LEARNING TO REMEMBER SLAVERY AT THE MUSEUM: SCHOOL FIELD-TRIPS, DIFFICULT HISTORIES AND SHIFTING HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

Taking as its point of departure *Understanding Slavery*, a national, multi-museum education project that includes learning resources, lesson-plans and a web-site, this thesis investigates the performance of recent shifts in historical consciousness in the context of museum field-trip sessions developed in England in tandem with the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. It argues that, as important cultural memory products, government-sponsored education initiatives require the same academic attention that history textbooks receive. This research combines macro- and micro-analyses in order to examine the role of education during politically charged periods of heightened commemorative activity, demonstrating how the production and consumption of educational media in museums influence – and are influenced by – political, historical and cultural discourses, changes in the curriculum, and shifts within historical consciousness.

Using analysis of qualitative data generated through observations of nine school field-trips, discussions with museum education staff and pre- and post-visit surveys with pupils and teachers (where possible), this thesis examines the experiences of school pupils (aged eleven to fourteen) learning about the history of slavery in the years immediately following the bicentenary. In addition to fieldwork undertaken at museums in Hull, Liverpool and London, this thesis also includes fieldwork carried out at a museum in Ontario, where school groups learn about the Underground Railroad and early Black settlement in Canada. This comparative case study offers an opportunity to critically consider the dominant trends in pedagogy and practice that have evolved in England in recent years as a result of multi-site initiatives, collaborative resource development, professional workshops and teacher training programmes. This reflective assessment is achieved through an examination of key themes emerging from the data, including issues surrounding the 'universal' lessons of slavery history for citizenship education, the pedagogy and ethics of object handling and the use of drama, role-play and empathy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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"Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."

(Zora Neale Hurston)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to examine how national education initiatives and museum field-trip sessions relating to 'difficult' histories influence – and are influenced by – shifts in 'historical consciousness', primarily within the context of England and the 2007 official commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade. It argues that, as significant cultural memory products, government-sponsored education initiatives, such as those that accompany national commemorative activity, require the same attention that history textbooks traditionally receive (see Spalding, 2011a). However, the dynamics of studying museum field-trips requires particular techniques, methods and conceptual frameworks that differ to those popularly used to interpret the content and rhetoric of a textbook, for example critical discourse analysis (Lee, 2007, Oteiza, 2003). Therefore, this thesis seeks to problematise the museum field-trip as a 'site' where a particular type of history education is produced and consumed, where historical consciousness is (re)negotiated and where commemorative acts are performed.

Taking as its point of departure *Understanding Slavery*, a national education initiative and web-based resource that developed in tandem with preparations for the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the former British Empire, this thesis examines how memory works at the interface between two significant institutions of learning: the museum and the school. In recognition of the need for ethnographic research into teaching difficult histories in the museum environment, this thesis utilises a theoretical framework that combines methods and concepts from education, memory and cultural studies in order to analyse the experiences of school pupils learning about the history of slavery in museums. Accordingly, it presents a detailed analysis of qualitative data generated through museum observations, interviews with museum staff, and surveys with teachers and pupils (aged eleven to fourteen) taking part in school field-trips to museums in Hull, Liverpool and London, each of which was involved in *Understanding Slavery*.

It also includes fieldwork undertaken at a museum in Ontario, Canada, where school groups visit to learn about the history of the Underground Railroad and early Black settlement in Canada. This comparative case study was included in order to offer a distinctly

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different context in which to observe museum field-trips with the same age group, which provided a valuable opportunity to critically reflect on the dominant trends in pedagogy and practice that have emerged in England as a result of the multi-site initiatives, collaborative resources, workshops and teacher training programmes that accompanied the bicentenary. A complete explanation and breakdown of the methodology and fieldwork is presented in Chapter 3, however it is important to explain at this point that the relationship between the 'local' (the museums) and the broader context of a 'historical consciousness' is imagined in this thesis in the same way that Sharon Macdonald describes in her analysis of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg:

> Nuremberg and the Rally Grounds can act as a focus for telling at least part of a wider story about German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ['historical consciousness'], not because they constitute the bigger frame writ small, but because those acting locally often do so in awareness of debates ongoing elsewhere, because of shared institutional factors, such as available funding and sometimes because of common assumptions or ways of acting (Macdonald, 2009: 16).

This thesis seeks to offer an alternative analysis of the 2007 bicentenary, highlighting how national education initiatives, school programs, education resources and museum field-trip sessions influence – and are influenced by – political debates and changes in the curriculum, and shifts within what is commonly referred to as 'public history' or 'public memory', but which is discussed here in terms of 'historical consciousness'. In doing so, it aims to shed some light on the perceived connection between teaching difficult histories to young people and tackling racism, prejudice and a range of 'anti-social' behaviours, thus 'improving' a pupil's capacity for tolerance and acceptance of difference (see BBC, 2008b, Misan, 2010).

The first section of this introductory chapter briefly describes the personal inspiration that underpins this research. This is followed in Section 1.2 by an overview of the significance of this research, including details of the bicentenary and the museums that serve as case studies for this research (Section 1.3). The research question and aims are outlined in Section 1.4, whilst the final section provides a synopsis of the thesis, guiding the reader through the structure and content of the subsequent chapters.

1.1   Research inspiration: making learning memorable

The style of presenting data in this thesis in inspired by the values of the "reflexive

researcher", as outlined by Etherington (2004); it is my intention to stress my 'position' as the researcher, in order to highlight the unavoidable 'bias' of the ethnographer, as well as honouring the importance of 'context' and 'interconnectedness' within this particular research project (see Chapter 3 on methodology for further details). Furthermore, a reflexive approach to research is most often associated with a constructivist approach and with qualitative methods designed to study a particular phenomenon within its natural context. As Etherington suggests, "it is by this means that we co-create multifaceted and many-layered stories that honour the messiness and complexity of human life [...] and enable us to create meaning out of experience" (2004: 27). It is with this in mind that the reader should consider the following narrative:

> This morning Kathryn and I visited Dresden in Chatham-Kent, about a one hour drive from North Buxton. This community is where *Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site* is located, a museum and heritage site that commemorates the life of Reverend Josiah Henson, a local hero who played a significant part in the abolition movement and the Underground Railroad. Henson's memoirs provided the inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's famously influential anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (2002 [1852]). Ruth, the member of staff that runs many of the school group visits to the site, kindly offered to show me round the exhibition. (It was raining too heavy to venture outside to see the Josiah Henson House, the Pioneer Church, the smokehouse, the sawmill or the other vernacular buildings that are found on the five-acre site.) Ruth explained the history of the site and pointed out the key objects in the exhibition. She then talked a little about her approach to working with school pupils; she always tells pupils visiting *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that the lesson that they can learn from the history of slavery and the Underground Railroad is that of "persevering through adversity" and "the strength that individuals and groups can have when they don't give up hope". For the first time I feel like someone has articulated a clear answer to the question that I am often asked: *Why are you so interested in the history of slavery?*

As a young teen, my aunt introduced me to African-American literature, beginning with *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou. I drew strength and inspiration from the courage and transfixing beauty of the characters in the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Nella Larsen and Frederick Douglass, amongst others. The history of African slavery in the Americas and the vast wealth of literature it has inspired has taught me many lessons, and this has been a major motivating factor in my research. Setting out on this research, I felt that learning about this history is important and that it can have a

powerful effect on how individuals perceive their own lives and how they relate the past to the present. However, I didn't know how or why this might be the case, and I certainly didn't comprehend the complexities of trying to find out, or where this curiosity might lead.

My interest in the transformative potential of museum field-trips can be traced back to a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Nottinghamshire with my A-level Religious Studies class. After learning about the history of the Holocaust through the subterranean exhibition, seeing the faces of the families whose lives were torn apart, reading survivor testimonies, and meeting one of these survivors face-to-face, I remember walking alone in the Centre's peaceful memorial gardens, where I reflected on the magnitude and horror of what I had just encountered, not wishing to speak to my friends or teacher. Memories of this experience stayed with me throughout my undergraduate degree.

When I graduated with a BA in History and English Literature (during which I specialised in African slavery in the Americas, African American literature and British abolitionist poetry), with no fixed plan of what I was going to do, I came across a leaflet for the Holocaust Memorial Centre amongst my belongings. Something clicked into place and I decided that I needed to do whatever it was that meant that I could work somewhere like that, to be part of this incredible experience by which young people have the opportunity to be touched by the humbling incomprehensibility of such traumatic pasts.

A year later, I began an MA in Heritage Education and Interpretation at Newcastle University, my dissertation topic for which looked at school groups visiting the Holocaust Memorial Centre in order to explore issues relating to memory and education. Faced with the attractive option of applying to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding to undertake doctoral research, my instincts led me to develop a research proposal that combined my interest in transatlantic slavery with my curiosity about the transformative potential and pedagogies of museum learning experiences. The rest, as they say, is history...

1.2   Research significance and theoretical standpoint

As mentioned above, this thesis takes a necessarily interdisciplinary approach, bringing together concepts, approaches and insights from a range of disciplines and fields of study (history, education, heritage studies, memory studies, cultural studies, sociology,

anthropology and psychology). These sometimes disparate, sometimes convergent disciplines are used to explore and articulate the relationship between politically charged commemorative years and government sponsored education initiatives, combining macro- and micro-analyses of teaching difficult histories in the museum. In doing so, this thesis seeks to promote a reconceptualisation of the museum field-trip as a significant cultural memory product. Furthermore, it attempts to get to the core of why learning about traumatic pasts in experiential environments is considered to be such a valuable opportunity for young people. For example, it argues that in order to better understand this phenomenon, we must carefully consider the relationship between experiential learning about traumatic pasts and the human faculties of 'empathy' and 'imagination', as outlined by Alison Landsberg in her book *Prosthetic Memory* (2004).

This research proposes that the projects and initiatives that received support and funding as part of the build up to the 2007 bicentenary shaped, and were shaped by, the shifting 'historical consciousness' of the slave trade and slavery. 'Historical consciousness' is a concept that has been introduced by German academics as a potential alternative to discussions of memory, but as yet has not experienced widespread usage in English language studies (Macdonald, 2006: 12). My understanding of historical consciousness is taken from the work of Sharon Macdonald, who states that when we are studying historical consciousness we are "trying to grasp the various ways in which people may relate to the past [...] recognising and seeking to theorise people's awareness of the past, history and historicity [...] investigating people's self-conscious definition of some aspects of the past as 'history', their notions of the agency of the past, their apprehensions of time, and how they perceive past, present and future and their interrelations" (2006: 12). Sheila Watson echoes this perspective when she argues that "by giving more attention to the historiographic needs and historical perceptions of [local] audiences, museums might more effectively articulate community identities and a sense of place" (2007a: 160).

This vision of historical consciousness is essentially different to popular definitions of concepts such as 'collective memory' because it recognises the inherently fluid, changeable and paradoxical character of how individuals, groups and societies relate to the past. There is no singular, shared, memory of the past, but rather each individual construction of the past exists within a shared framework that is distinctive to a particular time and place. It is

this socio-cultural, historically specific rhetorical structure that can be said to shift within periods of heightened commemorative activity. Historical consciousness subtly brings together ideas about memory and the past that are often otherwise perceived as being disparate. Like 'semantic memory', historical consciousness can be described as the memory of meanings, understandings and other concept-based knowledge unrelated to specific events.

However, Macdonald's description of historical consciousness also requires 'episodic memory', as it is through their recollection of events that they have personally experienced that people are able to interpret and relate to the past and begin to understand its significance for the present and the future. In the literature review (Chapter 2) and Chapter 8 of this thesis, Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory' is also brought into the mix of how we understand historical consciousness. Landsberg states that, through the consumption of mass culture, individuals acquire 'prosthetic' memories of events from the past that they did not experience themselves (2004), which this thesis argues plays an important role in how school pupils experience the history of slavery through museum field-trips.

In summary, the concept of 'historical consciousness' provides a way of thinking about how societies deal with the past in the present day without relying on what, more often than not, seem to be unproductive attempts to dichotomise or separate 'history' and 'memory' (most notably in the works of Nora, 1989). It is particularly useful when attempting to trace how different events and processes shape – and are simultaneously shaped by – the ways in which people relate to, represent and communicate the past in the present day. For example, the character of the 2007 bicentenary was a direct product of the historical consciousness within which it was thought up and developed. However at the same time, the events, activities and processes of the bicentenary have shaped and changed the historical consciousness of the slave trade and slavery in this country. It is important to explain at this point that the relationship between the 'local' (the museums) and the broader context of a 'historical consciousness' is imagined in this thesis in the same way that Macdonald describes in her analysis of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg:

> Nuremberg and the Rally Grounds can act as a focus for telling at least part of a wider story about German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ['historical consciousness'],

not because they constitute the bigger frame writ small, but because those acting locally often do so in awareness of debates ongoing elsewhere, because of shared institutional factors, such as available funding and sometimes because of common assumptions or ways of acting (Macdonald, 2009: 16).

In addition, this research aims to critically analyse and articulate the processes of representation, identity and regulation that, together with the processes of production and consumption, are regarded by Du Gay et al. as interacting to form the "circuit of culture – through which any analysis of a cultural text or artefact must pass if it is to be adequately studied" (Du Gay et al., 1997: 3). This approach is used to examine qualitative fieldwork data, illustrating the complexities inherent in the representation and performance of difficult histories in the context of learning outside the classroom during periods of heightened commemorative activity. It argues that in order to better understand the political and pedagogical nuances of teaching difficult histories, it is essential to engage with both the macro- and micro-levels of memory-work, as advocated by Brubaker and Feishmidt (2002). Drawing on empirical data generated through fieldwork in England (with a comparative case study in Ontario, Canada), it examines the experiences of school pupils (aged eleven to fourteen) learning about the history of transatlantic slavery in museums in the years immediately following the bicentenary.

Britain and the slave trade: remembering 1807

> There are few more perplexing questions in the history of slavery than the manner of its ending. The British were the pioneers of the campaign; first against the slave trade, then against slavery in their own colonies and finally against slavery worldwide. This simple fact itself has prompted historical debate. Why should the nation which had perfected (if not pioneered) those systems which took most Africans into the Americas, and made most profitable use of them when they were there, renounce its past and become so instrumental in ending them? It was as if the international slave-poacher quickly and effectively turned international slave gamekeeper. The British became the world's pre-eminent abolitionist force. In the process the British developed a political identity as *the* global power for good, safeguarding the down-trodden and defending the wronged. Yet this image, so persistently repeated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has to be set in the balance against the history of British slavery (indeed of British imperialism in a wider setting). When slavery had ended, British commentators preferred to revel in British abolition – not British slavery (Walvin, 1996: 158).

This extract from James Walvin's *Questioning Slavery* succinctly sets the scene for many of the 'difficulties' of remembering and representing transatlantic slavery in the British 'public

sphere' (a concept discussed further in Chapter 2); at the heart is a concern that memories of Britain's involvement in perpetuating transatlantic slavery can all to easily become supplanted by glorified memories of Britain's role in abolishing the slave trade. March 25th 2007 marked the 200th anniversary of Parliament's abolition of the slave trade in the former British Empire. This historical event was officially commemorated in Britain by a calendar full of events that spanned the entire year, under a government tag-line of "Reflecting on the past, looking to the future" (Directgov, 2007).

There were, of course, organisations, institutions, academics and community groups in the UK working on remembering the transatlantic slave trade and slavery before the national commemoration of the bicentenary preparations began – including the three English museums that are case studies in this research – although without the high levels of funding and exposure that 2007 provided, their capacity to increase public awareness of this largely unpublicised history was, as you might expect, somewhat encumbered. Until recently there were few authors writing about the position of the slave trade and slavery in the British public memory (recent books include Ennals, 2007, Kowaleski-Wallace, 2006, Oldfield, 2007), whereas the topic of slavery and public memory in the US is both prolific and well established within both academic (Du Bois, 1996 (1903), Fabre and O'Meally, 1994, Osagie, 2000) and fictional writing (most famously Angelou, 1984, Haley, 1978, Morrison, 1997 [1987], Walker, 2000).

As Chapter 2 demonstrates, in the build up to, during, and in the aftermath of the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, academics from different fields were interested in the ways in which the history of transatlantic slavery had been represented, produced, remembered, performed, consumed and appropriated, but the focus was almost entirely on exhibitions, memorials, plays, radio shows, films, documentaries, books, artworks and commemorative events (for a cross-section, see Adi, 2007, Cubitt, 2010, Kowaleski-Wallace, 2006, Smith, 2010). Many authors have written about history, memory and the politics of national identity in relation to a range of 'contested' histories (Hodgkin and Radstone, 2003, Benziger, 2008, Rothberg, 2000, 2009, Diouf, 2003, Kidd and Murdoch, 2004), therefore providing a useful theoretical framework for thinking about the relationship between actively remembering the transatlantic slave trade and Britain's national identity.

As others have commented, 2007 seems to have acted as a catalyst for shifting the historical consciousness of the slave trade and slavery in Britain (Hall, 2007, Mack, 2009, Smith et al., 2010), although there is little consensus about the nature of this shift, with some academics and commentators casting the bicentenary in an unreservedly negative light. For example, historian Hakim Adi questions the celebratory tone of the bicentenary, drawing attention to the way in which the actions of white British abolitionists such as William Wilberforce were privileged over the resistance and campaigning of enslaved and freed Africans. He suggests that the commemorations were nothing more than a 'Wilberfest', a pat on the back for the idea of Britain as a morally progressive nation, serving to white-wash over Britain's high-profile involvement in the slave trade (Adi, 2007).

The museums, galleries and heritage sector engaged with the build up to the bicentenary and the commemorative year itself in an unprecedented manner in terms of the scale, scope and intensity of the response. As a result, the historical consciousness of the slave trade, slavery and abolition was renegotiated in the public sphere through the vehicle of 2007; Britain's past went through a process of re-imagining, whilst notions of national identity were challenged by the unveiling of this 'hidden' history. In late 2005 the Heritage Lottery Fund announced awards of over £16 million for projects relating to the 2007 bicentenary, encouraging community based organisations and others to apply for funding for projects that would "add to the collective understanding of the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on national heritage" (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2007).

During 2007 both local temporary and national permanent exhibitions relating to the history of the slave trade and slavery opened (in some cases re-opened), including the key case studies for this research (International Slavery Museum, National Maritime Museum and Wilberforce House). A central focus of the response from museums, galleries and heritage has been on creating new learning opportunities, in particular for school groups, which has led to interesting collaborations between the museums sector and the education sector. The bicentenary presented the government and the cultural, museums, heritage and education sectors with many interesting opportunities and challenges; issues surrounding how to remember and represent the slave trade and slavery raises uncomfortable questions about national identity, racism and legacy that understandably created anxiety and inspired a generally cautious approach. As discussed by Kalliopi Fouseki in an article titled

'Community voices, curatorial choices' (Fouseki, 2010), perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of 2007 was the processes of consultation, collaboration and partnership between the museums and heritage sector and a range of organisations, groups and networks with vested interests in the outcome (including international, Human Rights, 'grassroots', community and academic). The act of engaging with these different 'communities' was one of the more public ways that organisations sought to deal with the difficulties of this contested history. Bernadette Lynch describes the conflict between community expectations and the reality of how museums produce exhibitions:

> A very recent and still painful experience of antagonism, for which they were unprepared, hit UK museums during the 2007 bicentenary of Britain's abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Due to expectations of the Black and Minority Ethnic communities of full collaboration in developing programmes on this subject matter, it brought museums face to face with the challenges of participation and co-production and the everyday politics and realities of racism, conflict and community activism (2011: 155).

The relationships between museums and communities were of course determined by power structures and institutional restraints, leading some to conclude that the inclusion of 'community engagement' within, say, the redevelopment of an exhibition on slavery was merely a tokenistic gesture. As Sheila Watson shrewdly observes:

> the sensitivity of museums to the pressures by vocal and well-organised members of a few communities has made some institutions understandably anxious to avoid public controversy and keen to consult with such groups. Thus the museum may well offer to share decision making with effectively led and managed pressure groups, or with communities that have a sense of grievance, understand museum politics, or are just easily identifiable and have formal structures with which museums can work (Watson, 2007b: 2).

However, according to Lynch and Alberti, "some participants can make use of these constructions, positioning themselves in such a way as to imbue their interventions with moral authority, turning the table and contesting the frame. They transform tokenism into opportunities for leverage" (2010: 14).

Although the dynamics of such power relations lie beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognise that although the 'voices' of the communities may not have found their way into the exhibitions of 2007 in the way in which the participants perhaps anticipated, their expectations, opinions and, often, their criticisms were certainly heard through their attendance at the many workshops and conferences. The direct and candid

nature of these conflicts clearly put pressure on the museum practitioners present, many of whom, in response, were keen to share their experiences of 2007 and the shakeup of practice they witnessed regarding issues such as undertaking community consultation, representing sensitive topics, and addressing the present-day legacies of difficult histories. Many of those present emphatically explained how their involvement with the bicentenary had altered their professional outlook and their perceptions of what it is exactly that a museum does. Despite the various criticisms made of the bicentenary, for many of those in the heritage and education sectors that were involved in the hive of activity surrounding the commemorations, there was clearly a sense that 2007 had in fact ushered in a "sea change of thought" (Cubitt, 2007), an aspiration for a more reflexive museum practice.

Understanding Slavery initiative

Furthermore, the role of the bicentenary in contributing to a more reflexive and truthful representation of the history of the British Empire being taught in schools is regarded by many as one of the greatest achievements of the commemorations. In England, school pupils currently learn about a part of history that has previously been either hidden, distorted or misrepresented in both the pages of the history textbook and the spaces of the built environment. The most prominent educational initiative developed in Britain to promote the teaching of slavery is the *Understanding Slavery* initiative. Since 2003, *Understanding Slavery* has been encouraging teachers and young people to examine this 'difficult history' through museum collections and heritage. The initiative was funded by the Department for Culture Media and Sport and the Department for Children Schools and Families and was developed as a partnership between museums across England, including the three main case studies for this research.

The original purpose of the initiative was to promote and support effective teaching of the transatlantic slave trade in schools and communities. The partner museums worked with teachers, educators and young people to develop learning programmes and resources, including handling sessions, loan boxes, print and digital resources and on-site group sessions. Significantly, in 2008 the slave trade and slavery became a compulsory part of the Key Stage 3 history national curriculum. Studying the implementation of *Understanding Slavery* and related programmes has the potential to reveal how the different factors that

influence projects at the intersection between the museums and education sectors interact with each other.

However, as this study aims to illustrate, the interesting and previously under-researched twist in the story is that the development, implementation and consumption of such education initiatives played a significant part in forming a new historical consciousness. Therefore, by focusing on one project relating to the bicentenary and tracing the three stages of development, implementation and consumption it is possible to further understanding of the mechanisms and impact of shifting the historical consciousness of a difficult history at both a personal, local and national level. This is particularly significant, as wherever there is a difficult history in a nation's past that demands public attention, the focus more often than not seems to turn to education and learning initiatives as the natural way of altering historical consciousness and re-shaping national identities.

The newly perceived relationship between learning and culture that has emerged in recent years, in both the academy and in cultural and educational policy and practice, runs parallel to an international acknowledgment of the potential of the museum, the heritage site or the heritage project as a 'medium' through which young people can learn about difficult aspects of the past in ways that appear to have greater significance and meaning than is perhaps possible within the walls of a traditional classroom. However, a substantial and satisfactory body of research relating to this phenomenon has yet to be produced. Claims about the long-term benefits for young people of engaging with sensitive, controversial or politically charged aspects of the past within the museum environment are easy to find, as are indications from young people that they are affected by these experiences (see www.facinghistory.org and www.holocaustcentre.net for examples of both).

Considering the funding, media attention and praise that learning outside the classroom projects relating to difficult subject matters have recently received, this research is both timely and significant. For example, the Imperial War Museum's Heritage Lottery Funded *Their Past Your Future* programme offered residential trips for young people to several continents to explore the impact of twentieth century conflict (TPYF, 2008). In February 2008, the government provided an extra £4.65m to the Holocaust Educational Trust to allow two sixth formers from every English school to visit Auschwitz, extending the

project until 2011 (BBC, 2008b). The potential value of such learning opportunities for young people have been widely acknowledged and the nature of these experiences are clearly of great interest to those engaged with both the theories and practice it heritage, trauma, memory, citizenship and education; however such phenomena have not yet been comprehensively investigated by researchers in the field.

If *Understanding Slavery* and related programmes in museums in England have played a part in altering the historical consciousness of the slave trade and slavery, then what are the implications for how we conceptualise and conceive the significance of how national education initiatives are developed (produced), implemented (regulated) and experienced (consumed) by school groups? When it came to developing the content, structure and style of these learning resources and sessions, many voices demanded to be heard and many histories demanded to be represented – but which voices were actually heard and which histories represented? The (often dissonant) 'voices' that contributed to the discussions around the development of education initiatives includes policy makers, funders, Human Rights organizations, curriculum developers, education networks, heritage networks, Pan-African groups, historians, exhibition designers, museum professionals, international organisations and a range of community groups.

In the face of this idealistic call for multivocality, the reality for the museum education officer is that they need to be able to deliver coherent sessions to school groups that meet the criteria of the National Curriculum for England and Wales. Whether a session has been taken straight from the *Understanding Slavery* initiative or has been developed in tandem with it but designed specifically for a particular site or exhibition, it is a product of the ways in which those involved in creating it relate and respond to the ever-shifting historical consciousness of the topic. One of the questions this research addresses is how might the ways in which museums and the educational sessions they deliver represent and communicate 'difficult' histories in turn impact on the shifting historical consciousness and what are the wider social, cultural and political implications?

Researching difficult history museum field-trips

This thesis is in part a response to the richness of academic literature that tackles the issue

of Holocaust education and the question 'why should we teach the Holocaust?' (Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Hondo, 2004, Burke, 1998, Davies, 2000, Gilbert, 1997, Short, 1994). More broadly, this question has been addressed by a range of national and international organisations, the mass media and, in fact, popular culture (for example: BBC, 2008b, Pettigrew et al., 2009, LaGravenese, 2007); however the literature on the value of teaching slavery is much less developed. As the literature review (Chapter 2) explains, there is some academic research relating to how slavery is taught to school pupils in particular countries, for example France and Portugal (Hodgson, 2011, Silva, 2011), although this has not generally included ethnographic fieldwork in classrooms. In England the focus has tended to be on evaluative and practice-based – often museum-led – studies, for example the collaborative work done by the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (University of Hull), which looks at ways of addressing the link between "historical slave systems and modern problems in Britain", as well as contemporary forms of slavery, through museum education (Quirk, 2011).

This thesis seeks to address this current lack of research into difficult history education experiences that take place outside the classroom, and in doing so it offers recommendations drawn from the findings in order that future learning initiatives can better understand the factors that allow these experiences to fulfil their potential and those that inhibit these particular memory performances (Chapter 9). A starting place for enhancing this understanding is to unpick what we mean by 'difficult' histories and how this translates to the museum experience. According to Bonnell and Simon, the difficult history museum presents the visitor with distinct opportunities for reflexivity, through a process of an "intimate encounter" with the exhibition (2007: 67).

The various elements of a difficult exhibition that Bonnell and Simon describe are a useful foundation for designing a purpose-built approach to generating and analysing data that will enhance our understanding of the pedagogy of this particular type of museum experience. For example, they state that a 'difficult' exhibition should present the visitor with a cognitive challenge to their interpretive abilities as they "confront" and "dismantle" their expectations of how an exhibition should "tell the story" (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 67), which in the context of this study has inspired an interest in indications of 'history-

making' processes in the data.

The visitor studies strand of museum research has inspired several aspects of this research, in particular the different ethnographic methods that have been proposed by academics in the field of museum studies (see Chapter 2 for a detailed review of the literature). For example, the work of Leinhardt and Knutson, which has helped highlight the importance of both longitudinal studies and of "listening in on museum conversations" (Leinhardt and Knutson, 2004). However, it is important to consider that school group visits to museums differ greatly from the 'typical' visitor experience. The learning that takes place during museum field-trips is not necessarily "self-motivated", which, according to Falk and Dierking, is a defining characteristic of free-choice learning (Institute for Learning and Innovation, 2008); a pupil may opt out of the visit by not turning up on the day, but this is the only choice they can make – to go or not to go. Even once inside the museum, the free-choice elements of the learning process are often restricted for pupils in ways that they are not generally for the 'ordinary' visitor. The Institute for Learning and Innovation's website describes free-choice learning as being "personally guided by an individual's personal needs and interests" (2008).

The nature of many organised school group visits means that the day is planned out for the class by the museum, so as to maximise time and utilise resources. School group visits often include elements and experiences that the ordinary visitor may not have access to – for example, object-handling, specially designed workshops with museum education staff, drama or role-playing sessions and behind the scenes insights. Moreover, the teacher will have a very clear agenda for the visit, which is likely to vary widely depending on the particular part of the curriculum that the visit is tied to, the age of the group and the type of activities or educational sessions that the teacher has booked the group in for.

An appreciation of the agendas of the teacher leading the visit, and the pupils' perceptions of this agenda, is essential in order to gain a fuller understanding of the dynamics of the school group context that may influence the character of the learning. Therefore, as the methodology of this thesis argues in more detail (Chapter 3), by combining the expectations, perceptions and memories of the school visit as reported by both the pupils and the teachers in the same study, an enhanced model of processes relating to learning about difficult histories in the museum can be constructed.

School field-trips to museums, heritage sites and art galleries offer a fascinating opportunity to explore and unpick what happens to the individual and group learning experience when the differing agendas of formal learning and free-choice learning come together. As this thesis illustrates, the definitions and boundaries of these terms and their associated agendas are much fuzzier than might be expected, particularly as much of the data for this research relates to a national education initiative that developed in tandem with the build up to the 2007 bicentenary and the development of new content for the Key Stage 3 history national curriculum. In this respect, the textbooks, websites, learning resources and museum-based sessions that were created for use by teachers and pupils to aid learning about transatlantic slavery are all 'cultural [memory] products': "all have been created by other human beings with the intention of communicating, that is 'conversing', with the reader or viewer, and all have been created within some socio-cultural context of their own" (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 41).

Therefore, critically analysing a range of educational media as cultural memory products and examining the consumption of these media by school pupils is an important and insightful way of deepening our understanding of the historical consciousness of difficult histories during times of intensified commemorative activity, such as commemorative years, dedicated months (such as Black History Month) or remembrance days (such as Holocaust Memorial Day). The range and nature of the educational media that teachers draw on is an illuminating issue in itself, although most recent studies have focused on the use of the Internet and technology (Baek et al., 2008, Mumtaz, 2000) at the behest of other resources. As reported by the case study museums and by the participating teaching staff, many teachers make use of the online and printed resources, lesson plans and teaching guidelines that have been developed and made available over recent years, including the *Understanding Slavery* website.

However, the extent to which teachers fully utilize these teaching aids is difficult to ascertain. A quick Google search demonstrates that the range of websites and organisations that offer lesson plans and resources inspired by objects, literature, drama, music, built heritage, art (and even computer games) could easily be overwhelming. An example of one such search of pages from the UK, using the following search terms – *teaching, resources, ks3, history, slavery* – comes up with 4,600 results. The top five websites are:

1. *Freedom – A KS3 History resource about Britain and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (www.nmm.ac.uk/collections/freedom/)

2. *Slave Trade – Year 9 – SchoolHistory.co.uk* (www.schoolhistory.co.uk/year9links/slave.shtml)

3. *Free teaching resources for history key stage 3* (www.free-teaching-resources.co.uk/history_key_stage_3.shtml)

4. *Year 8 Key Stage 3 History Resources* (http://www.educationforum.co.uk/KS3_2/Year_8.htm)

5. *Understanding Slavery* (http://www.understandingslavery.com/)

The *Understanding Slavery* resource portal (Figure 1) was designed to be a virtual national collection; it collates images of many objects from across a range of museums and provides detailed descriptions of the artefacts, along with ideas and suggestions about how they can be used within a classroom setting. The artefacts have been specially selected by the initiative and are organised into the following chronological themes: West African History, the Triangular Trade, the Middle Passage, slavery, resistance and rebellion, abolition, emancipation and legacy (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2011). Replicas of some of the key artefacts form the basis of an object handling session that is used with school groups at the partner museums (described further in Chapter 7).
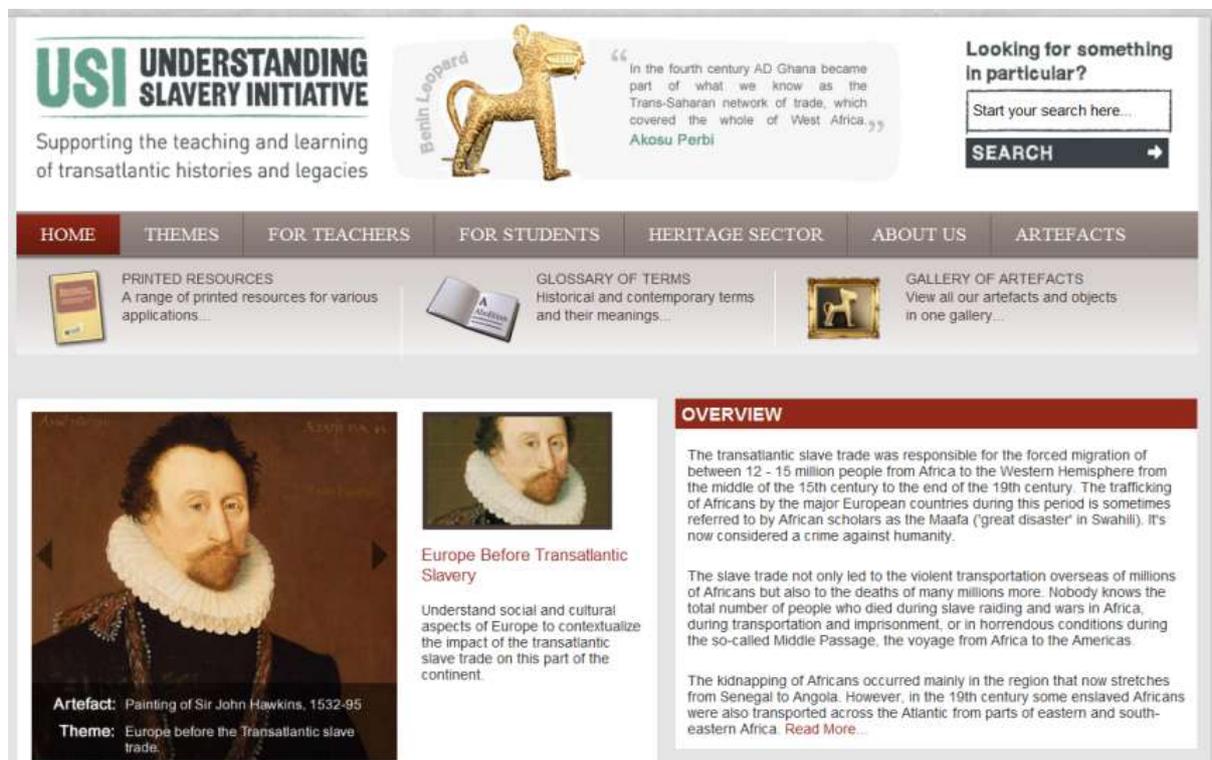
Figure 1: Screenshot of Understanding Slavery website homepage

From conversations had with individual teachers and the responses of the teachers attending the *Recovered Histories* teacher training conference at the Museum in Docklands in October 2008, it seems that most teachers appreciate the availability of resources and media relating to what is not an easy subject to teach. For example, *Recovered Histories* worked closely with *Anti-slavery International* and the Museum in Docklands in order to deliver INSET days and disseminate education packs to schools across the country (Alfred-Kamara and Mitchell, 2009). In their end of project report, *Recovered Histories* stated that their training activities:

> are all underpinned by the thinking that the history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is not one that should be commemorated at anniversaries but instead is a living history with visible legacies which can and should be accessed and owned by all in the UK. Whilst a controversial and emotive history, it can be used to foster community cohesion and create a sense of citizenship among students if it is taught accurately and sensitively (Alfred-Kamara and Mitchell, 2009).

This extract highlights some of the issues facing those involved with teaching slavery in the twenty-first century, some of which have been raised in this introductory chapter as key themes that are developed throughout this thesis: the perceived tokenism of short-term commemorations; the issues surrounding legacies and a sense of ownership over this history; the paradox of how a controversial and emotive history can be 'used to foster community cohesion'; the link with notions of citizenship education, and the challenge for teachers to be both truthful and responsive in their approach to this unarguably difficult history.

Framing slavery through audiovisual media

> Whatever media is at the core of your organisations educational efforts, find ways to involve additional media [...] if you're a museum, use radio and theatre. The more ways you communicate, the more likely you will be to get your message across; the more you collaborate, the broader will be your impact (Falk and Dierking, 2002: 138).

Some of the museums and associated organisations have produced excellent audiovisual material that is used by teachers in the classroom and provides a useful way of hooking pupils into the subject. This is one example of how museums influence teaching practice, even inside the classroom, through the production of multimedia that is accessible through the Internet. For example, the powerful film montage produced for the Museum of London

Docklands, titled simply "This is your history", which is played in a continual loop in the first gallery ('Zone 1') at the *London, Sugar and Slavery* gallery, is also available on websites such as YouTube and Vimeo. According to the museums website, the four minute video, made by the young film-maker Stephen Rudder, "is intended to emphasise how London, West Africa and the Caribbean – the three points of the Triangle Trade – are linked as a result of London's slave trade" (Museum of London Docklands, 2010).

Figure 2: 'This is Your History' video installation, Museum in Docklands

The video uses extracts from Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, where he describes his memories of being carried on board a slave ship, questions why enslaved families must be cruelly torn apart, ending with the words: "I hope the slave trade will be abolished, I pray it may be an event at hand" (Rudder, 2007). The museum website goes on to state that the video "reinforces one of the gallery's key messages that we all belong to this history – it is not solely 'black history', it is London's history" (Museum of London Docklands, 2010). This is just one example of how a museum can use the internet to increase the potential uses / users of its interpretive media, although in this case, a teacher would have to search pro-actively for the video, as there is currently no link or embedded version of the video on the *London, Sugar and Slavery* website. As some schools block YouTube on their internet browsers, it could be a problem for some teachers to access

this video.

> Invest in research and development on how to effectively utilise new technologies. The only given is that what works in one medium will not necessarily work in a new medium. The key is to complement messages, not duplicate them (Falk and Dierking, 2002: 138-9).

Another issue to think about is how technology – the internet, digital cameras, mobile technology, digital archives, museum and school websites etc. – have influenced the possibilities and opportunities of managing and enriching 'learning journeys' (as introduced in Section 2.2). But is there a danger of over-reliance on technology at the behest of the benefits of a well thought out, clearly communicated experience that is memorable in the long-term?

Other examples of audiovisual media produced by museums and made available to teachers for use within the class can be found on the *Understanding Slavery* website, including a video of actors reading the poem 'Alphabet of Slavery', which was originally published in *The Poetry of Slavery, an Anglo-American anthology (1764-1865)*: "each letter of the alphabet vividly depicts one aspect of slavery, from 'A is an African torn from his home' to 'Zealously labour to set the slaves free' (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2011). Interestingly, the poem talks about how slaves dreamed of reaching England – or her daughter Canada – so that they could be free. This poem alludes to one of the key reasons why England and Canada are interesting and valuable comparative contexts when it comes to teaching slavery in the twenty-first century; both, after particular points in history, have been perceived as being safe-havens for those escaping enslavement – both are also proud of their nations role in the abolition of the slave trade.

The obvious historical difference between the two countries is that England is well-known to have controlled and profited from the transatlantic slave trade over several centuries prior to the passing of the parliamentary bill to abolish the slave trade in 1807, whereas Canada's connection to slavery is commonly characterised as being 'the Promised Land' that awaited those who followed the North Star to freedom – the legendary Underground Railroad. However, as this thesis will demonstrate (see Section 7.4, for example), if you scratch beneath the surface of Canadian history, you will find that Canada's claim of being 'the land of freedom' for those escaping enslavement in the US is not as straightforward as it seems.

1.3   Case study museums and the InSite programme

Below is a brief summary of the history of each of the four case study museums, the details of which (including floor-plans and walkthroughs) are expanded on throughout the thesis.

Wilberforce House Museum, Hull (UK)

Figure 3: Statue of William Wilberforce outside Wilberforce House (Keith D, 2006)

This museum is located in Wilberforce House, a former Merchants house and the birthplace of the famous abolitionist, William Wilberforce (1759-1833). William Wilberforce was an MP who dedicated his time to the abolition of the slave trade and slavery and as a result he is a figure of pride for the people of Hull; a one-hundred foot high column, 'Wilberforce Monument' (1834), stands in the grounds of Hull College. It is located in the 'Museum Quarter' of Kingston upon Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire, England. The Grade I listed building was acquired by the city in 1903, and once renovated it opened to the public as

Britain's first slavery museum, a fuller history of which can be found in J.R. Oldfield's *Chords of Freedom* (2007). The museum was recently renovated, reopening it doors on March 25th 2007, after a two-year £1.6 million pound investment. This date marked the 200th anniversary of Wilberforce's Act of Parliament abolishing the slave trade in the former British Empire. The current museum consists of galleries relating to the 'History of the Museum', the 'History of the House', 'William Wilberforce', 'Origins of Slavery', 'West African Cultures', 'Capture and Enslavement', 'The Slave Trade', 'The Middle Passage', 'Auctions', 'Plantation Life', 'Resistance and Rebellion', 'The Abolition Campaign', 'After the Campaign', 'Modern Slavery and Human Rights' and 'Legacies of Slavery'.

International Slavery Museum, Liverpool (UK)

Figure 4: 'Black Achievers Wall', International Slavery Museum (National Museums Liverpool, 2011b)

The International Slavery Museum is on the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum on the Albert Docks and is part of National Museums Liverpool. It deals in particular with the history of the transatlantic slave trade between 1500 and 1865 and recognises the fact that Liverpool was a major slaving port, with the website stating that "about 1.5 million enslaved Africans were carried by its ships" (National Museums Liverpool, 2011a). Previous to the new museum opening on August 22nd 2007, the Merseyside Maritime had been home to the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery, which first opened in 1994. The current museum is

divided into three sections that cover the following topics: 'Life in West Africa', 'Enslavement and the Middle Passage' and the 'Legacies of Slavery'.

National Maritime Museum, London (UK)

Figure 5: The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (Chris O, 2006)

The National Maritime Museum is located in Greenwich, London and the historic buildings form part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site. The museum was established in 1934 and is the leading maritime museum in the UK. Amongst the many galleries and exhibitions is 'The Atlantic: Slavery, Trade and Empire' gallery, which opened on 30th November 2007 and focuses on the "movement of people, goods and ideas across the Atlantic Ocean from the 17th century to the 19th century" (National Maritime Museum, 2011). The themes covered in the gallery include 'Exploration and Cultural Encounters', 'Trade and Commerce', 'Enslavement' and 'War and Conflict'. The archives at the museum also house a collection of original documents, including ships' logs, plantation inventories and slave-ship account books.

Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, Ontario (Canada)

Figure 6: S.S. # 13 Schoolhouse – Buxton National Historic Site and Museum

Buxton National Historic Site and Museum is located in North Buxton in the Canadian province of Ontario and it tells the history of African slavery in the Americas and the 'Underground Railroad', the informal network of secret routes and safe houses through which slaves in the United States escaped to freedom in the northern states and in Canada, with the help of abolitionists and sympathisers. The museum opened in 1967 and is a tribute to the Elgin settlement, which was established in 1849 by Reverend William King who purchased nine thousand acres of land in order to create a refuge for fugitive slaves and free Blacks. King had inherited his wife's family's slaves when she passed away, and decided to travel with them across the border from the US into Canada. He then proceeded to divide the land he had acquired into fifty acre lots, which he then sold to his former slaves for two dollars and fifty cents an acre with six percent interest that could be paid over the course of ten years. The historic site includes the main building with exhibits about the

Middle Passage, life on plantations, the history of the Underground Railroad and the Buxton Community, as well as an 1861 schoolhouse, an 1854 log cabin, a barn, a church and a cemetery, all of which are utilised by the staff as educational environments and resources.

Their Past, Your Future: InSite 2008

It is important to state here that my early understandings of my research topic were significantly shaped by my involvement in the Imperial War Museum's *Their Past, Your Future* 'InSite' programme. I was fortunate enough to secure a place on this continuing professional development programme along with a group of around twenty others from across the UK, including another PhD candidate, several teachers and a range of museum and heritage professionals with an interest in difficult histories and education. Over the course of 2008, during the first year of this research, we took part in study trips to Germany, the Czech-Republic and Hungary, where we visited a range of memorials, historical sites and museums relating to twentieth-century history, in particular the Holocaust and the Cold War. The places we visited and the things we saw include Berlin memorials; Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp; Wannsee Haus; Stasi Headquarters; Hohenschonhausen Stasi Prison; Leipzig Forum of Contemporary History; Nazi Party Rally Grounds, Nuremberg; the town of Lidice (Czech Republic); House of Horror (Budapest); Emlekpont or 'Point of Remembrance' (Hungary).

The programme was designed to increase knowledge of twentieth-century conflict and commemoration and build confidence and awareness of issues relating to teaching and learning outside the classroom. At many of the sites we were given a behind the scenes insight into the heritage and education practice, often in the form of a presentation by a member of staff or a tailor-made tour, highlighting the ways in which school groups use (or do not use) the sites. We were also accompanied by two members of the education team from the Imperial War Museum, who made sure we got where we needed to go and, more importantly, provided us with background information about the sites and the histories, as well as stimulating discussions and dialogue through the use of activities, group work or provocative questions for us to consider. I include this experience under the 'case study' section of this chapter, as although it is not explicitly referenced and analysed in the chapters of this thesis, the insights into issues surrounding teaching difficult histories

outside of the classroom that I gained here were invaluable in shaping the focus and aims of this research. The conversations and memorable (often harrowing) experiences I shared with the individuals shown in Figure 7 above were ever-present in my mind throughout the planning, fieldwork, analysis and writing stages of this thesis.

Figure 7: InSite 2008 group, Budapest

1.4   Research question and aims

This thesis is guided by the following research question and aims:

> How are shifts in the 'historical consciousness' of 'difficult histories' such as transatlantic slavery (re)negotiated and (re)articulated through school field-trips to museums in England within the context of periods of heightened commemorative activity, such as the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade?

Aim 1:

To articulate the relationship between education and commemoration in regards how the historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery has been (re)negotiated through collective memory processes in recent years, with particular focus on the situation in England.

Aim 2:

To explore the nature and range of museum learning programmes in England aimed at Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14) school groups learning about the history of transatlantic slavery, in

particular those museums that were involved with the *Understanding Slavery* initiative.

Aim 3:

To examine the experiences of Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14) school groups learning about the history of transatlantic slavery in museums in England, including the pre-visit expectations and post-visit responses of the teachers and pupils (where possible).

Aim 4:

To identify dominant themes and pedagogical trends within the museum field-trip sessions and critically examine how these relate to recent shifts within the historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery in England, in particular in relation to the 2007 bicentenary commemorations.

Aim 5:

To establish whether the themes and pedagogical trends identified in Aim 3 are particular to English museums during this period by undertaking a comparative case study in another country in order to examine the experiences of school pupils aged 11-14 visiting a museum that deals with the history of transatlantic slavery outside of the English context.

Together, these five research aims address the details of the research question. In summary, Aim 1 deals with a macro-level analysis of recent shifts in historical consciousness, whereas Aim 2 brings the analysis down to a local level by examining the educational activities of individual museums, in particular the case study sites, linking this back to the *Understanding Slavery* initiative which operates at a national level. Aim 3 narrows the focus once again through a micro-level analysis of museum field-trip experiences. Aim 4 describes the purpose of analysing the museum fieldwork data as being to identify emergent pedagogical themes, whilst Aim 5 addresses the value of using a comparative case study in another country in order to establish whether the findings of Aim 4 are particular to the post-2007 English context, or whether the teaching of slavery in the twenty-first century involves transcultural trends.

1.5   Chapter outline

This thesis is divided into nine chapters; the scope and purposes of each are outlined in this section. This first chapter introduces the inspiration behind the research, the significance and key themes, the case study museums and the research question and aims. Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical basis for the study and positions the research within the field museum studies, drawing heavily on research undertaken in education, memory and cultural studies. Overall, the literature review chapter demonstrates how the literature and theoretical position discussed frame the research problem and contextualises the aims, research methods and analytical tools that are used to address the research question. The third chapter describes and justifies the research design and methods used to generate qualitative data through fieldwork at the four case study museums, as well as explaining the process by which this data was analysed and interpreted. It also reflects on some of the problems and opportunities that were raised during the study, including how these were overcome and dealt with.

Corresponding with Aim 1 above, Chapter 4 examines issues surrounding commemoration, education and the shifting historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery. It investigates where, why, when and how slavery has been remembered and represented, providing an overview of contemporary memory cultures and offering some considerations of how modes of remembering slavery have developed as the history has emerged into the 'public sphere'. Chapter 5 seeks to problematise the difficult history museum field-trip by examining some of the ways in which the phenomenon has been 'framed' by academics, educators, teachers and pupils. In doing so it draws out some of the aspects of visiting that are particular to a school group and, even more specifically, to instances of learning about a traumatic past.

Chapters 6 to 9 deal with Aim 4 and Aim 5, presenting an integrated account of the pedagogical trends and incongruities across the four case study museums, relating the themes that emerge from the micro-analysis with the changes in historical consciousness that have taken place at the macro-level. These chapters use illustrative 'vignettes' from the fieldwork observations as the primary source of data for analysis. Each of these chapters tackles one of the identified themes, beginning with the exploration of the 'lessons' of

slavery in Chapter 6. This chapter argues that within the field-trips observed at Wilberforce House Museum, slavery is represented as being a 'unique' and traumatic past, yet in some sessions it is paradoxically treated as a conventional history topic through which the 'universal' values of the citizenship curriculum can be taught.

Chapter 7 is dedicated to the idea of 'touching' the trauma of the past, in recognition of the widespread use of object handling within the museum-based educational sessions observed in this study. It explores the pedagogical dynamics of the use of objects in teaching about difficult histories, as well as discussing the ethical implications of this practice. Chapter 8 presents an analysis of the role of 'imagining' slavery and the potential for empathic responses to drama, performance and role-play in the museum environment, with particular reference to Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory" (2004). Chapter 9 brings together the analysis and discussion of the previous chapters, offering some conclusions about the findings of the thesis. Furthermore, it outlines the limitations of the research and offers some final thoughts, including recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is firmly situated within the rapidly expanding field of memory studies and as such it seeks to tackle many of the questions proffered by Võsu et al. below, applying them to the study of commemorative years, difficult histories and museum field-trips:

> We are witnessing an increasing 'memory boom' [...] in humanities and social sciences and a new field of research – memory studies – has emerged and develops rapidly. Under these circumstances we should, more than ever, pose ourselves the question – what do we mean by 'memory'? Is memory an object of study, a unit of research, or is it a theoretical perspective through which we investigate other phenomena? What are the differences between the concepts of memory and history or memory and tradition? In which aspects do processes of individual memory and collective memory correlate, and in which they diverge? How far can we extend the sub-concepts related to memory like remembering, forgetting, or trauma? And how can individuals' remembering be juxtaposed to the construction of social memory? What is the agency of language or artefacts in producing memory, in reflecting the experience of temporality? (Võsu et al., 2008: 243)

Through a review of the relevant literature, this chapter sets the scene for the chapters and analysis that follow and in doing so it demonstrates the significance and timeliness of this study, articulating the ways in which it contributes to current knowledge about the relationship between education, heritage, historical consciousness and difficult histories. This is, however, not an exhaustive review of memory and museum studies literature; such an endeavour would fill an entire thesis in itself. Instead it is necessarily selective, illustrative and provocative, providing the basis for the arguments and suggestions for theory development that are presented in chapters 4-8 and synthesised in the conclusion (Chapter 9). A review of the literature is not confined to this chapter; a more in-depth consideration of relevant literature is presented throughout chapters 4 to 8, whereas the literature relating to methodological approaches is found in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Although the justification and understanding of historical consciousness was explained in the introductory chapter, it is important to note here that the terms heritage and history are used in this thesis in distinct but related ways, according to my interpretation of what these sometimes interchangeable words signify. Ideas about what heritage is are continually changing, with, for example, Lumley recognising "the steady broadening of the concept of heritage to include natural as well as human phenomena, and

the increasingly anthropological (as opposed to art historical) definition of culture" (Lumley, 2005a: 17) as notable trends. Smith reinforces this observation: "the definition of heritage has started to broaden itself to include cultural elements like memory, music, language, dialects, oral history, traditions, dance, craft skills and so forth" (Smith, 2006: 56). With this in mind, 'heritage' is used in this thesis to signify a broad, inclusive understanding of 'what heritage is', including the processes and politics of the professional sectors that manage and interpret heritage. History, on the other hand, is used here to signify both the discipline of history, the 'stuff' of history and the narratives of the past, whether official or vernacular, that are presented and interpreted through heritage expressions and experience, and yet are not the only component of 'what heritage is', as illustrated in the extracts from Lumley and Smith.

The first section of this chapter situates the thesis within literature from memory studies and explores some of the key issues that the recent 'memory boom' raises in relation to the study of museums. The second section responds to these challenges by proposing a theoretical framework that combines methods and concepts from education, memory and cultural and heritage studies that can be used to investigate the historical consciousness of a museum field-trip, in particular one that deals with a traumatic past. The final section examines different types of literature relating to the representation of difficult histories in the museum, including ideas about the construction of national identities and changes in perceptions of the role of the museum in society.

2.1   Challenging 'collective remembering'

In order to understand how people relate to the past, it is essential to critically address the notion of 'collective remembering'; "Can societies really remember collectively? […] Can individuals really remember what they have not directly witnessed or experienced?" (Bond et al., 2010). Within discussions of how to ensure that there is a transmission of memory – of knowledge and understanding of past experiences – there is a sense that this must be achieved by educating the younger generations. The title of this thesis, 'learning to remember slavery', alludes to this conflation of education and memory in the rhetoric of traumatic pasts. Assmann articulates the relationship between 'learning' and 'remembering' in the following quote:

> The individual participates in the group's vision of its past by means of cognitive learning and emotional acts of identification and commemoration. This past cannot be 'remembered'; it has to be memorized. The collective memory is a crossover between semantic and episodic memory: it has to be acquired via learning, but only through internalization and rites of participation does it create the identity of a 'we' (Assmann, 2008: 52).

In this light, 'learning to remember' becomes 'learning in order to remember'; learning about the past in order that *society* will continue to remember. In the realm of learning to remember, the necessity of 'rites of participation' and 'emotional acts of identification' brings together processes of performance and empathy, which are discussed in greater detail in chapters 6 to 8 of this thesis, in particular in relation to Alison Landsberg's work on "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg, 2004). Landsberg's ideas about how – through the consumption of mass culture – individuals acquire 'prosthetic' memories of events from the past that they did not experience themselves is invaluable for those interested in exploring learning about traumatic pasts in museums as transcendent, transformative experiences that develop the 'empathic extension' of pupils (as discussed in greater detail in relation to slavery and citizenship in Chapter 4). This blurring of the ownership of personal memories, the suggestion that the memories of events that we have not experienced personally are somehow acquirable through mediated experiences such as those that take place in museums, is complemented by Susannah Radstone's argument that:

> Memory is always mediated. Even involuntary, personal memory, in the sense, that is, of those unspoken memories that seem to emerge spontaneously and that accompany and give depth and texture to everyday life in the present, are mediated. These apparently natural and uncontrollable ebbings and flowings of personal memory are complex constructions in which present experience melds with images that are associated with past experience, as well as with what Paul Antze has called the 'scenes' or fantasies that shape our inner worlds. So even personal memory flashes, in all their apparent immediacy and spontaneity, are constructions mediated by means of complex psychical and mental processes (Radstone, 2005: 135).

If the images, scenes or fantasies of our inner worlds include the mediated memories of a traumatic past that we have encountered in a novel, film or exhibition, then it is reasonable that these 'prosthetic memories' may play a part in the complex construction of our personal memories, even if they then remain 'unspoken'. Susan Crane's vision of the relationship between individual expressions of 'historical consciousness' and the encompassing 'collective memory' supports this interplay between macro- and micro-levels of memory-work (discussed further in Section 2.2 below):

> What if we consider the possibility that each self-expression of historical consciousness is an expression of collective memory, not because it is exactly shared by all of the other members of the collective but because that collective makes its articulation possible, because historical consciousness has itself become an element of collective memory? (Crane, 1997: 1383)

This understanding of historical consciousness as both the product of and a contributor to a constructed, constantly rearticulated collective memory is developed throughout this chapter. Crane usefully situates this suggestion within the context of a common observation that "[p]ractitioners of history have tended to distinguish history and memory by their distinct functions and modes of operation" (Crane, 1997: 1372). Radstone develops these ideas further in a discussion of what is at stake in the differences between 'historiography' and 'memory-texts':

> Another such challenge is posed by the differences of texture, emotion, tone and address between memory-texts and historiography. Memory-texts such as literary or cinematic autobiographical memoirs, or testimony to suffering, or the recorded words of oral history's informants tend to invite empathy and identification, and may be poetic in their recourse to metaphor and musical in their structure [...]. Historiography, on the other hand invites a cooler, more detached and analytical reading (and writing) stance (Radstone, 2005: 138-9).

This comparison between how the two perspectives of the past are popularly perceived may help to explain why many historians distrust affective representations of history that elicit emotive responses (for discussion see Lumley, 2005b: 24); by becoming too personally and emotionally involved in the past, we risk forfeiting our 'detached and analytical' (objective) stance and replacing it with (subjective) feelings of 'empathy and identification'. This relates to the fact that, traditionally, history as a discipline has been more interested in the production of history, leaving the ways in which history is consumed to heritage specialists, media broadcasters and historical novel writers. As this next sub-section illustrates, in order to understand how 'memory-texts' are consumed within the broader context of historiographic, political and socio-cultural movements, it is essential to combine micro- and macro-analyses in order to create a more holistic picture.

Bringing together macro- and micro-analyses of memory

As the quote below illustrates, the widely accepted constructed nature of collective memories and their expression through commemorative acts contrasts starkly with the

ways in which the academic field of history has generally been perceived and revered:

> In the last fifteen years, commemorations—and social memory generally— have emerged as a fruitful site for studying this interactive production of meaning. That the past is constructed and reconstructed to suit the needs and purposes of each succeeding generation; that even personal memory is a thoroughly social and cultural construct; that collective or social memory is not only constructed but chronically contested; that the 'search for a usable past' [...] involves not only highly selective memory and a good deal of forgetting [...] but even outright 'invention' [...]; that the politics of the present therefore not only shapes the representation, but often entails the misrepresentation, of the past—these have emerged as consensual, and richly explored, themes in the social study of memory and commemoration (Brubaker and Feischmidt, 2002: 701).

This thesis owes a great deal to the types of studies that Brubaker and Feischmidt describe here, in particular the recognition of how the past is continually (re)constructed by each successive generation through the processes of production, consumption and representation. Furthermore, Brubaker and Feischmidt's critique of the weaknesses of 'social memory' studies is helpful as they utilise Jeffrey Olick's observations of the field in order to draw attention to, for example, the general lack of comparative work (Brubaker and Feischmidt, 2002: 701).

The inclusion of a comparative case study museum from Canada in this thesis provides an opportunity to critically reflect on the dominant trends in memory-work, pedagogy and practice that have emerged in England as a result of the multi-site initiatives, collaborative resources, workshops and teacher training programmes that accompanied the bicentenary. In doing so, this research offers a critical analysis of the role of education during periods of heightened commemorative activity, highlighting how the production and consumption of heritage education programmes, museum field-trip sessions and learning resources influence – and are influenced by – political, historical and cultural discourses, changes in the curriculum, and shifts within 'historical consciousness'.

Brubaker and Feischmidt also discuss the excess of macro-analyses that make "epochal generalisations" about "the memory-nation-connection" without reference to individual experience; and, conversely, "parochial case studies that may appreciate the uniqueness of particular moments in particular places but often miss what is general or comparable in the cases" (Olick, as quoted in Brubaker and Feischmidt, 2002: 701). As the methodology of this thesis (Chapter 3) illustrates, this is a tricky tight-rope to walk; studies

that focus too tightly on the local risk becoming dislocated and lacking in relevance, whereas those that address memory at a global level are in danger of making unsubstantiated sweeping generalisations. Such concerns for the methodological weaknesses of collective memory studies research is echoed by Kansteiner, who states that:

> Most studies on memory focus on the representation of specific events within particular chronological, geographical, and media settings without reflecting on the audiences of the representations in question. As a result, the wealth of new insights into past and present historical cultures cannot be linked conclusively to specific social collectives and their historical consciousness (Kansteiner, 2002: 179).

