“WE DON’T HAVE RACISM UP HERE”

THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF THE PRESENCE AND ADVERTISEMENT OF SLAVES IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTLAND

By

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(Under the Direction of Jennifer L. Palmer)

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the influence and social impact of slaves in eighteenth century Scotland. It connects slave runaway advertisements, portraiture, court cases, enlightened thoughts, legal precedents, and anti- and pro-slavery sentiments which formed social discourse in eighteenth century Scottish society. Making the connections between these social elements present an alternative investigation of Scotland’s history within the Atlantic Slave Trade and involvement in human bondage. Such investigation sheds light on the importance of shifting the current understanding of Scotland’s slavery past from the Atlantic or Caribbean perspective of Scottish plantation owners and other Scots who participated in slaving communities throughout the Atlantic to social affairs within Scotland which influenced the entirety of the Scottish population, and later the entire world.
INDEX WORDS: Scotland, Eighteenth Century, Slavery, Runaway, Advertisements, Court Cases, Enlightenment, Pro-Slavery, Anti-Slavery, Portraiture, Legal, Social Discourse, Atlantic Slave Trade, Atlantic, Caribbean, Slaving Communities
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Scotland and Slavery: A Recovering History

Scotland has a long and celebrated history of abolitionist activism, but that history often overshadows the importance of the source for abolition—slavery. Scottish historians have focused on all aspects of Scotland’s history, without fully acknowledging Scotland’s involvement in the direct trade in enslaved Africans. Twentieth-century scholarship shrouded Scotland’s history with African slavery in the grander narrative of its involvement in abolitionism and the continued myth of the absence of Scottish participation in the slaving systems of the Atlantic. This denial is not limited to the current generation of Scots, but instead has filtered throughout popular history since the time of the trade. According to T.M. Devine in *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection*, public denial of Scottish involvement can be observed as early as 1883 in newspapers such as the *Glasgow Herald*, which commemorated abolition with bold assertions like:

> It is to Glasgow’s lasting honour that while Bristol and Liverpool were up to their elbows in the slave trade, Glasgow kept out of it. The reproach can never be levelled at our city as it was at Liverpool that there was not a stone in her streets that was not cemented with the blood of a slave.¹

While the bold assertion made by the *Glasgow Herald* has merit because Scotland was not an epicenter for the direct trade of enslaved Africans, it explicitly disregarded

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Glasgow and Edinburgh’s history with sugar, tobacco, cotton, and rum plantations throughout the Atlantic.²

Works by historians Jacob M. Price, Richard B. Sheridan, Kenneth Morgan, and T.M. Devine showcase the economic stability experienced in Scotland due to imports derived from slave labor throughout the Atlantic throughout the eighteenth century.¹ Sources of imports ranged from the Chesapeake to the Leeward Islands and were not limited to influencing economic stability and success unique to Glasgow, but also to other Scottish port economies including Edinburgh. The profits from the imports resulted in substantial economic stability that facilitated the expansion of linen industries, promoted a swell in investments in the West Indies, and amplified Scotland’s dominance in the trade of plantation sugar, West Indies rum, and Chesapeake tobacco. Primary imports of those raw materials turned into industrialized commodities and expanded the commercial trade to established ports throughout Scotland as leading destinations for their second exportation (usually second of many) and repurposing. Through these commodities the dominance of Scottish ports in the Atlantic system was seen throughout the eighteenth century and led to Scotland possessing “30 percent of the UK trade, and Scottish imports became more substantial than those for either the English outports or London itself” by

1758. This is especially impressive considering Scotland was considered politically unstable and Scots made up only 10 percent of the mainland in contemporary Britain.

Popular denial of Scotland’s participation in the slave trade may be explained by evidence that suggests that Scots did not witness some of the vital elements of the trade—the export or public selling of slaves. The minimal export of African slaves and the almost non-existence of slave selling blocks in Scottish ports led to popular ignorance and disillusion. Unlike citizens living in major slaving ports such as Liverpool, London, or Bristol, the Scottish people experienced little first-hand exposure to these horrors of the trade. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database estimates that only twenty-seven ships departed from Scottish ports at the height of Scottish involvement between 1700-1766, many of them containing only a handful of slaves before their arrival on the African coast. 3 Glasgow, Greenock, Montrose, and Leith functioned primarily as locations for importing staples produced by slave labor abroad, not as slaving ports. Imports from slave-holding regions that provided tobacco, sugar, cotton, rum, and other goods promoted the development of these Scottish ports. Port Glasgow was the leading example of that development because “without tobacco, Glasgow would not have reached eminence as a commercial city.”4

The economic growth from imports of staple crops like tobacco, cotton, and sugar created dynamic and lasting connections between Scotland, the Chesapeake Bay, and the West Indies. Those connections allowed Scotland’s influence to be neither internal nor

3 Information from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/hvRsWcUh.
limited to its ports, but to extended to the American South and the Caribbean in the form of credit and exchangeable commodities. Primarily in the Chesapeake Bay, Scottish merchants created a system of credit for smaller planters to establish themselves within the trade of tobacco. The availability of credit provided by Scottish merchants, bankers, and firms was the distinguishing factor in the Chesapeake. It allowed small planters throughout Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina to participate in commercial investments to “speculate in land, buy slaves, [and] clear land for cultivation.” The widespread scattering of general stores run by Scots within the Chesapeake provided needed credit to small planters and strengthened the resoluteness of Scotland’s involvement in the trade.

Renowned historian Jacob M. Price argues that the credit provided by Scots with commercial connections to Glasgow made Scotland not only relevant in its own sector, but also entrenched in the Chesapeake. By 1762, almost half of Scottish imports and 52 percent of exports were of Chesapeake tobacco. Twentieth-century economic studies such as Price’s *Tobacco in the Atlantic Trade* undoubtedly established the monetary connection of Scotland to societies throughout the Atlantic World, while also asserting the connection between Scotland and the slave trade. However, the latter connection was overshadowed by economic studies and left uninvestigated until recent scholarship began to explore the connection and how its omission has shaped Scottish historical remembrance.

Such overshadowing and apparent omission have led to Scots still not readily accept Scotland’s role in slavery, despite the recent scholarship which has proven this
denial false. Instead, they have welcomed the work of British and American scholars who have investigated English and American involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, with only limited mention of Scotland’s participation. The Scottish historian T.M. Devine openly admits that this amnesia regarding slavery is a direct consequence of prior scholarship, including his own. This phenomenon has allowed Scotland to avoid facing its direct involvement in the inhumane practice, which instead remained hidden under the umbrella of scholarship focused on the involvement of the United Kingdom. This amnesia can be observed in statements made by Scots such as “We don’t have racism up here, that’s an English thing” or “It Wasnae Us” when asked if Scotland ever participated in the African slave trade.

The reasons for Scotland’s unwillingness to acknowledge its affiliation with the slave trade might seem obvious, but the sources of Scottish amnesia extend beyond the brutality that characterized the trade. Alexander Murdoch proposes that one explanation is that the amnesia in popular consciousness resonates with the “notion that some of the success [of Scotland’s economy] could possibly be due to the territorial subjugation of other lands and to plantation economies which depended on slave labour in North

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5 A concern expressed by T.M. Devine in more recent books, as well as other historians and public figures who are actively working to illuminate Scotland’s dark past with African slavery and include it in Scottish history. The amnesia has also been addressed in many recent articles, such as Jackie Kay’s commissioned work which signified the 200th anniversary of abolition in the UK. In which she states “Most British people think of slavery as something that happened in America and perhaps the Caribbean” in her article published in the Scottish newspaper The Guardian in 2007. There are certainly other recent publications in newspapers and journals which agree with Kay’s assertion, but it stands to reason to heavily weigh Kay’s social experiences as she among the Scottish population who were unbelieving of their country’s historical connection to slavery, despite her personal African ancestry and descendence from Scottish African slaves.

America and the West Indies had precious little appeal for a society which, in the
nineteenth century, saw itself in the vanguard of the movement for slave emancipation.”
Furthermore, a complimentary explanation is the lack of an African slave presence in
Scotland in the eighteenth-century. This explanation resonates in the fact that although
some African slaves were brought to Scotland, primarily during the 1700s, there has been
no evidence to show that Scotland was a hub for the enslavement of Africans. Slaves
were generally brought to Scotland with owners returning from their Caribbean
plantations. Those brought to Scotland were classified as *servants* and did not consist of
more than one or two at a time. T.M. Devine and others describe *servant* numbers in
Scotland as minimal compared to the number of those enslaved by Scottish plantation
owners in the West Indies and North America and contend that it is the lack of a slave
presence in Scotland that resonated the most and has allowed Scots to continue to dismiss
the blatant connection between Scotland and slavery.8

The assertions that there was a limited number of slaves in Scotland has also
contributed to the limited body of scholarship investigating slaves in Scotland and how
they might have influenced Scottish society and the participation of Scots in the
abolitionist movement. Such assertions and lines of inquiry regarding the perceived
insignificant number of slaves in Scotland also suggest that domestic slavery was not
significant enough to merit as much analysis as slavery in the Caribbean and American

7 Murdoch, *Scotland and America*, 326.
However, simply dismissing the enslaved population of Scotland due to their silenced voices and small numbers obscures the narrative and extent of Scotland’s involvement in the slave trade. Though there is no doubt that the statistic of slave presence is weighted heavily against those who resided in Scotland, the contemporary presence of enslaved Africans in Scotland is no less significant than the presence of their counterparts in the West Indies, Caribbean, or American South. Concluding that slaves within Scotland were not as insignificant as their counterparts effectively limits the investigative potential of fully discovering Scotland’s slavery past. It also reinforces our already polarized understanding of eighteenth-century Scottish history.

Taken alongside twentieth-century works, recent scholarship has created a separated understanding of Scotland’s connection to slavery by presenting the connection as an isolated concept which functioned outside of Scotland, and one unaffected by domestic affairs and unrelated to Scotland’s overall historic narrative. This isolation is due to scholars presenting Scottish history as that of either abolitionism and the Enlightenment, or of Scots who traveled abroad to participate in the institution of slavery. In doing so, this polarization has essentially removed the notion of the existence of slavery and opposition within Scotland. Consequently, such polarization can also be seen within analysis of the court cases involving slaves during the growth of abolitionism. The court cases are examined as results of abolitionism as a way of tracking the progression of the movement and of Scottish law as it gradually changed to deal with the injustice of

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slavery; all the while not investigating the laws which allowed such a practice or the individuals who were directly affected by the fight against slavery. This isolation and separation of eighteenth-century events creates an understanding of Scottish history with slavery that is convenient and cleanly fits into the mosaic of a small nation on the verge of modernity. Instead, the more accurate interpretation of the historical connection between Scotland and slavery as one which consisted of a complex matrix of interrelated social, economic, political events of a society and nation torn by the enslavement of others.

In an attempt to bring together the unrecognized and isolated events of Scotland’s history with slavery, it is my aim to bring Scotland to the forefront of the narrative of the United Kingdom not only to expand upon the existing scholarship which solidified Scotland’s link to slavery, but to also present a historical map connecting varying parts of Scotland’s proud history. In doing so, I hope to present Scotland as a complex nation grounded on the concepts of freedom and Enlightened thought, but also as a nation and society which was not left unblemished in a world economy founded on slave labor. I argue that by turning the lens towards domestic affairs and investigating how Scottish citizens associated themselves with slavery, we can improve our understanding of how such a practice influenced and shaped the unique inner dynamics of Scottish society, while also mirroring the struggles of many European societies devoted to the Atlantic slave trade during the century of Enlightenment. Connecting the dots between Scotland’s economic, social, legal, and intellectual histories of the eighteenth century will bring it from beneath England’s shadow and show that it was not an anomaly of the time blind to
the world around it but was in fact a nation intimately involved in and shaped by slavery and the Atlantic slaving system, much like its European neighbors.

My research continues in the same vein of investigating African slavery in the domestic contexts as Iain Whyte and John Cairn, but I focus more heavily on the presence of African slaves in Scotland and how their physical and advertised presence influenced and was influenced by events within Scottish society. In investigating the presence and impact of the very people or ‘things’ which represented the ills of the world through advertisement, we gain an understanding of the complexities which characterized a nation uncertain of its own trajectory in a time defined by social and moral reform. Through the investigation of the enslaved within Scottish society during the eighteenth century we see that Scotland was composed of more than Enlightened thinkers and abolitionists. Molding my research after Morris and Eustace in their use of public literature and advertisements to gauge public opinions and awareness, my analysis will further bridges the gap in Scottish historical scholarship by investigating domestic African slavery and the societal dynamics which defined Scotland as a leading abolitionist nation.  

