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FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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Bachelor's thesis

Recent History of Monuments Destroyed in the United Kingdom During Black Lives Matter Rallies

Kryštof Čejchan

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Affidavit

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this work; no assistance other than that permitted has been used, and all quotes and concepts taken from unpublished sources, published literature or the internet in wording or in basic content have been identified by precise source citations.

the 14th of April 2024 in Olomouc
Date and location

.....
Author's signature

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my younger brother, Adam, for all the good times we shared.

Annotation

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Klíčová slova:	památníky, sochy, ikonoklasmus, Black Lives Matter, otroctví, rasismus, policejní brutalita, protesty, nepokoje, Edward Colston, Winston Churchill, George Floyd
Anotace v angličtině:	The bachelor's thesis focuses on evaluating justifications for the destruction of statues in the United Kingdom during the Black Lives Matter protests in the context of both history and the present. It includes an overview of historical and contemporary issues that have contributed to recent unrest and analyses the lives and statues of key historical figures. To achieve the thesis's goal, arguments are presented, analysed, and subsequently compared.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	monuments, statues, iconoclasm, Black Lives Matter, slavery, racism, police brutality, protests, unrest, Edward Colston, Winston Churchill, George Floyd
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List of Abbreviations

This bachelor's thesis contains the following acronyms and abbreviations:

i. *BLM* stands for Black Lives Matter
ii. *GB* stands for Great Britain
iii. *BST* stands for British Slave Trade
iv. *TRD* refers to the "Topple the Racists" database
v. *RAC* stands for Royal African Company
vi. *SSC* stands for South Sea Company
vii. *GTFT* refers to Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

1 Introduction

The United Kingdom has recently undergone a significant racial re-evaluation following George Floyd's murder, which fuelled the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that called for meaningful change. During the BLM rallies and protests, many monuments of controversial historical figures, such as Edward Colston and Winston Churchill, became a subject of controversy, with some being defaced or removed, causing heated and divisive debates.

This bachelor's thesis aims to evaluate the justification behind the destruction or removal of monuments in the context of historical injustices and contemporary social movements. To achieve this, the thesis sets its objectives to summarise the events that had led to monument destruction, identify critical and controversial monuments, and collect arguments and motives that transpired into monument destruction.

The thesis commences by providing an overview of the events that have recently transpired into motivation to damage the controversial statues, including slavery, attitudes towards enslaved Blacks, and contemporary issues like police brutality and Floyd's murder.

In the following chapter, the thesis discusses essential historical figures and their statues in the context of the thesis's aim. It focuses on why the statues were erected, why they are controversial, and the reasons behind their damage or removal. By exploring these perspectives, the thesis strives to provide an analysis of the justification for the destruction of monuments in the context of historical injustices and contemporary social issues.

In another chapter, various arguments presented in debates and relevant literature are described and analysed. The purpose is to provide a comprehensive understanding of people's views and to help evaluate the justification of the monument removal. Additionally, the chapter offers a unique perspective on George Floyd's statue and compares it to other controversial statues. This perspective goes beyond the chapter's original scope.

In the final chapter, the thesis examines the changes that have occurred as a result of the rallies, aside from the damage to statues. It also summarises the general public's opinions and reactions to the case of Edward Colston. This information will shed light on potential future rallies and how people can learn from past events.

Finally, the conclusion presents the findings of the thesis, discusses how it met its aims and objectives and expresses its view on the topic. It also offers advice to future scholars interested in studying this topic.

2 An Overview of Historical Events and Issues Leading to the Monument Destructions

Before passing any judgement on the recent monument destructions involving the BLM movement, it is vital to understand the events that had led to the recent rallies. These events had been building up as a chain reaction for centuries, bursting out recently in the form of rallies, riots, and unrest during which monuments were destroyed.

This chapter and its sub-chapters shed some light on the slave trade in the UK, its essential ports, and the position of enslaved Blacks in British society throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, which arguably play tremendous roles in fuelling the motivation and motives of the BLM movement. Subsequently, selected topics such as police brutality that are connected to the BLM movement shall be discussed and examined as well to understand the sources of recent unrest concerning the protests.

2.1 The British Slave Trading

The British slave trading and slave-owning represent very crucial topics in the context of recent BLM rallies that are connected to the monument destruction in the UK. Apart from affecting several other racial issues, the British slave trade (BST) plays another critical role: BLM activists' focus has recently been concentrated on monuments 'celebrating', among other issues, slavery (Shields, 2020). Hence, this sub-chapter dives into the issues of British involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Firstly, it is needed to be said that slavery has existed since ancient times, and it is likely that the majority of ethnicities, minorities, or cultures have experienced it in one way or another. The British were not exempt from this either (Sherwood, 2007, p. 5); nevertheless, Great Britain (GB) and Africa are incomparable in the context of enslavement. Sullivan (2020, p. 34), a member of the Naval Records Society, claims that Africans have historically had a strong association with slavery. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge that slavery had been present in Africa long before any Europeans arrived on the continent. In fact, the same author says it was an integral part of their way of life, equivalent to European land ownership. Sullivan (2020, p. 34) also claims that slavery was firmly established in their tribal cultures, either as a punishment for crimes or as a form of debt payment.

Anyway, let us focus on the BST with Africans, which dates back to the 16th century (Gallay, 2002, p. 46). In spite of GB being a latecomer to the trade compared to other European

countries, such as the Dutch, who had already established their dominance and monopoly in the slave trade (Barker, 1978, p. 7) or the Portuguese, who virtually had an unchallenged monopoly in the "Atlantic Slave Trade" (Bicheno, 2012, p. 82), the British eventually took over that monopoly. The British monopoly lasted for 35 years until 1689, when the demand for slaves became too high to be handled by just one country - leading to its collapse (Pruitt, 2016).

The British established a complex system of trade within Africa with African slave traders, which focused on the West African coasts[1], avoiding inland areas due to concerns about diseases and local armed tribes. African traders captured and supplied slaves, often taking individuals from inland regions who endured backbreaking journeys to the West Coast. Slaves were subjected to gruelling travel, often chained, and used to carry and transport goods. British traders negotiated with their African counterparts, often involving bargaining and bribery. In order to reduce the risk of uprisings, they chose slaves from diverse tribes and regions. Furthermore, the Africans were not passive actors in this trade and could engage with the British on equal terms in certain instances, challenging the conventional power dynamics of the time. (Baronová, 2014, pp. 27-29)

Smith (2022, pp. 11-12) adds that this was the first of three phases of the triangular trade, in which the British slave traders loaded their ships with clothes, guns, and metals in British ports. When the ships successfully arrived at an African coast, the goods were traded for the kidnapped Africans, who were mainly transported to the Americas, where they were sold. For the earned money, the British bought tobacco and sugar produced by enslaved people and sailed home.

It is estimated that 3.1 million enslaved Africans were transported by the British across the Atlantic Ocean, only 2.7 million of whom survived the transportation (Jacobovici, Kingsley, 2022, p. 81); they often died from disease or neglect, sometimes by suicide (Tunzelmann, 2021, p. 157).

Those slaves who arrived in the Americas endured relentless hardships, including forced labour in harsh conditions, insufficient provisions, and the constant threat of brutal punishment for disobedience (DeFord, Schwarz, 2006, p. 24). Family separation[2] and the loss of identity

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[1] The Sierra Leone or Upper Guinea Coast

[2] DeFord & Schwarz (2006, p. 74) also claim that "when the slaves had babies, the slaveholder obtained additional slaves without having to purchase them. Slaveholders knew as well that family ties made slaves less inclined to escape. The blacks knew that if they ran away, they might never see their families again."; indicating that families naturally helped slaveowners to prevent escaping while also providing more labour force.

were rampant, with slaves often torn from loved ones and stripped of their cultural heritage (DeFord, Schwarz, 2006, p. 12). Education and freedom were systematically denied, perpetuating a cycle of oppression (DeFord, Schwarz, 2006, p. 102). Despite these adversities, slaves exhibited resilience through cultural preservation and various forms of resistance, including escape attempts and rebellions (DeFord, Schwarz, 2006, pp. 26-33).

Eventually, the slave trade was illegalised on 25 March 1807 by passing the Act of Parliament to abolish the BST (UK Parliament, c2023). Nonetheless, according to the trans-Atlantic slave trade database (c2021), 34 ships were cleared after the Act had been passed and were legally[3] allowed to engage in the trade of slaves anyway. While slavery itself was eventually abolished in 1834, Great Britain, alongside Portugal, is accounted for approximately 70 per cent of all Africans transported to the Americas (Jacobovici, Kingsley, 2022, p. 81).

Overall, this chapter discusses the British involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade as it has quite a severe impact on recent BLM rallies and monument destruction in the UK. It explores the historical context of slavery, acknowledging its presence in Africa before European arrival and the establishment of the British slave trade in the 16th century. Despite being a latecomer compared to other European powers, Britain eventually dominated the trade, establishing a complex system of trade with African slave traders. The chapter also delves into the brutality of the triangular trade, where enslaved Africans were transported to the Americas in exchange for goods, enduring gruelling conditions and high mortality rates. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1834 marked significant milestones, but Britain's historical role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade should not be overlooked, as it contributed to the suffering of millions of Africans and shaped the socio-economic landscape of GB and the Americas.

2.1.1 Ports of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the UK

Ports known for their involvement in the slave trade, labelled as "slaving ports", are central to the recent debates on monument destruction. The "Topple the Racists" database (TRD)[4] highlights that numerous UK statues celebrating slavery and racism are concentrated in port cities like London, Liverpool, and Bristol (Stop Trump Coalition, n.d.). These cities

[3] It was legal only for those ships that had been cleared before 1 May 1807 as stated in the Act.
[4] It is important to mention that this database is crowdsourced - people/general public can maintain this database, adding or removing statues from it - however, as it stands now, the UK does not have any official database of statues that are linked to the BST or trans-Atlantic slave trade (Grindon et al., 2023, p. 2); hence the TRD is used.

prospered economically from the slave trade, leading to the construction of monuments honouring individuals who benefited from it. Thus, this sub-chapter focuses on the profitability of these ports during the slavery era and the merchants or slave traders linked to the recently controversial statues.

London's involvement in the eighteenth-century slave trade was significant. Initially, London dominated the English slave trade, benefiting from the Royal African Company's (RAC) monopoly until 1698, when the trade opened to all merchants (Rawley, 1980, p. 93) - despite facing competition from ports like Bristol and Liverpool, London continued to play a major role in the slave trade, dispatching a substantial number of ships to Africa until 1807 (Rawley, 1980, p. 86). Over 40 dock investors in London were identified as slave traders, organising half of the identified slave voyages during that period (Draper, 2008, p. 442).

Liverpool eventually surpassed London and Bristol in slave trade involvement. By 1804, Liverpool merchants were responsible for over 84 per cent of the British transatlantic slave trade. This growth contributed to Britain controlling nearly 55 per cent of the global slave traffic by the late eighteenth century. (Sneidern, 1995, pp. 171-172)

Bristol also played a significant role in the slave trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After the RAC's monopoly ended, the slave trade in Bristol expanded rapidly, with the Bristol African fleet growing to about 60 vessels in a decade. This involvement in the slave trade contributed to Bristol's prosperity during that time. (Jones, 1946, pp. 71-72)

Overall, these ports were instrumental in facilitating the transport of enslaved individuals, enriching merchants and traders who profited immensely from human exploitation. The concentration of monuments celebrating individuals linked to slavery in these cities reflects the enduring legacy of this chapter in history. Such figures symbolise the complex interplay between wealth accumulation, philanthropy, and exploitation inherent in the slave trade. The recent controversies surrounding the destruction of such monuments highlight ongoing efforts to confront and reassess the narratives surrounding Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade.

