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Re-configuring Cultural Memory in the UK: Colonialism, Slavery and the Slave Trade

The perceived need to address a wide spread amnesia and to rewrite hegemonic narratives of British colonialism, slavery and the slave trade has been a source of heated debate in the UK over the past 15 years. It has affected arguments and practices in education, the media and the museum and heritage sectors. Here practitioners have been encouraged to address this history in the interests of more inclusive representations of Britain's past that might contribute to greater intercultural understanding and what has come to be known as "social cohesion". This paper will consider this debate and look at how examples of recent cultural practice, including work by Black British writers, have addressed the largely forgotten history of Britain's colonial involvement in the Caribbean, focusing on how this work challenges taken-for-granted White assumptions about British history and identity.