Analyzing the complexities of social discourses as they arose due to

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10 Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006) and John Cairns, “After Somerset: The Scottish Experience [article].” *Journal Of Legal History* no. 3, 2012: 291-312. Cairn examines the effects of the Somerset case on enslaved persons in Scotland. He explains that while the case’s decision did not automatically set slaves free in England, as was thought initially, the initial miscommunication of the verdict was none-the-less spread throughout England, Scotland, and even across the Atlantic to inform those in bondage that if they were to make it to England, they would be free. This concept effectively enforced the idea of England as a ‘free soil’ nation.

11 Michael Morris introduces his own way of investigating the relationship between Scotland and what he refers to as the “Black Holocaust.” Morris uses the story of Robert Burn, Scotland’s poet, to initiate a ‘wider discussion that places Scotland into the context of the black Atlantic.’ He argues that public domestic sympathy towards the enslaved can certainly be inferred in Burn’s works. Morris argues that poems such as ‘Scots Wha Hae’ alludes to the disposition of continued slavery and expresses the virtues of
the presence of slaves and the different types of runaway advertisements provides further insight into both the contradictory presence of enslaved Africans in Scotland and the anxieties of slave owners in Scotland during the abolitionist movement by showing how the identities of these owners, and Scotland as a whole, were reconfigured due to the overwhelming participation of Scots in abolitionism. It also illuminates the uncertain position slaves found themselves in when they reached Scottish soil due to the undefined role of slavery within a ‘freedom loving’ nation, which affected the various ways some sought freedom while in Scotland. Understanding the social dynamics which contributed to the erasure of African slavery from Scottish history through the investigation of domestic slavery and advertisements ultimately adds yet another layer to our understanding of African slavery. While also presenting the interconnectedness of eighteenth-century concepts and events which defined Scotland’s inclusion into the historic narrative of the Atlantic slaving systems.

free labor in his ‘construction of the brave ‘free labourer’...[who] consistently collocate ‘cowardice’ with enslavement, even in the midst of the abolitionist campaign. Morris’ work introduces a novel aspect to the investigation of enslaved people in Scotland and public sentiments by taking published works, advertisements, and public notices in Scotland during the long 18th century and analyzing them for not only their base meanings, but also the allusions that are subtly made to protest the treatment of Africans and the inhumanity of enslavement. Michael Morris, "Robert Burns: Recovering Scotland’s Memory of the Black Atlantic," Journal For Eighteenth-Century Studies 37, no. 3: 343-359. Along with Morris’ novel investigation of poetry to gauge the societal perspective of Scotland’s participation in the African slave trade, Nicole Eustace’s Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008) also introduces a useful and intriguing interpretation of societal attitudes through her like investigation of advertisements and their applicability to understanding social dynamics. These two works will act as models for my own research in analyzing public advertisements to understand domestic African slavery in Scotland.

12 Most of the contradiction in the presence of African slaves in Scotland is founded in Scottish activism in the origins and success of the abolitionist movement. However, some of the contradiction is also founded in the fact that Scotland never established a definitive law regarding the ownership of slaves. Some adhered to the free-soil concept which was practiced in France, of which Sue Peabody’s “There Are No Slaves in France”: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Regime (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) speaks more towards, while others openly held Africans in bondage.
With these established goals in mind, I continue where Iain Whyte leaves off and investigate slave presence in Scotland during the eighteenth century through its relationship to the Enlightenment, legal understandings of possessing slaves and participating in slavery, and runaway ads within Scotland. Specifically, reading and interpreting different runaway advertisements and their calculated wording illuminates the social impact of slavery in relation to the concepts of property and identity, as well as the threat to white identity and supremacy posed by abolitionism in Scotland. While unpacking the social and political meaning of advertisements that shaped public understanding and awareness of both African slavery and the presence of slaves in Scotland often sacrifices the voices of individual slaves, the thorough analysis of these social anxieties and types of advertisements expands our understanding of how the unjust and inhumane practice of slavery could have occurred in a country that prides itself on its history of fighting against oppression.

Studying the estimated population of sixty to eighty enslaved Africans residing in Scotland over an eighty-year period during the eighteenth century and analyzing their appearance in both public and private spheres facilitates the domestic investigation of the public perception of and participation in slavery which has been left out of the historical narrative. Unlike prior works which investigated the social impacts of Scottish participation in slavery through the lens of Scots who traveled the Atlantic or by pointing

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13 As commented by T.M. Devine and Kenneth Morgan in *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past and Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, Scots who participated in the Atlantic slave trade generally did not discuss their involvement. The lack of sources which would give us insight on how domestic slavery was thought of and how perceptions might have changed due to the growing abolitionist movement prompts the analysis other sources in an attempt to answer these questions.
to contemporary narratives like Olaudah Equiano’s which briefly suggested Scotland’s economic involvement, investigating evidence of slavery through the domestic context of Enlightened scholarship, legal precedents, court cases, and runaway ads provide a needed understanding of how slavery inherently shaped aspects of everyday Scottish life and attitudes towards enslavement both within the nation’s borders and among Scots who resided elsewhere in the Atlantic. Reinforcing the link between Scotland and slavery through the investigation of its domestic affairs provides irrefutable proof of its involvement, but more importantly it also starts the process of connecting the people to their past and solidifies Scotland as a nation that can no longer be unrepresented in the historical narrative of Atlantic slavery.

**Enslaved Presence in Scotland**

The budding scholarship on Scotland’s participation in the Atlantic slave trade has shed light on the subject and has situated Scotland as an actor in the historical narrative of the Atlantic slave trade, in an attempt to inform Scots about one of the darker moments of Scottish history that helped make the region what it is today—a bustling metropolis of culture, economic growth, and pride. However, the investigation of black slaves in Scotland has largely been ignored or overlooked. Iain Whyte describes this scholarly silence as an injustice of Scottish history that needs to be rectified immediately.

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14 Iain Whyte and John Cairn are two of the few scholars who have taken any look at enslaved Africans in Scotland. However, no one has of yet analyzed the presence of enslaved Africans through advertisements like runaway ads and how such ads can be analyzed to understand the Scottish awareness of domestic slavery and their attitudes towards the practice. Olaudah Equiano, *Equiano's travels; the Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (n.p.: New York, Praeger [1967], 1967), chapter III, is often cited for its brief mention of a Scottish port among Equiano’s travels as a point of economic involvement in the Atlantic slave system.
so that slavery will stand alongside other historical topics that should be recognized as “different parts of this small country’s heritage that has elements of pride as well as shame, of courage as well as cruelty, of powerful spirituality as well as hard material.”

As asserted by Whyte, in recognizing Scotland’s trailblazing abolitionist work we must also recognize that “the roots of anti-slavery activity in Scotland go back to the presence of slaves in Scotland in the eighteenth century and the influence of the Enlightenment” and helped begin the social questioning of the practice. One means of analyzing the slave presence which Whyte speaks of is through understanding the complex dimensions of society which was influenced by the presence of slaves and the constant public advertisements which signaled their existence.

By analyzing advertisements and the social dynamics effected by the presence of both slaves and advertisements within Scotland we can see that the small percentage of enslaved Africans in Scotland held a prominent place in both the private and public sectors of society, much like their French, North American, and Caribbean counterparts where privately slaves were household or skilled unfree servants, while publicly they represented the prominence or wealth of their owners and his/her ability to possess and maintain a slave. As mentioned previously, slave presence was a result of Caribbean

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16 Ibid., 5.
17 Studies of the display of wealth and power based upon slave ownership has received significant attention in research regarding slavery and its practices in England, France, North America, and the Caribbean. French and slavery historian Jennifer Palmer terms such representations of wealth as ‘conspicuous displays of wealth,’ which were used prominent methods of assertion and social affirmation in societies which existed on the merits of human bondage. While this reference is of eighteenth-century French and Caribbean slave owners, Palmer’s phrasing presents a means of articulation a practice which was not regulated by national borders but was an established means which characterized power structures of Scottish, French, Caribbean, North American, and English slave holding societies. Jennifer Palmer,
slave-owning Scots bringing slaves back with them, who were often labeled *servants* instead of slaves. Though the connotation of *servant* would suggest that each slave possessed some autonomy, that was not the case. Despite the title of *servant*, slaves were still held in bondage in Scotland and had relatively no personal autonomy, unlike Scottish servants who were never considered unfree or not having personal autonomy. The majority of these transplanted slaves were adolescents or young adult males, usually of ‘strong stock’—those who were considered physically capable of performing all tasks assigned by their master. The preference for young males was likely due to owners wanting slaves who were able to learn and work a physically demanding trade, such as blacksmithing, to bring in profits. Male slaves were also easier to loan out to perform other physically taxing work for those unable or unwilling to do themselves. There is also evidence, as in the correspondence between relatives like William Colquhoun and his sister Betty, who resided in Scotland, that young male slaves were also introduced to residents in Scotland as gifts from their slave owning relatives who resided throughout Atlantic slaving communities. In Betty’s case, her slave was a present from her brother, a prominent figure in the international trade of human flesh. The sending and receiving of slaves as presents or as servants directly contradicts the concepts of free-soil which existed throughout France, and later England during the eighteenth century. The

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18 Many historians like as T.M. Devine in *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery Past*, Iain Whyte in *The Scots Abolitionist*, and Douglas Hamilton in *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World* have noted the preference for male slaves in Scotland and attributed it to the above mentioned motives of the owner.

19 The correspondence between William Colquhoun and his sister Betty in 1775 is discussed at further length by Whyte in *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 14.
correspondence between William and Betty is also representative of Scottish slave holder’s unwillingness to recognize the English, and supposed British, principle established by the 1772 Somerset decision which effectively enforced the idea of Britain as a free-soil nation, as argued by John Cairns in “After Somerset: The Scottish Experience.” Regardless of the means by which they arrived or the categorical label they were given, once in Scotland, there is no doubt that their presence was recognized throughout Scottish society and differed from their former lives on Caribbean or North American plantations.

While there are limited resources which document the daily lives of slaves and their quality of life while in Scotland, we are left with looking towards other European nations and their documented treatment of slaves during the eighteenth century to infer the life of a slave within Scotland. However, the fact that slaves were willing to risk escape even though they could not blend with freed men in Scottish cities, unlike other slaves throughout the Atlantic world in places with free colored populations, testifies to the importance of investigating the treatment of slaves and what caused them to seek freedom if their experiences were drastically different in Scotland than in other regions. Recent scholarship on Scottish participation in Atlantic slave societies documents how Scottish owners and overseers were harsh, unforgiving, and capable of extraordinary

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21 Looking towards other European nations to gain an understanding of the daily lives of slaves in Scotland will be discussed at length in the section titled ‘Scotland Within the Atlantic’.
violence.\textsuperscript{22} These revelations leave one to question how those same men treated the slaves they brought back from their Atlantic voyages.

Although there is no evidence of the widespread mistreatment of African slaves in Scotland, there are testimonies left by recaptured black servants who proclaim that their attempted escapes were responses to harsh treatment at the hands of their owners; accounts which could suggest a universal reason behind escapes. One such complaint was made by Ned Johnston, who in 1763 claimed that his master subjected him to “severe and cruel usage,” being “suspended from the joists of a byre and beaten with rods ‘till the blood ran from wounds in his body.”\textsuperscript{23} Johnston made these claims after he was recaptured, and the abuse testifies to his treatment at the time of apprehension. However, his owner’s use of physical violence does suggest that this type of treatment towards slaves, especially those who ran away, was considered acceptable behavior to a society where the unhuman understanding of slavery was beginning to take root.\textsuperscript{24}

Another account comes from a runaway ad in which the slave, Caesar, was compelled by his master to return with the promise that “his offence shall be forgiven.”\textsuperscript{25} Since there are no records indicating whether Caesar was returned to Colonel Munro willingly or by force, we do not definitively know if Caesar was simply and truly

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\textsuperscript{22} Hamilton’s second chapter in \textit{Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World} discusses the brutal nature of Scottish overseers who were “accused of valuing the lives of horses more highly than those of the enslaved,” 13.  
\textsuperscript{23} Whyte, 15-16.  
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Caledonian Mercury}, 22 June 1771. “A BLACK SLAVE RUN AWAY.” The British Newspaper Archives.
\end{flushright}
“forgiven” or beaten like Johnston. However, if we were to speculate on this matter and compare it to other such instances of runaway slaves who belonged to or were supervised by Scots that are well documented throughout the Caribbean, we can conclude that it is unlikely that Caesar’s offense was simply “forgiven.”26 This conclusion can be justified because, as Iain Whyte and other scholars discuss, the Scots were not immune to the general understandings of slavery “even if cruelty was admitted, the perception of Africans as a breed apart from humanity who lacked the same human emotions as the inhabitants of ‘civilised’ nations was a convenient barrier to feelings of pity.”27 In other words, white male owners thought themselves racially superior to their slaves and had the lawful right to use their property as they saw fit.