2.2 Position of Enslaved and Freed Blacks in British Society

The issues of the BST and the position of its slaves in British society go hand in hand. There were various reasons why African slaves sat at the very bottom of society. The most common reason was their status of being considered property - not human. Additionally, visible differences in appearance between a white man and a black man opened doors to exploit race

as another means of pushing slaves even lower. This attitude that pushed African slaves so low in the societal hierarchy was, besides other things, caused by several theories and ideologies that "anti-Negro"[5] pamphleteers were publishing in the late 18th century. In the following centuries, the attitudes, more or less, stayed quite harmful in some other ways and forms.

In the eighteenth century, as products such as sugar and tobacco became essential parts of daily life in Britain, the labour behind them, mainly done by African slaves, was not widely acknowledged by the British. Even with the increasing demand for sugar and tobacco, the British were largely oblivious to Africa, the continent that provided the labour for these prospering industries. Such obliviousness allowed late 18th-century propagandists to shape their own views of Africa and the transatlantic slave trade, often creating images detached from the actual African context. Simultaneously, the presence of Blacks in Britain during this time was marked by profound ignorance, reinforcing stereotypes of them as either subservient servants or destitute wanderers. These perceptions were so ingrained that any deviation from these roles by individual Blacks could captivate fashionable society, highlighting the novelty of behaviours outside the expected norms. (Barker, 1978, p. 15)

Barker (1978, p. 41) points out that until the 1770s, it was difficult to tentatively separate belief from propaganda as there had not been any rational debates regarding this issue yet. All changed during the 1770s, a contentious debate emerged regarding the "Negro's place" in nature; foremost among the scholars who argued with denigration was Edward Long, a former planter and judge in Jamaica who incorporated intellectual racism that was more elaborate than anybody else's. Despite his ulterior motives being apparent[6], Long's criticism of the Jamaican plantocracy and his lack of sympathy towards slavery's barbaric cruelties made some sceptical about whether his racism meant more than what appeared. His revulsion against interraciality was justifiable in his belief that the Blacks were sub-human. (Baker, 1978, pp. 41-42)

Moreover, Christian (1998, pp. 292-293) agrees with Barker, claiming that during this era, the growth of intellectual pseudoscientific racial theories that promoted White supremacy led to the endorsement and justification of the brutal exploitation of Africans. The same author

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[5] A term 'negro' was frequently used to identify a person who would be called an African American or a Black British nowadays. The term itself has been rarely used since the mid-1980s (Ferris State University, [2010]). However, for the sake of this chapter's topic, it is sometimes used regardless of its negative connotation.
[6] As a plantation owner, he saw no advantage in freeing the slaves nor giving them more rights.

also says that this portrayal of Black presence as a menace was part of the broader narrative of White racist ideology that aimed to justify the exploitation of people of African descent.

Nonetheless, based on the findings of Lorimer (1972, p. 25), discrimination, apart from occasional anti-Negro outbursts, was not generally common in the 18th century. In addition, the same author specifies that while these outbursts became more common after 1790, they did not reflect the overall attitudes towards Blacks. This may indicate that racist ideologies were on a slow rise by the end of the century; however, they had little effect.

Moreover, Little (1947, pp. 196-202) supports Lorimer's view by adding that a significant number of individual Blacks achieved success in their careers without facing any substantial, long-term discrimination. Nonetheless, Blacks were, first and foremost, "to all intents and purposes a commodity on the market, a form of property like a horse or a barrel of wine, worth twelve, or thirty, or fifty pounds sterling according to his utility" (Little, 1947, pp. 196-197). Furthermore, the same author also agrees with Barker, saying that by the end of the century, the arguments put forth by slave dealers had become so pervasive that even those who were most concerned about the welfare and moral progress of the Black British were caught by surprise by their intelligence and persuasiveness.

Overall, to provide a concrete instance of 18th-century racist theory, the following is cited from Long (1774, pp. 371-372): In his book, Long reflected on the prevalent racist ideologies of his era, claiming that the Negro race, which he saw as having different varieties, would demonstrate increasing intellectual abilities as they distance themselves from creatures like orangutans and other animals. As the Negro race advances intellectually, the overall system of humanity will seem more consistent and complete. He argues that this hierarchy does not degrade human nature but rather enhances the perception of the infinite perfections of God.

During the following century, the attitude towards Blacks, particularly in Britain, was multifaceted and often contradictory. While there were instances of admiration for the work ethic and resilience of black servants and labourers, there were also pervasive stereotypes and discriminatory practices that marginalised them within society.

Lominer (1972, pp. 34-42) examined the multifaceted roles of Blacks in 19th-century Britain, encompassing various occupations such as servants, sailors, and labourers. Nevertheless, they encountered systemic challenges, including limited opportunities, overt racism, and exclusion from certain professions and spaces. Despite some recognition for their hard work, the dominant white population upheld beliefs of racial superiority, justifying

discriminatory practices and perpetuating stereotypes. Black sailors faced unique challenges, including imprisonment and discrimination in British ports, while escaped slaves encountered economic hardship and prejudice upon seeking refuge in Britain.

In the 20th century, Great Britain witnessed evolving attitudes towards Blacks, particularly evident in the experiences of London's Black population. At the outset, in 1909, the Black community was relatively small, numbering around one hundred individuals[7], amidst a vast white majority (Merriman-Labor, 1909, pp. 16-17). However, with the onset of the Great War, London saw a slight increase in its Black communities as merchant seamen, soldiers, and students from Africa and the Caribbean immigrated to GB. The war also witnessed the participation of colonial soldiers deployed outside their home colonies in the British armed forces (Healy, 1998, p. 5). However, racial tensions simmered, leading to the UK's first race riot in 1919 in South Shields, affecting Afro-Caribbean and other immigrant communities (BBC News, 2003). This unrest continued, with subsequent riots and tensions between racial groups in various cities, partly fuelled by societal dislocation after the war (Tabili, 2016).

World War II saw another surge in the Black population in Britain, particularly in London and Liverpool, as many arrived as workers, seamen, and servicemen from the army (Davin, 1994, pp. 249-250). The aftermath of the war brought the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948, marking the beginning of significant migration from the Caribbean to the UK (Dean, 1992, p. 171). Despite these migrations, the attitude towards Black immigrants remained contentious, evidenced by legislative acts restricting immigration and increasing racial conflicts (Procter, 2000, p. 191).

Racial discrimination persisted, exemplified by mass street conflicts between Blacks and British police officers, including notable riots in areas like Brixton and Notting Hill (Jones et al., 2008, p. 140), which have been seen as the beginning of the end of free, unrestricted entry from the Commonweal (Dean, 1992, p. 171). Moreover, surveillance measures by the government aimed to monitor and control black immigrant communities at that time indicated deep-seated racial tensions and discrimination of that era (Blankson, 2021).

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[7] Merriman-Labor (1909, p. 16) claims there was a misconception of overestimating the total population of Blacks in London by Whites. A similar misconception has persisted in GB over the years, as Robinson (2014) showed in his documentary that the British still overestimate the total population of immigrants in the contemporary UK.

Overall, this chapter unravels the complex dynamics of the British slave trade and the subjugation of enslaved Africans within British society across centuries. Rooted in the dehumanisation of enslaved people as property and fuelled by intellectual racism, notably exemplified by figures like Edward Long, the systemic oppression of people of African descent persisted into the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite some Black individuals achieving success, they faced pervasive racism, exclusion, and limited opportunities. The experiences of Black communities during both World Wars underscored their contributions and the enduring racial tensions they faced. Despite advancements, racial prejudices persisted, evident in legislative acts restricting immigration and racial conflicts.

2.3 Contemporary Black Issue - Police Brutality and George Floyd's Case

In recent years, the BLM movement has taken a leading position in tackling the issues of Blacks and other minorities; according to them, the most significant contemporary issues are, among others, police brutality and systematic racism (Célestine et al., 2022, p. 1). As a consequence of these issues, which are dealt with in this subchapter, it appears that they play a significant role as the basis on which the recent rallies happened.

Demonstrations targeting statues representing the country's legacy of racist violence have taken place, in the broader context, alongside protests against police brutality and racial injustice (Kishi, Jones, 2020, p. 6). While these issues may vary depending on country or state, according to White (2022), they are not uncommon in everyday life and reflect the legacies of colonialism and slavery that still occur nowadays. It has, conceivably, gone as far as there is no 'incidental racism' anymore, only racism that is structural and deep-rooted, i.e. racism is "part of a well-established pattern and inherent to the system", as claimed by Corrrias (2024, p. 95).

The seriousness of police brutality can be supported by many recent incidents: according to statistics provided by Inquest (2024), there have been 49 deaths of Blacks, Asians, and members of minority ethnic since 2016[8] in England and Wales that were caused by police shooting or by any other reason in police custody[9].

[8] Until January 2024.
[9] "Death in custody is the term for anybody who dies while in the custody of the state - this could include while being detained by a police officer or while being held as a prisoner in a police station" (BBC News, 2020). Hence, the statistics may be mildly misleading due to the uncertainty regarding the cause of death while one was in police custody.

Instances of these incidents include the well-publicised shooting of Dalian Atkinson and the shooting of Chris Kaba, which happened in 2016 and 2022, respectively. In the case of Atkinson, an English professional footballer, police responded to a call that Atkinson threatened to murder his father, which was later confirmed by Atkinson's brother (The Telegraph, 2016). As a result of Atkinson's further aggression, two police officers deployed a taser three times, which was ineffective twice, and then kicked him several times to the head, leaving a bootlace on his forehead (BBC News, 2021a). One of the police officers was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to eight years in prison (BBC News, 2021b), while the other officer was found guilty of gross misconduct for using excessive force but was allowed to keep her job as a police officer (BBC News, 2023a). On the other hand, in Kaba's case, a police officer responsible for fatally shooting Kaba after he repeatedly refused to exit a vehicle, which was believed to be involved in a firearms incident (IOPC, 2022), was granted bail restrained with certain conditions[10] (BBC News, 2023b).

Based on the provided instances, it might be suggested that victims of fatal shootings are Blacks who are involved in dubious and more or less illegal acts. This is partly supported by Shapiro (2017), a conservative political commentator, who claims that "it has nothing to do with race and everything to do with culture" when also claiming that the number of Black people in prison - not for an innocent reason, not just for "walking down the street and getting pulled into a prison" - is high.

However, the argument that Blacks are shot only after acting illegally or seemingly acting illegally, in many cases, does not excuse nor give the right to police officers to use excessive force that is deemed to go beyond the level required to sustain life, avoid injury, or control a situation. This is undoubtedly true in the cases provided earlier, which resulted in several protests and unrest fighting for 'justice'[11], fairness, and, in some sense, commemoration so that cases of police brutality are not relegated to mere statistics (Birchley, 2022). Consequently, hundreds of British police officers have abstained from armed duties or relinquished their weapons permits (Melnick, Adam, 2023).