This tendency within memory studies to address the macro- and the micro-levels of memory-work in isolation from each other is clearly problematic, and is perhaps symptomatic of the different types of disciplines that those operating in the field of memory studies have come from, some of which are traditionally more comfortable with the bigger picture (politics, history), whilst others are more interested in the finer detail (literature and media studies, the social sciences).

In line with this thesis, Kansteiner argues that collective memory studies should utilise "the methods of communication and media studies, especially with regard to media reception, and continue to use a wide range of interpretive tools from traditional historiography to poststructural approaches", stating that "these two traditions are closely related and mutually beneficial, rather than mutually exclusive, ways of analyzing historical cultures" (Kansteiner, 2002: 179). He advocates the "extensive contextualization of specific strategies of representation, which links facts of representation with facts of reception", which he argues would serve to "recast [collective memory] as a complex process of cultural production and consumption that acknowledges the persistence of cultural traditions as well as the ingenuity of memory makers and the subversive interests of memory consumers" (Kansteiner, 2002: 179). This idea of cultural traditions as 'persistent' raises interesting questions about whether or not cultural and memory texts can be perceived as having a kind of agency beyond their use or misuse by individuals and groups. As discussed below, within some schools of thought, 'non-human' texts, artefacts or products are ascribed agentic qualities that, although controversial, can contribute to our understanding of how traditions, cultures or memories are passed down through generations.

Agency and transcultural memories

The proposal that memory, in the globalised world of the twenty-first century, operates on a transcultural plane has emerged in recent years in part in response to postcolonial readings of memory-work and memory-texts. The significance of this increasingly resonant interpretation of memory as transcultural is discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis, in particular in chapters 4 and 6 in relation to Michael Rothberg's seminal work on the 'multidirectionality' of memory and the consequences of marking traumatic pasts, such as the Holocaust or transatlantic slavery, as 'unique' historical events (Rothberg, 2000, 2009). However, for the purposes of this chapter, the focus remains on how recent notions of memory can aid the possibility of developing a more holistic appreciation of the processes of 'historical consciousness' (as introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis).

Astrid Erll has contributed significantly to debates about how memories are shared at a macro-level and negotiated at a micro-level. In her keynote address at the *Transcultural Memory* conference (which was recorded and is available on the conference website) Erll proposed that transcultural memory is tantamount to "travelling memory"; here, memories travel across boundaries and borders, as opposed to memories as being contained within particular 'sites', or lieux de memoire (Erll, 2010b). Erll relates her conceptualisation of travelling memory to James Clifford's notion of 'travelling cultures', and in doing so makes the statement that "cultures / memories do not stay still for their portraits" (Erll, 2010b), which is of course a challenging methodological concern for those who study memory.

Erll develops this argument through a discussion of 'transcultural remediation', which she describes as the ways in which memories and stories shift from media to media, for example from an oral history, to a book, to a film, to a website. She argues that it is the movement that is inherent in the intermediality of memories – and not the moments of seeming steadiness – that keeps memories alive (Erll, 2010b). In this model, memories are continuously rescribed as they move from media to media; therefore Erll maintains that we should focus our attention on the journeys of memories, away from the places, spaces and sites that have traditionally been considered as containing memories.

For Erll, memory is fundamentally a transcultural phenomenon, and in recognition of this she encourages us to move beyond site-bound, nation-bound notions of memory, towards an interest in the travelling of memories and the ways in which memories travel

across cultures at high-speeds in the globalised age (Erll, 2010b). Susannah Radstone, in her response to Erll's keynote lecture (both of which are available as recordings online), questioned Erll's emphasis on the speed at which images flow and the role of technology, insisting that we need to ask "What is the force that is driving this speed?", making the point that things don't just circulate, that they are driven by forces, that we need to think seriously about power and agency in relation to memory (Radstone, 2010b). This is where postcolonial studies, in particular Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, plays an important role by calling attention to "the question of agency" (2005: 245):

> Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order (Bhabha, 2005: 245).

> Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the 'middle passage' of slavery and indenture, [or] the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War […] Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement – now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of 'global' media technologies – make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue (Bhabha, 2005: 247).

Erll argues that travelling memories – for example the 1807 abolition of the slave trade – can have "functional potentials", but the specific uses of such memories will depend on the socio-historical location within which it is being rescribed (Erll, 2010b). Erll scrutinises the ways in which memories are often decontextualised in the process of rescribing, and how they can become emptied of meaning as they simply circulate; she uses the example of the travel agency that has erroneously adopted the name 'Odysseus' to demonstrate how memories can be distorted, abused and hijacked (Erll, 2010b). By way of contrast, Erll goes on to cite the use of Holocaust memories within South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an example of how travelling, transcultural memories can be used in a good way (Erll, 2010b). However, the differences between where memories are being hijacked and where memories are being used productively are not always as clear cut as in the examples that Erll puts forward, as this thesis will later demonstrate (chapters 4 and 6).

This issue of connecting the macro- with the micro-, social structures with individual agency, effects academics far beyond the field of memory studies, but is especially apparent in the study of culture; these two perspectives have been described by sociologists as:

> ...first, the model of the human being as homo sociologicus, that is, as determined by macro-level social structures and, second, the model of the human being as homo oeconomicus, that is, as consciously deciding about and governing his or her surroundings at the micro-level (Kirchberg, 2007: 115).

Kirchberg attempts to resolve the problem by suggesting that the macro- and micro-perspectives of the social sciences should be reconciled in a model that incorporates "an agency-structure feedback loop", stating that they "in fact can be joined together in order to elucidate cultural consumption matters [...]for the purposes of analysing the societal significance of museums and museum visits" (Kirchberg, 2007: 116):

Table 1: Outline of the differences between homo sociologicus and homo oeconomicus (Kirchberg, 2007: 116)

	Homo sociologicus	Homo oeconomicus
Determining factors	Individual determined by others	Individual determining others
Image of society	Structure	Agency
Perspective	Macro	Micro

As Table 1 outlines, "the concept of homo sociologicus emphasizes structural determinants of action and the concept of homo oeconomicus emphasizes the agentic components of individuals" (Kirchberg, 2007: 117-8). The question is, how can we use theory to improve our capacity to make connections between a macro-analysis of general shifts in the structures of national collective memory and a micro-analysis of specific cultural memory products and the agency of individual cultural memory consumers?

One possible response is to draw on the insights of Actor Network Theory (ANT), which, due to its emphasis on the agency of 'non-humans' (Latour, 2005), is of obvious interest to museum studies scholars whose research often questions the relationships between such things as architecture, spaces, objects (non-humans) and professional practice, community expectations and visitor experiences (humans). This is especially significant for the study of historical consciousness; Bruno Latour, one of the original creators of ANT, reminds us of the dangers of over-emphasising the importance of the "social realm" at the behest of the material:

> When the social realm is given such an infamous role, great is the temptation to overreact and to turn matter into a mere intermediary faithfully 'transporting' or

'reflecting' society's agency (Latour, 2005: 84).

The suggestion that non-humans have agency has had a profound influence on heritage and material culture studies (Alberti, 2005, Fallan, 2008, Macdonald, 2002). Sam Alberti comments in an article titled 'Objects and the Museum', "We may [...] draw some insights from actor network theory without necessarily subscribing to the program in its entirety and ascribing agency to objects as actants" (2005: 561), drawing attention to one of the popular criticisms of ANT; whether non-humans can really be perceived as having agency without having the factor of 'intentionality' that is associated with human agency. Sharon Macdonald has usefully discusses ANT in relation to ethnographic research in her book *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*, where she states that although "this perspective sometimes seems [...] to pay too little attention to language and classification, taking into account the actions of the non-human as well as the human does more empirical justice to the case here than would considering only human actions" (2002: 7).

This is also the case in this thesis; to understand how historical consciousness shifts over time, it is essential to pay attention to the agency that is found in the network of non-humans that is bound up with human agency in, for example, the making of the bicentenary. The museum as an institution, the museum as a space, exhibitions, museum collections, objects, the national curriculum, funding agencies, government bodies, the media, monuments and memorials, art, literature, films, websites, textbooks, the built environment, the works of both professional and amateur historians; the 'actions' of the non-human are essential to understanding historical consciousness in the context of this research. Although this thesis adopts a social constructionist perspective as opposed to a strictly ANT approach, some of the dilemmas of ANT – as expressed by Latour below – echo strongly within the study of memory or culture from an ethnographic viewpoint:

> [...] it is perfectly true to say that any given interaction seems to overflow with elements which are already in the situation coming from some other time, some other place, and generated by some other agency. [...] action is always dislocated, articulated, delegated, translated. Thus, if any observer is faithful to the direction suggested by this overflow, she will be led away from any given interaction to some other places, other times, and other agencies that appear to have moulded them into shape. It is as if a strong wind forbade anyone to stick to the local site and blew bystanders away; as if a strong current was always forcing us to abandon the local scene (Latour, 2005: 166).

This quote highlights the inextricable nature of the macro and the micro when it comes to

the type of research presented in this thesis; one leads you to the other, which inevitably leads you back again to where you began. The 'local' is the product of other 'times', 'places' and 'agencies', yet the local iteratively acts upon and rearticulates these 'elements' so that the 'faithful observer' risks being swept away in an unmanageable current of untameable interconnectedness. The next section presents an alternative to ANT for the study of cultural memory products, as attempted in this thesis.

2.2   Historical consciousness and the Circuit of Culture

In an attempt to make historical consciousness a more manageable concept to examine, this thesis advocates a cross-fertilization of concepts, models and methods, primarily drawing on the crossovers that are found in memory studies and cultural studies literature. In memory studies there are discussions about how to study the processes surrounding the collectivity of memory, whilst within cultural and heritage studies there is a parallel discussion about how to study cultural 'texts', 'objects' or 'products'. In view of that, Macdonald's vision of 'historical consciousness' (2006) provides a way of conceptualizing the overarching processes of cultural and collective memory, whilst Du Gay's 'Circuit of Culture' (Figure 8) is a model that can be valuably adopted and adapted to study 'cultural memory products'.
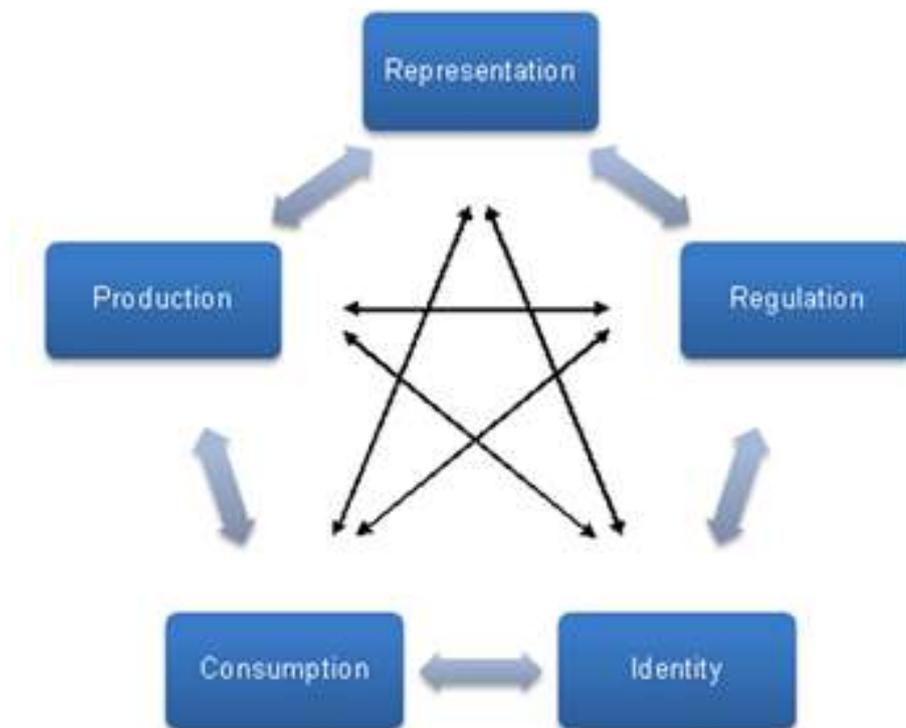
Figure 8: "Circuit of Culture", adopted from Du Gay (1997: 3)

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As introduced in the previous chapter, Macdonald states that when we study historical consciousness, we are "trying to grasp the various ways in which people may relate to the past" and we are "recognizing and seeking to theorize people's awareness of the past, history and historicity" (2006: 12). The key element for this thesis is examining the 'ways' in which people relate to the past, which, in the context of this research, is dominated by ideas about how individuals and groups experience cultural objects in the museum. In response to the commemorative year focus of this research, examining historical consciousness extends to investigating how cultural objects or media are produced during periods of heightened memory-work. These objects or media are therefore referred to here as 'cultural memory products' in recognition of the centrality of remembering in the socio-cultural processes of meaning-making surrounding their production.

Although not traditionally concerned with the study of memory objects, the Circuit of Culture is an influential model across cultural and heritage studies (see for example Newman and McLean, 2006, Pritchard and Morgan, 2001) that has been used extensively to study the 'lives' of cultural texts, such as the Sony Walkman (Du Gay et al., 1997). It provides a valuable framework for critically analysing and articulating the processes of representation, identity and regulation that, together with the processes of production and consumption, are conceptualized as interacting to form a "circuit of culture – through which any analysis of a cultural text or artefact must pass if it is to be adequately studied" (Du Gay et al., 1997: 3). Emma Waterton and Steve Watson usefully describe the circuit of culture's relevance for heritage studies (in the broadest sense) in the following manner:

> The basic idea is that certain images circulate within a culture and take on particular meanings, associations and values. This conceptualisation recognises that language, representation and meaning are connected in a continuous circle so that a set of discourses – by which we mean frameworks which embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts and ideologies – become so powerful that, reinforced over time, they come to form a closed self-perpetuating system of illusion or a 'way of seeing' the world (Waterton and Watson, 2010: 128).

Although this model was designed for analyzing cultural texts or objects at a micro level, it seems to be equally applicable to the study of the processes of historical consciousness within which an object is situated. If societies can in fact remember collectively, it is logical that a significant amount of this shared remembering must take place through interactions with – and experiences of – cultural memory products. Significantly, in the museum field-

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trip the objective of learning to remember a particular aspect of the past is achieved through pupils engaging with cultural memory products – such as texts, archive material, objects, film, performances and memorials.

In this respect, the circuit of culture perfectly complements the idea of 'historical consciousness', which, as Macdonald notes, "usefully avoids reifying a sometimes spurious distinction between 'history' and 'memory'; and it directs attention not just to the *content* of history or memory but also to questions of the media and patterns through which these are structured" (Macdonald, 2009: 4). In other words, not only unpicking the representational elements of a 'memory', but also the production and regulation of the associated discourses and frameworks. As the next sub-section illustrates, the history museum is an invaluable site for studying the relationship between the content and representational rhetoric of evocations of the past. As such, it has long been the subject of academic attention, through which a range of approaches to studying the museum have developed, some of which are more useful for this research than others.

Approaches to studying the museum

The extract below from Macdonald and Fyfe's *Theorizing Museums* raises many important issues about the changing role of the museum and the need to develop theories that facilitate conceptualisations of the museum that are appropriate to their status as 'key cultural loci of our times':

> there [has been] a revitalisation of the idea of the museum, a diffusion of the museum beyond its walls, a 'museumification' of ever more aspects of culture, a claiming of the museum by ever more sectors of society. […] The contradictory, ambivalent, position which museums are in makes them key cultural loci of our times. Through their *displays* and their *day-to-day operations* they inevitably raise questions about knowledge and power, about identity and difference, and about permanence and transience. Precisely because they have become global symbols through which status and community are expressed, they are subject to appropriation and the struggle for ownership. Yet despite the fact that museums clearly act as 'staging grounds' [...] for many questions which are also at the heart of debates in social and cultural studies, the social scientific study of the museum is still relatively underdeveloped by comparison with, say, that of the school or television (1996: 2-3, emphasis added).

What is particularly interesting about this quote is that Macdonald and Fyfe distinguish between museum 'displays' and 'day-to-day operations' when they articulate the

relationship between museums and 'questions about knowledge and power, identity and difference', etc. This thesis raises the question of where do the intangible aspects of what a museum is and what a museum does fit into this need to theorise the museum? If we consider that the intangible aspects of a museums work includes hosting public events, educational activities, first-person interpretation, lectures, conferences, professional training sessions, performances and commemorations, then the traditional vision of the museum morphs into something much more fluid, dynamic and socially responsive than just a collection of objects, a series of displays and the location for day-to-day professional practices.

In contrast to the extract above, before the academic shift that began in the 1960s, museums had traditionally been perceived, studied and written about from a historical perspective (Ellis, 1836, Esdaile, 1948, Goode, 1889), with little attention being paid to the social or political significance of the museum. The museum was primarily perceived to be a passive reflection of the society within which it exists and can be employed as a representative marker of political, economic, cultural and social change. As such it has the potential to reveal things about a society, whether it is a society that existed in another time and place, or our own, current society. For example, *what* a museum chooses to display, and indeed *how* a museum chooses to display, may be indicative of the respective society's interests and concerns as well as its attitude to material culture. Since the advent of 'new museology' (as outlined by Vergo, 1989), those who research heritage and museums have paid much greater attention to the agency of exhibitions and other interpretive media:

> One of the major insights gleaned from studies of museums within the last decade is the notion that museum exhibitions are not neutral – that, in fact, exhibitions are ideologically based and rhetorically complex arguments (Leinhardt et al., 2002: 5).

As Rhiannon Mason notes, the link between cultural expression and political power is now well recognised, although more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which organisational practices inform representational ones (2007: 14-23). Mason states that "exhibitions are really only the tip of the iceberg", "the one moment when those behind-the-scenes, institutional and ongoing relationships become temporarily fixed and visible to the public" (Mason, 2007: 23). However, exhibitions and their accompanying learning resources are sometimes treated as passive expressions of the society within which they are located, a trend which is noticeable in memory studies texts that downplay or ignore the

agency of non-humans (see the discussion about Actor Network Theory earlier in this chapter). The agency inherent in the production and consumption of an exhibition or other interpretive media tends to be more habitually fore-grounded in heritage and museum studies, perhaps due to the fact that many of these academics have previously (or concurrently) worked in the sector and are therefore more alert to such issues. This is in contrast to the more often than not critical literature studies background of many memory studies scholars.

Increasingly, however, the two fields are coming together, which facilitates more sophisticated understanding of the complex relationships between producers, consumers and regulators of memory within museums, as well as issues relating to historiography, representation, politics and identity-work. However, making connections between the ephemeral experiences that take place at heritage sites and the construction of 'national collective memories', involves significant theoretical and methodological challenges. The result is that there are certain inadequacies in the ways in which 'cultural memory products' are commonly analysed and conceptualised in both memory studies and cultural studies.

In bringing together different approaches, the strength of the Circuit of Culture for those whose research straddles the fields of memory and museum studies is its simplicity. It succinctly expresses the processes that those interested in memory from a cultural viewpoint are more often than not naturally interested in and packages these processes within a model that articulates the messy, cyclical, complexities of historical consciousness. This is particularly useful when we consider the origins of 'historical consciousness' – '*Geschichtsbewußstein*' in German – which Macdonald describes as "an academic sub-specialty" that is concerned with "questions of the necessity for human beings of finding 'temporal orientation'", a focus which she says "is undoubtedly itself shaped by the experience of dealing with Germany's own difficult history", as well as making "important analytical contributions to debates about memory" (Macdonald, 2009: 11). Huyssen elucidates further the relationship between the 1980s 'memory boom' and the Holocaust:

> Memory discourses accelerated in Europe and the United States in the early 1980s, energized by the broadening debate about the Holocaust (triggered by the network television series Holocaust and, somewhat later, the testimony movement) and by media attention paid to the fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries of events in the history of the Third Reich (Huyssen, 2000: 22).

For the purposes of this thesis, historical consciousness is useful for the ways in which it is able to tie together questions of historiography, commemoration and history education, which can be examined through the five interconnected elements of the Circuit of Culture – production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity – illustrated below through a discussion of 'collective memory' as outlined by Maurice Halbwachs, who is widely regarded as a founder of the field.

The idea of 'collective memory' was first proposed in 1950 by the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, as an alternative to dominant early twentieth century notions of individual memory (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992). Halbwachs's theory of collective memory fits into a social constructionist model of knowledge and is primarily concerned with demonstrating that individual memories can only function within a collective context. The editor and translator of *On Collective Memory*, Lewis A. Coser, states that with "the advantage of hindsight one may now assert with some confidence that [Halbwachs's] work on collective memory is pathbreaking and will have continued impact" (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992: 21).

So how did Halbwachs perceive collective memory and how have his ideas influenced the field of memory studies? One of the most important points Halbwachs made about collective memory is that "there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society" (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992: 22). This recognition that collective memories are socially constructed necessitates the plurality of memories and begins to explain the close association within the literature between memory and identities. In relation to this is the notion that it is "individuals who remember, not groups or institutions", and that "these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past" (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992: 22).

This highlights some of the complexity and paradox inherent in the production of collective memories, the implications of which feed into the different schools of thought regarding whether cultural memory is becoming more democratized with the rise of 'new media', or whether the power to construct a society's knowledge of the past remains in the hands of official bodies, institutions and states (see Huyssen, 2000 for further discussion). In relation to this, Halbwachs distinguishes between 'historical memory' and 'autobiographical memory', claiming that historical memory "reaches the social actor only through written

records and other types of records, such as photography [but] can be kept alive through commemorations, festive enactments, and the like" (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992: 23). Halbwachs understood that the consumption of 'historical memory' by the 'social actor' can be prompted by both tangible and intangible media, an observation that has been developed further in the recent waves of memory studies research.

Halbwachs credits the ritual of such memory-work with contributing to the maintenance of "social bonds"; "[p]eriodic celebrations serve as focal points in the drama of reenacted citizen participation" (1992: 23-4). If the performance of collective memory-work has the potential to inspire an active citizenry, then it is no surprise that states and governments are keen to be involved in the regulation of cultural memory products in the pursuit of their own political agendas; history books are replete with examples of this, including Adolf Hitler's invocation of the Holy Roman Empire in the built environment and events of the Nuremberg Rallies (Macdonald, 2005, 2006).

This brings us to another characteristic of Halbwachs's concept of cultural memory that is essential to this study: the relationship between memory and representation. Collective memory is sustained through a continuous production of 'representational forms', which in the globalised, transcultural age involves the mass-circulation of what have been referred to as 'second-hand memories' – memories that do not belong to us, 'prosthetic memories' (Landsberg, 2004) in essence – where narratives and images are reproduced, renegotiated and reframed, whilst being questioned and contested.

As previously suggested in this thesis, the conflation of commemorative events – or 'periodic celebrations', to use Halbwachs term – and citizenship education is a centrally important feature of how and why difficult histories are represented and remembered in the twenty-first century. Within the context of this research, the performance of active citizenry takes place through the 'learning journey' of the museum field-trip. The use of the term 'learning journey' has been particularly popular in studies of experiential learning, where the idea is linked the notion of 'lifelong learning', which, according to Beard and Wilson, is "a continuous significant life 'journey' [that] is gaining interest and momentum throughout the world" (2002: 46-7). Most research into experiential learning focuses on the outdoors as an educational environment (see for example Davis et al., 2005, Waite, 2011). However, although developed for a different purpose and environment, some of the

typologies used by such studies are of interest to this thesis, and indeed to the planning of museum and heritage learning experiences more generally. For example, the list below outlines some of the "ingredients" that Beard and Wilson suggest are useful in the "planning of creative experiential learning programmes":

- Create a **journey or destination** - physical movement and exercise; people and objects are moved from A to B.
- Create and sequence **social, mental and physical activities** – mind and body.
- Adjust or suspend **elements of reality.**
- Stimulate the **six main senses** / alter moods.
- **Construct or deconstruct:**
  - a physical object, e.g. bike, wall or raft;
  - a non-physical item, e.g. a clue, phrase or poem.
- Design **combative, competitive or co-optive strategies.**
- Create **combative and / or empathetic** approaches to the environment. […]
- Provide elements of real or perceived **challenge or risk.**
- Set a **target**, goal or objective, where goals create an underlying 'state of mind'.
- […] Allow people to deal with **change, risk, success and failure** – stretching personal boundaries.
- […] Design **quiet time for reflection** – physical or mental space.
- Allow the **story of the experience** to be told (Beard and Wilson, 2002: 47-8).

Of course, some of these suggestions are not always practical within the context of a museum visit, however, the principles underpinning them are certainly relevant to forms of experiential learning beyond that which takes place outdoors, particularly the view that "the learner is on a journey" (Beard and Wilson, 2002: 48). As the sub-section below argues, existing approaches to studying school field-trips are comparatively underdeveloped and are in need of careful reconceptualisation.

Reconceptualising museum field-trips

As this chapter has already illustrated, a more sociological approach to studying memory is full of possibilities for furthering our understanding of the complexities of how the macro and micro interplay and influence each other. This is particularly significant in relation to the study of anniversary years such as 2007, which can be characterised as 'periods of heightened commemorative activity'. Through her book *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, Macdonald champions "heritage making and historical consciousness as social and cultural practices", reminding us "to look not just at 'history

products' (e.g. a heritage site) but at the practical activities and sometimes rather banal events involved in their production and consumption" (Macdonald, 2009: 4-5).

In response to this view of historical consciousness, this thesis seeks to highlight how the intersection between the heritage and education sectors provides fertile ground for investigating the performance of collective memories in the public sphere (a key concept that is discussed in detail in Chapter 4), arguing that the production and consumption of the "associated activities" (Falk and Dierking, 1992: 13) of a museum deserve the same academic attention that the more static exhibition receives. Following on from this line of thought, Wineburg et al., reflecting on the recent surge of interest in memory, comments that:

> ...good or bad, many of these analyses share a common flaw by confusing the features of material works with how these works are understood by the different audiences who encounter them. In the words of Michel de Certeau, such analyses conflate the 'processes of production' with 'the processes of consumption' (Wineburg et al., 2007: 43).

This tendency to neglect the audiences of cultural memory products and the nature of memory encounters is beginning to be rectified by current scholars, for example those who, like myself, have been inspired by Landsberg's work on the acquisition of 'prosthetic memories' (Landsberg, 2004). Redressing the balance between production and consumption within memory studies is particularly significant in regards research that is concerned with education from an ethnographic perspective. As Wineburg et al. goes on to say:

> Within education, research on historical understanding has done a better job of asking what real people know about the past. But when it comes to the big questions of collective memory—such as How do the forces of modern society create historical beings?—work in education has also fallen short. What dominates discussions are national surveys on young people's historical knowledge. Such tests—whether from 1917, 1942, 1987, or 2001— are developed when experts sit down to determine the information children should know and then administer tests to see if they know it. [...] Historical narratives, to be sure, do not emerge via spontaneous generation from some neurological incubator. At the same time, historical narratives cannot be contained by what goes on in school. School history is one among a team of players in the formation of contemporary historical consciousness, but too often acts as if it is the only player (Wineburg et al., 2007: 43-4).

Outside of the classroom, museums and heritage sites are certainly important players in the 'formation of contemporary historical consciousness', and therefore the types of experiences that school pupils have through field-trips need to be brought more consciously

into the mix of research on historical understanding. If, as Aleida Assmann states, "history textbooks are the vehicles of national memory" (Assmann, 2008: 64) then it follows that government sponsored education initiatives delivered by museums should also receive similar conceptualization, in recognition of their potential as "weapons of mass instruction", to borrow a phrase from the title of an article about history schoolbooks by Charles Ingrao (Ingrao, 2009). Of course, the study of a textbook is going to be very different to the study of an experiential educational media. However, as the quote from Moughrabi below demonstrates, the types of overarching questions that we might ask of a history textbook are also of relevance to other forms of educational media:

> Controversies over the form and content of school textbooks are not new. Over the years, right-wing groups in the United States have launched numerous campaigns against textbooks deemed ideologically offensive or antipatriotic. [...] More recently, in Japan, government approval of a history textbook casting the Japanese invasion and occupation of China and Korea in a positive light led to anti-Japan protests in countries formerly occupied by Japan and even the recall of the South Korean ambassador from Tokyo. [...] by focusing on what is included and excluded in school textbooks, these controversies serve as proxies for wider questions of power relations in society (Moughrabi, 2001: 5).

As later chapters in this thesis illustrate (in particular Chapter 6), the significance of the question of 'what is included and what is excluded' transcends the history textbook / museum field-trip divide, as does the ways in which both types of educational media offer revealing insights into wider 'power relations in society'. It is important to note that the relationship between textbooks and politics is more direct in countries where there are set textbooks; in England and Wales there are no set textbooks, but rather a range of texts that follow the topics of the National Curriculum, allowing for greater variety in approaches.

In his work on memory and teaching history, Peter Seixas claims that we need to reconceptualise history education and its role in influencing how we study historical consciousness; he states that those institutions "whose work has an impact on the next generation have particular weight in considering the future of the past" (Seixas, 2004: 103). He goes on to say that there is a prevalence of research that focuses on what "takes place in schools" (Seixas, 2004: 103). In response, this thesis seeks to illustrate that an understanding of the (re)negotiation of national memory can be gained from studying history education practice that takes place *outside* the classroom. In doing so, this thesis also contributes more generally to the study of school field-trips to museums, which have

been researched for more than thirty years (Griffin, 2004: 59). According to Griffin:

> Three key aspects dominated the research through the early 1990s: the overall educational value of the trips; the impact of preparing for field trips; and early studies into the complexity of elements that influenced student learning (Griffin, 2004: 59).

However, he goes on to say that in the last ten years there has been a "major shift" in the study of museum field-trips, which has involved:

> ...closer investigation into the learning of the individual students within school groups rather than viewing the group as a single entity. It has increasingly incorporated a sociocultural perspective on learning and there has been an increased emphasis on the students' learning processes and how they can be facilitated, by paying attention to the students' views of their learning experiences, rather than details of the field trip program. It has looked more closely at the different impact that the museum staff, the teacher, the students themselves and their peers have on the learning (Griffin, 2004: 61).

Most notable for this thesis are studies that have examined the effects of 'baggage' on the learning experiences of visitors to museums, which Falk and Dierking describe as the 'personal context' (or 'prior interests'), which along with the 'physical context' and 'sociocultural context' (and the fourth dimension of 'time') form their Contextual Model of Learning (Falk and Dierking, 2000), which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. The Contextual Model of Learning has been widely used to understand visitor learning experiences (Cox-Petersen et al., 2003, Rennie and Johnston, 2004, Ballantyne and Packer, 2005), and as such it forms one of the key theoretical constructs for studying museums that have emerged in recent decades during the development of the field of museum studies.

This model emphasises the individual and collective significance of the various contexts, and in doing so it offers a way of structuring the generation of qualitative data; for example, the three contexts plus the passage of time were influential in the design and content of the survey questions developed for this research (see Chapter 3 for further details). However, the Contextual Model of Learning was primarily developed with the science exhibition in mind, as this reflects the backgrounds of the creators. Although this does not necessarily impede the validity of the model for use with other types of museums, especially as the different elements of the model are in fact both generic and universal in this sense, this thesis has found that on its own, the model is insufficient for explaining the experiences of school pupils learning about traumatic pasts through museum field-trips. In

order to address this conceptual shortfall, the next section provides an overview of literature that deals specifically with the representation of difficult histories in the museum.

2.3 Representing difficult histories in the museum

The insights afforded by the historical approach to museums are certainly of value to the study of how difficult histories have been represented in the public sphere over a given period of time. For example, J.R. Oldfield (2007) and Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace (2006) both offer interesting insights into the development and changes in the way in which British heritage sites, memorials and museums have represented the history of transatlantic slavery (both these texts are discussed in further in Chapter 4). Beyond the study of the representation of traumatic pasts, the historical approach to museums has been utilised to examine the history of museum learning (Hein, 1998), the politics of display (Karp et al., 1991), and the museums changeable role in society ('The museum: a temple or the forum', Cameron, 2004) – each provide a foundation upon which new research projects can build.

However, a historical understanding of the sector can only reveal a limited amount about the nature of the museum as a cultural institution with which people engage. As Hooper-Greenhill explains, in the 1950s and 60s some museologists began to look to other disciplines to find new ways of researching and understanding the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 1-10); this signalled an important tide-change for the still embryonic discipline of museum studies. In recent years, the fields of heritage, museum and gallery studies have been described as "interdisciplinary", and even as "postdisciplinary" (Corsane, 2005: xiii), in recognition of the illegitimacy of "socially constructed" disciplinary boundaries (Jessop, 2002: 1330).

For example, cultural studies has provided those interested in museums with a range of ways of thinking about their research subject, perhaps most notably as an example of a 'cultural practice' that has interesting relationships with power, identity and politics (see for example Johnson, 2004: 10). Approaches to studying these relationships are of course determined by the biases and values of the researcher; an orthodox Marxist approach is likely to regard museums and communication in terms of the "public [...] passive receptors of media messages", whereas a social constructivist approach is more likely to emphasise a

'polysemic' view, perhaps theorising the museum as a communicative media that is "capable of many potential meanings and readings", according to the 'situated culture of the reader' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 7-9).

Studies such as Roger Miles's work on exhibition theory demonstrate the flaw in the culture-as-power, 'hypodermic needle' models of culture and media; the failure of the Marxist model to explain people's varied responses to exhibition design at the Natural History Museum emphasises the need to pay more attention to the visitor, in particular to personal motivations for visiting (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 4-5). The visitor studies approach is also strongly advocated by Longhurst et al., who suggest that:

> ...in addition to the well formulated approaches to the study of the museum that focus generally on the institutional and wider social context for museums, or on specific museums and the processes that occur within them, or on the much studied strategies for display and narration of texts, the audiences for museums are also important (Longhurst et al., 2004: 104).

This visitor-oriented focus became particularly pertinent in the 1980s and 1990s when a decline in government funding meant that the museums and heritage sector was coming under increasing pressure to act as an industry, therefore it was vital that museums gained a better awareness of the characteristics, motives and needs of their visitors. Alongside this pressure to be more efficient and professional, in order to secure increased government funding, there also emerged a strong sense that the museum and heritage sector must justify this public support by becoming more accountable to the tax-payer, which resulted in a drive to demonstrate impact and evaluate outcomes, as well as respond to the requests of those who do not feel that their identities, histories, culture or heritage are adequately or fairly represented in the nationally funded sites and organisations.

Difficult history exhibitions and national identities

In recent years there has been a surge of interest in the role of the museum in the negotiation of national identities. For example, writing about national museums in Wales, Mason seeks to demonstrate "how museums function as palimpsests upon which public histories and national identities are written and rewritten and how the traces of what has gone before condition what follows in many subtle but significant ways" (Mason, 2004: 29). Mason goes on to explain that in the current climate of public accountability, heritage and

museums are now expected to be "explicitly representative of and answerable to their present constituents", and that this "new role" is of particular relevance for national museums, as "academics, policy-makers and museum professionals are looking to national museums to deconstruct and critique the national histories they were initially established to promote" (Mason, 2007: 30, 62).

The idea of the museum as 'reflexive' and self-critical is significant in questions about the representation of 'difficult' histories in museums, as often the fact that they are a place in which 'history is constructed' means that they are inescapably implicated in the complex conditions that contribute to a particular history being deemed as 'difficult'. However, defining what is meant by 'difficult' histories / heritage / knowledge / subject matter / exhibitions is not straightforward; the defining characteristics of what makes something 'difficult' often overlap with, and sometimes become obscured by, the related categories of 'controversial' exhibitions, 'dissonant heritage', 'contentious' or 'taboo' topics, 'hot' contemporary topics and 'sensitive' issues. Although an example of any of these categories could also be an example of a 'difficult' subject matter or a 'difficult' history, this would not automatically be the case.

A review of the literature quickly demonstrates that these terms are often treated as being synonymous and as such are used interchangeably (Cameron, 2006, Ferguson, 2006, Harris, 1995). Jennifer Bonnell and Roger Simon's article '"Difficult" exhibitions and intimate encounters' (2007) offers a comprehensive attempt at defining 'difficult' in the museum context. They carefully set the scene, explaining that in the last thirty years museums have shown an "increased willingness" to tackle "difficult subject matter", and that there is a lack of discussion in museum studies literature about what exactly makes an exhibition 'difficult' (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 65).

Bonnell and Simon are eager to make a division between the 'difficult' exhibition of their own studies, and "one that has been deemed controversial", a phenomenon which they claim has received much greater attention and can be best described as "one that provokes serious public disagreements about the adequacy and accuracy of an exhibit's narrative strategies and interpretative frame" (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 66). In response to this distinction between 'controversial' and 'difficult', Bonnell and Simon suggest that in the latter case, the 'difficulty' is not to be found in the objects or the exhibitions themselves, but

rather in the meaning-making process of the visitors' "intimate encounter" with the exhibition (2007: 67). They then go on to propose different ways in which this encounter may present difficulties for the visitor:

1) The experience challenges the visitor's interpretive abilities by honoring the *multiple perspectives* and ambiguous nature of history: here the exhibition is *cognitively difficult* as it requires the visitor 'confront' and 'dismantle' their expectations of how an exhibition should 'tell the story';

2) The experience elicits the *burden of 'negative emotions'*, such as 'grief, anger, shame, or horror' produced by the history being exhibited, whether it be that of 'systemic violence such as the seizure of aboriginal land, the slave trade, or the perpetration of genocide': here the exhibition presents an *ethical difficulty*, by obligating the visitor to take part in the museum's work as a moral voice;

3) The experience induces feelings of *'heightened anxiety'*, either because of an empathic *'identification with the victims of violence'* or a 're-traumatisation of those who have experienced past violence themselves': here the exhibition acts as *a facilitator for accessing the emotional sufferings of others* – or, indeed, oneself – which some may believe to be exploitative, 'a voyeuristic, sensationalist version of violence, loss, and suffering' (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 67. Emphasis added).

Bonnell and Simon ask the question of 'what can be achieved by making painful histories public' (2007: 66), and in their article they focus on the potential outcomes of an 'intimate encounter' with a 'difficult exhibition' for a visitor. The key points italicised above relate to the cognitive, affective and ethical issues surrounding the production and consumption of difficult histories in the museum, each of which is discussed throughout this thesis. The other crucial question that needs to be considered is what *political* outcomes can be achieved by making painful histories public? Why have museums been more willing to take on 'difficult subject matter' in recent years, as opposed to the comparative safety of exhibition topics before the 1970s?

A shift in the social significance of history

A possible underlying factor in this altered mind-set might be the dramatic changes with political movements from the 1960s onwards, especially in relation to the amplified centrality of "cultural questions", which led to an increased recognition of the "complex relationship between power and representation" (Johnson, 2004: 15). Mason and Baveystock write that "'Heritage' is increasingly invoked in Britain by politicians and policy-makers as one means of repositioning British national identity to foster social cohesion",

that it is "being deployed as a resource for reframing relationships between identities and nations" (2008: 15). They draw attention to the words of the ex-Minister for Culture, David Lammy, who in 2005 said:

> So let me be equally blunt in my challenge to the heritage sector: if you are not part of the solution to this crisis of Britishness, you are part of the problem (Quoted in Mason and Baveystock, 2008: 15).

Lammy's 2005 musings on and subsequent role in the 2007 bicentenary is discussed further in Chapter 4, however, what is important here is the idea that the work of the heritage sector can be instrumentalised by government, and that it is perceived by politicians as having the potential to contribute to important social and national issues. In this same speech at the British Museum, Lammy talked about the antiquated inadequacies of the children's history book, *Our Island Story: A Child's History of England*, which was first published in 1905:

> Whether we like it or not, Our Island Story needs updating [...]. First of all, the story of who we are no longer makes sense to many British people, without an understanding of Britain's role in the world. I speak as someone who was born up the road in Tottenham, but whose ancestors were taken from Africa to Guyana by European slave traders in the 17th Century; whose great-great grandparents became British subjects when Guyana became part of the Empire in 1831; and whose parents came to these shores to find work and a better life in the 1950s. Secondly, because growing numbers of people feel the way I do, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a single shared narrative about Britain. Identity itself is increasingly multiple and fragmented, not just because of a growing black and ethnic minority population, but because of stronger Scots, Welsh and English identities (Lammy, 2005).

Talking about his memories of the 1970s, Lammy says that:

> ...it was impossible to find my reality reflected in the images on television, in commercials, in books or in magazines. [...] That wasn't just a failure of creativity. Or a lack of vision or ambition on behalf of the broadcasters. It was a *collective failure to reflect the country as it was*. We didn't have the luxury of a debate about whether multi-culturalism was a good or bad thing. We just had a society that had chosen – sometimes actively, sometimes unthinkingly - *not to reflect the presence of so many of the people* (Lammy, 2005. Emphasis added).

Macdonald's definitions of 'difficult heritage' are salient here for guiding our understanding of what this 'crisis of Britishness', which is in fact a crisis of representation both within the content and workforce of the heritage sector, might mean through the lens of the study of cultural and collective memory:

> History has been gathered up and presented as heritage – as meaningful pasts that

should be remembered; and more and more buildings and other sites have been called on to act as witnesses of the past. Many kinds of groups have sought to ensure that they are publicly recognised through identifying and displaying 'their' heritage (Macdonald, 2009: 1).

Within the changes in research and practice that have defined 'new museology', parallel to the changes in perceptions from the museum as a 'temple' to the museum as a 'forum' (Cameron, 2004), there has been a concern for the 'democratisation of culture / heritage', which has influenced the types of 'histories' that the museum can perceivably, and more or less comfortably, choose to display. Recognition of this process of 'opening up' museums through their content and communication strategies is inherent in many of the discussions around the representation of history in museums in recent years.

Kevin Walsh, writing in the early 1990s, argues that this so-called democratisation can in fact become instead a 'commodification' of heritage, which he sees as a symptom of the postmodern condition, where the past is often presented to the public through "uncritical multi-media experience", where to be 'uncritical' is to be political, as it demonstrates support for the status quo (Walsh, 1992: 107-114). He also speaks of the "heritage spectacle", which he claims is "responsible for the numbing of our historical sensibilities" (Walsh, 1992: 101). This concern for the 'ahistorical', or 'uncritical', nature of many heritage and museum representations of the past is echoed Edward Lithenthal's article 'Committing history in public', where he discusses the need for there to be a move from 'descriptive history' to 'interpretive history' in museum representations (Lithenthal, 1994). Writing from the perspective of a historian who has been involved with the creation of interpretation for heritage sites, Lithenthal states that:

> In the classroom our voices are usually unchallenged; in the world of popular interpretation, however, we compete with others: filmmakers; "buffs" such as reenactors, collectors, and conspiracy theorists; and interpreters working at historic sites. Academic historians can find much to criticize in all this, but given such heightened public interest, this is a serendipitous time for academic historians to examine the ways in which our history is mediated and narrated in public and to add their voices to the shaping of such interpretive work (Linenthal, 1994: 986).

He does however recognise the difficulties in attempting to represent the nuances of academic historical debate in an accessible way that is suitable for museum interpretation (Lithenthal, 1994: 991), in other words in a way that meets the 'needs' of the 'target audiences'. Here we see that there is a conflict between the economically driven need to

make the museum an effective communicative media, and the demand of historians, and indeed 'grassroots' organisations, to change the representations of a nation's history to reveal a more reflexive, pluralistic relationship between visitors, museums, academics, meaning-making and public history:

> History is no longer presented as a static truth handed down by omniscient, anonymous experts whose interpretive take is hidden behind the aura of "fact", cloaked in text, artefact, interpretive program, and exhibit design. Visitors [...] understand that the place where they are standing is the site of an important event and that the event has been read differently, given the cultural fashions and political needs of particular times. *Each generation, they will learn, develops its own take on the story. They stand on a site and on the collected memories of a site.* They have the opportunity to appreciate what I believe is the most important story, which is not the mastery of the facts about a battle, but how the interpretation of the battle and the site itself reveal the hopes, fears, prejudices, and ideals of generations [...] These are places, visitors can learn, through which history is constructed (Linenthal, 1994: 987. Emphasis added).

What Lithenthal is saying here is important as it draws attention to the visitor's awareness of the historical consciousness of a site or exhibition and that the various interpretations or 'collective memories' of different generations are layered upon one another, bringing us back to Mason's conceptualisation of the museum as a 'palimpsest' upon which histories are 'written and rewritten', with traces of previous representations visible in the present (Mason, 2004: 29). The heightened public interest in history that Lithenthal describes (1994: 986) is a potential answer to the problem of the "historical amnesia" and "loss of a sense of place"' that Walsh attributes to the post-modern condition (Walsh, 1992: 60-1). But how does this ideal of representation, communication and meaning-making translate into museum practice? What types of exhibition design are most successful in creating an awakening in the visitor of the "processes of history" (Walsh, 1992: 115)?

Rowe et al., in their article 'Linking Little Narratives to Big Ones: Narrative and Public Memory in History Museums' (2002), take Walsh's idea of the importance of "making connections" (Walsh, 1992: 175) and discuss the ways in which museums empower people to root their own identities in history, and, in doing so, develop their historical consciousness (Rowe et al., 2002). They share Lithenthal's belief that history teaches us to appreciate the interconnectedness of time, space, events and people and that the solution to how a museum becomes an appropriate mediator of histories is in the linking of the "'big narrative' of a group to the 'little narrative' of an individual" (Rowe et al., 2002: 97). They

explore this process through an analysis of the different ways in which people make connections when encountering history museum exhibits (Rowe et al., 2002: 97).

Perhaps the most useful concepts that Rowe et al. introduce are John Bodnar's often discussed ideas of 'official' (national, collective) and 'vernacular' (unofficial, personal) narratives, and their relationship with public memory, which they define as "a site of contestation between competing voices [rather than] a body of information that is somehow encoded, stored and retrieved" (Rowe et al., 2002: 99). The significant point here is the recurring theme in the above discussions; the importance of 'reflexivity', both in relation to the museum's representation of the past and the museum visitor, who according to Bonnell and Simon should be encouraged to assume a "reflexive critique" that enables a "transformative insight regarding one's relationship to the past and one's complicity with established historical certainties" (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 69). As we will see, the idea of the "transformative" aspects of the museum is something that is not only central to discourse about the "transformative moment" that can occur when someone engages with a "difficult exhibition" (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 81), but is also a concept that has been embraced by those interested in 'measuring' the "transformative potential" of art gallery education (Newman, 2008).

Taking all of these issues into consideration, the literature seems to suggest that the museum can indeed be an appropriate 'mediator' for representing and communicating 'difficult' histories, as long as a new museology model of an active museum that promotes "democratic access to the past" is adopted and the visitor is treated as a producer of meaning, rather than as a passive consumer (Walsh, 1992: 179). This argument fits with the definition of 'public history' that Bonnell and Simon preference in their discussion of the characteristics of 'difficult histories': "public history becomes not simply a matter of accurately knowing the past and assessing its historiographic significance, but a force of inhabitation—a sense of dwelling with the past without 'settling' or mastering it" (Bonnell and Simon, 2007: 69). Although the notion of 'inhabiting' the past infers a more active response than merely 'assessing' its significance, this vision of public history remains somewhat underdeveloped in regards the potential meanings and consequences of unveiling a previously hidden or distorted difficult heritage, which Macdonald defines as:

...a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested

and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity. 'Difficult heritage' may also be troublesome because it threatens to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions (Macdonald, 2009: 1).

Positioning her work in relation to Tunbridge and Ashworth's term "dissonant heritage", which she explains they use "to express what they see as the inherently contested nature of heritage – stemming from the fact that heritage always 'belongs to someone and logically, therefore, not to someone else'", Macdonald states that her use of 'difficult heritage' "is more tightly specified than [Ashworth and Tunbridge's] notion of 'dissonance' insofar as it threatens to trouble collective identities and open up social differences" (Macdonald, 2009: 4). This disruption in the present and disturbance of collective identities are both key elements in the study of trauma, which in memory studies is dominated by the study of traumatic pasts such as the Holocaust.

Conclusion – *Understanding Slavery*: a historical signature of its time?

In situating this research in the fields of museum and memory studies, this chapter serves to examine some of the conceptual challenges involved in addressing the research question and aims (see Chapter 1). In addition, it queries some of the assumptions that have been made in academia about the character of the museum and its role in society, in particular in relation to ideas about 'collective memories'. In her book *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*, Macdonald proposes that "[if] exhibitions are 'historical signatures of their times', we should be ready to recognise that there may be more than one hand holding the pen – and, there may be more than one pen" (2002: 87). As this chapter has illustrated, the construction of histories, memories and knowledge in the museum or the heritage site context is a complex, multifaceted and often frustratingly ungraspable phenomenon to study. This study draws on the wisdom of writers such as Macdonald, Du Gay et al., Erll, Assmann and Seixas in order to build a fresh approach for the study of museum field-trips, responding to, contesting and sometimes adapting the literature presented in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis.

The overarching aim of adopting this theoretical framework is that "some of the complexity" (Macdonald, 2002: 87) of the production and consumption of national education initiatives in museums might be recovered. It provides a platform for examining

how knowledge, power, memory and identity work at the interface between the museum and the school, as well as how these processes and relationships might further our understanding of the nature of historical consciousness. In conclusion, this chapter presents a critical review of the literature, which acts as a foundation for the methodological justifications that are outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

As established in the introductory chapter, this research aims to articulate how shifts in the historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery are rearticulated through school field-trips to museums in England within the context of periods of heightened commemorative activity, which in this case refers to the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. In order to accomplish this, a detailed research strategy was developed in order to give coherence to the methodology; the methods of data generation and analysis used in this study were identified as the most relevant and valid for addressing the research question (see Section 1.4).

This chapter begins by summarising the methods used and gives an overview of the fieldwork that was undertaken over the course of this doctoral research (3.1). Details of the justifications for the methodology, the research design and the specific methods are provided in Section 3.2. The third section explains the process of selecting and contacting the case study sites and schools. Throughout, this chapter comments on how the actual methods and fieldwork employed differed from the original research plan and explains why this was the case. The position of the researcher and the limitations of both the overall research design and the individual methods are presented, as well as the strategies used to overcome any practical and methodological problems. In particular, Section 3.4 discusses one of the more frustrating obstacles that this research faced; the (generally thwarted) attempt at using web-based pre-visit and post-visit surveys with teachers and pupils.

3.1   Summary of methods used and fieldwork undertaken

The range of fieldwork methods used to generate data for the study includes: the collection of contextual and complementary data, which forms part of understanding the 'socio-cultural context' of the 'historical consciousness'; on-site methods such as direct observations; face-to-face discussions with teachers and museum staff; the analysis of the 'physical context' of the museum; and, finally, qualitative surveys with teachers and pupils (both online and paper based), which contribute to the 'personal context' of the school group visit experience.

I chose to use three case study museums in England, each of which had been involved in the *Understanding Slavery* initiative: the Wilberforce House Museum (Hull), the International Slavery Museum (Liverpool) and the National Maritime Museum (London). I decided not to use the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol as the museum has been undergoing major changes and I felt that this would make undertaking research there too tricky. I pursued the possibility of undertaking research at the 'London, Sugar and Slavery' gallery at the Museum in Docklands; however I encountered communication problems with the staff which eventually made access to school group visits impossible.

I also decided to undertake research at Buxton National Historic Site and Museum in Ontario, Canada, as a comparative case study. This museum was chosen for two main reasons: the potentially insightful contrast between the educational sessions it offers to schools and those offered by museums in England, and due to its links with the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University in Toronto. I had previously networked with academics from the Harriet Tubman Institute at a residential workshop at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation in Hull. This existing connection meant that I was able to gain access and support from the museum staff with great ease. Furthermore, I was able to meet with academics at York University during my visit in order to gain a better understanding of the Canadian context and the significance of the Underground Railroad for both local and national Canadian history.

Three visits were made to Wilberforce House Museum over the course of two months (January and February 2009), observing a total of four school groups and nineteen individual education sessions. During this same two month period, I observed one school group at the International Slavery Museum, which consisted of three education sessions. In May 2010 I spent one week at Buxton National Historic Site and Museum, during which time I observed three school group visits to the museum, involving eleven education sessions on site, as well as a storytelling session by the museum's curator at a campsite where one of the schools was in residence during their trip.

In June 2010 I observed one school group consisting of five education sessions at the National Maritime Museum. The observational data generated through these visits is presented in this thesis through a series of illustrative 'vignettes' which are analysed and

examined in relation to the research question and aims. This mode of presenting data is inspired by Sharon Macdonald's successful use of vignettes in her book, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Macdonald, 2009).

To summarise, I visited four museums six times in total over the course of seventeen months, observing nine school groups taking part in a total of thirty-eight education sessions. During the visits, if the school group was split into sub-groups, I quickly chose one group to follow and stayed with them for the course of the day, in order to maintain continuity and allow for a more holistic and less fragmented sense of the school's museum learning experience. These observations were recorded at the time by note-taking, using a basic observation schedule (see Appendix G), and further reflective note taking at the end of each session or visit.

Inevitably, the focus and purpose of my observations and descriptive note-taking developed and became more refined over the course of the fieldwork, however, for an idea of the kind of areas I had in mind at the beginning of the fieldwork, see Appendix H for the list of questions and issues I used to guide my initial observations. These were shaped primarily by the reading I had undertaken during my original review of the literature, in particular Falk and Dierking's contextual model of learning, which was also used to develop the questions for the pre- and post-visit surveys (discussed in greater detail later in this section).

For example, I was interested in recording the conversations that took place between the different factions (between pupils and pupils; pupils and museum staff; pupils and teachers; teachers and museum staff; museum staff and museum staff), in order to understand the nature and socio-cultural significance of verbal communication that takes place during museum field-trips. I was particularly interested in the expression of personal or affective responses to the topic from pupils, teachers and museum staff. I made care to record the physical context of the sessions as far as possible, including describing the use of spaces, interactions with objects, exhibits and interactives. I also made notes relating to whether pupils were working in groups or through solitary activities, in order to get a better sense of the inter- and intra-personal variations in learning during field-trips.

The issue of behaviour management quickly became of obvious relevance, in particular in relation to managing expectations and the variety in the attempts of adults to

ensure that the pupils acted in a manner that was appropriate to the subject matter. Other issues I paid particular attention to include: whether the pupils were given an orientation around the site; the way in which the visit was framed through introductory and closing sessions; the effects of restraints of space, time, resources; the clarity of instructions given to pupils; the use of cross-curricular references and the historical themes covered.

During these visits, every opportunity was taken to talk to museum staff – "the local players" as Macdonald calls them in her *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*, the ethnographic approach of which was influential for this thesis (2002: 7). Macdonald speaks of "[f]ollowing the local players and trying to understand their concerns and their ways of seeing and doing" (2002: 7), which was one method I adopted during my fieldwork that turned out to be a very useful way of building a rapport with staff, which then led on to what Macdonald describes as "informal discussion with Museum staff – over lunch [...], in corridors" (2002: 14), and, more often than not in my fieldwork experience, whilst waiting for tardy school groups to arrive, or helping to set up resources for the next session.

As with Macdonald's research at the science museum, the serendipitous but purposeful discussions with the following 'local players' formed a large chunk of the data set: curators, assistant curators, front of house staff, education project officers, learning development officers, secondary learning officers, *Understanding Slavery* facilitators, freelance facilitators, volunteer education officers and volunteer facilitators. In addition, I carried out semi-structured interviews with some of these staff in order to gather information and perspectives concerning organisational and institutional issues that had been raised during the fieldwork, as well as questions relating to the development and policies of the education departments, teams or staff (depending on the size of the museum). Therefore, although the questions I asked were planned in advance of each interview, they varied according to what information I needed in relation to each museum. In total, I undertook five semi-structured interviews with museum staff across the four museums, which I recorded through note-taking during the interview, sometimes emailing the interviewee at a later date to confirm that I had correctly understood their responses.

I also originally intended to generate qualitative data through pre-visit, post-visit and plus six-month surveys with both teachers and pupils. I designed the survey questions in order to address the different elements of the 'contextual model of learning' (2000). I

trialled the appropriateness and clarity of the survey questions with a small group of Key Stage 3 pupils from a school in Gateshead with the help of one of the participants from the InSite programme. The feedback from this workshop was then used to revise the survey questions, for example removing references to 'abolition', as this term would not be known by pupils who had not yet covered this part of the history in their classes.

However, although the response rate was very good for the pre-visit surveys (a total of eighty-eight pupil surveys and six teacher surveys), only two out of five of the school groups involved in the first cycle of the fieldwork returned post-visit surveys (a total of ten pupil surveys and two teacher surveys), with no schools agreeing to the plus six-month surveys. Therefore, for the second cycle of the fieldwork, this element of the data generation was unfortunately abandoned, as it was proving to be extremely time consuming and problematic. Whilst the responses to the surveys that were completed have proven useful in understanding the pre-visit expectations of the pupils and teachers, it became clear during the first cycle of the fieldwork that the observation notes and on-site discussions with the participants were to be the most valuable data source, providing the greatest scope for analysis.

Informed consent, data storage and analysis

As stipulated in the survey consent form (see Appendix B), informed consent was gained from each of the survey participants. It was anticipated that every pupil attending the visit would be presented with a survey to complete, thus ensuring that they were aware of the purpose and procedures of the research and that they understood that they had a right to refuse to be involved in the research. However, in the first cycle of the fieldwork, only around half of the pupils attending the visits completed the survey and signed the consent form. Although this was not ideal for both ethical and methodological reasons, the scenario of observing individuals and groups in a museum environment for research or evaluation purposes without their consent is a familiar situation in museum visitor studies.

The mitigating factor in this case is that I had detailed communication with each of the schools involved, through which I was able to fully explain the research process (see Appendix A), as well as providing a copy of the informed consent text for their perusal

before they decided whether or not to take part in the study. This ensured that the teaching staff responsible for the welfare of the pupils attending the museum visits were given ample opportunity to ask questions and address any concerns they may have had, in response to which I tried to be as flexible and accommodating as possible.

The informed consent text also outlines the procedures for data collection and storage, explaining that "all data will be kept confidential, unless otherwise required by law" (Appendix B), which refers to the legal necessity for researchers to report any information to the police that pertains to illegal activities, such as child abuse. Furthermore, the consent form also states that results "will not be released or reported in any way that might allow for identification of individual participants" (Appendix B); all participants (museum staff, teaching staff and pupils) have been given pseudonyms for the purpose of this thesis and related publications, and the case study schools have been anonymised to prevent recognition.

In order to allow for a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the different data types to take place, it was essential that the different elements of the data set be brought together in one place; the chosen solution was to import each piece of data into computer assisted qualitative data analysis software ('CAQDAS' – QSR Nvivo 8). This enabled comparison of coding themes across the different data types. The fieldwork observation notes from each of the museum field-trips were typed into word documents and imported into the NVivo software. Similarly, responses to online surveys were extracted from the purpose-built website and imported into NVivo, as were the responses to the paper-based surveys, once they had been typed into the appropriate survey template.

Two cycles of coding were undertaken using the NVivo software; the first cycle provided familiarity with the breadth of the data set and allowed the data to be clustered into common groups. Attribute coding was used in order to collate basic descriptive information such as context (museum, space), gender, group (school), and age range (academic year), allowing for easier management and location of multiple data types. Through descriptive coding I explored the data by summarising the topic of qualitative passages with single words or phrases. Furthermore, in vivo coding utilised the language of the participants (i.e. their individual words or short phrases) as actual codes, therefore

prioritising the participant's voice in the code set. During the second coding cycle I made another pass through the data to apply codes generated at the end of the first cycle to data coded in the early stages of analysis. These revisits to the data lead to the development of more refined codes and the eventual consolidation of the themes and theory that shape the analysis chapters of this thesis.

Table 2: Summary of fieldwork data

Museum	Schools	Code	No. of pupils	Pre-visit surveys	Sessions	Post-visit surveys
Fieldwork cycle one (January and February 2009)						
Wilberforce House	Pupil Referral Unit	WH:V1	3	Teachers = 0 Pupils = 4	6	n/a
	State-funded Catholic High School	WH:V2	26	Teachers = 1 Pupils = 5	4	Teachers = 1 Pupils = 4
	Community secondary school	WH:V3	90	Teachers = 4 Pupils = 59	7	n/a
	Independent Quaker school for girls	WH:V4	21	Teachers = 0 Pupils = 12	2	n/a
International Slavery Museum	Community secondary school	ISM:V5	40	Teachers = 1 Pupils = 8	3	Teachers = 1 Pupils = 6
Fieldwork cycle two (May and June 2010)						
National Maritime Museum	Comprehensive school for girls	NMM:V6	38	n/a	5	n/a
Buxton National Historic Site and Museum	High school	BM:V7	15	n/a	3	n/a
	Independent Anglican school for girls	BM:V8	25	n/a	4	n/a
	Independent Anglican school for girls	BM:V9	27	n/a	4	n/a
Totals:	No. of schools = 9		285	Teachers = 3 Pupils = 88	38	Teachers = 2 Pupils = 10

Table 2 outlines data generated between January 2009 and June 2010. Thirty-eight sessions were observed across nine different school visits to three museums in England and one in Canada. The total number of pupils that attended the visits observed is around 285, with

103 surveys collected from teachers and pupils. Four out of the nine groups were from all-girls schools. One third of the groups were from independent schools, whilst four out of nine are traditionally faith schools (although they all accept pupils from all faiths). Five of the groups were from state-funded schools, as well as one group from a 'Pupil Referral Unit' (a centre for children who are not able to attend a mainstream school).