It has also been suggested that the threat of returning to other slaving communities in the Atlantic was another coercive measure used by owners to scare and discourage slave desertion that could have influenced a significant number of runaway cases.28 Certainly, when faced with the threat of returning to the harsh environments of slavery in the American South or the West Indies, there can be no doubt that some slaves chose to run away and seek alternate circumstances instead of idly conceding to the threats. This was the case for Jamie Montgomery, who ran away after his owner Robert Sheddan threatened to send him to Virginia. Montgomery’s case is one of legal and abolitionist interest, but here it serves as an example of the constant threat of deportation

26 Scottish men throughout the slaving societies of the Atlantic were known as harsh owners/overseers, and cruel punishers of slaves. See T.M. Devine and Morgan’s books for more information on this matter.
27 Whyte, 59.
that slaves in Scotland faced, which might possibly have influenced their flight. While Whyte reminds us that this fear was not the sole reasons for slaves to want to escape bondage, in considering it, we gain a closer understanding of the continual anxieties and threats experienced by slaves at the heart of social discourse.

Publicly, the history of black presence began with British fascination, but quickly turned to black enslavement and the exploitation of their labors—both domestically and internationally. In this context, however, we will focus on the domestic aspect of the shifting social attitudes towards slavery in Scotland—as seen through public advertisements. Once in Scotland, though slaves were not free and were still subjected to acts of violence and labelled as inferior, they generally had a ‘better’ experience because they were not subjected to the rigors of plantation work and violence of overseers.²⁹ Given the absence of plantations that required slave labor in Scotland, slaves were relegated to the roles of domestic servants and skilled laborers who were hired out by their owners—both roles seemed significantly less severe to slaves who were used to the demands of sugar cane, tobacco, and cotton plantations. Additionally, slaves were brought to Scotland one or two at a time, and as they were primarily males, the constant demand for reproduction was not a driving factor for violence and cruelty towards slaves as it was elsewhere. Slaves in Scotland therefore had limited exposure to the horrors of

²⁹ See Iain Whyte’s *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery* for further discussion of racial inferiority in Scotland as it relates to African slaves, 57-59.
these reproduction demands and the continual unmothering and unfathering of slave children, although they themselves were torn from their social networks and families.\(^{30}\)

Privately, the role of enslaved blacks as household servants reinforced their subservience and established them as highly decorative ornaments of the elite Scottish household.\(^{31}\) Black servants were often dressed in fine clothing and taught proper decorum to ensure they measured up to the standards of their masters and mistresses’ social status. Slaves thus represented monetary centerpieces in the household that reinforced the power and standing of their owners. For contemporary Scottish slave owners, the most uniform way to display their social supremacy and lasting social standing was through personal or family portraits that included their domestic slaves, and thus “it is in that capacity [within portraits] that so many of them [slaves] appear in contemporary paintings and pictures – part of the domestic scene in a stately home.”\(^{32}\)

Two well-known examples of Scottish portraits containing black servants are “The Family of Sir William Young” and “The Glassford Family.” “The Glassford Family,” a portrait painted in 1760, shows a family with their black servant in the margins of the picture, while “The Family of Sir William Young” from 1770 proudly

\(^{30}\) In Walter Johnson’s *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) he discusses at length the traumas associated with reproductive demands and the unmothering and unfathering of children through slave networks and auctions.

\(^{31}\) We can see this through books like C.I. Johnstone’s 1827 popular publication *Elizabeth De Bruce* which characterized a black servant (free or unfree being unclear) as subservient and one who “A large and fashionable party dined at the Whim on this day” where “on a silver salver an ill-complexioned billet was presented to the lady of the mansion, by a black servant wearing white kid gloves that his ebon skin might not pollute the drawing-room.” C.I. Johnstone, *Elizabeth De Bruce* Vol 3 (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood and T. Cadwell, 1827), 23.

displays the black servant on the left side of the painting helping children onto a horse.\textsuperscript{33} The inclusion of black servants, presumably slaves, in the family portraits aligns with other such European portraiture which used the slave depictions as a means of expressing wealth and social standing.\textsuperscript{34} Though the parallels of wealth and slave ownership in expressing social status through portraiture was not a new phenomenon, it is the questions surrounding the voids and dark spots within some paintings which distinguish Scottish slave owner portraits from the rest.

Where the black servant in “The Family of Sir William Young” is proudly displayed, the black servant in “The Glassford Family” portrait is only partially pictured off to the left within a dark alcove which makes him almost indistinguishable from the drapes in the background. It is also within this portrait that we see dark spaces and pronounced voids which likely once contained the figure of another slave that may have been painted over after the social turn against slavery. These two family portraits are the most well-known and studied Scottish slave-owner portraits of the time, but are far from the only ones which depict African slaves. Famously, “The Battle of Culloden” of April 16, 1746 also depicts a black servant, possibly a squire, in the far right, center. However, it is in the analysis of the two previously mentioned portraits, which were produced in the

\textsuperscript{33} Each portrait is provided by the Walker Art Gallery collection housed at the National Museums Liverpool at http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/paintings/18c/item-238515.aspx.

\textsuperscript{34} The use of slaves as status symbols in portraiture is an acknowledged interdisciplinary concept which has been featured in many scholarly works. The most noted of these being David Bindman and Helen Weston’s “Court and City: Fantasies of Domination”, in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (eds), \textit{The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the “Age of Discovery” to the Age of Abolition: The Eighteenth Century}, vol. 3, pt. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp.125-170. Others include Jennifer Palmer’s article “The Princess Served by Slaves: Making Race Visible through Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century France” \textit{Gender & History} 26, no. 2: 242-262; and Catherine Molineux, \textit{Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain} (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).
same year, where we are able to see the diverging Scottish opinions on slave ownership and the social anxieties of the growing anti-slavery movement and its predominance in Scotland; which would likely later contribute to the ‘painting-out’ of one of the darker aspects in the Glassford family’s history—slave ownership.

The difference between those portraits that proudly portray slaves and those that do not due to this later repainting characterizes the public debate and break in social acceptance of domestic slaves in Scotland as representative of family wealth and standing. It also signals the lasting effects of some Scottish slave owners’ efforts to conceal their association with the slave trade by shielding their families from the scrutiny of an Enlightened society. Given this erasure of slaves in paintings, it does not seem overreaching to speculate about other ways that Scots sought to erase their family’s connections to the nefarious trade. Some of these efforts are evident in the evolution of runaway ads and the phrasing that advertised slave desertion in a society that was more likely to help the slave than to return the property to its owner, as was mandated by law.

Uncertain Legality of Slavery

Despite the growing scholarship in the field, scholars rarely discuss one of the key components of Scotland citizens ability to participate in slavery—the legality of the practice in Scotland and the history which supports or refutes it. Scots’ historic pride of their continual fight for freedom seems at odds with the practice of enslavement within its borders. Yet, there can no longer be any doubt that the Scots did in fact participate in the

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35 Cairns briefly speaks towards the legal standing of slave ownership and participating in the slave trade in his article After Somerset but does not speak towards its origins or how its ambiguity adds to that of slaves present in Scotland. Walvin’s brief examination of slaves in Scotland in Black People in Britain does not address the issue.
trade, and helped Scotland begin to expand and become a world competitor during the eighteenth century. Due to the seemingly hypocritical ownership of slaves by Scots and the growth of abolitionist sentiments in Scotland, there was a continual flux of inconsistent ideas and legislation regarding slaves and their state of bondage. No one was precisely sure how to handle the enslaved’s requests for freedom and whether Scotland should represent a ‘free soil’ region that opposed slavery based on its history of fighting against oppression.36 These questions and struggles continually filtered throughout Scottish society and courts in a desperate quest to finally settle on one decision or another; for or against domestic and international slavery. Scholar James Walvin aptly articulates these struggles in his description of eighteenth-century courts which “wavered, sometime affording them [slaves] the protection of the law, sometimes supporting their owners; claims that Africans were property – thing – like slaves everywhere.”37

The uncertainty of Scottish legal regard towards slavery was well founded in the ambiguity which characterized the legal status of slaves in Scotland. The legality of slavery in Scotland, and in the entirety of Britain, was never solidified and remained a point of contention until its abolition in 1833.38 Since before the time of Roman

36 Sue Peabody’s There Are No Slaves in France, though it is through the perspective of the French and not the British, discusses the concept of free soil which became an early staple against domestic slavery in France, but was often disregarded. Free soil is the legislative concept that automatically sets a slave free if he or she steps foot on a nation free of slavery—which Britain, and France, were supposed to be in the later years of the eighteenth century.

37 Walvin, 84

38 By looking through court cases and legislation from the 1780s to 1833, we see court rulings and laws which ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. Some cases would not recognize a slave as a person who could sue for his or her freedom; much like their enslaved counterparts in North America, while other cases recognized the enslaved person as a human being and not property, and who had the legal right to sue. I will speak more about this with the examination of specific cases in the following section.
occupation, Britain adhered to Roman common laws of *ius gentium* and *ius naturae* that allowed for the capture and holding of slaves by the right of national and natural law.\(^{39}\) This adherence persisted until the 12\(^{th}\) century when it waned due to monarchical pressure to set aside the practice. However, slavery once again became prominent and acceptable in English society after Sir John Hawkins, with the support of the monarch, started England in the trade of African slaves in the middle years of the 16\(^{th}\) century by contractually agreeing to provide a percentage of slaves to the Spanish on an annual basis.\(^{40}\) Though there was no written law that legalized the ownership of another human being in Scotland, the 1707 union of England and Scotland to form Great Britain preserved Scots law and the Scottish law courts (not including Parliament, which was dissolved), allowing Scots to adhere to which every country’s laws suited their purposes—and it was this legal uncertainty and power of choice which led Scots to justify their participation in slavery by citing it as in accordance with English law.\(^{41}\)

Without the ability to directly reference a specific law which allowed the practice of slavery within Great Britain, many in Scotland simply followed the course set out by English participation in the African slave trade. One such course consisted of Great Britain contractually agreeing to supply 4800 slaves to the Spanish annually beginning in 1713, while another resonated in the popularity of a formal statement given by high-

\(^{39}\) For a detailed analysis on the practice and contradictions within the Roman legal system of customary laws such as *ius gentium* and *ius naturae* which were passed on to the English see Amanda Perreau-Saussine and James B. Murphy’s *The Nature of Customary Law: Legal, Historical and Philosophical Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).


ranking business men who participated in the trade and who sought to finally solidify
Great Britain’s legal stance on the trade and the enslavement of Africans through the
Yorke-Talbot address. In 1729 the popularized Yorke-Talbot slavery opinion concluded
that slavery was legal in England, and therefore, in the rest of the British empire because
Roman law, which Great Britain still adhered to in some respects, was plain in
recognizing slavery by nation and natural law. By this law, the only contemporary
conclusions on slavery which could be made were that, “[A] slave, by coming from the
West Indies, either with or without his master, to Great Britain or Ireland, doth not
become free; and that his master’s property or right in him is not therefore determined or
varied: and baptism doth not bestow freedom on him, nor make any alteration in his
temporal condition in these kingdoms. We are also of opinion, that the master may
legally compel him to return again to the plantations.”

The Yorke-Talbot opinion is an important milestone to consider when analyzing
the legal structure which allowed for the ownership of enslaved Africans in Great Britain,
and therefore Scotland, in the long eighteenth century. The legal professionals behind the
opinion were Attorney General Philip Yorke and Solicitor General Charles Talbot, who
were regarded by contemporaries as “representatives of the crown,” and, therefore, not to
be ignored. Their opinion was considered synonymous with that of the monarchs. It

42As noted in Jean Allain’s The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary, p. 71. The Legal Understanding of Slavery gives one of the few accounts of the origins of the laws which sanctioned slavery. It concludes that the established law of the Romans, whose early occupation of Britannica, instituted slavery as a national and natural right of man. It goes further to explain the laws of *ius gentium* and *ius naturae* and how such laws were able to last centuries after the fall of the Roman empire.
directly contradicts a 1708 statement which concluded that “by common law no man can have a property in another” and as “soon as a man sets foot on English ground he is free.” The Yorke-Talbot opinion marks the beginning of the unparalleled open involvement in the African slave trade because the opinion affirmed to British citizens their actions would not be condemned and were in accordance with the views of the monarch and his interpretation of the law. It invokes Roman law as the deciding factoring on the matter, which all citizens must abide by. The law acknowledged that all men within Great Britain had the right to own slaves—regardless of the growing sentiment against the practice. The opinion solidified Roman law as the law of practice when referring to the trade and its adherence by all citizens in their quest to obtain or re-secure property (slaves)— *ius naturae* of all white men.