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[10] Specifically, the policeman lives at a named address, surrenders his passport, and does not apply for international travel documents (BBC News, 2023b)

[11] The perception of justice among protestors may not always align with the outcome of a court case. Many protestors have expressed concerns that the justice delivered by the British justice system has been insufficient in certain instances.

Moreover, Kramer et al. (2017, p. 21) claim that the overrepresentation of Black individuals in police use-of-force incidents is sometimes explained by racial disparities in crime rates. Police justify their use of force against Black victims by describing them in manners that are non-compliance or physical threats. These justifications often stem from the belief that higher crime rates in Black communities result in increased police contact, potentially leading to a higher likelihood of use-of-force incidents.

It is also essential to mention another instance of police brutality that occurred in Minnesota, USA, in 2020 - George Floyd's death. In this case, the police responded to a 911 call saying that George Floyd allegedly purchased cigarettes with a counterfeit bill and was under the influence of alcohol (Hill et al., 2020). A few minutes later, Floyd, handcuffed and lying face down on the street, remained under an officer's knee for approximately a total of eight minutes until he became silent, leading to his death about an hour after being taken to the hospital (Nivette et al., 2023, pp. 3-4). Even though there were over 1,000 deaths caused by US police every year between 2013 and 2023 (Korhonen, 2024), Floyd's death is arguably the most known one, as it led to one of the most significant racial justice movements in United States history (Sullivan et al., 2021, pp. 1-3). The widespread recognition of Floyd's case can be attributed to the bystanders of the incident who recorded and shared the footage of his final moments; furthermore, Floyd's last moments were rather moving as he was saying, "I can't breathe (. . .) Mama, I love you. I can't do nothing." (United States District Court for the District of Minnesota, 2020, pp. 13-14). The phrase "I can't breathe" became a slogan for BLM rallies worldwide, even though many other victims of police brutality had said it before (Flynn, 2020).

On the contrary, some opposed Floyd's legacy due to his criminal past; Owens (2020) claims that Floyd lived a criminal life: he was sent to prison at least five times, mainly for cocaine offences and theft with a firearm. Additionally, Floyd is primarily reproached for involvement in a burglary in which "he pleaded guilty to entering a woman's home, pointing a gun at her stomach, and searching the home for drugs and money" (Daily Mail, 2020). Owens (2020) also claims that while Floyd was a criminal, he did not deserve to be murdered by a policeman. It could be argued that George Floyd became a symbol for what happened to him, not for what person he was.

After all, in the wake of Floyd's death, the BLM movement began a series of countless rallies, protests, and riots that took place in the USA. In a short time, these protests were partly upheld by British protestors by virtue of the common historical connections between the two

countries, i.e., empire and slavery, to protest racism in Britain and to show solidarity with Black Americans (Tunzelmann, 2021, p. 165).

In conclusion, the chapter delves into the contemporary issues addressed by the BLM movement, notably focusing on police brutality and systemic racism. These issues have served as the catalyst for recent rallies and protests. The prevalence of police brutality, highlighted by incidents such as the shootings of Dalian Atkinson and Chris Kaba, underscores the complex issue of the excessive use of force by law enforcement. While arguments may arise about victims' backgrounds, it is indisputable that the use of excessive force cannot be justified, regardless of the circumstances. George Floyd's death in the United States further ignited global protests against racial injustice, becoming a symbol of systemic oppression. Despite debates surrounding Floyd's past, his death galvanised movements for racial justice worldwide, including in Britain, where historical connections of empire and slavery underscored solidarity with Black Americans.

3 The Monuments and Their Removal or Destruction

Following centuries of oppression, slavery, exclusion, and limited opportunities, the UK has been embroiled in debates and controversies surrounding the destruction of monuments, reflecting broader societal tensions and re-evaluations of historical legacies. These incidents, often characterised by fervent protests and polarised opinions, have underscored the complexities of the issues that have been bothering the UK for centuries. The statues and monuments built and erected during those years have recently been destroyed or removed during, or consequently to, peaceful or violent protests. Moreover, it is vital to bear in mind that, despite recent monument removals and destructions, countless others still pose a conflict of interest[12]. Therefore, this chapter does not aim to list all statues recently destroyed but rather to focus on essential ones that will play a crucial role in demonstrating the protesters' motives in contrast to their counterarguments. By putting these monuments into the perspective of modern standards, one can better understand the motivations behind these protests.

3.1 Edward Colston

Edward Colston was a multifaceted personality who was praised for his charitable works and condemned for his association with the BST. According to Nasar (2020, p. 1220), Colston's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade is widely considered the main motive behind the recent toppling of his statue during the BLM protests.

Colston became deeply involved in the British slave trade during the late 17th century. Joining the RAC in 1680, which held a monopoly over the British slave trade, he played a significant role in the enslavement of over 84,000 African individuals who were forcibly transported to the Americas on British ships (Edwards, 2023, p. 76; Cole, 2023, p. 161). The harrowing conditions of the Middle Passage led to the deaths of approximately 19,000 of these individuals (Cole, 2023, p. 161). Despite withdrawing from the RAC in 1692, Colston continued his involvement in the slave trade through private ventures until his retirement in 1708. Not only was he engaged in the exploitation of enslaved people, but Colston was also a Tory Member of Parliament for Bristol and held a prominent position within The Society of Merchant Venturers, a group of Bristol elites with deep-rooted ties to colonial and imperial endeavours. This society, which remains influential in Bristol to this day, played a significant

[12] For more information, there is a crowdsourced map of UK statues and monuments that "celebrate slavery and racism" available at https://www.topplettheracists.org/ [Accessed 2024-03-04].

role in funding historical voyages such as John Cabot's expedition to Canada and actively lobbied the British Parliament to expand the trade of enslaved Africans beyond the monopoly of the RAC. (Moody, 2021, p. 2)

Despite his involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, Edward Colston has been celebrated in Bristol for centuries as a prominent philanthropist. His wealth derived from the exploitation of enslaved people, yet his contributions to hospitals, schools, and churches earned him a revered status in the city. Numerous landmarks bore his name, including Colston Hall, Colston Tower, and Colston's Girls' School; however, they have been recently renamed. Though tainted by his atrocities, Colston's philanthropy has long been honoured without questioning the source of his wealth, reflecting a selective representation of his character. (Nasar, 2020, p. 1219)

Moreover, according to Moody (2021, p. 2), "the narrative of Colston as a patriarchal philanthropic father of the city has been fed into school education and political discourse". The same author also says that many of his donations were tied to self-interest, such as using boys' schools to recruit sailors for his ships.

Nonetheless, in his research findings, Rengel (2023, p. 64) suggested that the money donated by Colston had no connection with slavery. Rengel claims that the funds were inherited and not acquired through any illegal means. However, Rengel does not deny Colston's involvement in the BST and its financial profits.

3.1.1 Edward Colston's Statue in Bristol

The Statue of Edward Colston overlooked *the Centre*[13] in Bristol for more than a century. Initially erected in 1895 to commemorate his philanthropy, and violently toppled down during a BLM rally in 2020 as a direct response to Floyd's death for Colston's involvement in the BST (Tunzelmann, 2021, pp. 154-164); Colston's statue now represents Bristol's long history of activism, in the context of slavery and racism, in a local museum (Ware, 2024).

For most of its time, Colston's statue was not part of any controversy or centre of any debate; it was even described as "handsome" in the 1970s and identified as a "building of special interest, justifying every effort to preserve them" by Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Layard, 2020). However, as the public started discussing Colston's slave trades at the end of the 20th century, he began to appear in the spotlight of controversy,

[13] A public open space in the central area of Bristol.

mainly in 1998, when his statue was defaced with the words *slave trader*, drawing attention to the fact that Colston made most of his fortune from slave trading (Morgan, Harris, 1999, p. 18).

Furthermore, Tunzelmann (2021, p. 163) claims that many people had been oblivious to Colston's involvement in the BST until the city of Bristol held a public consultation in 1998, during which Colston's legacy was 'exposed' and discussed. Additionally, Hobbs (2021, p. 434) even says that when the statue was erected, Colston's philanthropy was the only thing Bristolians could see or chose to see, ignoring any of his involvements in the BST.

Throughout the following years, Colston's statue was under relatively minor attacks. In 2007, red paint representing blood was splashed on the statue. However, such incidents went mostly unnoticed - slowly changing people's view of Colston. Moreover, in 2014, debate over how Bristol should commemorate Colston, if at all, began to re-appear again. Nonetheless, the majority (56 per cent) of Bristol's population favoured keeping the statue standing (Gallagher, 2014).

Colston's statue became a centre point of controversy amidst the rising tide of the Rhodes Must Fall movements[14] in South Africa and Oxford. Despite mounting criticism, the statue found staunch defenders in groups like the Colston societies and the Society of Merchant Venturers. In an attempt at compromise in 2018, Bristol City Council proposed adding a second plaque to the statue, acknowledging Colston's deep involvement in the slave trade. However, the proposed wording, particularly highlighting Colston's political affiliations, ignited fury among his defenders. The debate over the plaque's wording revealed deep divides over historical interpretation and the city's identity. Despite attempts at reconciliation, the plaque initiative ultimately failed, leaving Colston's statue as a divisive symbol in Bristol's public space. (Tunzelmann, 2021, pp. 163-165)

After all those years of unrest surrounding Edward Colston, the murder of George Floyd was the last straw that began massive protests across the UK. While protests in London had already occurred, the protests in Bristol began on the 7th of June 2020. On this day, protesters tied a rope around the statue's neck and pulled it down (Hughes, 2021, p. 134). Painted with white and red, it lay on the ground, symbolling rejection. The scene was charged with symbolisms as a protester raised a fist in the Black Power salute while others altered the

[14] Cecil Rhodes was another controversial figure whose monuments were the centre of many protests and debates, mainly, around the year of 2015.

inscription on the plinth to reflect the rejection by the people of Bristol. The act culminated with two Black protesters kneeling on the statue's neck, recreating the way Floyd died. Colston, once a towering figure, was rolled through the streets, defaced, and broken until he was thrown into the waters of Bristol Harbour, mirroring the fate of thousands who perished on his slave ships. (Tunzelmann, 2021, pp. 165-166)

In conclusion, Edward Colston's statue in Bristol reflects a complex and evolving understanding of history, morality, and commemoration. Initially erected to honour his philanthropy, the statue stood as a testament to selective representations of his character, ignoring his deep involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. However, as societal attitudes shifted and historical narratives were re-examined, Colston's statue became a focal point of controversy and debate. Despite minor incidents of dissent over the years, it was the culmination of widespread protests in response to the murder of George Floyd that ultimately led to the toppling of the statue. The violent means used to remove this statue ignited a controversy, drawing widespread media attention and sparking a heated public debate.

