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Unravelling Dublin's Memoryscape: The Legacy of Slavery in the Contemporary City

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UNRAVELLING DUBLIN'S MEMORYSCAPE:

THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY IN THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

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INTRODUCTION

"You don't have to be directly involved in trading enslaved people to be benefiting from the fact that slavery exists."[1]

We are now in a time of global reckoning with the pervasive and intricate impacts which the systemic exploitation of enslaved peoples had across the world. After the shocking death of George Floyd, and the rise of social movements like Black Lives Matter and Decolonising the Curriculum, the summer of 2020 saw the advent of a significant re-evaluation of the physical symbols of imperialism which remain throughout our cities, and what they mean for our identities.

In Dublin, there were no obvious imperial statues to address, from independence in 1922, the Irish Republican Army targeted symbols of British rule, largely removing the physical presence of imperialism from the landscape by 1966. This absence led columnist and former political editor of The Irish Times, Stephen Collins, to write an article declaring that 'amidst all the furore about statues and slavery, there has scarcely been a word about the fact that the most prominent statue in Dublin commemorates a political figure who had a profound impact on the slave trade', arguing that Dublin was 'unlike other cities' because it could take pride in its abolitionist legacy.[2] Of course, he was talking about Dublin's most famous statue, Daniel O'Connell, situated on the street named after him in the heart of the city. But the Irish call him 'The Liberator' not for his abolitionist fight, but his fight for Catholic emancipation. The statue can be misinterpreted in this way because there are no imperial

[1] Lois Kapila, 'A Dublin church reflects on how it benefited from slavery', Dublin Inquirer, 17 March 2021 <https://dublininquirer.com/2021/03/17/a-dublin-church-reflects-on-how-it-benefited-from-slavery/> [accessed 20 March].

[2] Stephen, Collins, 'We can take pride in our statue of Daniel O'Connell', *Irish Times*, 26 June 2020 <https://www.proquest.com/hnpirishtimes/docview/2600511297/732C4BA1BF454DEEPQ/6?sourcetype=Historical%20Newspapers> [accessed 12 January].

statues which remain in the landscape that would suggest that Dublin was complicit in empire, affirming this perception that it is 'unlike other cities' in the western world.

The rise of debates surrounding slavery and identity has encouraged another discourse which centres around the Irish as an exception to the dominant historical narrative. In 2000, 'To Hell or Barbados: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ireland' was published conflating the Cromwellian conquest and the corresponding involuntary indentured labour of the Irish in British colonies with racial slavery. This was written by Sean O'Callaghan, a non-historian who claimed not just that the Irish were the 'first white slaves', but also that the lack of sources meant we could assume 'that they were treated exactly as the African slaves', leading him to fabricate up stories of rape, torture, and murder from no specific evidence.[3] In 2007, there was another popular publication, this time in America by two more non-academics, its title claiming to teach 'the forgotten history of Britain's white slaves', with a sensationalist image of white hands bound in rope on the front cover.[4] In the last decade, far-right American groups with Irish ancestors have begun to mobilise this myth of Irish slaves using images like in Figure 1 to undermine the inherent racial element of slavery and its ongoing impacts on society today, demonstrating how important it is for Ireland to reflect on its legacy of slavery to prevent the further manipulation of Irish identity for racist ends.[5]

[3] O'Callaghan, *To Hell or Barbados*, pp.41-2
[4] Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America,* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2008)
[5] Liam Hogan, 'Two years of the 'Irish slaves' myth', *Open Democracy*, 7 November 2016 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/two-years-of-irish-slaves-myth-racism-reductionism-and-tradition-of-diminis/?source=post_page-----4965e445802a> [accessed 8th November]

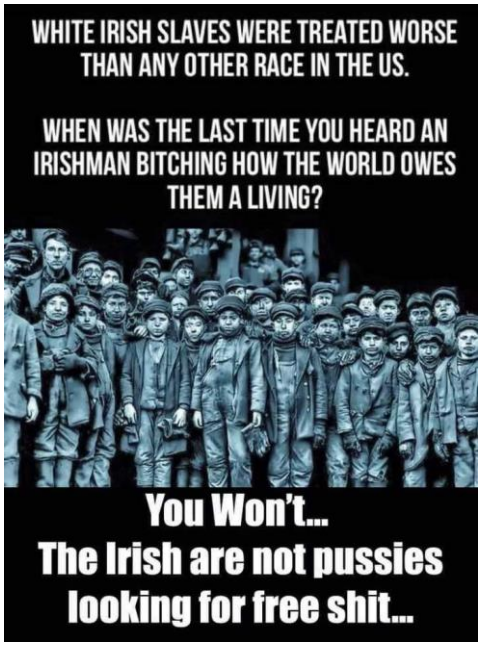


Figure 1. Liam Hogan, 'Two years of the 'Irish slaves' myth' *Open Democracy*, 7 November 2016 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/two-years-of-irish-slaves-myth-racism-reductionism-and-tradition-of-diminis/?source=post_page-----4965e445802a> [accessed 8th November]

Irish historian Liam Hogan has done extensive research into this subject, using his platform on *X* to integrate his academic work into the public sphere and refute these claims. In one post, he highlighted how the global debates of 2020 coincided with the virality of 'Irish slavery' in search histories online, predominantly driven by internet users in Ireland.[6] Potentially even more alarming is that currently in 2024, O'Callaghan's book is used by Amazon as the featured best seller for the cover of the *Barbadian History* section, despite it not being written by a historian.[7] The myth of white slavery very much continues in public discourse, illustrating how Irish identity is so much more strongly rooted in being colonised than partaking in empire. To understand how to combat this gap in historical memory, first we must understand how it was forgotten.

The Irish suffered for centuries at the hands of British imperialism, and these collective memories are understandably integral to Irish memory and identity. Amplified by the Easter Rising and wars of

[6] Liam Hogan (@Limerick1914) 'The Irish Slave meme', X, 16 June 2020 <https://twitter.com/limerick1914/status/1272869047340879874?s=12&t=sMOMFndAB7-O1gOmRD3MXg> [accessed 15 December 2024].
[7] Amazon.co.uk, 'History of Barbados - Books', *Amazon*, <https://www.amazon.co.uk/History-of-Barbados-Books/b?ie=UTF8&node=271461> [accessed 12 April 2024].

independence, post-colonial Ireland had a justifiably strong sense of victimhood, and this was the context in which nationalism was constructed. This collective identity was created in tandem with the IRA's removal of British presence in the landscape, which also reflecting the city's complicity in empire. Therefore, while it is fair to say that Dubliners don't walk the city today with a sense of victimhood consuming the way they perceive their city; there is nothing obvious remaining in the memoryscape which would prompt a questioning of the past, and so Dublin's role in slavery has remained forgotten.

However, this study's focus is not on the obvious, it is at its core a study of absence. Upon a closer inspection of Dublin's landscape, legacies of slavery do emerge; and they were always visible, they had just remained unseen, because nobody was looking for them. By unravelling these legacies, these connections can be made in public memory, thereby making these spaces part of Dublin's memoryscape rather than perceived only as the everyday landscape.

This study does not attempt to define the extent of Ireland's debt to slavery. Instead, it centres on the inobtrusive sites of the memory of slavery in Dublin's landscape which have long been seen as banal parts of the landscape – the buildings along the quays where merchants carried out business in the trading of slave-produced goods, the houses that slave owners resided in, and the institutions built from slavery-derived money. These spaces and places provide physical proof which can put to bed the pervasive narrative that Dublin does not have a slavery past, demonstrating that the 'absence' of slavery from Dublin is not a result of its absence from the landscape, but rather a consequence of how the landscape has been perceived, due to the forgotten legacies in Ireland's national memory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historiography on Ireland and Empire

Empire was traditionally portrayed as something that was done to Ireland, but in the last twenty years historians have demonstrated that empire was something that Irish did to other people too. Nini Rodgers' book, *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery* published in 2007 was the breakthrough in this field, proving that Irishmen found ways to integrate themselves into all levels of white society and within many different empires.[8] Her work has greatly encouraged further research on the Irish in Empire.[9] However, in her chapter on Dublin, she does not provide enough attention toward how the city's impressive economic and population expansion directly coincided with the expanding slave economy it was involved in.[10]