The language used in the Yorke-Talbot opinion also sheds light on the tension and uncertainty of enslaved Africans in Great Britain. Phrases such as “doth not become free” and “his master’s property” leaves little room for misinterpreting the acceptance of Scots and others in Great Britain’s participation in the Atlantic slaving systems. However, phrases such as “baptism doth not bestow freedom” and “master may legally compel”

the importance and impact of the Yorke-Talbot opinion, along with how it shaped views on slavery in the eighteenth century until it was later contradicted by the Somerset decision in 1772.


45 ‘Unparalleled open involvement’ speaks towards both Scots and other British citizens accepting the Yorke-Talbot statement as the law of the land and the final approval needed to alleviate them of the guilt or unchristian attitudes which they might have previously held in regards towards their potential involvement in the African trade. For more information on this see Allain’s *The Legal Understanding of Slavery,* pp 63-79.
provide insight on the on-going struggle of enslaved Africans within Great Britain to obtain freedom, and their master’s quest to deny them such. The inclusion of those phrases speaks towards the continual persistence of slaves to seek freedom in Scotland, using whatever means were available; through escape, baptism, or legal proceedings, all of which would later shape the course of enslavement in Scotland during the century of Enlightenment.46

**An Enlightened Nation**

“Eighteenth-century Scotland,” Duncan Rice contends, “is an extraordinary case of a small society that developed a heavy economic commitment to slavery at the very time that its intelligentsia were vehemently criticising it.”47 This statement is well founded based on Scotland’s eighteenth-century existence as a nation which produced famed Enlightenment scholars such as Adam Smith and David Hume, while simultaneously establishing itself as a nation enmeshed in the Atlantic slaving systems. Smith and Hume are representative of many contemporary Scots who lived in a slave-labor based economy, but who were deeply influenced by the Enlightenment and the ideas against the practice of slavery. Though it cannot be argued that Scotland, or any other nation, was solely responsible for the impetus of anti-slavery sentiments, and later

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abolitionism, it is apparent that Scots were among the first to begin discussing the ills of society and the validity of slavery. The Enlightenment of the eighteenth century acted as the catalyst for abolitionist thoughts in Scotland as early as the 1740s. Enlightenment ideas and practices led to more and more Scots acknowledging and challenging many of the injustices within their own societies and around the world, especially slavery.

Historian Douglas Hamilton has noted that “in narratives of the great abolition campaigns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Scots often appear as powerful anti-slavery advocates,” demonstrating that “Scots churchmen and intellectuals pronounced against slavery for moral reasons while others, notably Adam Smith, attacked it as an archaic and inefficient economic system.”

Therefore, the correlation between Enlightened thoughts and the questioning of slavery in Scottish society can be attributed to the early work of intellectuals, scholars, and clerics who held a general distain for slavery and regarded it as an unjust practice fueled by “a combination of ignorance of the facts, respect for the sanctity of property and fear of revolution” which “combined to ‘keep the lid’ on any challenge to slavery.”

Decades before the 1785 London based Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade’s

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50 Whyte, 6.
formal petition to Parliament calling for the end of the slave trade, Scottish scholars, intellectuals, and politicians, influenced by Enlightened principles, began to publicly question the legal and moral sanctity of slavery.\textsuperscript{51}

With their mid-century publications of \textit{Essays Moral, Political \& Literary} in 1758 and \textit{Wealth of Nations} in 1776, David Hume and Adam Smith are considered revolutionary Enlightenment intellectuals in both Scotland and around the world.\textsuperscript{52} However, they were far from the first or only Scottish voices which engaged in Enlightened thoughts and actions. In his 1755 publication \textit{A System of Moral Philosophy}, a Glasgwegian scholar, Francis Hutcheson, and noted professor of Adam Smith, declared that “no endowments, natural or acquired, can give a perfect right to assume power over others without their consent.”\textsuperscript{53} In this statement Francis Hutcheson directly challenged the idea that slavery was morally justifiable due to the laws of nature, as well as the widely accepted Eurocentric concepts of racial inferiority.\textsuperscript{54} Hutcheson’s work and influence in the community, as both an intellectual scholar and well-known professor at the University of Edinburgh, was undoubtedly influenced by the Enlightenment and the emergence of social recognition and justice. Hutcheson’s views and the continued arguments against the legitimacy of slavery as a law of nature can be seen in later works.

\textsuperscript{51} The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade’s petition is recognized among scholars as the start of Britain’s abolitionist movement.
\textsuperscript{53} Francis Hutcheson, \textit{A System of Moral Philosophy} (New York, A.M. Kelley, 1968), 204.
\textsuperscript{54} Refers to Scotland and the rest of Britain allowing slavery in accordance to Roman law, \textit{ius naturae}, which dictated that slavery and the holding of property was a natural law of the superior. More on this will be discussed at length in ‘Legality of Slavery’ section of this paper.
other than Smith’s, such as Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, in which Ferguson declared that a person cannot be “a thing or subject of property,” and that “the supposed property of the master and the slave, therefore, is a matter of usurpation, not of right.”  

Similarly to Hutcheson, Ferguson’s views and work were publicized and spread through his position as a university professor, with most of his Enlightened views and thoughts being introduced to his students, who would have presumably taken those ideas into all realms of Scottish society where Enlightened principles were slowly becoming part of everyday politics and social dealings.

As discussed by Iain Whyte in *Faith and Slavery in the Presbyterian Diaspora*, community politicians like George Wallace, a young lawyer and influential local figure, also brought slavery to the political stage by agreeing with Hutcheson’s and Ferguson’s works and openly declaring that slavery was a social phenomenon that could no longer be relegated to the scholarly sector of society, but should be brought to the forefront of contemporary politics and awareness.  

Such thoughts took root in politics with the

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56 Whyte cites community based opinion regarding slavery, such as George Wallace who asserted that “liberty was ‘a natural faculty’, that slavery was ‘contrary to nature’ and that this practice of the ancient world, though sanctioned by Roman law, ‘appears so horrid and so contrary to the feelings of humanity, that it cannot be agreeable to the law of Scotland,’” as the overlap of politics and Enlightenment views. Whyte discusses the scholarly, communal, and political influence of the Enlightenment and the initial rumblings of abolitionism in the mid-eighteenth century as evidence for his argument that Scotland lead the charge in abolition in Britain. Of which, he discusses extensively in his chapter titled ‘From James Montgomery to James M'beth’ in Peter C. Messer and William Harrison Taylor’s *Faith and Slavery in the Presbyterian Diaspora* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2016), 60-66. In which he cites George Wallace’s *A System of the Principles of the Law of Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1760), Book 3.2, 89.
growing tensions associated with slavery due to the nationalized court cases which brought slavery to the headlines of countless newspapers.\textsuperscript{57}

With the underlying issue of slavery being one of moral consequence, it comes at no surprise that clerics and other church officials were among these early advocates who openly questioned the sanctity of slavery. Known for ministers and church officials who publicly defied the synchronicity of slavery as a natural law and the right of Scots to own slaves in Scotland, the Presbyterian Church is often cited as the leader of the abolitionist movement in Scotland. By regularly granting controversial baptisms that allowed slaves to proclaim their freedom under the laws of Christianity, Scottish Presbyterian clerics established their support for abolitionism early with officials such as William Robertson, a prominent Church of Scotland clergy member, asserting that “no superiority in power, no pretext of consent, can justify this ignominious depression of human nature, or can conger on one man the right of domination in over the person of another,” and that no specific gospel can be quoted to condemn slavery, “but [it is] the spirit and genius of the Christian religion, more powerfully laying a particular command, which hath abolished slavery throughout the world.”\textsuperscript{58} Though the Presbyterian Church of Scotland did not take an official stance for or against slavery until the final decade of the century, their allowance of enslaved baptisms helped mark Scotland as a land of reformers and abolitionists during a century plagued by the dichotic relationship of Scottish Enlightened thought and Scots involvement in slavery.\textsuperscript{59} These early promoters of abolitionism and

\textsuperscript{57} I will discuss these court cases at length in the ‘Court Cases’ section.  
\textsuperscript{58} As cited by Iain Whyte in ‘From James Montgomery to James Macbeth’ in Faith and Slavery, 20-21.  
\textsuperscript{59} Rice, The Scots Abolitionists.
Enlightened thought brought slavery to the forefront of Scottish society and contributed to the increased involvement of Scots in abolitionism within Scotland, Britain, and the rest of the Atlantic.⁶⁰

After the initial introduction and push of Enlightened practices regarding abolitionism in the mid-1740s through the mid-1770s by the Presbyterian Church, Hutcheson, Smith, and their Enlightened counterparts, abolitionism within Scotland firmly took root by the last quarter of the century. In the last decades leading up to the turn of the century, Scotland became a hotbed of moral debate. Anti-slavery advocates argued that it was immoral and hypocritical for Scotland to allow human bondage within its borders when the Scottish people had a long history of oppression and brutality at the hands of the English. They likewise argued that the idea that “one rational being should be claimed by another as his absolute property, in all circumstances, like a horse or a dog, and that should beget children solely for his master’s profit, by adding to his personal chattels, are tenets so repugnant to all principles of humanity” stood in total contrast to Christian values.⁶¹ Though the acceptance of slavery had previously been understood as a necessary evil, the debate about the legality of slavery in Scotland shook the foundations of Scottish society and further added to the social discourse and division fueled by the continual presence of slaves in Scotland and the media publications associated with

⁶⁰ Ibid.
them. Such discourse that would eventually lead to Scots acting as trailblazers and unsympathetic enforcers of abolitionism globally.

Although the profits associated with slavery and the slave trade were crucial to Scotland’s economy during the eighteenth century, which helped fuel both the industrial revolution and Scottish progress towards modernity, with more than a third of all the abolitionist petitions in the entire United Kingdom coming from within its borders, Scotland’s leading role in the abolitionist movement that banned the slave trade in 1807 and abolished slavery in 1833 cannot be denied. As Duncan Rice has asserted, the opinions of Scottish citizens, which led to a substantial number of people participating in the abolitionist movement, signified that, “Scottish law and its existence as a nation was averse to slavery” and that Scots would not sit idly by and allow the practice to continue. Even after their victory on abolition, Scots were not satisfied with banning the institution throughout the British Empire, but instead extended their abolitionist efforts across national borders and helped to fund international organizations that helped runaway slaves, primarily those escaping bondage in the America South.

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62 This has been written about by analyzing the extensive memoirs or journals left behind by abolitionists. It is also reasonable to infer some of these points due to the Enlightenment being quoted as a dynamic time of economic, political, and especially societal change in Scottish history as discussed by Anand C. Chitnis in *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976).
64 Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns 1780-1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 126 talks about women’s roles in abolitionist movements, with a brief mention of Scottish women’s participation in an international network that helped runaway slaves around the Atlantic.
Dissenters

Though the age of Enlightenment and the later abolitionist movement are defining aspects of Scotland’s national history, to characterize Scotland as a nation entirely devoted to these concepts would falsely represent Scottish society as a whole during the century of Enlightenment and would continue the trend of polarizing Scottish history in presenting only one side or element which made-up contemporary social discourses. In order to go against such polarization, it is important to emphasize that not all Scots embraced abolitionism, nor did advocates always adhere to abolitionist principles. The inclusion of dissenters (pro-slavery advocates) and those who were not always resolute in their following of the movement are what presents eighteenth-century Scotland as a complex society torn between morality and economic security. Such paradoxes of Scottish society can be correlated and understood through many avenues of contradiction, such as through contemporary religion where two members of the same faith could simultaneously be devoted to opposite sides of the abolitionist movement, as well as through the actions and writings of prominent Scottish figures. For example, while Adam Smith condemned slavery as an outdated and ineffective economic system, he rarely spoke towards the practice within Scotland.65 Robert Burns, Scotland’s bard, wrote about the inhumanity of slavery in *The Slave’s Lament*, but actively participated in slavery within the Caribbean as a plantation overseer in the Caribbean.66 Likewise, David Hume wrote often of the superiority of whites and natural incapacity of black people, while also

65 Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*.
criticizing slavery as one not in tune with the thoughts of contemporary times because of its resonation from the “barbarous manners of ancient times.”