3.2 Robert Clayton and Thomas Guy

Sir Robert Clayton, serving as President of St. Thomas' Hospital from 1692 to 1707, was involved in both philanthropy and the slave trade. While Clayton's wealth originated from banking and land speculation, he also invested in overseas trading companies, including the RAC. This move, although controversial, was in line with the strong demand for enslaved labour in the American colonies, presenting Clayton with lucrative prospects. While Clayton's involvement with slavery may seem problematic, it is worth noting that it was not uncommon for wealthy individuals at that time to engage in such activities. Despite the indirect nature of his initial connections to slavery, Clayton's capital likely benefited from the trade's profitability. It remains uncertain whether profits from Clayton's involvement in the slave trade directly funded St. Thomas' Hospital's reconstruction efforts in the 1690s. However, his financial activities suggest that there could be a possible indirect contribution. Clayton's philanthropy towards the English poor was commendable, but it did not extend to the thousands of enslaved individuals transported under his watch, highlighting a moral discrepancy in his actions. It might be noted that this was a common practice during that time. (Bennett, Brot, 2021, pp. 8-29)

Thomas Guy, who is famous for establishing Guy's Hospital with a significant endowment derived from his investments, particularly his sale of South Sea Company (SSC)

stock during the profitable peak of the market, was unavoidably intertwined with the less respectable aspects of commerce in that era. Although his decision to hold onto SSC shares was based on the company's seemingly stable income streams, which included government interest payments and management fees, it inevitably connected him to the company's activities in the transatlantic slave trade. Even though Guy lacked prior experience in overseas trade, he was aware of the immense potential profits associated with the slave trade as an investor. His considerable financial stake in the SSC, which enabled the transportation of thousands of enslaved Africans, highlights his implicit involvement in this morally reprehensible enterprise. Although Guy's philanthropic ventures have left a legacy in healthcare, his financial connections to the slave trade remain a blemish on his otherwise commendable contributions to society. (Bennett, Brot, 2021, pp. 7-17, 33)

3.2.1 Robert Clayton's and Thomas Guy's Statues

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GTFT) is responsible for the ownership and upkeep of Clayton's and Guy's statues, located at St Thomas' Hospital and Guy's Hospital, respectively. In June 2020, the Trust announced that they would remove the statues from public view due to ongoing discussions around the legacy of colonialism, racism, and slavery (Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, 2020). In order to make an informed decision, GTFT pledged to collaborate with the public and the Mayor of London's Commission and commissioned independent historical research (Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, c2024; Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation, 2020). The Trust's decision to remove the statues was also reportedly influenced by pressure from BLM protesters following an incident in Bristol (Robinson et al., 2020).

Both statues were, for a short time, concealed and placed in wooden containers. However, after a prolonged debate, GTFT abandoned their plans to remove the monuments from Guy's Hospital and St Thomas' Hospital. Instead, they have decided to install permanent interpretation boards around the statues to provide historical and social context. This decision aligns with Historic England's recommendation to maintain such statues while offering contextual reinterpretation. The interpretation boards will offer a deeper understanding of the historical context of the statues, their contribution to medicine, as well as their links to colonialism and slavery. (Russell, 2023)

Overall, in response to increased public scrutiny surrounding historical figures who were, among other issues, involved in the slave trade, GTFT initially chose to remove the statues. This decision reflects a more comprehensive societal reckoning with such figures. However,

GTFT later decided to retain the statues but with the addition of contextual interpretation boards. The statues present a peaceful solution for dealing with controversial statues without resorting to violence. Even though, it is worth noting that the removal of these statues was prompted by the violent removal of Edward Colston's statue.

3.3 Robert Milligan

Robert Milligan is known for his involvement in the slave trade and ownership of 526 enslaved Africans (Gall, McCann, 2022, p. 24). Additionally, he played a significant role in constructing and expanding West India Docks in London. The statue of Robert Milligan was erected in recognition of his contribution to the civic project, which helped drive the city's financial growth (Gall, McCann, 2022, pp. 20-21). However, unlike some of his peers[15], e.g. Colston, Clayton and Guy, there seems to be no evidence of Milligan's philanthropic endeavours, such as funding hospitals or schools.

3.3.1 Robert Milligan's Statue

To some extent, Robert Milligan's statue has followed a similar trajectory as the statue of Colston. In 1999, *The Islander* newspaper published an article entitled "The Father of the Island Revealed", highlighting and celebrating Milligan's brilliance in persuading city merchants to construct the West India Docks. While some criticisms were levelled against the article, it still shows the commonalities between Colston's statue being described as "handsome" and Milligan's praise for his achievement in building the docks. (Tompsett, 1999)

Despite the published article, it is worth noting that the statue had already encountered various problems. According to Matthews (2012, p. 392), the statue had been moved multiple times, and at one point, it was even placed in storage. Nonetheless, it was eventually returned to its original location in 1997.

Furthermore, in 2007,[16] the Museum in Docklands hosted an exhibition called "London, Sugar and Slavery", challenging the traditional narrative of British commerce and exploitation, which had long ignored the realities of enslavement and exploitation. One of the key figures in the exhibition, among others, was Robert Milligan, a controversial figure due to his connections to the slave trade. During the opening event, his memorial statue, which was located outside the museum entrance, was shrouded in black and illuminated with a focused floodlight to draw

[15] In the sense of their mutual involvement in the BST.
[16] Two-hundredth anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807.

attention to his ownership of thousands of enslaved individuals. This aimed to confront viewers with the uncomfortable truths of Britain's history of exploitation and oppression. However, the shroud and ropes were removed without any substantive alteration to the statue. (Wemyss, 2016, pp. 70-72)

Following the destruction of Colston's statue, a petition was launched calling for the removal of Milligan's statue (Fox, 2020). However, prior to the statue's removal, BLM protesters had covered the statue with a shroud and a sign saying, "BLACK LIVES MATTER". Instantaneously, the statue was removed based on Milligan's historical links to colonial violence and exploitation and, in 2022, donated it to the Museum of London (Canal & River Trust, 2022; The Museum of London, [2020], p. 2).

Overall, Milligan's statue was erected to honour his contributions to the construction of West India Docks, which, alongside his deep involvement in the slave trade, was also the cause of his downfall. Although he was occasionally praised for his civic contributions, his lack of significant philanthropic acts and ownership of hundreds of enslaved Africans sealed the deal for his statue. The statue's history of being relocated, temporarily removed, and eventually transferred to a museum reflects the long-lasting attempts to fulfil modern standards. Ultimately, the removal of the statue by its owner was an inevitable consequence of the violent protests.

3.4 Winston Churchill

Describing and arguing why many consider Winston Churchill a hero would be somewhat redundant. His leadership and achievements during World War II are widely recognised. Despite some negative aspects of his life, his 'mostly positive' side is still celebrated in British public discourse. Even within the British education system, as Shahvisi (2021, p. 454) claims, Churchill is presented as a clear example of heroism and is held in high esteem.

Nonetheless, in the context of the recent monument destruction, it is essential to view Churchill from a different, quite specific, perspective - racism and white supremacy. Churchill's opinions and wrongdoings done to minorities and ethnicities throughout his lifetime have recently begun to appear in the spotlight.

Churchill's policies during the Bengal famine of 1943 have been heavily criticised for their perceived ruthlessness, with estimates suggesting that around three million lives were lost as a result of food blockades enforced by his administration (Limaye, 2020). On the other hand,

Masani (2020) states that Churchill wrote to Wavell[17] saying, "Every effort must be made, even by the diversion of shipping urgently needed for war purposes, to deal with local shortages",; indicating that Churchill's actions are not yet discussed and appropriately examined so that one can judge him objectively.

Similarly, Churchill's stance on the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds in 1919 reveals a disturbing mindset. His endorsement of such tactics, expressed in his assertion that "poisoned gas" should be employed against "uncivilised tribes", reflects a belief in the superiority of particular human groups over others (Limaye, 2020). However, according to Wright (2020), Churchill, in this particular issue, "only advocated the use of non-lethal weapons when most [other statesmen] wanted to shell, bomb and kill [the Kurds]". Wright comes from the fact that Churchill's quote is often used noncontextually and not at its entire length[18].

These incidents are reflective of Churchill's broader worldview, which was shaped by a belief in a hierarchical ordering of human races. Churchill's statements, such as his assertion in 1937 that "a stronger race, a higher-grade race",[19] had the right to supplant indigenous peoples, exemplify this hierarchical mindset (Heyden, 2015). His views on race and colonialism were evident in his comments on various ethnic groups, including his belief that the indigenous peoples of America and Australia had not suffered a "great wrong" at the hands of colonisers (Heyden, 2015). Moreover, his assertion that the Indian population was not equal to the white man during his time as a junior officer further highlights his discriminatory attitudes (Addison, 1979, p. 41).

Churchill's views extended beyond race to include other marginalised groups. His remarks about Jews in 1937, suggesting that they bore some responsibility for the persecution they faced, are indicative of his tendency to blame victims for their own plight (Cowell, 2007).

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[17] A Governor-General and Viceroy of India

[18] Wright (2020) says that the quote "I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes" is widespread but taken out of context because the quote, in its full length, is "*I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes. The moral effect should be so good that the loss of life should be reduced to a minimum. It is not necessary to use only the most deadly gasses; gasses can be used which cause great inconvenience and would spread a lively terror and yet would leave no serious permanent effects on most of those affected.*" (Thomas, 2021, p. 43).

[19] Here, it might be interesting to observe certain similarities between Churchill's and Long's views on race that were mentioned earlier; nonetheless, it is also vital to bear in mind that these two men have great differences from each other.

3.4.1 Winston Churchill's Statue at Parliament Square in London

In 1973, eight years after Churchill's death, Queen Elizabeth II asked Churchill's widow to unveil his statue, which was attended by distinguished statesmen from all political parties (AP Archive, 2015). During the ceremony, the Queen delivered a speech that started with the words, "He will be remembered for many things: in peace and in war, in politics and in literature..." (ITN Archive, 2022). Although the Queen's remarks were delivered with good intentions, the ambiguous phrase "he will be remembered for many things" may now carry a different meaning, hinting that Churchill's legacy may be viewed in a contentious light.

Winston Churchill's statue exhibits unique features that were shared with other statues discussed earlier. Similar to many others, it had been subjected to protests and vandalism prior to the BLM demonstrations. Nevertheless, Churchill's statue is arguably admired more than any other statue mentioned above, signifying that, unlike other controversial statues, Churchill's reputation in the contemporary world is still deemed acceptable enough not to have his statue removed in spite of numerous protests attacking his statue.

According to Matthews (2012, p. 48), Churchill's statue was vandalised for the first time on May Day in 2000[20]. The monument was severely damaged during the demonstration, with graffiti covering the plinth. Churchill's statue was also given a green Mohican haircut, which was considered a humiliating act of vandalism.

In 2020, Churchill's statue was vandalised twice; firstly, by Extinction Rebellion protestors who spray-painted the words 'is a racist' next to Churchill; and secondly, during the BLM protests, the words 'was a racist' were scrawled, and a 'Black Lives Matter' placard was taped around the statue's midriff. It was subsequently covered in a container to protect it against further damage as the protest movement gained momentum. It is noteworthy to mention that the degree of antipathy towards Churchill's statue is now beginning to become such a severe threat that at a recent protest against police violence and violence against women, police officers circled the base of the Churchill statue to protect it against damage. (Shahvisi, 2021, p. 455)

In conclusion of Winston Churchill's statue and the reasons for its defacing, it could be said that while Winston Churchill's leadership and achievements during World War II have long been celebrated, recent events have shed light on his less admirable aspects, particularly

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[20] Protests in London associated with International Workers' Day (also known as May Day) against capitalism (Woodward et al., 2000)

regarding racism and white supremacy. Criticisms of Churchill's policies during the Bengal famine of 1943 and his endorsement of chemical weapons against the Kurds underscore a somewhat racist mindset reflective of his broader worldview. His discriminatory attitudes towards various ethnic and marginalised groups further tarnish his legacy. Despite this, Churchill's statue remains largely revered, as evidenced by its resilience against protests and vandalism. However, the recent surge in antipathy towards the statue indicates a growing recognition of Churchill's controversial legacy, prompting debates about his place in contemporary public discourse.