3.2   Methodological justification and research design

Qualitative research often comes under criticism for being "unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias" (Silverman, 2006: 35). However, it seems that this type of criticism is less about a fundamental flaw in the work of most qualitative researchers and more about a misunderstanding in the research world regarding what it is that qualitative researchers are trying to achieve and why. As Silverman points out, "there are areas of social reality [that] statistics cannot measure" (Silverman, 2006: 43), and it is with these aspects of research problems that qualitative methods are able to contribute significant insights. A quantitative survey approach to the research phenomenon of this thesis may have resulted in the following findings based on statistical data relating to the 'school group visits: personal context' unit of analysis:

> In this research, 72% of the pupils surveyed reported a preference for 'individual' (rather than 'group') museum-based activities, demonstrating that the majority of English pupils aged 11-14 prefer 'interpersonal' rather than 'intrapersonal' learning styles.

Whilst this finding may be interesting and useful for teachers, museum education staff and educational resource planners, it offers no insight into the reasons *behind* this statistic. What experiences of individual and group museum-based activities do these school pupils have? How have these previous (or lack of previous) experiences of both types of museum-based activities affected their answer? Are different structures of museum-based activities better suited to different types of museums and subjects? Would observations of the responses of these same pupils to both types of museum-based activities correlate with the pupils' perceptions and reports of which type of learning they prefer? The purpose of undertaking this study has never been to generate data that is representative of a particular "population" or "universe" (Yin, 2003: 31), to which the findings can be generalised, as in the fictional example above. This distinction is crucial in understanding the purpose,

parameters and knowledge claims of this research, all of which may be deemed unsuccessful if gazed upon with the mind-set of a quantitative researcher who favours statistical analysis.

Taking this understanding of the uses and potential merits of qualitative research, the purpose of this study is to generate data that is generlisable to theory, using four museums and nine schools so as to utilise the benefits of multiple case studies, as discussed below. Clearly, the four case studies are in many ways very different from each other; the number and nature of the variables would be impossible to operationalise. However, this research is not interested in measuring factors or strictly defining concepts. Given the theoretical model that this research seeks to examine and promote as a valid approach to studying museum field-trips, difficult histories and commemoration, the number of variables upon which the case study museums may differ are, to all intents and purposes, unrelated to the validity of the findings.

Case study research

> A case study is an empirical inquiry that […] investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when […] the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2003: 13).

The ambiguity and complexity of 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context' is a recurring motif in this thesis, one that serves to highlight the careful amalgamation of the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. This section is concerned with laying the foundations upon which the overall structure of the thesis depends; the use of case studies.

> In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003: 1).

In response to Yin's criteria for choosing a case study research strategy – posing a 'how' or 'why' question – I return to the research question, as stated in Chapter 1:

> How are shifts in the 'historical consciousness' of 'difficult histories' such as transatlantic slavery renegotiated and rearticulated through school field-trips to museums in England within the context of periods of heightened commemorative activity, such as the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade?

This research question has elements of both 'exploratory' and 'explanatory' inquiry; first *to*

explore the character of the phenomenon at the micro-level (school groups learning about 'difficult' histories in the museum), and second *to explain how this relates to shifts in 'historical consciousness'* at the macro-level (periods of heightened commemorative activity). However, in this particular study, the separation of these two elements is not necessarily a natural or helpful distinction to make, as the theoretical concepts that underpin the explanatory element also serve as a structural framework for the design of the exploratory investigation, which correlates with Yin's take on case studies and theory development:

> For case studies, theory development as part of the design phase is essential, whether the ensuing case study's purpose is to develop or test theory. […] [T]he stated ideas […] increasingly cover the questions, propositions, units of analysis, logic connecting data to propositions, and criteria for interpreting the findings – that is, the five components of the needed research design. In this sense, the complete research design embodies a 'theory' of what is being studied (Yin, 2003: 28).

A continuous engagement with the "development of theory" is the backbone of this project; it is the point from which this research was launched, and it is the internal and ever-evolving discourse to which I have returned at each decision-making moment along the way. The intention is that the mode of presentation of the methodology of this thesis serves to stress my 'position' as the researcher, which in turn highlights the values of the "reflexive researcher", as outlined by Etherington (2004), which inspired the planning stages of this research.

This research aspires to honour 'context' and 'interconnectedness', both of which are complemented by the use of constructivist theories, qualitative methods of data generation and researcher reflexivity. As Etherington suggests, "it is by this means that we co-create multifaceted and many-layered stories that honour the messiness and complexity of human life […] and enable us to create meaning out of experience" (2004: 27). This approach is influenced by phenomenological research, which Hicks describes as "one of several traditions of qualitative enquiry":

> Like other qualitative methods it differs from quantitative enquiry in that it relies on working with only a few cases but many variables. [...] the qualitative researcher explores a topic by building a complex, holistic picture based on the detailed reports of informants and an analysis of their words, approaching the study as an active learner who wants to tell the story from the participants' view. Researchers who choose to undertake a phenomenological study focus on the meaning of experiences. In such a study the researcher examines accounts by several individuals

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of their lived experiences of a particular concept or phenomenon, with the aim of reducing the experiences to a shared meaning. In this way the researcher brings to the reader a better understanding of the essential structure – or the 'essence' - of the experience (Hicks, 2005: 69).

A further criteria for case study research is that "the investigator has little control over events" – in other words that the researcher does not wish to alter or manipulate the "behavioural events" (Yin, 2003: 1) of the experiences that he or she is interested in, which is certainly the case with this research. As far as possible 'unobtrusive observations' of school groups were undertaken, meaning that I tried to stand back and watch what happened and listen to conversations without getting involved with the sessions, unless specifically asked by a facilitator, teacher or pupil to assist with a particular task. As previously mentioned, I did, however, speak extensively to teachers and facilitators between the tasks and sessions, and it was through these informal conversations that much of the insights into the prior knowledge, expectations and experiences of the groups – as well as their plans for how they were to use the field-trip back at school – and the concerns, frustrations and values of the museum staff came to the fore.

Following on from this, the final criteria that Yin provides for defining case study research is that the phenomenon being studied is a contemporary one that exists within a "real-life" context, which serves to distinguish the strategy from either "historical" or "experimental" research (Yin, 2003: 1). A particular type of qualitative approach, "naturalistic research" is interested in getting "under the skin" of a human phenomenon, through description and interpretation, "often in the words of selected individuals (the informants)" (Heath, 1997). To those currently working in cultural or heritage settings, this may seem like simple common sense; if you want to know what how visitors respond to an exhibition or cultural event, you ask the visitors. However, this shift away from the objectivism of conventional positivist methods towards an interpretivist phenomenology represents not only a methodological shift, but an epistemological and theoretical one too.

This shift in methodology – from naturalistic observation (used to study behaviour) to 'free conversation' (used to study a child's conception of their world) – "implies [a] distinction between objectivity (the world) and subjectivity (its conception or representation)" (Piaget, 2007: xiii). The value and insight of Jean Piaget's findings in his studies of childhood communication gave naturalistic observation a firm place in the

methodological toolbox of qualitative phenomenologist's. However, when Piaget became interested in studying the "contents of thoughts, on the system of intimate beliefs", he realised that a change in methodology was necessary, as the "inner tendencies of the child" are not "directly observable in social interaction" (Piaget, 2007: xiii). Piaget pioneered the idea of "free conversation with children" (Piaget, 2007: xviii), a precedent to unstructured interviewing, where the interests and responses of the interviewee are allowed to shape the flow of the interview, a technique often used in studies that seek to build theories or models from the data (Wengraf, 2001: 61).

Multiple embedded cases

Yin differentiates between different types of case study research, for example, some studies investigate only one 'case', whereas others involve more than one case or site and are therefore referred to as a "multiple-case study" (Yin, 2003: 42). Yin proposes that the "evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 2003: 46). For this reason, this thesis investigates three cases in England and a comparative case in Canada. The value of using four sites is that if the results from one site are replicated at the other three sites, as predicted by the theoretical framework and propositions, then the validity and reliability of the study's findings are strengthened by the presence of "literal replication" between sites (Yin, 2003: 47).

For example, if there is evidence at one site that the character of an individual's learning in the museum is shaped by the physical, socio-cultural and personal contexts within which the learning takes place, then in order for this proposition to be truly persuasive, supportive evidence generated from investigations of the same phenomenon from other sites must be presented, otherwise the significance of the findings are seriously undermined. Conversely, diversity in the pedagogical approaches of the four museums serves to illustrate the significance of institutional, organisational and, in the case of Canada, national contexts in shaping educational media and programmes. Such findings would not be possible with just one case study museum, or with case study museums located in just one country.

When using "analytic generalisation", an investigator generalises from case study to theory, "in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study". For example, in this research I have used Falk and Dierking's 'Contextual Model of Learning' (2000), Du Gay's 'circuit of culture' (1997) or Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory' (2004) as templates with which to compare the empirical results generated from the four museums. This means that the theoretical framework of a study is not only of vital importance for the research design (as discussed earlier in the chapter), but also that the "appropriately developed theory also is the level at which the generalisation of the case study results will occur" (Yin, 2003: 31). Therefore, as Yin persuasively argues, the advantage of a multiple-case study is that if "two or more cases are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed" (Yin, 2003: 33).

Certain areas of interest (which Yin would refer to as "units of analysis" (Yin, 2003: 45) were identified from the literature at the beginning of this research to guide the generation of the observation and survey data (see Appendix H for examples). This foundational structure allows for greater analytical flexibility in the later chapters of the thesis, specifically ensuring that the comparative case study from Canada is properly integrated into the analysis and the arguments that are developed. This research is concerned with the overarching similarities between the three English case studies; the variations between them simply serve to highlight the nuances of how historical consciousness is rearticulated within different contexts. The timing of the field-trips (in the years immediately following the bicentenary), the involvement of each of the English case studies with the *Understanding Slavery* initiative and the age of the pupils provides an empirical grounding within the theoretical framework that facilitates a full exploration of the research question and aims. Therefore, by studying the twelve units of analysis across the four different museums, this research is better equipped to make claims about the theories that underpin each of the units.

3.3   Selection of the case study sites and schools

This section deals with the selection of the case study sites and the process of contacting and selecting school groups. As Yin points out, the selection of cases to be studied must be done carefully and purposefully, so that the researcher can either "[predict] similar results

(a *literal replication*)" or "contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a *theoretical replication*)" (Yin, 2003: 47). For this thesis, the selection of case studies has been made using the logic of both *literal replication* and *theoretical replication*; I began this research assuming that the three museums in England would generate similar data and therefore similar findings, with any variation being a natural result of the theoretical framework that has been used.

For example, Falk and Dierking's 'Contextual Model of Learning' (2000) has been used in this thesis to predict that the physical context of an individual's museum learning experience influences and shapes the character of that learning, therefore variation between the character of learning in the museums is to be expected, as they are each 'physically' different. However, I chose to study three large city-based museums in England as I predicted that there would be degrees of variation between them (but no drastic differences), as one of the original aims was to study the subtle differences between how school group visits are approached by different museums in order to highlight the factors that contribute to engaging learning experiences.

Although this study focuses on three particular museums in England, the style of representation, communication and learning at these museums is contrasted and compared more widely within the context of other museum and heritage learning experiences that are available to schools in relation to this difficult history. The gathering of information and complementary data from other sites and learning initiatives in England is a vital component of this research, as without this contextual knowledge, the significance of many of the issues that arise from the main data set would be lost. The Canadian case study is invaluable in this thesis, as it provides multiple opportunities to examine similarities and differences with the English museums, allowing for greater understanding of both the strengths and weaknesses of existing literature and theory, as well as a viewpoint from which to critically reflect on the 'historical consciousness' of England in the wake of the bicentenary and what the consequences of this shift might be for museum learning experiences and the heritage and education sectors more broadly.

In relation to the selection of school groups to use in the research, the focus has been on considerations like "authenticity", which, as Silverman proposes, is often the key issue in qualitative research, rather than questions of sample size and whether the data is

representative of the population (Silverman, 2006: 20). As the primary focus is on the nature of the educational products available at each museum and how this affects the experiences of the school groups that visit the museums and use these products, rather than on the nature of the school groups themselves per se (although this is taken into account through reference to the 'socio-cultural context' of the Contextual Model of Learning), the selection of the school groups is, to a certain extent, incidental. I selected the educational products that I wanted to analyse, such as the 'Slavery Study Day' at the National Maritime Museum, and the schools that were booked in to use these particular educational products were then contacted and invited to be involved in the study.

The fact that these schools were booked to use particular educational products within the museums and that the pupils were at Key Stage 3 (age 11-14), were the main criteria for selection, as due to the circumstances of this type of research, the rules of 'purposive sampling' were the only ones that were deemed appropriate. Although the 'purposeful sample' was larger than the number of schools actually used (in other words, there were more school groups booked in for each educational product than the number of schools selected), the process of selection was to all extents and purposes 'random', based on the schools meeting the necessary criteria and agreeing to be involved in the research. Obviously, this type of selection is not suitable for studies that aim to make generalisations from representative samples, however, as a means for selecting the source schools for the relevant units of analysis for this study it is an appropriate approach.

Methods of triangulation

> Triangulation involves the practice of viewing things from more than one perspective. This can mean the use of different methods [or] different sources of data […] The principle behind this is that the researcher can get an even better understanding of the thing that is being investigated if he/she views it from different perspectives (Denscombe, 2007: 134).

Triangulation is a crucial element in the design of this thesis – both methodologically and theoretically. Triangulation is an integral characteristic of case study research and, furthermore, is essential for addressing questions relating to constructivist museum learning theories and the concept of 'historical consciousness', as both emphasise the significance of interplay between 'contexts'. The use of different methods of data generation and the study

of a coherent yet varied set of 'units of analysis' has clearly demonstrated that the case study approach, as described by Yin (2003), is the most appropriate for this particular investigation.

By following Yin's advice regarding the importance of ensuring that the "research design embodies a 'theory' of what is being studied", I have been able to remain flexible to circumstances and adaptive to new opportunities for bringing added depth or breadth (2003: 29, 45), without departing from the original research question. The fieldwork in Canada is a prime example of a retrospectively essential part of this thesis that was not in the original research plan; I was able to opportunistically decide to include this fourth case study without feeling that I was digressing dangerously from my research question and aims. On the contrary, these seeming 'digressions' have lead to a more valuable and fulfilling thesis that seeks to address questions and follow lines of inquiry that perhaps only a doctoral student has the luxury of time and freedom to pursue. Below is an overview of how the different types of triangulation played a role in this research.

> [S]ocial researchers are not able to make use of fixed/objective positions, universally agreed, from which to make their observations – not in the same way surveyors, engineers and others rely on absolute, objective positions in the physical world. What social research has adopted, however, is the principle that viewing something from more than one viewpoint allows you to get a better 'fix' on it – to get a better knowledge of it (Denscombe, 2007: 135).

Denscombe, building on the work of Denzin, highlights the following types of triangulation that are relevant to this research: methodological, informant, time, space and theory (2007: 135-6). The importance of triangulation, in particular 'time' triangulation and 'space' triangulation, are also described by Cohen et al. in *Research Methods in Education* (2007), in which they state:

> [T]riangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint (Cohen et al., 2007: 141).

This approach to research recognises the fundamentally 'messy' nature of studying human phenomena, for which "the single observation [...] provides only a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and of situations in which human beings interact" (Cohen et al., 2007: 141), a point that is reflected quite clearly in Falk and Dierking's theories of museum learning (1992, 1995, 2000, 2002). Developing an appreciation of this integral link

between my methodologies and my theoretical framework has proven to be a crucial process through which my research design has become stronger and more transparent.

Therefore, theory has driven forward my research design as much as the opportunities and limitations of the practices to which I have striven to gain access and insight; my theoretical predilections have determined what it is I have observed, the data that I have generated and the methods I have chosen. As Cohen et al. point out, "research methods act as filters through which the environment is selectively experienced", and therefore "they are never atheoretical or neutral in representing the world of experience" (2007: 141). It is essential that this unavoidable 'selectivity' or bias is fully recognised when undertaking research and in turn is honestly depicted in the write up of the study; otherwise the findings may be misleading and make claims to forms of 'objective', distanced knowledge that is not necessarily possible in the social sciences and humanities.

The first type of triangulation that this research utilises involves triangulating data generated by different methods that address the same phenomenon, so that "[f]indings can be complemented by adding something new and different from one method to what is known about the topic using another method" (Denscombe, 2007: 135). As outlined in Section 3.1, this research has adopted a range of methods to gain greater knowledge of school groups learning about the slave trade and slavery in museums in England, and the contextual circumstances, including 'historical consciousness', that shapes these museum learning experiences. This includes not only surveys and direct observation of visits, but also literature reviews, reviews of media coverage, analysis of exhibitions and educational resources (off-site, on-site and online), interviews, analysis of policies and strategies, attending relevant conferences and workshops, study visits to comparative sites and activities relating to relevant continuing professional development programmes.

As Cohen et al. state, the validity of a piece of research can be undermined by "[e]xclusive reliance on one method [which] may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated. The researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method" (2007: 141). The data from the surveys is used to support the data from the observations, and vice versa – without one, the other becomes instantly less valuable and valid. Furthermore, Denscombe suggests that the "validity of findings can be checked by using different sources of information"

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(2007: 136), a principle which is of course central to the 'replication logic' that underpins Yin's preference for a multiple-case study, as discussed earlier in this chapter. By choosing to survey and observe both the teachers and the pupils, rather than relying on one to determine the experiences of the other, I have been able to increase the validity of the research findings.

The logic behind 'informant triangulation' echoes that of 'space triangulation', which advocates "the use of more than one cultural, social or geographical context" (Denscombe, 2007: 136). By generating data relating to more than one country, more than one museum and more than one school group, I have been able to check across sites and groups for valid, significant findings that relate back to the theory. The four case study museums are situated in completely different contexts and have completely different histories. Similarly, the schools involved have been from a wide spectrum of cultural, social and geographical backgrounds – from a Pupil Referral Unit in an under-privileged area to an independent all-girls school in an affluent area of Toronto – in order to determine whether the same theories and models can be applied across the variety of museum learning experiences for eleven to fourteen year olds in England and Canada.

Time triangulation relates to the attempt at incorporating a longitudinal aspect into this research and quite simply involves "using data collected at different times" (Denscombe, 2007: 136). Cohen et al. explain that this type of triangulation is particularly useful for researching learning, as it "attempts to take into consideration the factors of change and process by utilising […] longitudinal designs" (2007: 142). As seeking to understand the (often cyclical) process of learning is essential to the purpose of Falk and Dierking's museum learning models, a longitudinal design was initially at the crux of this research; the pre-visit, post-visit and plus three to six months elements of the original research design.

However, as already mentioned, due to the unexpected difficulties I encountered in attempting to secure the longer-term involvement of teachers, the post-visit elements of the study were unsuccessful in all but two cases, and the plus three to six months surveys were abandoned altogether. Due to the added complications and time limits of undertaking the fieldwork in Canada, no pre- or post-visit surveys were used with the school groups. However, through conversations with the teachers I was able to ascertain very useful details

about the pre- and post-visit activities that the pupils had already and were due to undertake back at school.

Cohen et al. also promote combining levels of triangulation, in other words using "more than one level of analysis from the three principal levels used in the social sciences, namely, the individual level, the interactive level (groups), and the level of collectivities (organisational, cultural or societal)" (2007: 142). This is certainly something that I have attempted in this research. Having proposed in the previous chapter that data generated in relation to the three contexts of learning ought to be situated within data relating to 'historical consciousness' and the 'circuit of culture', this thesis seeks to understand the wider context of political, professional, social and cultural debates and issues that swirl around remembering, representing and teaching 'difficult' histories. This has been achieved through a variety of (sometimes opportunistic) methods that allow the work of relevant research communities, government departments, grassroots organisations, activist groups, think-tanks and non-government organisations to be integrated into the narrative of the thesis.

What about pupils who don't visit a museum?

This research has focused on the experiences of pupils who take part in museum field-trips with their class to learn about the history of slavery. Another important approach to this area of study would be to combine this with fieldwork that covers the experiences of pupils learning about the history of transatlantic slavery within the classroom, in order to understand the differences and similarities in pedagogy, content, message and pupil response. A truly comprehensive study would seek to understand and compare the learning journeys of both sets of pupils; those whose teacher's organise a visit to a museum and those whose teachers – for whatever reason – do not (or cannot) take their pupils to one of the museums that offer complementary programmes and sessions. This of course means that there are limitations to my research that may be addressed in future studies.

Unfortunately, there is no quantitative data relating to the percentages of Key Stage 3 classes that do / do not take part in a field trip to a museum in relation to their learning about the transatlantic slave trade. However, from conversations with teachers where they compare pupils from previous cohorts where such a visit was not taken, it is clear that they

feel a visit to a museum – if carefully planned and thoughtfully executed – can transform a classes interest, creating enthusiasm for and a critical understanding of the history, as well as reflections regarding how it relates to their own lives. This isn't the only way pupils engage with experiential learning opportunities, and there is surely a lot to be learned from the more spontaneous, often pupil-driven, activities that classes undertake away from the museum context. Questions of how, why, where and when this potentially powerful learning experience unfolds underpin this thesis, as well as questions of missed opportunities, miscommunications, misunderstandings and threats that can undermine – or at least detract from – a field-trip.

Although statistical data detailing the percentage of Key Stage 3 classes that visit a museum when learning about slavery – as well as whether this number is increasing or decreasing and what types of schools are more likely to make a visit – would certainly be useful, unfortunately this type of analysis is beyond the parameters of this research. However, through this study, I have come to appreciate that although only a percentage of teachers will have the opportunity to organise a museum field-trip for their pupils to the key museums in England that deal with the history of transatlantic slavery, there are many more who will use some aspect of the built heritage or other tangible evidence of this history within their local area.

3.4   The potential and pitfalls of online qualitative research methods

This section deals with the attempt to use online qualitative research methods in this study. As introduced earlier in this chapter, I originally intended to use pre-visit and post-visit surveys (see Appendix C, D, E and F) in order to generate qualitative data from open-ended questions. Qualitative surveys were chosen in lieu of the opportunity for face-to-face interviews with teachers and pupils within both the tight timetable of the museum visits and within the travel budget of the project. Although the method of web-based surveys was mostly replaced by paper-based surveys in the first cycle of the fieldwork, with surveys being altogether abandoned in the second cycle (as discussed in Section 3.1), the examination below is important as it demonstrates one of the ways that the research strategy progressed over time. It also highlights some of the issues faced by researchers who wish to engage with innovative methodologies and technologies, especially when

working with school groups.

Online ethnography or 'computer-mediated communication' ('CMC', Mann and Stewart, 2000: 2) makes use of online technology to carry out a sustained ethnographic study of an often geographically dispersed group. Online ethnography has been described as:

> a method in which one actively engages with people in online spaces in order to write the story of their situated context, informed by social interaction. It involves a researcher and participant engaging in conversation and meaning making through repeated, revisited and jointly interpreted conversations that support reflection and revision (Crichton and Kinash, 2003).

Most qualitative research aims to engage participants in "critical discourse and reflection", for which Garrison et al. suggest that "there is sufficient evidence to suggest that writing has some inherent and demonstrable advantages over speech" (2003: 26). They go on to say that the written word facilitates "higher-order learning", meaning that "questions and responses were at a higher cognitive level that in a face-to-face verbal context" and therefore e-learning can "support collaborative, constructivist approaches to learning" (Garrison and Anderson, 2003: 26).

Unsurprisingly, CMC is deemed as particularly valuable for research that targets young people: "the so-called Net Generation, born between 1980 and 1996 [...] They are the first generation to grow up in the digital world, with the proliferation of the Internet and the introduction of such consumer technologies as wireless phones and DVDs" (Hutton, 2006). Furthermore, research has shown that email surveys have particular advantages over self-completion paper surveys and questionnaires, in that "email responses were more complete, especially for open-ended questions, and the email survey achieved much longer responses to open-ended questions than the paper version" (Mann and Stewart, 2000: 69).

Perhaps the main criticism of CMC research methods is that the researcher does not have the advantage of using and interpreting the range of sensory cues and non-verbal encouragement that is available in F2F interviews or focus groups. However, although some researchers feel that cues such as body language, speed and tone of speech and facial expression are essential elements of qualitative research (Clarke, 2000: 8) – as they reveal so much about the participants emotions, intentions and expression – other researchers regard the absence of such (potentially misleading) cues an advantage to both the

researcher and the research participant[1]. In relation to this, some claim that CMC should only be used as a supplement to face-to-face methods (Crichton and Kinash, 2003).

When I first considered using the Internet and CMC as a way of generating data for my research, I expected to come against uncertainty and cautionary approaches from schools, but I did not anticipate the level of resistance I met. Many of the teachers refused to use the online surveys, opting instead for pupils to complete a paper version, which I then collected from the teachers when they arrived at the museum. In light of the potential benefits of CMC, it was disappointing to realise how difficult it is to convince schools to allow pupils to access the web-based surveys. The website was designed and built by a computer science graduate in order to facilitate the generation of qualitative data from school pupils over an extended period, using CMC. The screen shot (Figure 9) provides an idea of what the website looked like and how the questions were presented to the participants.

There are useful lessons here for others considering using online surveys with school pupils, some of which are perhaps, with hindsight, more obvious than others. For example, during a visit at Wilberforce House, I was told by one teacher that the head teacher of her school had "adamantly said no" to the online surveys, because "governors at the school are very strict about who is given access to personal details", explaining that they "used to have an online target / rewards system for pupils, but even that was shutdown".

> Much research has employed particular methods or techniques out of methodological parochialism or ethnocentrism. Methodologists often push particular pet methods either because those are the only ones they have familiarity with, or because they believe their method is superior to all others (Smith, quoted in Cohen et al., 2007: 142).

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[1] Clarke's list of visual cues includes "Appearance, height and weight", "Physical handicaps" and "Clothes, make-up, jewellery" (2000: 8). Depending on the research question, these visual characteristics may or may not be significant. If such 'variables' are not integral to the researchers line of enquiry, it may indeed be an advantage that during CMC these physical factors are taken out of the equation, and therefore cannot effect the researcher's judgement of those being researched, or vice versa.
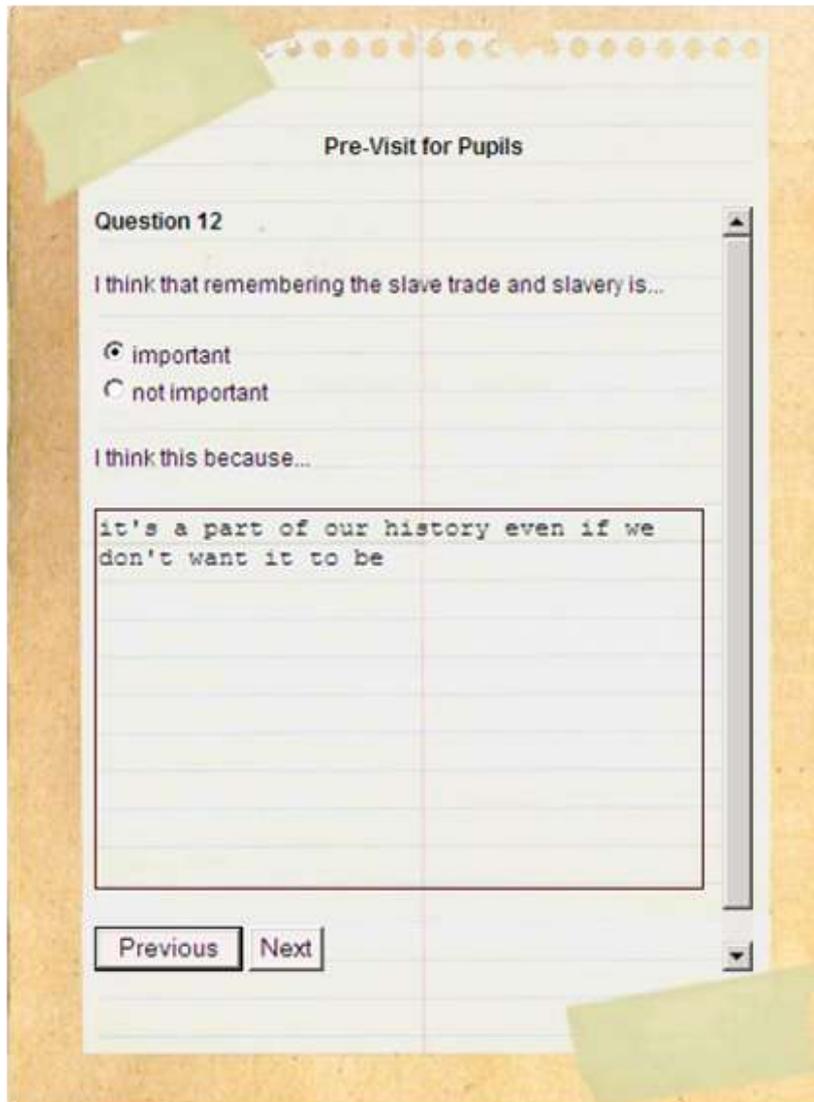
Figure 9: Screen shot of webpage designed and built by Andrew Pitts for this research

However, I do not regret taking the challenge of trying something new, as the learning curve has been both useful and interesting. In addition, it has reinforced the importance of triangulating methods (see Section 3.3), as knowing that I had paper-based versions of the survey to fall back on provided the peace of mind and freedom to push the online surveys as much as possible with teachers. As Cohen et al. argue, the use of "triangular techniques [...] will help to overcome the problem of 'method-boundedness'" (2007: 142).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research strategy and methods employed within this research were

chosen in order to address the research question and aims, drawing, wherever possible, on the perspectives of those who experience these museum field-trips first-hand: the museum staff, the teachers and the pupils. A case study approach was selected as the best option for examining multiple museum sites in a theoretically comprehensive yet flexible manner, using various types of triangulation as a means of ensuring that the findings are both valuable and valid. This flexibility is evident in the way that the specific methods used during the fieldwork have changed over the course of the study in response to the unforeseen obstacles faced. Qualitative methods were used to generate data relating to each case study, which was then analysed using specialist software, through which coding themes emerged that were eventually consolidated into the themes and theories that shape the content and arguments of the rest of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4: COMMEMORATION, EDUCATION AND SHIFTING HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

As outlined in the introduction, one of the overarching aims of this thesis (Aim 1) is to examine how the slave trade is (re)negotiated through collective memory processes (macro-analysis) and how these shifts are (re)articulated through the consumption and regulation of cultural memory products (micro-analysis). This chapter investigates where, why, when and how the transatlantic slave trade has been remembered and represented, providing an overview of contemporary memory cultures and offering some considerations of how modes of remembering slavery have developed as the history has emerged into the 'public sphere' (see below for further discussion of this concept).

By looking back at how slavery has been remembered in the past, we can gain further insight into how the bicentenary commemorations – and specific projects, such as the *Understanding Slavery* initiative – became possible in the form they took, why they gained support and how they gathered momentum. This chapter investigates how memories of the past are produced and how shared meanings are constructed, paying particular attention to commemorative years as periods of heightened, and generally politicised, memory-work.

It begins by taking a step back and looking at the relationship between power, knowledge and memory in the history, historiography and historical consciousness of slavery. It uses the life of nineteenth century escaped slave turned abolitionist, writer and activist, Frederick Douglass, as a looking glass through which some of the 'difficulties' of this 'transcultural' memory can be viewed (Section 4.1). The second section discusses the unveiling of the history of slavery in the public sphere, which is followed by a more narrow focus on the 2007 bicentenary in the third section. Building on this more contemporary framework, Section 4.4 aims to examine the ways in which shifts in 'historical consciousness' have resulted in the prevalent conflation of commemoration, difficult histories, empathy and citizenship in education. The final section offers an analysis of the rhetoric of remembering and teaching traumatic pasts, which is a thread that is picked up at points throughout this thesis.

4.1 The pathway from slavery to freedom

> I was born in Tuckahoe […] I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave as improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit (Douglass, 2007 (1845): 16).

This extract is from the opening of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave, Written by Himself*, a nineteenth-century slave narrative written to further the abolitionist cause. Douglass's words speak powerfully to the paradigm of power-knowledge-memory-history that characterises the different stages in the 'unveiling' of the history of slavery, a paradigm that this thesis argues is central to the way in which we must understand the 'historical consciousness' of 'difficult histories'. Douglass was denied knowledge of his date of birth, he describes how he was made to feel no different than an animal, stripped of a part of his history that we take for granted; by regulating and limiting their slaves' memories, 'masters' tried their best to dehumanise the enslaved, resulting in the ultimate form of oppression, the most socially violent expression of power. Another example is the practice of preventing slaves from learning to read and write, a practice that was supported by the law in some states. Douglass recounts the first time he heard his master explaining to his wife the reasons why a slave should not be taught to read and write:

> Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, this it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master—to do as he is told to do. Learning would ~spoil~ the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave." [...] These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiment within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. [...] I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. [...] From that moment I understood *the pathway from slavery to freedom*. [...] Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read.

> [...] From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the ~inch~, and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ~ell~ (Douglass, 2007 (1845): 44-8).

By writing *Narrative* and sharing his memories of enslavement, Douglass had written himself into the pages of history, and in doing so he had influenced the course of his own life by securing his freedom (see below), as well as altering the course of the abolition movement, by raising awareness and campaigning tirelessly. However, many – if not most – of the Africans who lived as slaves in the Americas never had the opportunities that Douglass had; reading, writing and access to knowledge – three acts that are essential to a person's capacity to contribute to the creation of 'history', at least in the West, where the written word is generally given higher status than oral and intangible forms of knowing.

It is for these very reasons, reasons that Douglass' life exemplify so well, that this thesis argues that the complex relationship between knowledge and power in the history, historiography and historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery that it's most public 'unveiling' in the twenty-first century is 'difficult'. Difficult, both in regards the pressures of representation and the responses of the public, but also the task of the researcher in articulating how this shift might have come about and explaining the origins of the tropes and narratives that make this current historical consciousness possible.

Addressing these issues in a comprehensive and satisfactory manner is beyond the scope of the present work, meaning that this chapter must necessarily set out limits that are appropriate to the research question and aims. This is done, however, whilst endeavouring to remind the reader that by scratching the surface of how the 'hidden' history of slavery has been unveiled through – and from some perspectives, in spite of – the 2007 bicentenary, we are in fact touching upon issues of power-knowledge-memory-history that are integral to why remembering, representing and teaching this history is difficult and traumatic, yet potentially empowering.

This relates to Orlando Patterson's idea of "slavery as social death", in which he states that "[slavery] is one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave" (1982: 1). He goes on to say:

> How, we may ask, could persons be made to accept such natural injustice? The question applies not only to the victims but to those third parties not directly involved in the slave relation who stood by and accepted it. Denying the slave's humanity, his independent social existence, begins to explain the acceptance. Yet it is only a beginning, for it immediately poses the further question: how was the slave's social death, the outward conception of his natal alienation, articulated and reinforced? (Patterson, 1982: 8)

Patterson's answer is that the slave's social death was in fact articulated and reinforced through culture, through:

> ...symbolic instruments [that] may be seen as the cultural counterpart to the physical instruments used to control the slave's body. In much the same way that the literal whips were fashioned from different materials, the symbolic whips of slavery were woven from many areas of culture. Masters [...] used special rituals of enslavement upon first acquiring slaves: the symbolism of naming, of clothing, of hairstyle, of language [etc] (Patterson, 1982: 8).

Enslavement, was in fact a battle of culture, an institution whose existence relied on the constant renegotiation of symbols of power, of dehumanising acts. Its downfall, both at the micro- and macro-levels – as Douglass demonstrates – was made possible when these 'symbolic instruments' were subverted and challenged, not only in the minds of the enslaved and their enslavers, but also the 'third parties' who eventually played a key role in its abolition.

In 1845, the same year the *Narrative* was published, Douglass travelled across the Atlantic, touring Ireland and Britain for two years, giving lectures in crowded churches. It was during this trip that Douglass became legally free; as explained in 'Remembering Slavery', the online exhibition by Tyne and Wear Museums, Douglass "stayed with the Richardson's [of Newcastle upon Tyne] during his lecture tour of Britain. Anna and Henry helped raise money to buy Douglass' freedom so that he could return safely to the United States without fear of enslavement" (Tyne and Wear Musueums, 2007).

The symbolic currency of the slave narrative format allowed those who had once been denied the opportunity to learn the basic skills of reading and writing to communicate with those far-removed from the realities of the "peculiar institution" (Stampp, 1956) of slavery. Before 2007, it is unlikely that many members of the public were aware of the connection between Newcastle upon Tyne and the freeing of Frederick Douglass. However, in Northern Ireland, there is a physical reminder of Douglass's visit in the form of this mural on the 'Solidarity Wall', at Falls Road in Belfast, which features other murals that are

dedicated to peoples / revolutionaries inspired by or with connections to Irish Republicanism (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Frederick Douglass mural, Falls Road (Belfast, Northern Ireland) (Cordless Larry, 2006)

This is a great example of the transcultural nature of politicised memory, a powerful reminder that the global currency of trauma and suffering – the "multidrectionality" of memory (Rothberg, 2009) – is not an exclusively twenty-first or twentieth century phenomenon. As opposed to the traditional framework that portrays memory as "competitive memory – as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources", Rothberg's concept encourages us to "consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (2009: 3).

Similarly, Erll reminds us in her idea of 'travelling memories' that "memory is fundamentally a transcultural phenomenon"; memories and representations have always travelled (a point well illustrated by Erll's examination of the circulation of the story of Odysseus), but the difference in the highly globalised, technology and media saturated world of the twenty-first century is that memories now "travel across cultures at high

speed" (Erll, 2010a). As the next section explains, the globalisation of communication demands new theories about how memories, cultural media or other representational forms 'circulate'. Below, these theoretical challenges are examined in relation to the discourses and regulatory forces through which the history of slavery has been perceived to have been unveiled in the 'public sphere'.

4.2   Unveiling the history of slavery

The relevance of 'public-sphere' theory was briefly introduced in Chapter 2 of this thesis, but it requires further examination for the purposes of this current chapter. According to Nancy Fraser,

> the concept of the public sphere was developed not simply to understand communication flows but also to contribute to a critical theory of democracy. In that theory, a public sphere is conceived as a space for the communicative generation of public opinion. Insofar as the process as inclusive and fair, publicity is supposed to discredit views that cannot withstand critical scrutiny and assure the legitimacy of those that do. Thus, it matters who participates and on what terms. [...] Mobilising the considered sense of civil society, publicity is supposed to hold officials accountable and to assure that the actions of the state express the will of the citizenry (Fraser, 2010: 76).

Fraser challenges the validity of this traditional description of the public sphere in regards its applicability to the highly-globalised twenty-first century, offering the notion of "transnational public spheres" as a self-confessedly imperfect yet "indispensible" alternative (2010: 77). Fraser comments on the emergence of a language of 'transnational public spheres', including the use of concepts such as "diasporic public spheres", "Islamic public spheres" and even a "global public sphere" (2010: 76). The suggestion that public spheres are capable of transcending the boundaries that have previously pre-defined their existence has an obvious connection with the issues discussed earlier in this thesis regarding 'transcultural memories' (see above and Section 2.1).

As Fraser explains, a "growing body of media studies literature is documenting the existence of discursive arenas that overflow the bounds of both nations and states. Numerous scholars in cultural studies are ingeniously mapping the contours of such arenas and the flows of images and signs in and through them" (2010: 76), which could, of course, refer to models such as Du Gay et al's 'circuit of culture' (1997), as described in Chapter 3.

The various elements of the circuit of culture model are also reflected in the academic literature produced in response to 2007, for example: Geoff Cubitt's examination of the themes of resistance in museum displays (representation) (Cubitt, 2010); Laurajane Smith's analysis of the "emotional avoidance and disengagement with exhibition content" in the responses of white British visitors to slavery museums (consumption and identity) (Smith, 2010: 193); Kalliopi Fouseki's exploration of "the tensions that arose between museum professionals and community members" during consultation (production) (Fouseki, 2010: 180) and Emma Waterton's insightful considerations of issues relating to commemoration, multiculturalism and social exclusion (regulation) (Waterton, 2010).

Waterton et al. have also examined processes of regulation and representation through a study of "official government responses" and how they "were replicated in popular culture, drawing on the film *Amazing Grace*" (Waterton et al., 2011: 23). Continuing in this line of enquiry, she has (along with Ross Wilson) used critical discourse analysis to explicate the rhetoric of the bicentenary, arguing that there is a dominant "way of talking about the transatlantic slave trade [that they] have labelled 'abolition discourse'" (Waterton and Wilson, 2009: 381).

This chapter also offers a discursive approach to the overarching shifts in the historical consciousness of teaching slavery, by presenting an analysis of the consequences and politics of representation, in a way that ties together Erll's notion of travelling memories and Radstone's concern with agency and forces, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Erll, 2010a, Radstone, 2010a). Stuart Hall describes the discursive approach as examining "how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied" (Hall, 1997: 6).

In describing the international shift in historical consciousness in the past decades, Katharina Schramm notes that "the rather fragmentary and flickering resurgence of the slavery topos in very heterogeneous settings has given way to a remarkable rise in public references to slavery and the slave trade on an almost global scale" (Schramm, 2007: 72). In the case of Britain, 2007 was both a culmination of and a catalyst for this shift; the role of the bicentenary in contributing to a more reflexive and truthful representation of the history of the British Empire being taught in schools is regarded by many as one of the

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greatest achievements of the commemorative year.

What events, discussions, movements and decisions were necessary for the momentum of unveiling the history of slavery to gather speed in the build up to the bicentenary? This is not an easy question, as the potential responses stretch back through the Civil Rights movement, the 'Windrush generation' and the lives of post-abolition communities across the Americas, and therefore clearly lies beyond the scope of this research. However, in terms of the most recent events, it seems that during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, people begin in earnest to express a need to 'unveil' this history, for example through works of literature such as Alex Haley's *Roots* (Haley, 1978) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (Morrison, 1997 [1987]).

Then, in the 1990s, both community and professional groups start to take up projects and initiatives designed to address this need; by the 2000s, many of these projects were maturing, reaching their second phases or coming to an end. By the end of the bicentenary year, at the same time that this research began, those who had been involved with this generational shift felt that it was time to reflect on the progress that had been made; it was time to question what exactly 2007 had contributed to this unveiling.

Alongside the grassroots movements, the academic, heritage and education sectors were also tied up in this process of shifting the historical consciousness of slavery in England. Before the bicentenary commemorations were conceived of, the transatlantic slave trade was already becoming encoded – or inscribed – with cultural meaning through the practice of representation and through various modes of remembering, including the original exhibitions at Wilberforce House and the Merseyside Maritime Museum and through memorial projects, such as the Slave Trade Arts Memorial Project (STAMP) that was inaugurated in 2002 in Lancaster, the fourth largest slave port in Britain (Rice, 2009).

Surrounding the bicentenary was a multiplicity of voices and agendas that on the surface appeared to be 'competing' with each other regarding what aspects of this history should be focused on, which should be played down. These voices were driven by a whole spectrum of socio-cultural, political, artistic, pedagogical, institutional, national and community-based beliefs and values, the complexities of which have been examined elsewhere (for example Waterton, 2010, Weinstein, 2007). However, as Basu explains below, comprehensive research into how and why exactly the discourses surrounding

"enduring cultural memories" come to shift over time is rare:

> Enduring cultural memories are never made by politicians, monuments or individual media representations, although both media and politics (or power relations) are essential to their existence; they are formed and develop through a tangle of relations that reaches back and forth across time. Although questions of media, temporality and power have all been crucial to the field of memory studies, little work has been done on exactly how these elements interact to form memories that shift over time and what work they do in terms of identity formation and negotiation (Basu, 2011: 33).

Perhaps the reason for a lack of work in this area is due to the difficulty of knowing *where to begin*, and, indeed *where to end* (a dilemma discussed in detail in Section 2.1). Consequently, this chapter (like much of this thesis) can seem at times to be a 'tangle' of threads; at the international level there is transcultural memories, academic movements, and international heritage projects. At the national level there are official commemorations, government agendas, funding strategies, national education initiatives, and curriculum development. At the local level – institutional settings, museum histories and contexts, exhibition design, education programme development, learning team structures, and facilitators' teaching styles. At the level of each case study – school demographics, teacher agendas, physical contexts, pupils' prior interests and personal responses, and the group's 'collective' experience of learning and remembering.

Untangling these connections is not a straightforward task; the agency and values that characterise each aspect are multi-faceted, intertwined, often misleading and sometimes seemingly paradoxical. However, by situating this type of analysis within a framework that deals specifically with the production, consumption and regulation of museum-based resources and sessions, this research is able to offer an alternative analysis of the meaning and mechanics of the bicentenary and the broader topic of teaching slavery in the twenty-first century. The next section focuses on 2007 as a high-profile commemorative year, highlighting some of the key issues that were at stake in relation to the construction of new memorials and the official recognition of the imprint that the slave trade has left on the built environment in Britain.

4.3   The 2007 bicentenary: what's at stake?

Commemorative years are an obvious source of interest to memory studies scholars; the 'self-conscious', purposeful yet unpredictable, often controversial nature of these officially endorsed attempts at creating a moment (or a series of moments) through which 'collective memories' can be communicated and shared are unsurprisingly irresistible to commentators. However, how we view the "discursive construction" (Wodak and De Cillia, 2007: 315) of commemorative years is certainly open to debate, as the extract below demonstrates. In their article, Wodak and De Cillia discuss the construction of national identities through commemorative events, using post-war Austria as a case study, in particular the "socio-political contexts" and controversies surrounding national commemorative years that took place in 1988, 1995 and 2005:

> [We] assume that such commemorative years are – on the one hand – planned very carefully; on the other hand, the commemorative events are, it seems, systematically disrupted due to the many unresolved conflicts in Austrian society. Hence, we claim that – as long as the elites do not acknowledge the many conflicting perspectives and narratives and openly confront and discuss them, such disruptions will probably always occur and have to be viewed as a typical and systematic part of commemorative events, and not as exceptional and unique, unpredictable, 'accidents' – in Austria and elsewhere (Wodak and De Cillia, 2007: 318).

In essence, Wodak and De Cillia are arguing that rather than seeing controversy and resistance as being somehow separate from the mainstream aspect of a commemorative event, it is important that we begin to regard commemorations as inherently contested and contestable phenomena. Nowhere is this clearer than in the actions of Toyin Agbetu, who disrupted a service at Westminster Abbey on the 200th anniversary of March 25th 1807 in order to approach the Queen and express his anger at the way the abolition of the slave trade was being commemorated (Kirton, 2007). This protest was widely reported, with videos of the verbal attack still available online. The BBC News reporter, Amanda Kirton, remarked that statements of support for Agbetu suggested "a general unrest among the black community":

> House of Lords leader Baroness Amos was one of the guests seated in the abbey during the protest. "Toyin's protest reflected the anger and the pain that still exists," she said. The "absolute horror and degradation" of the slave trade was not generally discussed, she added. "The commemoration period has raised all these issues which have not been easy to read, or watch. People need to recognise that it is very sensitive and emotional, especially for the black community." Prime Minister Tony

Blair, in his statement leading up to the commemoration period, declared that the bicentenary would be a chance for Britons to "speak about how shameful the slave trade was" (Kirton, 2007).

The public recognition of anniversaries offers individuals, families, groups, communities and societies opportunities to celebrate or memorialise significant events in their personal or shared histories, but as the example above illustrates, some subjects are much more comfortably regarded as 'shared' than others. Some anniversaries – in particular the centenaries of major events – take place on a national or sometimes international scale, which means that there is a sense that other nations are paying attention to what is remembered and how. As such, commemorative years can be viewed as a revealing manifestation of what particular communities, whether real or 'imagined' (Anderson, 2006), choose to *publicly* remember about their past, and therefore they act as a symbolic expression of contemporary values and identities.

As above, some commemorative years are conceived in order to bring previously 'hidden histories' to the attention of the public, through the use of a range of media, including exhibitions, documentaries, television dramas, radio programmes, films, literature, events, public lectures, artwork and memorials. In such cases, the intention is not just to remember a particular aspect of the past, but to provide opportunities for people to increase their awareness and understanding of both the history and its legacies. As this chapter explores, the recent commemorations of 1807 serve as a great example of this widely-accepted correlation between memorialisation and learning.

There are physical traces of the stories and legacies of transatlantic slavery throughout the British landscape. In fact, if you scratch beneath the surface of many British heritage sites, cities or industries, there are tangible links to the slave trade, for example at the docklands of London or the cotton mills of Manchester. Less obviously connected are the stately homes built by families that made their fortune from the slave trade in the West Indies (for example Harewood House in West Yorkshire), or the street made famous by The Beatles that is in fact named after a Liverpool merchant who was a slave ship owner and vocal anti-abolitionist ('Penny Lane', after James Penny). In fact, English Heritage marked 2007 through a series of activities and resources that "began to formally acknowledge the role that the slave trade, plantation wealth and the abolition movement had in shaping our built environment" (English Heritage, 2008).

Other examples of links to the slave trade on the streets of Britain include a statue in the centre of Bristol that commemorates the philanthropy of a local merchant and Member of Parliament, who acquired his wealth through the slave trade and was a member of the Royal African Company (Edward Colston, 1636-1721). Perhaps most intriguing is the plaque in St. Mary's Churchyard that commemorates 'Nottingham's first black entrepreneur', who was brought to England as a slave at three years old and who went on to start an employment agency (George Africanus, 1763-1834).

The 2007 bicentenary certainly directed publicity towards the history of slavery and its representation through British heritage. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the International Slavery Museum (Liverpool), the Wilberforce House Museum (Hull) and the 'Atlantic Worlds' gallery at the National Maritime Museum (London) each unveiled substantial redevelopments in 2007. These new exhibitions were carefully researched and designed by curatorial teams who worked in consultation with communities, interest groups and specialist historians in order to present a more truthful, thorough, accessible and appropriate representation of the history of slavery. The timed unveilings of these exhibitions illustrates one significant way in which 2007 gives the transatlantic slave trade meaning, through the construction of particular frameworks of interpretation. In this light, the bicentenary acts as a rupture between one discursive formation and another; a catalysed and concentrated shift in historical consciousness.

In addition to the (re)opening of museums, a number of memorial projects emerged in anticipation of and in response to this heightened interest in the history of transatlantic slavery (Spalding, 2011b). Since at least the 1980s, monuments and memorials have been perceived as potential sites for learning and not just as 'sites of memory'. Consequently, artists and designers are tasked with creating models that have a pedagogical purpose as well as an aesthetic and affective appeal if their designs are to be commissioned. Although there has been a campaign to erect a sculpture in Hyde Park in London to remember enslaved Africans and their descendants, the £1.5 million needed for the bronze statue has not yet been raised. 'Memorial 2007' has not come to fruition, despite the backing of London's Mayor, Boris Johnson (Memorial 2007, 2006a). It is quite probable that the sheer scale of the proposed fourteen foot high granite and bronze memorial depicting "six larger than life free-standing figures, each of whom represents a part of the slave story" (Memorial

2007, 2006b), and the highly visible nature of the proposed location in the nation's capital are key factors in preventing this project in moving forward (Figure 11):

Figure 11: 'Memorial 2007' sculpture for Hyde Park (Memorial 2007, 2006a)

Conversely, smaller memorial projects that are further removed from the gaze of international tourists and diplomats have had greater success. For example, the Slave Trade Arts Memorial Project (STAMP) in Lancaster unveiled its own memorial artwork in 2005, titled 'Captured Africans'. STAMP was formed as a partnership between the city council, the museums service, campaign groups and the county education service. The STAMP team worked with artists, schools and community groups in order to increase public awareness of the link between Lancaster and the shipping of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. The memorial (see Figure 12) is roughly the same height as the one proposed for London's Hyde Park, yet this quayside sculpture is less explicitly confrontational; the artist, Kevin Dalton-Johnson, opted for an abstract representation of the history of slavery as opposed to the realism offered by the Memorial 2007 design.

Figure 12: 'Captured Africans' memorial in Lancaster (image courtesy of the artist)

'Captured Africans' takes the shape of a ship (Figure 12) that is imbued with words and materials that invoke the slave trade ('wealth', 'cotton', 'rum', 'mahogany', coins encased in acrylic), as well as incorporating a mosaic of the 'triangular trade' (Europe, Africa and the Americas, Figure 13) and an inscription that details the names of slave ships with links to Lancaster. Perhaps most inspiring of all are the modest depictions of captured Africans that are positioned on top of the mosaic base of the sculpture:

Figure 13: Map of 'triangular trade' and figures of enslaved Africans at base of memorial (image courtesy of the artist)

These mini-sculptures are the product of a series of workshops, where after discussing the subject matter and studying diagrams of slave ships, a group of young people from Lancaster made these simple figures in clay, with a little assistance from the artist, before selecting which ones they thought were the best, which were then cast in iron for use in the finished memorial (Rice, 2009). Interestingly, Dalton-Johnson describes himself as a 'pedagogic artist', and when interviewed about the design, he explained that he was mindful of not using stereotypical portrayals of slaves, as "it could stir up quite large pangs of guilt within the public, who may not want to look at it for that reason, and therefore the sculpture would not meet one of my main objectives, to be informative" (Rice, 2009). This determination to engage and educate onlookers, to enhance both cognitive and affective understandings of the history it memorialises, coupled with the innovative and thoughtful ways in which the artist worked with local communities, touches on some of the issues that are raised later in this thesis in relation to the pedagogical trends in museums (see Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 particularly).

Anxiety caused by notions of memory as competitive

In addition to a concern about stirring up 'pangs of guilt within the public', it seems that much of the anxiety felt by those involved with (or excluded from) the official bicentenary commemorations was due to the worry that if you bring the history of the British slave trade into the public sphere, then you inevitably cause other histories – such as the Holocaust or maritime history – to be displaced or minimised, to the detriment of those who identify with these histories. This anxiety is founded on an understanding of memories as "competitive" (Rothberg, 2009), of the public sphere as being a fixed entity, and of cultural identities as discrete or exclusive – the premises for which have been successfully challenged by postcolonial studies, in particular the renewed focus on the 'transcultural' nature of memory. As introduced earlier in this chapter, the transcultural approach provides a way of understanding memories as being produced in a liminal space – that which Homi K. Bhabha refers to as the "third space" (Bhabha, 2005) – where meanings are constructed across 'fuzzy' boundaries and are much more fluid than previous conceptions of cultural memory allowed for.

By focusing on the historical consciousness of a past that is inherently 'transcultural',

this research is able to explore how memory works when a government endorses national curriculum changes and national education initiatives relating to difficult histories. The flip-side of the bicentenary involves those who are entirely opposed to the representation of the history of slavery in the public sphere. As outlined earlier in this chapter, Rothberg advocates the idea of "multidirectional memory", therefore rejecting the concept of competitive memory, which he states is based on "a notion of the public sphere as a pregiven, limited space in which already-established groups engage in a life-and-death struggle" (2009: 5). This type of 'zero-sum logic' can be seen in a range of discussions about how modern societies remember and represent the past.

For example, in an article titled 'The Truth about Slavery' on the British National Party (BNP) associated website, *British Pride*, it is claimed that the "Transatlantic Slave Trade is one of the most discussed topics in British history [which] is demonstrated every year in our schools when British school children learn about the horrors of the slave trade during Black History Month. Every aspect of the trade is dissected and White British children are left in no doubt that slavery was the fault of their ancestors and something to feel deeply ashamed of" (British Pride, 2008). Below this article is a link to another BNP associated website, *March of the Titans: a history of the White Race* (WhiteHistory.com, 2008), which is advertised as documenting "a Hidden History" (British Pride, 2008). Underpinning these two political statements about how the past is represented is an understanding of memories (or histories) as being in competition with each other in the public sphere. This can be seen quite clearly in the following extract from the *British Pride* website:

> The British people have a long and glorious history. But in Britain today, our great history and culture is being deliberately suppressed. British history is no longer taught in schools, and our young people have little or no knowledge of our great past and the heroes who shaped it. This is no accident, it is part of a deliberate plan by the traitors in politics and the media to rob our people of any sense of national identity and national pride. [...] In their quest to turn our beautiful island homeland into an Afghanistan-style multi-racial slum, they know only too well that to achieve this crazy dream they must stamp out everything which binds our people together and gives us a feeling of group identity, hence the ceaseless onslaught on our history and traditions (British Pride, 2009).

Although this is clearly an extreme and politicised outlook on how 'British history' is and is not represented in the public sphere, it nonetheless illustrates the potential implications of viewing memories as competing within a 'limited space' where the memories of one group

are regarded as damagingly displacing the memories of another group. As Rothberg points out, this framework for understanding memories does not allow for the constant renegotiation and construction of individual and group identities, as well as for the intertextuality of memories in the digital age of mass-communication.

Other critics of the 2007 bicentenary have drawn attention to the fact that by using the 200th anniversary of Britain's role in abolishing the slave trade as the narrative through which this history is revealed to the public, it only serves to 'whitewash' the truth of the horror, scale, scope and legacy of the British slave trade. For example, the Pan African Human Rights Organization, *Ligali*, stated that the "2007 slavery whitewash must not be taught in schools" (Ligali, 2006). Waterton argues that in 2007 the "rhetorical resources drawn upon [...] to understand and soothe the traumatic history of the exploitation of African people" lead to a regulation of the official narratives, popular media and public discussions about the slave trade:

> To pre-empt and combat these issues, the 'abolition discourse' was drawn upon by all levels of British society, legitimized by government institutions and perpetuated by further elements in society, newspapers and computer-mediated communication (Waterton and Wilson, 2009: 381-3).

Waterton also draws attention to the government's decision to officially commemorate the date that legally ended the slave trade, claiming that this lens of abolitionism was used to "[distance] Britain from questions of guilt and complicity, focusing instead upon shaping the slave trade as part of an isolated past" (Waterton and Wilson, 2009: 383). However, as this thesis illustrates, the narratives, motifs and rhetoric through which this contentious history is taught through museum field-trips sessions do not always comply with a framing of transatlantic slavery that neutralizes issues of guilt and severs ties with contemporary legacies of inequality and racism.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the official government tag-line for 2007 was "Reflecting on the past, looking to the future" (Directgov, 2007). This focus on 'the future' is a familiar trope in the rhetoric of traumatic pasts. The Directgov website claims that "Improving our understanding of the slave trade" is necessary in order to tackle the legacy of this "difficult and sensitive subject", going on to explain that "children aged 11-14 will learn about Britain's role in the slave trade and its abolition, as a compulsory part of history lessons in schools" (Directgov, 2007). Although transatlantic slavery has been

actively taught by some schools in Britain since at least the 1980s, with references to it in textbooks dating even further back, it wasn't until 2008 that the slave trade joined the British Empire, the two world wars and the Holocaust in becoming a compulsory part of the secondary history curriculum. The website also states that "it is recognized that teachers need help to teach it effectively", and that therefore the *Understanding Slavery* initiative has "developed a range of high quality materials to help teachers bring the subject to life for pupils" (Directgov, 2007).

As outlined in Chapter 1, *Understanding Slavery* produced handling sessions, loan boxes, lesson plans, print and digital resources, on-site group sessions for schools and best practice teaching guidelines, such as a booklet titled *Unlocking Perceptions* (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008). Interestingly, those involved in producing the museum learning resources and teacher training opportunities that both predated and accompanied 2007 were also instrumental in lobbying the government and curriculum authorities to make slavery a compulsory topic (BBC, 2008a). This indicates a need for greater consideration to be given to the agency of those involved in the production of educational media within the heritage sector, including their influence on the content and focus of the national curriculum. In the Key Stage 3 history curriculum guidelines, under the heading of 'British history', it states that:

> There should be a focus on the British Empire and its effect both on Britain and on the regions it colonized, as well as its legacy in the contemporary world (eg in Africa, the Middle East and India). Recognition should also be given to the cultures, beliefs and achievements of some of the societies prior to European colonization, such as the West African kingdoms. The study of the slave trade should include resistance, the abolition of slavery and the work of people such as Olaudah Equiano and William Wilberforce (QCA, 2007).

