

UCLan Research Centre on Migration, Diaspora and Exile Seminar Series 2022-2023

“The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1780-1865”

by Prof Alan Rice, Drahoslava Máchová, Andrea Sillis, Kirsty Roberts and Dr Stephanie Munro

(The Institute for Black Atlantic Research)



Image: John Raphael Smith (1752-1812), *The Slave Trade*. Courtesy of the Whitworth, The University of Manchester

This paper will share results of a research project that is looking into links that early members of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society had with both the transatlantic slave trade and the abolition movement. When the Lit & Phil was founded in 1781, Manchester’s rapidly mechanising textile industry placed it at the centre of global trade networks fuelled by slave-produced cotton. However, the city was also an important hub of opposition to slavery, and whilst prominent members of the Society did indeed benefit greatly from wealth generated from slave-produced cotton – notably the Peel, Greg, Heywood, and Philips families – other members were actively engaged in anti-slavery campaigning. We have also found evidence that some members of the Society, such as Charles White (1728-1813) and Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), were engaged in research that was instrumental in producing and supporting theories of scientific racism.

The research is being carried out by a team of researchers from the Institute for Black Atlantic Research (IBAR), including Alan Rice, Drahoslava Máchová, Andrea Sillis and Kirsty Roberts, with additional voluntary input from Dr Stephanie Munro. Alan Rice is Professor in English and American Studies at UCLan, co-director of IBAR and director of MIDEX. Drahoslava has a BA in History from UCLan, where her dissertation focused on the social memory of communism, and an MRes, also undertaken at UCLan, focusing on the reception of the 1968 Prague Spring in the British radical Left movement. Andrea Sillis is an associate member of IBAR and MIDEX, having completed a PhD at UCLan in 2018 on the critical writing of Toni Morrison. Kirsty Roberts completed her BA at UCLan and currently works in the External Relations department at UCLan, where she is also the Co-Chair of the Racial Equality Network. She is also a freelance historian, curator and researcher, with a keen interest in local Black and working-class histories. Stephanie Munro undertook a PhD on the abolition movement in America, and currently works for the Open University.

Wednesday 23 Nov 16.00-17.00 Adelphi Building Lecture Theatre 4 (ABLT4) and [Online](#)



Attendance is free

Hosted by The UCLan Research Centre on Migration, Diaspora and Exile (MIDEX)

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