, and Images*, ed. Ana Lucia Araujo (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011), 203–238.
3. See Nassirou Bako-Arifari, "La Mémoire de la traite négrière dans le débat politique au Bénin dans les années 1990," *Journal des Africanistes* 70, nos. 1–2 (2000): 221–231. In my book *Public Memory of Slavery: Victims and Perpetrators in the South Atlantic* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2010), I

- discussed the plural memories of slavery among the Aguda community; see especially Chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7.
4. About the Slaves Route, see Ana Lucia Araujo, "Caminhos atlânticos: memória e representações da escravidão nos monumentos e memoriais da Rota dos escravos," *Varia História* 25, no. 41 (2009): 129–148; "De victime à résistant: mémoires et représentations de l'esclavage dans les monuments publics de la Route des esclaves," *Les Cahiers des Anneaux de la Mémoire* 12 (2009): 84–102; and *Public Memory of Slavery*, Chapter 4. Other works include Gaetano Ciarcia, "Restaurer le Futur: Sur la Route de l'Esclave à Ouidah (Bénin)," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 192, no. 4 (2008): 687–706; and Dana Rush, "Contemporary Vodun of Ouidah, Benin," *African Arts* 34, no. 4 (2001): 32–47.
 5. Among the numerous works about the merchant, see Robin Law, "Francisco Félix de Souza in West Africa: 1820–1849," in *Enslaving Connections: Western Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery*, ed. José C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (Amherst, NY: Prometheus/Humanity Books, 2003), 189–213; Robin Law, "A carreira de Francisco Félix de Souza na África Ocidental (1800–1849)," *Topoi*, 2001: 9–39; and Alberto da Costa e Silva, *Francisco Félix de Souza, mercador de escravos* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2004).
 6. Chacha was the Souza's nickname, which later became a sort of noble title conferred to the head of the family.
 7. Christian de Souza, during the visit of Francisco Félix de Souza's memorial, Singbomey (Ouidah), June 19, 2005. See also Ana Lucia Araujo, "Renouer avec le passé brésilien: la reconstruction du patrimoine post-traumatique chez la famille De Souza au Bénin," in *Traumatisme collectif pour patrimoine*, ed. Bogumil Jewsiewicki and Vincent Auzas (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2008), 305–330; "Enjeux politiques de la mémoire de l'esclavage dans l'Atlantique Sud: la reconstruction de la biographie de Francisco Félix de Souza," *Lusotopie* 16, no. 2 (2009): 107–131; and *Public Memory of Slavery*, Chapter 6.
 8. "Discours de bienvenue du porte-parole de son Excellence Mito Honoré Feliciano Julião de Souza, Chacha 8 à la délégation de l'Université de Rutgers (État du New Jersey)," Ouidah, July 24, 2005.
 9. Interview with Emile Olougoudou, Ouidah, July 24, 2005.
 10. Frederick E. Forbes, *Dahomey and the Dahomans: Being the Journals of Two Missions to the King of Dahomey and Residence at His Capital in the Years 1849 and 1850*, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1966 [1851]), 106–108.
 11. John Duncan, *Travels in Western Africa in 1845 & 1846: Comprising a Journey from Whydah, through the Kingdom of Dahomey, to Adofoodia in the Interior*, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1968 [1847]), 114.
 12. Robin Law, "The Atlantic Slave Trade in Local History Writing in Ouidah," in *Africa and Trans-Atlantic Memories: Literary and Aesthetic Manifestations of Diaspora and History*, ed. Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Paul E. Lovejoy, and David V. Trotman (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2008), 274n20.
 13. David de Souza, during the interview with Honoré Félicien Julião de Souza (Chacha VIII) and David de Souza, Singbomey, Ouidah, June 19, 2005.
 14. See Bruce Chatwin, *The Vice-Roy of Ouidah* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), and Werner Herzog, *Cobra Verde* (1987).
 15. See Joel Noret, "Memories of Slavery in Southern Benin: Between Public Commemorations and Lineage Intimacy" (paper presented at the workshop "Politics of Memory: Making Slavery Visible in the Public Space," 125th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Boston, January 6–9, 2011).