Alongside the global reckoning of the public memory of slavery in the last five years, scholarship on Ireland's entanglement in slavery has expanded significantly.[11] In 2021 a Round Table was held by a collection of scholars on the practicalities and challenges of decolonising Irish history which recognised that this process of decolonising Irish history was split into two halves, those of coloniser and colonised.[12] This study offers an opportunity to move beyond the binary confines of colonised and coloniser which sit at the heart of this debate, connecting together the physical legacies of slavery which remain in Dublin's landscape demonstrates that it was in part through being a colonised

[8] Nini Rodgers, *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, 1612-1865* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.81
[9] See: K. Block and J. Shaw, 'Subjects Without an Empire: The Irish in the Early Modern Caribbean', *Past & Present*, 210 (2011), pp.33–60; T.G. McMahon, P.A. Townend et al 'Chapter 1: Introduction', in *Ireland in an Imperial World: Citizenship, Opportunism, and Subversion* ed. by McMahon et al, (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2017); Orla Power, 'Irish planters, Atlantic merchants: the development of St. Croix, Danish West Indies, 1750-1766' (PhD: NUI Galway, 2011)
[10] Nini Rodgers, 'Dublin, Sweet City' in *Ireland, Slavery and Anti-Slavery: 1612–1865* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.159
[11] Nicholas Draper, 'Ireland and British colonial slave-ownership, 1763–1833' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, ed. by Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) p.103
[12] Dháibhéid et al, 'Round Table', p.307

space that the city was able to profit both indirectly and directly from the New World slave economies.

Currently, the most notable work on this subject is Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean, a collection of interdisciplinary essays edited by Ciaran O'Neill and Finola Kane, released in 2023. This book nuances Rodger's research on the Irish abroad, but more significantly to my study, contends that scholars should give more attention to the Irish landscape in attempting to discern connections to a slavery past, arguing that this is what can provide tangible evidence that Irish families were deeply embedded in an economy dependent on Atlantic exploitation.[13]

The year beforehand, in 2022, Ciaran O'Neill was responsible for the Dublin City Council's annual commemorative lecture, his research is the first to illustrate how the absence of memories of the past in Dublin have come to impact the present, not just through the Irish slave myth, but also in political discourse. For example, while Taoiseach Micheál Martin tweeted about Joe Biden's ancestors being migrants of the famine, Michelle Obama's descendancy from an Irish enslaver has not been tweeted about, or even acknowledged in the Irish public sphere, because it does not fit the 'key narrative of exile and loss in Irish memory'.[14] The way history is perceived in the public sphere is still determined by the lack of recognition of Ireland's enslaving past. O'Neill has been driving the impetus to obtain the forgotten legacies of slavery in Dublin's landscape, also working alongside other professors with Trinity College Dublin under their Colonial Legacies Project, and publishing three papers online in 2023 which have been of vital insight to my research.

[13] Ciaran O'Neill and Finola O'Kane, 'Introduction' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, ed. By F. O'Kane and C. O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) pp.6-7
[14] C. O'Neill, 'The Public History of Slavery in Dublin', *Dublin City Libraries*, (2022), p.24

Historiography on Dublin's Landscape

Historians have long established that the landscape is central to the nation-building agenda, forming a locus for the retelling of national history especially for recently independent states.[15] Several studies have analysed the nationalising of Dublin's 20th century landscape, most notably the works of Yvonne Whelan, Andrew Kincaid, Erika Hanna, and David Dickson.[16] Dickson casually notes the presence of sugar merchants in the city, but beyond this none of these account provide any acknowledgement of how the imperial symbols in Dublin's landscape were connected to slavery and its legacy.[17]

Moreover, memory historiography has focused largely on the complex legacies of commemoration in the Irish landscape as a result of the ongoing internal conflicts, largely between Catholics and Protestants, and Republicans and Unionists. For example, David Fitzpatrick and his study of what he termed as 'decommemoration' by the IRA is insightful in acknowledging its significance for the construction of nationalism, but like much of both memory and landscape historiographies, only focuses on what it *added* to identity.[18] As memory scholar Aleida Assmann has established, collective memory is equally determined by the exclusion of histories which do not contribute to the positive formation of national identity, like Dublin's role in empire and slavery.[19] What has been forgotten, as

[15] Aleida Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* ed. by Robert Goodin and Charles Tilly (2006) p.215
[16] Yvonne Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin: Streetscape, Iconography and the Politics of Identity* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003); Andrew Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin: Imperial Legacies and the Built Environment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Erika Hanna, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-1973*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David Dickson, *Dublin: The Making of a Capital City*, (Massachussettes: Harvard University Press, 2014)
[17] Dickson, *Dublin*, p.286
[18] David Fitzpatrick 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A Chronicle of Embarrassment' in *History and Memory in Modern Ireland*, ed. by Ian McBride, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p.193; Guy Beiner, 'When Monuments Fall: The Significance of Decommemorating', Éire-Ireland, 56 (2021) pp.41-2
[19] Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', p.217

the prefix in (de)commemoration suggests, has received scant attention, as have the implications of this forgetting for Irish memory today. This dissertation aims to force a re-think of studies on Dublin's imperial landscape, which have hitherto been flawed in their analysis of the legacy of slavery in the city.

METHODOLOGY

Memory and Place

The intersection of memory and place provides an effective lens for studying the interplay between memory and prevailing historical narratives. Unlike other forms of memory such as films or books, physical spaces persistently exist and tangibly shape our daily lives. The concept of memoryscape, developed by Pierre Nora in his seminal work on *Les Lieux de Mémoire,* emphasises that spaces are not neutral, but carry the imprint of the past, influencing our perceptions and behaviours based on how we perceive them in the present.[20] Therefore, the interaction between space and the memory invested into it is not always conscious, often it is the very things we take for granted in our landscape, the streets we live on, the pubs we go to, and the train stations we journey between, which have historical nomenclature that has faded into our normality. Even the statues of historical figures which people pass every day are little acknowledged until the contemporary social climate brings them into the present, and the subconscious then becomes conscious. This ongoing interaction highlights the significance of memory and space in understanding how historical legacies continue to resonate in contemporary society.

[20] P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations*, 26 (1989), p.8-10

Actor-Network Theory

Yvonne Whelan uses the concept that landscape is 'written' by agents of power in analysing the removal of imperial presence in the landscape, but I will approach this study using Bruno Latour and Michel Callon's Actor-Network Theory.[21] ANT challenges traditional notions of agency by emphasising the role of non-human actors, such as the landscape, as well as human actors in shaping interactions in history. Instead of considering the landscape as a 'neutral placeholder', when conceived as a 'mediator', it can be seen as 'adding something to a chain of interaction or an association'.[22] This I will use to reveal how the removal of obvious imperial signifiers in the landscape was only considered in the context of human agency, taking for granted how this absence then fuelled the perception that Dublin did not have an association to slavery in collective memory. Moreover, it will illuminate how this perception can be dismantled through the unveiling of the properties and institutions connected to slavery-generated wealth, which had hitherto been neglected due their presence being taken for granted, perceived only as 'neutral placeholders'.[23]

The Irish National Archives

From my research in the Irish National Archives, I built a collection of newspaper articles from The Irish Times, The Irish Press and The Independent from 1925 to 1966. As I only had online access to The Irish Times database, which I have also used for more recent articles, this was vital to my research to provide variety of sources from which to draw my evidence on how the media, contemporary views of the public and the memoryscape interacted with each other. However, this study would have benefited further from the access to reports from local Dublin newspapers.

[21] Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p.14
[22] Bruno Latoure, *Politics of Nature* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004) p.104; Edwin Sayes, 'Actor–Network Theory and methodology: Just what does it mean to say that nonhumans have agency?', *Social Studies of Science*, 44 (2014) p.138
[23] Ibid, p.138.

An awareness of the political stances of these newspapers is equally important. For example, the Irish Press was especially known for its nationalist stance and, having been established by de Valera in 1931, often clearly supported his political agenda.[24] As Benedict Anderson asserted, newspapers play an important role in shaping nationalism and collective memory, especially in newly independent states, and the rhetoric used in news reports on the status of British monuments in Dublin emphasises the central role they played in structuring perceptions of this decommemoration in the lead up, enactment, and aftermath of these events.[25] I also gained access to government documents from the Ministry of Justice Department which focused on the damaging of British linked monuments, political lobbying for their removal, and the corresponding ongoing debates surrounding this.

UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database

I have used the UCL Legacies of British Slavery Database (hereby LBS) to geolocate those connected to compensation records with specific ties to Dublin, which produced 58 results.[26] The LBS website geolocates the properties of those who were awardees or beneficiaries of abolition compensation, but since this work seeks to understand the residual physical legacy of slavery, I argue that all claimants showcase their connection to slavery through the act of requesting compensation. Therefore, I then narrowed down this search to the 19 individuals tied to specific streets addresses

[24] David Robbins, 'The Irish Press 1919-1948: Origins and Issues' (MA: Dublin City University, 2006) p.41
[25] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016) p.25
[26] LBS (2024) https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/ [accessed 5 January 2024]

so I could pin these physical legacies on to a map of contemporary Dublin, shown below in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5.

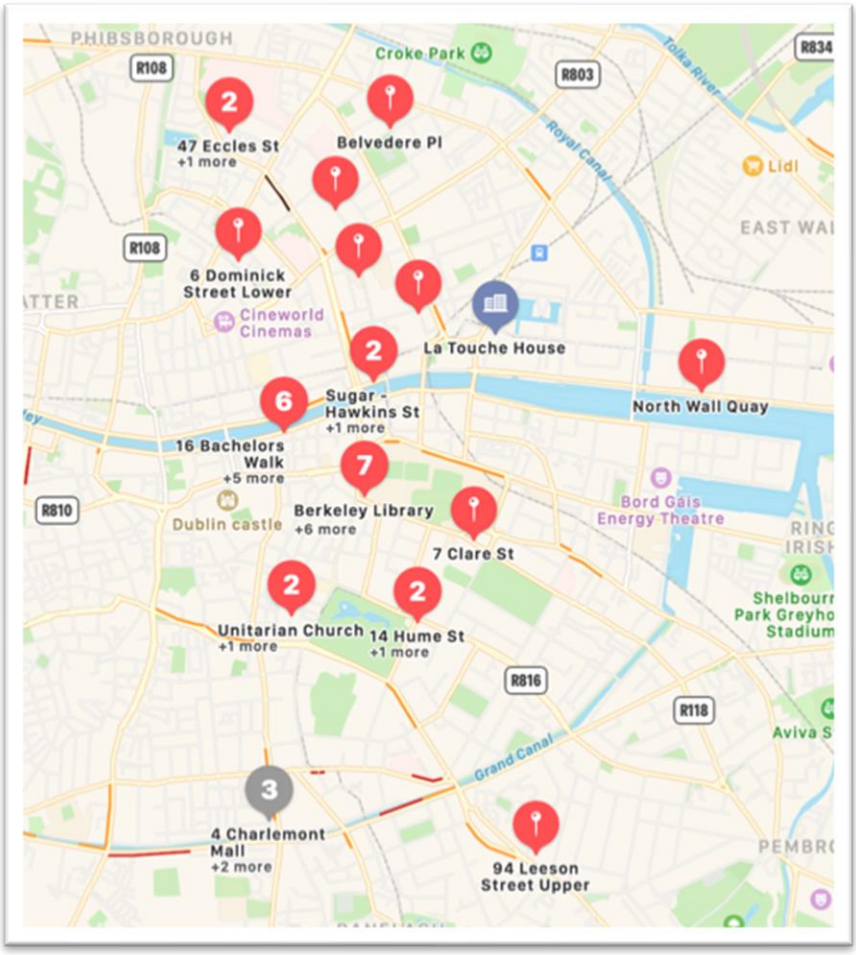


Figure 2. Wide view - Locations connected to those involved in the slave trade in Dublin

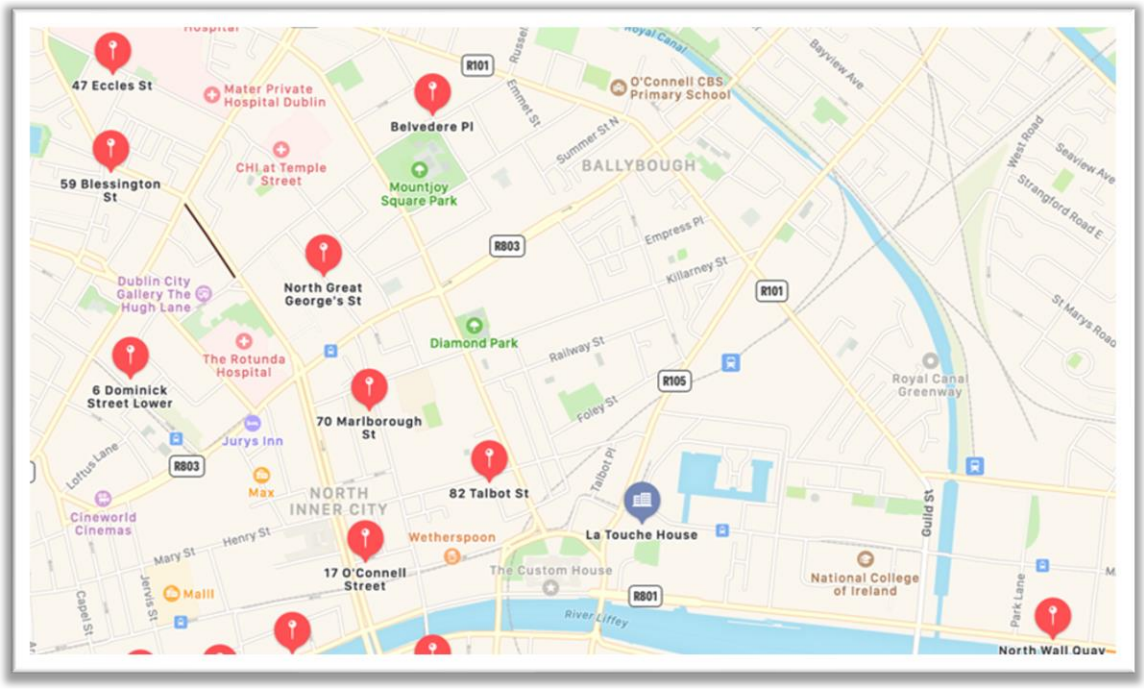


Figure 3. North section - Specific locations.