4 Pro- and Anti-monument Arguments and Motives

The issue of monument removal or destruction has been widely debated, with both sides presenting complex arguments. Some believe monuments should be preserved as a reminder of history, while others argue that they perpetuate oppressive ideologies. The media has heavily publicised this issue, leading to protests and intense debates. This chapter delves into the arguments and motivations presented in the context of this issue, and, in general terms, the findings of this chapter will later help to conclude whether the removal or destruction of monuments can be justified.

The starting sub-chapter delves into contentious historical arguments, which stand as pivotal points of debate. It necessitates a meticulous examination, delving into the symbolic significance of statues, their commemorative value, and the varied interpretations of the historical narratives they embody.

Transitioning into the second sub-chapter, emphasis is placed on the significance of civilised conduct juxtaposed against the potential for violence inherent in particular public gatherings. This section scrutinises how such displays of aggression can negatively impact the broader societal perception.

The subsequent sub-chapter draws attention to the "domino effect" concept, elucidating the palpable fear induced by an uncertain future. The analysis dissects the psychological underpinnings of societal apprehension, shedding light on its far-reaching implications.

Finally, the final sub-chapter assumes a critical stance, evaluating other monuments through the lens of preceding arguments, thus exposing inherent contradictions. By juxtaposing various historical commemorations against the backdrop of discussed themes, it offers a nuanced perspective on the complexities of public memory and historical representation.

4.1 Misrepresentation and Misinterpretation of History

This chapter contains three main arguments regarding history. The first claims that removing the statues erases history, the second defends historical figures based on historical context, and the last explores the complex topic of moral duality.

4.1.1 Erasure of History

Surrounding this topic, there is a common argument and belief that removing or destroying monuments leads to an erasure of the country's history; in some cases, this leads to another argument saying that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. This was partly

argued by Boris Johnson (2020), a former British prime minister, who said, "We cannot now try to edit or censor our past. We cannot pretend to have a different history…".

This argument appears in many studies surrounding this issue. However, most scholars in those studies come to a unified conclusion that taking down statues does not erase history because those statues did not represent it in the first place. According to Eisikovits (2020, p. 405), "…monuments are not history. They are, at best, caricatures of history". This was similarly claimed by Tunzelmann (2021, p. 185), who said that "pulling down these statues did not erase history: all of these histories still exist". Their argument is quite self-explanatory: Monuments do not teach objective history, nor do they represent it. However, to learn history, one should read a book, watch a documentary, or go to school or a museum.

Furthermore, Burch-Brown (2017, pp. 75-76) highlights a crucial insight: erecting statues without a comprehensive understanding of the individual they depict risks distorting history. This oversight becomes particularly evident in instances such as the controversy surrounding Edward Colston's statue. Often, such monuments are perceived as emblematic of positive qualities without proper scrutiny, perpetuating misconceptions about historical figures and events. Similarly, Townsend (2017) says that removing statues like Colston's does not entail erasing history; instead, it corrects the misrepresentations that these monuments may have propagated.

On the other hand, Sanni (2020, p. 1188), who argues that the destruction of historical monuments is not a new phenomenon, posits that throughout history, such destruction has been utilised as a tactic of war, not only to conquer but also to eradicate collective memories. Discussions surrounding the ethical implications of destroying historical sites have persisted for decades, indicating that the moral dilemmas associated with such actions in the twenty-first century are not entirely novel occurrences. After all, Sanni offers a new perspective to this debate, mainly saying that removing monuments can erase memories.

Moreover, a British historian, Tim Stanley, a few years before the recent monument re-evaluation began, offered another point of view regarding this topic. He had argued that all monuments should be kept intact because they represent the complete history of the British Empire. To support his argument, he used the statues at Parliament Square, which he suggested

are balanced because they objectively represent 'each side'[21]. However, Rahul Rao from London's School of Oriental and African Studies responded to Stanley's argument and said that such a balance would only exist in museums where the statues are not mainly celebrated but displayed with their historical context for conversation and debate. (BBC, 2017)

Overall, the argument that altering statues leads to an erasure of history could be considered as debunked. There are many scholars and sources that claim that the connection between monuments and the actual history is feeble. Moreover, people cannot possibly learn history from statues unless they have a descriptive plaque attached to them - but in that case, it could be argued that it is the plaque that teaches history. History can be learnt from books, textbooks, documentaries or at museums or schools - not from a statue itself. All in all, history is not erased with the removal of statues - it only changes how people view history.

4.1.2 Men of Their Times

This argument argues that people in the past had different moral standards than those people have today, and therefore, they should be judged by the standards of their time. It has been used frequently in debates regarding the destruction or removal of statues.

It is possible that people were more supportive of the statues when they were initially erected than they are now. However, this does not necessarily mean that everyone agreed with the practices that those statues may represent. According to Tunzelmann (2021, pp. 185-186), there is no evidence to support the claim that people agreed with Colston's politics on slave trading, as no polls were conducted during that time.

Nevertheless, when it comes to Winston Churchill, one can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the views about him than about Colston. Even though historians began to offer more nuanced perspectives of Winston Churchill when his statue was erected, he was, first and foremost, considered a national hero. This can be supported by Annan (1993, p. 268), who says that Churchill's legacy began to evaporate once one did some research on him, but he was still considered a "great man" by his critics at that time. Furthermore, in 2002, the British public voted Sir Winston Churchill the Greatest Briton of all time following a nationwide poll that attracted over a million votes" (BBC, [2002]).

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[21] To explain this, Stanley used Churchill and Mandela as examples. He claimed about these two men that they form a balance for their different cultural background and opinions.

However, despite what people thought about these men in their times, it is essential to identify that due to a cultural shift over the years, people now 'judge' these people from a modern point of view. Judging people by modern standards is, by many scholars, considered acceptable, as seen in the following paragraphs - it is called moral relativism.

The argument of moral relativism employs analogies to make its point. The first analogy suggests that modern standards judge Hitler and Stalin, as their statues would still be standing if they were not (Tunzelmann, 2021, p. 23). This indicates that people commonly evaluate individuals from the past based on contemporary norms. The second analogy, on the other hand, highlights other monuments, such as the pyramids, which have not been removed regardless of being built by slaves (Roberts, 2020). This demonstrates that the argument is intricate, and using analogies might lead to an endless debate about selecting monuments that have or have not been removed for their controversial past.

Archer & Matheson (2024, pp. 4-7) express their scepticism regarding using this argument that it is acceptable to excuse past actions simply because they were considered normal at that time. They contend that it is not entirely fair to do so. Furthermore, they argue that those who use the argument of moral relativism to defend controversial historical figures' statues fail to provide an entirely satisfactory interpretation of their defence. This is because if one argues that monuments should not be judged by modern standards, they inherently agree that what those people did in the past was wrong.

All in all, this chapter highlights the lack of evidence supporting the assumption that past societies unanimously endorsed the practices represented by certain statues. The chapter also explores the concept of moral relativism, which allows for the judgment of historical figures based on contemporary norms. However, scepticism is expressed regarding the validity of excusing past actions solely based on historical context, with critics contending that it is not entirely fair to do so. Additionally, the chapter argues that those who use moral relativism to defend controversial statues fail to provide an entirely satisfactory interpretation of their defence, as it implies acknowledgement of wrongdoing by historical figures.

4.1.3 Moral Duality

This argument raises a contentious issue surrounding evaluating individuals based on their positive and negative deeds throughout their lifetime. The argument, predominantly pro-monument, asserts that people should be assessed based on their complete worth without focusing only on the negative aspects. For instance, if someone was involved in slavery, their

philanthropic contributions may outweigh their negative actions, as seen in Edward Colston's case. However, analysing one's life comprehensively and assessing whether it is primarily justifiable to celebrate them in spite of their wrong actions would go far beyond this chapter; thus, this sub-chapter focuses primarily on other controversial aspects of this argument as well as its reach to the political sphere.

While each monument holds its own unique history, a common thread among those discussed is that they were erected to honour the perceived good deeds of their subjects. As Frowe (2019, p. 5) notes, "the problematic statues are built precisely because, at the time they are built, most people do not believe that the subject is a serious wrongdoer". For example, Colston's statue commemorates his philanthropic efforts (Cork, 2018; Richards, 2020, p. 237; Rengel, 2023, p. 65; Ware, 2024), while Churchill's statue required public support for its construction, as evidenced by a 1969 debate in the House of Commons (Tilney et al., 1969). Thus, it is quite clear that the reasons for removal or destruction and for erection can vary significantly.

According to Bristol Archives (c2024), Colston founded a hospital in Bristol, which is now a school, in 1710. Wright (2020) points out this fact and offers an intriguing point of view: If the statue was erected to celebrate Colston's charitable deeds, it raises the question of whether it should still stand in spite of his immoral actions. The author contemplates mainly the broader implications, proposing that it is unjustifiable to remove Colston's statue but keep the school, which Colston initially financed with money he earned from the slave trade. Nonetheless, two years after Wright's claim, in 2022, the school was renamed - previously known as *Colston School*, now *Collegiate School, Bristol* (La Mare, 2022). While these actions offer another way of tackling this issue, they, first and foremost, also seem to be quite effective in 'keeping the school standing' and distancing itself from Edward Colston's controversy.

During a debate at Oxford Union (2016), Professor Nigel Biggar, whose research interests include the ethics of nationalism and empire, argued against using moral duality as an argument. He stated that individuals like Churchill, Lincoln, or Rhodes cannot be judged solely on their bad deeds since they also achieved great things. According to him, if one looks for pure heroes, they will not find many. He suggests that judging people solely on their past mistakes is unobjective and unfair since many men and women who would be worthy of having a monument made some bad decisions in their lives.

Moreover, the concept of moral duality goes beyond the example of a school in Bristol. It extends to the political spectrum, specifically to right-wing and left-wing ideologies. The right-wing is generally in favour of monuments, while the left-wing tends to be against them. This highlights the moral duality in which the right-wing defends monuments by viewing them as symbols of heroism and patriotism, while the left-wing prioritises the recognition of racism in history (Dearden, 2020; BBC, 2020).

After all, the debate surrounding monuments reflects a broader discourse on how individuals should be evaluated based on their positive and negative actions throughout their lives. The argument for preserving monuments often emphasises the entirety of a person's contributions, suggesting that positive deeds may outweigh negative actions. However, this approach raises complex questions about the moral justification for celebrating individuals who have committed significant wrongs. The case of Edward Colston exemplifies this dilemma, as his philanthropic endeavours are juxtaposed with his involvement in slavery. The decision to erect or remove monuments is influenced by societal perceptions at the time of their construction and can vary widely based on historical context and evolving attitudes. Furthermore, actions such as renaming institutions or recontextualising historical figures offer alternative approaches to grappling with this moral complexity. Ultimately, the debate over monuments reflects deeper divisions in political ideologies, with the right-wing often defending monuments as symbols of heroism and patriotism. At the same time, the left-wing prioritises acknowledging and confronting historical injustices such as racism.