Highlighting the contradictions of famous Scottish figures of the Enlightenment gives us a sense of the paradoxes present in Scottish society during the rise of abolitionism. However, these figures do not adequately represent the dissenting population who were directly affected by society’s push toward the complete abolition of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. Dissenters were among those who were intimately tied to the slave trade and came from all socioeconomic realms of society, including, but not limited to, slave owners, the elite, absentee plantation owners, ship captains, overseers, doctors, and merchants. They saw themselves as true Scotsmen and mocked abolitionist sentiments. One such dissenter was Alexander Rose who wrote about the absurdity of the growing social need to reject slavery, and even the term slave. He stated that Wilberforce’s abolitionist bill should “be lost in the middle passage & never come sage into port,” and exemplified slave owner’s irritation for the movement by mocking respect for their “Black Planters – the word slave having been abolished, as obnoxious to the nice feelings of the modern votaries of transatlantic humanity.”

With such mockery and contempt of abolitionism, dissenters were those who essentially ensured the continuation of anti-slavery incentives in Scotland due to their refusal to acquiesce. Their

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69 NRS, Fraser-MacIntosh Papers, GD 128/44/6b.
refusal and very existence within Scottish society created social opposition and anxieties which forced contemporary abolitionists to fight for legal abandonment of the institution, instead of simply relying on society to forsake it as immoral and against their Christian values, as was the initial goal.\(^\text{70}\)

Despite the undeniable role they played within social, economic, and political discourses, the voices of dissenters and the very idea of objecting to anti-slavery sentiments are unfound in the historic narrative or remain buried under the polarized understanding of Scottish history. The few scholars who have begun to uncover and investigate dissention to Scottish abolitionism contend that dissenter’s voices were easily buried because Scots rarely discussed their ownership of slaves and participation in the slave trade openly, especially after the 1750s and the growth of abolitionism.\(^\text{71}\) This silence likely contributed to their exclusion from the historical narrative and unrecognized social tensions surrounding the debate over slavery in the latter half of the eighteenth century, decades before the 1787 establishment of the London-based society for slavery which is often credited with the beginning of the challenging of slavery in Britain.

However, as Douglas Hamilton asserts, the self-silencing does not make the examination of the dissenting population within Scottish society less important to investigate, nor does it signal the justification of their exclusion from the national narrative.\(^\text{72}\) Dissenters were too vital an element of social discourse which influenced the


\(^{71}\) Devine, *Recovering Scotland’s Slavery past*, 41-46.

outcomes of abolitionism because they were at the heart of many anti-slavery initiates. That they were a group who essentially fought for their right to maintain their property (slaves), but who did not remain unaffected by the Enlightenment and abolitionism. In short, despite the advancement of Enlightened thoughts and sentiments and the fervor of the abolitionist movement, the existence of dissenters of abolitionism is what prompts an understanding that “slavery in the empire remained entrenched in parts of Scottish society a century after the Union, and that abolition, therefore, was a matter of debate rather than clear consensus as late as the 1830s.” 73

**Runaway Ads and Public Opinion**

The influences of the Enlightenment, growth of abolitionism, and opposition by dissenters are best seen through the gradual shift of terminology present in runaway advertisement for Scottish domestic slaves. Using similar language as in the American South and Caribbean, Scottish runaway ads addressed the disappearance of a slave and the proposed reward for the return of the said property. Runaway ads such as the one which appeared in the *Glasgow Journal* on the 30 December 1745, used the following common descriptive language in advertising runaways:

That on Friday last, a NEGROE BOY bout 15 Years of Age, deserted the Service of William Crawford, Junior, Merchant in Glasgow, and is supposed to have gone towards Stirling. He spoke very bad English, had a Brown Freeze Coat, and Blue Waist Coat, and is much Innknee’d. Whoever will bring back the said Boy to his Master, or give such Information of him, as that he may be apprehended, shall have a sufficient Reward. 74

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Though each runaway ad generally prescribes to the same common form of information provided for each slave, the uniqueness of each ad provides a key in understanding the tensions present in eighteenth-century Scottish society. However, before we are able to analyze the hidden insight these ads provide, we must first understand the different categories of people who were represented in the ads and the ambiguity of their differing status of free or unfree.

The categories present in the various runaway ads characterize the hierarchical system in eighteenth-century Scottish society and demonstrate how the different categories were arranged in this system and how the lower status of slaves and servants simultaneously increased social standing while reinforcing white supremacy, as well as challenged the system which held white men and their right to maintain their property was considered above all else. The use of the categories of slave and servant illuminates the fluidity and lack of distinction that superficially characterized many of the runaway ads. Understanding the difference between runaway ads for servants and slaves allows for the analysis of the similarities and differences of the different types of ads and how slaves’ ads can be identified and separated from the general and examined for their underlying meanings. These ads are the key to understanding the reluctance of Scots to speak about their domestic engagement in the inhumane practice of human ownership and provide an insight into the minds of slave owners during a time of increased social or moral reform.

75 In this we can consider the Roman law of ius naturae which held property and man’s ability to possess it as one of the fundamental aspects of life. This concept will be discussed at length in a later section.
The Scottish understanding of slavery and the merits of holding Africans in bondage was no different than that of many of its European neighbors.\textsuperscript{76} It is the similarities of existence of slaves as a solidifier of status and social standing, as well as the way in which abolitionist sentiments of the Enlightenment era warped the power structure associated with property and ownership that aligns Scotland with other European nations and places it within the Atlantic context. In considering Iain Whyte’s assertion that the “early exposure to the issue [abolitionism] through the presence of slaves in Scottish communities and the clear theological and moral challenge to the trafficking of human beings and holding them as property gave the Scottish anti-slavery movement a unique impetus,” it becomes more apparent why the categories of servant and slave within runaway ads need to be examined.\textsuperscript{77} For, as we will discover in this section, it is the uniquely Scottish legal structure combined with the presence of slaves and the fervor of abolitionism which influences the shifts of opinions and the wording in runaway ads throughout the eighteenth century.

The title of slave was giving to an individual who was owned by another. For this study, the title of a slave is not the significant part, it is the understanding which inherently came along with the meaning of the word. In Scottish society, to be a slave meant that you were considered another man’s property to do with as he saw fit, that you were the bottom of the social ladder, and that your status of being unfree remained the

\textsuperscript{76}Some of that ambiguity is due to the fact that, as mentioned previously, most enslaved Africans who were brought to Scotland were labeled as servants, even though their lack of freedom directly contradicts the understanding of the categories which represented servants of the time.

\textsuperscript{77} Whyte, \textit{Scotland and the Abolitionism of Black Slavery}, 6.
deciding factor in differentiating you from others. In the earlier runaway ads, slaves were also often synonymously characterized as ‘black,’ ‘boy,’ ‘African,’ ‘negro,’ and ‘runaway.’ To possess freedom, either by birth or through purchase, meant that one could not be labeled a slave. Freedom is the distinguishing feature between slaves and servants, even if the terms were often ambiguously defined and represented in advertisements. Servants were generally persons born free who entered into a contractual agreement to work in exchange for some monetary gain.\(^78\)

Though the categorical definition of slave and servant seem simplistic enough and readily distinguishable, the finite relationship between the two in the runaway ads was so often shrouded by ambiguity that the categories became fluid and difficult to correctly identify without further context. Such ambiguity, along with the fact that runaway ads were not always labeled as such, but rather as desertion or deserter ads, complicates correctly identifying runaway ads of Scottish slaves. Distinguishing between the two social categorizations helps to differentiate between runaway ads that were for free servants and the ads which demonstrate the anxieties felt by slave-owners in their later labeling of runaway slaves as servant. The distinction also inherently shows that not all runaway servant ads were for slaves labeled as servant, but that there was in-fact a large number of runaway servant ads which actually characterized deserted free servant but are not always easily discernable from those of runaway slave ads. Differentiating between the two types of ads becomes paramount in analyzing the different ads to ensure that you do not misidentify a free servant as a slave, or vice versa.

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\(^78\) Jean Allain, *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary*, 13-19.
The fluidity between the two categorizations can be observed in an ad such as one published on Thursday, September 26, 1734, in the *Caledonian Mercury* that describes “one Helen Watson” who “went from her Master’s House there upon Monday last…” Characteristic of other runaway advertisements at the time, the ad describes Helen’s age and physical appearance, as well as the clothes she was wearing when last seen.\(^79\) Though the ad does not explicitly name the absent Helen Watson as a Negro, nor a slave, its wording and her general description contain a bridging element between the descriptions of Negro slaves and free white or mulatto servants, demonstrating the fluidity of the two categories. The most notably absent words from the ad are “slave” and “runaway.” The absence of the term slave obviously means that we cannot definitively identify Helen Watson as a slave. However, in the small section that describes her appearance, the most notable identifying characteristics are that she was “black hair’d, of black complexion.” These characteristics lead us to infer that she was either a freed black, a mulatto, or a slave who was just not identified as such. Also missing from her description, which would have likely appeared if she were a slave, is the description of her hair as ‘wir’d’. In analyzing the given characteristics of Helen, most notably, the absence of features which were uniform to earlier runaway slave ads, we can conclude that it is unlikely Helen Watson was a slave. It is more likely that she represented a small fraction of the Scottish population who were characterized as mulatto or of mixed heritage.\(^80\) In making this

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\(^80\) Daniel Livesay’s dissertation *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race West Indians in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733-1833* investigates the population within Scotland during the 18\(^{th}\) and early 19\(^{th}\) century who were characterized as being of mulatto or mixed heritage. His analysis includes white Scotsmen who lived shortly on their plantations in the Caribbean and the miscegenational relationship they
distinction, we see the importance of being able to sort runaway free servant ads from those of actual slaves; for, the distinction is not as easily made as one would expect and could be attributed to owners wanting to forgo distinguishing their slaves as such by adding them to the already well-established and socially accepted category of servants.

The absence of the term *runaway* in the ad is also very telling, perhaps more so than the general description of Helen. Though the ad does state that Helen has a master from whom she has run away, the description of her as a *servant* and not a *runaway* casts the direct ownership of this individual in doubt. The term *runaway* was used in advertisements not only as a characteristic, but also as a statement of ownership and possession. *Runaway* and *slave* denoted the individual as a possession or property that was expected to be returned to the rightful owner. While *servant* is certainly an ambiguous term and has been correlated to several advertisements in which slaves were cited, it was not until the latter years of the eighteenth century that ‘servant’ came to be used in lieu of *slave*. However, this observation cannot completely rule out the possibility that Helen was a person held in bondage. Helen’s status as free or enslaved can also be called into question by the lack of a more detailed description of what she had

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81 This principle can be observed in the later 18th century advertisements which name slaves as ‘servants’ instead of ‘runaways’ or ‘slaves.’ This was due to the growing awareness of the inhumane nature of slavery which would lead many Scots to participate in abolitionism in the second half of the 18th century.

82 As in the case of any other property, Scottish law which adhered to Roman Law and classified slaves as property to be possessed, bought, and sold regardless if it was an object or a person.

83 This observation and analysis will be discussed in a later section of this paper.
in her possession, such as valuable clothing, and the lack of a time-frame during which she was working in the service of her master, as is seen in the ad for Polly Rich.

An ad published in the Caledonian Mercury on Tuesday, March 4, 1740 seeking the return of “one Polly Rich, who was an engaged Servant to the Right Hon. Earl of ROSEBERIE for one Year” is another representation of how the wording of the advertisements reinforced the fluidity of these categories.84 Similarly to Helen, Polly is described by sex and physical appearance, with more emphasis placed on her clothing and the things in her possession.85 The description of Polly’s appearance as “finely dress’d, with a brown Camblee gown faced up with a Brocade Silk on a white Ground, fine sew Stays, and all sorts of Linnen and Cambricks with the earl’s Mark upon most of them, especially the Cambrick Handkerchiefs, being a large R and an Earl’s Coronet over the head of it” indicates that she stole the items described in her possession, whereas for Helen it was unclear. The distinction of who the clothing and such belonged to is reasonably associated with the ease of others to identify the articles. While acknowledging the extensive value of the articles in Polly’s possession, we can infer that Polly was not a slave, because slaves were rarely in possessions of such items for long periods of time due to the fear that they might sell or barter the items.86

Another contextual factor that identifies Polly as a servant rather than a slave is the descriptiveness of her physical appearance. According to the advertisement, Polly

84 Caledonian Mercury, 04 March 1740. “ADVERTISMENT.” The British Newspaper Archives.
was “fine shap’d, blue ey’d and black Hair (or not brown) long visag’d,’ and had ‘a proper high Nose,” phrases uncharacteristic of African features and different from the descriptions of African slaves in other runaway ads. The specificity of her age, articles of clothing that would unlikely be accessible to slaves, and the articles in her possession—which can be examined in the context of the slave’s ads—stand in contrast to the descriptions of runaway slave ads, which generally only describe the clothing worn by the runaway slave as a means of identification. The articles of clothing in Polly’s possession are described in detail and in such a way that leaves the reader with no doubt that they do not belong to the absent servant and should be returned to the Earl even if they are not found with Polly Rich. Polly seems to fade to the background of the ad in lieu of the importance placed on the clothing and is thought of as a replaceable servant who took the true and undeniable possessions of someone else—which did not include herself.