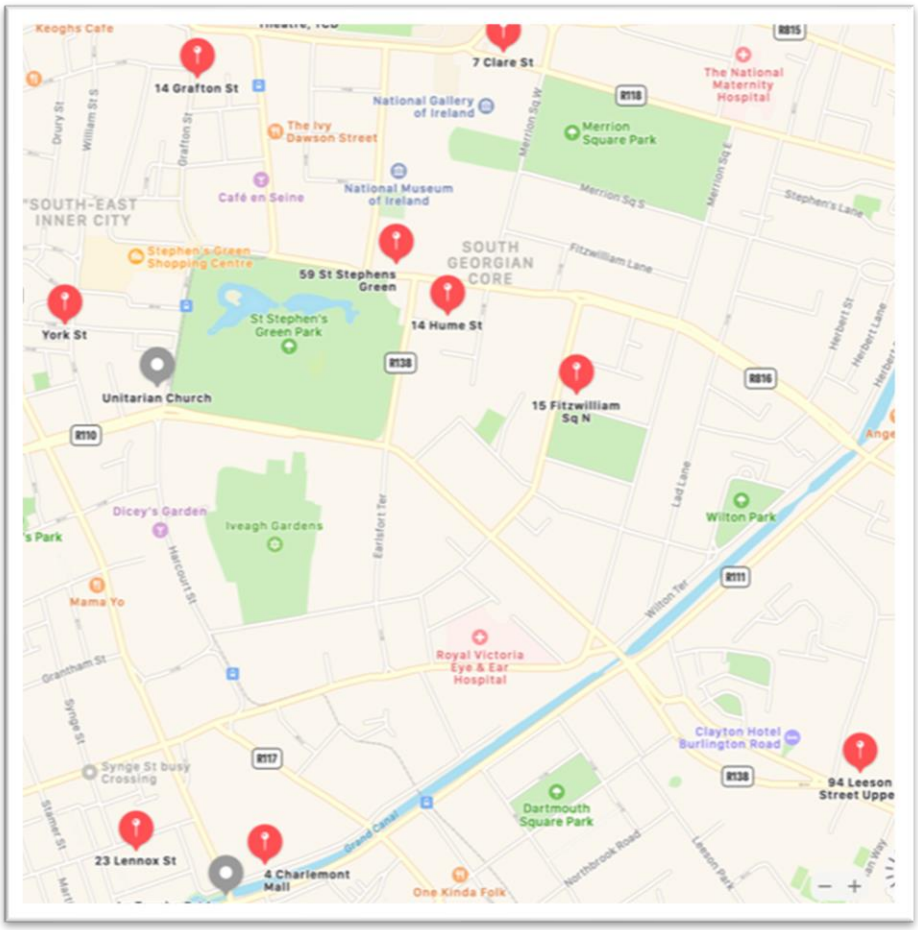
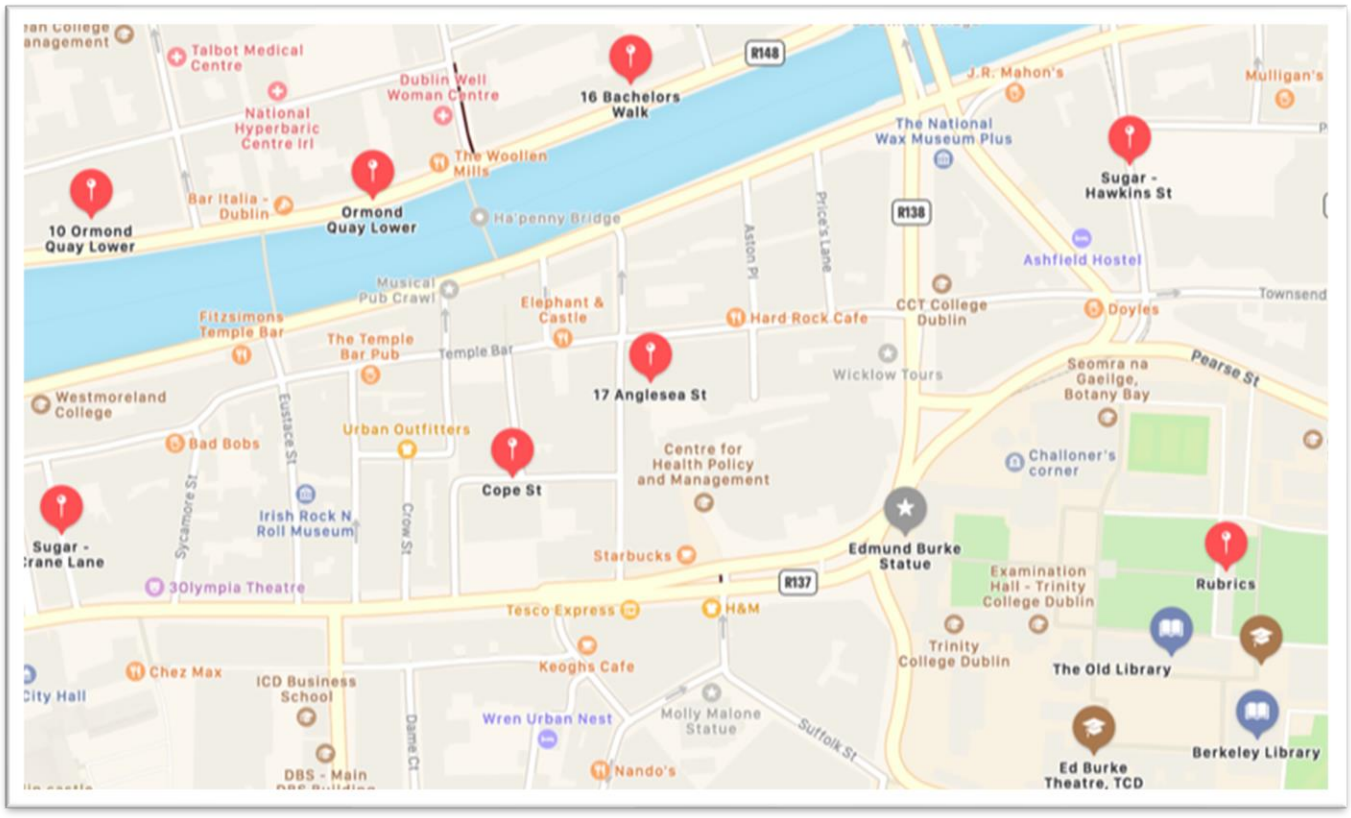


Figure 4, left. South Dublin specific locations

Figure 5, below. The Centre: Quays and Trinity specific locations



STRUCTURE

Chapter One – Creating the Myth of Imperial Non-Complicity:

This chapter will analyse how the erasure of British presence from the landscape of postcolonial Dublin had a significant amnesia effect on Irish collective memory and identity, fuelling a sense of distance from empire.

Chapter Two – The Physical Legacies of Slavery in the Contemporary City:

My second chapter will locate some of the specific physical legacies of those who profited directly and indirectly from slavery in eighteenth and nineteenth century Dublin which are still present in the landscape today.

CHAPTER ONE – CREATING THE MYTH OF IMPERIAL NON-COMPLICITY

Postcolonial identity in Dublin cultivated a perception of the past in collective memory where the Irish remained detached from empire, reasoned through their victimhood at the hands of the British imperial power which thereby situated them on the colonised side of the binary axis. The attacks by the IRA on concrete symbols of British power meant that this developing national identity was consistently interacting with the growing absence of imperial signifiers in the memoryscape, fuelling a narrative of Irish history rooted in oppression and colonisation which forgot Ireland's bonds with empire.

State-led Changes to the Landscape

Dublin's landscape began to change from the 1880s; monuments for figures such as Daniel O'Connell in 1882 and Wolfe Tone in 1898 reflected the rising Catholic and Republican presence in government and the corresponding decline of the Protestant hegemony.[27] Nevertheless, these few monuments did not distract from the fact that in 1922, post-independence Dublin still retained numerous imperial symbols scattered across its streets, quays, and bridges which had been used to signify Dublin's allegiance to Britain. Therefore, the Irish Free State immediately set out to replace this British-linked nomenclature with historically Irish names to remove these connections of British power and control from the nationalising landscape, an ongoing process for two decades.[28]

[27] Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p.222
[28] Ibid. pp.221-4

However, it would be wrong to assume that there was an overwhelming consensus about the perceived need to remove all imperial heritage from Dublin's landscape, especially in the case of grand, historical monuments, some of the public had not wanted a complete independence from Britain, and even supported empire.[29] As David Fitzpatrick has contended, the tensions that arose from these divides and the attempts to construct a cohesive, collective national narrative through state-organised commemoration often only served to create further controversy, which he termed 'a chronicle of embarrassment'.[30] State authorities were concerned about this jeopardising support for their position, alongside establishing their legitimacy as an independent state on the global stage, which resulted in a reluctancy to remove British-linked symbols unless the public was overwhelmingly clamouring for them to do so.

To avoid this problem, the government instead focused on adding to the monument landscape. The end of the Civil War in 1923 also marked the erection of the cenotaph on Leinster Lawn, commemorating two of the founding figures of Irish independence who died in the Easter Rising, Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith.[31] At its unveiling, President T. Cosgrave made a speech, commending that 'many a patriot before them had gone bravely to death with less success in sight.'[32] This strong nationalist rhetoric situates the Rising within a broader history of Ireland's fight and sacrifice for the creation of the Irish Free State, in the face of imperial oppression. The prevailing historical narrative quickly reflected the centuries of suffering faced by Catholic Ireland at the hands

[29] Sabine Marschall, 'The Heritage of Post-Colonial Societies' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. by Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), p.349–51
[30] Fitzpatrick, 'A Chronicle of Embarrassment' pp.195–7
[31] Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p.158
[32] Sera McClintock, 'The Cenotaph at Leinster Lawn', *Century Ireland*, (2020) <https://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/the-cenotaph-at-leinster-lawn> [accessed 1st April]

of its neighbouring aggressor, as David Brown has asserted, and this is seen here in the introductory speech to this monument. [33]

In 1935, the official memorial to the Easter Rising was erected at the General Post Office, an already extremely important site in national memory due it being where the rebels declared Ireland a Republic. It commemorated the death of mythological war hero and demigod, Cú Chulainn, offering yet another story of a heroic moral and political sacrifice in the name of the nation. The President, Eamon de Valera, called it an 'epoch in our history', and a symbol of Ireland's 'dauntless courage'.[34] The rhetoric of the Free State's first Presidents again provides insight into how these monuments were supposed to be perceived by the public; both examples mobilise memories of Ireland's fight against the British in both the recent and distant past to legitimise the state's position through the implication that Irish history has been building to this moment. But more significantly, it embedded into the landscape a simplified version of Irish history where Ireland was never complacent to British rule, and therefore, never complicit in empire.