This thesis argues that although the content of the curriculum can certainly be regarded as operating within the framework of the abolition discourse – as evident above in the explicit inclusion of Equiano and Wilberforce – the ways in which narratives of slavery are performed through museum field-trips offers compelling evidence of the complexities of how memories are produced and consumed at the interface between heritage and education. Some of the potential causes of this complexity in teaching slavery are discussed in the next section in relation to citizenship education and the human capacity for empathy.

4.4   Slavery, citizenship education and 'empathic consciousness'

Jeremy Rifkin argues that the reason that popular historical narratives focus on "crises and calamities, harrowing injustices, and terrifying episodes of brutality inflicted on each other" is due to the fact that "tales of misdeeds and woe surprise us. They are unexpected and, therefore, trigger alarm and heighten our interest. That is because such events are novel and not the norm, but they are newsworthy and for that reason they are the stuff of history" (2009: 10). Whether or not brutality is really incomprehensible to our twenty-first century sensibilities, understanding the role of empathy is essential, as ideas about empathy are central to many of the ways in which difficult histories, sensitive / controversial subjects, uncomfortable heritage, dark tourism and traumatic pasts have been conceptualised, memorialised, interpreted, appropriated and researched. Throughout the vast literature on difficult histories, empathy is continuously discussed and examined, particularly in relation to whether visitors to a particular heritage site, memorial or museum 'empathise' with the story being told, the issues raised, the peoples whose lives are being remembered and represented:

> The draw for visitors, as described by Iles, regarding the Battlefields of the Western Front, is not so much a simple desire to sight-see but rather a wish to identify and empathise with its symbolic, commemorative spaces, not simply a way of seeing, but also a way of feeling and a way of doing (Perez, 2011).

For example, 'empathy' forms a key element in Miles' "space-time framework", which he uses to categorise different types of 'dark tourism':

> [...] any Holocaust memorial must bridge the existential gap between the here-and-now of the tourist and the event (or events) of more than half a century prior. It must convert the memorial *thing* into a *live memory*. This is the major challenge for all dark tourism. More than evoking historical knowledge, to be successful, any dark touristic "attraction" must also engender a degree of empathy between the sightseer and the past victim (Miles, 2002: 1175).

In differentiating between "dark tourism" ("sites *associated with* death") and "darker tourism" ("sites *of* death"), Miles claims that visiting the latter "constitutes a further degree of empathetic travel" (2002: 1175). The idea that there might be a scale of empathy that relates to the history of a site raises interesting questions about how, why and where societies should remember, represent and teach difficult histories – such as transatlantic slavery – in the twenty-first century. A major recurring issue in Holocaust memory literature revolves around creating ways of "connecting post-millennial youth directly to the

disappearing generation of Shoah eyewitnesses" (Miles, 2002: 1176). Most responses to this problem involve increasing access to videotaped Holocaust survivor testimony through innovative online portals or integration into exhibitions, such as at the Holocaust Memorial Centre (Nottinghamshire, UK). Miles cites the "interactive media of Internet and new generation television" as potentially offering the means for realising the answer to his own question of "What lies beyond darker tourism?" (2002: 1176). His vision of "darkest tourism" is of something that "transcend[s] both the *spatial* differences that distinguish dark from darker type and the *time* gap that separates both dark and darker from the remembered tragedy" (Miles, 2002: 1176).

Transcending boundaries is a key feature of how empathy is 'created' through heritage experiences. Rifkin describes transcendence as meaning "to reach beyond oneself, to participate with and belong to larger communities, to be embedded in more complex webs of meaning" (2009: 20), a description that greatly resembles the principles underpinning effective citizenship education. This interpretation of transcendence could also be used to describe the experience of engaging with heritage – whether it be through visiting a museum, site or memorial, virtual interaction through the internet, or through taking part in a commemorative event – each of these has the potential to allow an individual to reach beyond themselves, to empathise with a larger community and develop a 'sense of belonging' whilst challenging their understanding of the meanings behind things.

Essential to this argument is the way in which we frame and understand 'the museum'. In this way of thinking about remembering, representing and teaching slavery in the twenty-first century, the museum (as a technology of memory) is "a key cultural loci of our times" (Macdonald and Fyfe, 1996), and as such what happens within the museum – the human experiences and exchanges that make the museum a forum and not a temple – are as important as the architecture, the exhibition design, the collecting strategy or the visitor demographics. The particular nature of the museum as a communicative media leads Harris to ask the following questions about its potential and pitfalls as a space in which to represent difficult subjects:

> Are sensitive subjects more appropriately treated by specific sorts of museums, private institutions, for example, rather than public? Or for-profit as opposed to nonprofit institutions? Or exhibition halls rather than permanent collections? And are difficult or contested or highly complex subjects, whatever their social

significance, better translated by media that are unconstrained by the exigencies of labels and exhibition spaces? (Harris, 1995: 1110)

This section aims to articulate the role of empathy in the history and historiography of slavery and abolition, before explaining how this relates to citizenship education. Discussions of empathy within academic literature normally refer to the concept of 'sympathy' as a counterpart – or in Rifkin's case, a "precursor" (2009: 11) – to empathy. Rifkin states that notions of sympathy emerged during the European enlightenment, in particular through the work of economist Adam Smith who gave "considerable attention to the question of human emotions", with sympathy meaning "feeling sorry for another's plight" (2009: 12). Writing about his ideas 'of sympathy', Smith explains that:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the *imagination* only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. [...] By the *imagination* we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them (Smith, 1812: 2-3. Emphasis added).

Interestingly, Smith's 1759 book *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* is recognised for its role in paving the way for the British abolitionist movement, particularly in influencing the women activists and poets of the 1780s, for example Helen Maria Williams, whose poems were disseminated as lyrical ballads that were used to raise awareness about 'the plight of the African' amongst the general public, often through the use of an African voice pleading with the reader or listener to 'step into their shoes' for a moment; to *imagine themselves in their situation*. The success of the slave trade had in part relied on the 'othering' and the dehumanisation of the African in the minds of those in Europe and the Americas who were profiting from the enslavement and exploitation of millions of human beings.

Any feelings of empathy for the enslaved Africans would have undermined the entire system of the trade, the "peculiar institution" (Stampp, 1956), upon which the wealth and culture of transatlantic world relied. Any feelings of sympathy for the enslaved African were expressed in ways that served only to further disrespect and destroy their culture and identity. For example, the fervent attempts of slave-owners to 'civilise' enslaved Africans

through religion and conversion to the Christian faith could be said to be born out of sympathy for the African, out of a desire to 'save their souls' and improve their lives. In the 1780s, essays were published "linking the successful reproduction of slave populations in the New World with the conversion of slaves to Christianity" (Cody, 2003: 321). However, this is distinct from true empathy, as there is no attempt to understand the thoughts and feelings of these fellow human beings and in regards these attempts to secure an increase in the reproduction of slave populations, there is no sense of the African as a 'fellow being' at all, just as a commodity whose potential needs to be maximised.

Although the early tactics of the abolitionist movement took place 120 years before the word empathy entered into common language, the objective of the poems and ballads was in fact to elicit an empathic response, rather than one of mere sympathy, which Rifkin describes as being "more passive" than empathy, which he says "conjures up active engagement – the willingness of an observer to become part of another's experience, to share the feeling of that experience" (2009: 12). According to Rifkin, "the development of selfhood is [...] completely intertwined with the development of empathic consciousness" – he points to the fact that the term 'empathy' only came into use in 1909,

> [...] about the same time that modern psychology began to explore the internal dynamics of the unconscious and consciousness itself. In other words, it wasn't until human beings were developed enough in human selfhood that they could begin to think about the nature of their innermost feelings and thoughts in relation to other people's innermost feelings and thoughts that they were able to recognise the existence of empathy, find the appropriate metaphors to discuss it, and probe the deep recesses of its multiple meanings (Rifkin, 2009: 11).

Rifkin states that previous generations, for example those living in the 1880s, "were not encultured to think therapeutically", they "were unable to probe their feelings and thinking in order to analyse how their past emotional experiences and relationships affected their behaviour towards others and their sense of self" (2009: 11), which prompts us to remember that we cannot judge the actions and values of the slave owners through our modern-day sensibilities. Rifkin states that in the twenty-first century, "a hundred years after the coming of the age of psychology, young people are thoroughly immersed in therapeutic consciousness and comfortable with thinking about, getting in touch with and analysing their own innermost feelings, emotions, and thoughts – as well as those of their

fellows" (2009: 11). Citizenship education, at least as it is taught in England, can be understood as a response to – or at least as being shaped by – the emergence of a new empathic consciousness over the last few decades. Rifkin discusses "empathic pedagogy" in relation to education reform in the US, where he says there has been an increased focus on "emotional intelligence", education as a "collaborative learning experience" and on "nurturing a more mature empathic sensibility" (2009: 15).

Rifkin goes on to state that this "new empathic approach" has been attributed with improving "mindfulness, communication skills, and critical thinking" and that "empathic skills emphasise a non-judgemental orientation and tolerance of other perspectives" (Rifkin, 2009: 15). In *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy,* Decety and Ickes survey the ways in which empathy is used in various social interventions, including "the use of empathy-stimulating experiences in the classroom":

> ...students being exposed to peers from different socioeconomic backgrounds, learning about poverty, learning about the Holocaust, visiting hospitals, spending time in homeless shelters, and participating in activities that aid disadvantaged groups. Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain specific outcomes of these presumably empathy-enhancing activities or the present student population involved. Also, one finds in the literature a number of papers recommending (without offering evaluations) the use of literature [...] or art [...] or history [...] as tools to stimulate empathy (Decety and Ickes, 2009: 90).

Decety and Ickes unsurprisingly find shortcomings in the manner in which these 'empathy-enhancing activities' have been researched and evaluated, in particular the lack of evidence pertaining to the 'specific outcomes'. However, the fact that 'learning about the Holocaust' has come under the radar of these social cognitive neuroscientists whose cutting-edge book explicitly promotes the benefits of cross-disciplinary research is significant and only serves to emphasise the need for in-depth research that uses social neuroscientific findings to shed light on the role of empathy in learning about difficult histories. As the section below demonstrates, the perceived transformative power of teaching about traumatic pasts has been communicated for a while now in relation to the history of the Holocaust, with the rhetoric of 'learning from the past' playing a crucial part in the drive behind shifts in historical consciousness.

4.5   The rhetoric of remembering and teaching traumatic pasts

He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it.

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

(Santayana, 1906: 284)

The second version of the famous George Santayana quote is the original, whereas the first is one of the many paraphrased variants of the original, which just so happens to be inscribed on a panel that is forebodingly positioned at the entrance to the exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Nottinghamshire. There is a belief that if you teach young people about traumatic pasts then you can prevent such atrocities from happening again. This rhetoric is repeatedly found in discussions of the value of learning about the Holocaust, often under the mantra of 'Never Again' and it has been used in recent years to describe the benefits of teaching young people about the history of slavery.

The Holocaust and transatlantic slavery have emerged from the twentieth century as two of the most recognisable examples of 'traumatic pasts' from which we must learn, in order that these examples of *man's inhumanity to man* might not happen again. The perceived value of teaching young people about 'difficult' histories has gained increasing momentum across several countries, including, for example, the UK, USA, Canada, Germany, Israel and Sweden, all of which are members of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

> In the realm of school curricula and textbooks, history automatically becomes applied history. It serves as the backbone for the nation-state and supports its values by constructing heroic and mobilizing patriotic narratives (Assmann, 2008: 64).

But what happens when the past you are mobilizing is 'messy' and contested? What if the 'values' of a nation are counter to a defining aspect of its heritage? What happens when a nationally important narrative will not easily accommodate unproblematic stories of heroism that invoke patriotic feelings? These are important questions for many societies and nations across the world; how do we teach 'difficult histories'? What are the 'lessons' of a traumatic past for the younger generations? For Germany, the question of how to teach the history of Nazism and the persecution of Jews, Slavs, Roma, Communists, homosexuals and the mentally and physically disabled has played an important part in the (re)negotiation of national identity post-1945. The practice of remembering and teaching about the Holocaust is now widespread, with dozens of countries across different continents giving

prominence to this history and the value of its lessons for the younger generations. There was a particular 'boom' in Holocaust memory and teaching in the 1990s.

It is necessary here to emphasise the influence of Holocaust studies in defining debates about the political, social and intellectual significance of 'learning to remember' traumatic pasts; memory studies literature is infused with reflections on the experience of (remembering) the Holocaust. A diversity of subjects are covered in Holocaust memory literature, including Norman Finkelstein's examination of the "exploitation of Jewish suffering" (2000); Michael Rothberg's work on realism and the representation of trauma (2000); Roger I. Simon's research on the ethics of learning and remembrance (2005), and James Young's analysis of the meaning of Holocaust memorials (1993).

In terms of Holocaust education, there are books addressing *Why should we teach about the Holocaust?* (Ambrosewicz-Jacobs and Hondo, 2004); explorations of "teacher and learner perspectives"(Burke, 1998); considerations of the "principles and practice" of teaching the Holocaust (Davies, 2000), and even chronicles of students touring sites of Holocaust memory (Gilbert, 1997). Deirdre Burke, in her PhD thesis, *The Holocaust in Education: an exploration of teacher and learner perspectives*, looks at the "impact of the Holocaust upon learners", stating that her "research findings support the initial perspective that previous research had merely scratched the surface of this vast topic" (1998).

The research that has emerged from Holocaust studies has undoubtedly influenced the rhetoric and focus of subsequent interest in trauma and memory studies. Appreciating why memory of the Holocaust has become a "paradigm for trauma" (Fassin et al., 2009: 18) is an essential starting point for understanding how and why memories of African slavery in the Americas have been represented, produced, imagined, performed and consumed in the twenty-first century. Didier Fassin states that there are two main reasons for this widespread conflation of the Holocaust with trauma:

> [It] represents the most extreme reach of violence, and as such has become an unavoidable reference point for any experience of pain, of suffering, and hence of trauma [and] it developed after a period of silence, a fact that attests precisely to its traumatic nature. It is because of the delay between the event and its painful exposure to the public gaze that the process can be qualified as trauma (Fassin et al., 2009: 18).

Comparisons with the 'unveiling' of the history of transatlantic slavery, mainly since the

1980s, have been highlighted and expounded by Paulla Ebron; the "parallels between African Americans' discussions of historical recovery and memory and Jewish histories of the horrors of life during the holocaust are striking especially in terms of their categories and narrative conventions" (Ebron, 1999: 930). Regarding the cultural-historical symbolism of the Middle Passage, Ebron states that the "horrors of the Atlantic slave trade have led some African Americans to claim this as our holocaust" (Ebron, 1999: 923). She goes on to cite the Middle Passage as creating "the point of origin for African American history as a collective project of memory, trauma, and healing. It serves as a reminder of the physical and psychic separation from 'home'" (Ebron, 1999: 924). Lurking behind the trauma of the Middle Passage is the unavoidable evidence of Britain's involvement in the slave trade; "between 1700 and 1810, the British transported almost three million Africans across the Atlantic" (Walvin, 2000: 30). Historian James Walvin vividly describes the role of the British in the trade:

> Africans formed an army of uprooted and transported people, cast to the far side of the Atlantic, in unspeakable conditions, for the economic betterment of their captors and tormentors. In all this, the British were central. They had not been the first, and they were not alone. But the British had brought the Atlantic system to a degree of economic perfection which profited themselves and their colonies in proportion to the plundering of Africa and the violation of their African captives (Walvin, 2000: 31).

The potential benefits of learning about traumatic events from the past at school-age has attracted attention from those working far beyond the governments and education sectors of the nations that have embraced this type of pedagogy. The mass-media, the arts, and the heritage sector have all responded, and in some ways contributed, to this recent phenomenon, for example, several news sources in the UK covered the fact that transatlantic slavery became a compulsory part of the secondary curriculum in 2008. Another example of the media's interest in teaching difficult histories can be found in a BBC report on the British government's decision to extend funding for a Holocaust Educational Trust project that was launched in 2005 and sent "6,000 teenagers per year [to] spend a day visiting Auschwitz camp and meeting survivors of the Holocaust" (BBC, 2008b).

The report goes on to quote the trust's chief executive, who "says that the trip makes the young visitors 'eye-witnesses' to what happened during the Second World War. The experience can be life changing, she says. 'They suddenly realise that what they value and they see it is important to challenge prejudice today'" (BBC, 2008b). In literature, we can

turn to the bestselling book *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*, an absorbing journey through "the history of the Civil War and its potent echo in the present" (Horwitz, 1999). Although his interests lie predominantly in the practices of 'hardcore reenactors' and neo-Confederates, Tony Horwitz also makes several potent references to the ways in which the history of slavery has and has not been taught across the southern states of the United States. In this extract, Horwitz recounts a conversation he had with a history teacher (Shambray) at a school in Greenville, Montgomery:

> Integration [of schools in 1969] turned the Civil War into a minefield. 'Suddenly, whatever I said was wrong,' Shambray said. Blacks accused her of soft-pedalling slavery while whites thought she was vilifying their ancestors. Shambray found herself dreading the subject. 'For a few years, I would take a running jump from about 1855 to Reconstruction … Then, from about the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, the atmosphere improved and Shambray learned to ease her students into the Civil War. 'I'd preface the whole issue by saying that none of us here today were responsible for what happened. It's history, and we need to discuss things in an open, intelligent fashion' (Horwitz, 1999: 374).

This extract raises the thorny issue of responsibility, a theme that is raised repeatedly in the rhetoric of traumatic pasts, making the teaching of such histories unpalatable for those who do not wish to see descendants of either side of a 'conflict' or difficult history feel like either a perpetrator or a victim.

These snippets of commentary on 'difficult history' education draw our attention to some of the key questions that are being asked about teaching slavery in the twenty-first century: why might it be beneficial? How should teachers approach the more difficult aspects of these histories? When in their school careers should children be exposed to such matters? What kinds of things should and should not be covered? Who should get to decide? Finally – perhaps most pertinently for this thesis – what is the most appropriate environment for this learning to take place? These are the types of questions that are significant for the study of 'intergenerational memory' – the means by which events from the past are passed down to future generations, a process of communication that this chapter will now examine more closely.

The intergenerational transmission of memory through education

> How is historical knowledge transmitted across generations? What is the role of schooling in that transmission? (Wineburg et al., 2007: 39)

These questions posed by Wineburg are at the heart of this thesis. The phrase 'historical knowledge' could quite easily be replaced with 'historical consciousness', 'memory' or 'culture', as our understanding of the transmission of each can be furthered by considerations of the 'role of schooling'. In addition to studies that deal with the content of displays, public responses to exhibitions, attempts at community engagement, popular culture and government rhetoric, Roediger and Wertsch note that education is of great interest to those concerned with memory-work:

> Key processes in educating children involve how to best present information to engage students' learning and to help them retain information. Fields such as educational psychology explicitly consider this topic. In addition, many of the almost unconscious attitudes that students have about the past of their country and their people come through textbooks, teachers and the educational process. Every modern state devotes massive resources to presenting an official national history, and this inevitably involves using a narrative that enhances some features and minimizes or ignores others. In the USA, for example, history textbooks have until recently considered in a relatively benign manner both the topics of slavery and treatment of Native Americans. Certainly, the history of both blacks in the USA and Native Americans would be quite different if written from the perspective of the affected peoples relative to how these subjects are portrayed in history textbooks of the majority culture in (say) high-school history classes (Roediger and Wertsch, 2008: 14).

This quote highlights the importance of power in the production of educational media, which is conceived here as being regulated by the 'majority culture'; government-sponsored national education initiatives fall into this same category, as an example of the state devoting considerable resources to the presentation of a nationally significant history, which in the case of this thesis refers to how British history has been reconfigured (in the classroom and beyond) to include the transatlantic slave trade.

This brings us to what it is that has so far been missing from the academic response to the bicentenary; fieldwork-based research that tackles how the history of slavery is being taught to school pupils in England in the aftermath of 2007. Some work has been done on the situation in other countries, for example Kate Hodgson addresses the situation in France since the passing of a law in 2001 that "states that slavery and the slave trade should be given a prominent place in the national curriculum"; she looks at the provision of

educational materials, at how "new research on slavery and the slave trade is impacting on French curriculum development", as well as undertaking interviews with educators about how their practice has changed (Hodgson, 2011). Similarly, Filipa Ribeiro da Silva examines the national curriculum and secondary level textbooks within the Portuguese context, concluding "that slavery and abolition is taught mainly based on historical facts and with little or no reflection upon the 'wrongs' of slavery and the 'responsibility' of the historical actors involved" (Silva, 2011).

Although these types of studies are clearly important for critically articulating how nations represent their own difficult histories within their curricula and textbooks, they are limited by their lack of ethnographic, observational data relating to what is happening inside the classroom. Without in-depth fieldwork with school groups we cannot claim to know what is actually being taught and how pupils are responding to and engaging with the history of slavery. This thesis differs from these studies in that it prioritises the lived experiences of those involved in the learning 'on the ground'. It considers the perspectives of school pupils, teachers and other educators, rather than relying solely on the content and rhetoric of education policies, curriculum descriptions or even lesson plans. Real lived experiences are inherently untidy and very rarely do they turn out the way we expect.

Teachers interpret the curriculum according to their own experiences, interests and the availability of resources. Lessons and museum-based sessions do not always go to plan – teachers and facilitators respond to their pupils and adapt the plan accordingly. Education policies and guidelines do not accurately reflect the reality of what takes place in the classroom. This is not to suggest that careful analyses of these aspects of teaching are not useful – but they are not a valid indication of teaching practice; the nuance, serendipity and intangible aspects of collective learning experiences are missing from any such study.

However, in order to be truly valuable, any micro-analysis of what is actually happening in the classroom or in museum-based education sessions must be accompanied with a macro-analysis of the production and regulation of the relevant education programmes, any changes to the curriculum or the application of government agendas. The writings of academic historians; the decisions of politicians to commemorate specific events from the past; a curatorial team's choice of which objects to display in a museum exhibition; a funding body's priorities about what types of heritage projects should be supported; a

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national curriculum developer's judgment about which sources best illustrate a particular history; a teacher's verdict about how best to get his or her pupils interested in history. These are all matters of historical consciousness; in other words, these are all things that shape – and are shaped by – shifts in historical consciousness.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, many of the issues that define how societies have remembered and represented the history of slavery and other difficult histories have been considered in relation to some of the crucial concepts in the study of memory, including: the public sphere; historical consciousness; commemoration; transcultural memory and multidirectional memory. By primarily focusing on the macro-levels of remembering and teaching slavery, this chapter lays the foundations for the more micro-focused analyses that follow. In conclusion, the discussions above have consolidated and illustrated the politically charged and complex nature of the relationship between commemoration, education and shifting historical consciousness, and in doing so this chapter builds a bridge between the questions that are raised in the introduction (Chapter 1), framed in the literature review (Chapter 2) and addressed in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5: FRAMING THE DIFFICULT HISTORY MUSEUM FIELD-TRIP

This chapter seeks to problematise the difficult history museum field-trip by examining the ways in which the phenomenon has been 'framed' by academics, educators, teachers and pupils. In doing so it draws out some of the aspects of visiting that are particular to a school group and, even more specifically, to instances of learning about a traumatic past. Therefore, this chapter primarily speaks to Aim 2 and Aim 3 of this thesis; exploring the nature and range of the programmes available for Key Stage 3 groups and examining these museum learning experiences in more depth through the presentation of data analyses.

This includes addressing issues such as the physicality of the museum through the lens of a school group visit (Section 5.3) and the teachers' pre-visit expectations (Section 5.1) (responses to the pupil's survey are presented where relevant throughout the thesis). To achieve this, it takes the ideas about approaches to studying museum field-trips introduced in Section 2.2 and expands on them in line with the discussions about memory, education and historical consciousness that dominate Chapter 4. It begins with a more detailed examination of school field-trips and learning in the museum environment (Section 5.1), which lays the foundations for the case study grounded analyses that are presented in the remaining sections of this chapter.

In the introductory chapter, a brief overview of the case study museums is provided. However, rather than laboriously describing the setting and physicality of each museum in sequence in one section, this thesis provides a more detailed 'walkthrough' of the four case studies as and when it seems most appropriate in the course of the chapters. As most of the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken at Wilberforce House (including the visit from the Pupil Referral Unit that is the primary focus of this chapter), it is necessary in this early chapter (Section 5.3) to provide a clearer sense of the museum and examine how the different spaces serve to 'frame' the school field-trip visit. A session from the National Maritime Museum is also presented in this chapter; therefore this is preceded by a brief 'walkthrough' of the site (Section 5.5).

As outlined in the methodology chapter, the schools that were included in the fieldwork were to all intents and purposes 'self-selecting' and therefore I had little control

over the types of groups I observed at the museums (see Section 3.3). This fact created an interesting anomaly in the data, which this chapter is in part designed to address; it pays particular attention to one group of pupils, the three males from the Pupil Referral Unit that visited Wilberforce House on the first day of my fieldwork. As this chapter illustrates, these pupils were not typical within the wider data set and their experience at the museum does not necessarily correlate with the museum learning experiences I observed with the other groups.

However, although the Pupil Referral Unit may not be representative of the pupils that participated in this research, they are characteristic of a wider trend within the teaching of difficult histories to young people. As introduced in Section 4.5 of this thesis, there are particular pedagogical, cultural and historical discourses that shape the ways in which traumatic pasts are remembered and taught in different societies. This chapter expands on this earlier dialogue through an examination of one specific trend within the teaching of difficult histories; the targeting of socially excluded and 'at-risk' young people. The significance and practicalities of this trend are outlined specifically in Section 5.2 and are discussed further in Section 5.4 in relation to the data generated from the Pupil Referral Unit in this study.

Sections 2 and 5 of this chapter serve to address Aim 2 of this thesis, through their examination of some of the ways in which the experiences of school groups learning about transatlantic slavery are 'framed'. In particular, Section 5.4 addresses the role and responsibilities of the facilitator and considers how this influences the quality and character of the school group's experiences at the museum, in particular the flexibility of their teaching practice. Section 5.5 opens the discussion up to include examples beyond the Pupil Referral Unit in order to highlight some of the ways in which teachers, pupils and facilitators frame the history of slavery in relation to other events, experiences or issues, for example the election of Barack Obama or the legacies of racism.

5.1   School field-trips and learning in the museum environment

Building on the benefits of combining micro- and macro-analyses proposed in Chapter 2, this section examines how key ideas in museum studies literature contribute to a more

holistic vision of school field-trips and learning in the museum environment. This is achieved through a discussion of key literature from museum, cultural and education studies in order to highlight the theories and concepts that have influenced the study of museum field-trips as both a learning experience and an expression of museum responses to cultural and educational policies. This is especially significant in the context of official commemorations and the work of national education initiatives, such as *Understanding Slavery*.

Museum studies scholars have followed in the footsteps of mass communication studies and cultural studies theorists and has adopted ethnographic methods as a way of understanding the interplay between "individual psychologies and responses" and the "larger social divisions and structures" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 8). In *The Practice of Cultural Studies*, Johnson et al. describe "culture as policy" as being fashioned from a limiting reading of Foucault; in summary, cultural policy here is depicted as being focused on "governmentality" – in this case the programs and structures through which the museums and heritage sector are organised, regulated and controlled (2004: 11). However, this approach can be a very useful tool for illuminating the motives for, and consequences of, policies relating to social inclusion and cultural capital, at least in the UK.

Therefore, far from being removed from the experiences of the visitor, cultural policy studies are absolutely vital to developing a rounded appreciation of what happens in a museum from the visitor's point of view. The *Understanding Slavery* initiative and the 2007 bicentenary are prime examples of why it is essential to grasp that cultural policy and governmentality are key in understanding how the 'regulation' of culture or memory influences the experiences of the visitor. This is particularly important for school groups, whose museum learning experiences are further regulated by the content of the curriculum and a range of education agendas and policies, including funding available for visits and health and safety guidelines.

In her article 'Foucault's museum: difference, representation and genealogy', Beth Lord moves away from notions of personal and social contexts towards the idea of 'space', through an analysis of Foucault's concept of a 'heterotopia', which she defines as "a space that is absolutely central to a culture but in which the relations between elements of a culture are suspended, neutralised, or reversed" (2006: 1). This almost transcendental description of the museum is useful when trying to understand why the museum is

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sometimes regarded as a place / space where 'transformative' learning / memory journeys occur. The transformation might be in the treatment of the subject matter through the creativity of the exhibition designers, or in the transformations that take place within the visitors themselves. This second type of transformative potential is discussed later in this chapter in relation to the museum learning experiences of 'disaffected young people' (Section 5.3).

Lord concludes that "Foucault's museum is defined as a space of difference and a space of representation: a space in which the difference between words and things is put on display and made available for public contestation" (2006: 11). The choice of the word 'contestation' is interesting as it appeals to the idea of the museum as a 'forum' rather than a 'temple' (see Cameron, 2004), and of the visitor as an 'active' consumer rather than a 'passive' receiver (see Falk and Dierking, 2000: 41). This acknowledgement of the complexities of the power relations in respect of cultural policies and practices moves the Foucauldian analysis of the museum forward to incorporate recent thought in both visitor studies and media studies. This shift is achieved at the same time as retaining the essence of Foucault's 'power-knowledge' paradigm, whilst widening the potential sources of power to include, for example, 'communities'. This correlation between the changing practices of the heritage sector and the changing theories and methods of heritage studies are succinctly expressed in Peter Vergo's term 'new museology' (Vergo, 1989). Vergo describes the subject matter of new museology in the following extract:

> Beyond the captions, the information panels, the accompanying catalogue, the press handout, there is a subtext comprising innumerable diverse, often contradictory strands, woven from the wishes and ambitions, the intellectual or political or social or educational aspirations and preconceptions of the museum director, the curator, the scholar, the designer, the sponsor – to say nothing of the society, the political or social or educational system which nurtured all these people and in so doing left its stamp upon them (Vergo, 1989).

New museology is fundamental to studies that place communities at their centre, as apparent in the tone and content of the research presented in Sheila Waton's edited volume *Museums and Their Communities* (Watson, 2007b). Furthermore, the repositioning of the museum as a significant educational institution made up of complex 'communities of practice' that operate within wider systems of power and regulation (Fox, 2000) is an essential turning point, the roots of which can be traced back to the 1970s and the

professionalisation of the sector, for example through the establishment of specialist groups:

> As a relative newcomer to museum organization, the GESM [Group for Educational Services in Museums] has also had to contend with the occasional hostility of curatorial departments, whose members did not always regard school groups as the most welcome of visitors (Chandler, 1976: 185).

Written in the mid-1970s, Chandler's comments about the hostility of curatorial departments towards the work of the association "responsible for coordinating [educational] work in museums and art galleries" are of retrospective interest; he states that until GESMs "foundation in 1953 the development of educational services was a slow and haphazard process" (Chandler, 1976: 185). Education and learning have since become an unavoidable, policy-driving force in the cultural sector, a change that is particularly palpable in the museum and heritage sector in the UK. Underpinning this shift in focus and intensification of resources available for education and learning in cultural institutions is the recognition that, within the cultural context, education and learning have the potential to bring about change, to 'transform' not only the museum and our perceptions of it, but also to transform us as visitors, and our perceptions of ourselves.

A public declaration of the value of learning in the museum surfaced during the 1990s and has had a profound effect on the sector, with government funding having supported many initiatives and developments in the UK. However, as Hooper-Greenhill comments, "theory-building and research" into learning in the museum has not moved as quickly as the practice of museum education (2007: 7). Much of the research that has been undertaken in recent years in the UK has, by varying degrees, been driven by advocacy and the growing need "to be able to present government with evidence of the outcomes and impact of museum learning" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007: 7).

Although such research and evaluation is of vital importance to the sector, as a means to secure the continued support of funders, its relatively narrow aims fall short of allowing for a revealing, in-depth, qualitative understanding of the character of learning in the museum. Instead, quantitative, objective, outcome-based research findings are more commonly produced, for example the report *Engage, Learn, Achieve*, which usefully assesses the impact of museum visits on the attainment of secondary pupils (Watson et al., 2007). Of course, this type of study has an important place within museum education

studies, but in order to appreciate fully why exactly museum visiting influences such outcomes as attainment, a more in-depth ethnographic approach is desirable.

Museums are now widely accepted as environments where both formal and life-long learning take place. There is also a more recently emerging notion that museums are places where young people can engage with 'difficult' histories and 'sensitive' subjects in ways that may not be possible inside the walls of the classroom. The perceived benefits of learning about 'difficult' histories outside the classroom have been widely discussed and extolled (as outlined in Chapter 4), and are perhaps most clearly expressed through the work of *Facing History and Ourselves*, an international organisation that delivers classroom strategies, resources and lessons relating to 'difficult' histories. The *Facing History's* website states that through its work:

> Students all over the world learn to recognize bigotry and indifference. They also meet exemplars of courage and compassion in the face of injustice and see that their own daily choices can have major impacts and perhaps even be a critical link to a safer future [...] Facing History's work is based on the premise that we need to – and can – teach civic responsibility, tolerance, and social action to young people, as a way of fostering moral adulthood. If we do not educate students for dignity and equity, then we have failed both them and ourselves [...] We believe that students are moral philosophers-able and willing to think about tough moral and ethical dilemmas in surprisingly sophisticated ways (Facing History & Ourselves, 2008).

The ability to 'foster moral adulthood' is a big claim to make for a project, but it seems that this type of 'outcome' is a strong incentive for government agencies and funders to support initiatives and institutions that can potentially 'teach civic responsibility' in a manner that effectively and innovatively employs the 'lessons of history' (see Chapter 6 for further discussion). However, the pedagogies of field-trips to 'difficult history' museums have rarely been researched, and where it has, the data collection and analysis has been limited; in line with the general trend of evaluating learning (in the UK), research has focused overwhelmingly on the 'outcomes and impacts' of the learning (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004: 29).

As the public accountability of the museums and heritage sector increased in the 1980s, surveys began to be used to record the demographic details of visitors; these surveys became more sophisticated and professional as they began to focus on the "participation" of museum visitors: who visits museums and why? (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 3-4). By the

1990s, researchers were becoming progressively interested in what visitors do once they arrive at a museum, and this is where the now more established field of "visitor behaviour studies" emerges (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995: 5). This marks a pivotal point in the story of museum studies; as Hooper-Greenhill explains, "the importance of the social context of museum visits" was being seriously considered for the first time, as was the idea that people "come to museums carrying with them the rest of their lives" (1995: 5). This idea of visitors bringing with them to the museum their personal 'baggage' is an important aspect of this thesis, as the later sections of this chapter demonstrate.

One consequence of the realisation that visitors bring with them personal 'baggage' and that they have individual 'needs', is the sector's preoccupation with 'target groups', a shift that Josie Appleton states is "[in] keeping with the new market-driven spirit" (2007: 117). Target groups can be defined as distinct groupings of people according to certain characteristics that may mean they have shared needs and interests, for example: families, school groups, socioeconomic groups, people with disabilities, young people aged 16-25 and any other group that museum organisations feel are underrepresented in the visitor figures. The 'socially excluded', such as disaffected young people, have also been targeted by museums through policy and practice, in line with government agendas designed to promote social inclusion (Tlili, 2008). As Newman and McLean stated in 2002, the "potential social value of museums within society is an area that remains underresearched and contested" and that "the contribution that museums can make to resolving the problems of exclusion is not fully understood" (2002: 56). In 2000, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport defined social exclusion as:

> A shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health, poverty and family breakdown (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2000).

In relation to the responsibilities of museums to tackle social exclusion, Richard Benjamin, the director of the International Slavery Museum, poses the following question in an article on the 'Museum Identity' website:

> [How] can museums in the UK expand and develop if indeed it is not engaging with current political trends; debates and the great social ills and issues at every opportunity? Is it simply not acceptable that museums which are centrally funded and where social inclusion in the words of DCMS 'should be mainstreamed as a

policy priority for all libraries, museums, galleries and archives' not to actively campaign against such political parties as the BNP in elections? If museums are in the words of David Anderson 'metaphors for the kind of society we have, and the society we wish to create' then the answer is no, museums must get involved in the great debate and indeed challenge such political parties which aim to stifle real social cohesion (Benjamin, 2011).

In addition to this renewed need to justify their social relevance, in recent years the future of museums has also depended on their ability to defend and demonstrate their economic sustainability. This means that it has been essential that they attract 'new audiences', which has in part been achieved by developing communication and interpretation strategies that respond to the needs of these target audiences. As a result, studies investigating learning in the museum in recent years have generally focused on 'impact' and 'outcomes'. This is perhaps due to the limited funding opportunities for non-evaluative research in the sector, with the majority of the funding available in the UK coming through government-led initiatives such as *Renaissance in the Regions* or the *Inspiring Learning for All Framework* (Museums Libraries and Archives, 2011b, Museums Libraries and Archives, 2011a).

These types of research projects are inevitably agenda driven, for example many recent studies have focused on issues such as 'social inclusion', and others have had unavoidable advocacy-linked purposes, for example the development of 'Generic Learning Outcomes' as a model for measuring the impact of learning in museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 2003). In the current political and economic arena it is essential that the museum is perceived to have a valuable role in society, as an innovative and dynamic educational institution, therefore evidence of 'effective' learning must be gathered to ensure that financial support continues. However, one potential side-effect of this undeniably important mode of thinking about and approaching museum education is that the wide-spread success of its now well-established models and paradigms may, in the long-run, serve to stifle creativity, flexibility and innovation in research into learning in the museum (Newman, 2007). However, refreshing approaches to studying museum learning experiences have emerged in recent years that stress what Leinhardt and Knutson refer to as "the nonfactoidal aspects of museum learning and the uniqueness of the free-choice environment" (2004: 1).

The inherently 'generic' nature of the Generic Learning Outcomes means that although they may be useful for evaluating responses to an interactive science exhibition, or

an open-air museum, they are perhaps not fit for purpose when it comes to examining individual's responses to a 'difficult history' exhibition, or an interactive session with a Holocaust survivor. This thesis argues that these types of experiences are perhaps better understood using ideas such as the acquisition of 'prosthetic memories' (Landsberg, 2004), as discussed in chapters 7 and 8 in particular. Furthermore, the relative lack of longitudinal studies into museum learning is regrettable, particularly as socio-cultural theories of learning, such as those expounded by Falk and Dierking, emphasise the ongoing, cyclical and contextual nature of experiential learning (2000).

Accounts from learners taken on the day of their visit, whether through a questionnaire or an interview, have a place within large-scale research projects that aim to demonstrate evidence of effective learning. However, in isolation, they reveal very little about the significance of this learning within the visitor's lives outside of the museum, which, as Section 5.3 illustrates, is often an integral part of understanding a particular school field-trip. Indeed, any attempt to curtly evaluate such experiences will inevitably lead to unsatisfactory and potentially misleading findings.

Understanding the pre-visit perspectives of teachers

Attempting to adopt a more holistic and longitudinal approach to museum learning experiences is particularly important when looking at school group visits, as they should not be treated in the same way as every other visit. A pupil visiting a museum with his or hers school class is not partaking in 'free-choice learning' in the same way as the visitor who wakes up one morning and chooses to go to a museum.

> The school field trip constitutes an important demographic market for museums. Field trips enlist the energies of teachers and students, schools and museums, and ought to be used to the best of their potential. There is evidence from the literature and from practitioners that museums often struggle to understand the needs of teachers, who make the key decisions in field trip planning and implementation. Museum personnel ponder how to design their programs to serve educational and pedagogical needs most effectively, and how to market the value of their institutions to teachers (Anderson et al., 2006: 365).

Anderson et al's work on "understanding teacher's perspectives on field trips" offers many interesting insights into the variety of issues, factors, obstacles, contexts and opportunities that determine the nature of a field-trip experience (2006). Through a comparative study

across the US, Canada and Germany, they conclude "that issues surrounding teacher perceptions of field trip planning and implementation may be widespread and—to a degree—independent of specific school systems and field trip cultures" (Anderson et al., 2006: 366). Returning to the pressures on museums to increase 'foot-fall' and target particular groups, the extract above highlights some of the most significant issues, drawing attention to the need to consider the practical, professional and pedagogical factors that can ultimately influence the 'transmission of historical knowledge'.

The teachers surveyed through this research articulated a wide range of motivations and aspirations for accompanying their pupils to the museum. Some of the reasons given were shared across the teachers, for example the idea that it will "consolidate learning". The teachers that completed the pre-visit survey stated the following as the "main purpose" for the visit:

- "It gives them an opportunity to learn outside of the constraints of the classroom and to see 'history in action' rather than reading and writing about it from a book";
- "To aid / extend their learning to complete activities for the deep learning day. To help facilitate their use and appreciation of local museums";
- "Highlight the democratic side of protest and its effectiveness against injustice";
- "To make the topic even more engaging for the pupils. To inspire them to think more widely about the topic";
- "Their keen interest. To complement and consolidate their learning. To learn in different ways in a different environment – engaging".

Here, unsurprisingly, the type of history education practice that the museum has to offer is perceived as more active, free, engaging and inspiring than the classroom alternative. In describing what they would like their pupils to see, hear and do at the museum, one teacher responded:

> I would like the pupils to look at conditions before, during and after slavery for the people involved, so they get an overall view of slavery and its effects. I would like them to handle artefacts of the time, look at primary evidence and hear first-hand accounts. I would like them to be able to empathise with the slaves and also look at the reasons for slavery existing and how it was abolished and by what means.

This teacher picks up on many of the trends and themes that are discussed in this chapter and beyond: Africa before the slave trade (sections 6.4 and 7.3); the impact of slavery and its legacies (Section 5.5); the value of object-handling and working with primary evidence (Chapter 7); the use of personal narratives and accounts (Chapter 8); the opportunity to feel empathy with the enslaved (chapters 6-8); the reasons that transatlantic slavery existed for

so long and how it was brought to an end (Chapter 6). Echoing the points already made about slavery museums, in response to a question about whether they think there will be any difference between how their pupils learn about this history in the museum environment as compared to the classroom, the teachers gave the following answers:

- "Interactivity with the displays. Talking to curators / experts. Listening to accounts of slave experience and seeing the 'reality' of what this action had on other human beings";
- "Pupils will be able to handle artefacts and look at primary evidence which is more difficult to do in a classroom. They will also be able to look at a wider variety of sources and information. Museum staff will also possess detailed knowledge about slavery and the artefacts which they will be able to pass onto the pupils. An exciting place to come and experience different aspects of the slave trade with different people leading";
- "The ability to handle artefacts";
- "Pupils more relaxed. More visual, more hands on approach to learning. Engaging workshops";
- "They will handle objects from the time, work with different adults and work in the museum seeing artefacts, visual material etc";
- "Greater use of artefacts and group work and our investigative theme throughout the day".

Here, the teachers highlight some of the other commonly held perceptions about the value of museum visiting, including that the museum staff possess greater knowledge of the subject; that engaging with new adult figures, especially curators and other experts, is an effective way of learning; that museums present the 'reality' of the past; that museums are more exciting than the classroom because they engage the senses and offer a 'hands on' approach to learning and that the museum offers an ideal setting for an investigation driven learning journey. This is an interesting area of investigation in itself: teachers' perceptions of the value of learning about the history of slavery and going to a museum to do (some of) this learning. Although the survey data generated for this thesis does not permit us to make broad generalisations or conclusions about the attitudes and values of Key Stage 3 teachers across England, it does offer interesting insight into some of the common pressures, concerns, ideals and objectives shared by those teachers that engage with museums.

As outlined previously, the approach undertaken in this thesis is informed by Falk and Dierking's 'contextual model of learning' and their broader ideas about 'free-choice learning' (Falk and Dierking, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2002), which provide a more holistic way of visualising learning outside the classroom, specifically museum field-trips. There is an

obvious sticking point here; pupils do not necessarily choose to attend a museum field-trip and that therefore this is not strictly free-choice learning that we are dealing with:

> Free-choice learning occurs during visits to museums, when watching television, reading a newspaper, talking with friends, attending a play, or surfing the Internet. Free-choice learning tends to be non-linear and personally motivated and to involve considerable choice on the part of the learner as to when, where and what to learn (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 13).

However, this thesis argues that the very nature of the museum as a learning environment means that there is the potential for valuable, memorable and meaningful free-choice learning experiences for school pupils that offer something different to learning that takes place inside the classroom. According to Falk and Dierking, "meaningful learning results when a person is able to actively construct and find personal meaning within a situation" (2000: 41). One of the key questions that this thesis seeks to address is: do difficult histories such as transatlantic slavery or the Holocaust become more accessible – and therefore more meaningful – within museum or heritage (or essentially any free-choice learning) environments? And if this is the case, what is it about these learning settings that makes these histories more accessible? How can the resulting meaning-making be further facilitated through the physical context of the environment? What are the factors that influence a person's ability and motivation to 'actively construct and find personal meaning' within a museum?

5.2   Difficult histories and disaffected youth

In recent decades, academic and public attention has turned to the topic of teaching young people about the Holocaust. For example, *Holocaust Journey: Travelling in Search of the Past* (Gilbert, 1997) documents a university group's two-week journey across Europe visiting Holocaust sites; the book weaves the group's experiences and poignant responses with a historical narrative of Nazi persecution. *Did you ever meet Hitler, Miss?* (Levi, 2002) captures the experiences of school pupils meeting Holocaust survivors and presents the questions they ask during these invaluable and increasingly rare encounters. More recently, the Holocaust Education Development Programme undertook the first large scale national study of teaching about the Holocaust in secondary schools in England (2008-9) and continues to work with teachers to transform teaching and learning about the Holocaust.

As introduced in Section 4.5, the phenomenon of young people learning about the traumatic events from the past has attracted attention from a range of commentators and creative media, many of which address the question posed by the title of Ambrosewicz-Jacobs' book *Why should we teach about the Holocaust?* (2004). The value of Holocaust education has even been played out on the big screen, in the 2007 American drama, 'Freedom Writers'. It tells the real-life story of Erin Gruwell, a schoolteacher who in the 1990s took an unorthodox approach to teaching at a high-school in Long Beach, California, where pupils were bitterly divided into racial groups whose members constantly fought with each other. During a lesson, Gruwell confiscates a racist drawing by one of the students, and decides to use it to teach about the Holocaust, instructing the students to keep a journal in which they write about their experiences of abuse and seeing their friends die in gang-related activity. She invites Holocaust survivors to talk to the class about their own experiences of trauma, and arranges a field-trip to the Museum of Tolerance.

After reading 'The Diary of Anne Frank', the class decides to invite Miep Gies – the woman who sheltered Anne Frank from the soldiers – to talk to them. When one pupil tells her that she is his hero, she denies it, claiming that she was only doing the right thing. This encounter is presented as a transformative experience for the class, even causing one pupil to change her mind about her decision to lie in a court testimony about a drive-by shooting she witnessed. In essence, the film portrays the power of Holocaust memory in reaching individuals who are deemed to be unreachable by the education system.

The 'Freedom Writers Foundation' was founded by Gruwell in 1997, providing training programmes and events in the US that advocate student-centred pedagogies that promote empathy and tolerance as a means of tackling social exclusion, hate-related crime, gang activity and racial conflict. By engaging young people in an examination of racism, prejudice and moral dilemmas through the lens of anti-Semitism and the Nazi persecution of minorities, educational organisations propose that it is possible "to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry" (Facing History & Ourselves, 2008). In the UK, there are tailor-made Holocaust education programmes that specifically target young people who are deemed to be 'at-risk', whether because of an association with gun and knife crime, drug abuse, anti-social behaviour, hate-related crime, school exclusion, truancy or racial conflict. For example, the work carried out by 'The Holocaust Memorial

Centre' in Nottinghamshire or the Hertfordshire based charity 'Act for Change'.

The idea of fostering 'empathy not hate' is at the heart of why such programmes are perceived to be effective and important; the Holocaust holds a unique place within the socio-cultural imagination, serving as a moral kaleidoscope through which other historical and contemporary situations, dilemmas and traumas are scrutinised. Understanding empathy is central to an understanding of what it means to be human, how people understand the social world around them and behave towards each other. However, perceptions and conceptualisations of claims made about the value and socially beneficial outcomes of teaching disaffected, disadvantaged and 'anti-social' young people about traumatic pasts are currently underdeveloped (see Chapter 9 for recommendations for future research).

> The promotion and training of empathy for the purpose of increasing tolerance and reducing prejudice would seem to be a logical endeavour. A potential stumbling block is the problem of implementing yet another program amid the already overburdened school day. A possible solution is to make empathy-enhancing procedures an integral part of the classroom's regular curriculum (Decety and Ickes, 2009: 91).

As the three male pupils from the Pupil Referral Unit illustrate in their response to Wilberforce House and the history of slavery (see below), our understanding of the nature of museum field-trips is deepened by closely observing and seeking to appreciate the learning experiences of those who fall outside of the 'normal' pupil or school category.

Pre-visit expectations and motivations

As discussed in the methodology chapter of this thesis (Section 3.1), surveying school pupils in order to generate qualitative data is useful but problematic, and most social scientists would choose to undertake interviews, where possible. Unfortunately, the nature of this research project, geographic distance and limited resources meant that interviews with pupils and teachers before the museum visit were not an option and therefore surveys – both paper- and web-based – were used with groups instead.

As expected, the responses to questions varied in quality, and the data generated from the surveys completed by the pupils from the Pupil Referral Unit suffered from a low completion rate and very brief answers. This is not surprising, given the educational

background of these pupils, as well as the fact that the pupils unanimously expressed a strong aversion to writing activities during their visit. Despite the brevity of many of the responses (and the lack of response to some questions), the data nevertheless adds some valuable insight into the sociocultural and personal contexts of this groups visit, as well as some ideas about the pupils expectations for the museum and their prior understanding and interests regarding the history of slavery.

In response to whether they had ever heard, seen or read anything about the slave trade and slavery before, all four boys responded that they had, citing television, books, the Internet and teachers as the sources for this information. When providing a few details of what they had heard, seen or read, Lucas mentioned the issues of "transportation", "punishments" and "work", David stated that he had heard of "a scheme of work about slavery", whilst Paul stated that he was aware of "the slave triangle" prior to the visit. When asked whether they had spoken to anyone about their upcoming visit to the museum, two of the boys stated that they hadn't and the other two stated that yes they had spoken to others about the visit, with one responding that he had spoken to members of his family about "what the museum is for".

In relation to how they thought learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery in a museum would be different to in a classroom, Lucas responded that they will be able to see and hear "how slaves lived", whereas David stated that they will have the chance to hear "things we don't know" and opportunities to "try things on". Andrew expected that they will be able to see "equipment" and to have opportunities for "touching equipment / tools", and similarly Paul expected that they would be able to see "chains", hear "about how slaves live" and have opportunities to "wear chains". These expectations about what a museum is certainly help shed some light on the ways in which the pupils react to different aspects of the visit, in particular in regards their fascination with the materiality of objects (see Vignette 2 below).

Three out of four of the boys stated that they had been to a museum before, with one boy offering the name of an English Heritage property that he has previously visited. Lucas thought that it would be better to learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery in a museum because "you get closer to the truth". David, Andrew and Paul agreed with Lucas, reasoning that a museum "has more things to look at and touch", that "it's more

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fun" and that "I will not have to write". Lucas stated that he thought that his teacher wanted them to visit the slavery exhibition because "it can explain it better". Similarly, Andrew's response was "To give us more information" and Paul stated that "it will help us learn more", whereas David thought it was because "He wants us to have a good time". Lucas's expectations for the types of tasks and activities that they would be asked to complete at the museum was that they would be asked to "answer the questions", David expected that they would be asked to "write things down" and Andrew thought they would be given a "clipboard with worksheets to complete".

Lucas and Andrew stated that there were no particular aspects of the history of the slave trade and slavery that they were hoping to find out about at the museum, whereas David stated that he was hoping to find out "about Egyptians". In response to a question about how he expects he will feel when he visits the slavery exhibition, David stated that he thought he would feel "nervous" and Andrew thought that he would feel "mixed emotions". Andrew and David agreed that learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery is interesting, with David stating "I like history" as the reason why he thinks this. When asked whether he thinks that remembering the slave trade and slavery is important or not, Andrew responded that he thinks it is important because it "reminds us of how hard their lives were". Paul, on the other hand, stated that it is not important to remember slavery, and that learning about slavery is "boring".

Finding out about the school before the visit

Access to this kind of information about a school group would of course be of great value to museum education staff, as several of the case study museum staff commented when they read through the questions that I had been asking the teachers and pupils before the visit. Many of the solutions that staff proposed regarding the lack of communication are both practical and straightforward, so why are they not already happening? The answer that is commonly given from museum staff is time (and therefore money), as it takes time to open up lines of communication and find out about: a school's background; the expectations of the teachers and pupils; what (if any) pre-visit activities the group has completed; what they have previously learnt about transatlantic slavery and how the teacher intends to integrate the visit into the classroom-based teaching.

Therefore, it is unlikely that many (if any) museums would have the resources to generate and interpret such information prior to a group's arrival, not to mention the extra time commitment for teachers. Furthermore, museum learning teams in the UK are under pressure from performance indicators and institutionally set targets to maintain high numbers of school group bookings, therefore it can seem like a risky strategy to introduce any 'extra work' for the teachers or anything that might deter them from making that booking.

The build up to the arrival of the school group is full of activity, anticipation and a tinge of anxiety. Often the museum facilitators running the school programme sessions know very little about the group in advance of their arrival at the venue, and therefore are expected to be able to immediately interpret a groups needs and to adapt their pedagogical style or the design of the session accordingly. The ability to think on one's feet and to deliver an engaging session about a difficult history to a group of young people is a challenging skill that is impressive to see in action. Every facilitator that was observed over the course of this research demonstrated this skill, albeit to varying degrees. However, it is clear through the conversations and interviews with staff from across the museums that there are key factors within the institutional, organisational and employee context that can either enhance or impede the natural aptitude of a good educator. It is mostly common sense – the more a facilitator knows and understands about a group beforehand, the better – but the consequences of a failure to communicate this information can be profound, particularly if the group falls into the 'atypical' school category.

Understanding the Pupil Referral Unit pupils

The Pupil Referral Unit that the three boys attend underwent an Ofsted inspection a few months after the field-trip to the museum. The report describes the centre as providing "education for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream school or who are considered to be unable to cope in mainstream [education]" (Parker, 2009: 3). The report also highlights the following: a higher than average proportion of the pupils are entitled to free school meals; the majority of the pupils come from White British backgrounds; the proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs is above average (Parker, 2009: 3). Many of the pupils have been involved in crime and other anti-social activities,

therefore the centre works hard to help pupils "live safer and more healthy lives" (Parker, 2009: 4).

The Pupil Referral Unit provides young people with individual support and a tailor-made weekly timetable, which is designed to improve their behaviour and build their self-esteem, which subsequently "enables them to begin to enjoy learning", leading to higher achievement and higher aspirations (Parker, 2009: 4). The value of providing such alternatives to mainstream school are clear in the following quote from a parent who "described the 'absolute miracle' that has transformed her son from, 'a boy with no ambition who possibly would have ended up in prison to a nice young man with manners and an eagerness to do his GCSE examinations'" (Parker, 2009: 4).

The report outlines several observations about the centre that add valuable depth to our understanding of the sociocultural context of this museum field-trip. These are pupils that have been at risk in their mainstream schools, often due to misbehaviour, poor attitudes towards learning and an unwillingness to accept the level of conformity that is expected of pupils in a secondary school environment. The report echoes many of the issues that emerged during the group's visit to Wilberforce House, for example it discusses the necessity of using "engaging" teaching styles, stating that the more engaging a particular lesson is, the less the teachers have to concentrate on "correcting inappropriate behaviour" (Parker, 2009: 4). The example of an engaging lesson given involves a science experiment, where two of the boys were "fascinated by the changes that occur when zinc and magnesium are burned" (Parker, 2009: 4).

However, the report also makes note of an example of pupils displaying high levels of engagement through "reflective and evaluative thinking", in particular in their "discussion about the impact of Sitting Bull's victory at Little Big Horn" (Parker, 2009: 4). Regarding the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the report states that pupils at the unit "begin to understand, in most cases for the first time, the difference between right and wrong, and how to get along with different people" (Parker, 2009: 4). The report also states that during their time at the centre, the pupils "develop rational values of their own, and begin to recognise their own characteristics" (Parker, 2009: 4).

Learning to enjoy learning

The Ofsted report goes on to say that in the "better lessons, activities are motivating and teachers are more sensitive to individual responses", citing the adaptability and patience of the adults as the key factors in creating these successful lessons (Parker, 2009: 5), which are also key characteristics necessary in a good museum learning facilitator. The report remarks on the good practice of presenting "questions as opportunities to succeed", and using "additional questions to entice pupils to explore their own ideas, rather than telling them the answer" (Parker, 2009: 5), therefore addressing the fear of failure and of 'getting it wrong' that has impeded their progress in mainstream schooling. The report comments on the "range of off-site activities" that "reintroduce the idea of enjoying learning as well as giving scope for teamwork and problem solving" (Parker, 2009: 6). From this we can see that the decision to take these pupils to Wilberforce House for the morning is part of a long-term, carefully thought through, ambitious and vitally important strategy for improving the self-confidence, happiness and life opportunities of young people who have been rejected from mainstream schooling because of unacceptable behaviour or who have been deemed unable to cope within their previous schooling context.

The adults at the centre work hard to develop an encouraging, supportive and consistent relationship with the pupils that is built on patience and mutual respect, a fact that the pupils recognise and respond positively to (Parker, 2009: 5). The message is clear: the head teacher at the Pupil Referral Unit believes that one of the most important things that they can do to help these pupils improve their attitude, behaviour and academic achievement is to provide them with opportunities to enjoy learning, to engage with a topic meaningfully. What better place to do this than in a museum? As Section 5.4 below demonstrates, for these pupils, the tangibility and tactility of the museum galleries was a crucial aspect of their 'enjoyment' of the field trip. The next section of this chapter 'sets the scene' for the vignettes and discussions that follow by presenting a walkthrough of Wilberforce House Museum.

5.3   Setting the scene: a walk through Wilberforce House Museum

Upon arriving at the street entrance to the museum, the visitor enters through wrought iron gates into a small walled garden area that envelops the beautiful Grade II listed building.

The garden offers the opportunity to take a seat on a park bench in a peaceful space removed from the street from which to admire William Wilberforce's birthplace as well as the monument of the man himself, which stands to the right of the visitor entrance, almost gesturing you inside. There are no visual cues for the visitor that the history represented inside the museum's walls is not just a story of the triumph of the abolition movement, but also one of suffering, exploitation and contemporary injustices; the house feels impressive yet familiar, grand yet inviting. Which is essential for the resident's of Hull – Wilberforce is an important figure of civic pride and the Wilberforce House Museum is the epicentre of activity and remembrance of this inspiring local MP who played such a significant role in abolishing the transatlantic slave trade. As J.R. Oldfield comments and as this thesis demonstrates:

> Like so many British heroes, Wilberforce's image has been 're-arranged' (Halbwach's term) to meet the demands of the present, so that at different times he has been viewed and adopted as a 'Christian philanthropist', an apostle of freedom, or, more recently, as a modern human rights campaigner. (Oldfield, 2007: 3)

The strength of feeling and attachment to Wilberforce from the people of Hull was more than evident during the redevelopment of the museum's galleries and exhibition spaces. The newly reopened museum received mixed reviews from the local community, many of whom were disappointed to find that the recreation of the cramped conditions on a slave ship (Figure 14), had been removed during the redevelopment. The response to the loss of this material representation of the Middle Passage offers a fascinating insight into the complexities of identity and engagement in relation to difficult histories and contested heritage. The museum representations and interpretive media that people feel most strongly passionate about are not always the most 'politically correct', sensitive or ethically adequate, even if they are evocative, memorable and engaging.

Figure 14: Recreation of cramped conditions during the Middle Passage (East Riding Media Library, 2011)

Once through the main doors of the museum, the everyday visitor is directed towards the reception area, which is located at the base of the grand staircase that leads up to the first floor where the following themes are covered in the gallery spaces: origins of slavery, West African cultures, capture and Enslavement, the slave trade, the Middle Passage, auctions, life on the plantations, resistance and rebellion, and abolition (see Figure 15 for a floor plan of the galleries). The other three galleries are located on the ground floor: the first examines the life and work of Wilberforce, the second explores the history of the house, and the third, which can be found in an annexed part of the building that is accessed by a door opposite the main reception door, looks at issues relating to contemporary slavery.