The contradictory elements of Polly’s ad that speak to the similarity of categories in the ads for enslaved African are the phrases “is Runaway,” “her right Owner,” and “she cannot speak one Word of Scots or scarce understands it.” Phrases like these make the fluidity of the two categories more apparent and demand the use of context in determining which category the runaway falls under. Though her description as a ‘runaway’ directly contradicts my earlier assertions about the usage of the word, the term here cannot be analyzed and understood in the same context as an ad that characterizes a slave as a runaway because the second sentence of this ad specifically states that her servitude is limited to a specific time frame, this is absent from all slave ads, indicating
that she was a free servant under some contract that she broke by running away. The ambiguity associated with the phrase “her right Owner,” which is characteristic of runaway ads, can also alternatively be explained through the investigation of contemporary servant contract. Such contracts were defined by the person who undertook the contract being labeled a ‘servant’ and the owner of said contract described as the ‘master.’ The last contradiction is her inability to understand Scots. This can simply be explained by her being from England, where Gaelic and the Scottish version of English would not have been spoken often. The uncertainty that characterizes the entirety of Helen and Polly’s ads is representative of the descriptive nature of runaway or deserter advertisements which often blurred the ostensibly distinctive categories of servant and slave and free and unfree. The distinguishing factors between servants and slave runaway ads show that not all runaway ads were for runaway slaves and forces scholars to look further than the headings of ‘runaway,’ ‘deserted,’ or, later, ‘servant’ in collecting and analyzing runaway ads for Scottish slaves during the long eighteenth century.

More than a decade before the first stirring of abolitionist sentiments in Scotland, one definitive ad for a runaway slave was published by the *Caledonian Mercury* on Monday, October 15th, 1739 and the phrase that denoted the subject as a slave was his description as a “NEGRO BOY named TONT.” Though the term ‘slave’ was not

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87 Allain, *The Legal Understanding of Slavery: From the Historical to the Contemporary*, 13-19.
88 One other runaway ad which appeared in *The Glasgow Journal* at the end of December 1745 also characterized the slave as a ‘Negro Boy.’ This is significant because it lines up with the demographics of slaves held in Scotland at the time. Most of them being African males between the ages of 15-25. This specific demographic was targeted because Scottish owners wanted to only recruit slaves who were ‘of strong built’ or ‘well made.’ Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery* and Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*.
explicitly stated, it is implied by Tont’s description as a ‘Runaway’ and a ‘Negro.’ Tont’s ad shows the general outline of similar postings by presenting the name of the runaway, what he looked like, who he belonged to, and whether a reward was to be given. One of the unique characteristics of the ad for Tont is his descriptions as a “runaway from the ship CHARLES” and the fact that he was “known in Leith by the Name of SIMMONS.” These two statements tell us several things. One is that Tont was more than likely a ship hand who frequently came and went from Scotland, and the other is that he had been frequently seen in Leith. The phrase “known as” leaves no room for misinterpretation by indicating that not only was Tont a slave who frequently resided in Scottish ports, but also frequented Leith often enough that the general public was aware of his presence and could identify him if needed. This information directly contradicts the notion that slaves were absent and uninvolved in everyday life in Scotland. The language used in the ad by the master, who presumably would have drawn up the ad for publication, also indicates that in the early years of the eighteenth century, slave owners had no qualms about allowing their slaves to be seen and to participate in Scottish society. Slaves were not as invisible or absent as the modern historical amnesia might imply.

Similarly posted in the Caledonian Mercury almost thirty years later, and during the initial years of abolitionism in Scotland, on Wednesday, June 8th, 1768 was an ad in which a “NEGRO SLAVE” was characterized as a “stout lad, well-made” who “answers to the name of LONDON.” It is interesting that the descriptive nature of the ad still

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denotes the runaway as a slave, despite the early rumblings of abolitionist sentiment in Scotland. Those rumblings and the anxieties of slave owners can be observed, however, in the final section, which is separated from the main body paragraph of the ad and which emphasized that “as every person knows the penalty of harbouring a slave, any person that does it will be prosecute in terms of the act of Parliament.” This section acts as a direct reminder to the readers that the law, as it pertained to the assistance or hiding of runaway slaves, was on the side of the owner, regardless of the reader’s personal views on the practice. This sentence suggests that not all citizens accepted the practice of slavery within the borders of Scotland, hinting at the divisive social atmosphere and political tensions surrounding slavery. The absence of similar phrases in earlier ads also suggests a growth in public consciousness on the inhumane practice and its presence in Scotland, the Atlantic world, especially in the Caribbean. It shows that owners were aware of the increase in public consciousness and the potential that their ownership might be challenged by another Scot.

The growing public consciousness and social tensions can further be observed in ads published just three to four years later that directly described the runaway as a slave. One of these ads, published on Saturday, June 22nd, 1771, seven years before the famous Knight vs Wedderburn case reached the Scottish courts, in the Caledonian Mercury, similarly denoted the runaway as a “BLACK SLAVE…call[ed] CAESAR” who “was

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91 Parliamentary acts which generally applied to the Southern colonies in North America, but was also in effect in Scotland. The act of harboring a slave also deprived a man of his natural and legal right to possess his property—the laws of ius naturae and ius nationale.
bred a cook,” but it indicated that he was an Indian and a “native of the East-Indies.”92 It likewise explicitly cites the law as a means of dissuading people from taking it upon themselves to free the slave to aid in his escape. The owner’s anxieties about others helping the slave to freedom is apparent in the caveat that “It is hoped Masters of ships, and others will be careful not to secrete or carry off the said slave, otherwise they shall be prosecuted in terms of the law.” This statement shows that the public consciousness about the ownership of slaves was becoming a grave threat to the legitimacy of white Scottish men to own slaves and to reassert their supremacy over another race, which Masters were aware of. The inclusion of such phrases that portray the position of the opponents of abolitionism uncover the rarely documented attitudes of slave owners in the age of abolition and Enlightenment, including their perceptions of the threat that abolitionist activities posed to their identity as white men of distinction.

White slave owner’s identities are shown to be further strained with the shift in the descriptive elements used in subsequent runaway ads. Beginning around the 1770s, with the increased Scottish involvement in the abolitionist movement, runaway ads for slaves adopted a more ambiguous characterization of the status of the runaway. It is in these ads, such as one published by the Caledonian Mercury in May 1772, where “BLACK SERVANT” came to replace ‘slave’ or ‘negro’ as distinguishing features. Characterizing a runaway as a black servant instead of a slave adds a layer of uncertainty about whether the servant was free or held in bondage. This shift would not have been a

point of concern ten or twenty years earlier, when the abolitionist movement was in its infancy and the public turned a blind eye to the source of Scotland’s growing economy and agricultural sector.\textsuperscript{93} However, due to the public shift towards abolitionism, we see that masters started to censor their words in accordance with the attitudes of the public. It is also worth noting that this ad does not name the owner of the slave as earlier ads did, but alternatively states that the reward for the runaways recapture will be given to whoever gives “intimation to the publisher of this paper.” Abolitionist pressures in Scotland were potential reasons why the owner might not want others to connect his name with the publicly slighted practice. As negro slaves began to be confined within the home and many Scots refrained from writing or speaking about matters such as their ‘domestic servants,’ Anthony, the “Black Servant,” was likely well-hidden until his escape. The absence of the owner’s name not only implies that the owner was aware of the need to censor the ad and exclude his name, but it also shows that masters no longer felt justified in publicizing the extent of their wealth by announcing their ownership of slaves.\textsuperscript{94}

One final runaway ad epitomizes the shift in owner awareness and public condemnation due to the rising strength of abolitionist sentiments. Similar to the former example, an ad placed in the \textit{Caledonian Mercury} on November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 1784, presented a

\textsuperscript{93} The rapid development of Scotland which prompted its success on the world stage is cited by one historian as resolutely founded in slaving practices throughout the Atlantic which provided the “resources for a relatively poor society to undertake a rapid programme of costly agricultural transformation in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.” A nation submerged in the production of wool to provide the continual influx of slaves in the Caribbean, specifically the West Indies. Thomas Dowds, “The Scots and slavery,” \textit{History Scotland Magazine} 11, no. 2 (March 2011), 19.

\textsuperscript{94} Dowds, 19.
runaway as a “BLACK SERVANT” and “BLACK LAD” named Carsan and not as a slave.\textsuperscript{95} We can surmise that this was due to the same reasons as discussed above. The ad also instructs the reader to contact the publisher if Carsan is found. The only indication of the owner’s identity is his description as a “Gentleman in Rosshire.” In neglecting to include the master’s name, this ad represents an attempt by the owner to re-secure his property without attracting any undue attention toward himself or his family and their participation in human bondage. The last factor that solidified the shifts in both private and public consciousness due to the appearance of the abolitionist movement is the word that signifies ownership—‘runaway.’ Instead of using the term runaway to denote the deserter and his legal status, the ad uses the word strayed. The semantic shift has many implications. Not only does it strengthen the argument about a gradual shift in public consciousness and owner awareness, it also marks the end of ads denoting any form of the ownership of slaves and the use of slaves as a status symbols, as we have likewise seen in the erasure of slaves from contemporary paintings, as can be seen in all later runaway ads. Shifts like these were undeniably influenced by and directly correlated to the social anxieties and the growth in public condemnation of slavery, as well as the three separate court cases of Montgomery, Spens, and Knight in Scotland that forever changed the legitimacy of slavery and the fate of the enslaved.

\textsuperscript{95} Caledonian Mercury, 13 November 1784. “A BLACK SERVANT STRAYED.” The British Newspaper Archives.
Pivotal Court Cases

Despite the popular Yorke-Talbot opinion, the understanding of Roman law as the deciding factor in Scottish participation, and the growth of abolitionist sentiments, the uncertain legality of the institution of slavery in Scotland and the rest of Great Britain persisted. With the growth of the abolitionist movement and the increase of Presbyterian clergy performing baptisms against the grain of social and legal understanding it comes at no great surprise to modern historians that the fate of slavery in Scotland would ultimately be decided in the courts. The continued ambiguity which characterized Scottish participation in the trade and the existence of domestic slavery can be observed in origins of the court cases which spanned twenty years in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Three cases brought before the Court of Session in 1756, 1769, and 1778 marked the beginning of Scotland’s government having to face the harsh reality of the palpable tensions and growing divide between its people on the subject of slavery within the country’s borders, as observed through the shifts in the language of the runaway ads. The underlying societal tensions present in the runaway ads became solidified in the three court cases of Montgomery v Sheddan, Dalrymple v Spens and Henderson, and Knight v Wedderburn which were characterized by a black slave’s quest for freedom and their similar attempts to play on the nation’s anxieties and the controversial understanding of Christianity and the values of the Presbyterian Church. Each of the three cases offers insight into the increasing demand for government involvement in deciding the fate of each slave and their attempt to definitively outline the role of slavery within Scotland by directly opposing the common understanding and
acceptance that “from the start of sophisticated legal discussion [arguments of the roman concept of *commercium* as presented in Shedden v. Montgomery] of slavery in Scotland, Roman concepts were in use to understand the phenomenon, and slaves were understood to be property.”

The cases also offer an intimate view of the participants involved through their petitions and testimonies given during the legal proceedings.

*Montgomery v Sheddan* was the first of the three cases and began in 1756. The case was brought to the court by Robert Sheddan against his slave James (Jamie) Montgomery, formerly known as ‘Shanker’. Sheddan claimed that Montgomery ran away after being forcibly transported to Port Glasgow to be sent back to Virginia and resold to his former master Joseph Hawkins. The threat of returning to Virginia and his previous master prompted Montgomery’s flight and subsequent quest for freedom. While on the run, Montgomery was baptized by Reverend John Witherspoon, but was apprehended by authorities shortly after and placed in the Edinburgh Tolbooth jail. From his jail cell Montgomery petitioned the Court of Session to hear his case and request for freedom based on his new found Christian identity. Robert Sheddan detested Montgomery’s proclamation of freedom and presented the court with a counter petition to refute Montgomery’s claim. Sheddan reaffirmed his legal right to Montgomery by presenting the court with the original receipt of Montgomery’s purchase.