The IRA and the Destruction of British Symbols

Although the government wasn't tackling the monument issue, the IRA had just fought and won the war of independence against British forces, and understandably they were strongly opposed to the enduring presence of these British figures in the landscape. Empowered by their victory, they enacted their own process of decommemoration; mutilating, bombing and generally disfiguring colonial

[33] David Brown, 'Free, and unfree' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, ed. By Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) p.55
[34] John Turpin and Fintan O'Toole, 'Modern Ireland in 100 Artworks: 1935 – The Death of Cúchulainn' *Irish Times*, (28 March 2015) <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/modern-ireland-in-100-artworks-1935-the-death-of-cuchulainn-by-oliver-sheppard-1.2154483> [accessed 15 April 2020].

monuments, focusing particularly on those which were in more public parts of the city. In tandem with the collective memories of Irish suffering and perseverance fostered by the state's construction of monuments, these acts of decommemoration fortified a sense of victimhood in Irish identity. Guy Beiner develops that due to the government's 'chronicle of embarrassment', this was much more frequent and reported than the official state-led commemoration, and so became at least equally as significant and created a 'subculture' of decommemoration.[35]

In May 1937, the Irish Independent reported the 'malicious damage' done to the statue of King George II in St. Stephen's Green.[36] This damage was caused a day after the coronation of King George VI, connecting this act to an antipathy for both the past and present British royal family, and making it the second royal statue which the IRA had now achieved in damaging enough to necessitate its removal.[37] The motivations driving the desire to rid Dublin's landscape of these monuments were complex, but from the beginning it was unmistakeably anti-British in tone rather than anti-colonial. This inherently anti-British sentiment of the IRA's political agenda can be seen in by the window smashing which occurred, targeting stores selling British memorabilia and other items, such as mini figures of Queen Victoria, flags, and records.[38]

In November of 1937, after another bombing of a Royal Coat of Arms symbol at Exchange Court, the Minister of Finance wrote to the Minister of Justice, referencing a recent publication of Wolfe Tone Weekly which had called for the removal of Queen Victoria's statue. He implored the government that 'serious notice should be taken of these incidents', because 'some people are so encouraged by

[35] Beiner, 'When Monuments Fall', p.56
[36] 'Statue of King Blown Up', *Irish Independent*, 14 May 1937, found in: NAI, JUS/2008/117/887
[37] Ibid. (the first monument to be blown up was King William III, College Green in 1928)
[38] See: 'Explosion Outrage' *Irish Times*, 14 May 1937, NAI, JUS/2008/117/887

the immunity which those responsible have enjoyed, that they feel they can now offer open incitement for a third bombing outrage.' [39] This is one of multiple letters complaining about government and police action taken, how where possible they effectively maintained a policy of non-intervention, strategically distancing itself to avoid responsibility, but still benefitting from the symbolic implications of these actions for fostering national identity.[40]

Although concrete, these monuments and symbols are always evolving, adapted by the perspectives brought with changing cultural and social contexts.[41] Seen by the IRA as the remaining symbols of British oppressive domination over Ireland, this was the context in which they were removed, and in which they were discussed in the media and the government. Republican identity of non-complicity in British empire was thereby solidified in the makeup of city, as they had been the 'agents of power' who had 'written' the landscape.[42] For the wider public, this absence in the landscape then interacted with the sense of victimhood fostered in identity, creating a cyclical dynamic of interpretation between human and landscape which served to shape collective memory. Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas corroborate significance of absence in landscape for memory, observing that:

'In every memorial, something has been left out or forgotten, in every removal, something is left behind, remembered. In both cases it is what is not there, what is absent, that causes this tension.'[43]

What has been remembered about the removal of these monuments in both public memory and historiography is the manner in which they were removed – in a highly politicised, nationalist act of

[39] Letter to the Minister of Justice, 20 November 1937, NAI, JUS/2008/117/887
[40] Letter to the Minister of Justice, 26 October 1937, NAI, JUS/2008/117/887; corroborated by: Beiner, 'When Monuments Fall' p.58
[41] Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', p.218
[42] Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p.17
[43] Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas, 'Between Remembering and Forgetting' in *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past*, ed. by Buchli and Lucas (New York: Routledge, 2001), p.80

retaliation against the remaining symbols of British imperial domination.[44] Therefore, the landscape has been perceived as passive, effectively 'black boxed' in Dublin's memory by the context of removal, seen as the way that Dublin succeeded in making itself an inherently Irish space.[45]

The Statue of Queen Victoria

There was one major British monument in the public eye which was removed by the state authorities; Queen Victoria from outside the Leinster House in 1948, the year before Ireland left the Commonwealth.[46] Calls to remove this monument were heightened due to its location outside the Parliament building, and it seems that by 1948, despite the government having avoided the matter for years, it became worse for them to do nothing.[47]

Scholars have recognised the vital role the press played in fuelling the rise of Irish nationalism,[48] and this was especially true concerning the ongoing debates on Dublin's imperial landscape. For example, an article in the Irish Independent asked the Taoiseach if he knew that 'the national feelings of the majority of Irishmen were outraged about the failure to remove the statue of the foreign monarch'.[49] The wealth of news articles building up to the statue's removal such as this one, and the large crowds who joined to watch on the day of removal, are testament to how decommemoration practices became central in Irish public discourse and identity, thereby influencing the perception of history in collective memory.[50]

[44] Beiner, 'When Monuments Fall' pp.55-7
[45] Latoure, *Politics of Nature* p.104
[46] Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, 192–213; King George I was also removed by the state from the Mansion House grounds in 1928, but it held little prominence due to its location away from the public eye
[47] The question of removal had been raised within the government as early as 1933, see: Letter to the President from the General Secretary, 25 March 1933, NAI TSCH/3/S6412A
[48] McMahon et al. 'Introduction', in *Ireland in an Imperial World* p.4
[49] 'Leinster House Statue' *Irish Independent*, 1 July 1948, NAI TSCH/3/S6412A
[50] See: 'Day to Day' *Irish Press*, 23 July 1948, NAI TSCH/3/S6412A

In the month leading up to the removal of Queen Victoria's statue, an article in the Irish Press was published, citing that 'Ireland was her one blind spot' in the forging of the imperial symbol of the crown, and calling her 'one of Ireland's worst rulers' who opposed 'Irish home rule, Irish land reform, and practically every other measure designed to ameliorate the evils which British misrule had brought on their country.'[51] This criticism may have in part been to emphasise the superior place Ireland was in now under Eamon de Valera, but the language demonstrates how Irish memory had now erased the nuances of its imperial past. Her role in empire is acknowledged, noting that Queen Victoria had 'strengthened the bonds between the dependencies and the mother country' and it does not decry empire, but the treatment of Ireland, her 'one' exception.[52] The idea that Ireland did not share the same bond with the metropole that England's other colonies was, as described in the article, contingent on the opinion that they did not reap any benefits from 'British misrule', thus fuelling the sense of imperial non-complicity.

Moreover, a day after the removal on the 23rd July, another article reports of a deputy who 'waved a five-pound note', which he said was an attempt of 'giving her back the fiver she contributed to the famine relief.'[53] The Great Famine is a horrific part of Irish history, in which they were undeniable victims to British misrule, but as Ciaran O'Neill and Finola O'Kane argue, its focus in Irish national memory has concealed the extent to which Dublin's engaged with empire from the late 17th century.[54] As we see here, the removal of this statue, like others, became inextricably tied to memories of Irish victimhood at the hands of the British, which amplified the perspective of Ireland as purely a colonised space.

[51] 'Out of Place' *Irish Press*, 9 July 1948, NAI TSCH/3/S6412A
[52] Ibid.
[53] 'Day to Day' *Irish Press*, TSCH/3/S6412A
[54] O'Neill and O'Kane, 'Introduction' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, p.7

After 1948, the removal of four more statues was caused by the IRA; in Phoenix Park, Lord Gough was bombed in 1957, and Lord Carlisle in 1958, and in St Stephens Green, the monument to Earl of Eglinton and Winton was covered in paint in 1954, and bombed four years later.[55] Finally, this process of decommemoration culminated in the bombing and subsequent removal of Nelson's Pillar on O'Connell Street in 1966, which had for too long symbolised 'the imperialistic ideology which for so long was responsible for the suppression of the human and nationalistic rights of our people'.[56] Dublin's collusion with the British empire had been all but forgotten; the city was a victim of empire, not a perpetrator.