For most of the school groups that visit the museum, the day begins in the dedicated learning space, which is also located in the building's annex, although it has its own entrance and therefore feels removed from the galleries and the rest of the museum. This setup has its advantages and disadvantages, with obvious advantages including that there is less need

for museum staff and teachers to be concerned about noise levels, disturbing other museum visitors or indeed other museum visitors distracting the pupils. However the disconnect between the education centre and the museum can influence the design and structure of school group sessions, as there seems to be an understandable temptation to limit time in the galleries for practical reasons. For example, one of the case study school groups spent a total of twenty minutes in one gallery and thirty minutes in another gallery over the course of a four hour visit to the museum, which was a common pattern across the visits observed at this particular museum.

The education centre is a modern space that has a range of facilities necessary for a school group visit: a small kitchen area and coat rack; large built in cupboards provide storage space for object handling boxes and other resources; a projector and large screen linked up to a PC with internet access; plenty of light – both natural and artificial. The tables and chairs are easy to move and can be configured according to the requirements of a particular activity or group size, and there is ample space at the back of the room for the teachers and accompanying adults to hover, sit, listen or chat. In other words, the room is akin to a well-furnished classroom and as such serves as a more than familiar environment for a school group. Whether or not the easy familiarity of the space is a positive thing or not depends very much on the perceived purpose of the museum visit, which is an issue that is examined in this thesis. However there is no doubt that the education centre at Wilberforce House is a welcoming, functional and well-designed space.

Some of the sessions delivered by the museum are taken from the *Understanding Slavery* initiative, as interpreted by the museum learning team. Other sessions have been developed by staff at Wilberforce House and are therefore much more site-specific (for example a PDA tour of the galleries or the Guildhall Debates), or are reflective of the professional background and particular interests of the staff (for example the 'Campaigning for Change' session). Many of the session plans used by the facilitators were put together by the education team at the High Street venue of Hull Museums, who liaised with local schools to ensure that the sessions fitted with new requirements. Sessions were designed to match the national curriculum, and had been recently updated to be in line with the new Key Stage 3 citizenship curriculum, although staff reported that most of the sessions had not changed that much since the museum re-opened.
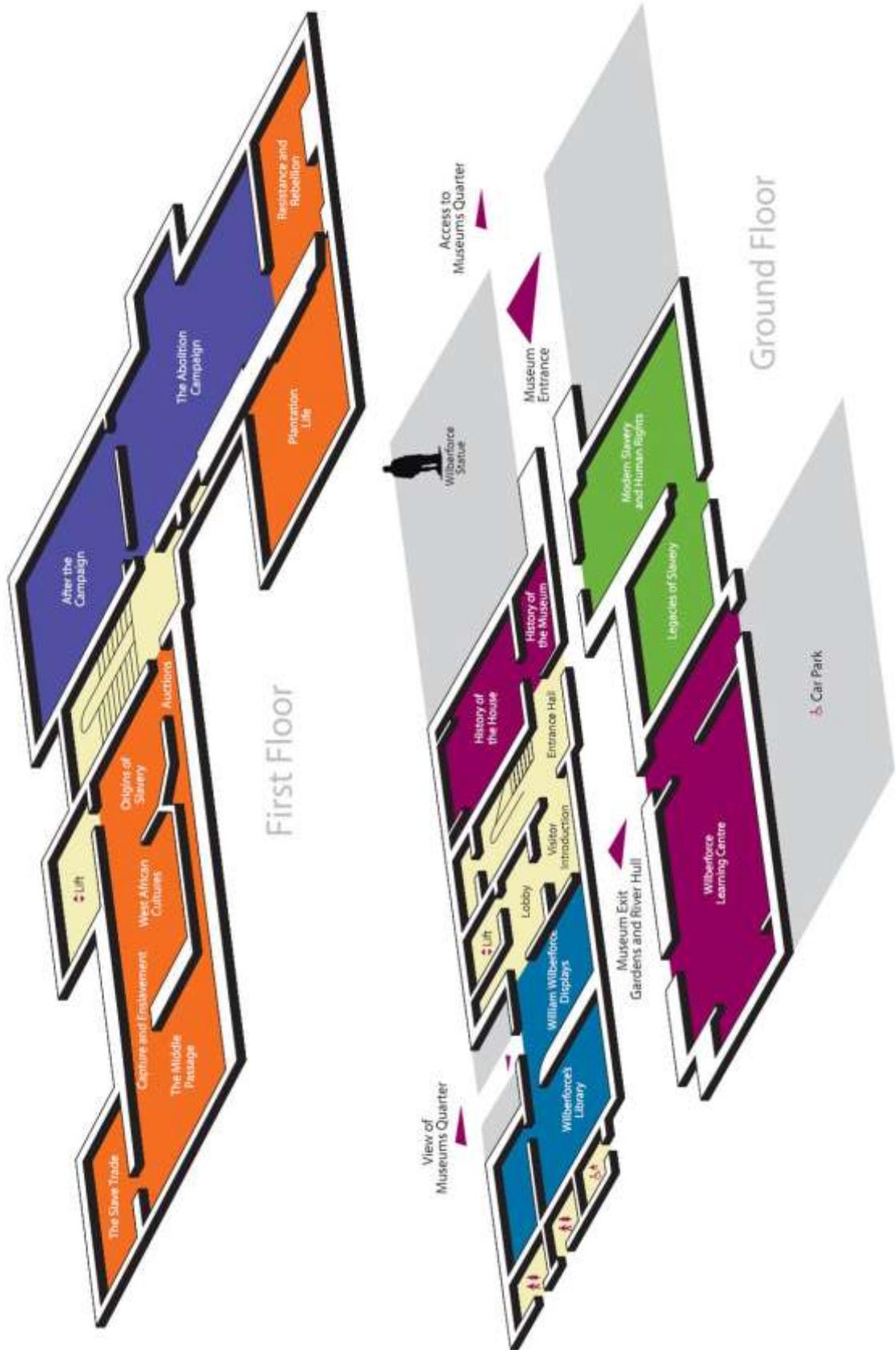
Figure 15: Wilberforce House floor plans

5.4   Sticking to script / going off script

This section tackles the observational data and presents the first vignette of the thesis, which coincidentally happens to be from the first day of the fieldwork, back in January 2009. It uses the idea of 'sticking to the script' as a starting point for discussing the ways in which facilitators interpret their capacity and freedom to adapt to the needs of a group and be flexible with the sessions, an issue that is especially important when it comes to groups with particular behavioural or learning requirements.

Vignette 1: This is my personal context, what is yours?

The group arrive at 10.15am and they are taken straight to the museum's education centre. The museum facilitator, Rowena, asks the three male pupils to take a seat around one of the tables. Rowena starts by introducing herself as a freelance learning facilitator and telling the group that she has a background in mental health. She then asks the three adults from the centre to introduce themselves. Dave explains that he teaches the pupils humanities, whilst Mike and Rachel explain that they are both teaching assistants at the centre. The three boys jokingly mock the adults. They seem to be testing the boundaries of what they can get away with. Dave responds in a relaxed manner; he seems to have a good relationship with the boys. Rowena asks the boys to introduce themselves. They each say their names in turn (Lucas, David and Andrew) and where they are from. Rowena asks them what it is like where they are from, to which Andrew shrugs and says, "It's alright".

Rowena mentioned in her interview that she was keen to sit at the table too, rather than "standing at the front of the classroom a lot", because "with a group like [the Pupil Referral Unit] she'd much rather be sat with them, in a less formal setting". After the group had left, I asked Rowena how much information she has access to about a particular group before they arrive at the museum. She explained that as a freelance facilitator, she has no direct contact with the lead teacher during the booking process, but that she does receive an email prior to the visit with the name of the school and the particular sessions the teachers have requested.

She went on to say that she had wanted to find out more about group, so she visited the Pupil Referral Unit's website, but there wasn't much information there either, which is

why she was keen to start the visit by asking the three pupils about Pupil Referral Unit, and why they go there:

[Rowena]   Tell us about [the Pupil Referral Unit]. Why do you go there?

[Pupil]   'Cos there's teachers I don't like at school.

By asking this question, the museum facilitator is recognising the importance of both personal and sociocultural contexts in relation to understanding where the pupils are coming from, building a picture of the group as a 'community of learners' (Falk and Dierking, 2000) with shared experiences and pre-existing relationships with each other. Moreover, she is quickly building a picture of how these pupils feel about formal education, about school, about their previous learning experiences and about their notions of agency. This group presented a quandary for Rowena, as she knew before they arrived that she would need to do "something different" with these pupils than the sessions that she would run with a group from a mainstream school, yet she expressed uncertainty about whether she had the authority to adapt sessions in response to a groups needs without consulting the museum learning team. There are several issues that this expression of work-based anxiety raises, including the need to be flexible in response to a groups particular 'sociocultural context' (Falk and Dierking, 2000).

Regarding whether she thinks that the teachers that visit generally have the same ideas about learning as she does (and by extension as the museum does), this facilitator said that she finds that there is "often a clash in agendas": "Is it a day out? Some teachers see it this way. Or is it a learning journey? This is how I see it". However, she says that her main "bugbear" is those teachers that have an agenda of the pupils undertaking "pure fact gathering", as she feels that "they might as well not have visited the museum". The issues raised by this facilitator are echoed in the many discussions with museum education staff that took place across the course of the fieldwork.

Integrating freelancers into the museum learning team

When asked what her main anxieties are in running the sessions at the museum, Rowena responded that her main concern is "feeling isolated", and that she feels that she has "no opportunity to talk to other freelancers or the education staff about the sessions or her worries", and therefore "nothing gets fedback". The nature of the relationship between a

freelance facilitator and a museum's learning team is particularly important when thinking about initiatives such as *Understanding Slavery*, which provided funding for freelancers to be brought in to deliver the individual sessions. Rowena was keen to explain that this "isn't because the staff aren't lovely and helpful, but because there is nothing in the structure of the teams or the museum that allows for reflective practice and development – at least not that involves the freelancers".

Luckily for the pupils from the Pupil Referral Unit, Rowena had been instructed by the museum staff to take an adapted approach with this group, as their numbers were so small (three pupils with three members of staff) that many of the activities in the core sessions that the museum offers would not have been possible. However, had Rowena been given more opportunity to find out about the Pupil Referral Unit, or had she been in contact with the teacher who organised the visit, she may have had a clearer idea about how best to approach these pupils. For example, through emails I exchanged with the teacher who organised the visit, I found out that the pupils had "to earn their right to go on this activity", which meant that the teachers didn't know which pupils would be taking part until the week before the visit. Four boys were selected to make the trip to Wilberforce House – Andrew, Lucas, Paul and David – although Paul was not actually present on the day of the visit[2]. The three remaining boys were all 14 years old at the time of the visit and they self-identified as being White British.

Encouraging flexibility in museum learning practice

One of the key characteristics of a valuable 'free-choice learning' experience that Falk and Dierking highlight in their discussion of 'flow experiences' is that "the opportunities for action in a situation are in balance with a person's abilities" (2000: 24), which within the realm of museum field-trips can be interpreted as one size does not necessarily fit all. Each of the sessions offered by Wilberforce House to schools has a session plan that facilitators can follow, and one facilitator reported that they were "not encouraged to adapt sessions".

This is a particularly significant consideration in relation to how to deal with a group

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[2] Although Paul did not visit the museum, he did complete a pre-visit survey for this research, therefore his responses have been included in the analysis of the pupils pre-visit expectations and prior interest in the history of slavery.

from, say, a Pupil Referral Unit, as the premise upon which it is based underpins many of the problematic learning experiences that these pupils have faced in mainstream education: "the challenges of the activity must match or be attainable by the skills of the individual or group. If the challenges are greater than the skill levels, anxiety results; if skills are greater than challenges, the result is boredom" (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 24). Anything that might prevent a museum learning facilitator from responding confidently and flexibly to the specific needs of a group of pupils is ultimately going to have a negative impact on the museum learning experience. Therefore, a key recommendation for museums is that they have a clear and well communicated policy that gives the facilitators (including freelance), the flexibility and freedom to adapt sessions according to the specific needs and interests of a group.

In Vignette 2 below, we re-join Rowena and the three Pupil Referral Unit boys in the education centre at Wilberforce House Museum.

Vignette 2: Fascination with the materiality of objects

After twenty or so minutes of general discussion about the history of slavery, Rowena shows the boys a picture of the Brookes slave ship. She passes round a pair of leg shackles for them to hold, asking them to feel how heavy they are.

[Rowena]	I want you to concentrate on the chains and how heavy they must have been, and what it must have been like to wear them. What do you think happens when you wear something like this next to your skin?
[Andrew]	It chafes.
[Lucas]	You get diseases.

Throughout their visit to the museum, it was clear that these three boys had a more vocal interest in the materiality and authenticity of the things they were seeing than the other groups observed. The pupils seem really interested in what happened when people died on the ships; Andrew talks about how they just threw them overboard. They talk about how awful the ships must have smelt and they make some jokes about things like how they would have gone to the bathroom. Andrew is asking Rowena lots of questions, most of which seem to be based on things he has seen in the film Amistad; as a result he has lots to contribute, for example the imagery of throwing people overboard.

Rowena gives the boys a world map to look at, asking them "Where do you think Africa is?" Lucas and David do not hear the question as they are busy laughing at something else. One of the teachers tells them, "Shh, listen. Don't be rude".

[Teacher]   Lucas, you've had some good stuff to say, don't ruin it.

[Lucas]   I wish I hadn't come me, I'm bored. I thought we were coming to a real museum. I'm going to sleep. We've done all this at school.

[Teacher]   Why'd you come then?

Lucas puts his head on the table, signalling his withdrawal from the discussion (although he does look up a few times).

[Rowena]   The reason why we're doing this now is 'cause then we'll know what we're looking at when we go into the museum.

[Andrew]   Miss, why was there slavery?

[Rowena]   Why'd you think?

[Andrew]   'Cause they was racist and 'cause of money and stuff. It wasn't fair...

Rowena shows the pupils a video from the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum's website. An actor playing Thomas Buxton reads the words of a speech that Buxton made to the House of Commons on May 9th 1826; he describes the horrors of being on a slave ship and how the slaves "were wedged together in one mass of living corruption" – packed in like cargo. The pupils give the video their full attention; even Lucas lifts his head from the table to watch.

The pupil's vivid and unabashed interest in the more grotesque and 'Horrible Histories' aspects of narratives such as the Middle Passage presents an interesting dilemma regarding whether to indulge their curiosity and risk inappropriate responses, or whether to guide discussions away from violent or voyeuristic topics. The careful representation of perpetrators and victims is particularly pertinent when dealing with the instruments of restraining and torture, the objects through which enslavement was reinforced.

[Rowena]   What has happened recently in America? For the first time in history?

[Andrew]   First black president!

[Rowena]   Yes that's right...

Rowena is cut off from what she was about to say, as the pupils are getting distracted by the maps that are on the table from earlier and they start asking completely unrelated questions. Rowena manages to recover the pupils' attention:

[Rowena]	Now just before we go upstairs, I want you to have a look at some of these things – some possessions that belonged to Africans (music) that meant a lot to them, things that were taken away from them. These things – like musical instruments for example – represented their culture – they were a very proud people. This is what you'll learn about in the gallery upstairs.
[Andrew]	Miss, what's the oldest thing here?

Rowena doesn't answer this question, but holds up an African 'talking stick' (a tall stick used by storytellers as a way of remembering the sequence of events in a story – the events are carved onto the stick and can be passed on to the next generation, so that they will remember the story too):

[Rowena]	This here is something they used to tell stories. We're gonna talk about these objects again later.
[Lucas]	I'm starving.

After looking around the main galleries on the first floor of the museum and a small discussion about freedom and human rights, the pupils are led to the 'Contemporary Galleries' area on the ground floor of the building. These spaces are themed around four issues: 'legacies of the transatlantic slave trade'; 'modern day slavery'; 'human rights and campaigning' and 'identity and diversity'. Once again the three boys are drawn to the different objects and are asking lots of questions about what things are made of and who made them (Figure 16).

Figure 16: 'Products of Slavery' display, Wilberforce House Museum (My Learning, 2008)

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[Rowena]   These are the sorts of things that are made and they're made by children in sweatshops, which is a form of slavery.

Rowena points out the panel on the back wall of the first gallery space, which talks about responsibilities and rights, with cards and pens for visitors to leave their own comments; she encourages the boys to write something themselves.

The pupils are wandering around the galleries freely, asking Rowena questions and pointing things out to each other. Rowena shares with them that her favourite object is the carved wooden statue, because of "the skill that has gone into it". The pupils are really interested in the statue too; Lucas takes a photo of the statue on his mobile phone and David asks him to send him the image as he doesn't have his phone with him. The pupils pose with the statue to have their photo taken.
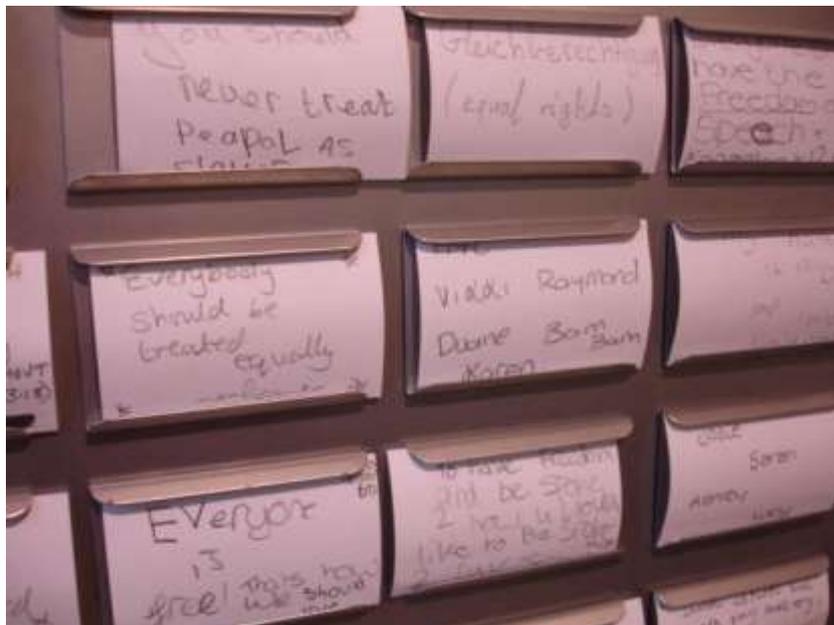
Figure 17: Comments board, Wilberforce House Museum (My Learning, 2008)

Rowena points out a photo of the man who carved the statue. Lucas – who had seemed disengaged in the sessions in the education centre – is now much more animated and is clearly excited by the fact that he can see the man who created the statue, and perhaps more importantly, that he can touch it.

[Rowena]   So, now that you've been to Wilberforce House it might be a good idea for you to learn something about him...

[Andrew]   We already know! We did about him in class!

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[Rowena]	You didn't tell me that!
[Lucas]	Sir, how'd you spell museum? [typing the word into his phone]

The moments where the pupils seemed most engaged either involved new media – for example the Thomas Buxton video – or an opportunity to touch something 'real', something tangible. Furthermore, the pupil who had previously seen the film *Amistad* was very keen to learn more and share what he knew about life onboard a slave ship. Groups such as Pupil Referral Units bring into much sharper focus the necessity of comprehensive training for museum facilitators regarding how to respond to the unavoidably cruel parts of the history in a respectful, sensitive, yet truthful manner. Furthermore, this session highlights the importance for museum education teams of ensuring that school sessions and programmes leave room for flexibility and that all facilitators, including freelance, feel confident that they have the authority to adapt to a group's characteristics.

For example, with this group it was especially crucial to manage their expectations and keep them informed about what would be happening next, when they would be having lunch, what they would be expected to do. Considering the pupils' responses to the pre-visit survey in relation to the comment that Lucas makes about being disappointed because he thought they were going to "a real museum", this most likely stems from an understandable confusion regarding visiting a museum but spending a great deal of time sat in what is essentially a classroom. As outlined in Vignette 1, on their arrival at the museum, the pupils were directed to the education centre where they were faced with a classroom table and chairs. During this introductory session, they were asked to write down "what [they] think slavery might mean"; their response to this task was one of seeming bemusement and annoyance at having travelled all this way just to be asked to write something. This extract from the introductory session highlights the issue:

[Lucas]	Whose idea was this trip?
[Teacher]	It's a day out of school innit? It's different.
[Lucas]	We thought it was like exploring round and stuff.
[Rowena]	I am going to take you into the museum and look round the gallery in a bit.
[Andrew]	Are we gonna get to try stuff on?
[Rowena]	We haven't got things you can try on, but there's stuff in the African gallery you can look at.

[David]	Are we taking these sheets home?
[Andrew]	How'd you spell prisoner?
[Lucas]	What's in our pack lunch? Why can't we have owt fizzy sir?
[Teacher]	Think about it, we'd have to scrape you off the ceiling!

However, the pupils' behaviour signalled a much higher level of interest once they entered the galleries and they were able to do something, to explore; they enthusiastically play on a set of West African drums, smell cotton and tobacco and touch the life-size sculptures of sugar cane. Unlike some of the other groups whose main concern seems to be with writing down every fact or piece of information, these three boys did not read the text panels and were set against the idea of writing anything down, indeed they seemed to be against the idea of doing anything that reminded them of school. Due to the extremeness of their preference for experiential learning opportunities, this group gave the impression of gaining something genuinely valuable from their museum experience, something that has been missing from their experiences of learning at school.

In this section and in Section 5.2, the 'entry points' of the boys from the Pupil Referral Unit have been discussed in some depth in regards their pre-visit expectations of and responses to the museum field-trip. In the section that follows, the idea of entry points is used as a platform for exploring some of the ways in which transatlantic slavery is used as a 'frame story' for other narratives or issues, for example through reference to contemporary events or the various legacies of slavery.

5.5   Transatlantic slavery as a frame story for other narratives

The idea that visitors to a museum - and in fact learners in all contexts – become engaged via an 'entry point', as argued by Howard Gardner in his seminal work on 'multiple intelligences' (2006), is widely accepted within constructivist models of learning. Within free-choice learning contexts, this entry point is often self-defined and is unique to the individual. A person with prior experience of reading architectural blueprints might gravitate towards the drawing plan in an exhibition about furniture design and begin their learning journey there, whereas someone with an interest in trees may consult the labels to discover what materials a particular piece of furniture is made from.

These two imagined examples of entry points into the same learning environment

are made possible by the interpretation strategy of the exhibition; without the inclusion of the designer's drawings or the provision of information about materials, the pieces of furniture by themselves become much less accessible. This relates to the idea that the challenge of an activity must match the abilities of the individual; similarly, for an exhibition to support successful learning experiences, it must allow visitors "to seek the level of engagement and understanding appropriate for the individual", so that it can be "understood at many different levels and from different perspectives" (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 25).

The same is necessary for a successful museum field-trip or at the level of an individual session. When a school group arrives at a museum, it is important that appropriate entry points to the topic of transatlantic slavery are available to the pupils as soon as possible. Of course, what is appropriate for one group may not be appropriate for another, depending on such factors as the age of the pupils or the level of engagement with the history that has taken place in the classroom beforehand, for example. This is one of the ways that the museum field-trips in this research have been analysed, through a critical examination of what happens when the pupils arrive at the museum and how does this correspond with the prior engagement, interests and motivations of the pupils (where this data is available). The museum field-trip is a challenging hybrid of tasks and activities prescribed by adults, but with opportunities for free-choice learning, all of which takes place in a context that is inherently experiential and potentially exciting, enjoyable and memorable. In the vignette below, one particular strategy that teachers employ to create an entry point or 'narrative hook' into the topic of transatlantic slavery is presented; the reference to relevant contemporary events.

Vignette 3: References to contemporary events

The most obvious example that emerged from this study is that of Barack Obama, who was elected President of the United States of America on 4th November 2008, whilst I was undertaking fieldwork at the museums. The hype that this historical event created unsurprisingly found its way into many of the sessions and field-trips I observed, including a school whose visit to Wilberforce House is covered in greater detail in Chapter 6. The extracts below are taken from the opening and plenary sessions of this visit, during which

the teacher running the day talks to the pupils about the significance of Obama's election. During the opening assembly, after showing the pupils a PowerPoint of images relating to the slave trade and slavery in the Americas, Gareth – the teacher running the trip – tells the pupils:

[Gareth]   The images you've just seen show the reality of slavery and some of its worst expression…It is very important to learn about transatlantic slavery today. When I mentioned the trip to you in assembly, I made links to the new President of the United States, Barack Obama, which we'll return to in the last session today.

After a busy day of rotating round activities and sessions (presented in vignettes 5, 6, 9 and 10 later in this thesis), the pupils, teachers and museum staff reconvene in the Guildhall for a plenary session. Gareth talks to the group about Barack Obama and his inauguration speech, in particular focusing on his use of the rhetoric of 'the pursuit of happiness'. He quotes from the part of the speech where Obama proclaims a need for the nation to celebrate "why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath". Gareth explains to the pupils that Obama's personal story is very important when thinking about the history of transatlantic slavery, that his presidency is very significant, especially in terms of the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Gareth asks, "Has something changed? Is something going on?" He briefly mentions the not-so-distant events and circumstances that make the election of an African American president so remarkable: segregation, bus boycotts, protests, "people who were willing to break the law for what they believed in":

[Gareth]   We've still got a long way to go, but it's important we learn about it because we can do something about it…

A pupil puts up their hand and asks why there are more slaves today than there was then?

[Teacher]   Greed – because slavery is about money.

[Gareth]   But if we can learn from it, we can change it. We can stop it.

The penultimate comment of the day is made by this same teacher, who talks about Michelle Obama and the irony of the fact that her enslaved ancestors helped build the White House. The final words come from Gareth:

[Gareth]   We need to protect our rights and the rights of other people.

Whereas the opening and plenary sessions of this visit to Wilberforce House used events in

the US to discuss the significance of the transatlantic slave trade today and the unique ways in which it has shaped the history of race, racism and civil rights, other visits were framed more in terms of how transatlantic slavery has impacted on Britain and people living in Britain today. During the introductory session of the National Maritime Museum's 'Transatlantic Slavery Study Day', the facilitator covers the question of legacies – in particular legacies of racism – whilst using evidence about African culture and society to subvert the assumptions about Africa that the pupils might have.

As outlined in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the National Maritime Museum is a very large building, covering four floors and housing several gallery spaces. On arrival at the museum, the school group are escorted to the cloakroom, where they leave their coats and bags, before being directed to the lecture theatre on the ground floor for an introductory session. 'The Atlantic: Slavery, Trade and Empire' gallery is on the first floor of the building, as is the space outside of the Caird library where the vignette presented below takes place (Figure 18). In addition to the lecture theatre, the museum also has a 'seminar room' and a 'learning space' that are also used for school group sessions. In the opening session in the lecture theatre, Alex introduces some ideas about legacies and racism, issues that subtly run through the day's activities, and are picked up again in the plenary, giving the visit a rounded feel and a focus for the pupils.

Vignette 4: Legacies of racism

The opening session for the school group at the National Maritime Museum is held in a large, bright lecture-theatre space, where the pupils are directed to sit in tiered rows. The group is from an ethnically diverse, all-girls comprehensive school from the Greater London area, and they have taken public transport to be at the museum today. There are around 40 pupils, all from Year 8. The Formal Learning Officer, Alex, welcomes the group to the museum and begins the introductory session:

> [Alex] I'm not going to talk at you all day; the point of today is for you to ask questions yourself. So, have you been learning about the transatlantic slave trade at school?
>
> [Pupils] Yeah.

On a screen at the front of the room, a PowerPoint presentation is running, with images of
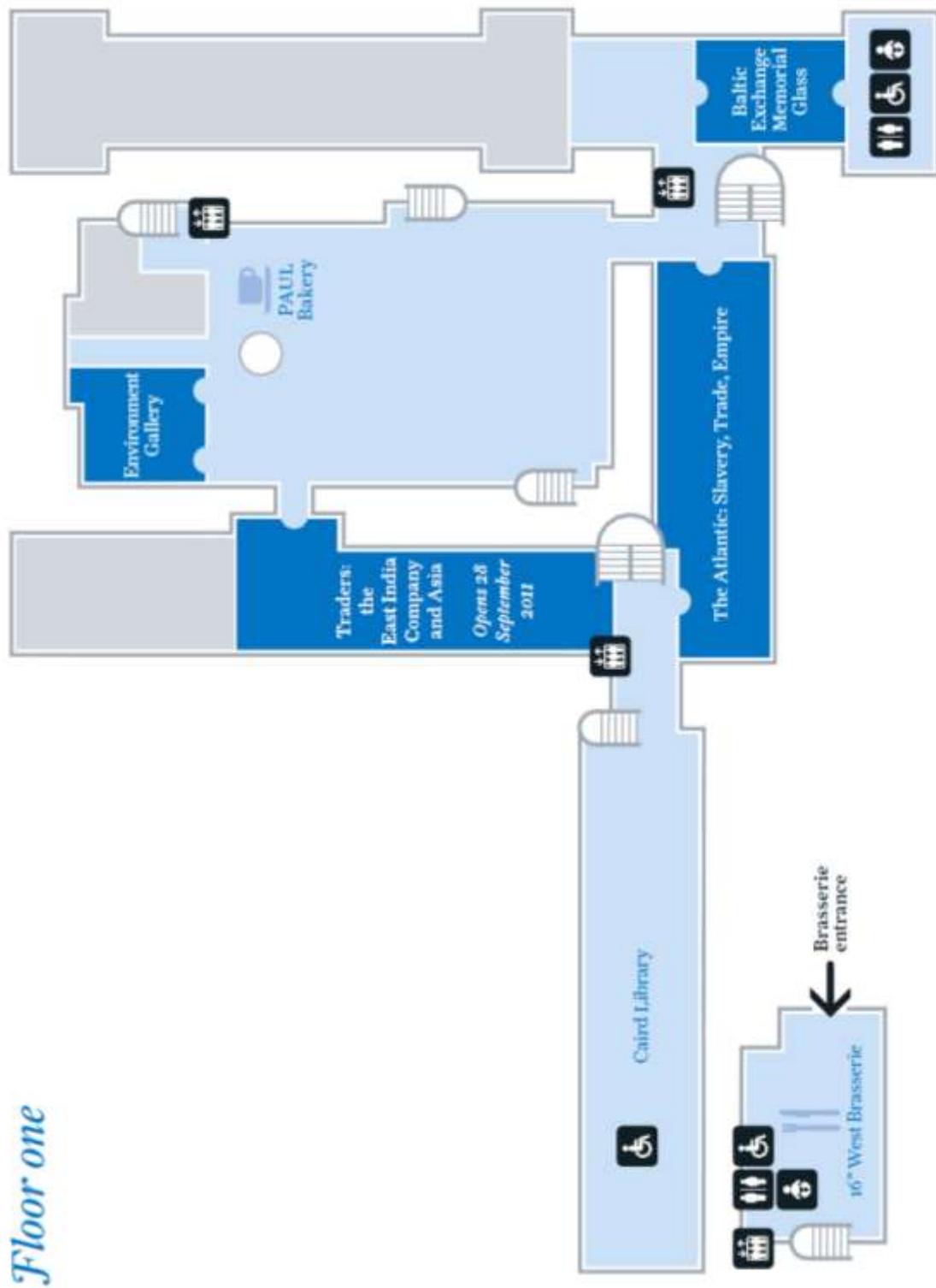
Figure 18: Plan of 'Floor One' of the National Maritime Museum (National Maritime Museum, 2010)

famous black people, chocolate, sugar, etc.

[Alex]	Do you think that the history of the transatlantic slave trade has affected the lives of these people and what Britain is like today?

Some pupils respond yes, others respond no. Alex shows the pupils a map of Africa:

[Alex]	In pairs, discuss what you think Africa was like before the transatlantic slave trade.

After a few minutes, Alex asks for feedback from the pupils about what they think Africa would have been like before the transatlantic slave trade:

[Pupil]	People lived normal everyday lives like anyone else.

[Pupil]	It was quite poor.

[Pupil]	People were hard-working and there was a sense of community.

[Pupil]	Even if they didn't have big buildings or whatever, they were happy with what they had before everything started to change.

[Alex]	It's interesting to think about whether Africa was one big happy continent, or whether there was rivalry. I'm going to show you a quote – about a place where there are judges and scholars and written books etc… In pairs I want you to discuss for 30 seconds where you think this quote might be talking about…

The pupils read the quote, which includes extracts such as the following:

There are […] numerous judges, teachers and priests, all properly appointed by the king. He greatly honors learning. Many hand-written books imported from Barbary are also sold. There is more profit made from this commerce than from all other merchandise.

[Alex]	Ok, so where do you think this is talking about?

[Pupil]	Timbuktu?

[Alex]	Oh! That's very specific! Why'd you think that?

[Pupil]	Because Timbuktu was very wealthy…

[Alex]	You're right, this quote is Leo Africanus talking about Timbuktu.

Alex explains to the group that the Transatlantic Slavery Study Day is about working with sources. He goes on to ask:

[Alex]	How can you go from 1550s where the main trade is in books and knowledge to the 1600s when 75% of trade is slavery related?

It is interesting to look at the original, full text of Leo Africanus' account of Timbuktu, as it does in fact mention slaves and it talks quite clearly about power struggles between the classes; it is by no means a straightforward celebration of a prosperous, trouble-free society. In this session, the museum selectively uses this document to make a point, however the opportunity to explore the complexities of primary resources was disappointingly not taken up in this instance. Alex prompts the pupils to think reflexively about why they are visiting this particular museum to learn about this topic:

[Alex]   Why are you at the National Maritime Museum today? What has the National Maritime Museum got to do with the slave trade? What does 'maritime' mean?

This museum visit has been carefully developed to be a 'slavery study day', and as such the opening and plenary sessions are designed to frame the experience and to encourage the pupils to think critically about what they want to know about slavery and the types of sources or evidence that they might require to address their questions. This approach forces the pupils to think for themselves and to think of the museum – and the visit itself – as a resource:

[Alex]   There is a clipboard under your chair. Today you're going to be working with documents and objects and talking to people who are experts, so I want you to spend a couple of minutes coming up with a question that you are going to think about today, and we'll come back to them at the end of the visit. There are pictures and words on the cards that might help you think of ideas for questions.

Examples of the questions that pupils came up with include:

What is abolition? and Why would you want to stop slavery if you are making money from it?

As with the other schools I observed, this group was divided into different groups which then rotated around various sessions and activities, including looking at archival material, exploring the Atlantic Worlds gallery and an object handling session, each of which are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.

At the end of the day of activities, the pupils return to the lecture theatre:

[Alex]   So what have you learned today?

[Pupil]   That it was a triangular trade because of trade winds…

[Pupil]   We learnt about the conditions for crew and slave owners on the slave ships.

[Pupil]	We learnt about how the symbol of a man helped the abolition movement.
[Alex]	Why?
[Pupil]	'Cos it helped people think about what it was that was being traded.
[Pupil]	I wanted to find out about why were mixed race kids treated differently? And I found out that they weren't really treated that differently and in fact they were treated a bit better.
[Alex]	Yeah it's right that different skin tones were treated differently and this is where racism comes in. The slave trade wasn't started because of racism, but the racism was used to justify the transatlantic slave trade – this is a big legacy.

Discussing skin tones and racism with young people is understandably a scary thing that can cause great anxiety for teachers, facilitators and other education professionals. However, it is important that pupils have the opportunity to have these conversations and ask these questions. Whether or not the museum is the most appropriate environment for this is a matter for debate, as is whether or not enough museum education professionals have received the correct training to handle such interactions with confidence and comfort. The issue of handling the 'emotional fallout' whilst teaching difficult histories is discussed again in Chapter 7 in relation to the handling of objects.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates, through illustrative examples from both theory and practice, that the difficult history museum field-trip is framed through the lens of a range of perspectives, scenarios and agendas, depending on the particular personal, sociocultural and physical contexts at the local level. The first section of this chapter presents the pertinent academic literature relating to how the school field-trip has been problematised as both a learning experience and as a significant aspect of the intersection between the museum and education sectors. It argues that the more outcome-focused approaches to understanding educational museum visits have their place within museum studies research, but that the 'difficult' nature of the field-trips observed in this thesis requires a less generic line of enquiry that is sensitive to the specifics of learning about traumatic pasts outside of the classroom.

The first section also demonstrates some of the ways in which we can use a fuller

understanding of the pre-visit perspectives of teachers to make recommendations for both practice and future research. The perceptions that teachers in this study have about the museum, as both an authority of knowledge and a unique learning environment, raise many interesting questions about what teachers expect from a visit and from the museum staff. As the findings presented in Section 5.1 are based on responses from only a small number of teachers, it is difficult to make any generalisable conclusions about the broader attitudes of teachers towards difficult history museums. However, the issues highlighted serve to provide contextual information for the chapters that follow, including picking up on some of the key themes that emerge from the observation data.

The rhetoric and practice of teaching 'at-risk' young people about traumatic pasts is a fascinating area of study that is full of potential for future research, as outlined in the concluding chapter of this thesis (Chapter 9). In this current chapter, the idea of 'fostering empathy' (not hate) is introduced and developed in relation to increasing tolerance in disaffected young people who engage with the difficult history museums and organisations that provide these types of learning opportunities. The importance of providing space for empathic responses to traumatic pasts is something that emerged strongly in this study, as evidenced by the chapters that follow. The teacher surveys, the conversations with case study museum staff and the participants of InSite, and the academic and grey literature all attend to the significance of the human faculty of empathy.

The remainder of the second section of this chapter navigates through the background information available for the Pupil Referral Unit whose visit is investigated in Section 5.4. Through the pre-visit pupil surveys a sense of the interests and expectations of the pupils is sketched out, including some of their apprehensions about going to the museum. These snippets of insight into the pupils' pre-visit 'baggage' is then situated within the context of the findings of an Ofsted inspection of the Pupil Referral Unit, which stresses many of the socio-cultural factors that have an influence over these particular pupils' attitudes to learning, as well as many of the strategies that the Unit employs to try to improve their experiences of learning, for example by using more interactive and practical lessons. Here, the museum visit is framed as an 'off-site activity' that has the potential to contribute to the pupils 'learning to enjoy learning', which is stated as a key aim of the Pupil Referral Unit.

In the fourth section of this chapter, two vignettes from the Pupil Referral Unit are presented; the first highlights the ways in which facilitators use their prior knowledge of a group to try and connect with them in an appropriate manner, whereas the second vignette discusses some of the characteristics of this groups response to the museum, including their fascination with the materiality of objects. This idea of museum learners as having distinctive 'entry points' in regards how they access what they encounter during their visit is developed further in Section 5.5. Here, the ways in which adults perceive the 'entry points' of the pupils has a direct bearing on how they choose to 'frame' the topic of transatlantic slavery, for example through references to contemporary events they think will be of interest or through broader narratives, such as the legacies of slavery.

CHAPTER 6: THE LESSONS OF SLAVERY: A UNIQUE HISTORY THAT TEACHES UNIVERSAL VALUES

As outlined in the introductory chapter, this thesis is interested in the ways in which educational institutions in England have addressed the question of how to teach the history of the transatlantic slave trade during a period of heightened commemorative activity in the public sphere. Much of the commentary regarding the bicentenary centred on the issue of what lessons does this history teach children, or, indeed, the wider public? In Chapter 4 of this thesis, the discourses contributing to the construction of contemporary memory cultures surrounding the history of slavery were presented, which was followed in Chapter 5 by discussions of the various ways in which the difficult history museum field-trip has been framed by scholars, museum professionals, teachers and pupils. Building on these two context-setting chapters, this current chapter describes and analyses some of the key 'lessons of slavery' that emerged from the fieldwork data. In doing so, it critically reflects on some of the potential opportunities and hazards of teaching slavery.

This chapter primarily addresses Aim 4 of this thesis (as presented in Chapter 1); this particular aim seeks to identify the dominant themes and pedagogical trends within the museum field-trips observed, whilst critically examining how these relate to recent shifts within the historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery in England. Accordingly, this chapter makes connections between the rhetoric that is used on the ground during museum education sessions and the overarching narratives or stories that have so-far shaped the public representation of this history in the twenty-first century. Although the different narrative approaches presented in this chapter can on the surface appear to be discrete and unrelated, they are not self-contained – that is able to exist independent of one another – nor do they each neatly fit within a particular pedagogical paradigm.

Instead, a particular 'lesson' about slavery may be taught in distinctly different styles, with different outcomes and emphases, drawing meaning and context from the 'messages' of previous (or upcoming) sessions that the pupils will take part in. In order to illustrate this point, this chapter presents six different sessions from Wilberforce House Museum, taken from across three different school group visits. Viewed collectively, these

individual 'vignettes' provide evidence as to the multiplicity of messages that can be found even within a single museum case study. In particular, this chapter examines how transatlantic slavery is represented as being 'unique' (due in part to its pervasive legacies), yet is simultaneously treated as just a[nother] history topic through which the 'universal' themes and skills of the citizenship curriculum can be taught with the aim of developing what has been termed "active global citizens" (QCA, 2008).

The first section of this chapter explores what is at stake when traumatic pasts are treated as unique events, drawing on different notions of the contemporary significance of the history of slavery and making suggestions about what this means for the study of transcultural memories. The second section traces the development of citizenship education in England and outlines the key ideas that underpin the curriculum. Section three presents data from four field-trip sessions at Wilberforce House Museum that cover the topic of campaigning, arguing that this approach can result in the decontextualisation and dilution of the history. The final section contrasts these sessions with moments from the data where the history of slavery is treated as a unique, traumatic and difficult part of 'our past', including a vignette that explores the teaching of 'Africa before the slave trade', and one that examines the voices of pro-slavery movements in Britain that fought the abolition of the slave trade.

6.1   The 'uniqueness' of traumatic pasts

The globalization of memory works as well in two other related senses that illustrate what I would call the globalization paradox. [...] It is precisely the emergence of the Holocaust as universal trope that allows Holocaust memory to latch on to specific local situations that are historically distant and politically distinct from the original event. In the transnational movement of memory discourses, the Holocaust loses its quality as index of the specific historical event and begins to function as metaphor for other traumatic histories and memories. The global circulation of the Holocaust as trope at once decenters the event of the Holocaust and certifies its use as a prism through which we may look at other instances of genocide (Huyssen, 2000: 24).

The postcolonial understanding of the Holocaust as a 'transcultural memory' has been the focus of a great deal of recent memory studies work; this "transcultural turn" (Eckstein, 2007: 279) in the literature has naturally expanded into the study of other memories, particularly of genocide, war, enslavement and trauma. This shift in memory studies was

thoroughly explored at the three-day *Transcultural Memory* conference in February 2010, including a paper I presented in a panel titled 'Education and Transmission', that forms the bedrock of the arguments and analysis here in this chapter (Spalding, 2010). This conference spoke to the construction of 'collective national memories' through the production and consumption of a variety of media and cultural memory products and programmes, including education initiatives. Through Rothberg's keynote address, the delegates were invited to consider the paradoxical dichotomy between the 'unique' and 'universal' qualities of traumatic pasts, as expressed in his work on 'multidirectional memory', "a model based on recognition of the productive interplay of disparate acts of remembrance and developed in contrast to an understanding of memory as involved in a competition over scarce public resources" (2009: 309).

In particular, the conference organisers were interested in whether Rothberg's model allows us to move "beyond notions of the Holocaust's uniqueness that might inscribe a hierarchy of suffering" (Bond et al., 2010). The issue of whether or not a difficult history is regarded as being a unique atrocity that is significant in the present day is central to why and how a society chooses to remember and represent or repress and cover up aspects of its past in the public sphere; the capture and enslavement of millions of human beings is unarguably a unique, difficult and significant aspect of British history that often elicits cautious responses from those with the power to regulate the public sphere. However, as Assmann explains, national historical narratives can and do change, and this change is often tied up with formal education:

> In focusing their attention on forgotten episodes and shameful moments, historians can help to create a more honest and complex self-image of the nation. Over the years, a change in style of history textbooks can be observed, which may be characterized by the move from monumental to self-critical narratives (2008: 70).

A 'self-critical narrative' of Britain's involvement in the slave trade is necessarily peppered with statements that emphasise the 'uniqueness' of this history and, conversely, attempts to undermine British culpability typically take the form of detracting from the uniqueness. For example, *12 million*, the unimaginably huge number of Africans that were enslaved and transported to the Americas, and *1.5 million* – the number that are estimated not to have survived the Middle Passage. The word *Maafa* – or *the African Holocaust* – the Kiswahili derived name meaning "disaster, terrible occurrence or great tragedy", used by Pan-

Africans to describe "500 hundred years of suffering of people of African heritage" (AfricanHolocaust.net, 2011). One website dedicated to the study of *Maafa* emphatically states that:

> The African Holocaust is the *greatest continuing tragedy* the world has ever seen. It was also the *most impacting social event* in the history of humanity. Not only in terms of *scale* but also in terms of *legacy* and *horror*. It is a Holocaust which is constantly denied, mitigated and trivialized. The African Holocaust is white-washed and Africans denied their human value and treated as a people only suitable for slavery. [...] The Maafa reduced humans with culture and history to a people invisible from historical contribution; mere labor units, commodities to be traded. From this Holocaust/Maafa the modern racial-social hierarchy was born which continues to govern the lives of *every living human* where race continues to confer (or obstruct) privilege and opportunity. [...] And in the 21st century the legacy of enslavement manifest itself in the social-economic status of Africans *globally*. Without a doubt Africans globally constitute *the most oppressed*, *most exploited*, *most downtrodden people on the planet*; a fact that testifies to the untreated legacy of Slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Not only is this reality in the social-economic spectrum it is also experienced in the academic and political value the Maafa receives compared to the Jewish genocide (AfricanHolocaust.net, 2011. Emphasis added).

In this view, transatlantic slavery is part of a wider picture of exploitation and oppression of Africa and its diaspora. The language used in this extract is replete with superlatives, each of which contributes to the idea of the *Maafa* as a unique – and uniquely horrific – atrocity, one that this website claims is unfairly undervalued in both academia and politics in comparison to the Nazi Holocaust. This type of rhetoric might lie at the extreme end of the spectrum in regards describing the slave trade as a unique event, but it serves to illustrate the political fallout of such debates. In the context of the classroom or the museum field-trip, what does it mean to present the transatlantic slave trade as 'unique'? How are traumatic pasts and transcultural memories interpreted and appropriated by individuals, groups, institutions and government bodies? These interconnected questions are important for understanding and unpicking the rhetoric of the various 'modes of remembering' that can be found in the interpretive media used by museums and heritage sites.

In line with Waterton's 'abolition discourse' (2009) model we can conclude that by focusing on 25th March 1807 – an event that has not previously been commemorated – the cultural memory products and media produced around the bicentenary might use the idea of Britain's benevolence in ending the slave trade to detract from or destabilise other messages about the slave trade, for example the Pan-African discourse. This inherently

overarching focus on Britain's role in abolition rather than the slave trade itself has been the lynchpin in much of the criticism of 2007 and the recent treatment of slavery in British public memory. The first of the approaches covered in this chapter – using slavery and abolition to talk about citizenship and campaigning – is in some ways the most striking, as it speaks directly to this issue.

Through the data presented in the first section of this chapter, it is argued that although there are indeed valuable lessons for pupils (of this age in particular) to learn about the importance of civic responsibility and the power of effective campaigning, if this is not handled carefully and respectfully, there is a danger that the historical specificity of the abolitionist movement becomes diluted and decontextualised, whilst the matter of British involvement in perpetuating and benefitting from the slave trade is either diminished or glossed over entirely. Furthermore, the perceived focus on Wilberforce has led some to label 2007 as 'Wilberfest' (Adi, 2007), whereas others have commented that "Abolition started with Africans, not with politicians" (The National Youth Agency, 2007: 2). The youth journal, 'Vibes and Voices', states that:

> Although there is some ambivalence about where the attention is being focused, the bicentenary, nevertheless, provides us with a unique opportunity not only to remember the brutality of the chattel enslavement of African peoples but more importantly to reflect on the consequences that the Transatlantic Slave Trade had on the social, economic and political structures that shape the world we live in today. [...] If the bicentenary commemoration is to achieve anything, it must be used proactively to create a climate in which we can discuss freely the past issues which continue to impact on our lives today, without the fear of being accused of having the famous 'chip on our shoulders'. We must 'set history free, so that it can set us free'. The major challenge for us now is to deal with the legacy of slavery, repair the damage and heal some of the wounds, particularly among young people. Let the commemoration mark the beginning of that process (The National Youth Agency, 2007: 3).

In this same issue of 'Vibes and Voices', the scale and scope of the history of slavery is presented 'in numbers' (Figure 19).

Figure 19: 'Slavery in numbers' (The National Youth Agency, 2007: 4)

According to Astrid Erll, such decontextualisation can be likened to using memories as "containers", which leads to the production of "schematised memories", which can be used in a good way – as in the case of references to the Holocaust in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2010a). However, as Erll warns, memories such as the Holocaust can become "emptied of meaning" and left to "simply circulate" as what she refers to as "travelling memories" (2010a). Travelling memories – in this case abolition – become characterised by their "functional potentials"; their "specific use will depend on the socio-historical location" and they become open to 'distortion', 'abuse' and 'hijacking' (Erll, 2010a).

As the vignettes presented in the rest of this chapter illustrates, at Wilberforce House Museum, there are several sessions available to schools that relate to teaching the universal values that are promoted by the citizenship curriculum. These sessions often focus on the abolition movement and use it as a starting point for discussing civic responsibilities and campaign strategies. However, alongside these abolitionist focused sessions that tend

to accentuate the positive role that Britain had in ending the slave trade, Wilberforce House also offer sessions that highlight the more difficult aspects of this history, including the work of pro-slavery groups, Britain's involvement in and profiteering from the slave trade – including the impact on the African continent – and the legacies of inequality and racism.

6.2   The development of citizenship education in England

When it comes to the representation of difficult histories in the public sphere, there is a prevailing sense of these being 'lessons-children-can-learn-from-the-atrocities-of-the-past' type histories, which inevitably opens these histories up to specific types of appropriation that other historical topics – such as the Victorians or the Romans – are not generally subjected to. This is perhaps best exemplified by the ways in which these topics have become central to notions of citizenship in England, where the recent period of heightened commemorative activity has resulted in correlations being made between teaching difficult histories and effective teaching of the skills and values of citizenship education.

Notions of 'citizenship', 'responsibility' and 'identity' have mostly been expressed within the context of the New Labour vision of Britain as a 'multicultural society', which is evident in the approaches that were adopted by education initiatives that developed in tandem with the 2007 bicentenary. Writing in 2005, Davies and Issitt argue that "the current policies to introduce versions of citizenship education have emerged [in Australia, Canada and England] in the context of diverse challenges to the legitimacy of the nation state" (Davies and Issitt, 2005: 389). They go on to state that they:

> ...do not want to suggest that all those challenges are perceived negatively. Indeed key politicians and others have made a range of very positive responses to the rapid development of a global culture and seem to be seeking democratic and pluralistic ways forward. Official policies supported by government agencies and departments in the three countries certainly do not display obvious nationalistic goals (Davies and Issitt, 2005: 389).

The ideas driving the citizenship curriculum in England include 'human rights', 'participation', 'global citizens', 'identity', 'responsibilities', 'tolerance and respect', 'democracy' and 'society', which for Key Stage 3 (age 11-14) are expressed through three 'key concepts':

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1. Democracy and justice;

2. Rights and responsibilities;

3. Identities and diversities: living together in the UK (Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2011).

Teachers are currently encouraged to deliver citizenship education in a cross-curricular fashion, by looking at other subjects such as history or religious studies and creating opportunities to explore the themes and skills of the citizenship curriculum. Interestingly, from its conception in the 1990s, citizenship education in England has emphasised the potential of teaching 'controversial topics'. The Advisory Group on Citizenship produced a report in 1998 (commonly referred to as the 'Crick Report', QCA) that recommended that citizenship should be made statutory in the curriculum (which took place in 2002). In the report, there are several recommendations made regarding why and how teachers should address controversial issues, which it defines as issues "about which there is no one fixed or universally held point of view. Such issues are those which commonly divide society and for which significant groups offer conflicting explanations and solutions" (QCA, 1998: 56).

The report states that such issues "can arise in the teaching of virtually every subject. For example, History deals with the causes of events such as wars, industrial disputes, revolutions, coups, and so on, implicitly attributing blame or credit" (QCA, 1998: 56-7). At the time when citizenship became a statutory part of the curriculum, transatlantic slavery was not mandatory within the history curriculum (this did not happen until 2008). The Diversity and Citizenship curriculum review that was published in 2007 was instrumental in highlighting the value of teaching the history of slavery as part of citizenship education (Ajegbo, 2007). It was this document that advocated the need to develop the third 'key concept' of the current citizenship curriculum, which was originally "Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK", but has since been pluralised.

The report also highlights criticisms of the ways in which African and Asian heritage and history was taught in schools, in particular "the way Black History Month is used by some schools as a mechanism to 'tick' the 'diversity box'. Such an approach only serves to marginalise the experiences of minority ethnic groups rather than show pupils how these experiences are part of mainstream UK history" (Ajegbo, 2007: 41). This drive to shift from a marginalised Black History to a mainstreamed British History – or even a universalised World History – is at the centre of many of the disputes and criticisms of the 2007 bicentenary.

In general, government sponsored remembrance and teaching of the Holocaust predates that of slavery remembrance, particularly in places such as the UK, the US and Canada, where Holocaust education has been used to tackle racism and discrimination since the 1990s, through the adoption of Holocaust Education Taskforces and Holocaust Memorial Days (Force, 2010). The premise is that if young people learn about these difficult histories then it is possible to tackle prejudice behaviour. But what is it exactly about these kinds of histories that makes people believe and invest in the transformative potential of learning about these subjects at school? Teaching about slavery has been equated with tackling racism and promoting multiculturalism. However, this thesis argues that although these might be the intended – and sometimes realised – outcomes of teaching young people about this history through allusion to the values of citizenship and campaign strategies, it is in fact through prosthetic memory experiences and the fostering of empathy that values such as tolerance and respect seem to be more commonly engendered (see Chapter 8).

6.3   Slavery as teaching the 'universal' values of citizenship

In the pre-visit surveys, several of the teachers referenced the citizenship curriculum in their responses, particularly in relation to "mass campaigns". One teacher stated that "from a citizenship point of view [studying transatlantic slavery] is greatly important as at least 20 million people are still in slavery today". In relation to abolition another teacher commented on the importance of learning about both "the mistakes of the past" and "positive citizens contributing to society"; "pupils should learn about all aspects of history – the good and bad, they should be better informed of the past of others, other cultures, essential for living in a multicultural society". One teacher listed the reasons that it is important that their pupils learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery as the following: "[it] explains how some people were treated and still are treated today; see first-hand the effect of slavery; explains role of British Empire; leads into Human Rights and how everyone should be treated as equal; how some people's ancestors can be traced back to Caribbean and slavery". The different aspects of this history that, for the purposes of this thesis, are often treated as distinct are in the eyes of this teacher inseparable and interconnected.

Examples of sessions that use slavery to teach the 'universal' values of citizenship

include those that make explicit links to modern forms of slavery, which can be successful in raising awareness of contemporary issues, but can also be potentially confusing when the topic becomes muddled by questions relating to separate issues, such as illegal immigration. As detailed in the introduction, this chapter uses two contrasting sessions from the same field-trip to Wilberforce House in order to provide a framework through which other sessions are analysed. The structure and purpose of this particular field-trip was devised collaboratively between the education staff at the museum and the head of the school's history department – Gareth – who hand-picked the combination of sessions that the pupils experienced, as well as personally facilitating an introductory and plenary session that served to frame the beginning and the end of the trip. In his pre-visit survey, Gareth states that during the visit he would like his pupils to learn about "West African culture before slavery to show the abuse they experienced" and the "power / breadth of Abolition movement".

Gareth has previously taken groups to the museum, so he had a clearer idea of what he wanted to achieve from the visit. As the trip took place half-way through the academic year, not all of the approximately 120 pupils that attended had yet covered slavery in their history lessons. Of those that had, Gareth explained that they had been learning about the "Middle Passage, life on plantations, Abolition and the transatlantic slave trade". In regards to how the museum visit fits in with the teaching unit back at school, Gareth commented that it "complements and adds to the learning" for the slavery and abolition units, that it "adds in citizenship [and] mass campaigns" and also illustrates the "significance of slavery and linking to today". To a question about why he thinks it is important that his pupils learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery, he responded "to learn about the poor treatment of humanity and racism and how it has a clear legacy to today". Finally, when asked whether he had ever encountered any difficulties or issues in teaching this history to school pupils, he said that he had, citing "their own prejudices / racial views and passivity and lack of care" as issues.

The day begins with an assembly-like presentation in one of many grand, wood-panelled rooms in the city's Guildhall. Whilst the pupils get settled on the floor, Gareth shows a looped slideshow of images depicting scenes from the Middle Passage, plantation life, and the abolition movement whilst playing a recording of the famous hymn, 'Amazing

Grace'. Once everyone is seated, he talks a little about why they are visiting the museum and how it links to what they have been (or will be) learning about at school. He then shows a brief but violent clip from the 1997 film, *Amistad*. He ends this introductory session by posing the group a key question for them to consider during their visit:

[Gareth]   Why is it important to study the transatlantic slave trade today?

The school group is made up of male and female pupils aged twelve to thirteen, almost all of which self-identified as 'white British' in the pre-visit survey. They are quickly divided into six groups of around twenty. Each group is accompanied by two teachers and is escorted from session to session, taking part in six different activities in total across the course of the day. I joined one of the groups as they rotated round the different stations within the buildings utilised by the museum for school visits, including the Guildhall, Wilberforce House itself, the adjacent Streetlife Museum and the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation. The sessions are scheduled to last between forty-five and sixty minutes. In the morning, the pupils attend a session that utilizes mobile devices ('Personal Digital Assistants') to facilitate a "trail around the galleries" (the only time they spend in the galleries during the visit), which is followed by an object-handling session that covers the Middle Passage and life on plantations.

Vignette 5: 'Campaigning for Change'

Before breaking for lunch, the group moves to the museum's dedicated learning centre to take part in their third session, which is titled 'Campaigning for Change'. The pupils are divided into sub-groups and instructed to cluster around three tables. The museum facilitator, Jeremy, kicks off the session by talking to the pupils about something they can easily relate to – the popularity in recent years of the coloured rubber wristbands used to promote campaigns and charities, for example 'Make Poverty History'. Jeremy, who is in fact a freelance education specialist with a background in media and advertising, shows a PowerPoint presentation that begins with an image of the McDonald's logo – 'The Golden Arches'. Images of well-known logos scroll across the screen: Google, Nike and Microsoft. Jeremy explains that it is through repeated exposure to a logo that familiarity is developed, with the end goal of the image being instantly recognisable to everyone, illustrating how campaigners come up with a logo and a strap-line that "will make you make connections to

many emotions". The group is then shown this striking image from an advertising campaign adopted by the Italian clothing brand Benetton (Figure 20).
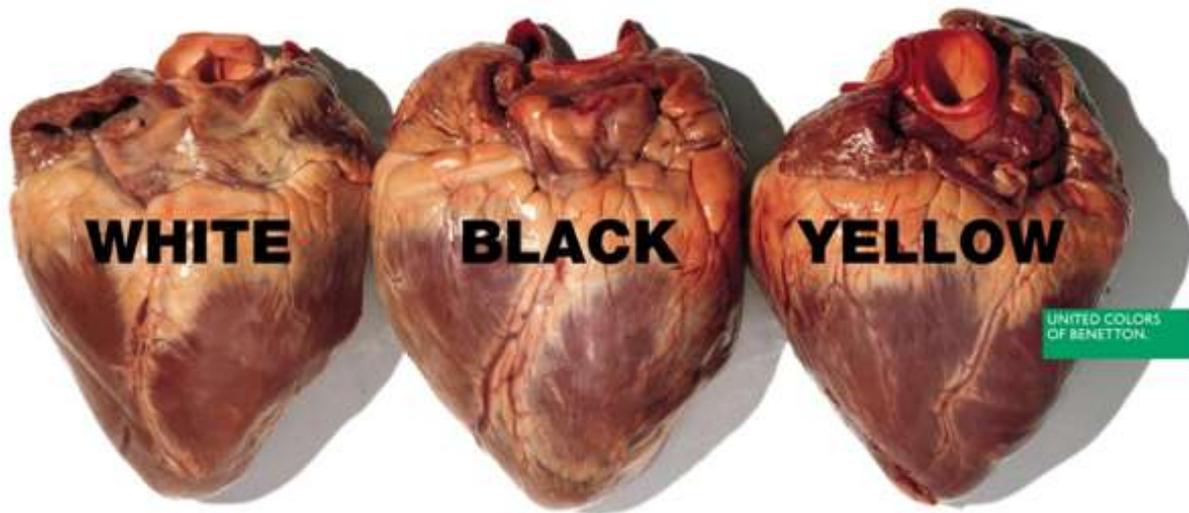
Figure 20: "White, Black and Yellow", United Colors of Benetton (Benetton, 1996)

The image depicts three bloody hearts, positioned closely next to each other against a white background, accompanied by the 'United Colors of Benetton' slogan. Written across the three hearts are the words 'WHITE', 'BLACK' and 'YELLOW'. This example of Benetton's controversial campaign images has been imaginatively chosen because, as Jeremy explains, it was intended to show that "everyone's the same on the inside", regardless of the colour of their skin; in fact, this particular image was developed by Benetton in conjunction with World Anti-Racism Day in 1996 (Benetton, 1996). After this energetic and engaging introduction to the practice of developing effective campaign strategies, the pupils are given the opportunity to think about something they would like to campaign to change in their own lives; the issues they choose include domestic violence and bullying. They then work in small groups to develop a key message, a logo and a slogan for their campaigns, the outcome of which is that each pupil makes their own pin-badge with their group's design on the front.