4.2 The Importance of Civilised Manners

Another controversial argument criticised the fact that some statues were illegally destroyed or defaced; proponents of this argument argued that protesters should have chosen a peaceful and democratic approach.

A few days after the statue of Edward Colston was violently removed, many called the protestors mobs or anarchists (Cork, 2021). Even Kehinde Andrews, a BLM supporter and Black Studies professor, acknowledges the fact that it was a violent act that did not correspond to British laws. Hence, the legality of the violent removal or damage of the statues can be primarily assumed to be illegal. However, Andrews asserts that regarding statues of figures associated with slavery, colonialism, and fascism, the method of removal is secondary to the primary objective of eradication. In his view, the imperative lies in eliminating these symbols

of oppression and injustice from public spaces, regardless of the means employed to achieve this end. (Good Morning Britain, 2020)

On the other hand, according to British journalist Tom Harwood, removing statues without proper authority should only be allowed in a contemporaneous setting. According to Harwood, the recent removal or destruction of the statues is unjustified because they are connected to events that happened decades or even centuries ago. Hence, they are not contemporaneous. For instance, statues of Hitler were rightly removed *immediately* after World War II, as it was set in a contemporaneous setting. However, Harwood is, overall, sceptical about people taking justice into their own hands and believes that vigilantism[22] on the streets should not trump democratic politics. (Good Morning Britain, 2020)

It is worth noting that certain controversial statues were removed violently after many years of unsuccessful peaceful negotiations (Moody, 2021, p. 3). Protesters believed they were justified in their actions, as they had been calling for their removal for several decades. It appears that, in some cases, monuments were damaged or removed by force when the protesters felt that words alone were not enough to bring about change. Keir Starmer also noted this during an interview for BBC (2020) and said that "[removal of the statues] should not have been done in that way [violently]; [it was] completely wrong to pull a statue [of Edward Colston] down like that…but stepping back, it should have been removed a long, long time ago".

Furthermore, Tunzelmann (2021, pp. 185-186) points out several issues with this argument. She suggests that while people may want statues removed democratically, they are often erected with little democracy. She also notes that removing statues through authorities can be a good compromise but emphasises that the process must be efficient both in terms of time and money.

During a discussion on Good Morning Britain (2020), it was debated whether the violent removal of statues could be justified, given that authorities had ignored peaceful negotiations. It was indicated that when protestors resort to forceful riots during demonstrations, it can have a detrimental impact on the movement. The disturbing nature of such violent incidents can cause the public to view the protestors in a negative light and lose support for their cause. It was also noted that the justifiability of removing or damaging each statue depends on its

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[22] According to the Cambridge Dictionary, vigilantism is "the practice of ordinary people in a place taking unofficial action to prevent crime or to catch and punish people believed to be criminals" (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, c2024)

individual values; for instance, the violent removal of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol was deemed justifiable even by the city's Society of Merchant Venturers[23]; whereas defacing the statue of Winston Churchill is seen as an act that can lead to the loss of public support for the protestors.

In conclusion, this argument discusses the violent nature of some protests. Advocates for peaceful approaches emphasise the importance of democratic processes and legal frameworks, arguing that resorting to violence undermines the legitimacy of the cause and risks alienating potential supporters. Conversely, proponents of direct action contend that certain symbols of oppression necessitate immediate and forceful removal, regardless of legal constraints, in order to effect meaningful change and confront systemic injustices. Arguments from both sides highlight the complexities of historical memory and the contested narratives surrounding commemorative monuments.

4.3 The Domino Effect

The argument of the "slippery slope" or "the domino effect" shall be discussed in this chapter, as it represents another argument used, partly by politicians[24], to debate the issue of monument removal (Eisikovits, 2020, p. 409; Tunzelamann, 2021, p. 23). Bülow & Thomas (2020, p. 495) define the meaning of this argument as "if one allows for a relatively harmless act, then this will result in the acceptance of something that we now consider either harmful or unacceptable". Thus, advocates of this argument caution that if protestors removed statues such as Colston's, it could lead to the destruction of other historical figures' statues, such as Cromwell, Churchill, or Horatio Nelson, whom the advocates hold dear, as can be seen by clashes between the BLM and 'pro-monuments' protestors in London (Dearden, 2020).

Firstly, in order to analyse this argument, it is essential to establish the number of monuments that have been destroyed in the wake of Floyd's death; according to Hurynag (2021), 84 statues are subjects of controversy, 21 of which have already been removed. Since there is no official monuments database in the UK (Grindon et al., 2023, p. 2), it is necessary

[23] As mentioned in the preceding chapters, this organisation was once viewed as a collection of Bristol's upper class with solid connections to colonial and imperial pursuits (Moody, 2021, p. 2). Therefore, it might come as a surprise that this organisation supported the removal of Colston's statue.
[24] Specifically, Donald Trump used this argument. However, British monument defenders also adopted it, as can be seen on Good Morning Britain (2020).

to bear in mind that the number may differ slightly. Moreover, according to records from the TRD, only nine monuments have been removed (Stop Trump Coalition, n.d.).

Even though Younge (2021, p. 1) claims that "every single statue should come down", the total number of removed statues is relatively low in the context of this argument. Thus, considering the proportion of statues removed, one could contend that the "slippery slope" argument is exaggerated, thus diminishing its validity, as the destroyed statues constitute only a fraction of *all* statues in the UK[25].

Furthermore, BLM protests peaked and were most active in 2020 (Paton et al., 2022, p. 8), suggesting that the protests' momentum is gradually declining in the UK. For this reason, there appears to be no imminent radical surge in monument removals in the short-term future.

Nonetheless, even if, in the long-term future, all those 84 controversial statues were to be removed, it could still be argued that it is part of a democratic process. Tunzelmann (2021, p. 187) asserts that "in a free, democratic society, there can be no limits on which historical figures can be discussed and reassessed. A lively debate on what we value is healthy.". Similarly, this is also claimed by Hobbs (2021, p. 431), who also says that "it is healthy to have such vigorous debates from time to time, and [it is] a sign of a functioning democracy…". Thereupon, while significant monument removals may not be anticipated in the short term, it is probable, in the long term, that the "domino effect" will lead to the removal of another statue sooner or later, whether as part of the BLM movement or a different one that may emerge in the future.

In conclusion, the domino effect argument regarding monument removal appears to be an overstated concern. While some controversial statues have been removed, the numbers remain relatively low compared to the total number of monuments in the UK. Additionally, the momentum of the protests seems to be declining. However, even if more statues are removed in the long run, it could be interpreted as a healthy sign of a functioning democracy. Therefore, removing contested monuments might not be a slippery slope into historical erasure.

4.4 Contemplating the Future of Empty Pedestals

Although only a few statues were destroyed or taken down, it is vital to consider the future implications. Specifically, the question of what should be erected in place of the removed statues raises several complex issues and can be used when debating this topic. This sub-section

[25] Amess ([2020]) claims there are 828 statues recorded in the United Kingdom.

examines the challenges associated with selecting a replacement for the vacant pedestals and the broader concerns it presents. Furthermore, this chapter discusses George Floyd's statue in the context of the arguments used above.

Historically, people have come to re-evaluate their views, beliefs, and opinions, resulting in cultural shifts. New monuments and statues should, therefore, correspond to modern standards. In recent years, Tunzelmann (2021, pp. 188-189) claims that movements have been fighting to raise more statues and monuments of women and people of colour in the USA and UK. While this is a step in the right direction, it is regarded as a "cosmetic change" that does not solve the issue. Some argue that the destroyed statues should be renewed and recreated to represent the actual cultural change, such as adding statues of protestors around Colston's statue, portraying the protestors taking down the statue (Moody, 2021, p. 3).

Currently, no permanent[26] changes have been made to the empty pedestals after the monuments were removed. For example, during rallies in Bristol, a female activist named Jen Reid stood atop the empty pedestal from which Colston's statue had just been removed with her clenched fist raised (Gould, 2020, p. 1). She became a viral BLM symbol after the picture of her performing this act gained popularity on social media. A few days later, Bristol activists and Marc Quinn, a British artist, installed a sculpture based on the picture overnight without formal consent from the local government. The statue was soon removed; as Chambers (2022, p. 6) puts it, "The speed with which Colston's statue was retrieved from its watery grave was replicated by the speed with which the Bristol city council removed Quinn's statue of Reid".

Many scholars believe that the empty pedestals left behind after the removal of certain monuments serve as a powerful reminder of recent events. They argue that there is no need to erect new monuments in place of the old ones. The empty pedestals symbolise activism and can be used as a starting point for meaningful discussions about contemporary issues (Eldar, 2023, p. 487). According to Strauss (2020, p. 141), "the empty pedestal is the best way to remember but not honour the past". This suggests that it may be best to keep the pedestals empty to remind future generations of the rejected parts of British history.

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[26] Claiming that a statue would stand permanently forever would be quite inconsistent, given that any statue can be subjected to a re-evaluation and consequently removed, as discussed previously. Thus, the word 'permanent' suggests that the statue would stand for at least a generation.

However, in 2021, a statue of George Floyd was erected in Newark[27], most likely in an attempt to make public spaces more inclusive, to commemorate his death and "a lot more than [just] himself at this juncture in history" (O'Kane, 2021). While this thesis focuses on the United Kingdom, Floyd's statue can be used to identify another problem with erecting statues after heated BLM protests worldwide. The issue is with the perception of Floyd's life and whether it is justified to erect his statue based on the arguments used with the statues of slave owners. The logic and arguments applied to the monuments discussed earlier can also be applied to Floyd's statue. Additionally, as discussed in the previous chapter, "it is healthy to have such vigorous debates from time to time, and [it is] a sign of a functioning democracy…" (Hobbs, 2021, p. 431) or "a lively debate on what we value is healthy" (Tunzelmann, 2021, p. 187). Thus, it is fair to claim that debates should not be limited only to "racist" statues but should extend to any statue, including Floyd's statue.

First and foremost, Floyd's moral complexity is a topic ripe for discussion; while many perceive him as a martyr of racist police brutality, others cast him as a criminal (Lloyd, 2024). Regardless of perspective, he was a figure defined by the circumstances surrounding his death rather than his character or actions. Consequently, it could be argued that the logic applied to the removal of statues commemorating slave traders for their atrocities could also be extended to Floyd's statue due to his criminal background (Daily Mail, 2020). Moreover, while subject to debate, it could be contended that figures such as Churchill, Guy, or Conston made more significant positive contributions to the world than Floyd.

Secondly, George Floyd's context within the modern era warrants examination. To contextualise this argument, let us consider the notion that each figure previously mentioned - Churchill, Guy, Clayton, Colston, and Milligan - was a product of their time, as suggested by Archer & Matheson (2024, p. 4), irrespective of contemporary judgments on their moral standing. However, Floyd diverges from this pattern, as his actions - such as burglary and cocaine possession - do not align with modern ethical standards. Conversely, it is crucial to acknowledge that police brutality, the central issue surrounding Floyd's legacy, also contradicts prevailing contemporary moral norms. Nevertheless, this counterargument serves primarily to provide a broader understanding of Floyd's place in history.