Dublin in the '60s: A Modernising City

The fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966 meant state led commemoration was vital, and this focus on memorialising the past encouraged a historical revisionism which began to question the traditional perspectives, and thus the binary axis of victim and oppressor under which Irish history had been subsumed.[57] Kincaid asserts that revisionism 'made its most concrete mark' in the landscape, yet it was the landscape itself which stopped this revisionism from reckoning with many forgotten parts of Dublin's history, and this perspective undermines its agency to do so.[58] By this point, the apparent forms of imperial presence in the landscape had largely been eradicated from the public eye, and with it the visibility of Irish involvement in the imperial project.

[55] Beiner, 'When Monuments Fall' p.55; Whelan, *Reinventing Modern Dublin*, p.158
[56] 'Call To Remove Nelson Pillar' *Irish Times*, 10 June 1950 <https://www.proquest.com/hnpirishtimes/docview/524048732/F48867D60B2644B5PQ/3?accountid=9730&sourcetype=Historical%20Newspapers> [accessed 11 January 2024]
[57] Kincaid, *Postcolonial Dublin*, p.164
[58] Ibid, p.164

This is demonstrated by the debates that began to arise surrounding the preservation of Dublin's historical landscape due to the contentious aspect of the eighteenth-century city being intertwined with Ireland's legacy of colonialism, alongside notions of urban modernization and social modernity which were increasingly taking value in Dublin.[59] Historian Erika Hanna addresses how Ireland's imagined past on which its nationalism had been based had focused on a history of a continued struggle against the British, meaning that the eighteenth-century buildings of Dublin directly opposed an 'imagined past for current use'.[60] However, like Kincaid or Whelan, she does not consider that these buildings equally represented the accrued wealth from the slave economies of the New World as a result of their position within the British empire in the long eighteenth century. Despite the 'revisionism' of the 1960s, it seems that imperial non-complicity had already been too far established in Irish identity and the landscape.

Dublin's amnesia of its role in the slave economies of the New World is an unforeseen, indirect consequence of the political retaliation of IRA members who wanted gone the British symbols of domination over Ireland, and a government who wanted to remain as impartial as possible. This fuelled an already present colonised identity, which was likely to be questioned in years to come by the very emblems of imperialism which were being erased, and thus Dublin's role in slavery was forgotten.

[59] Ibid, p.151
[60] Hanna, *Modern Dublin*, p.45

CHAPTER TWO – THE PHYSICAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY IN THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

In recent years, some of Dublin's most celebrated and commemorated figures have come under scrutiny for their slavery connections. In 2020, it was revealed that one of Trinity's most prized and celebrated alumni, George Berkeley, was an outspoken advocate for slavery, and on his 'farm' in colonial Rhode Island, he had his own slaves. [61] Trinity has confirmed the renaming of the Berkeley Library and launched an investigation titled the Colonial Legacies Project, which has also led to the questioning of Edmund Burke, who's more confusing stance on slavery has led to ongoing debates about whether his 1868 statue should be removed from the North entrance. The strong desire of many to defend this man as 'of his times' is telling of how Irish identity does not connect itself to a slavery past, but, as Ciaran O'Neill has cited in his work for the project, Burke's lengthy support for West Indian interests in parliament went beyond 'condoning disagreeable necessities'.[62]

Dismantling the celebratory attitudes towards famous figures of Ireland's past with legacies of slavery is of great importance for public memory, however this work needs to reach the men, women, and families whose names do not ring bells in the minds of Dubliners. While work still needs to be done to dismantle the legacies of those celebrated in Irish history who partook in slavery, this chapter will also set out to emphasise the importance of unravelling the stories of the unknown if we are to truly grasp Dublin's legacies of slavery. First, I will focus on the growth of the provisions trade in Dublin

[61] Ciaran O'Neill, Patrick Walsh et al. 'Draft Trinity Colonial Legacies Working Paper on TCD and Slavery' (2023) Trinity Colonial Legacies, <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/104217/Trinity%20Colonial%20Legacies%20Working%20Paper%20on%20TCD%20and%20Slavery%20Revised.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [accessed 18th March 2024] p.1
[62] Ibid, pp.15-8

from the late 17th century. Although sugar was the 'important bond attaching Dublin to the slave economies of the new world', this has prevented scholars on Dublin's history from engaging effectively with how the provisions trade fostered the connections which allowed sugar to thrive, and this also provides insight into how, in being a colonised space, Dublin was afforded certain opportunities which stimulated its trade.[63]

The Provisions Trade

The transatlantic expansion of the trade of Irish salted meats began in the second half of the 17th century, very quickly becoming a staple of the diet of the enslaved population on the growing sugar plantations. The letters from the Governor-General of the Franco-Caribbean colonies in 1672 testify to this; he reported that if the prohibition on Irish beef continued, 'the Islands couldn't be struck by a worse catastrophe, because if the slaves are lacking in beef, colonists will be lacking in slaves.'[64] Nini Rodgers does not mention the salted meats trade in her chapter on Dublin, leading her to the assumption that eighteenth-century Dublin was correctly described by those before her as having 'no significant direct colonial trade'.[65] However, this is untrue. Franco-Caribbean plantations continued to expand and Irish salted beef remained central to the diet of their enslaved populations, so much so that the French government granted and renewed multiple decrees from 1727-1741 which allowed direct trade to take place between French Atlantic ports and Dublin and Cork.[66] Moreover, Ireland's economy was also boosted by the commercial freedom granted to England's colonies to trade among ports in the 'first British Empire', which was especially prominent after the Navigation Acts of 1731 and connected Irish merchants to large importers of salted meat in the

[63] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.160; Dickson, *Dublin*, p. 286
[64] Bertie Mandelblatt, 'A Transatlantic Commodity: Irish Salt Beef in the French Atlantic World', *History Workshop Journal*, 63 (2007) p.19
[65] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.159
[66] Mandelblatt, 'A Transatlantic Commodity' p.35

Caribbean and North American colonies.[67] This is further emphasised by the correlation between the peak engagement of Britain in the transatlantic slave trade, when over 830,000 African captives were taken, and the height of Irish meat production from 1750-1775.[68] Dublin's landscape was deeply connected to the development of plantation slavery through the reciprocal relationship of economic growth, as trade burgeoned, Dublin could find its merchants on the quays of the river Liffey.

The Irish linen trade also expanded remarkably alongside the transatlantic slave economy. It was the type of linen produced, that of low-quality cloth used to clothe enslaved peoples, which was most desired by buyers. In 1743, a bounty was introduced by the metropole to incentivise the production of this cheaper, coarser linen in Ireland, in the hope of claiming the market from German competitors, and to better supply their colonies. This encouragement made the Irish linen industry flourish across the country, but the ability of Dublin merchants to finance the marketing of the cloth to England meant Dublin Linen Hall became 'the destination of choice'; in the latter half of the eighteenth century, linen was the second largest category of consignments exported from the port of Dublin.[69] In this instance, being an English colony provided the provisions trade with the means to expand in eighteenth century Dublin, reflected in the increasingly busy and populated areas surrounding the port.[70]

[67] Jonas Vargas, 'Charque and Tasajo (Salt-Cured Beef) as an Atlantic Commodity in the 18th and 19th Centuries', *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, (2023) p.175
[68] Vargas, 'Charque and Tasajo' p.168
[69] Power, 'Irish planters, Atlantic merchants' p.130; Karen A. Cheer, 'Irish Maritime Trade in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Patterns of Trade, Market Structures, and Merchant Communities' (MA: Victoria WGTN, 2008) p.23
[70] O'Neill, 'Public History' p.3

Dublin's Sugar Merchants

The provisions trade facilitated the growth of the sugar market in the eighteenth century, for example, Irish Presbyterian merchant James Dunn, shipped salted goods to Jamaica for sugar from his Dublin counting house on Lower Ormond Quay, partly facilitated by his connections to the Irish John Byrn, who owned a goods store in Kingstown.[71] A reciprocating trade relationship was devised between sugar and Irish goods like linen and salted meats, but also more generally through the connections fostered between Dublin and those in French and British sugar colonies. It is important to destabilise the perception that Dublin only engaged and profited indirectly through England. Although it is true that most imports and exports travelled through British ports first, this narrative can take away from the agency held by Dublin's merchants and traders, suggesting the city and its inhabitants were just a pawn of the imperial power who reaped all the financial benefits.