This session is successful in demonstrating to a school group – in a very short amount of time – the possibilities of mobilising people through effective campaigning, using the example of the abolitionist movement as a starting point, and abolitionist hero William

Wilberforce as inspiration. The facilitator was able to reinforce the importance of civil responsibility, and in doing so he empowered the pupils by giving them a glimpse of their potential agency as citizens in British society. Most of the pupils were visibly enthused by the task, displaying pride in the logos and slogans that they had produced; they were eager to show them off to Jeremy and the teachers that were present.

Nevertheless, other than a reference to the abolition movement at the beginning of the session, the historical specificity of the abolition of the slave trade in the former British Empire is all but missing; the focus quickly turns to modern campaigning strategies and how organisations use them to fight for people's civil rights, for fairer trade, and for an end to modern forms of slavery. It seems, therefore, that when the past is mobilised by government agendas such as the fostering of community cohesion and the promotion of universal values through citizenship education, there is a danger that the outcome is a historically diluted representation, one that focuses entirely on what is most attractive about a history (the abolitionist movement) and in doing so avoids the more difficult narratives (the impact and legacies of empire).

In sessions such as this one, the activity could in fact have taken place anywhere as the physical context of this session recreates a classroom setting and the facilitator is not able to make use of the 'unique selling point' of a museum field-trip; access to objects, novel architectural characteristics, engaging with stimulating exhibitions. As a result, the museum environment – the 'technology of memory' – is not implicitly essential to the learning experience. However, such sessions as 'Campaigning for Change' are not delivered in isolation and it might be that the fact that for this school group this session had been preceded by a trail around a gallery and an opportunity to handle objects meant that the seeming lack of museum essence was not problematic.

Each session interplays with other sessions and takes place within the context of the overall field-trip, which is only one part of a learning journey that begins at school (or, for some, at home, through their community or through popular media) and continues through a cyclical process of remembering and learning, as described by Falk and Dierking (2002). If this is the case, then what exactly is different in those moments of learning where the essence of the museum or heritage environment is more fully engaged and the transformative potential realised? This question is addressed in this chapter and developed

further in the chapters 7 and 8, where the pedagogy of object handling and dramatic representations are examined respectively.

Vignette 6: 'Unfinished Business'

In the 'Campaigning for Change' session, which explicitly uses slavery as a means by which to teach 'universal' values and civic responsibilities, the facilitator did not make use of material evidence, historical facts or critical analysis of the past, nor did he tackle the impact or legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. Instead, the history of transatlantic slavery and the British abolitionist movement is interpreted in a much more prosaic fashion. However, within this same museum there are examples of sessions that use the history of slavery and abolition to teach about campaigning in a much more integrated and critical manner; the types of sessions that adhere to this pattern usually follow a similar structure, which involves the pupils actively dealing with information and ideas, often gathering evidence and constructing critical arguments or convincing campaigns strategies.

This approach to teaching pupils about 'citizenship' is effective in combining the development of historical analytical skills and the skills of the citizenship curriculum, using the essence of the museum (the galleries, objects, documents) as the media through which this learning takes place. An example of such a session at Wilberforce House is 'Unfinished Business'. The pupils are once again sat around the tables in the education centre. The facilitator, Jill, asks the group about the Guildhall debates session they attended previously:

[Jill]   Who won? Can you give me an example of the arguments they used?

A few of the pupils put up their hands and Jill calls on them to give some examples.

[Jill]   Ok, so this morning you looked at slavery from a historical perspective. Can any of you tell me what 'Am I not a man and a brother' means?

[Pupil]   That we're all equal.

[Jill]   That's right. And Abolitionists were the first people to use this clever kind of branding.

Jill asks the pupils whether they have ever worn any of the rubber wristbands, awareness ribbons, or bought a poppy or something for a campaign or charity. She explains that the Wedgwood image was "a prototype for these kinds of things", and explains that

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"abolitionists were doing the same as us – wearing badges etc, especially women, as they couldn't sign the petitions or protest in government".

[Jill]   We're going to think about the tactics that abolitionists use and that campaigners use now. Then we're going to go to the galleries on contemporary slavery and do three activities in the galleries. Then we're going to come back and design a campaign about contemporary slavery using pens, paper and PowerPoint.

On each table is a briefcase, one for each sub-group.

[Jill]   Ok. So, in the cases on your tables you'll have things like a speech from William Wilberforce etc. We are going to be thinking about five different tactics that campaigners use: logos, communicating, testimonies, mobilising the public and awareness raising. What I want you to do is to work in your groups and to match the tactics up to the evidence in your case.

The cases contain some objects, but also laminated images of objects and documents. The pupils seem keen, but there are some expressions of confusion about the objective of the task. The pupils are communicating with each other across the room to find out what the other groups have in their cases. After ten or so minutes, Jill gets the group's attention:

[Jill]   Quickly, before we go through to the gallery, I'd like to go round the groups and for each group to give an example of a tactic they've been looking at.

The pupils give examples including a document relating to Equiano and the "importance of testimonies of ex-slaves" and "William Wilberforce's speech – it's really emotional, and he uses rhetorical questions".

Jill asks this pupil "Who would he have been talking to? What job did he do?", to which they respond that he was an MP and he would have been talking to educated people. Another group chooses the Brookes slave ship image, with one pupil explaining that "it was used for awareness raising, because just describing the conditions you wouldn't be able to imagine it, but if you can see what it was like...it was better 'cause you can look at it and you don't have to listen to a big speech".

[Jill]   Has anyone ever signed a petition before?
[Pupil 1]   Yes, against modern slavery.
[Pupil 2]   Yes, a local school was closing.
[Pupil 3]   Yes, for gay rights.

Jill draws this first part of the session to a close. This approach to teaching slavery clearly resonates with the 'abolition discourse' that Waterton states as having dominated the rhetoric and practice surrounding the bicentenary (Waterton and Wilson, 2009). Through discussions of campaigning skills, this session is effective in combining the development of historical analytical skills and the skills of the citizenship curriculum, using the 'essence' of the museum (the galleries, objects, documents) as the vehicle through which this learning is mediated.

The next part of this session uses the abolition and campaign strategy angle to start conversations about contemporary slavery and modern abolition movements. However, although this is a popular approach to addressing modern slavery (an issue that teachers seem to be keen to tackle), as the data demonstrates, making the connections between historical forms of slavery and contemporary forms can be problematic.

Vignette 7: Using Contemporary Slavery galleries to explore campaigning

[Teacher]   Right, we're going to split you into three groups. And we need to calm down...

The pupils are taken to the contemporary slavery galleries on the ground floor of the museum. Jill tells the pupils that each group is going to complete three activities, covering the topics of 'human rights', 'campaigning' and 'modern day slavery'.

[Jill]   We're going to have ten minutes for each activity, then we're going to rotate round.

Jill is explaining the different activities to the teachers and teaching assistants, providing three of them with packs relating to each of the activities. She tells the teachers where to be stationed in the galleries (each activity is to be facilitated by a different teacher) and they ask her questions about the tasks. Jill doesn't stay with the groups at first, as she needs to return to the education centre to set up the laptops for the next activity.

The three teaching staff call their first groups over to the correct areas in the galleries. The teacher facilitating the 'human rights' activity has the pupils gathered around and is reading from the session's activity pack (including the instructions for the facilitator!) and she shows the group some images. The pupils appear to be listening, as the teacher is quite strict and reprimands the two or three pupils who attempt to break away from the

group to look at an interactive video screen. The teacher asks individual pupils to read out the text on the back of the images. After a few minutes of reading the text accompanying the images, the pupils begin to look more fidgety and their attention turns away from the activity (the objectives for which are not entirely clear); instead they look around at the displays and interactives surrounding them.

[Teacher] Guys come back here! Don't go in there!

One pupil jokingly 'shushes' the video playing behind him as he can't hear the teacher. The pupils return their gazes to the teacher, answering the questions she asks them about the images:

[Teacher] What rights do you think are being infringed here? CAN YOU LISTEN PLEASE!

As the groups move round and start their next activity, Jill explains to me that she had devised this gallery-based activity in order to match up with the contemporary slavery programme, as there wasn't anything available before. She tells me that it is designed so that the pupils can give good presentations based on what they find out. Jill stands back and lets the school staff take the lead. The three teachers vary in their approaches to the activity, with one teacher inviting the pupils to explore the gallery space more freely, using the activity pack as more of a springboard than a straightjacket; this teacher seems to have taken ownership of the knowledge and the learning process.

After about thirty minutes in the galleries – ten minutes on each task – the group are escorted back to the education centre.

[Jill] You all did very well in the gallery for focusing. I know it's been a long day for you, but now you have a chance to do something more creative. Were any of you moved by any of the images you saw in the gallery?

[Pupils] Yeah.

[Jill] Ok. So now you have twenty-five minutes to come up with a campaign yourselves, so you need to think about what you saw in the galleries and about the different tactics that we talked about earlier.

Each group has been provided with felt tip pens, paper, laptops with PowerPoint installed and with a folder of digital images to use in their presentations.

[Pupil] Has anyone got a good idea for a campaign name?

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The groups work hard on their campaigns, creating image-filled presentations and drawing logo designs onto their paper. However, the time quickly goes by and before Jill realises, they have gone over the allotted twenty-five minutes. Because of overrunning in the morning sessions too, there is no time left for the presentations and the group has to leave to take their coach back to school.

The vignette below illustrates a slightly different approach to the 'Human Rights and Legacies of Slavery Galleries'. Unusually, this session at Wilberforce House is facilitated by one of teachers accompanying the group, as opposed to a member of the museum's staff.

Vignette 8: Teacher-led session on modern forms of slavery

This group is from a Quaker all-girls boarding school that aims to promote the values of 'peace, equality and social justice'. In the morning of their visit, the group take part in the Guildhall Debates session (see Vignette 10 and Vignette 18). After lunch, the Religious Studies teacher – Martha – has planned her own session for the group. The session begins in the education centre.

> [Martha]   So girls, we learnt a lot this morning. We heard about different slogans, for example "Am I not a man and a brother?" You girls tell me a lot of what you see on TV – we are bombarded with slogans in adverts and other things. But abolitionists didn't have TV or the Internet... But we don't have to have a campaign about slavery do we now? Because we don't have slavery anymore, do we?

Some of the pupils say 'no', but one girl puts up her hand and says that yes we do still have slavery and then she goes on to give a very detailed explanation of 'bonded slavery', which Martha expands on further.

> [Martha]   And you're going to find out that there's a lot of bonded labour in the world today.

One pupil puts up her hand and asks whether "poor people in third world countries selling their children to white people who can't have children" would count as bonded labour.

> [Martha]   With child labour, the kids have no access to education because they are working and they can't get out of it. It can be very dangerous, there is no health and safety [lifting a pupil's arm up], and so often a child might lose their hand or have another accident.

> [Pupil]   But surely if you have people working for you, you want to look after them so they can keep working for you?

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Martha explains that as the children are free labour they are easily replaceable. One pupil talks about illegal immigrants and how they are sometimes used to undertake cheap labour.

[Martha]   You have the trafficking of human beings too. And then there was the incident at Morecambe Bay where those Chinese cockle pickers were found dead...

[Pupil]   There are illegal immigrants working in our local Indian.

[Martha]   They might not be slaves – that might be a different problem. Can you give me one more example of a modern form of slavery?

[Pupil]   Ooh! Child soldiers!

[Martha]   That's right. By the way, who touched the guns outside?

Martha is referring to some weaponry that the pupils passed at lunch time within the Museum Quarter. Several of the girls raise their hands.

[Martha]   And why do we think that might not be good?

[Pupil]   Because we're a Quaker school?

[Martha]   Well, yes. Because we don't want to be involved with objects of violence like guns... What we're going to do this afternoon is we're going to go into the modern slavery gallery – it's quite small – and I'm going to put you into groups and you are going to research information in the gallery. Then you're going to come back here and each group will have a computer to make a PowerPoint on about a particular topic and you will then present this to the others. You'll be making a kind of advertising campaign and slogan. Ok, so the five topics that each of you will be looking at are 'Child Labour', 'People Trafficking', 'Bonded Labour', 'Child Soldiers' and 'Human Rights', including the impact that slavery has had on modern day attitudes. I'm going to give each group the names of children that are featured in the gallery that you need to look out for.

Whilst walking to the 'Human Rights and Legacies of Slavery Galleries', Martha tells me that the previous year when they brought a group to the museum that they had spent ages in the contemporary gallery and that "all the information they need is on one screen really", referring to the interactive screen in the first space. She says "it would be better for them if there were four screens, one for each topic". She goes on to say that "today we only have one girl who is special needs and the group has put her in charge of writing down the information, so I think I'm going to have to go hurry her up and almost write the story for her so they can move on".

In the galleries, the groups complete their information gathering exercise with little

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fuss, using clipboards and pens to note down the key facts that they will need to create their campaigns. Martha comments that it would be good if there were computers in the gallery that link to the antislavery website so that the pupils could find out more about bonded labour. After twenty or so minutes, the group returns to the education centre to put together their presentations. However, not all of the laptops are able to connect to the internet and aren't working properly, and some of the pupils express that they feel that they haven't got enough time to create a good PowerPoint presentation, so they suggest that they tell their story in a different way – through drama. Whilst the pupils are preparing their different presentations, Martha explains that her "classroom is quite big so they are used to doing a lot of drama". The other teacher accompanying the group tells me that the pupils are also "very used to going on lots of trips out of school, because we have them from age five so they often go on afternoons out from when they're young", which makes sense as the pupils seem very comfortable and calm in this out of school environment.

Five or ten minutes pass, in which the girls are clearly putting in a lot of effort, rehearsing what they are going to say. However, there is not enough time for every group to show what they have done in full. One group has put together a dramatic portrayal of the stories that they read in the gallery about children in bonded labour; they perform the short scene with great confidence, ending by addressing the audience with the question, "What can we do?" The other groups quickly show the campaigns that they have created for their themes, including slogans such as "As We Listen: They Work", and the teacher praises their thoughtful efforts. Whilst the pupils pack up their belongings, Martha tells me that "these girls don't always realise how lucky they are". Before they leave the museum, Martha addresses the girls:

[Martha]   It's important that we pay attention, because maybe when you are Prime Ministers or when you work for the government or are just mums, then you can tell your children about these things.

It is interesting to note that Wilberforce House by far offers the most sessions that address the abolition movement and / or make explicit links to the citizenship curriculum. The fact that a museum located in the birthplace of the most famous British abolitionist should pay particular attention to the abolitionist movement is not a surprise. However, the conscious decision to offer sessions that directly reflect the requirements of the Key Stage 3 citizenship curriculum is most likely a result of the fact that the Hull Museums Service works

very closely with the Local Education Authority (LEA) and liaises with local schools when designing sessions to match new curriculum. In conversations with facilitators at the museum, it was clear that the "strict nature" of the LEA is problematic in the development and delivery of sessions.

Although it is clearly useful for teachers if the learning objectives for the sessions complement those of the curriculum units, some of the freelance staff reported that they feel disempowered by their perceived lack of authority to adapt sessions so that they more appropriately meet the need of a particular school group. One facilitator even reported being "told off" by another freelancer for changing something as trivial as whether the pupils cut out the paper themselves or not. This same facilitator stated that if she could do anything she wanted with the groups, that she would "do more with objects", "explore African cultures more, how villages work, how families work" in order to "break down barriers" and "reveal the ordinariness of it all and how it's not much different to their lives really". These types of sessions are in fact offered by Wilberforce House Museum, however, as Vignette 9: 'Africa Before the Slave Trade' (presented in the next section) demonstrates, the facilitators here seem to be somewhat restricted by the institutional conventions of the museum, at least in comparison to the 'all-singing all-dancing' equivalent session offered by the International Slavery Museum (see Section 7.3).

As the four vignettes presented in this section illustrate, the idea of campaigning and fulfilling civic responsibilities is clearly appealing to teachers and museum education staff, who have been encouraged by the citizenship curriculum and national education initiatives to engage with these ideas in as many cross-curricular ways as possible. However, it is also easy to see why some people would be uncomfortable with the portrayal of 1807 as this magnificent turning point where the British started the process of righting all the wrongs of African slavery in the Americas. The truth is that the 1807 abolition act freed no slaves. The parliamentary bill prohibited the carrying of slaves on any British ship as well as prohibiting the import of slaves into any British colony. However, not only were these laws not that well enforced, they were utterly meaningless for those already enslaved in the Americas, which is why 1807 has often been described as a 'hollow victory', which might explain in part why, before 2007, it had never been the focus of commemorative activity. The next section focuses on the citizenship curriculum as another example of a way in which the history of

slavery has been interpreted by the education sector, in this case as a unique and important part of the nation's past that must be taught truthfully and with relevance to the present day.

6.4   Teaching why transatlantic slavery is unique and important

In contrast to promotion of the universal messages of slavery history that defined the sessions presented previously in this chapter, this section critically examines another key pedagogical trend that emerged from the fieldwork data; the idea of transatlantic slavery as a uniquely traumatic event, as a shared history that must be taught as part of an ongoing process of symbolic reparation.

For example, the Diversity and Citizenship review that was published in 2007 uses the theme of slavery as an example of how the 'identities and diversities' element of the citizenship curriculum might be delivered. The lesson-plan style table (Figure 21), titled "Slavery: a chronological learning journey, through diversity, justice and active participation" outlines a possible topic for discussion – "Focus of learning journey: Should the UK pay compensation for the transatlantic slave trade?" (Ajegbo, 2007: 107). Of course, these are just suggestions of the types of topics that teachers might cover, but the focus and phrasing of the "Key Learning Questions" certainly highlight some significant issues about teaching the history of slavery in the twenty-first century.

The question of whether or not the UK should pay reparations for the transatlantic slave trade is a political hot topic, one which has been linked in various ways to explanations about how the 2007 bicentenary was implemented; in particular the language and rhetoric used by Blair and official government documents. Furthermore, the rhetoric of the reparations movement itself is heavily reliant on the perception of transatlantic slavery as 'unique', in the same way that notions of the Holocaust as a uniquely horrific event were crucial to the success of the Nuremberg Trials in prosecuting Nazi perpetrators.

Many have commented on the Labour government's skilful avoidance of the word 'apology', as this would be seen as an omission of guilt, which within the context of the reparations movement would give weight to the arguments in favour of some form of

Key Learning Questions	Range and content acquisition, skills and processes and areas of focus
Range and content 1: Why has the British government (Tony Blair) recently expressed 'deep sorrow' for the transatlantic slave trade?	• Pupils examine the recent regrets voiced by Tony Blair, as a nationwide expression of regret for the transatlantic slave trade. • Pupils focus on the philosophical perspectives of regret, with an emphasis on what makes regret meaningful and why.
Range and content 2: How did some British citizens enslave African citizens?	• Pupils examine the actions and motivations that caused 18th and early 19th century British citizens to participate in the slave trade. • Pupils focus on the differences in equality and access to human rights that are developed and evolve through the process of socialisation and societal status.
Range and content 3: How important were British abolitionists in helping to end the transatlantic slave trade?	• Pupils investigate the significance, scope and relative power of the abolitionist movement in the UK, and compare this to other 'pressure movements' that led to the end of the slave trade, such as the African slave revolts. • Pupils compare these pressure movements to contemporary examples of pressure groups that lobby for and promote social justice through human rights (e.g. Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch [HRW]).

Figure 21: 'Key learning questions' (Ajegbo, 2007: 107)

'compensation'. Rifkin discusses the advent of restorative justice within the practice of law as "a new way of dealing with conflict resolution that puts as much emphasis on empathy as on equity" (2009: 17). Rather than the focus being on justice as meaning to punish the perpetrators, Rifkin states that there is now much more focus on reconciliation – repairing the relationship between victims and perpetrators.

This includes a wide range of actions, for example "[i]mprisoned felons and their victims are encouraged to come together in carefully choreographed therapeutic settings to talk face-to-face and share their feelings about the crime", which is designed to activate an "empathic response" in the perpetrator, leading to "remorse and an effort to seek forgiveness" (Rifkin, 2009: 16), assumedly resulting in a decrease in the likelihood of them reoffending. The creation of a "safe environment" for an "empathic catharsis" for both the victim and the perpetrator to begin to "heal" is the foundation of such twentieth-century

phenomenon as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of post-apartheid South Africa, which along with the Nuremberg Trials, continues to shape and drive discourses surrounding contemporary reparations movements, including those who are trying to redress the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade, as experienced in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Presented with adequate historical information, questions about 'regret' and reparations have the potential to fuel very interesting and thought provoking discussions amongst pupils and teachers, with a clear emphasis on the history as both unique and important. For example, introducing to the classroom the fact that when slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833, slave-owners were granted the right to compensation for their loss of 'property', which cost the British government twenty million pounds, is likely to prompt engaged and critical responses. Clearly, at that moment in history, those with the power empathised with those who were losing their power; oftentimes those governing were indistinguishable from the slave-owning class. It is unfathomable to a contemporary sensibility that the British government could pass an act that compensated the slave-owners and entirely neglected the needs and rights of the former slaves themselves, it is counterintuitive to the values of contemporary Britain. Reparations is indeed a 'difficult' issue that not only has the potential to divide opinion in British society today, but is also just one example of a historical 'fact' that, when highlighted, casts a dark shadow on the legitimacy and appropriateness of commemorating – 'celebrating' – the 1807 act to abolish the slave trade in the former British Empire.

The second dominant 'lesson of slavery' that this chapter deals with is perhaps less easy to reduce to a set of learning objectives or outcomes than the teaching of citizenship values. However, the notion that it is founded on – that transatlantic slavery is unique – is fundamental in understanding what makes this a 'difficult history', a traumatic past that is perceived to have played an exceptional role in the development of the world as we know it. Importantly, these labels of 'unique', 'traumatic' and 'difficult' are as much about the nature of the historical narratives that form this past as they are about how this past relates to the present: the tangible and intangible legacies of African slavery in the Americas.

Vignette 9: 'Africa Before the Slave Trade'

The most common (and perhaps the most self-conscious) way that the uniqueness of this history is communicated to school groups is through an exploration of 'Africa before the slave trade'. This tends to follow the pattern of using material culture from West Africa to subvert assumptions pupils may have about Africa, which is then followed by an exploration of the impact of the slave trade on the African continent. In the pre-visit surveys, two-thirds of the teachers specifically mentioned this topic as important in relation to the visit. For example, one teacher said they wanted their pupils to:

> Look at the artefacts from Africa, consider whether African culture was any less 'civilised' than the West before the start of slavery. [To] consider the longer-term impact on Africa and the nations where slaves were settled after being taken.

A different teacher stated that they wanted their pupils to learn about "West African culture before slavery to show the abuse they experienced", whereas others referred to "the level of culture in pre-slavery Africa" and the importance of teaching "about African civilisation before colonialism".

As mentioned earlier, there is a session with this same title at the International Slavery Museum, presented in this thesis as 'Vignette 14: Learning about West African culture' (see Chapter 7). For the purposes of this chapter's focus on the issue of slavery history as 'universal' versus 'unique', we return now to the school group that was introduced in vignettes 5 and 6, as they continue their learning journey through the various sessions selected for them at Wilberforce House by the head of their history department.

After the lunch break, the group is directed towards one end of a canteen space in the Streetlife Museum. During this afternoon session (which is followed by one final session titled 'Unfinished Business', which uses object-handling to discuss abolition), an interesting discussion about the impact of the slave trade on the African continent takes place between the museum facilitator (Lucy), the more vocal pupils in the group and one of the accompanying teachers. The session is titled 'Africa before the slave trade':

> [Lucy]   What kind of things do you think people think about when they think about Africa?

The pupils offer the following responses: that Africans are "stupid", "savage", "not modern", that the people there have "no rights" and that they are "not really in touch with the modern world" – Lucy writes these onto a flipchart sheet. The teacher, almost in mimicry of

the pupils, asks the facilitator:

[Teacher] Can I add one Miss? 'Inferior' – white Europeans believed that Africans were an inferior race.

[Lucy] What else do you think they thought Africa was like?

The pupils' ideas included that people thought there was "nothing there", that everyone "lived in huts", and that there were "no crops", "no businesses". They also talked about the landscape, hunting and how "women did domestic things".

[Lucy] So we're building a picture of what Europeans thought of Africans – that they were inferior and not as good as us.

[Teacher] Can I ask something Miss? What about religion? What about the idea of the British bringing Christianity to Africa? What did you see in the gallery?

[Male pupil] That the African religion was pagan and inferior.

As the session develops, the focus turns to how to make good use of historical 'facts' and how to separate them from 'fictions':

[Lucy] I'm going to give each group a pack of evidence and I want you to think about whether your evidence does or does not support this view of Africa that was widely accepted. I want you to think about culture, religion, technology, education, society and government, art and creativity [Lucy writes these categories onto the flipchart]. You have 25 minutes to do this, so take your time. Really examine the evidence and think about what it is telling you... I was asked this morning by another group why the timeline says 'black death in Britain' on it – this is so you can see what other things were happening at the time.

The 'evidence packs' are full of laminates of photos of objects or documents and supporting information. Through conversations with the pupils, Lucy and the teachers are working hard to challenge the pupils and encourage them to really think through the prejudices that they have about Africa. One teacher talks to the pupils about the evidence they have in front of them of the fact that Africans could read and write, whilst Lucy tells the pupils that Ancient Egyptians were in fact African, even though, quote "we don't always make that link". She shows the group a traditional African mask – the only object used in the session. Returning to the flipchart, Lucy reads out the ideas about Africa that the group came up with at the beginning of the session:

[Lucy] Do we still think these things are true?

[Pupil] No.

[Lucy]　　　　　So, what evidence can we use to demonstrate this?

The pupils are very keen to demonstrate that the things they had said about Africa at the beginning of the session were not in fact true, using examples from their evidence packs and from their discussions with the teachers and the facilitator.

The contradictions regarding 'uniqueness' in the rhetoric and narratives used to teach school pupils about the transatlantic slave trade seem to be partly determined by the intended message of the educational media or the desired pupil response to a particular session. In some cases, for example in this session, transatlantic slavery is presented to pupils as being unique, as having played an exceptional role in world history; this is usually achieved through discussions of the legacy of the slave trade in Europe, the Americas and Africa. Now that some of the commonly-held prejudices against Africa and Africans have been dismantled through the discussions around the evidence packs, Lucy turns the pupils' attentions to the impact of the transatlantic slave trade on the continent:

[Lucy]　　　　　Has it changed your opinions at all? Because I must admit that I didn't know a lot of this before. Has anyone learnt anything?

[Pupil]　　　　　I didn't know that they [Africans] were rich.

[Lucy]　　　　　Yes and that's because much of what we have learnt about today was destroyed by the slave trade – we gave them guns, fuelled civil wars to create prisoners of war that could be sold into slavery, people fled their towns, societies were destroyed. Skills were lost and tribalism became strong as people wanted to protect their own – we have a lot to answer for.

In this session the important but complex matter of the legacy of the slave trade in Africa and the question of 'inherited guilt' is presented to the school group, framed within a dichotomous 'us' and 'them' rhetoric. The main learning objective of the session is to give pupils an opportunity to voice their own assumptions and prejudices about Africa; they were then presented with the knowledge and evidence to challenge and subvert these assumptions. Furthermore, the pupils were able to gain a better understanding of the role of the slave trade in contributing to political, cultural, social and economic circumstances in certain African countries. The group was also introduced to the idea that some of the prejudices against Africans were created by Europeans in order to justify the continuation of the slave trade.

Here, the pupils are encouraged to regard the history of slavery as an unavoidable

part of 'our past', as something that we need to take responsibility for, as something that has serious resonance today. This session is notably different to the session on campaigning where the traumatic and emotionally charged history of the transatlantic slave trade is treated as a conventional history topic from which 'universal' lessons of civic responsibility can be drawn; it does not shy away from a reflexive, critical representation of British involvement in the slave trade, and the negative impact that the British Empire had on the African continent.

By using historically specific facts to undermine common prejudices about Africa, this session informs and potentially develops what might be referred to as a pupils 'historical inquiry toolkit': in other words, the methods and values necessary for analyzing and interpreting evidence about the past. Returning now to the abolition discourse, it is clear that in this particular visit, the pupils were presented with both of the "two specific ways of characterizing 'the slave trade' and its abolition" that Waterton stresses: "the explicit use of factual detail" and "the studied use of vagueness", which results in "accentuating positive aspects of British history and nullifying any seemingly 'disruptive' influences through ambiguity and sidelining" (Waterton and Wilson, 2009: 383-4).

The contrasting style and focus of these sessions is indicative of a wider issue that is discussed within the memory studies literature: that is, the process of selecting from the past that which is useful – and forgetting that which is not – in order to create something that addresses what Edward Said refers to as "urgent purposes in the present" (Said, 2000: 16). Assmann usefully reminds us of Said's insightful observation that collective memory is always selective "by manipulating certain bits of the national past, suppressing others, elevating still others in an entirely functional way" (Said, 2000: 6).

However, within a more historically grounded setting and task, the topic of the abolitionist movement can be successfully used to promote reflexive, critical thinking, whilst offering opportunities to carefully build empathy with different viewpoints (for example pro- and anti-slavery groups) and to explore the challenging realities of early nineteenth-century British life. In other words, there are examples of teaching pupils about the abolition movement that could not easily be characterised as amounting to a 'whitewashing' of history.

The history of abolitionism does in fact lend itself to a reflexive and challenging

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exploration of how ordinary people can become implicated in something as terrible as the slave trade through their livelihood or decisions as consumers. In the session below, which takes place at the Guildhall in Hull, the pupils whose learning journey we have traced through three vignettes already in this chapter (Vignette 5, 6 and 9) are once again encouraged to think about the power of campaigning. However, in this instance this is achieved through a more historically grounded and provocative activity that makes intelligent use of role-play, as well as the development of analytical, presentation and teamwork skills, all within an exciting and novel physical setting.

Vignette 10: Gathering evidence in the gallery for use in the Guildhall Debate

The session begins in the museum's learning centre. The facilitator (Lucy) explains to the group that they are going to be thinking about different groups that would have had different opinions about the slave trade. The pupils are to be divided into different groups and using evidence from the museum galleries, they will be tasked with building an argument relating to their group's stance of the slave trade. They will then be expected to present their arguments and evidence in a debate team set up:

[Lucy]	I want you to feel really comfortable today in the museum, I'm not a scary person, so don't be afraid to say what you feel and think. But don't forget when we're debating, we'll be thinking like we're living 200 years ago. I personally think the slave trade was a horrific trade, and hopefully you do to…But can you think of anyone in Britain who'd have wanted to keep the slave trade?

Out of the pupils' various suggestions, the two that Lucy is looking for come through: merchants and slave traders.

[Lucy]	And who would have wanted it to end?
[Pupil]	The slaves themselves.
[Male pupil]	Religious people.
[Lucy]	That's right. So have any of you ever been involved in a campaign?
[Male pupil]	I've been in a postman's strike…

Straight away it is obvious that this session – although it is taking place in the same museum as the previous session – offers a very different representation of the history of the abolition movement. Most importantly, the complexities of the situation in early nineteenth-century Britain is presented, rather than 1807 becoming a univocal moment of Britain leading the

way in bringing about the beginning of the end of an immoral and exploitative institution. Unlike in the previous session, the activity here does not run the risk of giving a misleading message that glosses over how Britain benefitted from the slave trade. As the data extracts below illustrate, the pupils are confronted with the ways in which Britain was implicated in the trade and the struggles that abolitionists faced in getting the 1807 bill passed.

Lucy divides the pupils into five different groups, each representing a different faction in the anti-slavery / pro-slavery debates: the merchants, the slave-traders, the abolitionists, the general public and the ex-slaves.

[Lucy   We're not going to have a lot of time in the museum, so you will need teamwork to collect all the evidence that you need. We're only going to be using the top floor of the museum.

Lucy gives the pupils laminated, colour-coded maps of the museum and tells them that they will only need to visit the orange and purple galleries. Each group is given a pack with questions that will direct their collection of evidence to support their argument. Lucy explains that each question tells them where they will need to look in the galleries for the answer.

[Lucy]   Has anyone got any questions?

There is a general din in the room as the pupils begin to move towards the door to head to the galleries.

[Teacher]   Shhh! You will need to be smart and divide your tasks up.

[Lucy]   Okay, let's have some quiet. Right you're only going to have twenty minutes in the museum so it's important that you stick to the questions.

The groups are directed out of the learning centre and into the main museum building, where they are led upstairs to the first floor where the orange and purple galleries are located. The purpose of this twenty minute period in the gallery spaces is fact gathering; the pupils begin to panic, frantically dashing around the galleries in search of the evidence they need to make sure that they successfully complete the task. They are very busy, making a lot of noise, frequently consulting their clipboards and therefore they are not engaging with the objects or the exhibitions in an exploratory way that would fit with the idea of free-choice learning, as discussed in Chapter 5. Most of the pupils work in pairs – it seems that they have delegated the work effectively and they are pretty focused. The pupils approach Lucy

when they are stuck and she guides them to the answers.

Two of the male pupils are following the "What would you have done?" flowchart, which uses a series of questions to guide visitors through the types of choices that enslaved Africans would have been faced with and what the consequences of their actions might have been. The flowchart is displayed under a banner of "Resistance and Rebellion", and the instructions: "Imagine you have been enslaved and are working on a sugar plantation in the Caribbean. Choose one type of resistance from the four below and see where your decisions take you". The four types of resistance and their related decisions are:

- Violent behaviour: The overseer hits your friend. Do you hit the overseer in their defence?
- Stealing: Your family are starving. Do you steal some food from the Plantation store house?
- Refusal to work. You are feeling exhausted. Do you refuse to work today?
- Keeping African traditions alive. You meet a slave from another region. Do you decide to be a couple?

By answering 'Yes' or 'No' to a series of questions, visitors are guided down the flowchart to discover their hypothetical fate, which is destined to be one of the following:

- The Maroon War is won. You live with the Maroons helping other runaways;
- You are caught and killed by bloodhounds;
- You manage to escape to the coast and become free;
- You gain a bad reputation with the Overseer and get punished often;
- The Plantation owner sells you on and separates you from loved ones;
- You have a family and follow your cultural traditions in secret.

Unlike the boys from the Pupil Referral Unit, whose teacher encouraged them to look at the flowchart and vividly related it to their own lives (for example deciding whether or not to use violence in a situation), the two male pupils here carefully read all of the text and follow the routes of the chart with their fingers. However, unlike the Pupil Referral Unit group, they are not discussing the different options with each other, and as such they do not seem to be emoting with the described situations in the same way. It seems that they are more passive and approach the display as another task to be completed before moving on, rather than actively and verbally making connections between their own lives and the agency and the lives of the slaves who are trying to escape to freedom.

Some of the pupils are keen to show their teachers interesting things they have found in the museum, but most are very focused on answering the questions, which means

that they are drawn more to the text panels than the objects or other more tactile or interactive media, as the evidence they need is to be found mostly in the interpretive panels. Bucking the general behavioural trend of the group, a few of the pupils and two teachers are gathered around an installation that, through rectangular outlines on the wall, simulates the physical space that would have been available to enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage, allowing visitors to stand up against the wall and visualise the cramped conditions. The teachers and pupils figure out this element of the exhibition together, discovering new things about the harrowing journey from across the Atlantic Ocean by reading the information panels together and taking it in turns to stand in front of the wall and comment on the inconceivably restricted space. The teacher furthers this collaborative learning opportunity by involving one of the museum facilitators, asking her questions about the slave ships.

The facilitator talks to one of the male pupils, who just so happens to be quite tall, about the average height of Africans; he suggests that there wouldn't have been many tall Africans around and that therefore the space available to enslaved Africans might not have been quite as restrictive as it would have been for him. This develops into a mature and detailed discussion about the morality of the slave trade and the difficulties of judging it through the lens of today's ethical standards. One of the teachers takes photos of the pupils that are trying out the slave ship 'size-chart' display. In the next gallery space a pupil is playing with the traditional West African drums. Lucy appears from around the corner and announces that they need to start heading back to the education centre – the pupils obediently comply and the group is quickly rounded up.

Back in the education centre, the pupils return to where they had previously been sitting.

[Teacher]   Shhhh!

The class instantly becomes silent, showing the same obedience and respect that they displayed in the galleries.

[Lucy]   Now I know it was difficult for the pro-slavery groups to gather evidence as there wouldn't be much in the museum. I want you to spend twenty minutes formulating a speech for the debate. We're going to have a debate in the Guildhall – does anyone know what that might be?

[Male pupil]   Like a parliament?

Lucy describes the physicality and the atmosphere of the Guildhall and explains how that will help us feel like we're actually in 1807. She reiterates that they have twenty minutes to put together a two minute speech that they will present to the other groups. She tells them that they are going to be marked on their speeches – out of five for manner (the way it's delivered) and out of five for matter (content).

[Lucy]   It's up to you, but you can develop a character to deliver your speech through, how that person might speak, how they might put their argument across. You can score extra points for drama. But it's a serious subject, so I don't want to see any comedy. In your pack you have images, questions, documents etc, and a few guidelines about what you might want to include in your speech. Any questions? No. Ok. I'm going to give you twenty minutes. And by the way it isn't a done deal that an antislavery group will win.

[Pupil]   Who decides who wins?

[Lucy]   Not me, your teachers.

[Teacher]   Oh no you can't do that!

As the pupils work on their speeches, the teachers, teaching assistants and Lucy float around the groups, checking that there are no problems.

[Lucy]   You can take the evidence packs to the Guildhall if you want so you can hold up any evidence etc. OK, you've got 5 minutes to finish off.

The pupils are frantically practicing and a few seem to be having a last minute panic.

[Lucy]   I don't want you to feel apprehensive, we're all friends.

Lucy explains to the group that when they leave the museum to head to the Guildhall they will be crossing some busy roads, and that they will need to be sensible in the Guildhall as it is a working building. The teacher reiterates the need to be sensible and respectful.

One of the teachers explains to me why teaching slavery is important to her, remarking that she thinks it is essential to make history relevant, to make connections. She talks about how there are still genocides in the world today, going on to how she links slavery up with the history of empire and how she thinks it is far more interesting for the pupils than going over and over the King's and Queen's of England. She says that she thinks the pupils like the museum because "they can see things for real that they've only previously seen in textbooks...seeing something for real does something the textbooks

can't". She explains that the pupils love learning about Equiano because "it's real people, real stories". The teacher comments that it is great that the session matches the national curriculum exactly – Lucy responds by saying that "it has taken a long time to get it really good like that". Before heading for the Guildhall, the teacher tells me that one of the boys does debating outside of school and that she really can't wait to see them inside the Guildhall. (For the next instalment of this session, see Chapter 8.)

The common thread running through Vignette 9 and Vignette 10 is the sense of prioritising the truth about British involvement in the slave trade and the devastating legacies for Africa and the African Diaspora, rather than the more 'sugar-coated', diversionary approaches to teaching slavery that were observed in the vignettes presented in Section 6.3. The weight of historical responsibility was palpable beneath the surface of the bicentenary events and the range of media responses it evoked. Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the degree to which this aspect of this twenty-first century shift in historical consciousness – this desire amongst some factions to repair, or at least redress, the historical injustices of the slave trade – was articulated at a local and individual level is more complicated than perhaps previous analyses of the bicentenary commemorations have allowed for (see Section 6.1 for a discussion of Waterton's 'abolition discourse', for example).

Conclusion

It is of course not surprising that in the aftermath of the bicentenary of 1807 that a popular approach to teaching slavery is through the lens of abolition. However, what is clear is that the relationship between education and commemoration is a multi-faceted and ever-evolving expression of the difficulties of the historical consciousness that is being (re)negotiated at a particular time in a particular place with a particular set of local actors. In other words, in addition to the discourses dominating the public sphere and the emphasis of national education initiatives on one area of a history over another, the timing, location and people involved in the museum field-trips have a significant role to play in shaping the nature of the learning experience and the pedagogical approaches adopted (as seen in the case of the freelance facilitator with a background in media and advertising in Vignette 5 above).

As the first session in this section illustrates, the abolition movement and its most public players provide a useful springboard from which to explore the importance and the strategies of campaigning, of people coming together to bring about positive change within their societies. However, it is clear from such sessions that unless they are situated alongside other sessions or activities that deal with slavery in a more historically embedded manner, then the explicit teaching of the 'universal' values that can be drawn from this history can be at worst misleading and at best disconnected from the subject matter.

Using illustrative examples from Wilberforce House Museum as the framework through which this seeming dichotomy between the 'unique' and 'universal' aspects of teaching slavery is demonstrated, this chapter brings together the theoretical and practice-based implications of both approaches. The analysis presented in this chapter is set against a backdrop of the following question, which is picked up again in this thesis in relation to the use of object handling (Chapter 7) and drama (Chapter 8): What are the perceived 'lessons' of transatlantic slavery and how has this rhetoric shaped the pedagogies adopted by museums for school groups in the aftermath of the 2007 bicentenary?

CHAPTER 7: TOUCHING THE TRAUMA OF THE PAST: THE PEDAGOGY AND ETHICS OF OBJECT HANDLING

Perhaps the most notable common thread that runs through the educational approaches observed in the four case study museums is the importance that museum staff, teachers and pupils all give to the opportunity to handle objects relating to this traumatic past. Object-handling emerged from the data as the most dominant pedagogical trend (see Aim 4), which is perhaps not surprising given the manner in which museums are popularly conceptualised; as "a building where objects of historical, scientific or artistic interest are kept" (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2010). This chapter is particularly well placed to address Aim 5 of this research: "To establish whether the themes and pedagogical trends identified [...] are particular to English museums during this period" of commemorative activity, as it is through the topic of object-handling that many of the most intriguing contrasts between the English museums and the Canadian case study become most apparent. This chapter seeks to relate these differences in approach to the regulating influence of the shift in historical consciousness in the build up to, during and after the bicentenary.

> Audiences say that access to primary sources – particularly objects – is the unique contribution museums can make to the teaching of history. However, there are distinct challenges when using them to illustrate aspects of transatlantic slavery (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 25).

The quote above is taken from the 'Working with collections' section of *Unlocking Perceptions*, a ring-bound booklet produced by the *Understanding Slavery* initiative in recognition that "Engaging with the history and legacies of the transatlantic slave trade may be more challenging than other subjects" (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: inside cover. See Chapter 4 for further discussion). As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), Bonnell and Simon state that one of the factors that makes a 'difficult' exhibition difficult is that it "elicits the burden of 'negative emotions', such as 'grief, anger, shame, or horror' [...] here the exhibition presents an ethical difficulty, by obligating the visitor to take part in the museum's work as a moral voice" (2007: 67).

This is particularly evident in the case of object handling, where the visitor is faced with the tactile, physical weight and feel of the past, of the horror of the slave trade and the

profits made by the slave trading nations. Perhaps even more than watching a video clip or reading a text panel, holding a chain or neck collar requires the visitor to form a personal response, to position themselves in relation to the museums 'moral voice' – to take an ethical stance. If, as Bonnell and Simon argue, the difficult exhibition "induces feelings of 'heightened anxiety' [...] because of an empathic 'identification with the victims of violence'", then the object handling session may also act as "a facilitator for accessing the emotional sufferings of others [...] which some may believe to be exploitative, 'a voyeuristic, sensationalist version of violence, loss, and suffering'" (2007: 67). Paul Williams' examination of the ethics of how objects are displayed in memorial museums is very useful for framing the discussion of adopting an ethical stance towards handling slavery objects:

> A marked feature of memorial museum collections is that they are defined by what the violence in each event produced. Institutions must decide how to incorporate and frame the output that the calamity generated, knowing it will come to symbolise the event. [...] The framing of objects as 'too safe' or 'risky' understands the ethics of display principally in terms of visitor sensitivities. Yet, given that the victims suffered the actuality of horrific acts, is it a cop-out to consider its mere emblems too uncomfortable to view? Further, are exhibition designers, advisors and curators the rightful gatekeepers of what we should see? (2011: 221).

Here, Williams highlights how the ethics of how an object is framed is often formed in relation to the 'sensitivities' of the visitor; the curator's assumptions about how the potential visitor and consumer of an exhibition will respond and whether or not the museum feels comfortable with or equipped to deal with this hypothetical reaction. This chapter aims to explore how far the internalised ethical stance towards object handling that developed in response to 2007 is a result of anxious assumptions about how school groups *might* behave as opposed to genuine ethical reasoning that considers a range of viewpoints and consults academic thinking on the subject.

Each of the case study museums provides access to 'primary sources' through their school programmes, however as this chapter shows, the 'distinct challenges' of using objects to teach slavery reveal themselves in different ways in different contexts. This chapter illustrates how, even when the same (or very similar) objects are used across the museums, ethical or pedagogical guidelines based on the nature of the objects themselves are perhaps not appropriate, as there are many contextual factors that are more significant. *Unlocking Perceptions* raises some of the key issues surrounding the pedagogy and ethics of

object handling, however due to the booklet format, there is not space to address them in any depth; instead, hints and tips are provided, along with advice from anonymous museum education staff about the potential difficulties and opportunities of using objects in teaching.

Figure 22: 'Unlocking Perceptions' (image from Global Dimension, 2008)

This chapter outlines the approaches suggested by *Understanding Slavery* and uses these as a foundation (or baseline) for analysing the use of object handling within the sessions observed at the case study museums. In doing so, it critically examines the significance of the *Understanding Slavery* initiative's guidelines for object handling, unpicking the logic and values that underpin these principles and ascertaining the extent to which they reflect practice, as observed in this study. Each of the case study vignettes presented in this chapter deals with a different aspect of the use of object handling during field-trips to museums that represent the history of transatlantic slavery. The themes covered include: object handling as a medium for discussing human rights; objects in relation to behaviour management and learning styles; the position of object handling within the sequence of sessions during a visit; interactivity, music and the use of objects to explore West African culture and finally the issue of authority and accountability in the ethics of object handling.

The similarities and differences between the approaches to object handling across the four case study museums are sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious, but always fascinating, drawing out the layers of complexity around what on the surface seems a straightforward matter – that access to objects enhances learning. The variations can be

attributed to a number of factors, each of which is discussed in this chapter, for example: the museum's history; the institutional context; the structure of the learning team; the pedagogy and experience of the facilitator; input from teachers; the dynamic and response of the group; the space being used and the pedagogic purpose of the session. This analysis is complemented by the inclusion of comments from the pre-visit pupil and teacher surveys regarding the importance of perceptions about objects in shaping expectations about the museum visit. The final section of this chapter draws out these comparisons and highlights the implications for future research and practice, issues that are developed further in Chapter 9.

Examining the ways in which the case study museums are utilising object-handling in sessions that deal with 'difficult histories' is important for several reasons. Firstly, it raises crucial questions about staff training and about the patterns of practice that have developed within museums in England and how these have and have not been influenced by the guidelines and shared values advocated by *Understanding Slavery*. In doing so, this chapter traces how ideas about pedagogical and ethical best practice are created, circulated and challenged. This analysis is strengthened by the possibilities afforded by the comparative case study in Canada; the dramatic difference in practice at Buxton Museum throws into question many of the assumed values that have emerged in England through the work and resources of initiatives like *Understanding Slavery* and the *Recovered Histories* professional development programme for educators (Recovered Histories, 2011). Secondly, examining the experiences of pupils handling objects relating to traumatic pasts furthers our understanding of experiential history education, whilst problematising the generally accepted benefits of providing young people with access to collections:

> The main benefit a museum can offer in terms of history teaching is direct contact with the physical remains of another age – the tools, weapons, utensils, furniture, costumes, and many other artefacts that give a particular flavour to that age. The experience of this contact can add another dimension to history teaching. [The] past is often difficult to believe in. Through the visual and tactile evidence they leave behind them, the people of the past can become real flesh and blood (Chandler, 1976: 187).

The 'physical remains' of the other age in question here are potentially full of violence, suffering, torture and images of overt racism and oppression. As this chapter demonstrates, coming face-to-face with the objects of enslavement is, for most people, a truly difficult

encounter. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising – particularly considering the levels of anxiety that many museum professionals involved in 2007 expressed – that museum education teams in England, under the guidance of *Understanding Slavery* and due to the limited number of original artefacts relating to slavery that are available to them, choose not to allow school pupils to handle the original artefacts in their collections and have instead invested in the production of replica objects. This is not the case, however, at Buxton Museum, where pupils are actively encouraged to touch original shackles and other traumatic objects, thus conveying a sense of the power of the 'authenticity' of objects.

The sophistication of the sessions analysed in this chapter varies notably, in particular with regards to the level of consideration given to the ways in which the object-handling sessions relate to, build on and complement the other elements of the field-trip. Furthermore, the potential memorability of some of the sessions is marred by the use of images of objects, as opposed to actual objects, something that Chandler feels deeply about:

> ...contact [with objects cannot] be replaced by other forms of 'visual aid'. This term is all too often limited to photographic material of one kind or another, while the visual aid with the most immediate impact is the object itself. As a Museums Association pamphlet puts it, 'The strongest reason for studying original material is that no photograph or reproduction can be as good, and there is absolutely no substitute for the experience of handling and the awareness which this engenders.' A teacher makes the same point this way:
>
> > The authenticity of the genuine article backed by the expertise of the museum staff can vividly bring to life appropriate parts of the curriculum, create the keenest interest, and stimulate the mind and the imagination to a far greater extent than other visual aids on film or tape, which are in comparison 'secondhand' (Chandler, 1976: 187).

The logic of taking a school group to a museum then giving them images of objects to look at is questionable, although this practice is popular in some sessions. This raises interesting questions about how a shared feeling of cautiousness and anxieties created by increased feelings of external pressure in response to the political and media attention surrounding the bicentenary can ultimately influence the museum learning experiences of Key Stage 3 pupils across England, therefore bringing together the macro- and micro-levels of this research. I would argue that although the *Understanding Slavery* guidelines were undoubtedly developed in response to the experiences and advice of knowledgeable practitioners, there is certainly still scope for these suggestions for best practice to be

unpicked and theorised with greater attention to why certain object handling behaviours may or not be appropriate.

In other words, as highlighted by Jenkins' *Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections: The Crisis of Cultural Authority* (Jenkins, 2011), the 'ethical' practices of museums are sometimes uncritically adopted by well-meaning curatorial, educational or other staff, often in response to certain professional, sectorial or subject-based anxieties, for example around the display or repatriation of human remains. Elsewhere, Jenkins discusses the practice of museums covering mummies and ancient bodies up:

> This cautionary approach is taking place without public demand for it. In fact, museum-goers expect to see ancient bodies on display. They find it educational and kids love it. And yet professionals are increasingly uncomfortable about displaying human remains and are continually questioning its ethics, covering mummies and skeletons up, removing them altogether, or erecting warning signs (Jenkins, 2010).

Jenkins key argument is that museum professionals have developed an ethical stance that supports the "idea that all human remains should be treated differently", without having necessarily thought through the consequences and repercussions of such an approach for the "cultural authority" of the museum (Jenkins, 2010). The parallel with the current ethical stance to handling slavery objects in museums in England is the way in which the approach was developed and internalised in response to both a cautionary sectorial climate and the anxieties caused by a raised public and political profile during the bicentenary commemorations.

The hypothetical question we might ask is whether, without the pressures, politics and anxieties of the bicentenary preparations and events, as described by Roshi Naidoo in her chapter titled 'High Anxiety – 2007 and Institutional Neuroses' (Naidoo, 2011), would the same conclusions have been made in regards the 'ethics' of handling objects relating to slavery? If, as I would suggest, the answer is no, then does this call into question the nature of how and why museums and museum professionals use the idea of ethics to justify and frame certain practices that may in fact be more a response to practical factors (for example the necessity of replicas due to the lack of authentic objects available) or social or political pressures? Naidoo's key argument is that in 2007, academics and museum professionals were not just acting with respectful cautiousness, but with anxiety about getting something right (Naidoo, 2011).

This is not to suggest that there are not other determining factors involved in why the Canadian case study differs so much in terms of attitudes to object-handling; this chapter seeks to address these broader contextual factors as fully as possible, such as the sense of inherited ownership over the history that staff at Buxton Museum feel. As Chandler notes, 'the past is often difficult to believe in', and this is particularly the case when the past in question is characterised by brutal extremes (in terms of scale, scope and suffering) that are incomprehensible to our twenty-first century sensibilities; it is indeed the inconceivability of the history of transatlantic slavery that makes it so 'difficult', so challenging (yet potentially rewarding) for people to learn about. Therefore, the need for people to encounter the 'visual and tactile evidence' left behind is even more vital in order that, as Chandler puts it, 'the people of the past can become real flesh and blood'.

As the next section of this chapter illustrates, object-handling sessions, if carried out effectively, have the capacity to engender genuine empathy with those who lived this history, both the enslaved and the enslavers. As this chapter demonstrates, this fact raises an interesting question of whether and how to teach pupils about the perpetrators of violence and oppression, and not just the victims. Clearly, any attempts to tell the story from the enslaver's point of view must be handled carefully, but this thesis argues that the benefits of doing so may in fact outweigh the risks.

7.1   Object handling and the order of sessions

It has been imperative for the USI team to set the ground rules when using the slavery-related handling objects particularly when working with the instruments of torture and 'correction'. Using them separately from other historical artefacts has been essential in conveying the seriousness of this history (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 26).

It is understandable that facilitators might be anxious about running object handling sessions on the topic of slavery; there is a delicate balance to be found between affording pupils the freedom to touch these powerful objects, to explore their materiality, and being sure to create an atmosphere where the 'seriousness of the history' is recognised, enforced and respected. As this chapter illustrates, each of the case study museums uses different tactics in their attempts to strike this balance, however there are certain trends reflected across most of the sessions. For example, in the majority of the visits observed, object

handling takes place within a discrete session, typically in a dedicated learning space.

The pupils sit in small groups around tables and each sub-group has their own objects to look at and handle, with the teachers and facilitators at hand to ask and answer questions. The first session in this chapter is a slight variant on this model, but it follows the same principles as many object handling activities. The setting is the National Maritime Museum's 'Transatlantic Slavery Study Day' and the pupils are from an all-female state school in Greater London. What is particularly interesting about the study day is the consideration given to having pupils look at different types of evidence, as well as how the different sessions relate to each other, in order to create a more cohesive field-trip experience. This type of approach to engaging school groups has been practiced by the museum for many years:

> Though the original material has a special contribution to make, the development of museums as resource centres in a broader sense [...] has resulted in some very interesting programs run by museum education services. One such program involved a volunteer group of secondary school students in a post-examination period, who chose (with expert advice) individual topics to study over a period of three days at the National Maritime Museum. Here much of the material was in document form-ships' logs, personal letters, dockyard reports, and so on. These documents were backed up by three-dimensional objects such as models and relics, and also by maps, prints, and paintings, while funds were available for photographs of these items. Something of the wealth and variety of historical evidence a major museum can offer, provided prior consultation has taken place, is evident here (Chandler, 1976: 187).

It seems that the approaches of the education staff of the 1970s are still being practiced today and clearly maritime history is a subject area that lends itself well to the investigation of evidence from ships' logs, archives, maps and personal correspondence, as illustrated in the vignette below.

Vignette 11: Archival documents and examining the details of history
The group have just completed a session in the National Maritime Museum's Atlantic World's gallery, during which they were given mobile devices that allowed them to find out more information about the objects, as well as taking photos and recording sound, therefore they have already begun to think about the importance of objects before reaching this session. The session takes place in an area outside of the entrance to the library and

archive department. Although it is tucked away from the main thoroughfare, it is not an enclosed space, meaning that members of the public can enter the area. The pupils gather around two tables; on each table are a range of documents from the archives. Standing behind the tables are two male members of staff from the archive department who will be running the session.

I stand with one group and listen to the facilitator explain what the documents are – he has a ships log from the Middle Passage and plantation registers. He invites one of the pupils to read out a list of names from a plantation register; he asks the pupils why they think the plantation owners would want to change the enslaved Africans' names to English names:

[Pupil]   To break their spirit...

[Pupil]   They'd be easier to pronounce, too.

The archivist-cum-facilitator talks to the sub-group about the different trades that some enslaved Africans knew – for example "cooper, mason, watchmen" – and that by using these skills, how some slaves were able to make a little money by doing extra work, but only if their master's trusted them. He also explains that "skilled slaves were worth more because they were harder to replace". With each document, the archivist asks the pupils to tell him when it is dated and whether or not the slave trade was legal at that time.

The groups swap round after about ten minutes. On the second table, the archivist has logs and diaries that were kept by slave masters that document life on the plantation. He reads out a section where the slave-owner coldly references the death of a female slave. The pupils seem to be particularly interested in the fact that the slave master illustrated the diary with meticulously detailed drawings of plantation life:

[Pupil]   Isn't it a bit weird that a master could be really cruel to slaves but then seem quite sensitive by doing these drawings?

The facilitator acknowledges that this does seem strange to us now, looking at these sources in the twenty-first century:

[Facilitator]   You have to think about whether these documents and sources are biased and whether they are really a good representation of what happened; would a master be biased?

These snippets from this short but focused session illustrate how archival material can be

successfully used in an effective manner that 'gives weight' to the unimaginable numbers and statistics that dominate the meta-narrative of transatlantic slavery. 'Twelve million people' means much more when confronted with a list of the two hundred and fifty Africans enslaved on just one plantation. Of course, given more time, the issues that these documents raise could be discussed in greater depth. However, even within this short session there is a sense of the profundity of the sheer detail that these sources offer to learners – subtle and shocking details that are difficult to communicate without having the evidence right there in front of you. For example, the dehumanisation of the list of Anglicised names from a plantation register; the benefits of being a 'skilled' slave if your owner trusted you to practice your trade and make some money for yourself; the worth of a human being, their value in dollars written just the same as the price of cattle; the problematic humanity of a slave-owner and the contradictions of their kindnesses and cruelties.

> Using one or two handling objects in a session, rather than everything available, has proved very effective in promoting deductive, analytical, curatorial and discursive learning (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 27).

In this session, the potential impact on the pupils comes less from the opportunity to touch or handle the artefacts, and more from being in their presence, from seeing and reading them, being drawn into the details and questioning what they can tell us about this complicated history. This is particularly impressive considering that the archivists that run these sessions have little or in some cases no training in working with young people and school groups. This does mean that some of the archivists-cum-facilitators who lead these sessions are more confident and natural with the pupils than others, but there are clearly benefits of having someone who is an expert in *reading* archival material and who is passionate about this type of evidence, as it gives the pupils an insight of how knowledge is constructed within the discipline of history.

Christine Castle comments that the museum has a unique capacity to teach people how to "do history" for themselves (Castle, 2002: 1). This concern with demonstrating to learners the ways in which historians infer things from different types of evidence and sources continues into the next session that this same group took part in during their study day. This next vignette highlights the importance of contextualising and deconstructing the act of object handling itself before allowing pupils to touch the sensitive artefects. The

necessity of creating the right environment is a central message in the *Unlocking Perceptions* booklet:

> Set up a physical environment conducive to looking at objects that have a violent history. Beyond the verbal explanation associated with the instructions, are the cues that get sent from, for example; having learners sits down; keeping key objects or images removed from circulation and handled only by the facilitator; or asking the students to wear gloves or open a case in order to handle and question an object. These are actions that promote an awareness of the gravitas of the history. (Always think about why the object is required as an integral part of the learning outcome. Do you really need to show a whip? What does this object seek to convey to the learner?) (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 25, 'Museum Education Officer')

Although there is no wearing of gloves in the extract below as all the objects are replicas, there is certainly the sense that the facilitator knows that through his 'actions [he can] promote an awareness of the gravitas of the history'. He does this by laying down ground rules at the beginning of the session and by reacting to the pupils' responses to the violence of the history in a considerate and controlled manner.