Fredricksburgh March the 9 1750

Know all men by these presents that I Josephth Hawkins of Spotselvenia County for & in Consideration of the Sum of Fifty Six pound twelve shillings & six pence Virginia Curr[enc]y to me in hand pay[ed] by Robert Shedden Merch[an]t in Fred[ricksburgh] the

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96 Allain, *The Legal Understanding of Slavery*, 72.
Recept wherof I acknowledge Have bargain[e]d Soled & deliv[e]red & by these presents do bargain sell & deliver unto the said Robert Shedden One Negroe unto the said Robert Shedden his Edxecutors administrators for Ever, And I the said Joseph Hawkins for my self my Edxecutor & admin[istrato]rs shall & will warrant & forever defend against all Persons whatsum Ever In witness wherof I have herunto sett my hand & seal this Ninth day of March One thousand seven hundred & fifty

Signed Seal[e]d & Deliv[e]red Joseph Hawkins
James Hilldrop
Jo[h]n Stewart

After both petitions were filed, the Court of Sessions scheduled the hearing to take place in January of 1757. Unfortunately, due to the poor conditions of the jail and his poor health, Montgomery died in Tolbooth jail before the case could be heard by the court. Montgomery’s early death postponed the court having to face and act on the controversial issue of slavery in Scotland.

Since the case was not heard before the court, we are unable to obtain any further knowledge or insight into the specific justifications used by each party regarding the legitimacy of Montgomery’s bid for freedom. Despite this fact, we are able to use correspondence issued by Sheddan to investigate the growing social anxieties of slavery as a legal right to maintain property, along with the unwanted baptisms and the interference of the Presbyterian Church. Sheddan’s use of the receipt which document Montgomery’s purchase is symbolic of the social dynamics which allowed slavery to exist within Scotland. The receipt ascribed Montgomery to the realm of property – or ‘thing’ - and, therefore, a rightful possession of Sheddan. The legal representation of

97 Petitions made in the Montgomery v Sheddan case. Legal records from the National Records of Scotland (CS234/S/3/12).
Montgomery as a ‘thing’ and not a person removed all human sentiments from the proceedings, and in-turn, the questions of slavery, because no true Scotsman would reject the right of a man to maintain his property.

Sheddan’s anxiety over Jamie’s baptism was also very telling of the time and clearly expressed in one of his letters to Lord Bankton of the Court which states, “my reasons for opposing [Jamie’s baptism] were I was sensible his desirte [sic] of the sacramen of Baptizm did not proceed from any good disposition in him or desire to get free from the bondage of sin and death but that he wanted to make a handle of it to do me an injustice by attempting to free himself of my lawful service being mine lawfully bought of Mr. Joseph Hawkins in Virginia.” This statement provides yet another glimpse into the changing societal attitudes towards slavery and the Church’s eventual unified condemnation of the heinous practice. Montgomery’s baptism, like so many others, marked the clergy’s early and continued involvement in anti-slavery actions, with or without the unified approval of the Presbyterian Church, and willingness to participate in dismantling slavery to ensure the “imperatives of Christianity in a nation such as Scotland took precedence over the expressed wishes of a master,” as well as the unabashed affirmation that clergy members would continue intervene when possible and push the issue of slavery through baptisms, regardless of the legal acceptance of such practices.

98 Ibid.
99 Whyte, Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 20-21. Faith and Slavery also discusses the role of clergy members from the early years of abolitionism to the eventual outlawing of the practice. The authors show that though the Presbyterian Church did not take an official stance against slavery and the practice within Scotland until the last two decades of the eighteenth-century, it continually granted the requests for the baptism of slaves by clergy throughout the nation.
Social anxieties regarding slavery, along with the growing involvement of the Church and its officials in undermining slavery within Scotland, appeared in the courts again in 1769. *Dalrymple v Spens and Henderson* in 1769-1770 once again brought slavery to the fore of social questions and intensified the uncertainties surrounding its legality. David Spens, formerly known as Black Tom, was bought by Dr. David Dalrymple in the West Indies and accompanied Dr. Dalrymple when he returned to Scotland in the early 1760s. Dr. Dalrymple intended to send Tom back to the West Indies in 1769, but first granted Tom’s request to be baptized before his departure. On September 1st, 1769 Black Tom was baptized and officially became David Spens. Once baptized, Spens declared his freedom and sought asylum with John Henderson, a staunch anti-slavery advocate. Spens proclaimed that his baptism no longer constituted him as a heathen slave, and therefore, he could no longer be considered Dr. Dalrymple’s property.

Dr. Dalrymple took the case to the Court of Sessions and bitterly denounced the deceit used by Spens and Henderson in the outward claims of converting slaves only for the purpose of bringing them into the fold of Christianity. Dalrymple argued against the falsehood of the conversion and asserted “that it now however appears that the Conversion and Baptism of the Negro was a Pia Fraus [pious fraud] concerted between him and the other Defender John Henderson who thought Proper to put it into the Negroes head that Baptism by the Law of this County would emancipate him from his Servitude…”

Spens and Henderson’s appeals ultimately fell on deaf ears when the court chose to take a hands-off approach by affirming Dalrymple’s ownership and Spens’

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100 *Court of Session records of David Spens case.* National Records of Scotland (CS236/D/4/3).
inability to challenge it. The court did not rule in favor of either party, but simply stated Dalrymple’s legal right to own ‘the slave’. Regardless of Spens’ faith, his prior servitude and his skin color constituted his inferiority and his standing as Dalrymple’s legal property, and therefore, the only recourse would be for Spens to return to Dr. Dalrymple.101 Spens took longer than expected to return to his former master and was later arrested after Dalrymple proclaimed that Spens intended to flee the country with the help of Henderson. While incarcerated, Spens garnered support to help fight against his enslavement. However, their planned efforts never came to fruition because not long after Spens’ imprisonment Dr. Dalrymple died, which automatically freed Spens.

Besides its similarity to the early case in 1756, one of the important aspects of this case is that it forced the Scottish courts to acknowledge growing tensions and to consider the potential repercussions of ruling against social pressures to end the ownership of slaves in Scotland. Ultimately, the court once again was able to look the other way and skirt dealing with the societal divisions. The court was able to circumvent and postpone any direct ruling related to the legality of slavery by refusing Spens’ case and by legitimizing the legal superiority of white Scottish men, like Dr. Dalrymple. This case also further highlights the continued involvement and interference of the Presbyterian Church in conducting slave baptisms to bypass the laws and establish former slaves as freed Christians. It also re-solidified the understanding of slaves as property and the government’s realization that the tensions between clergy, the growing acceptance of abolitionism, and slave owners would eventually reach a boiling point.

101 Ibid.
The next and final court case exhibited similar elements of the prior two, but the final ruling of *Knight v Wedderburn* in 1778 marked the political conversion of the Court of Session. Though the Somerset case of 1772 in England is considered the landmark ruling which freed all slaves in domestic Britain, it was not until the Knight case of 1778 that Scotland formally ruled on the matter. The case involved a slave named Joseph Knight, bought in Jamaica and brought to Scotland with his master John Wedderburn. Knight was later baptized and married in Scotland. After his baptism, Knight pursued his freedom through the concept of Scotland as a free-soil nation. Knight argued that since his arrival in Scotland from Jamaica, he was free because slavery was not recognized in Scotland. In making that bold claim, Knight openly challenged the legal standing of slavery within Scotland and his own enslavement and forced servitude. The first court which heard the case was the Justice of the Peace court in Perth which ruled in favor of Wedderburn’s ownership; ultimately upholding the white patriarchal system and slave ownership within Scotland. Knight challenged the ruling and took his suit to the Sheriff of Perth. The Sheriff controversially ruled in favor of Knight and proclaimed that “the state of slavery is not recognised by the laws of this kingdom, and is inconsistent with the

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102 It should be noted that in a recent article titled *After Somerset* historian John Cairns makes a substantial argument for the correlation between the Knight ruling made in Scotland after the Somerset case in England. Cairn examines the effects of the Somerset case on enslaved persons in Scotland. He explains that while the case’s decision did not automatically set slaves free in England, as was thought initially, the initial miscommunication of the verdict was none-the-less spread throughout England, Scotland, and even across the Atlantic to inform those in bondage that if they were to make it to England, they would be free. This concept effectively enforced the idea of England as a ‘free soil’ nation. John W. Cairns, "After Somerset: The Scottish Experience" *Journal of Legal History* no. 3: 291. *HeinOnline*, EBSCOhost (2012).
principles thereof: That the regulations in Jamaica, concerning slaves, do not extend to this kingdom…”103

Wedderburn contested the decision and took it to the Court of Sessions, the highest court in Scotland. The Court of Sessions upheld the Sheriff’s ruling and decided, despite Wedderburn’s proclamations and protests, that “the dominion assumed over this Negro, under the law of Jamaica, being unjust, could not be supported in this country to any extent: That, therefore, the defender had no right to the Negro’s service for any space of time, nor to send him out of the country against his consent: That the Negro was likewise protected under the act 1701, c.6. from being sent out of the country against his consent.”104 Therefore, the court in essence ruled that slavery could not be recognized within the borders of Scotland, and that the law now had legal standing to protect any slave or runaway forced to flee in the face of the threat of returning to other slaving regions throughout the Atlantic.105

The final ruling in Knight v Wedderburn granted Knight his freedom and encouraged slaves to pursue similar legal actions to gain their freedom. The case’s outcome did not, however, definitely address the role of slaves in Scotland.106 Though it was ruled that “the state of slavery is not recognized by the laws of this kingdom,” the

103 Court of Session records of Joseph Knight case. Legal records from the National Records of Scotland (CS235/K/2/2).
104 Ibid.
106 This same concept is discussed by Sue Peabody in There Are No Slaves in France, but in the French context. In France, although the Code Noir had made slavery illegal by proclaiming France a free-soil nation, the existence of slavery within French borders remained well into the nineteenth century. The continuity between the two nations in their delay of adhering to such rulings and laws which denounced slavery speaks towards the extent each society was invested in the practice and suggests that the experiences in Scotland, and France, in regard to slavery, were not acute, but were in fact an aspect of slaving societies throughout the Atlantic.
owning of slaves did not become illegal in Scotland until the 1830s. From these rulings, the Court of Session made it clear that they would not challenge the legality of the institution within Scotland but would help those who took legal actions against their masters who bought them from elsewhere in the Empire and brought them back to Scotland. This case may have resulted in revolutionary declarations made by the Scottish courts; it however did nothing to appease growing tensions between pro- and anti-slavery advocates that would later come to a head during the early years of the nineteenth century when the abolitionist movement brought slavery to the forefront of political and governmental debates founded in Enlightenment theories and actions to eradicate slavery from the British Empire and the entire world in 1807 and 1833, respectively.

**Scotland Within the Atlantic**

The need for historians to de-polarize Scottish history with slavery by interpreting the connections between Enlightened thoughts, anti- and pro-slavery sentiments, and fluctuations in law in Scottish history in order to gain a complete understanding of the culminating factors which influenced social discourses, slave escapes, and their advertisements as the era of Enlightenment progressed becomes evident in the above analysis. Without the comprehensive understanding of the combined social dynamics which were influenced by and shaped the presence of the enslaved and runaway advertisements, we would not gain a true understanding of their significance to Scottish history. However, in connecting the social discourses and events of eighteenth-century Scottish history in order to provide evidence of the influence of enslaved presence and its reflection in runaway advertisements, Scotland’s position within the Atlantic is not
explicitly apparent; and therefore, assigns our understanding of these aspects in Scottish history to the isolated or polarized understanding of Scotland as an anomaly of eighteenth-century Atlantic studies. In my attempt to abstain from prescribing my own research to such a narrowed interpretation, I have discovered that connecting the historic dots of events in Scottish eighteenth-century history and using the comprehensive understanding of such events to interpret slave presence and advertisement also allows for us to place Scottish history within the history of the Atlantic World. In our analysis of the influence of slave presence and advertisements within Scotland, it becomes apparent that the discourses of Scottish history in the Enlightened century can be correlated to like happenings of its European counterparts. In short, through the comprehensive analysis of the social discourses produced by the presence of enslaved persons within a society, we can see that Scotland can be placed in the context of Atlantic World history due to its similarities to other contemporary European nations. Scotland’s commonality to other European nations who participated in the Atlantic slaving systems is most apparent when investigating the daily lives of slaves and the motives behind their escapes.