16. On the issue of slave trade and cultural tourism in the region, see Ana Lucia Araujo, "Welcome the Diaspora: Slave Trade Heritage Tourism and the Public Memory of Slavery," *Ethnologies* 33, no. 1 (2011): 145–178, and Jung Ran Forte, "'Marketing Vodun': Cultural Tourism and Dreams of Success in Contemporary Benin," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 193–194, nos. 1–2 (2009): 429–452.
17. About African diaspora tourism in Bahia, see Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), especially Chapter 1.
18. The dam was listed as a Brazilian national heritage site by the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) in 1959.
19. This information is taken from his obituary, quoted by Cristiana Ferreira Lyrio Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho: Perfil de um contrabandista de escravos na Bahia (1828–1887)," (MA diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 1998), 32. See also Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia (hereafter APEB), Testamento do Conde Pereira Marinho, Estante 3, Caixa 1019, Maço 1488, Documento 5, 5v, fol. 6. I am indebted to Cristiana Ferreira Lyrio Ximenes, who generously shared with me her MA dissertation on Pereira Marinho, and who patiently answered my numerous questions about the slave merchant.
20. See Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 32.
21. Through archival research Tânia P. Monteiro showed how Portuguese traders who arrived in Bahia in the second half of the nineteenth century shared similar personal profiles. They quickly prospered and obtained important advantages in their trade activities in Bahia. See Tânia P. Monteiro, *Portugueses na Bahia na Segundo Metade do Século XIX—Imigração e Comércio* (MA diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, 1982). See also Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 33.
22. Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 58.
23. See Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 68. However, we were not able to confirm the connections between Marinho and the slave merchant Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva. For more information on Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva, see Carlos Alberto Lopes Cardoso, "Dona Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva Industrial Angolana da Segunda Metade do Século XIX," *Boletim Cultural da Câmara Municipal de Luanda* 37 (1972): 4–14; Douglas Lanphier Wheeler, "Angolan Woman of Means: D. Ana Joaquina dos Santos e Silva, Mid-Nineteenth Century Luso-African Merchant-Capitalist of Luanda," *Santa Barbara Portuguese Studies Review* 3 (1996): 284–297; Júlio de Castro Lopo, "Uma Rica Dona de Luanda," *Portucale* 3 (1948): 129–138; Mariana P. Candido, *Fronteras de Esclavización: Esclavitud, Comercio e Identidade en Benguela, 1780–1850* (México: El Colégio de Mexico, 2011), 59. I am indebted to Mariana P. Candido for providing me numerous references and documents on Ana Joaquina dos Santos Silva.
24. IHGB, Periódicos, *Diario de Notícias*, nº 92, 26/04/1887 qtd. in Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 59. About Domingos José Martins see David A. Ross, "The Career of Domingo Martinez in the Bight of Benin 1833–1864," *Journal of African History* VI, no.1 (1965): 79–90. Robin Law, "The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 1 (2001): 22–41.
25. See David Eltis et al., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org>. However, Verger found in Bahian archives thirty-six voyages of Marinho's vessels, of which only four were captured by the British Navy.
26. See Voyage 3585 in David Eltis et al., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org>.

27. Andorinha (1849), Voyage 3829, see Eltis et al., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org>.
28. Pierre Verger, *Fluxo e refluxo do tráfico de escravos entre o Golfo do Benin e a Bahia de Todos os Santos dos séculos XVII a XIX* (Salvador: Corrúpio, 2002), 461.
29. Ximenes collected a series of 1860s newspaper articles denouncing Marinho's activities. Titled "O Sr. Marinho—Sempre o Senhor Marinho!" these articles were published in the Bahian newspaper *Interesse Público*, whereas the responses defending Marinho were published in the newspapers *Pharol* and *Diário da Bahia*, under the title of "Sempre Calúnia!"
30. Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 109.
31. About the Santa Casa de Misericórdia da Bahia, see A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *Fidalgos and Philanthropists: The Santa Casa da Misericórdia of Bahia (1550–1755)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).
32. Other slave merchants members were also members of the institution, including João da Costa Junior and Francisco José Godinho.
33. Ximenes, "Joaquim Pereira Marinho," 113.
34. APEB, Testamento do Conde Pereira Marinho, Estante 3, Caixa 1019, Maço 1488, Documento 5, 14v, fol. 15.
35. Author's translation from Portuguese.
36. See Christine Chivallon, "Bristol and the Eruption of Memory: Making the Slave-trading Past Visible," *Social & Cultural Geography* 2, no. 3 (2001): 347–363, and Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *The British Slave Trade & Public Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press 2006), Chapter 1.
37. For a brief comment on these exhibitions see Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, "Uncomfortable Commemorations," *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 1 (2008): 223–233. See also in this volume: Richard Benjamin, "Museums and Sensitive Histories: The International Slavery Museum," and Geoffrey Cubitt, "Museums and Slavery in Britain: The Bicentenary of 1807."
38. Georgie Wemyss, *The Invisible Empire: White Discourse, Tolerance and Belonging* (Farham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 42.
39. For a detailed analysis of the numerous statues of slave merchants in London, see Madge Dresser, "Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London," *History Workshop Journal* 64 (2007): 162–199.
40. See Museum in Docklands, *London, Sugar & Slavery: Revealing Our City's Untold History*, a short walk that shows some of the city of London's connections to transatlantic enslavement," <http://www.museumindocklands.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/64C929D2-717B-4100-AD09-AE81ACCB7611/0/LSSETrail.pdf>.
41. For the official information regarding Milligan's statue, see Public Monument and Sculpture Association National Recording Project, <http://pmsa.cch.kcl.ac.uk/UEL/TH108.htm>.
42. See Museum of London Docklands, "In the Picture," <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Get-involved/Collaborative-projects/InThePicture.htm>.
43. James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 96.