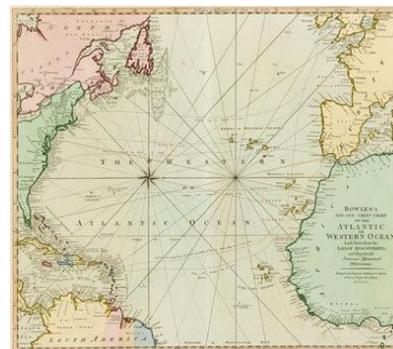




## Traces and Memories of Slavery in the Atlantic World

Université Paul Valéry,  
Montpellier, France  
1-2 December, 2016



### Keynote Speakers

Ana Lucia Araujo (Howard University)  
Christine Chivallon (Research Director, CNRS)

In *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001),<sup>1</sup> Ron Eyerman explores the formation of African American identity through the cultural trauma of slavery. While trauma directly affected individuals who experienced slavery, Eyerman argues that, as a cultural process, trauma is "mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory". This international conference seeks to examine the foundation, the mechanisms and the scope of these memorial processes. It endeavors to explore a reality of slavery that rests on human memory, on a (re)constructed memory of individual, collective or family trajectories and migrations transmitted from generation to generation.

The Traces and Memories of Slavery in the Atlantic World conference sets out to interrogate how descendants reconstruct the history of their ancestors when transatlantic slavery is one of the variables of the memorial process. The conference also aims at examining the extent to which, by a process of collectivization of personal or family memories and (hi)stories, social actors of the present not only partake in generating and consolidating group identities but also how they foster "the emergence of the memory of slavery in public space."<sup>2</sup> In addition to assessing the cultural and symbolic redistribution which are enabled by the commemoration, the museification and the patrimonialization of the memory of slavery, this conference aims at probing the constraints which determine the inscription of this memory in the public sphere and the extent to which social demand, especially in the context of the obligation of remembrance, influences the production of historical knowledge and sometimes leads to conflicts of memory.

As Ira Berlin has argued, can it be contended that although "[h]istory and memory both speak to the subject of slavery [...] they speak in different tongues" ?<sup>3</sup> In the traumatic and post-traumatic context of slavery, conflicting memories of interracial relationships, for instance, call for a specific attention: can the mechanisms of memorial (re)construction, whether it be from a psychological or historical point of view, claim or aim to be neutral? It will prove interesting to study the historical and strategic importance of places like Gorée - their symbolic and affective charge, as well as their memorial function. In the same vein, instances of what Ana Lucia Araujo refers to as "memory replacement", whereby "a local population appropriates an existing building or site and assigns to it

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Christine Chivallon, "Mémoire de l'esclavage et actualisation des rapports sociaux," in Cottias, Myriam, Cunin, Elisabeth & de Almeida Mendes, António (eds.), *Les esclavages et les traites. Perspectives historiques et contemporaines*, Paris, Karthala, 2010, p. 335.

<sup>3</sup> Ira Berlin, "American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice," *The Journal of American History*, 90.4 (2004), p. 1266-1267.

stories of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery as if it was an actual heritage site" will also be worth considering.<sup>4</sup>

The organizing committee of this international and interdisciplinary conference welcomes papers in the form of case studies, analyses aimed at identifying general trends or comparative approaches. The geographic scope of the conference - the Atlantic space - is purposefully broad, as the issue of memorial modernity transcends individuals, race, nations, space and time. As memory of facts dating back to several generations can only be transmitted, reconstructed and inevitably fragmentary in nature, the palimpsestic dimension of the memorial process will be given particular attention.

Papers may build on recent theoretical works on memory, such as those of Michael Rothberg (2009)<sup>5</sup> for whom memory is constructed on the basis of multidirectional focalizations and synergies between events that are seemingly disconnected in time and space (*Multidirectional Memory*), or of Max Silverman (2013)<sup>6</sup> who has described the relationship between past and present in the form of a "superposition and interaction of different temporal traces [that] constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by another" (*Palimpsestic Memory*). It might prove interesting to unravel the threads of family memory construction by studying the trajectory of founding individuals. The archival traces of key moments will thus be identified in order to interrogate and retrace the historical context of these trajectories and/or shed light on parallel trajectories, such as those of better-known historical figures. Genealogical research offers a propitious ground to retrace memories as genealogy reveals the memorial mechanisms which allow to recreate, from the interstices left by factual elements, decipherable paths which are historically credible and psychologically acceptable. Finally, it will be interesting to assess whether the memorial prism is necessarily ethnocentric.

*The themes this conference endeavors to explore include, but are not limited to:*

- the history and memory of slavery;
- the memorialization of slavery;
- the canonization of the memory of slavery;
- representation(s) of slavery;
- the commemoration, the museification and the patrimonialization of the memory of slavery;
- places and conditions of the production of knowledge on slavery and its circulation;
- the legacy/cies of slavery and the (re)construction of (collective) identity;
- slavery and genealogy;
- sources and archives on slavery.

### **Submission guidelines:**

The languages of the conference are English and French. **Please send proposals of no more than 300 words in English or French (for papers or panels) and a brief CV mentioning your institutional affiliation to traces2016@gmail.com by February 29, 2016.** Notification of acceptance will be sent by March 31, 2016. We welcome papers that cover any region of the Atlantic World as well as proposals for round table discussions.

### **Conference Organizers:**

Lawrence Aje (Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier - EMMA)

Nicolas Gachon (Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier - EMMA)

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<sup>4</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo, *Shadows of the Slave Past: Memory, Heritage, and Slavery*, New York, Routledge, 2014, p. 77.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2013.