Some individuals did manage to take advantage of the opportunities that were presented in Dublin, Simeon Hardy and his brother John Peter used their connections to Ireland to facilitate trade from 1812 between sugar from their Barbadian plantation and Irish goods, likely to feed and clothe their enslaved, or sell these goods to others for the same purpose.[72] In 1837, Simeon Henry Hardy Junior was awarded £269 18s 7d for the 13 enslaved held at the time of claim execution, an approximate £37,800 today.[73] While we can't trace the destination of all the money from the trading and enslaving enacted by the Hardy family, the awarded compensation is directly connected to Dublin, the address marked as 15 Fitzwilliam Square North. It is intricate and nuanced connections such as these which

[71] Thomas Truxes, 'Doing business in the wartime Caribbean: John Byrn, Irish merchant of Kingston, Jamaica (September–October 1756)' in Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean, ed. By Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) p.91-2

[72]LBS, Simeon Henry Hardy junior (2024)<http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/1164> [accessed 1st April 2024]

[73] Ibid; CPI Inflation Calculator (2024) <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1782?amount=29675.65> [accessed 21 April 2024].

have escaped our historical narrative, and which must be recollected – these are the physical legacies slavery has left behind, even if they only seem to be the houses which Dubliners pass each day.

Sugar brought significant wealth to Ireland and was undoubtedly key to Dublin's economic development in the 18th and 19th century.[74] Sugar bakers took over; two thirds of Ireland's sugar was refined in Dublin and in 1778 it housed 24 refiners and bakers, and as Finola O'Kane's recent research has discovered, these were focused on Hawkins Street, just south of the quays, and in the Liberties by Crane Lane.[75] As O'Kane corroborates, Dublin's landscape was being vastly impacted through its economic links to the slave economic of the New World, both directly through the cropping up of new sugar-based businesses, and indirectly through how these profits were reinvested into the economy.[76] Moreover, Nini Rodgers work has delineated how sugar fuelled the rise of the Catholic middle class. The most obvious example is Edward Byrne, a sugar-baker who became was contemporarily recognised as 'wealthiest Catholic merchant in Ireland', after it was discovered he paid an annual £80,000-100,000 in customs duties.[77] His business was in a predominantly Catholic-merchant area just below Usher's Quay, in what is now the forgotten Mullinahack neighbourhood, but his property on North Great George's Street remains, meaning there are still connections to be made between his engagement with the slave economy to Dublin's present landscape.[78]

[74] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.160
[75] O'Kane's unpublished work cited in: O'Neill, 'Public History' p.13-4
[76] Finola O'Kane, 'Designed in parallel or in translation? The linked Jamaican and Irish landscapes of the Browne family, marquesses of Sligo' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, ed. By Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) p.282
[77] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.174
[78] Ibid, p.174; C.J. Woods 'Byrne, Edward' (2009) <https://www.dib.ie/biography/byrne-edward-a1324> [accessed: 14 February 2024]

Individual ties to Slavery

My focus will now turn to two prominent planter families who resided in Ireland. The Delap family were some of the biggest planters in Antigua, owning the estates Mount Eagle and Orange which by 1782, the year they passed down to Robert Delap, amassed a worth of £29,675.65, including the valuation of 346 enslaved peoples, worth an unimaginable £6,276,782 today.[79] In Robert's will, he left his leasehold house in York Street to his wife, with the length of time in which these plantations had been in the Delap family, how much of the purchasing power for their properties in Dublin was provided by the wealth amassed from their involvement within the slave trade?[80]

Moreover, not all merchants stopped off in metropolitan ports first, some went directly to Dublin with their sugar, like the Wilson family. With extensive slaveholdings in Trinidad inherited from his father Joseph, nine different claims for 451 enslaved people in Trinidad in the West Indies paid out a huge £23,324 7s. 9d to Thomas Wilson in 1836, putting Wilson in the top bracket of Trinidadian slaveowners in the period.[81] The LBS database also provided the details of Joseph's will, registered in 1815, which notes his house at 10 Lower Ormond Quay, along with his shipping premises as North Wall Quay.[82] O'Neill has also done work on the remaining 'Grand Houses' in the Southern suburbs of Dublin, of which the Wilson family owned three, providing examples of slavery legacy which remain that go even farther than the major city area.[83]

[79] LBS, Robert Delap (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146644529> [accessed 14 January 2024]; CPI Inflation Calculator (2024) <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1782?amount=29675.65> [accessed 21 April 2024].
[80] Robert Delap <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146644529>
[81] LBS, Thomas Wilson (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/28386> [accessed 10th January].
[82] LBS, Joseph Wilson (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146654161> [accessed 18th January 2024].
[83] O'Neill, 'Public History', p.18

Black-boxed Sites of Memory

These places are taken for granted as long-standing sites of the landscape, and the years of history they have seen are forgotten. What of 'The Auld Dubliner' on 17 Anglesea Street, a popular spot in Temple Bar which was owned by Peter Dumoulin in 1837 when he pursued a claim of £2,000 for enslaved people in Trinidad?[84] Or the Sketchers store on 14 Grafton Street which was inhabited by Jamaica claimant Thomas Kelly, and John Jameson who was awarded £391 6s 2d as an assignee for enslaved on an Antiguan plantation and lived at 17 Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street).[85] Even the Sherbourne Hotel on St. Stephens Green; while their recent controversy was quashed as the resemblance of their statues to slaves was established as a coincidence, the large hotel now subsumes many old houses on the street, such as number 59, which was owned by Espine Batty who was awarded over £4,892 worth of compensation for his Jamaican plantations.[86] These are just a few examples of the generations of inhabitants stretching long before us, illustrating that while they seem like the banal houses, shops and properties which need not be questioned, there is a wealth of history held by these places and spaces across Dublin.

To expand on this, using his theoretical framework of Actor-Network theory, Latoure discusses how upon becoming accepted in society for a certain use, 'entities become states of nature, self-evidences, black boxed'.[87] As they become part of the common world, they are no longer discussed. Dublin does not connect itself with a history of slavery, and so there has been no drive to probe the histories of this landscape – after all, why look for slavery in a city which supposedly was not complicit in it? The complex histories and interactions connected to these houses have therefore been black

[84] LBS, Peter Dumoulin (2024) <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146630519> [accessed 14 March 2024].
[85] LBS, Thomas Kelly (2024) <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146630545> [accessed 14 March 2024]; LBS, John Jameson (2024) <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/768> [accessed 14 March 2024].
[86] LBS, Espine Batty (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/14307> [accessed 2nd Feburary 2024].
[87] Latoure, *Politics of Nature*, p.104

boxed by society, these houses considered as self-contained entities, rather than analysed through the lens of the reciprocal relationship between the landscape and humans, and how this can change our perception of history. In the same way that the impacts of the removal of British presence in the tweniteth century were obscured due to the preoccupation with the IRA, or the human agents, again in this case a dismissal of the agency of landscape in shaping our view of the past means these histories will remain hidden.

The recognition of those who have lived in houses before our time is not a new phenomenon however, blue plaques can be seen across Dublin commemorating houses where famous people once lived. On 59 Blessington Street for example, a plaque commemorates Dame Iris Murdoch DBE, Irish-British novelist and philosopher who was born there in 1919.[88] What is not remembered, however, is that eighty-two years earlier, Charles and Maria Hunt received a large compensation fee of £2,216 12s 7d for 131 enslaved peoples on their Clay Hill estate in St Kitts, while residing at the very same property.[89] Ironically, Murdoch's work is best remembered for its focus on morality and the balancing between good and evil, and this subliminal contradiction reflects the tension between memory and forgetting in Dublin's landscape; where the history of slavery is not absent, but its memory is.

Institutional ties to Slavery

In the commercial context, Ireland provides cases of slave-owner connections to both commercial, financial, and private institutions. What has not been stressed enough by historians is the significance

[88] Sarah Burns, 'Iris Murdoch centenary marked with stamp and plaque', *Irish Times*, 11 July 2019, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/iris-murdoch-centenary-marked-with-stamp-and-plaque-1.3953918> [accessed 10 February 2024].
[89] LBS, Maria Bellenden Hunt (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/43939> [accessed 8th February 2024] - Maria's page also lists the address of her death in 1874, 94 Upper Leeson Street, connecting yet another property to enslavement.

of the absence of land tax in Ireland, which, unlike in Britain, meant the duties paid on the imports from plantation economies, sugar, rum and tobacco were quick to become the mainstay of government income.[90] As with the compensation records, it is not easy to trace how this money was reinvested into the economy once in the pockets of these individuals. However, a team of scholars working with Trinity have traced the tax revenues generated from transatlantic trade directly to the financing of the construction of buildings for Trinity College, which were facilitated through a succession of financial allocations approved by the Irish parliament. In December of 1698, £3,000 from the return of a new tobacco duty, just shy of 1% of the governments total revenue, was directly funded the 'enlarging their publick buildings and erecting lodgings'.[91] What is now Trinity's oldest building on campus, Rubrics, was built from the money of slavery.