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[27] A city in New Jersey, USA.

Lastly, it is essential to recognise that the hypothetical removal of Floyd's statue, or any other monument, would not erase history. Statues do not accurately represent history, nor do they promote objective learning, as stated earlier. This applies to Floyd's case as well. Even if his statue were to be removed, his murder and the influence of his death on rallies around the world would continue to be an integral part of history.

Overall, the debate surrounding removing and replacing statues is complex and raises questions about historical representation, cultural values, and evolving societal norms. Some people believe that new monuments should be constructed to reflect modern standards and represent diverse voices. In contrast, others think that preserving empty pedestals serves as a reminder of activism and rejected aspects of history. However, the recent addition of a statue of George Floyd in Newark has further complicated this discourse, prompting discussions about moral complexity, historical context, and the significance of commemoration. Erecting Floyd's statue can be seen as hypocritical because if the arguments used in other instances were applied to Floyd's statue, it could be, to say the least, a subject of controversy, let alone a subject of removal. Regardless of whether one supports the retention of Floyd's statue or questions its appropriateness, it underscores the complexity of this argument and the whole issue of monument removal or destruction.

5 The Aftermath

The United Kingdom was swept by BLM rallies, which brought about a significant transformation of historical monuments. During these rallies, statues were destroyed, and plaques were defaced. This forced the nation to confront its past and grapple with demands for a more inclusive future. The impact of these events goes beyond the physical remnants of monuments. It has sparked debates on identity, memory, and the complex narratives woven into British history. These debates have been multifaceted, with a range of responses and evolving perspectives on the contested symbols of the nation's past. This chapter will delve into the aftermath of these events, providing a more detailed examination of the multifaceted responses, evolving perspectives on the contested symbols of the UK's past, and law changes discussed as a result of violent protests.

The aftermath of the destruction of statues in the UK in 2020 has left a lasting impact, culminating in significant legislative changes. Following the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol amidst anti-racism protests, Section 46 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021-22 has been drafted to address the issue. This section proposes amendments to the Magistrates' Court Act 1980, altering the trial mode for criminally damaging memorials. No longer determined solely by the monetary value of the damage, cases may now be tried in the Crown Court regardless of the financial impact. The government argues that such acts can deeply offend communities and emotions, warranting more severe sentencing options. However, the amendment's definition of "memorial" extends beyond traditional war monuments to include any structure or object with a commemorative purpose, potentially encompassing statues of controversial historical figures like slave traders. This move has stirred controversy, with some viewing it as safeguarding contentious statues, while others see it as necessary to protect historical heritage. As the amendment takes effect, it will likely spark further debate and division as it is applied in future criminal trials. (Chishty, 2021, pp. 1-3)

5.1 General Public's Responses and Sentiments

The aftermath of the incidents involving monuments can be analysed by examining how the general public perceives the demonstrations and their subsequent outcomes. In 2021, the 'We are Bristol' History Commission conducted research on how people responded to the removal of Colston's statue. The study was conducted on 13,684 respondents, 55 per cent of whom were from Bristol. According to the research's authors, "The Bristol participants represented a cross-section of the city, with people of all ages, genders, ethnicities, and

deprivation levels participating in large numbers. Every geographic region of the city was included." (Cole et al., 2021, p. 4). This chapter discusses the results of this research as well as its impact on potential future rallies.

During a research study, participants were asked several questions regarding the future and past of a statue of a historical figure named Colston. The first question asked what should happen to Colston's statue, and the majority of respondents (74 per cent) wished for it to be put on display in a museum. They believed statues are meant to celebrate individuals, whereas museums are meant to educate people about history. Therefore, placing the statue in a museum would open it for objective discussion or debate, which would not be possible in a public open space. On the other hand, 72 per cent of respondents who did not want to see the statue in a museum wished for it to be erected back in its original location. (Cole et al., 2021, pp. 22, 26, 30)

In the following question, "What should be in the plinth space?" most respondents (65 per cent) "wanted to see the provision of a plaque that reflected the events of 7 June 2020" (Cole et al., 2021, p. 35). Similarly, Moody's (2021, p. 3) research suggests the creation of a new sculpture depicting the statue being pulled down to be placed in the empty spot.

Additionally, the researchers asked, perhaps, the most critical question: "How do you feel about the statue being pulled down?". The responses to this question revealed varying opinions based on race. However, the majority of respondents, 56 per cent, felt positively about the statue's removal (see Figure 1). Specifically, an overwhelming 65 per cent of Bristol participants felt very positive or positive about the statue's removal. This is a remarkable shift from the 2014 study, where 56 per cent of Bristol's population preferred the statue to remain standing (Gallagher, 2014). These results indicate a significant change in societal attitudes towards the representation of history.

The respondents' age was found to be directly proportional to their agreement with the removal (see Figure 2). Younger respondents were generally more in favour of it. The research found that the removal was strongly supported by students who viewed it as a step towards progress and a display of justified anger. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 47)

It is worth noting that according to the research, 39 per cent of Black people had negative opinions about the removal of the statue (see Figure 3). Black people were the third group that least supported the removal of the statue, after Gypsies and those who did not state their ethnicity. The researchers explained that this was due to the violent nature of the removal, which

many Black people disagreed with. One Black respondent commented that "a minority of activists went against the wishes of the people of Bristol, who had never voted to have it removed, took the law into their own hands and vandalised a piece of public property." Another Black respondent mentioned that "it was a wanton act of vandalism. Irrespective of anyone's beliefs, the law is the law and must be respected." This supports the idea that the statue should have been removed a long time ago (Cole et al., 2021, p. 46).

Furthermore, those who expressed a negative opinion about removing the statue provided various reasons for their stance (see Figure 4). While the majority stated that it was wrong and should not have been done, some cited specific arguments discussed in the previous chapters. Twenty-four per cent of the total respondents believed that the removal was illegal, 12 per cent argued that it erased history, and 7 per cent expressed the view that Bristol should not change unpalatable aspects of its past. Some respondents also claimed that Colston had accomplished great things and, therefore, deserved to be celebrated as a man of his time. However, the issue that both positive and negative respondents found problematic was the violent nature of the statue's removal. (Cole et al., 2021, pp. 50-52).

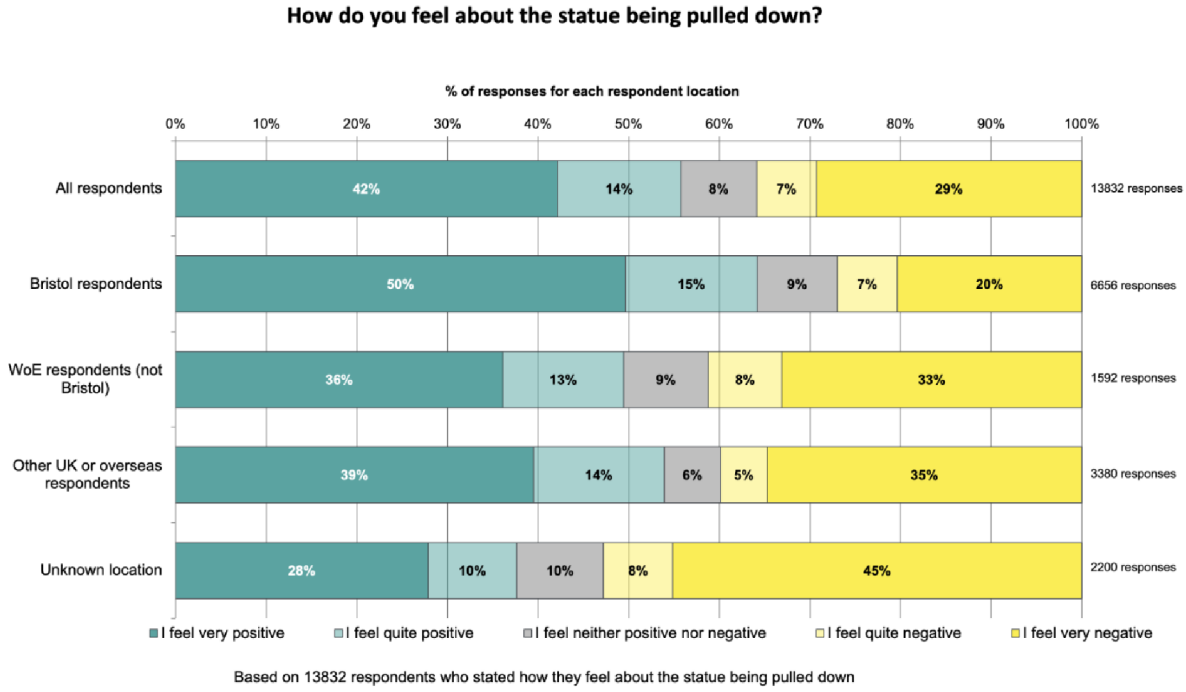

Figure 1 - How do you feel about the statue being pulled down? All responses. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 43)

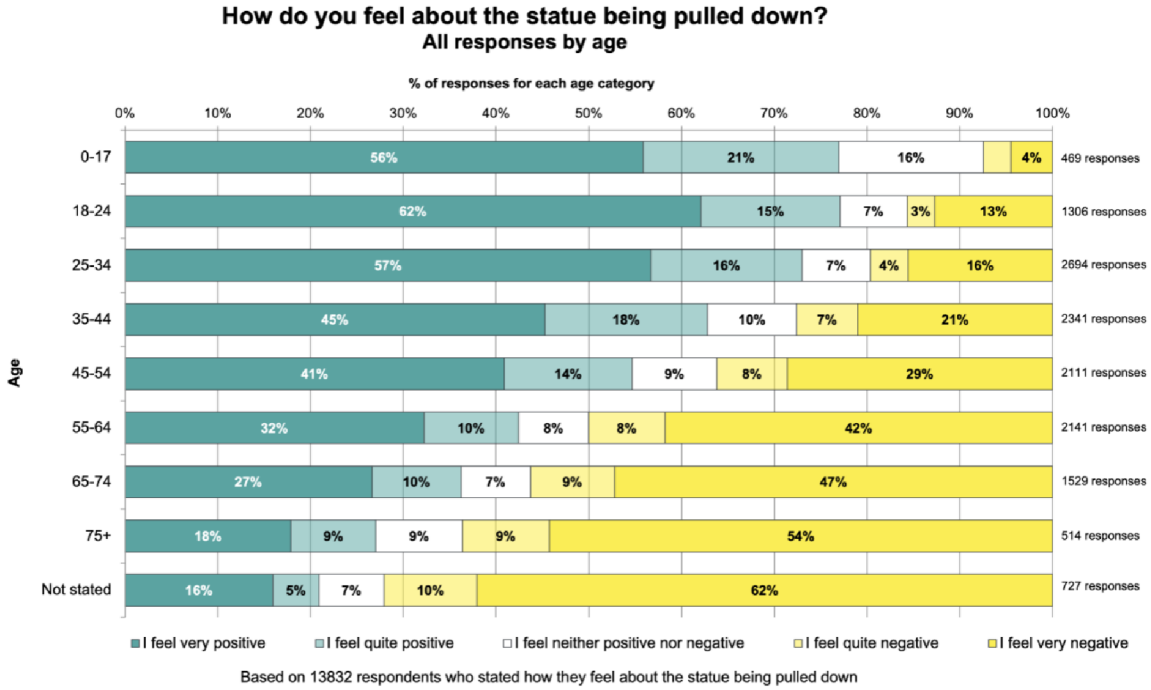

Figure 2 - How do you feel about the statue being pulled down? All responses by age. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 47)