In a time of great social change, which one eighteenth-century politician characterized a time where “it is no small consolation to see, that the bitterness of ill-directed zeal is fast giving way to charity, and the natural influence of progressive improvements. Nothing will stand the test of time and experience, but that which is founded on truth. Error and prejudice will pass away…” one can only assume that the very existence of a slave had to be a constant source of anxiety for both owners and slaves. Theses anxieties, on the part of the slaves and their growing awareness of abolitionism, could hint
at the daily experience of slaves and their possible desertions, but such assumptions cannot form the basis of our analysis and therefore signifies the need to further our investigation on the daily lives of slaves.¹⁰⁷ The estimation that “between 1719-1776, there were thirty-six newspaper advertisements for runaways who were brought from the Caribbean, the American colonies or the Indies, with nine notices of slaves for sale, four of these being in 1766,” when compared to the earlier statistics of enslaved populations in Scotland during the same period, it suggests that roughly one-third to one half of slaves in Scotland deserted their owners at least once.¹⁰⁸ Where one cannot argue against the notion that Scottish slaves ran away from their owners because they simply wished to be free, this conclusion does not satisfactorily answer why some Scottish slaves chose to run, while others chose to stay, or the daily factors which influenced such decisions. These telling statistics also show that a little under two-thirds of Scottish slaves never disserted their owners and suggests that the lives of Scottish slaves were not solely composed of escape attempts or plans of escape.

Recognizing the slaves who chose not to escape their bondage prompts an alternative understanding of the daily lives of Scottish slaves, which has largely been ignored in recent literature. Emma Rothschild’s *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* is one of the only historical narratives which attempts to tackle the challenge of portraying the complexities of a slave’s existence within an empire where “for

¹⁰⁷Sir John Sinclair, Bart., *The statistical account of Scotland Drawn up from the communications of the ministers of the different parishes* (Edinburgh: printed and sold by William Creech; and also sold by J. Donaldson, and A. Guthrie, Edinburgh; T. Cadell, J. Stockdale, J. Debrett, and J. Sewel, London; Dunlop and Wilson, Glasgow; Angus and Son; Aberdeen, 1791), Vol. 1, M,DCC,XCI. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. 75.

the enslaved,… the diversity of slave regimes was itself a continuing constituent of the experience of slavery” which had to be instantaneously understood and adhered to upon their arrival in Scotland.109 In this account Rothschild provides invaluable evidence of the daily lives of Scottish domestic slaves and their uncertain existence in a society at war internally over moral and economic principles. In this investigation of the intimacies and dealings of the inner and outer aspects of empires, the Johnstons family papers and court records validate Rothschild’s previous assertions of slave life in Scotland by examining the legal proceedings of a female slave named Bell or Belinda. Being one of the few cases where a slave’s life, especially one of the few female slaves, in Scotland is recorded, Bell or Belinda’s story is one of tragedy and persecution but offers us some insight into the lives of slaves. As Rothschild concludes, Bell’s writing after her conviction of infanticide tell the story as a slave brought from Bengall to London, and then to Scotland who described her existence within a Scottish household as “a black Girl or woman…the slave or servant [of John Johnston],” and one who understood “little or nothing of the Language.”

Though Bell or Belinda’s personal story cannot be representative of all slaves in Scotland, her story does point to a world in which slaves were isolated from their families, thrown into a society of unfamiliar rules and social understands, but at the same time were intimately involved in their master’s family and were members of a “well-informed world of individuals who were slaves and who had conversations, access to newspapers, opinions about officers of the law, and letters from their friends.”

The investigation of Belle or Belinda’s story and inner and outer intimacies of a Scottish slave-holding family led Rothschild to conclude that the ambiguity of a slave’s existence within Scotland was not unlike that of other domestic slaves in Europe who were subjected to constant uncertainty and “circumstances in which entirely new scenes of oppression were both remote and close…, and in which individuals [were introduced into] contiguous and conflicting cultures, and found themselves alone in empires.”\textsuperscript{110} Rothchild contends that from the first time their feet touched Scottish soil, slaves occupied a role similar to their French and English counterparts. They were intricate participants in “relationships that were at one and the same time relations between individuals and relations of power, in which their own individuality, or their own humanity, ebbed and flowed.”\textsuperscript{111}

Aligning with what we already know regarding the legally ambiguous and uncertain world Scottish domestic slaves resided in, this account helps to fill in the voids left by a population whose voices were previously “rendered inaudible by the clink of money.”\textsuperscript{112} Such assertions not only expand our understanding of the milieu in which Scottish domestic slaves existed, they also suggest that these experiences were not limited to slaves within Scotland’s borders; but were in-fact, the experiences of other slaves who likewise resided in European lands where “the legal roles of individuals changed over time, in the

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid, 300.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
frightening oscillation of commerce, sovereignty, and jurisdiction…” due to social paradoxes of slavery and enlightenment during the Eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{113}

As seen through the historical events of eighteenth-century England, France, and Spain, Scotland was far from the only nation that struggled to conform to the new understandings of moral obligation, while simultaneously maintaining its existence as a nation woven into the fabrics of the Atlantic slaving system. For instance, in France, as in Scotland, the eighteenth century was a time of debate and social anxiety regarding slavery. Where Scottish social anxieties stemmed from the growth of abolitionist fervor beginning in the mid-1740s and the government’s hands-off approach to slavery, the uncertainties and tensions of domestic slavery in France were the result of fluctuating legal codes and the activities of slaveowners who continued their fight against the ‘Freedom Principle’, also known as the free-soil principle, long before the time of the Code Noir in the seventeenth-century and throughout the time of Enlightened sentiments. Scholars such as Sue Peabody proclaim that “the historical trajectory of the free soil principle was neither consistent nor always uniformly progressive in its effects,” but asserts that is was of French and Dutch origins, and would later contribute to free-soil ideologies in other nations such as England and Scotland.\textsuperscript{114} Though the free-soil concept is a direct link between Scotland

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 141. \\
\textsuperscript{114} The concept of free soil being, the idea of enslaved people being able to cross territorial borders and instantaneously becoming free, was not limited to England or the U.S., but in fact originated in French and Dutch legal decisions, including the French Code Noir. Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg’s article "Free Soil: The Generation and Circulation of an Atlantic Legal Principle" present an alternative examination of the free soil concept and how it was regarded and applied throughout the countries involved in Atlantic trade (ie, England, France, Portugal, Spain, Africa). It questions the varying ideas and implementation of the concept and how the century of Enlightenment changed those once held principles of the legalization of human bondage versus territorial freedom become subject to final dismissal in a significant portion of European and Caribbean societies. Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, "Free Soil: The Generation and
and France’s participation in slavery, it is the similarities in economic structure and social understandings of hierarchy and outwardly portraying wealth through objects which justify the comparison between the two countries. The absence of the use and need for plantation labor in both countries adhere to the understanding of domestic slavery as a means of portraying social standing and wealth, instead of as a means of continuing economic success within the both countries.

Regardless of which country you refer to, there is no doubt that slaves were kept to maintain social standing through objectification and were at the heart of social discourses on enslavement and abolitionism in Scotland and France, two countries who would later be regarded as pioneers of anti-slavery sentiments. The similarities of the social construct and understanding of the social uses of domestic slaves help solidify the connections between Scottish and French domestic slaves whose lives were undoubtedly similar, if not reflective, of one another. As French historians such as Jennifer Palmer conclude, the experience of slaves upon their arrival in France was the almost instantaneous dual understanding of slavery as “simultaneously a point of continuity and of profound difference” from their former lives in the Atlantic slaving societies, not unlike their Scottish counterparts described by Rothschild.\textsuperscript{115} Therefore, both groups of slaves were similarly cut off from familial ties and left to wade the waters of learning their expected roles alone. Such solitude in an unknown land undoubtedly created great

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\textsuperscript{115}Palmer, *Intimate Bonds*, 1.
anxiety for those held in bondage. Those anxieties could account for a percent of escapes, and by result, runaway ads, but with limited resources documenting the lives of Scottish, and French, slaves prior to escape, those estimates can only be speculative.

**Conclusion**

Shifting the investigative lens from Scottish presence in the slaving societies of the Atlantic to its domestic affairs related to slavery opens a new means for examining Scotland’s overall connection to the nefarious institution. In examining in tandem the effects of the Enlightenment, growth of abolitionism, the ambiguities of law, slave presence, runaway ads, public opinion, and court cases of African and Indian slaves within Scotland the popular amnesia of Scots towards slavery and the falsehood of their non-direct contact with those enslaved is directly contradicted. Embracing the connection allows Scotland to acknowledge the intricate dealings that made it a dominating presence within the Atlantic system of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It can no longer be unrepresented in the narrative of the United Kingdom. The links between Scotland and slavery shows us that slavery cannot be confined to the massive and cumulative histories of large nations. Smaller nations were as equally involved, if not more so, in the practice of Atlantic slavery and its ultimate impact on the world.

However, shifting the lens of analysis has more importantly helped to illuminate the voices which have otherwise been left silent and shown that our understanding of this period of Scotland’s history can no longer consist of the isolated interpretations of ‘either, or’; either a history of Scotland as a leader in abolitionism, or as a nation whose citizens made up a larger percentage of the population throughout the slaving communities of the
Atlantic. Focusing on the smaller population of enslaved Africans in Scotland through a comprehensive understanding of the internal social dynamics provides an intimate view of the societal struggles among Scots during a time of progressivism and Enlightenment where “despite educated and Enlightened Scots having a philosophical distaste for slavery, social and economic factors could outweigh this and enable many to accept living through its [slavery’s] fruits.”\(^{116}\) This new means of analysis presents an alternative interpretation of the wave of economic, governmental, and social discourses which forever changed Scottish history and marked Scotland as a major international actor during the eighteenth century. It testifies to the diversity of thoughts and practices which solidified Scotland as a nation on the verge of change during the Enlightenment, as well as a multidimensional nation grappling with the knowledge of the evils inherent in the slave labor from which it greatly profited. It also further signifies the personalized contact between Scots and slaves as not being limited to the Atlantic system, but as an engrained element of everyday life in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland.

Furthermore, while reinforcing the link between Scotland and slavery through the investigation of its domestic and international affairs provides irrefutable proof of their involvement, it is only the beginning. Works such as this one will hopefully add to the expanding field of research surrounding Scotland’s connection to slavery that seeks to eliminate the disillusion of Scottish participation in slavery domestically and through the Atlantic, while also encouraging a shift in the scholarship to move away from polarized investigations of Scotland’s history with slavery. It is no longer necessary to analyze

\(^{116}\) Whyte, 55.
historical sources to try and simply reinforce the Scotland-slavery connection. As we have seen through the investigation of the influences of the enlightenment, abolitionism, dissenters, legal codes, presence of slaves, and runaway ads, there is potential for scholars to analyze the social characters and forces that have yet to be thoroughly examined. Shifting the focus of scholarship from refuting popular amnesia of the slave trade and emphasizing the connection, to a more comprehensive and inclusive examination of the people who created a society torn between Enlightened thought and engrained hierarchical supremacy will allow for the continuation and expansion of this field of analysis, which could otherwise be stunted if scholars were only interested in establishing and reiterating Scotland’s role in the Atlantic slave trade or simply illustrating Scotland’s history with abolitionism. Such a shift will not only illuminate the voices of those often left out of the narrative, like Scottish domestic slave owners, but will also push scholars to seek out other means of analysis to further emphasize the significance in understanding the historical complexities of a proud nation which is often overshadowed by its English brethren.

Though there is still a long way to go in this field of inquiry, in considering recent works and the potential for shifting the historical focus in order to create other lenses of analysis, the promise and likelihood of future scholarship continuing the investigating of documents left by Scots, personal correspondence, court records, census reports, and journals is substantial. In continuing to bring Scotland to the forefront of the larger history of the United Kingdom, we will be able to better understand its Atlantic and domestic participation in human bondage and begin the process of reconnecting the
Scottish people to an important part of their nation’s history. In order to accomplish those goals and to further uncover the Scottish connection to slavery and to make it an area of continued recognition and study, there must also continue to be a shift away from the overwhelming numerical data that often hides the connection under the large economic profits experienced by Scotland and its establishment within the United Kingdom. In making these shifts, slavery will no longer be a cruel injustice that other nations participated in, but an aspect of Scottish history that cannot be disputed.

In completing this analysis and shifting the focus towards the domestic tensions within Scotland that ultimately led to Scots becoming leading advocates in the fight against slavery, I plan to continue my research within this vein of analysis and hope to see similar scholarship within the field in the next few years. It is also my hope that by shifting the discussion from Scotland within the Transatlantic system to its native affairs and how those affairs defined it as a nation within the Atlantic, we will not only add to the growing historiography that links Scotland to the slave trade and slavery, but also encourage other areas within Scottish history and slavery that have yet to be investigated such Scottish women’s roles in the practice of slavery and its relations to gender dynamics of the early nineteenth century. In adding new interpretations to the expanding field of Scottish history and encouraging additional scholarship and lines of inquiry we will gain a more holistic view of Scotland’s undeniable participation in the slave trade and slavery which shaped Scottish history and contributed to the nation’s development towards modernity.
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