Vignette 12: Laying down the ground rules

The setting is a dedicated learning space on the ground floor of the National Maritime Museum. The pupils sit around five tables, each with a box placed in the centre. This session is facilitated by Alex, with assistance from Megan, who has recently joined the education team at the museum. Alex explains to the pupils that in contrast to the gallery-based session they did first thing, they are now going to have an opportunity "to look at objects from behind the glass", but that the objects they will be handling today are in fact replicas.

| [Alex] | We're going to start by thinking about what museums do with objects and what questions you can ask about objects. Let's think about an everyday object – like my wristwatch. If we found this wristwatch, but we had no idea what it was, the sorts of questions we might ask are, 'What does it do? Why is it shaped like this?' |

Alex removes his watch and holds it up for the group to see.

| [Alex] | We have to be careful not to make assumptions based on how societies work now and how we think about things today. |

He passes the watch to the pupil sitting in front of him.

| [Alex] | What sort of things might you be able to tell about me from looking at this wristwatch? |

[Pupil]	Whether or not you care about cows dying – 'cause it's made of leather.
[Alex]	Excellent answer, yes, I wouldn't have thought that people would be able to tell that about me from my watch. What else would you be able to tell about me from this watch?
[Pupil]	How big your wrist is.
[Alex]	Yes, that's right – you could look at which of the holes is most worn and from that you could measure how big my wrist is. If you hold it, you can feel what it is made out of. If you turn it over and look at the writing on the back of it, then this is extra evidence.

Alex takes the watch back from the pupils.

[Alex]	OK, so today we are going to look at objects relating to four different aspects of the slave trade. In your groups, you will have five minutes to look at your objects, and then you will take it in turns to feedback to the rest of the group about how the objects relate to the history we've been talking about today. I can see that you've been making notes, which is great, so you can continue to write things down and this will help you remember stuff about your day here. You need to ask the same types of questions of these objects as you asked about my watch.

The pupils begin to check out what is in their boxes, which relate to the theme of 'trade'. The teachers and the museum staff walk round the groups, talking to the pupils about the objects, asking and answering questions. After five or so minutes, Alex gets everyone's attention and asks one of the groups to give some feedback about what they thought of the objects. The pupils in this group seem a little inhibited, perhaps as they are the first to speak. One girl takes the lead, holding up each of the objects in turn and saying what it is: sugar lobes, sugar cane, coffee, cotton, manila and kente cloth. The pupil goes on to say that in their group they had talked a lot about the production of cloth, and they had "wondered why the sugar cones were made to be the particular shape".

[Alex]	OK, you've just been looking at objects relating to trade, and the next box I'm going to show you are about the journey from Africa to America. These boxes contain some sensitive objects – so I want you to pick them up and look at them carefully, but I don't want to see anyone trying them on or putting them on each other. So if I see anyone messing around with them then I'll have to take them away.

Although most of the pupils respect Alex's rule, two of the girls are in fact trying on some neck shackles; Megan is stood with this group and she seems to be uncertain about whether to – or indeed how to – stop the pupils from handling the objects in this manner. Putting the

shackles down, the two girls suddenly become very concerned about whether or not the objects are real:

[Pupil 1]	'Cause I really wouldn't want to be touching it if it had really been used on people...
[Teacher]	Don't worry, it is definitely a replica.
[Pupil 2]	Course it is, they're not gonna give a group of children real artefacts are they?
[Pupil 1]	Well, what are museums supposed to have?

The teacher has a discussion with this table about how "the neck chains are very heavy", how "they would rub on your neck" and that "they would be used to stop you running away". On another table, one pupil is talking about whether they put people on their sides during the Middle Passage, as "that way they could fit more people on the ships":

[Alex]	What do you think the conditions were like on these ships?
[Pupil 1]	Smelly.
[Pupil 2]	Noisy.
[Pupil 3]	Diseased...and horrible.

Alex asks the pupils to think about what the psychological effects of hearing the noise of chains for three months might be. The groups are asked to feedback. Four out of five of the groups have objects relating to the experiences of the Africans that were enslaved on the ships; the fifth group is looking at the rope that would have been used for the sails and their task is to think about the experiences of the crew members on the slave ships:

[Pupil 1]	They could do what they wanted, so if they wanted to rape a girl, they could, and they could get STDs.
[Alex]	The crew had better conditions than the slaves did, but they were still not good conditions. We need to think about how the crew lived. One of the arguments used by abolitionists was that there was a need to make things better for the crew, which was a sneaky way of making things better for slaves too.

The variation in the objects used in this session certainly allows for an interesting range of themes to be covered that reflects the multifaceted and challenging nature of this history. However, as Alex explained after the session, opening the discussions up to include the more difficult aspects of slavery can become problematic when pupils have unexpected and sometimes tricky responses. For example, Alex mentions that the girl who states that crew members on slave ships would have been able to rape the female slaves seemed to want to

talk about rape or sexual violence in relation to several of the objects and themes and that he was not sure what was the best way to handle this.

There is an important question underpinning this problem; is it ethical to raise such complex and emotive issues with young people when there is not the space or time – or even staff with the relevant experience and training – to deal with the 'emotional fallout'? In this particular situation, the facilitator articulated apprehension and uncertainty about how to deal with what might easily have been an expression of the pupil's own personal or emotional 'baggage' that she had brought with her to the museum; this is a particularly important issue when the subject matter is potentially challenging due to violent, sexual or racial content. In relation to this, what should the role of school and museum staff be in monitoring the appropriateness of the pupils' behaviour when handling the objects?

These two issues run throughout the rest of this chapter, but it is useful at the point to refer to a conversation that took place during my time in Canada. Whilst in Ontario, I took the opportunity to visit the Harriet Tubman Institute at York University in Toronto, where I met with Drs. Yvonne Brown and Michelle Johnson to discuss the teaching of the history of slavery in the Canadian context. Towards the end of the discussion, I described the surprising differences I had observed in the use of objects at Buxton Museum as compared to the case study museums in England (see Section 7.4 for details). Dr. Brown is particularly interested in this issue as she has vast and varied experiences as an educator during her career. Her comments raise some interesting questions about the wider issue of the 'ethics' of object handling when teaching slavery. Dr. Brown reflected on her experiences of teaching this history at undergraduate level, explaining that she feels that whenever we teach about slavery, whenever we talk about slavery, there is "emotional fallout" and that the important question is "What do we do with this?" When she teaches slavery at degree level, she usually shows a video at the end, as "a way of enhancing all the cognitive learning with an affective aspect".

However, she has recently decided not to end the classes in this way anymore, even though past pupils have commented that it is only when they watch the video that the history begins to really mean something to them. However, she says that she "just doesn't feel comfortable with showing it". She believes that learning about this history is "always traumatic" and that therefore maybe it is enough for people to learn about slavery in a

more passive and less interactive manner; "the aim is not to traumatise people". Regarding whether learners should be given the opportunity to handle objects relating to slavery, Dr. Brown is very clear that she does not think it is appropriate for people to be handling original shackles, for example. Furthermore, she is not sure about the ethics or purpose of handling replicas of these types of objects either.

Returning to the National Maritime Museum and the object-handling session, the next boxes the pupils are presented with have the theme of 'plantation life'. One of the objects is a neck collar, but Alex doesn't tell the pupils where it would go on a person, and instead leaves them to figure it out. After a few trials and errors, the girls agree that it would most likely have gone around a person's neck. Once again, they try the object on; the teacher at the table doesn't say anything. The girls discuss how wearing the neck collar would be "a constant irritant", as "every time you moved your head back you would bang it on the hand".

At a different table, the pupils are looking at a 'ladies whip', which Alex explains "would have belonged to the plantation owner's wife".

[Alex]	Why do you think she might have wanted a whip?
[Pupil]	Because she was scared?
[Alex]	And why might she be scared?
[Pupil]	Because the slaves might rebel?

Alex explains to the pupils that "it is important to think about how the plantation owners might have felt, how they might have felt scared, because only then can you understand how the system worked".

| [Pupil] | The wife might be scared 'cause her husband would tell her how rough and tribal the slaves are so she'd be scared. |
| [Alex] | I'm glad that you have given me so much feedback about this object, as it's a difficult object to look at. |

This session raises the crucial issue of 'perspective taking', for example is it problematic to ask pupils to empathise with the plantation owner's wife or the slave ship crew members? These types of questions are discussed further in Chapter 8, through analysis of sessions where pupils role-play characters from across the spectrum of pro- and anti-slavery arguments. As Alex explained to the pupils, in order 'to understand how the system [of slavery] worked', it is essential to think about how those who were perpetuating and

profiting from the enslavement of Africans thought and felt about the different aspects of "the peculiar institution" (Stampp, 1956).

During the feedback for this theme, Alex explains that as well as "physical forms of resistance", the slaves resisted in other ways too:

[Alex]	Two of the groups have wooden spatulas that were carved by Africans. Objects like these allowed people to keep African traditions alive; this was a form of cultural resistance.
[Pupil]	Especially as the slave would have used time that they should have been using to make tools for their master...
[Alex]	Yes, that's a good point, thank you.

These last comments are a clear example of a pupil using information that they had learnt in a previous session to enhance their understanding of the objects, in this case that slaves often had skills they were able to use to make things for themselves or to sell at local markets. In conversation with the facilitator later at the end of the day, we discuss how the order of the sessions definitely makes a difference to the pupils' learning experience. He believes that the study day is most effective when the pupils do the object handling session first, as this "really hooks them into the topic" and makes them more interested in the gallery and the archival documents that follow. However because of the need to meet the museum's footfall targets, the school group sizes are too large, meaning that they have to separate them into smaller groups. The sub-groups then rotate around the different sessions, therefore they have no control over the sequence in which they do them, which he says he finds frustrating as there is a noticeable difference in the quality of the museum learning experience depending on the order.

In this next section, the approach to object-handling at Wilberforce House is explored, using an example that raises the important issue of how facilitators respond to the potentially inappropriate interventions of teachers.

7.2 Use of objects to generate general discussion

At Wilberforce House Museum, objects – or images of objects (see Chapter 6) – are used in a few sessions but in different ways. For instance, in the session 'Unfinished Business', examples of items produced for the abolitionist movement are used as a medium for

discussing the tactics and strategies of effective campaigning, relating this to the work of modern day anti-slavery movements. The museum education team is quite open to adapting sessions or allowing teachers to create their own field-trip visit, picking and choosing from the sessions on offer for their particular Key Stage, according to their learning objectives.

This was the case with field-trip to Wilberforce House Museum presented in the next vignette; this particular object handling session was one of five sessions (excluding the opening 'assembly' and the closing plenary) that the pupils rotated round across the course of the day, as devised by the history teacher that organised the trip. Rather than explicitly interpreting the objects in a historical evidence style, this facilitator uses the session as a springboard for discussing human rights and freedom before giving the pupils a task relating to the objects. As with the National Maritime Museum session, there is an example of potentially 'inappropriate' handling of an object that leads to an interesting intervention from a teacher and a seeming feeling of uneasiness in the museum facilitator.

Vignette 13: Object related tasks and handling teacher interventions

The group walk from the museum to an adjacent building – the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE). I hear one of the female pupils say to a teacher, "That museum's ace miss!" A few of the other pupils stand looking at the commemorative wall of WISE, reading out loud the names that are etched into the stone, including Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King. The group enters the building and follows the facilitator, Rowena, up the stairs into a room that is set out with clusters of desks.

[Rowena]	I want you to feel you can say what you want...you don't have to put things in a special way. It is more interesting than me just talking to you. So, what is slavery?
[Pupil 1]	Capturing people for money?
[Pupil 2]	Making people do things they don't want to.
[Rowena]	And then what is enslavement?
[Pupil 3]	When you are a slave?
[Rowena]	Have slaves got any rights?
[Pupil 2]	No.
[Rowena]	What do we have in this country?
[Pupil 4]	Freedom.
[Rowena]	What makes us free?

[Pupil 5]	You can practice any religion.
[Rowena]	Does anything else come to mind?
[Teacher]	What about the right to vote? It doesn't affect these guys yet, but I'd want the right to vote...
[Rowena]	So, what about human rights?

The pupils offer the following answers: "to vote", "to have a health service", "free education" and "free speech".

[Rowena]	Marvellous! Wonderful answers, thank you. Human rights are common to all – everyone has them – nobody is excluded. What do you know about the slave trade?
[Pupil 2]	There was a trade triangle.

Rowena shows them a short clip from a video about Thomas Buxton, the abolitionist MP whom Buxton in Ontario was named, after changing from the 'Elgin settlement'.

[Rowena]	So, what was he talking about there?
[Pupil 1]	Slaves being squished together on ships.

Rowena is having a few problems with the technology. She apologises to the students and explains that the technology is new to her and that she isn't where she thought she would be so please forgive her. Whilst she is sorting out the next video, she talks about Barack Obama and asks why it's remarkable that he is now the President of the US:

[Pupil 3]	Because he's the first black president.
[Rowena]	Yes, it's important because they have a history of being an enslaved people.

Rowena shows a video depicting a day's work on a plantation.

[Rowena]	Do you think it was a hard life on the plantations?
[Pupils]	Yes.
[Rowena]	Did you see things in the gallery that were used to torture people?
[Pupil 2]	Yes, metal bars.
[Rowena]	What were they used for?
[Pupil 2]	To stop them escaping.
[Rowena]	Right, so on each table you'll have an object and a picture, and what I want you to do is to try and match them up. And we'll walk round and talk to you about the objects.

The pupils are sat in small sub-groups round the different tables. The objects include manilas, cowrie-shells, whips and shackles. The pupils are looking at the objects and asking

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the facilitator and the teachers questions, such as "Do these go round your ankles to stop you running away?" and when looking at some manila, as "Miss, what are these?" The teachers also ask Rowena questions, showing that they are learning along with the pupils. A few of the pupils are getting up and wandering around; one of the teachers asks them to sit down and tells them to get on with the task of working out the relationships between the objects and the pictures.

One teacher asks the pupils to think back to the slave trade triangle that they were hearing about in an earlier session, encouraging them to work out how everything links together, asking them to think about what they saw and learnt about in the gallery. She checks a few details about the objects with Rowena, before telling one sub-group, "Shush, listen". The other teacher explains that the slave trade was already happening in Africa before white men started enslaving Africans. Rowena is having a discussion with a few of the female pupils about West African culture and sexist traditions. Some of the pupils seem very keen and are writing information on the worksheet and clipboard they were provided with earlier in the day.

A few of the girls are laughing heartily at something that is happening with the leg shackles. The male teacher goes over to them and takes hold of the leg shackles. Placing the leg shackles round the pupils' ankles, he creates an impromptu dramatic scene in the corner with the four pupils; he gives them orders and threatens them with violence whilst he secures the shackles. The other teacher looks over and observes the scene; she laughs at what is happening, however Rowena does not look quite so sure. The male teacher is now getting the four girls to walk chained together "like a three-legged race". The female teacher voices her concern that they might fall over. She then reminds them that "slaves wouldn't have had socks on", reinforcing that "it wasn't fun". The girls stop trying to walk chained together and the male teacher talks to them more seriously about the matter, asking them to imagine various scenarios of being enslaved on the African coast. The groups continue to rotate round every five minutes, before Rowena realises that time is up and that they need to be moving onto their next session.

Unlike the object handling session at the National Maritime Museum, this session lacks the framework of what it means to be looking at and touching objects relating to this difficult history and what it means to analyse objects as evidence about the past. The

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investigative potential of object handling is not fully realised as the task does not require the pupils to be critical of the artefacts, rather they are used to generate more general discussions about the experience of being enslaved. The incident where the teacher creates a scene of the pupils being shackled together is particularly interesting; without the thoughtful and engaging questioning and explanation that followed this sensationalising 'performance', this intervention from the teacher would most likely be interpreted as distasteful and inappropriate. However, what in fact is happening here is that the teacher is introducing a pedagogic device that is generally missing in the sessions that this particular school group took part in during their visit: the creation of drama and awe, the role of which is discussed in depth in Chapter 8.

7.3   Interactivity, music and West African culture

Other than the brief intervention from the teacher involving the pupils trying on the leg shackles at Wilberforce House, the sessions that have been examined so far in this chapter have been designed to be fairly calm, with any drama or interactivity contained within a video or an isolated moment of pupils breaking the ground rules, as with the object-handling session at the National Maritime Museum. However, in this next vignette the facilitator uses a much more energetic approach to object handling that makes innovative use of musical instruments and performance, and in doing so creates a collective, kinaesthetic, and multi-sensory experience. This session at the International Slavery Museum is intended to subvert pupils' ideas about civilisation on the African continent, using objects in a creative and enjoyable manner, as a way of exploring West African culture, before moving on to talk about the slave trade more specifically.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool is on the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, and therefore when the school group arrives they are directed to the lifts on the ground floor. Once on the third floor, the doors open onto the 'Freedom and Enslavement Wall', that is inscribed with quotes such as "I prefer liberty with danger to peace with slavery" (Figure 23). From the responses given in the pre-visit survey, the teacher that organised the trip obviously had a clear sense of what the pupils were going to experience at the museum;
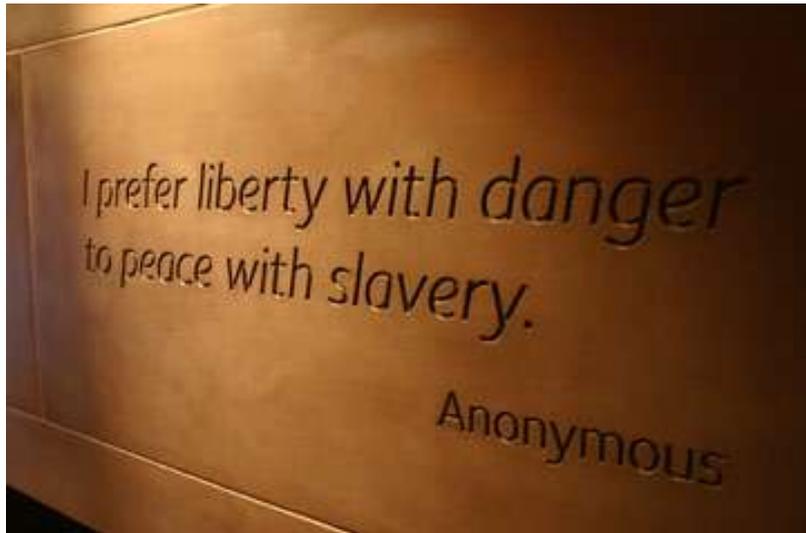
Figure 23: 'Freedom and Enslavement Wall' (International Slavery Museum, 2011)

when asked what he would like his pupils to do at the museum he stated, "Look at the artefacts from Africa, consider whether African culture was any less 'civilised' than the west before the start of slavery". The first main gallery space at the International Slavery Museum deals with 'Life in West Africa', introducing "the continent as the birthplace of human culture and civilisations", displaying objects including "African art forms that have had a global cultural influence, such as musical instruments, masks and sculptured figures" (International Slavery Museum, 2010). This area also houses a "recreation of part of an Igbo family compound" (International Slavery Museum, 2010) (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Igbo family compound (International Slavery Museum, 2010)

The teacher leading the visit to the International Slavery Museum stated in the pre-visit survey that he thinks it is important that his pupils learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery because "It is an event which is rather shameful on the past Europeans, but one which in today's climate is sadly still necessary for young people to learn about how to treat people you don't perhaps know or fully understand". This teacher expresses an awareness of the importance of learning to empathise with others, with people who are perhaps different. However, he has also encountered the difficulties of teaching the history of slavery to school pupils:

> Last year I had a black student who got very upset in watching and learning about this period of history. His parents felt it was inappropriate to learn about such a topic and felt that positive black role models should be taught rather than as 'victims' of whites.

Once again there is a difficult balance to be struck, this time between exploring the power dynamics of slavery and communicating the importance of resistance, rebellion and the emerging agency of slaves in bringing down first the trade and then slavery itself, thus demonstrating how enslaved Africans are much more than 'victims' in the narrative.

Vignette 14: Learning about West African culture

The session takes place in the museum's dedicated learning space, the Anthony Walker Education Centre, which is situated at the mouth of the first gallery in the International Slavery Museum, which deals with West African culture and history. The room is a large, modern, flexible space. For this session it has been set up with the chairs in a theatre style, with the facilitator addressing the pupils whilst standing at the front, and the accompanying teachers either sitting or standing at the back of the room, out of the view of the pupils. The facilitator, John, begins by asking the pupils what they think museums do, and then he tells them that they are going "to get the chance to be like historical detectives".

The most striking characteristic of John's delivery style is his energy and easy rapport with the pupils, developed partly through his demonstration of respect for and interest in them as individuals (for example, he asks for their names when they put their hand up to answer a question), and through his self-deprecating sense of humour. This seems to have the effect of putting the group quickly at ease, which is important as this session involves a lot of pupil participation and potential for self-conscious embarrassment. "Has anyone

heard of the triangular trade?" he asks, before asking for volunteers to hold up a large-size

map (because he's "too short" to hold it up high himself):

[John]   Can anyone be very clever and tell me what countries were involved? Can anyone describe the triangle for me? Why a triangle?...

A female pupil offers an answer about the need for more workers in America.

[John]   ...Excellent, yes, there was a shortage of labour in the Americas

He explains to the pupils that the map they are looking at is different to most maps because

it is a Peters map, which, as he explains, means that it is "accurately sized":

[John]   Why might maps of the time made Africa look smaller than it is?

[Pupil 1]   To make it look not as important?

[John]   Excellent, yes.

Moving on, John begins handing out various objects to the pupils for them to look at, feel

and pass around:

[John]   Ok. This is my favourite object – pass it around, have a think about what it was for. Who might it have been made for? Smell it. It smells strange. Do you think it's lots of bits of wood, or just one piece? Excellent. Anyone guess what it might be?

[Pupil 2]   A seat?

[John]   Yes, excellent. What kind of person might have sat in this seat?

[Pupil 3]   A chief?

[John]   Is there anyone in the class that is quite loud and might be good at being a chief? Azhar? Does everyone think Azhar?

Nearly everyone in the class puts their hand up in agreement.

...There we go. A democratic vote. You've been nominated. OK. Keep passing the chair round; make sure everyone has a chance to feel it.

The selected pupil, Azhar, willingly joins John at the front of the room. John continues to

highlight the different aspects of traditional West African culture through the use of objects

and by stressing such things as the importance of the chief and the significance of clothing in

denoting status within a community – "the way they wore their wealth". John selects two

pupils – a male and a female – and dresses them in kente cloth, demonstrating the different

ways in which men and women wear the cloth, then explaining that the chief – in this case

Azhar – shows his wealth and importance by the fact that he has a whole costume made
from kente cloth:

[John]   Do you think Azhar looks stylish? Should he have to wear this to
              school everyday?

The pupils laugh.

[John]   Can I ask you to tell me what we mean by being green or being
              ecologically friendly?

A pupil gives an answer that I can't quite hear from the back of the room.

[John]   Yes that's right. But we didn't invent this. Africans did, hundreds of
              years ago by having biodegradable fans.

John has a male pupil step forward to cool Azhar with a large traditional West African fan.

[John]   It's all about status – the fanner has to be lower than the chief.
              Who here has a mobile phone? Would you believe me if I said that
              West Africans had mobile phones back then?

John presents the pupils with a drum that he explains can make different noises that sound
like the voices of the Ashanti people. He asks for another volunteer from the group to have
a go at playing the drum. He has the group to clap out words, for example <u>gin</u>, <u>whisk</u>-<u>ey</u>, <u>co</u>-
<u>ca</u> <u>co</u>-<u>la</u>. He asks them to tell him how many syllables are in each word. John instructs the
pupil with the drum to drum out <u>Chief</u> <u>Az</u>-*har*, *<u>Chief</u> <u>Az</u>-har*, *<u>Chief</u> <u>Az</u>-har*. He asks Chief Azhar
and the fanner (both now in costume) to stand behind a screen, whilst the drummer
continues with the beat:

[John]   That's excellent! You're a natural!

John gives the rest of the group two more drums to pass around and try out – the pupils
are allowed to chat and make noise in this session. Although most of the class is sat on
chairs facing the front, it doesn't feel like a classroom setting – as the session progresses,
it becomes more like an interactive group performance, with John as the ringmaster. The
group is given plenty of time to engage with the objects at their own pace. John mingles
with the group and chats with smaller groups of pupils in a casual manner:

[John]   If we imagine, drums are a really good way of letting people in the
              tribe know what's going on.

Returning to the front of the room, John informs the group that Chief Azhar is going to walk
in to the sound of the drums and that he needs to look important when he enters.

> [John] If you imagine that the Ashanti people we are thinking about lived off the land, what would they be? Farmers, yes, excellent. So harvest time would have been really important. And this hat - this headdress – that I'm holding here is linked to that. Would anyone like to be a dancer for me? If not, would you just like to wear the headdress?

A pupil volunteers to wear the headdress.

> [John] OK. We need more musicians! Here are some monkey drums, for the ceremony. The shakers are used by the women of the tribe.

Some pupils are taking photos of each other taking part in the mock ceremony.

> [John] Europeans thought that African's had no history because they had no books. But they did in fact have history, just in a different way. They sing songs about their past. They use shells that are shaped like ears that they believe are links to their ancestors. They use gourds – carved out gourds as spoons and bowls etc. Does anyone think that they might be good at being a gourd shaker?

Fourteen of the pupils are now at the front of the room, each involved in the ceremony, with most holding various types of percussion instrument. It is of interest to note here that in the pre-visit surveys, one of the pupils chosen for this percussion session expressed a particular interest in learning more about the influence of the African Diaspora on modern music. When asked whether he had learnt anything about the slave trade and slavery before, he stated that "[he] knew that the African slaves started blues music". He also responded that he did think that the history of the slave trade and slavery relates to his life "because they [African slaves] started to form blues music which is still performed and written very often".

In the post-visit survey, a different pupil stated that the thing he had enjoyed most about the activities at the museum was that "[he] could play a drum which sounded good, and [he] could also feel the way that they felt". Another pupil from this group stated the following in relation to why they think that learning about this history in the museum was different to in the classroom: "I think it's a lot better because learning in a classroom you are just sat on a chair listening to the teacher where as when we went to the museum we interacted with everything and we understood more about it. I think we learn better by doing rather than listening".

John numbers the pupils and instructs them that when he says their number they

must play their percussion instrument. After a few practice runs and a lot of noise, John returns to the issue of the headdress:

[John]   We really need a volunteer to wear the harvest headdress, otherwise, I'll have to wear it and that will be embarrassing for me! This headdress was worn to make the land fertile…

A male pupil eventually agrees to wear the headdress.

[John]   OK. So when the music gets louder and louder, I need you [pupil wearing the headdress] to kneel down and plant a seed in front of the chief for a good harvest.

The next few minutes are noisy and chaotic, but the pupils are clearly having a great time and getting into their roles.

[John]   Can we have a round of applause please? So the ceremony was to make sure that they got food. Where do you go to buy food? Shops? And what about these gourds? They have been carved out to be used as spoons and bowls. This ceremony was important, because if we don't have a good harvest then we won't have anything to eat this year.

As in the session on 'Africa before the slave trade' that is discussed in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.4), the facilitator moves the conversation round to ask the pupils what they have learnt about Africa:

[John]   Before we go on to the next bit of the session, remember that Europeans thought that West Africans were uncivilised. Pass around these figurines – if you could tell me what you think of them – what kind of people might have made them. In a minute I'm going to ask you some questions about those objects, but before that, I thought you were so good at the music, I just want one more go…

John calls out the numbers again and the pupils with instruments play accordingly.

[John]   Excellent! If you can now put your objects on the table and sit down. Did you enjoy being West Africans? We've learnt something important this morning – if we think about the questions from the start of the session...Do we think West Africans were uncultured and uncivilised?

The pupils collectively voice that they do not think West Africans were uncultured and uncivilized.

[John]   So what the Europeans were saying about West Africa was not true – they were in fact very advanced.

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John goes on to cite examples such as the historic practice of performing cataracts surgery and building underground cathedrals.

> [John]   So why might Europeans have wanted people to think that West Africans were uncivilized?
>
> [Male pupil]   To justify what they were doing.

At this point John moves on to discuss the slave trade more specifically, building on what has been covered in the first section:

> [John]   Can you describe the costume that Azhar was wearing?

The pupils describe the colourful, intricate cloth of the chief's costume. John shows the group a typical outfit that would have been worn by an enslaved African, highlighting how plain it is, how different it is to the other outfit. He talks about the Middle Passage and the "seasoning camps" that awaited many enslaved Africans in the Caribbean, where they would be tortured with the purpose of "breaking" them; conditioning them to their new life as a plantation slave. John explains how the slave owners wanted to strip the enslaved Africans of their identities.

> [John]   You would be taken from your homes to Jamaica…Can anyone tell me what this is? [holds up a branding iron] Imagine if you are someone else's property. Does anyone have a nickname? My nickname at school was 'Casper', because I'm pale like a ghost.

John explains to the group that slave owners would take away people's names, so that they had no identity, and they would give them a new name; the erasure of real names and the branding of a master's symbol into the slaves flesh were acts that were designed to show that slaves were not important – just "like cattle". A replica neck collar is passed around – John shows the group how it would have gone around a person's neck, using himself as a model. There are lots of hands shooting up now to answer questions – the collective shyness at the beginning of the session seems to have disappeared. John talks to the pupils about how enslavers would chain people together in what were called "chain gangs". He explains that the journey across the Atlantic in the slave ships would take weeks and weeks.

> [John]   Can anyone tell me what happens to metal when it gets hot?
>
> [Pupil]   It burns?
>
> [John]   Yes, so these shackles and chains would burn the skin. These objects that we have here today are replicas, so they've not actually been used to hurt anybody.

John allows the pupils plenty of time to really hold the objects and try the costumes on. He moves around the group, talking to the pupils individually. One of the teachers has broken away from the back of the room and is engaging with the pupils and the objects. John asks the group questions like "What part of the body do you think these might be for?", and gives the pupils opportunities to make comments and ask questions of their own.

[John] Why do you think they chained them up? Yes, exactly, because they were afraid they might rebel – over 70% of slave ship journeys had some kind of rebellion – the Africans fought their enslavement.

John uses the following to encourage the group to think about life on a plantation for an enslaved person, in particular the dangerous and exhausting work they were made to do, the temptation to rebel and the fear of facing slave catchers:

[John] Now, a couple of people have been interested in this object here [a machete] – what do you think it might have been used for? It was used to chopping down sugar cane – these were skilled people. Imagine that from the moment you woke up to the last thing at night chopping sugar cane – how might you feel? Very tired, yes. And there were a lot of accidents – people lost limbs. But this machete could also be used as a weapon couldn't it? Why might you not rebel then? Well, a big part of it was because the plantation owners had better resources.

[Male pupil] Did they have guns?

[John] Yes. And the slaves were all branded so that people could easily tell who owned them. So slave hunters would chase you North if you escaped, like Ellen and William Croft, who managed to escape slavery as she passed for white, so they escaped to North America and then to Liverpool.

John holds up a neck brace for the group to see:

[John] This is a neck brace, which would have been used as punishment. They would bolt it on to people who tried to run away. It has a hand on it – can you see? And these braces were made by the slaves themselves. The hand symbolised 'stop'.

Once the group has finished looking at the different objects and asking questions, John brings the session to a close:

[John] OK, so I hope you enjoyed this morning. The first half of the session on West African culture was quite happy – and then thinking about the slave trade was quite difficult. But it isn't all bad as the slave trade was abolished. And the culture of West Africa was spread throughout the world – especially through music, like rap, blues, jazz.

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An important consideration for determining whether a facilitator is enabling objects to be handled in a manner that is appropriate to the subject is the question of timing and context. The nature of the moment at which an object of torture or suffering (whether real or replica) is introduced to the group is vital, as is what has come before this moment and what will come after it. For example, by the point at which John shows the group the machete and the neck brace, he has laid the groundwork of creating an atmosphere of respect through the development of an understanding of West African culture and through fostering 'empathic extension' to include the experiences of enslaved Africans during the Middle Passage.

It is through such careful consideration of how knowledge and understanding builds within a session that a facilitator can gauge whether the pupils are in a place where they can appreciate the object and its sensitive meanings; the facilitator has a great responsibility in judging the mood and temperament of a group. It is essential that the pupils' sensibilities of empathy have been nurtured within a session or visit so that they are less likely to have a voyeuristic response to an object that engenders sensationalism rather than the sense of having 'witnessed' another's memory – another's testimony – through the corporeality of an object. The section that follows includes examples of how objects are used at the Canadian case study museum; the approach to object-handling at Buxton Museum serves to challenge many of the accepted practices that have been observed in the English case study museums so far in this chapter.

7.4 'Feeling the weight' of difficult histories

> My ideal model for schools would be: 1. Preparation at school based on museum collections, creating a format to discuss the sensitivities of the subject and the right language to use, ensuring that pupils feel safe in the group to be honest and emotional if need be and that respect is instilled. 2. A museum session which offers an overview through the museum's collection and discussions with breaks for reflection. 3. A forum at school to process what has been learnt (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 28, 'Museum Head of Formal Learning').

The value of pre-visit preparation is something that is raised repeatedly by museum facilitators; unfortunately, given the time pressures that most teachers face, in particular in subjects like history, finding opportunities to undertake effective preparatory activities is difficult. However, in some schools – in particular independent schools – teaching staff have

greater control over the ways in which they deliver the curriculum, as is the case in the following vignette. This means that teachers are able to embed the museum field-trip into the overall teaching scheme in much more effective ways that acknowledge the progression and dynamics of the pupils' learning journeys. With this next vignette, we can also begin to think about how objects relating to slavery might "[foster] an otherwise unattainable insight" (Landsberg, 2004: 136) into the history.

As evidenced in the previous vignettes, the question of whether museum facilitators and teachers should use original or replica objects is vital, as is the manner in which the objects are contextualised, 'handled' and discussed. The example below illustrates how objects – including original shackles and branding irons – can be integrated into the flow of the museum field-trip 'performance'. However it is important to state that this museum's practice by and large goes against the grain of the sessions observed at the sites in England, for reasons that should become apparent. In this vignette, we travel from Liverpool to Buxton, a small town in rural Canada, and the location of the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum. Here, pupils from across Ontario come to learn about the Underground Railroad and the lives of former slaves who in 1849, along with the support of Reverend William King founded what was originally known as the Elgin Settlement, which became the most successful of the four organized black settlements found in Canada.

Adjacent to the museum site, which includes the museum building itself (1967), S. S. # 13 Raleigh (Buxton) Schoolhouse (1861), the Colbert / Henderson Cabin (1854, right image below), the Shadd barn, the cemetery and the church (1866, left image below) (Figure 25). All of the buildings – and the cemetery too – are used as spaces to deliver school-group sessions that have been designed to make the most of the distinctive physical contexts, each of which tells a different part of the Buxton settlement story.

Figure 25: Left – Cemetery and church. Right – Colbert / Henderson Cabin

Vignette 15: The Land of Freedom

The main museum building at Buxton is divided into three sections. On arrival to the site, all school groups are first led into the left wing, where there are rows of seats set up in a theatre style, facing a wall-mounted television screen where the introductory video is shown (Figure 26).

Figure 26: School group listening to assistant curator in opening session

The perimeter of the room is dominated by displays, objects and installations that tell the

story of Africa before the slave trade, the trade itself, the Middle Passage and plantation life. The opening session is run by either the curator (Kathryn) or the assistant curator (Walker) and acts as an introduction to the history of African slavery in the Americas, then more specifically the history of the Underground Railroad and the Elgin Settlement. In the example below, Kathryn is talking to a group from a private all-girls' school, which, although Anglican in tradition, it in fact multi-faith.

> [Kathryn]   So, we tend to think of Canada as The Land of Freedom. But did you know that there was once slavery in Canada? Yes, when there was slavery in Canada, people were escaping back to the territories in the US – to Michigan for example – where there was no slavery. Canada wasn't very welcoming – people weren't saying "please blacks, come and live here". Canadians are proud to have abolished slavery, but they didn't want them coming to live in their town as they thought they were dirty and lazy etc, so people protested.

Kathryn tells the pupils that Buxton was the most successful of the four planned settlements in Ontario. She also tells them that she herself is a sixth generation descendant of the fugitive slaves that helped found the settlement in the mid-nineteenth century. She shows them a twenty minute film that tells the story of the settlement. The film includes details of Reverend William King's life; the names of the slaves that he took across the border into Canada; the opposition that the settlement faced from people like Edwin Larwill; the rules that King created for settlement, including that each house must have at least four rooms and be thirty-three feet from the roadside. The film closes with footage of reenactments of life on the settlement and of the parade that has taken place every Labour Day weekend since 1924, inviting all those with a connection to the town to return for a 'Homecoming' celebration. Finally, the film talks about how the museum and the site became designated a 'national historic site' in 1999.

After the film finishes, Kathryn takes questions. She then turns the group's attentions to the long history of the transatlantic slave trade. Kathryn talks to the pupils about African tribal chiefs and how they were powerful and rich and how they were stealing people from other tribes and selling them to the captains of the slave ships. She tells them that the slave traders would be looking for "good strong" people to enslave and that sometimes Africans were tricked into thinking that they were going on a journey.

> [Kathryn]   Sometimes parents would give away their children because of debts. When they got the slaves to the coast, they would put them in big

holes in the ground with grates over the top. They would separate families and lingual groups, so that people couldn't talk to each other.

Kathryn shows the pupils the wooden structure in the corner of the room that represents the limited space that enslaved Africans would have to lie in during the Middle Passage – two foot by two foot by six foot. She explains that sometimes more than one person would be in each space, depending on the numbers on the slave ship. Kathryn shows how the slaves would have been shackled together and stacked up in rows in these compartments and that waste from those on the upper bunks would drip down on to the ones below:

[Kathryn]   People would have been drowning in excrement. There would be people dying and remaining chained to the people next to them. Slaves were insured, so sometimes it was more profitable for the traders to throw the slaves overboard than to let them die on the ship, as this wouldn't be covered by the policy.

The pupils look really shocked, and a few ask questions such as "What's waste?", "What's shackling?", "How long was the journey?" and "How did they feed them?"

[Kathryn]   So this here is a replica of an auction block (Figure 27), where they greased the men up and made them smile – they poked and prodded them like cattle.

[Pupil]   Would they ever fight back?

[Kathryn]   Yeah, but then they'd have to face the consequences. But not all masters were cruel. Some would allow families to stay together. I should tell you that there were some black slaveholders too – because people are greedy and because they wanted to be wealthy too.

Because the museum has limited space for displays and interpretation panels, the recreation of the slave ship and the auction block are in close proximity to and are powerfully juxtaposed with such items as Mary Ann Shadd's printing press and a commemorative saw (both of which are discussed below). The contrast between the degradation of the slave ships and the empowerment and resistance of the Elgin settlement within one humble gallery space is profound. Kathryn moves further along the wall and lifts some shackles from the hook where they hang:

[Kathryn]   These are original adult shackles…

Kathryn tries to place the shackles around a pupil's wrist.

[Kathryn]   See – it's not going to fit – they made them that tight. And these other ones here are shackles for children – originals too. I encourage you to pick them up, feel their weight…

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Kathryn invites one of the pupils to stand up on the slave auction block and she puts the shackles around her ankles.

[Pupil]   How would she walk?

[Kathryn]   Like in a three-legged walk, but it wouldn't be fun.

Figure 27: Left – original shackles and replica neck collar. Right – auction block

Immediately, the difference in the use of objects in this museum as compared to museums in England is startling. When asked whether she thought there were any problems with using original artefacts such as the shackles, Kathryn was surprised to find out that this was an issue in other museums:

> Handling-session participants should be invited to touch the objects but some participants may decline as the impact of handling the object can often evoke strong reactions. (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 27)

For Kathryn, encouraging the pupils to touch and hold these powerful objects is a natural extension of sharing the history of her ancestors and teaching visitors about the town's heritage and how it relates to the national narrative of Canada. Unlike many of the facilitators in England who, along with curators and other museum professionals involved in the bicentenary, expressed anxiety and apprehension about teaching this history to the

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public, Kathryn has the privilege of feeling complete ownership of the history. This is, to all intents and purposes, a community run museum; it was built by the community, for the community, who then chose to proudly share their history with others from outside the community. The extraordinary legacy of the town and the origins of the museum create a palpable sense that those involved in the museum have the authority to teach this history in their own way. This is not to suggest that visitors to the town or the museum are made to feel like outsiders with no right to share this history. On the contrary, those that I have met through conferences and workshops that have spent time in North Buxton recount their visit with the sense of feeling honoured to have been so warmly welcomed into the community, as well as an eagerness to tell everyone who will listen about the history of the settlement; the passion that comes from the community's sense of pride and ownership of their heritage is both infectious and moving.

Kathryn lifts the heavy replica neck collar from its place on a (I assume fake!) tree stump beneath where the shackles were hanging (Figure 27). She puts it over the pupils head, resting it on her shoulders, telling the group that if they were being punished, the slaves would have to sleep in the collar too.

> [Pupil]   Why are there chains on it?
>
> [Kathryn]   So they could attach bells to it, so they could hear if a slave is trying to run away.

Kathryn describes the apparatus that slave masters would use to force-feed slaves, to prevent slaves that wanted to die from starving themselves and that they put muzzles on their faces for the slaves that were "too mouthy".

She explains about how slavery depended on matrilineal descent; that it was the slave status of the mother that was important. She tells them that slave masters often had children with the slave women and that these children would inherit their mother's slave status. She also tells the group that slave masters were sometimes "even harsher to mixed race children". At this point, a teacher interjects to talk about how "these relations were not legitimate and were just about power – there were some meaningful relationships, but most were about force and power".

> [Kathryn]   So, you guys are how old? Oh we'd get an excellent buck for you! People didn't get chance to become mothers, as babies could be taken away – you had to become hard in order to cope with it.

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A pupil raises her hand:

[Pupil]   How old were the kids when they started to work?

[Kathryn]   As soon as they could walk. Did you know that there were white indentured servants – working as maids? And Indian slaves too. Does anyone have any questions?

[Teacher]   Why were there rules about what their houses could look like?

[Kathryn]   Because Reverend King wanted blacks to feel pride and for the whites to think that the blacks were good people too.

Bringing the opening session to a close, Kathryn encourages the pupils to have a look around, to try on the shackles and to climb into the slave ship space to see what it feels like. The lead teacher tells the group that they can start thinking about their "artefact study": "I want you to pick two artefacts that mean something to you". The pupils are given a sheet to complete to help them think about their chosen objects and the teacher takes a photo of each object as the class will be putting together a digital archive when they return to school. "Make sure you ask questions of the museum staff because they know a lot more that I do and you won't be able to ask them questions when we are back at school", the teacher advises the group. She tells me that as well as researching their assigned character from the 1861 schoolhouse class, the girls have "also been doing some general reading and study around the topic, coming up with their own questions so that they each have their own angle". When they get back to school they will put together a digital archive recording everything they have found out here, then they will create a project of their own choice. The teachers are hoping to set up a website that they can show to the younger pupils as an introduction to the topic.

One of the pupils is peering through a glass case at a model of a typical plantation (Figure 28) and asks her teacher how many people would have been living in that area. Kathryn explains that it would depend on how large the plantation was, where it was located and what crop they were growing. Kathryn joins a group of pupils at the far end of the room who are looking at some objects relating to people with connections to the settlement.
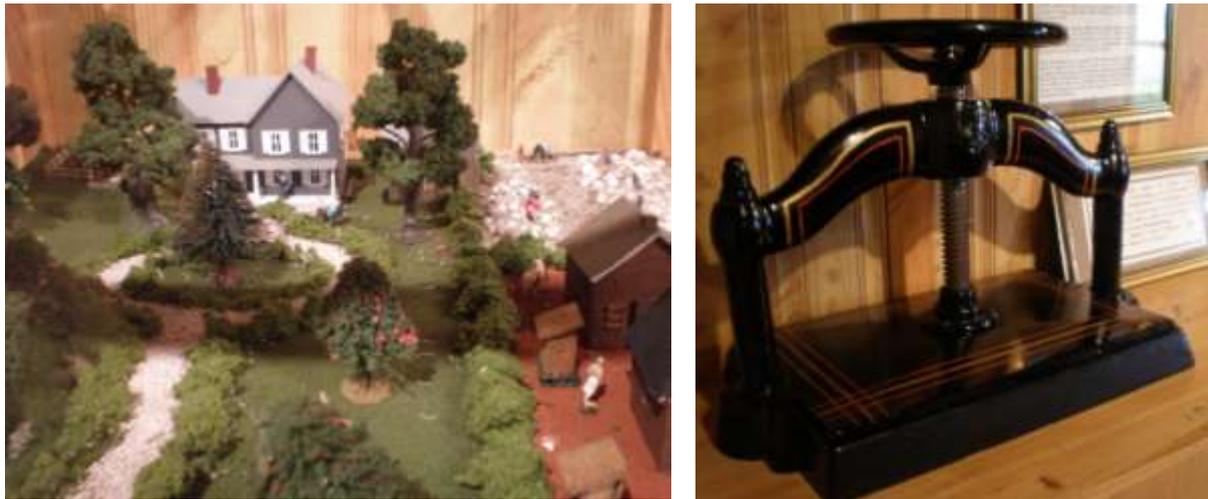
Figure 28: Left – miniature model of plantation. Right – Mary Ann Shadd's printing press

Kathryn lays her hand on one of the objects, a printing press (Figure 28), which she explains was used by Mary Ann Shadd to produce the *The Provincial Freeman* newspaper she founded in 1853. Kathryn also explains that Shadd was the first black woman to graduate from Harvard, in Law, and that she went on to sue the university for sexual discrimination and even started a cooperative for women to become self-sufficient. Some of the pupils have already decided which object they are going to focus on, including: a commemorative wooden saw with a painted scene of Africans being whipped on their way to the coast to board slave ships (Figure 29); the chains and shackles and the slave auction posters.

Figure 29: Commemorative saw on display at Buxton National Historic Site and Museum

Talking to one of the teachers, I find out that one fifth of their school curriculum is "investigative research" and that the school's early years ethos is heavily inspired by the Reggio Emilia, 'child-centered', approach. For example, in Mathematics they used Google Earth and other maps to study the routes of the Underground Railroad and work out the

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distances that fugitive slaves travelled. I move into the second gallery space, where some of the pupils are looking at the types of farming equipment that would have been used by Kathryn's ancestors in the mid-nineteenth century.

One of the pupils approaches me because she wants to tell me about how holding the children's shackles made her feel. She tells me that she has read a lot about black history and says that she has studied it many times, but that she had "never felt as connected to the history" as when she held that object and that it had "made her feel queasy" – she says "it's just something that you can't get in a classroom or from a book". Overhearing the conversation, one of the teachers tells me that "museums like this are great because they're so hands on".

The occurrence of these types of moments is commented on in the *Unlocking Perceptions* booklet:

> There was a moment that struck me during an event here at the museum: during a handling session, an adult visitor picked up a leg-iron and in that moment something resonated for him. The object seemed to trigger something immense for him. You could show image after image of the torture associated with the transatlantic slave trade and the gravitas might not sink in, but for that one individual, it was that object that made its mark (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 26, 'Museum Head of Formal Learning').

On a different occasion, I hear another member of staff – Walker – tell a group of pupils that the shackles are indeed real, and that through research they know that the last time the children's ones were used was on a twelve year old boy. He went on to share with a few of the pupils and one of the teachers that "the children's shackles don't affect him", but that, sometimes, when he picks up the adult shackles, "it's like something runs through my body and I don't want to touch them". This issue of the emotional impact of 'touching the trauma of the past' is something that needs to be explored further, with consideration of both the cognitive and emotive aspects of feeling empathy for those whose lives – and sometimes bodies – were shaped by these harrowing objects.

Figure 30: Curator showing pupils a branding iron

I hear Kathryn talk with a sub-group of the pupils about the branding iron, which is exhibited in the museum. Kathryn removes the object from the traditional and simple wood and glass display case, handing it over to the girls so that they can look more closely (Figure 30). With the girls gathered round her – fully engrossed by the 'weight' of what they are holding – Kathryn describes how slave-owners would brand men on their tongue or cheek, women on their shoulder; "Depending how many times you were bought would determine how many branding marks you would have on your skin". A few minutes later, I see this same group of pupils sat on the floor in a circle in front of the display about traditional farming equipment used at the settlement. They are working on their object study and they are recounting and reflecting on how the masters branded their slaves with their initials; they are clearly upset by this knowledge.

I ask the teacher what is the purpose of the activity sheet the pupils are completing, and she tells me that it has a series of questions about "how they feel" about the things they are seeing, based around the acronym SOAPS: Subject. Occasion. Audience. Purpose. Speaker. I ask the teacher further questions about how the museum field trip relates to the learning that the pupils are doing and will be doing back at school. She tells me that in Grade 5 (age 10-11) the school gets the girls to read *Underground to Canada* (by Barabara

Smucker, published in 1977) and each pupil keeps a journal every day. The teachers tell the pupils how far they have walked that day and what obstacles they have had to face. One year, the girls said that they wanted to actually walk these routes so they could "feel what it was like". When the teachers told them that this would not be possible, the pupils were really disappointed, so they organised a simulation of the Underground Railroad in Toronto; they did an eight kilometer walk, which included hiding behind things and making sure they were not spotted by the people passing by.

One of the teachers recounts how some members of the public even played along with the simulation – for example, when their dogs could smell the pupils in their hiding places and would start barking. The whole thing was filmed by the teachers. "The girls were exhausted when they got back to class, but it was worth it as there was a noticeable difference in the journals of the girls who went on the walks and those who didn't", the teacher tells me. Apparently that cohort of pupils will be going into Grade 8 next year, so they will be visiting the museum at Buxton: "it will be interesting to see how they respond". Within the English case studies, the museum staff expressed a common desire to have the resources to follow up with schools and find out how they use and integrate the museum learning experience once they are back in the classroom. In the pre-visit surveys with teachers, only one teacher had a clear sense of how the visit was going to be used back at school, stating: "some of the students will be writing an article for the school magazine and using photos to build up a display to show their personal impressions of the trip".

> If you want to use collections to engage audiences, if you want to have real learning take place around collections you have to have respect for what's coming back at you. And I don't mean in a kind of woolly-focus group way: I mean from people who ask hard questions and who want intellectual answers. If you approach your practice in that sense you will get something that is challenging and enjoyable. And very dynamic (Understanding Slavery Initiative, 2008: 27, 'Museum Head of Learning and Interpretation').

The staff at Buxton Museum certainly use their collections to engage audiences, albeit sometimes in ways that would be deemed wholly inappropriate in the context of the *Understanding Slavery* guidelines for best practice. The question is, in order to have 'real learning', is it necessary to give audiences access to 'real' objects? As regards a respect for the objects, the staff at Buxton Museum clearly have a reverence for the artefacts (as evident in Walker's comments about how he feels when he touches the shackles); the fact

that this reverence is expressed and managed in a completely different way to how it is in the English case study museums opens up many complex issues that are perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I would argue that any attempt to judge, condemn or regulate the object-handling practices at Buxton Museum would be misled and in danger of stifling the essence of what makes this museum uniquely memorable and refreshing.

One of the many differences between Buxton Museum and the other case studies in that the meta-narrative is the success of the settlement and therefore the overriding message is one of resistance, survival and hope, as opposed to one of empire, trade or abolition. The memories and stories of slavery, the Underground Railroad and life at the Elgin settlement have been passed down through the generations and now live within the curators and their volunteers. The collective memory of the town reverberates through the museum which acts as a centrepiece for the sense of pride that the exclusive identity of being a descendant (or indeed the spouse of a descendant) of those founding settlers bestows upon the residents of North Buxton. It is perhaps partly because of the positive energy of the museum that the object-handling practices are both accepted and well received by pupils and teachers; it seems unlikely that this approach would be deemed appropriate within the institutional setting of, say, the National Maritime Museum in London.

Conclusion

This chapter attends to perhaps the most widespread, venerated yet difficult educational approach that was observed across the four case study museums; the provision of opportunities for pupils to handle objects relating to this traumatic past. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is widely accepted both within the literature and in the museum and heritage sector that the use of objects is an essential part of giving people a powerful opportunity to connect tangibly with the past, allowing them to learn about periods of history through material culture.

> Historical objects are witnesses, things that were there, then. They bear their makers' marks in their weaves, textures, and shapes, and have a compelling agency to cause people living in the present to enunciate their relationships to the past (Phillips, 2005: 108).

This chapter addresses Aim 4 of this thesis, which focuses on identifying the dominant

pedagogical trends within the data. It reveals, through a series of vignettes from each of the four museums, that although there may be a sense of 'best practice' relating to object-handling (as advocated by *Understanding Slavery's* 'Unlocking Perceptions, for example), in fact the reality 'on the ground' is that different facilitators express a different attitude to what is and is not appropriate and effective. As the final vignette illustrates, this chapter reaffirms the importance Aim 5 of this thesis; the inclusion of a comparative case study from a different country. The differences between the English and Canadian case studies exposes not only evidence of how periods of national commemorative activity create cross-site 'communities of practice', but also the notion that the 'weight' of this difficult history is felt and communicated in different places in different ways – in this instance in accordance with the processes of meaning-making and ownership surrounding the history of the museums themselves.

CHAPTER 8: IMAGINING SLAVERY: DRAMA, PERFORMANCE AND ROLE-PLAY

In the previous two chapters, this thesis presents findings relating to two of the key pedagogical trends that emerged from the data; Chapter 6 investigates the relationship between the perceived 'uniqueness' of a difficult history and its value for citizenship education, whereas Chapter 7 examines the pedagogy and ethics of handling objects relating to a traumatic past. In this current chapter, the third dominant theme from the fieldwork is explored; the use of drama, performance and role play in encouraging pupils to use their imaginations in order to foster 'empathic' responses to the subject. This chapter is the final contribution to Aims 3, 4 and 5 in this thesis, the overall findings of which are comprehensively synthesised in the concluding chapter (Chapter 9), in order to address the original research question.

In Chapter 4 of this thesis, the connection between empathy, visiting sites of 'difficult history' and the transcendence of boundaries is discussed, in particular in relation to the work of Jeremy Rifkin, who describes transcendence as meaning "to reach beyond oneself, to participate with and belong to larger communities, to be embedded in more complex webs of meaning" (2009: 20). Transcending the boundaries of time and space are also important factors for Landsberg, who, through her concept of 'prosthetic memory', gives us a way of understanding that learning about traumatic pasts – if an experiential pedagogy is employed – has the potential to transcend those boundaries that divide us and can in turn "change one's mode of thinking" (Landsberg, 2004: 149). The ways in which slavery can be imagined in the museum include the following, which are referred to here as 'prosthetic memory experiences': object handling, drama, role-play, performance, music, monuments, art and creative practices, audio, audio-visual, interactions with facilitators, exhibitions, memorial spaces, architecture, buildings. Williams explains why museums that memorialise difficult histories are likely to engage with 'performative' approaches to representation:

> Precisely because the high stakes associated with the content of memorial museums can produce drama more easily that other types of museums, they are now at the forefront of the 'performing museum' paradigm. [...] In the performing museum, the total physical environment becomes the attraction as the visitor is encouraged to re-enact the drama in a kind of empathetic walk-through. Hence, rather than viewing museum spaces in principally intellectual terms, as theatrical environments they are

as equally concerned with the visceral, kinaesthetic, haptic and intimate qualities of bodily experience (2011: 223).

I argue that in order to understand these moments, we must carefully consider the relationship between experiential learning about traumatic pasts and the human faculties of 'empathy' and 'imagination', as outlined by Landsberg (2004). I propose that through multifaceted interdisciplinary research we can begin to make connections between the micro- and macro-levels of many of the important issues surrounding teaching slavery in the twenty-first century. This chapter considers how we might better understand the validity of the argument that teaching slavery has the potential to induce empathic responses in pupils, a topic that is also covered in a forthcoming publication (Spalding, 2012). Through various 'vignettes' of field-trip experiences from the case study museums, the themes of dramatization, performance and role-play are examined through the lens of 'prosthetic memory experiences'.

This model can help explain how education initiatives such as UK based 'Act for Change' might influence the attitudes and behaviours of young offenders. This outreach programme was founded in 2007 and uses Holocaust education to explore a variety of issues with marginalised pupils. The director and founder of Act for Change, Lea Misan, is interested in how these young people respond to meeting Holocaust survivors and "what they do with this experience" when they return to their everyday lives (2010). She says that an important element of the programme is "developing empathy" and that this shifts the way in which these young people think about things (Misan, 2010).

When they listen to the survivors' stories, they do not just see victims and perpetrators; they learn that "sometimes a victim becomes a terrorist" (Misan, 2010). Misan believes that this is important because when they assess the young people, they find that "they didn't just start offending, they were victims first. That hurt broke whatever shared reality and this sense of broken trust led to a feeling of 'us and them'. [...] They feel like victims, so out of anger, frustration and intense emotion they act out, in a role reversal of victim / perpetrator" (2010). She also says that open dialogue and empowering the young people to facilitate sessions and identify the things they want to discuss are essential to the success of the programme; she talks about the power of "going into [someone else's] shoes and looking at reality from their eyes", an act of imagination that is unsurprisingly

heightened by the experience of meeting someone who survived the Holocaust (Misan, 2010).

8.1   Teaching through dramatic representations

> Prosthetic memories are adopted as the result of a person's experience with a mass cultural technology of memory that dramatizes or recreates a history that he or she did not live (Landsberg, 2004: 28).

This is the core of Landsberg's ideas about 'acquiring prosthetic memories'; it is clear why this model is so appealing to those who study how and why societies remember the Holocaust or slavery in the twenty-first century. The museum learning experiences that I have observed through my fieldwork can be interpreted as immersive experiential interactions with a 'technology of memory' that dramatizes a past beyond living memory. In order for an individual to have a prosthetic memory experience, the dramatisation of the past that they are engaging with must have the potential to elicit an empathic response, which, importantly, Landsberg conceptualises as having both affective and cognitive elements (2004).

Landsberg examines a range of arguments that have been made about why cinema – "the moving picture" – has such a unique affective quality; the explanations include references to the "bodily, experiential component of film spectatorship", its "ability to produce memories in its spectators", its "power to shape consciousness" (Landsberg, 2004: 29-31). According to Landsberg, "Film addresses people intellectually as well as sensuously, through their bodies" (2004: 29), which, as Landsberg goes on to demonstrate, is an integral element of many heritage and museum experiences – particularly in regards those sites that deal with traumatic pasts. Learning about traumatic pasts in a museum context has the same latent intensity as the cinematic experience so as to be both "formative and powerful" (Landsberg, 2004: 30), cultivating in individuals what Rifkin calls "empathic extension", which might work toward improving a pupil's capacity for tolerance and acceptance of others:

> Empathic extension is the only human expression that creates true equality between people. When one empathises with another, distinctions begin to melt away. The very act of identifying with another's struggle as if it were one's own is the ultimate expression of a sense of equality. [...] If someone feels superior or inferior in status to another and therefore different and alien, it becomes difficult to experience their

plight or joy as one's own. [...] Empathy is a communion of kindred spirits, and it's elicited in a temporal and spatial zone that transcends distinctions based on social status (Rifkin, 2009: 160).

I argue that it is through the moments where pupils are provided with a space (whether emotional, physical, intellectual or psychological) in which to imagine slavery that they can acquire prosthetic memories that have the potential, as Landsberg words it, to change one's mode of thinking (2004: 149), to extend one's empathy. Of course, I do not mean for pupils to imagine slavery in an abstract, removed sense – rather to imagine the experiences of those who lived, endured, resisted or survived slavery, those who inherited the legacies, or perhaps those who perpetuated, profited or turned a blind eye. One teacher, in the 'any other comments' section of the pre-visit survey stated that they "really feel there should be a more emotive session to get the pupils to examine how they feel about what they have heard / seen and learned". As illustrated in the vignette below (an extract from fieldwork observations at the International Slavery Museum), the need for a 'more emotive session' is sometimes achieved through storytelling and drama.