Moreover, there were further grants from revenue through the eighteenth century; supporting the construction of Trinity's famously beautiful Old Library, and the continuation assembly of the West Front in 1754.[92] Although the immense £15,000 that the library was granted by 1722, was not explicitly linked to slave-derived profits as Rubrics was, the tariffs levied on imports from plantation economies, mainly sugar and tobacco, were essential sources of government income.[93] Whether or not the money came directly from these import duties, the extra revenue it produced must have played a part in the ability to produce such a large sum for the construction of these buildings.

[90] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.161
[91] O'Neill, Walsh et al. 'Draft Trinity Colonial Legacies Working Paper' (2023) <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/handle/2262/104217/Trinity%20Colonial%20Legacies%20Working%20Paper%20on%20TCD%20and%20Slavery%20Revised.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> p.5
[92] Rodgers, 'Sweet City' p.167
[93] Ciaran O'Neill, Patrick Walsh et al. 'Trinity's Colonial Legacies Project Draft Audit and Summary Document' (2022) Trinity Colonial Legacies <https://histories-humanities.tcd.ie/assets/pdf/research/tcl/DraftAuditandSummary.pdf> [accessed 18th March 2024], p.24

Additionally, the establishment of the Bank of Ireland in 1783, the first large scale and modern Irish bank, was entangled within the slavery landscape in Dublin. Many prominent enslavers, merchants and traders took shares in the Bank, with Joseph Wilson being one of the most prominent to do so and his son, who received the compensation, acting as the Governor to the Bank from 1838-40.[94] The major Catholic enslaver Valentine O'Connor was also a subscriber of £2000 to the foundation of the Bank of Ireland in 1783 and owned 6 Dominick Street, and Oakley Lodge, which neighboured the Wilson's property in the suburbs of Stillorgan.[95] His extensive slaveholdings can be seen by the huge compensation of £5,052 14s 9d received by his niece, Cecilia Blake from her inheritance of his two thirds of the Mount William estate in St Vincent, while she lived on 16 Bachelors Walk. O'Connor and Joseph Wilson both had an important role in founding Dublin's Chamber of Commerce, an organisation which continues today on 7 Clare Street. Their website only notes the 'significant contribution to the economy of the capital' these founders made, without any acknowledgement of the connection of these founders to slavery.[96]

Bankers and merchants were indeed so tied up that in 1831, Dublin MP George Moore, who resided 14 Hume Street, presented a petition, of which Wilson was likely party, to the House of Commons from 'Bankers, Merchants, and others' in the Irish capital 'connected with the West Indies'. Although it didn't outright oppose abolition, it implored the House 'not to interfere with planter property' and sought for 'full and fair compensation'.[97] It was not just the merchant and planter elite in Dublin who were concerned about the loss of slavery profits, but bankers who knew their investments were a result of this. There is more work to be done than just locating the houses that these people resided

[94] LBS, Thomas Wilson <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/28386> [accessed 21 January 2024].
[95] LBS, Cecilia Blake (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/25811> [accessed 18 January 2024].
[96] Dublin Chamber, Past Presidents (2024) <https://www.dublinchamber.ie/About-Us/Past-Presidents> [accessed 26 March 2024].
[97] S. Kleinman, 'Ireland and the £20 Million Swindle', *History Ireland*, 29 (2021), p.26

in while profiting from the subordination of the enslaved, how many institutions will we able to trace to investments from slavery-derived wealth?

One cannot write about banking and slavery in Dublin without mentioning the La Touches, the founders of the Bank of Ireland. While the fortune they originally invested in the bank was built off their family's role cloth industry in the 17th century, as demonstrated, they received investments from other prominent slaveowners in Dublin. Moreover, the LBS database has shown that in around 1817 William and Peter La Touche became the owners of two plantations in Jamaica through marriage. For this they received almost £7,000 in 1835 as compensation for the 385 slaves they owned in Jamaica, the equivalent of £1,114,601.56 today.[98] All entries relating to the family in the Dictionary of Irish Biography render their slave-ownership invisible, but what remains visible is the La Touche name in Dublin's landscape.[99] Located in the International Financial Service Centre, the office building La Touche House was named to commemorate the legacy of the banking family, and in 2020 was purchased for €84.3 million.[100] The La Touche Bridge across the canal in Rathmines was named after the family member David for his role as director in the Grand Canal Company. Although David wasn't an enslaver, this allows the legacy of the La Touche family to be commemorated for the good they did for Dublin, which allows the family's connection to slavery to remain obscured. Significantly, recent work from Finola O'Kane Crimmins, has tracked cumulative evidence that suggests that Belfield, the University College Dublin campus which was once owned by the slave-owners the La Touches, may have gotten its name, and some inspiration for its spatial makeup, from

[98] LBS, William Digges La Touche (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/43378> [accessed 20 January 2024]; LBS, Peter Digges La Touche (2024) <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/46255> [accessed 20th January 2024]; CPI Inflation Calculator (2024) <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1782?amount=29675.65> [accessed 21 April 2024].
[99] Turlough O'Riordan, La Touche, Peter (2009) <https://www.dib.ie/biography/la-touche-peter-a4625> [accessed 21 January 2024].
[100] O'Neill, 'Public History', p.13

a La Touche plantation in Jamaica.[101] These physical legacies of the La Touche family name are passed every day without second thought - how many Dubliners cross the bridge, students walk across campus, or employees go to work each day and yet remain unaware of the family's role in owning nearly 400 enslaved people?

The way that the landscape has been perceived has for so long written how Dubliners view their history, constituting a cycle of forgetting. By uncovering the physical connections to slavery which have always been present in the city, but have been absent from memory, this cycle can be stopped as these places become sites of memory which demonstrates Dublin's connection to an imperial past.

[101] Peter Digges La Touche <http://wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/46255>

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates the significance of absence in Dublin's landscape in shaping collective memory and identity, and therefore influencing what memories are excluded and forgotten. The way that the landscape has been perceived has for so long determined how Dubliners view their history, but it is by looking how the landscape has informed that perspective which can begin to dismantle this conception. Despite the governments struggle to create a cohesive unified identity through commemoration, the removal of British symbols became a significant element of national identity. This *real* absence impacted how Dubliners viewed both the present and the past, creating a *perceived* absence of any connection to empire in the present landscape and affirming the idea that their city was never complicit in the imperial world of subjugation.

Moreover, by using Actor Network Theory, this study has been able to look beyond what humans take for granted in the landscape every day, demonstrating that as historians we should always be ready to consider society's 'neutral placeholders' as potential sites of memory. Analysing the interaction between space and memory emphasises that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and this is something of especial importance when addressing the convoluted and silenced histories of slavery.

In November 2023, there were violent riots in Dublin after it was discovered that a man who had attacked young children with a knife was of non-Irish ethnicity. Deeply xenophobic language consumed the media, and Irish public figures even engaged, such as sportsperson Conor McGregor

who declared that Ireland was 'at war' with these 'sick and twisted people who should not even be in Ireland in the first place'.[102] On a personal level, my mother's close friend, who's home I arrived at a week later to begin my research, told me that she had refrained from going into the centre as her sons feared her being targeted due to her multi-racial background, despite being a life-long Dubliner. This response to the attack lays bare the alarming rise of far-right extremism in Ireland, which centres around the exploitation of nationalist narratives rooted in historical grievances, such as the Irish Slave myth.[103]

By unveiling the other side of Ireland's colonial past, these myths used to justify and perpetrate hatred can be undermined in the public domain, and this is the intention of this dissertation. While studies of Irish involvement in empire are a crucial element of uncovering this forgotten history, this study bridges the gap between the obscured past and the contemporary city of Dublin. It contributes directly to public history: by mapping physical sites to those with connections to the transatlantic slave economy, it provides hard evidence of Dublin's role in the slave economy which people pass every day, making this history tangible for those who attempt to continue to deny it.

[102] Adam Higgins, 'ONLINE OUTRAGE: Conor McGregor blasted for 'whipping up' immigration anger' *Irish Sun*, 24 November 2023 < https://www.thesun.ie/news/11737627/conor-mcgregor-blasted-dublin-riots/> [accessed 16 April 2023]

[103] Natalie Zacek, 'How the Irish became black' in *Ireland, Slavery and the Caribbean*, ed. By Finola O'Kane and Ciaran O'Neill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023) p.324

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