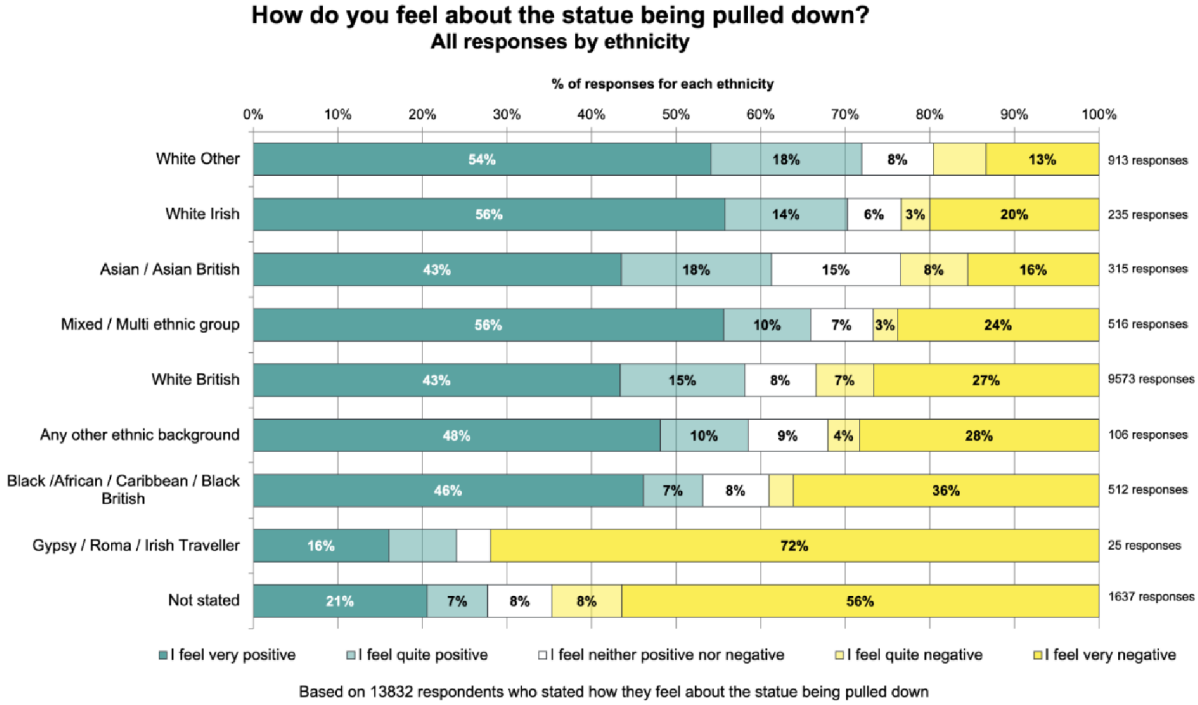

Figure 3 - How do you feel about the statue being pulled down? All responses by ethnicity. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 45)

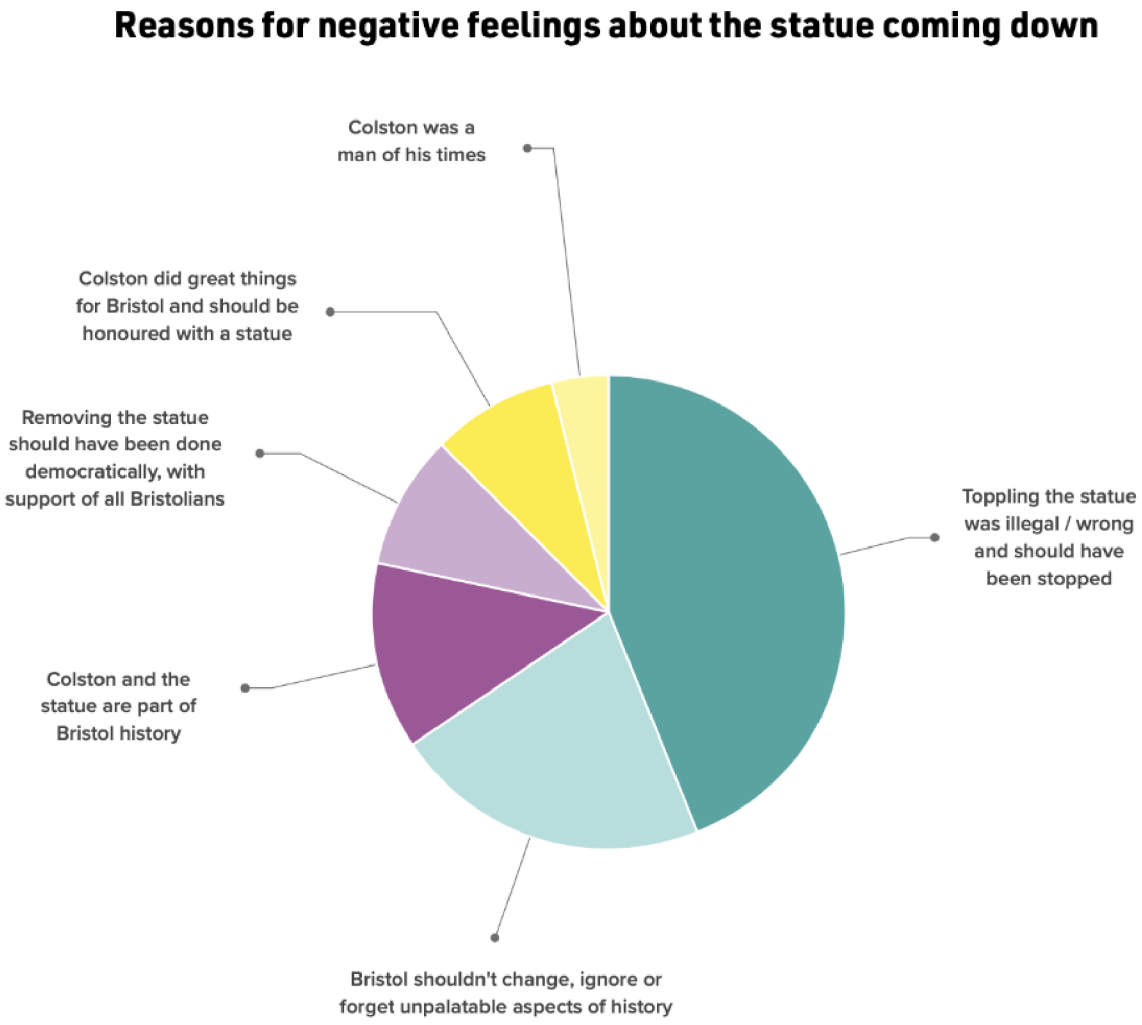

Figure 4 - Reasons for negative feelings about the statue coming down. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 50)

The researchers have also made some recommendations regarding the empty plinth and toppled statue, indicating how they will be dealt with in the future. According to their suggestions, the statue should be placed in a museum in its current damaged state, and nuanced and contextualised information should be provided alongside it (Cole et al., 2021, p. 56). This recommendation has been fulfilled as Colston's statue is now located in the local museum, covered in paint and damage, with several plaques providing information about the statue and its removal (Cole, 2023, p. 161; Harcombe, Bouverie, 2024). Additionally, they recommended that the plinth should be kept empty while adding a plaque that briefly and factually explains when and why the statue was erected and removed. (Cole et al., 2021, p. 56).

Overall, this research has revealed some interesting facts about how people responded to removing Colston's monument. The survey results indicate that most people reacted positively or negatively to the removal, even though many agreed that violent rallies do not contribute valuably to the cause. This may lead to more peaceful rallies in the future; in particular, democratic voting may be used along with providing controversial monuments with

contextualised plaques. Additionally, the statistics also highlight that the younger generation is more progressive and cares more about these issues than previous generations, which could suggest more changes and rallies in the future. However, as Paton et al. (2022, p. 8) say, the BLM protests in the UK peaked and were most active in 2020, implying that the momentum of these protests is gradually declining. Therefore, it could be argued that future rallies or protests may be part of a different movement under different circumstances. All in all, in terms of race, it appears that white people are more supportive of these changes than any other race, indicating that the predominantly white United Kingdom may become more open to discussing such issues in the future.

6 Conclusion

The focus of this thesis was to evaluate the justification of recent monument destructions in the UK. To achieve this, the thesis examined historical and contemporary issues such as slavery and police brutality that had led to the recent unrest, as well as commonly used and unique arguments proposed during debates. These arguments included misrepresentation of history, moral duality, violent nature of the rallies, "the domino effect", and somewhat hypocritical erection of new statues. Furthermore, the thesis examined Edward Colston, Winston Churchill, Robert Clayton, Thomas Guy, and Robert Milligan, whose monuments were found to be critical for this topic.

Evaluating the justification for removing monuments is a difficult task. It depends on each monument individually - there is no unified answer for all monuments. Yet, some arguments, like "the domino effect", erasure of history, and men of their times, could be applied to all statues. Nonetheless, scholars agree that these arguments are invalid as they are either misleadingly established (the domino effect) or incorrectly interpret history (erasure of history and men of their times).

On the other hand, the argument of moral duality applies to each statue differently. It is subjective and depends on each person's views towards a particular historical figure. In the case of Colston's statue, the majority of Bristolians believed that the good deeds, such as philanthropy, did not outweigh his involvement in the slave trade. Nevertheless, most people still consider Winston Churchill's good deeds prevailing. The deeds of Guy and Clayton are, to a certain degree, neutral, whereas Milligan's deeds are dominantly wrong.

Both sides of the argument agreed that rallies should be peaceful and civilised. Protests are considered to be democratic and nonviolent. However, in the case of Colston, peaceful negotiations had failed to bring about change for several years before the statue was violently removed. This suggests that future protests may aim for peaceful and democratic solutions and that authorities may be more receptive to preventing violence. It is also important to note that the outcomes of the rallies varied depending on the statue in question; Colston's statue was violently removed, Churchill's was defaced, Milligan's was removed relatively peacefully, and Guy's and Clayton's statues were given contextualising plaques.

All in all, given these arguments and historical injustices, there are not many objective arguments that would be persuasive enough not to accept the removal or destruction of monuments. As long as people approach the issue democratically, there is not much wrong with

that. However, if a statue still stands after many protests, like in Churchill's case, it may be a sign that society is not ready for such a change.

The most significant counterargument to the BLM monument destruction is the hypocrisy in erecting new statues of BLM 'heroes'. While this thesis generally concluded that the removals of historical figures were justified, it also identifies that if Floyd's statue were to be judged by the same arguments and standards, it would be, to say the least, disturbing that this statue was erected in 2021, a year after many other statues were removed for these same arguments and reasons.

This thesis delved into a complex topic, examining it from both historical and contemporary perspectives. While it refrained from drawing a definitive conclusion, it offered valuable insights into recent events and posed thought-provoking questions. The topic remains multifaceted, with numerous unanswered aspects, particularly concerning moral duality. Acknowledging this, the thesis suggests that future researchers should explore this issue more deeply.

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