Vignette 16: Destination Freedom

The session takes place in a large, open-plan space in the basement of the museum, which for the purpose of this session has been set up with rows of chairs in a theatre style, with the accompanying teachers and teaching assistants sitting or hovering at the back of the room behind the pupils. The session is introduced to the pupils by the museum's learning education officer, Jan, who begins by briefly describing what her job at the museum involves. She goes on to explain that the session they had done in the morning – an interactive session about Africa before the slave trade – was designed to give them an overview of the topic. She urges the pupils to remember that this session is going to involve a performance, so they will need to be quiet and pay attention:

[Jan]   This session is called 'Destination Freedom' and it is based on the true story of William and Ellen Craft who escaped from slavery in America. They didn't have kids as they didn't want their children to be born into slavery. At the end you will have the opportunity to 'hot-seat' Ellen, if John will be so kind as to facilitate the questions? So, now we're going back in time to 1850, if we can get started, I will introduce you to Ellen Craft…

The silent anticipation of the group is broken by a few pupils giggling, but this soon stops

when the actress playing Ellen Craft (Rita) walks into the room in period costume, apparently engrossed in the patchwork quilt she is working on. Positioning herself in front of the group, she lifts her eyes to the audience before she begins:

[Ellen Craft]   This quilt is my life…

Mum told me to make sure I was a house slave – not a field slave. Are you questioning the lightness of my skin. 'Cause surely only negroes can be slaves, right? My mother was African. My father was a slave owner. Not that I choose to call that man my father though. I was given away at 11 because I was a reminder of my master's indiscretion. I ain't never been off the plantation before.

The pupils – and the adults – seem to be entranced by Rita's performance, which is tinged with both sadness and joy:

[Ellen Craft]   …It was a new patch on my slave quilt.

As long as I was a slave, I wasn't having a kid.

She talks to the group directly, recalling for them her memories of meeting William and falling in love:

[Ellen Craft]   So we jumped the broom. Guessing you don't know what that is, do you? You see, masters would not want us marrying because then they can't take the children away and do what they want with them.

Sometimes, Ellen addresses William instead – talking to him about the love and understanding between them – before returning her attentions to the audience:

[Ellen Craft]   You see, we both longed for children so much, but we wanted children as God and nature intended…

We were taught that a slave can never escape their lot, and that if you try then you are ungrateful to God. We were taught that it says in the scriptures that that was our lot in life. How were we to know any different? We couldn't read – slaves were not allowed to read. But they heard tales enough to put fear into the soul of any slave that desired their freedom.

Assuming the voice of William, Ellen recounts how he told her about the Underground Railroad:

[Ellen Craft]   Just to think that it might be possible to live free, to raise a family, what a square that would be on my quilt! Then it occurs to William that I might pass as white, and he as my slave.

Ellen pauses for a moment, then – breathlessly – continues:

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[Ellen Craft] Then there was the realisation that the plan was flawed. In 1848 a white woman would not be seen travelling with a black man.

Ellen, speaking in William's voice again proclaims loudly:

[Ellen Craft] THAT IS IT! THAT IS IT! You will have to disguise yourself as a…

A female pupil spontaneously interjects with 'A man!' Rita responds with a warm smile and continues:

[Ellen Craft] Yes, that's right, a man. I was angry with him at first. And knowing William as you all now know him, ladies and gentlemen, do you think he listened? …But I started sewing a pair of trouser pants that might just fit me. I was sewing the most important square on my quilt. We got passes from our masters, but this presented us with a new quandary. We could not read or write and therefore how would we sign for things? So we put my arm in a sling and tied a hanky round my head. And William cut my hair. Our hearts were beating when trying to escape. I know that you can put yourself in our humble shoes that morning. I know you wouldn't be afraid.

Ellen describes how they had to act like she was a white man and that William was her slave. She recalls how she made the error of saying 'thank you' to William and how she was corrected by another passenger who informed her that "she might spoil her nigger, saying thank you like that":

[Ellen Craft] I was shakin' with anger and fear.

She tells the group how they had heard that abolitionists were taking slaves across the borders to the northern states:

[Ellen Craft] So finally, on Christmas day 1848 we arrived in the city – the free city of Philadelphia. And we gave our heartfelt thanks to God.

And now, young gentlefolk, you have heard my story and I really must be returning to my quilt. And I know you must want to know about the other squares on my quilt of life. In 1850 a bill was passed that meant that free slaves could be captured and sent back to their owners. Therefore we had to seek asylum in England and we found ourselves right here in Liverpool. Then we moved to London where we made a life for ourselves and raised children – as God and nature intended. So we had arrived at our destination: freedom.

Now, I want to thank each and everyone of you for listening. Now I really must return…to my quilt.

After a round of applause from the group, John steps in to facilitate the 'hot-seat' questions:

[John]	We have been very lucky to have a guest from the 19th century here with us – and now we can interview her. Does anyone have any questions for Ms Craft?

The pupils are very keen to ask questions and several hands shoot up:

[Pupil]	Were you ever beaten up on the plantation?
[Ellen Craft]	No, because I was a house slave, but I did witness others being beaten.
[Pupil]	What was it like to see William being treated how you would have been treated on the train?
[Ellen Craft]	That's a very good question, young man. What is your name? It was very difficult, very difficult indeed.
[Pupil]	How did you earn money when you were in London?
[Ellen Craft]	Well, first we lived with abolitionists in Surrey who taught us how to read and write. Why do you think we wanted to know how to read and write?
[Pupil]	To get a job?
[Pupil]	To fit in?
[Ellen Craft]	Yes, and so that we could write our story down so that everyone knows what's happening in America. So we travelled around the country to tell people our story. I didn't speak in public myself, of course, as I thought this was unladylike.
[Pupil]	Are you really thrilled that Barack Obama is president?
[Ellen Craft]	Ba-rack-a who?
[John]	He's a black man who is the President of the United States of America now, Ellen.
[Ellen Craft]	A black man? In the White House? My Lord above. And are you pleased about this?
[Pupils]	Yes!
[Ellen Craft]	God bless you all.
[John]	You can actually download the story of William and Ellen Craft on the internet, so maybe you can do that when you get back to school.

The responses of the pupils to the post-visit survey are perhaps the best means by which to explore the impression that this session seems to have made on the group. One pupil specifically mentioned that they had spoken to their family and friends about the "the good actress who played Ellen Craft" after the visit, whilst another pupil stated that the thing that they had enjoyed the most was "listening and watching a lady pretending to be a slave that had run away, she was really good".

A different pupil stated that "the actress of Ellen Craft allowed us to gain better understanding of her struggle [...] she was there talking to you so you could hot seat her which is more informative than reading it from some text", demonstrating how this novel approach had appealed to their interpersonal learning preferences. This desire for interactivity and drama was echoed by another pupil, so shared that they wish their group had had the chance to "do an activity involving slavery like maybe role-play". To a question about what was the most interesting thing that they had found out about at the museum, the pupils that completed the post-visit survey responded with the following:

- "That there was a part of America that didn't have the slave trade so that if slaves made it to there, they were free people";
- "How some of the slaves rebelled";
- "How the two slaves escaped to North America and started a new life in London";
- "The struggle for freedom the slaves endured".

'Destination Freedom' seems to have had a clear impact on what they learnt about the history of slavery whilst at the museum. One pupil had a particularly interesting response to the visit, stating that they think that learning about slavery is important because:

[It] tells us what cruel and un-dignified things that were forced upon people just because of their skin colour in that because we are white we have control over everything and try to act like god.

This reflective and earnest comment is all the more revealing when set against this pupil's much more generic response in the pre-visit survey to a similar question about the importance of learning about slavery:

Without an event like that our world and ourselves would possibly not be in the format [that] it is today.

For whom the liberty bell tolls

Across the museum sessions observed through this research, there are instances where facilitators and teaching staff invite the pupils to imagine something beyond their own lives, The Buxton Liberty Bell is perhaps the best example of a 'temporal and spatial zone' that, through an act of empathic recognition by the pupils, creates a powerfully immersive and multi-sensory prosthetic memory experience. In this case, this physical interaction marks

the beginning of the museum visit and is interesting to consider in relation to "the material characteristics of objects and the ways in which those characteristics are sensorially experienced in museums" (Dudley, 2009: 1).

At Buxton Museum, school coaches are able to park directly in front of the site, which is located in a quiet rural setting, meaning that the staff are able to hear a group arrive and can head outside to meet them. This is important, as right outside the main door of the museum is a replica of the Buxton 'liberty bell'. Every school group that arrives at the museum is told the story of the bell and is invited to ring the bell themselves, an occurrence that would be well suited to a study into what Dudley frames as "the exploration of subjective experience – physical, multisensory, aesthetic, emotional, immersive – of publicly displayed objects" (Dudley, 2009: 2). The virtual museum, 'Canadian Black History: An Interactive Experience' (developed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada) that was launched in February 2011, includes several references to the Buxton settlement and the lives of those who made the town their home.

Figure 31: 'Canadian Black History – An Interactive Experience' (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011)

Figure 31 is a screen shot of the virtual museum, showing images and objects relating to

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Buxton. On the left wall are images of the exterior of S.S. #13 Schoolhouse and a class photo from 1910 – "the first picture to be taken of children attending the school" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). On the back wall is a photo of the Buxton Liberty Bell and the objects in the display case are the "Letters accompanying the presentation of the Buxton Liberty Bell, 1850" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). The information panel for the Liberty Bell image reads as follows:

> When a fugitive slave arrived in Buxton through the Underground Railroad, the large bell in the Mission school rang to celebrate their arrival and new found freedom. The 550 pound bell was given to the academy in Raleigh, Canada West in 1850 by the African American community in Pittsburgh. Upon learning about the promise of the Canadian safe-haven of Buxton, a resolute group of blacks determined to express their encouragement by donating a lasting symbol of freedom. The original bell now hangs in the steeple of St. Andrew's United Church, which was built in 1858. This replica of the Buxton Bell was created in 2007 and is dedicated to the courage and accomplishments of those who chose Buxton as their home. The bell can be viewed and rung at the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).

This brief history of the bell is both clear and informative, but it cannot replace the experience of ringing the bell; the sound, the weight of the rhythmic swing of the bell, the resonance and the *feeling* in the air as the loud chimes reverberate across the flat farmland surrounding the museum. As Wehner and Sear note in their discussion of objects in museums, "It is no easy thing to create displays that captivate visitors to the extent that they persist beyond a cursory observation of an object to the deeper interrogation that will lead them to imaginatively connect with the experiences of historical and cultural others" (Wehner and Sear, 2009: 158-9). The inclusion of a video clip (or perhaps a sound clip) of the replica bell being rung would have given the objects accession into the online virtual museum more impact.

Of course, within North American culture and history, the 'liberty bell' is an important emblem of freedom; the community in Pittsburgh who commissioned the Buxton bell were no doubt inspired by the iconic symbol of American Independence, the 1752 Liberty Bell that is located in Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and that gained its name during the 1830s when it was adopted as a symbol by abolitionist societies. This association with another legendary 'object' gives added strength to both the aesthetic appeal of the Buxton Liberty Bell and the readiness of individuals and groups from beyond

Buxton to take it on as their motif. The historic date of March 25th 2007 not only marked the reopening of Wilberforce House in Hull, but also the opening of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migration of African Peoples at York University in Toronto. During the opening ceremony on the York University campus, the replica of the Buxton Liberty Bell was rung before being returned to the museum:

> "The bell is a powerful symbol of freedom," says Professor Paul Lovejoy, the director of the Tubman Institute and a research professor in York's Department of History. "The whole community could hear it when someone arrived safely in Buxton," he says, noting also that it was also rung "every morning and night in the community so that people would stop and pause and remember those who are still in slavery." [...]"The significance rests in the opportunity for the bell to be rung symbolically at this event in recognition of all those who have successfully shed the bonds of slavery," says York's Lovejoy. "The Tubman Institute is committed to bring about the end of slavery and the emancipation of people from injustice. This is the message that will be conveyed," he says. "I am proud that we are building institutions in Canada, like the Buxton Museum and the Tubman Institute at York that can tell the story of our past," says Lovejoy. "It is a collective past that includes all peoples" (Wawryshyn, 2007).

The bell – both the original and the replica – is a fascinating 'technology of memory' that operates on many levels as a medium for empathic consciousness. For the historical community of Buxton, the sound of the bell signalled a need to extend one's empathy beyond the current boundaries of the settlement to include a new person or persons into the community; safe arrival in Buxton coupled with the ringing bell ensured that the newcomers were accepted as 'one of us'. The ritual of ringing the bell every morning acted as an empathic reminder to the community that there were still many living across the border for whom the bell did not toll, whose plight they *must remember to remember*. For the descendants of those founding settlers who still live in Buxton, the bell – *the sound of the bell* – creates a corporeal connection with their ancestors, with the heritage of which they are so palpably proud:

> "We have many artifacts and many ways to tell this important chapter in North American history," says Bryan Prince, the vice-president of the Buxton Historical Society, which administers the Buxton Museum. "But, for me, this bell is the most important symbol that we have to tell the story of the Underground Railway, the horrors of slavery, the triumph of escape and the coming to a country where they can begin again." Prince is a sixth-generation descendant of Buxton settlers who escaped slavery and a board member of the Tubman Institute (Wawryshyn, 2007).

This passion, pride and commitment to telling the story of the settlement to everyone who

visits the museum runs throughout the towns inhabitants, even those who are not descended from the former slaves or who were not even born in Buxton. This is testament to the success of the work of the museum, events such as the annual 'Homecoming' celebrations and the 'passing down' of the history and the stories from generation to generation over the dinner table in keeping alive the towns 'collective memory'. The bell is an important lynchpin in the wheels of this impressive memory-work. Recognising that the location of the original bell in the steeple of a church that is removed from the museum site, the museum secured funding from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Buxton Historical Society to commission a sculptor to make a replica (Wawryshyn, 2007):

> "I was one of a small group of people who had been fortunate to see the original bell on several occasions," says Prince. "Each time upon seeing it, I would get a lump in my throat, and feel overwhelmed with emotion. Now that we have this replica, thousands of visitors to the Museum each year will be able to appreciate its beauty and experience the feeling that comes with being in the presence of something extraordinary," he says (Wawryshyn, 2007).

Bryan's description of how seeing the original bell made him feel and how he hopes 'being in the presence' of the replica will make visitors to the museum feel echoes Sir Ken Robinson's description of aesthetic experiences, which he says happen "when the senses are operating at their peak, when you are present in the current moment, when you are resonating with the excitement of this thing you are experiencing, when you are fully alive" (Robinson, 2010).

Each group that visits the museum is asked to stop at the bell and hear about its history before they enter the exhibition spaces (Figure 32). The museum staff encourage each group to ring the bell themselves, to imagine what it would have been like to live in the settlement during the early years and to hear that ringing noise, knowing that it meant someone else had reached safety at the end of the Underground Railroad. Every pupil visiting the museum begins their field-trip experience with an invitation to empathise with those former and fugitive slaves, who arrived at the settlement, exhausted and relieved, unsure and elated. Each pupil is afforded a moment – should they wish to take it – to visualise the settlers emerging from their houses or dropping their work tools and running

Figure 32: The Buxton Liberty Bell. Left – details of engraving. Right – pupil ringing bell

across the fields to welcome a stranger – perhaps even a family of strangers – into the warmth and security of their community.

The bell acts as a vehicle through which Buxton's founding settlers, their direct descendants and those who visit the town can transcend the boundaries of lived experience and feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves. Rifkin describes transcendence as meaning "to reach beyond oneself, to participate with and belong to larger communities, to be embedded in more complex webs of meaning" (Rifkin, 2009: 20), a description that resembles the principles underpinning effective citizenship education, as discussed in Chapter 6. For Landsberg, this transcendence of the 'reality' of our own lived experiences involves a process akin to Freud's notion of 'transference':

> The transferential space of the [museum] is not a place where old memories, worn on the body as symptoms, are revealed and dismantled through talk but a site where new symptoms, new memories, prosthetic memories, are incorporated into the body. As happens in analytic transference, although real experience takes place, the experience is not equivalent to or an exact repetition of the original event or relationship: the parameters are artificial. Nonetheless, the experience fosters an

otherwise unattainable insight into the original event. In the case of the museum, as we take on prosthetic memories, as we incorporate these symptoms, we are simultaneously giving over our bodies to these mute objects. We take on their memories and become their prostheses (Landsberg, 2004: 135-6).

The ethics and affective impact of 'taking on the memories of objects' is an issue that is discussed in Chapter 7. In the next section, a different type of educational activity that requires both empathy and the imagination is explored; the use of role-play in bringing the subject of transatlantic slavery to life.

8.2   Empathising through role-play

The modern concept of empathy has fascinating roots. Unfortunately, there is not space here to go into the intriguing neuroscientific insights into the phenomenon we know as empathy; however, Landsberg's own explanations of its significance for memory studies are more than sufficient within the parameters of this thesis. In discussing the difference between sympathy and empathy, Landsberg points out that 'empathy' is in fact "a relatively recent word, first appearing in English in 1909, three centuries after sympathy entered the language" (2004: 149). For Landsberg, the difference between sympathy and empathy lies in the understanding of empathy as having "a cognitive component", whereas "the act of sympathizing not only reinforces the victimhood of the other but also establishes hierarchies" (2004: 149). As discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, fostering young people's capacity to empathise through difficult history education is associated with tackling racism, prejudice and anti-social behaviour.

At Buxton Museum, discussions about legacies of racism take a decidedly different tone than in most of the sessions I have observed in England; the theme of 'citizenship skills' did not emerge from the data at all. In a comparative study of citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England, Davies and Issitt state that through their analysis of the three countries' textbooks, they conclude that citizenship textbooks in Ontario, Canada can be characterised as "education in civics (provision of information about formal public institutions)" and those in England as "education for citizenship (a broad-based promotion of socially useful qualities)" (2005: 389). Although this study is six years old and changes have been made to both curricular and education policies since then, it is still a useful indication of the broad differences between the two countries conception of citizenship

education.

However, it seems that in more recent years, in countries including England, South Africa, Australia and Canada there has been a shift in the "discourse of citizenship education", with "the place of historical understanding [becoming] located increasingly within an International Rights Framework of the Human Rights Act and the UNESCO Framework of 1995", thus emphasising the use of education "for peace and justice, to respect diversity, heritage and the environment" (Bam-Hutchinson, 2009).

Before beginning my fieldwork in Ontario, I was told to expect that many teachers in Canada would be keen to teach a version of history that states that there was slavery in the United States, and then there was the Underground Railroad which led runaway slaves to freedom in wonderful, friendly Canada. The Buxton Museum would be an obvious place to teach such a triumphant and celebratory representation; the story of the Elgin Settlement is both fascinating and inspiring and it offers many reasons to be proud of Canada's historical association with the Underground Railroad.

However, the staff at the museum demonstrate a powerful grasp of the importance of the truth, no matter how difficult it might be to hear. For example, one of the first things that I heard the curator telling a school group from Toronto was that although people like to think of Canada as the Land of Freedom, that in actual fact there had been slavery in Canada too, and that during those times, people were escaping south across the border to the territories of the US.

Within the walls of Buxton Museum, which was built by the hands of the community, matters of skin tone and prejudice have a different weight; the question of racism brings a 'spark' to the room, because it's relevance is so immediate; the curators can say to the pupils 'I am the descendant of a slave' and in doing so they confidently communicate that they own their history. Because of this, the museum staff are keen to tell what they see as the whole truth; they speak honestly about racism and Canada's not so clean past, about how it was not always 'The Land of Freedom'.

This is a clear example of why the comparison between museums in England and the Buxton Museum in Ontario are particularly illuminating. In England, there is the danger that by proudly focusing on the abolition movement, politicians, curators, teachers and – indeed

anyone discussing this aspect of the nation's past – can choose to avoid the difficult history of Britain's role in the slave trade and the legacies of racism and inequality, legacies that run counter to the image of 'multicultural Britain' that New Labour worked so hard to create.

The capacity to empathise with an event or situation that we have not experienced ourselves requires an act of imagination, therefore the museum as a "mass cultural technology of memory" (Landsberg, 2004: 28) becomes a place where people can imagine what it is like to be someone else, to walk in someone else's shoes, which, as discussed in Chapter 6, is an important aspect of being a 'good citizen'. The activity described below provides pupils visiting Buxton Museum with an opportunity to consider the complexities of an individual's actions and the restraints on the agency of the enslaved Africans that they have been learning about.

Here, the pupils have to think carefully about the potential repercussions of trying to escape, such as failing and being treated worse by the masters as a result, being separated from family, or putting those left behind at greater risk of abuse and punishment. 'Footsteps to Freedom', as the session is titled, is a simple activity that in theory could take place anywhere, but is undoubtedly given greater gravitas by taking place at a site brimming with the powerful history and energy of those who were successful in escaping bondage.

Vignette 17: Footsteps to Freedom

This session takes place in the historic church building. One of the many experienced volunteer education facilitators – Susan – begins by explaining to the sub-group of pupils the differences between the churches in the settlement, for example that 'some of the churches were very quiet, whereas at others the people would speak and cheer and say amen and start clapping'. Susan moves on to talk to the girls about the original settlers of Buxton:

[Susan]	When they came here to Canada they had hard lives – they had nothing, but they found comfort in their church. What else do you think brought them comfort?
[Pupil]	Their families?
[Pupil]	Their children?

Figure 33: Pupils and facilitator inside the church at Buxton National Historic Site and Museum

[Pupil]	Their community?
[Susan]	Yes that's right, very good. All of those things will have brought them comfort. Now, I'm going to split you into groups and each group is going to be given a character to look at and you are going to live in their shoes for a little while. You'll know how old your character is, whether you have a kind master or a mean one. Then you have to decide whether you will try to escape slavery or not. You will need a secretary and they have to record what your circumstances are and what the outcomes are.

The group splits into three groups of five pupils. Susan allows the group around five minutes to read through the information sheets they have been provided with about their particular character, whose lives and circumstances of being enslaved in the US in the nineteenth century are based on research undertaken at the museum. Once their time is up, the groups present their decisions about whether or not to try and escape slavery to the others.

The pupils open with statements such as "Our name is Mollie, we are twenty-three years old and we are a servant. Our master is good when is sober", then they move on to explain the reasons their character might choose to stay and the reasons they might choose escape, before revealing their group's decision (in this case that Mollie should stay). Susan

asks one of the pupils to randomly pick a card from a selection of five or six, which details what the fate of the character is, based on the fact that they have chosen to stay:
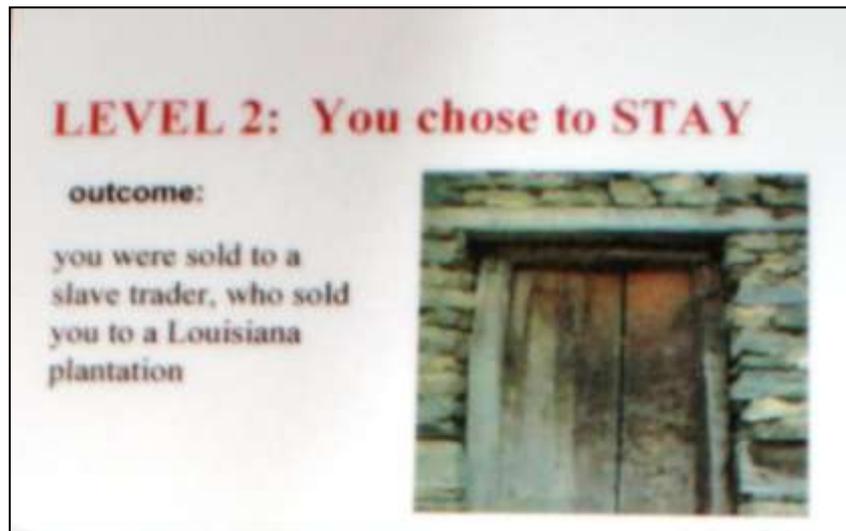
[Susan]	What emotions do you think would be common for those in bondage?
[Pupil]	Sad.
[Pupil]	Depressed.
[Pupil]	Scared?
[Susan]	All the emotions you came up with for how a slave might feel were all negative, but do you think that they would ever have had happy emotions? Do you think there were any moments of happiness?
[Pupil]	No…
[Susan]	What about family? There are always moments of happiness, even in the worst circumstances.
[Teacher]	Walker [the assistant curator] was telling us about someone who arrived in Buxton after their thirteenth attempt to escape – it's just incredible.

Adding their own twist to the museum's learning programme, the teachers decide that the pupils will finish the day with a service in the church that they will prepare themselves. The service is to be made up from the following elements: "prayers for the people" written by one group of pupils, a "skit" "about something they think we should remember" performed by another group and a reading chosen by the final group, including an explanation of "what made it memorable and why they chose it". At first, this group were drawn to Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech, but Susan gently suggests that perhaps they should read 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou (minus the stanza that begins 'Does my sexiness upset you?').

She explains that she often uses this poem with children and that she always gets the young people to say the phrase 'I rise', which is repeated throughout the poem, as a collective voice. The girls listen intently to Susan's passionate recital of the poem – raising her closed hand with every utterance of 'I rise' – and agree that this is the reading they will share with the rest of the group at the church service.

Figure 35: Pupils practicing their reading of Maya Angelou's poem 'Still I Rise'

Following the prayers ('We pray for those in Canada who are not as privileged as us. Creator of the universe, hear us') and a skit based on the session in the schoolhouse (where Kathryn dresses up as a 'schoolma'am' and recreates a 1910 classroom experience), the group that prepared the reading take their turn: "We chose this because it is about perseverance and hope – it is about never giving up. 'Still I Rise' by Maya Angelou". The girls take it in turns to read a few lines each and say 'I rise' together each time, finishing with:

> Out of the huts of history's shame
> I rise
> Up from a past that's rooted in pain
> I rise
> I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
> Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
> Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
> I rise
> Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
> I rise

> Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
> I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
> I rise
> I rise
> I rise.

[Teacher]   We pray for the museum staff, the descendants of those who were brave enough to start a new community. I thought it was appropriate to finish on this note as we are dealing with a powerful history with a dark underbelly, especially for Canadian history – we are not innocent.

<div align="center">[...]</div>

Clearly, this school group are not a typical school group; it is not every day that a group of pupils designs and performs their own church service whilst visiting Buxton Museum. However, the 'Footsteps to Freedom' activity is used with almost all groups of this age that visit the museum. The session was conceived and created by one of the museum's dedicated volunteers, and rather than relying on technology or other expensive resources that the museum simply does not have access to, it draws on the one thing that they have in abundance; real-life stories. Using the wealth of research materials available in the library and archive area of the museum to create a series of scenarios, choices and outcomes for the pupils to navigate. This activity uses the same idea as the "What would you have done?" flowchart at Wilberforce House Museum (see Vignette 10), but instead of using a static display that pupils may easily pass by in their exploration of the exhibition, Buxton Museum makes this interactive investigation of the sometimes harsh realities of resistance into the focus of a simple yet effective session.

8.3   Memories, field-trips and physical contexts

As mentioned in the literature review (Chapter 2), the significance of the physical context within which learning takes place has been convincingly fore-grounded by the prominent museum education researchers, Falk and Dierking, for example through their Contextual Model of Learning, which also includes the 'personal' and 'socio-cultural' contexts, as well as the dynamic fourth element of time (2000). Their comments regarding learning, space and memory and the findings of neuroscience raises interesting issues in regards to interpreting

the significance of the next vignette:

> Neuroscience research has revealed that 'spatial learning' is not just a specialised and isolated type of learning but is integrated with all types of learning; all learning is influenced by the awareness of place. A key component appears to be the part of the brain known as the hippocampus. All memories of people, places or events, if they are to become long-term memories, must pass through the hippocampus. The hippocampus is located in a very evolutionary ancient portion of the brain, the limbic area [which] is strongly associated with human emotional processing. Probably not coincidentally, then, it appears that in the process of becoming 'permanent', a memory acquires both an emotional and a physical context stamp as it passes through the hippocampus (Falk and Dierking, 2000: 62-3).

This neurobiological connection between memories, emotions and physical contexts is perhaps not surprising, but it provides a powerful insight into why it might be that field-trips are particularly memorable aspects of a school career. This is an under researched area, although there are a few studies that investigate individuals' memories of field-trips. For example, a longitudinal study of memories of science field-trips found that although "students' memories were nonspecific and disassociated from information given by the field teacher", "results from [...] tests yielded positive responses toward wanting to learn more about the subject matter and an interest in returning to the field trip site" (Knapp, 2000: 65). In a study of teacher motivations for fieldtrips, "opportunity to provide a memorable learning experience" was the third most prevalent response that teachers expressed in interviews (according to the categories the researchers created to describe the range of motivations), with "to reinforce or expand upon the classroom curriculum" and "to expose students to new experiences" being the first and second most common motivations (Kisiel, 2005: 941).

Finally, in a paper titled 'Memories are made of this: some reflections on outdoor learning and recall', Sue Waite uses survey responses from 334 primary education practitioners and a school case study involving children aged between two and eleven to reflect on "how the quality of outdoor experience may sustain and support engagement and memory" (Waite, 2007). However, in-depth longitudinal research that explores both the subtle emotional and behavioural outcomes of field-trips, as well as the ways in which people (re)construct their memories of field-trips within the broader framework of their life narratives has yet to be undertaken. An illuminative aspect of such research would be to investigate the relationship between the physical characteristics of the field-trip, the ways in

which people remember (and misremember) these places and spaces and the impact on the status of these memories.

Within the context of the type of field-trip sessions discussed in this chapter, it would also be necessary to consider the importance of the interactivity of the experience in relation to the memorability and long-term resonance of experiential learning opportunities. For example, the session described in the following vignette not only requires a great deal of input and commitment from the pupils in order to be successful, but it also gains effect from the physical characteristics and history of the building in which it takes place; the city of Hull's Guildhall, which is regularly used by the staff at Wilberforce House Museum for school group sessions (see Section 6.4 for the first part of this session).

Vignette 18: The Guildhall (Part 2)

After the twenty minutes is up, the pupils are instructed to gather everything they will need for the debate and they are escorted to the Guildhall, which is located a couple of streets away from the museum. The architecture and features of the Guildhall is very impressive, in particular the oak and walnut that lines the corridors and staircases, and the Sicilian marble underfoot. The pupils are clearly awed by the space and they seem to recognise that they need to behave respectfully as it is a working building.

The group follows Lucy through the warren of corridors to a meeting room that is the perfect setting for the group to imagine that they are really debating the slavery question at the turn of the nineteenth century; the grandeur and history of the building certainly adds gravitas and a sense of drama to the session that is both exciting and potentially intimidating for the pupils. Perhaps in response to this sense of general apprehension, Lucy – taking her position behind the raised lectern at the front of the space – shares with the pupils that "she isn't the sort of person who enjoys talking in front of people".

> [Lucy]   I'm going to chair the debate and the teachers are going to award the points. Would you like a few minutes to practice what you're going to do?

The pupils eagerly accept this opportunity to rehearse and the energy level in the room goes up a notch. A member of staff from the school leans over to me to say "That's what you

want, isn't it, for them to get so enthused about what they're going to do?"

> [Lucy] I'm going to call each group in turn to the front. For the rest of groups, it's important that we listen carefully. Any questions?

The first group – the merchants – moves from their seats in the audience to the raised stage-like space that adjoins the lectern. The five male pupils take it in turns to approach the lectern and read from the script they have prepared. They show the audience images from the evidence pack to support their claims, as well as stating 'facts' about the importance of the slave trade for British society and economy. Two of the pupils are making good use of their acting skills and are clearly keen to be awarded the extra points that were promised for effective use of drama:

> [Pupil] Please make the right decision. Coffee and tea are at stake for God's sake!
>
> [All together] For slavery!

The second group – the abolitionists – is made up of five girls. The pupils in the audience are listening attentively as the group reads out a range of statements, including:

> The most upsetting thing about slavery is the division in race.
>
> Put yourself in the slaves' position.
>
> Slaves are treated like animals.
>
> No human being should go through all this much pain because of the colour of their skin.

The third group – the slave traders – is also a made up of five girls:

> By giving them English names, we're showing them that they're part of the family. We just want to make a living. It's not easy being a slave trader. There isn't enough work for all of us.

They go on to try and justify the use of shackles, before finishing their argument with:

> Slavery is not just a way of life, it is our life. We have families to support.

The penultimate group – the ex-slaves – has two boys and four girls. They talk emphatically about being captured in Africa, about the horrors of the Middle Passage, the slave auctions, about being branded and sold, working on plantations, being treated like animals and being made to wear muzzles. Significantly, for these few minutes they adopt the identity of the enslaved through the use of 'we' and 'us', rather than 'them' or 'the slaves':

[Pupil]	How many more of us need to die so you can put sugar in your tea?
[Lucy]	You used some really emotional arguments there. Order in the house!

The final group - the general public of Great Britain – take their positions and present their case:

[Male pupil]	Am I not a man and a brother? How many times have you heard this? Do you really know what it means?

This group also uses the rhetoric of "how would you feel if…" to stir up compassion for the plight of the enslaved Africans:

[Male pupil]	Think about women being sexually abused, children being taken away. Think of the agony people go through – could you? I know I couldn't.
[All together]	STOP SLAVERY, SAVE LIVES!

Lucy returns to the lectern to close the debates.

[Lucy]	We need to give ourselves a big round of applause! Did anyone find the activity this morning challenging? What about the pro-slavery people? Did it help you understand how it carried on for so long?

The pupils seem to be too relieved that their role-play performances are over to respond to these questions with anything other than affirmative nods.

[Lucy]	Who's heard of Harewood House? Who's been there? It was all built off slave trade profits. People in Britain didn't want the slave trade to end as it was propping up their luxurious lifestyles.

The teachers add up the marks they gave to the different groups and give Lucy a run-down of the scores, which she then presents to the groups.

[Lucy]	The scores were quite even. Although the anti-slavery side won today, it just shows how hard it was to get the bill through when they were up against such strong arguments.

[...]

The Guildhall Debates is an interesting session in that it takes the pupils out of their comfort zone and forces them to engage more fully with the topic or run the risk of standing up in front of their peers in this grand, formidable old building to find that they have nothing to say. The other important aspect of this session is the manner in which it carefully encourages some of the sub-groups to empathise with the interests and values of those who, for various reasons, were pro-slavery and protested against the abolition movement.

Although operating within the 'abolition discourse' of the bicentenary, as described by Waterton and Wilson (2009), this session is framed by a more holistic vision of the early nineteenth century, one that includes the 'uglier' sides of the debates. As one pupil from the group at the International Slavery Museum stated in their pre-visit survey, it is important to learn about the slave trade and slavery because "it's part of our history, even if we don't want it to be".

8.4 Pre-visit research, perspective taking and period costume

In some instances, role-play activities for the pupils are integrated with dramatisations by museum facilitators. For example, Buxton Museum offers a "Day in an Early African Canadian Settlement":

> For young scholars who have the good fortune to visit the Buxton Museum on a class trip! [...] Before their visit to the settlement, students should complete a series of activities [that] will familiarize them with the settlement and the time period. All resources to complete these activities are provided in the resource kit. During their day at the Buxton Schoolhouse, students will role play one of the children who would have attended the school in 1861, and would have been a neighbour of the owner of the log cabin. Students will participate in four distinct learning experiences in which they will participate in events in the lives of the children of the early Buxton Settlement. [...] You should allow at least 6 weeks to complete activities before your visit (Gardner, 2011).

Through pre-visit classroom activities, pupils research their assigned 1861 Buxton School character and learn about their lives and families. This allows them to develop empathy with an individual from the past, meaning that by the time they reach the museum they are interested in finding out more and are keen to seek out references to the person in the museum galleries, library and archive. In the photo below, a pupil spends time in the archive area in the right-wing of the museum, where the curator and assistant curator help her to undertake some extra research into the history of her assigned character, who, it turns out, is one of the curator's ancestors.

Figure 36: Curator, pupil and assistant curator undertaking research in the museum's archives and library area

In the following vignette, we join the pupils from the all-girls school as they line up to enter the schoolhouse.

Vignette 19: Voices of Freedom

Kathryn, dressed in her full "school ma'am" outfit (which was tailored by one of the volunteers), calls the pupils to the steps that lead into the schoolhouse. She instructs the group to form two queues – girls on one side, boys on the other. The girls join a queue according to the gender of their 1861 school child character. Inside the schoolhouse is a small cloakroom on each side – one for the boys, one for the girls. Hanging from coat pegs are dozens of lanyards, each with a nametag complete with a black and white photo that represents one of the 1861 SS #13 Schoolhouse class members. The pupils find the correct nametag for their character and then file into the main school room, which has been decorated to look as it would have done in 1861 – complete with the British flag and a framed picture of Queen Victoria on the wall. The pupils are once again divided into boys and girls and are told to stand by their desks, as they are to start their mock school day with a recital of 'God Save the Queen'.

Figure 37: Left – pupils lining up to enter the schoolhouse at Buxton. Right – name tags for schoolhouse session

After the children have taken their seats, Kathryn explains to the group that she is their substitute teacher for the day, as their regular teacher – Mr Cromwell – has been taken ill. She then undertakes a health and posture inspection, going around each girl in turn and checking their hands.

> [Kathryn]   You have a little discoloration on your fingers. Is Mr Cromwell aware of this small pox fever that's going through the settlement? And what is this here?

Kathryn points to the wristwatch one of the girls is wearing.

> [Pupil]   Erm, it was a family heirloom...
>
> [Kathryn]   And what is the purpose of this apparatus?
>
> [Pupil]   It's like a portable clock.

Everyone in the room laughs at the girl's quick-witted responses.

Figure 38: Pupils taking part in the 'Voices of Freedom' session in the schoolhouse at Buxton

[Kathryn]	I will now do attendance, when I call your name, please stand. Alice Brookes? Ah, Miss Brookes, can you tell me a little about yourself? Where did your family come from so that you could be born here?
[Pupil]	My grandfather came here to Buxton in 1849.
[Kathryn]	Ah, exactly when the settlement was founded – did your grandfather help build this school?
[Pupil]	Err yes, I think so.
[Kathryn]	Stanley Prince – can you tell me anything about your family?
[Pupil]	Oh, my story is quite interesting actually...

The pupil goes on to elaborate about 'his' family's heritage, adopting an animated tone that elicits more laughter from the pupils and their teachers. Kathryn asks more pupils about their character's families – one of the pupils shyly responds with "I don't know". Kathryn then instructs the pupils to take it in turns to read from a book about Africa, before turning their attentions to spelling and arithmetic, with only a small chalkboard and a piece of chalk to aid them. The questions are fired at the students in quick succession, including things like

"How many letters are there in the days of the week?"

> [Kathryn] I am coming out of character now…So, I am related to the Prince's and the Shadd's etc, who you have been learning about today. […] When pupils left the schoolhouse, the community were supporting their education too. So if you were walking down the street and a neighbour you were passing might ask you a question, and if you couldn't answer, they would bring you into their house and give you sugar cookies and teach you. So, when the blacks got here, they really absorbed education.

Throughout this chapter, the vignettes from Buxton Museum present very different types of learning experience than those that draw on the data from the English case studies. In this particular vignette, the pupils are immersed in the historic schoolhouse environment, with Kathryn in full period costume and remnants of the period on the walls. Sitting up straight at the wooden desks, the pupils are invited to imagine what school life would have been like for the historical characters whose names and photo they wear around their necks. Although this session is not directly about experiences of enslavement, it offers an insight into another central aspect of the story of North Buxton; the importance of education to the success of the settlement and the lives of those who made it their home.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the use of drama, performance and role-play, which are connected by the notion of 'imagining slavery', and as such form the third dominant pedagogical theme that emerged from the fieldwork data. Through the vignettes presented here, a correlation has been made between encouraging pupils to use their imaginations and attempts to foster 'empathic' responses to this difficult history; what makes heritage and museum experiences unique in regards potentially developing the empathic consciousness of pupils learning about difficult histories? The answers that have emerged from the data relate to the experiential, performative, collective, multi-sensory, transcendent and embodied immediacy of field-trip sessions that use the mediums of drama, role-play and imagination to engage the group and create opportunities for empathic responses to the history.

This conflation of teaching difficult histories and the potential for 'empathic extension' is a thread that runs throughout chapters 4 to 8 of this thesis. References to fostering empathy, whether implicit or explicit, have defined many of the findings in this

research. In Chapter 4, this connection between slavery and 'empathic consciousness' was examined through the lens of the citizenship curriculum, whereas in Chapter 5 this is apparent in the practice of teaching disaffected young people about difficult histories. In Chapter 6, the skills and values of citizenship education are examined further – including the inherent need for empathy with other cultures that drives the three key concepts of citizenship in the national curriculum in England and Wales: "Democracy and justice", "Rights and responsibilities", "Identities and diversities: living together in the UK" (Association for Citizenship Teaching, 2011).

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION OF IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

This concluding chapter seeks to synthesise the findings and arguments of the previous chapters (Section 9.1). The second section reflects on some of the limitations of this research, whilst Section 9.3 turns these limitations into recommendations for future research. The chapter, and this thesis, ends with some final thoughts about the research process.

9.1   Research findings

This research has set out to examine how national education initiatives and museum field-trip sessions relating to 'difficult' histories influence – and are influenced by – shifts in 'historical consciousness', primarily within the context of England and the 2007 official commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade. This investigation has been driven by a need to recognise and reconceptualise the museum field-trip as a significant 'cultural memory product' that requires the same attention that the history textbook has previously received. Therefore, it was necessary for this thesis to problematise the museum field-trip as a 'site' where a particular type of history education is produced and consumed. Operating within the context of the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the former British Empire, the fieldwork undertaken and the data generation for this thesis was designed to enable a thorough investigation of the following research question:

> How are shifts in the 'historical consciousness' of 'difficult histories' such as transatlantic slavery (re)negotiated and (re)articulated through school field-trips to museums in England within the context of periods of heightened commemorative activity, such as the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade?

The original contribution to knowledge represented by this research is the deeper and more theoretically developed understanding of how the shifting discourses that constitute the historical consciousness of a commemorative year are (re)negotiated through museum field-trips. This thesis argues that this (re)negotiation is achieved through common pedagogical strategies that emerge from cross-site, national education initiatives and professional training opportunities, such as *Understanding Slavery*, as well as in response to the rhetoric and content of changes to the national curriculum. In doing so, it makes an

original contribution to the field of learning, history, historical consciousness and museums, particularly in the way in which it observes instrumental use of these within England.

Furthermore, the 'difficulties' of a particular traumatic past are (re)articulated at the local level through sometimes subtle, sometimes overt, moments or performances of memory and meaning-making that vary according to the particular personal, sociocultural and physical contexts, as well as the group, organisational and institutional dynamics within a given museum. This argument is based on original research which has examined the ways in which national education initiatives and museum field-trip sessions relating to difficult histories influence – and are influenced by – shifts in historical consciousness. This thesis presents findings relating to the impact on museums and schools in England of official bicentenary aims and objectives and how these are translated into modes of delivery within the museum setting. Reaching these conclusions in response to the original research question was achieved by breaking down the question into five research aims, as outlined in Section 1.4. The key findings that these research aims gave structure to are reflected on below in the sequence that they appear in the chapters of this thesis (excluding the introduction, literature review and methodology chapters).

Chapter 4. Commemoration, education and shifting historical consciousness

In order to understand the nature and significance of the 2007 bicentenary, it was necessary to investigate where, why, when and how the transatlantic slave trade has been remembered and represented previous to the twenty-first century context. In Chapter 4, the multifaceted conflation of commemoration, difficult histories and education were examined, in order to construct a clearer vision of contemporary memory cultures. By exploring the life and work of Frederick Douglass, Section 4.1 argued that the complex relationship between power, knowledge and memory in the history and historiography of transatlantic slavery has an important bearing on the ways in which this transcultural memory has been remembered and represented, for example the ubiquitous presence of first-hand narratives as an expression of resistance and agency. This focus on personal narratives is a key characteristic of the performative nature of the memorial museum, which demonstrates why it is important to trace the various tropes and motifs of slavery histories back through literature and culture in order to understand the depth and significance of

what was both selected and overlooked during 2007.

Section 4.2 uses the notion of 'public spheres' to argue that, in the case of Britain, 2007 was both a culmination of and a catalyst for the recent shift in historical consciousness, therefore highlighting the dynamic and iterative nature of how the status and interpretation of a particular history evolves both within the short- and longer-term. Furthermore, it states that the role of the bicentenary in contributing to a more reflexive and 'truthful' (in other words more critical) representation of the history of the British Empire being taught in schools is regarded by many as one of the greatest achievements of the commemorative year, although some commentators at conferences and workshops during 2007 bemoaned the focus on schools and education, claiming that it was used as an excuse to avoid the more difficult aspects of the history. This observation is important in contextualising the discussions that thread through the rest of the thesis, as it highlights the fact that within the conferences and workshops surrounding the bicentenary, the educational offer of museums was frequently at the centre of the dialogue. The interconnections between education, commemoration and difficult histories are extolled further in Section 4.3, which argues that the pedagogical effectiveness of a memorial design is the key to its success, both in regards to the likelihood of it being commissioned in the first place, as well as the reception it receives from the public.

Section 4.4 argues that there is a historical link between slavery, empathy, abolition and citizenship, going right back to the reasons that slave traders were able to enslave fellow human beings (because of a lack of empathy towards 'the Other') and how, in part, the slave trade came to be outlawed in the British Empire (through the abolition movement which invited the public to empathise with the plight of the African slave, to walk a moment in his shoes). The twenty-first century outcome of this shift in sentiments has been played out in recent years through the use of the history of slavery to teach the citizenship curriculum. Here, citizenship education is viewed through the lens of the "empathic pedagogy" that has emerged in recent years and which focuses on the development of skills such as "emotional intelligence" (Rifkin, 2009: 15).

The final section of Chapter 4 draws on a variety of texts, education programmes and media in order to suggest that the dominant rhetoric of remembering and teaching traumatic pasts is one of Never Again, of 'learning to remember' these histories so that such

atrocities will not happen in future generations. This is a powerful yet difficult paradigm to break down, but this thesis argues that in order to understand the intergenerational transmission of memory through education, it is necessary to pay greater attention to the production, regulation and consumption of relevant educational and mainstream media. In seeking to address this need, this thesis argues that what has so far been missing from the academic response to the bicentenary is fieldwork-based research that tackles how the history of slavery is being taught to school pupils in England in the aftermath of 2007.

Chapter 5. Framing the difficult history museum field-trip

This chapter begins with an examination of the appropriateness of current museum education literature as a framework for studying the difficult history museum field-trip. It concludes that although the outcome-focused models for analysing museum learning experiences do indeed have many important uses, that a less generic line of enquiry is required that is sensitive to the specific difficulties of learning about slavery outside of the classroom. The benefits of pre-visit data generation with teachers and pupils is advocated as a means of developing a fuller understanding of how the perceptions and expectations of school group frames and influences the visit itself. Through analysis of the responses of teachers to the pre-visit survey used in the fieldwork, Chapter 5 highlights that two of the main perceptions that teachers have of the museum is as an authority of knowledge and as a unique and valuable learning experience for their pupils, which is reflected in the conversations that teachers have with both pupils and staff during the visits.

This chapter moves on to argue that the difficult history museum field-trip is framed through the lens of a range of perspectives, scenarios and agendas, depending on the particular personal, sociocultural and physical contexts at the local level. Section 5.2 uses the example of teaching disaffected young people about difficult histories to illustrate this point. It argues that for groups made up of pupils who are deemed to be 'at-risk', it is especially crucial that the museum facilitators are given the opportunity to learn about the specific needs of the group before the visit and that they feel confident enough to adopt a flexible approach in adapting or abandoning existing, pre-planned sessions.

Furthermore, it is argued that for pupils who have been excluded or removed from

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mainstream education (because they perhaps do not conform to the expectations of a traditional classroom) that the materiality and tangibility of the museum environment experience should be fully explored and exploited. In addition, this section draws attention to a theme that runs through this thesis; the importance of providing space (whether physical or emotional) within a museum field-trip for pupils to express empathic responses to traumatic pasts. The final section of Chapter 5 suggests that there are conscious efforts being made by the adults who design and deliver these museum field-trip sessions to create 'entry points' for the pupils that will hook them into the history and articulate its relevance to their lives. The two examples given are references to contemporary events, such as the election of Barack Obama, or the legacies of racism that can be traced back to the slave trade.

Chapter 6. The Lessons of slavery: a unique history that teaches universal values

Some critics of the bicentenary argue that by revealing this history to the public and to school pupils through the narrative of Britain's pride-worthy achievement in leading the way in abolishing the trade, that the government was able to detract attention away from the more divisive issues, such as how Britain benefitted from the trade for many years and the difficult legacies of inequality and racism. In this sense, it was essential that the meta-narrative was one of slavery *and* abolition, in order that the 'lessons' of this traumatic past could incorporate the vision of a multicultural society that New Labour wished to promote. The universal lessons of citizenship and the idea of global moral values that unite the British people were clearly more favourable for the government than questions of legacies, apologies and reparations. However, these divergent approaches to the 'lessons' of slavery are often found side by side within a museum field-trip, although as explained in Chapter 6, certain approaches seem to be more prevalent in some museums than in others.

This thesis argues that by pushing the link between the history of slavery and abolition and its potential within citizenship education, these connections trickled down through the curriculum changes, training days and education initiatives into the museum sessions – including those that were devised and developed by individuals, independent of the *Understanding Slavery* initiative. Evidently, there are ways of teaching about the

abolition movement that are much more historically grounded and do not run the risk of Britain just being portrayed as a benevolent force within the narrative of the transatlantic slave trade.

This chapter suggests that there are different sets of ideas relating to what exactly the 'message' of the history of slavery is for the younger generations and that many of these emerged from the interconnected discourses that defined and steered the recent surge in interest in this traumatic past. Through an examination of popular perceptions of the value of learning about slavery, Chapter 6 outlines the dominant approaches that emerged from the observation data in regards the teaching of citizenship and campaigning, the legacies of transatlantic slavery and modern forms of slavery. The pedagogical trends covered in Chapter 6 are brought together by the paradox of 'unique' versus 'universal' within the rhetoric of remembering traumatic pasts: the teaching of slavery as a unique history that we must learn from in order that it shall not be repeated; and slavery as a topic through which the universal themes and skills of the citizenship curriculum can be explored.

Chapter 7. Touching the trauma of the past: the pedagogy and ethics of object handling

Chapter 7 attends to the use of object-handling across the four case study museums. It suggests that the opportunity to touch artefacts relating to this traumatic past is perhaps the most prevailing theme of the data set; it is central to many of the comments made by teachers, pupils and facilitators about the pedagogical purpose of visiting a museum to learn about slavery. Perhaps the most crucial aspect of Chapter 7 is the comparison between the approaches of the English and Canadian case study museums to the pedagogy and ethics of pupils handling objects relating to a traumatic history. It poses the question of whether, in order to have 'real learning', is it necessary to give audiences access to 'real' objects? According to Williams, "The visitor response to the explicitness of emotionally affecting objects typically depends on how authentically the museum frames the encounter" (2011: 223), but how might we conceptualise authenticity in relation to 'real' objects versus replicas or 'real' recreations of how objects were authentically used versus sterile, hands-off approaches? Unfortunately the complex issue of authenticity is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is clear that this contested and under-researched area demands further

research and theorisation.

This thesis argues that although the object-handling practices observed at Buxton Museum may not be deemed wholly appropriate in the context of the *Understanding Slavery* guidelines, it cannot be denied that the staff at Buxton Museum have a clear respect for the power and meaning (the authenticity?) of the artefacts, even though this may seem incompatible with the pedagogies and ethics that have developed in England in recent years. However, in light of the argument developed in this thesis that some of the restrictive guidelines about the handling of objects in England were more to do with the lack of professional confidence than any fully-rationalised thought about ethical issues, it would be interesting to find out whether museum professional from the English case studies would find the practices of the Canadian case study 'unethical', or whether they would concede that the differences in practice are more to do with differences in sociocultural, institutional and political contexts.

Furthermore, it is perhaps the case that being in the presence of the descendants of enslaved Africans, who happen to communicate their ancestors' stories with such passion, makes a marked difference in the potential range of responses from the young people visiting the museum. This thesis argues that any attempt to regulate the object-handling practices at Buxton Museum would be in danger of stifling the essence of what makes this museum uniquely memorable and refreshing. This chapter perhaps raises more questions than it proclaims to answer, such is the nature of the issue; literature on the topic is either practice based (and therefore often lacks conceptualisation) or disconnected from the realities of teaching young people about a sensitive subject in a museum in a manner that is both engaging and respectful.

Chapter 8. Imagining slavery: drama, performance and role-play

The central argument of this chapter is that the reason that museums are keen to engage the imaginations of school pupils through drama, performance and role-play is because this is the most effective way of creating opportunities for them to acquire what Landsberg refers to as 'prosthetic memories' (Landsberg, 2004). By 'imagining slavery', the pupils in the vignettes presented in this chapter are invited to have a memorable, empathic response to

this traumatic past that might not be possible to recreate in the more restrained environment of the history classroom. This is one of the clear advantages of the 'performative' memorial museum approach, as described by Williams:

> The strength of experience at memorial museums may mean that what we 'never forget' as visitors is our own experience of an event's representation. That is, without a direct conduit to the event itself, we remember our own sensory engagement, and value it especially if we feel it holds authenticity (2011: 223).

This chapter argues that the acquisition of prosthetic memories seems to take place through performative, collective, multi-sensory, transcendent and embodied experiences that have a distinct sense of immediacy, of making one more aware of being in the moment, often through a sense of risk or dramatic tension. It is in this sense that through the memorial museum experience we *learn to remember*, and perhaps even if we do not always remember everything we learnt, we remember that we did learn and we remember that we did feel something – whether it be sadness, shock, horror, awe, inspiration or anger – which I would argue is just as valuable as remembering the date on which the slave trade was abolished.

A 'list of ingredients' for an effective difficult history museum learning experience

One of the key questions that this thesis has tried to address is: do difficult histories such as transatlantic slavery or the Holocaust become more accessible – and therefore more meaningful – within the museum (or essentially any free-choice learning) environment? And if this is the case, what is it about these learning settings that makes these histories more accessible? How can the resulting meaning-making be further facilitated through the physical context of the environment? What are the factors that influence a person's ability and motivation to actively construct and find personal meaning within a museum? These questions have been addressed to varying degrees by this thesis, and certainly a great deal more could have been written using the data and insights that were generated through the fieldwork. The ideas proposed below are based on the findings of this thesis, but they are more suggestive than absolute; I hope that they might serve as a springboard for future research.

This investigation has operated within a framework that brings together ideas and

methods from memory, cultural and education studies in order to reconceptualise the museum field-trip as a memory product that is as significant and interesting as the history textbook. For example, this thesis has been inspired by research into experiential learning, in particular the use of the idea of 'learning journeys', which is both a way of viewing experiential learning and a guiding value for the design and delivery of these types of learning experiences. As outlined in Chapter 2, Beard and Wilson have used the idea of learning as a journey as the inspiration behind the "ingredients" that they suggest for the planning of successful experiential learning programmes (2002: 47-8).

Using the list presented in Section 2.2 as a working model, this chapter offers a suggested list of ingredients for the planning of a difficult history museum learning programme. The elements of this list are drawn from the findings of the previous chapters as well as findings from other pieces of research (including my MA dissertation) and observations and conclusions I have gathered through other relevant experiences, for example the *Their Past, Your Future* 'InSite' programme (see Section 1.3 for further details).

1. Make time for a **prologue** – manage expectations by discussing all aspects of the visit beforehand.
2. Create a **journey or destination** - physical movement around a site; spaces, and objects used to create a comprehensive narrative.
3. Create and sequence **social, cognitive and physical activities** – engage the mind and the body through sensory experiences, in particular through object-handling.
4. Adjust or suspend **elements of reality** – engage the imagination through drama, creating opportunities for the acquisition of 'prosthetic memory experiences' and the extension of empathic consciousness.
5. Provide elements of real or perceived **challenge or risk** – through role-play or decision-making activities, **stretching personal boundaries.**
6. Set a **target, goal or objective**, where goals create an underlying 'state of mind' – frame the visit through introductory and plenary sessions that reinforce the main learning objectives.
7. Design **quiet time for reflection** – a physical or mental space for dealing with 'emotional fallout' (e.g. a memorial).
8. Allow the **story of the experience** to be told – actively integrate the museum learning experience into teaching back in the classroom and provide the opportunity for creative responses.

9.2   Research limitations

In regards the methodology, it can be argued that the main limitation of this research is the fact that the pre-visit, post-visit and plus six-month surveys that were originally planned had a low response rate in the first phase and were abandoned during the second phase of the fieldwork. Considering the types of constructivist learning theories and models that were extolled in the literature review (Chapter 2), the deficiency of this personal, longitudinal aspect of the research is undeniably disappointing. As the methodology of this thesis (Chapter 3) explains in full, the attempts during the fieldwork to generate data through surveying pupils and teachers was not as successful as had been expected; therefore, the use of survey data in this thesis is somewhat limited. However, the responses of the teachers to the pre-visit survey that are available are useful in providing a contextual understanding of why they think it is important for their pupils to visit a museum to learn about slavery (see Section 5.1 in particular).

In order to address this setback during the early phases of the fieldwork, the focus and the scope of the research question was adjusted in order to move away from a format that relied entirely on the effectiveness of the qualitative methodologies in relation to the concerns of constructivist learning theories, towards a more discursive, memory-studies driven line of enquiry. In hindsight, this revised question is perhaps better suited to the aspiration of offering an alternative analysis of meaning-making in the context of the bicentenary commemorations. The more refined focus on cultural memory products, education and difficult histories is certainly a worthy and fascinating subject, in particular when investigated through the theoretical framework proposed in Section 2.2: 'historical consciousness and the circuit of culture'. This thesis argues that although these two ideas may seem incompatible, they are in fact mutually enhancing.

It might also be argued that using just one comparative case study may create misleading, or at least limited, findings; however, within the scope of this research, it was not possible to undertake any further fieldwork overseas. However, as mentioned in Section 1.3, my involvement with the InSite continuing professional development programme in 2008, as well as my MA dissertation which looked at the relationship between education and memory at the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Nottinghamshire, ensured that I had some further grounding in the issues surrounding teaching difficult histories outside the

classroom beyond this thesis. Furthermore, this research does not attempt to make generalisable statements about the nature of slavery museum field-trips across either England or Canada, as to attempt to do so would be erroneous. Instead, the findings that are presented throughout these chapters serve to contribute to the theoretical dialogues surrounding this phenomenon, whilst offering a representation of the ways in which the historical consciousness of the bicentenary was (re)articulated in the years immediately following 2007.

9.3   Future research

In light of the limitations of this thesis that are outlined above, perhaps the most obvious suggestion for future research would involve a renewed attempt at generating data with teachers and pupils before and after the museum field-trip takes place. This would entail ensuring that schools are one hundred percent committed to the research project, as well as developing research strategies and methodologies in consultation with the participants.

One new angle might involve a comparative study between groups that do take part in a museum visit and groups that do not, in order to better understand the differences in the 'learning journeys'. This type of research would build on the work done by studies such as *Engage, Learn, Achieve* (Watson et al., 2007), but perhaps with a more ethnographic and longitudinal focus. Another fruitful area of study would be to investigate and compare the experiences of different age groups learning about difficult histories outside the classroom, for example primary pupils visit 'The Journey' exhibition, which opened at the Holocaust Memorial Centre in 2008 as the first UK exhibition designed for teaching the Holocaust to primary-aged children. This would offer a fascinating insight into the significance of the age of the learner in determining perceptions about the appropriateness and ethics of different pedagogical approaches. In response to the need for more comparative, inter-memory research, a study that uses the same questions and methodologies to examine both Holocaust and slavery education in the museum or classroom environment would be of great interest, illuminating and perhaps challenging some of the ideas about the transcultural and multidirectional nature of memory in a globalised world, as outlined in this thesis.

Future studies into the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in relation to the perceived value of learning about difficult histories outside the classroom would also be of interest, and could cover a range of issues, including initial teacher training, continuing professional development needs, understandings of 'what museums do' and what teachers expect from a museum visit. Although these issues were touched upon in the pre-visit survey in this thesis, there was not the opportunity in this current study to expand on and follow-up on these areas. Similarly, a study that looks carefully at the significance of the timing of a museum field-trip would be of great value to museums and schools alike. At what point in the teaching of the history of transatlantic slavery do teachers take their classes on a museum field-trip and what is their rationale behind this? How much of this is determined by the logistics of the school term and the opportunities for transport, or by the teacher's perceptions of when a visit will be best received by the pupils?

A study that takes a more holistic and ethnographically immersive approach to the school group's learning journey would also be illuminative. This would entail spending substantial time in the classroom both before and after the visit. This would give a researcher a better chance at addressing questions such as the following: What do teachers do in advance of the visit with the pupils in the classroom? What difference does the amount and type of the preparation make to the quality and outcomes of the visit for the pupils? What is / should be the role of the museum in make suggestions or offering guidelines regarding what preparatory work the class might do before the visit? How many schools arrange a visit with the idea of an extended project back at school? Is this more likely to be possible in schools where there are better resources, such as private schools, or at least schools where behaviour and poor academic achievement are not such a primary concern?

In 2009 the *Understanding Slavery* initiative undertook research with the National Maritime Museum to determine whether the use of mobile phones in the gallery would distract pupils from engaging with the objects. Similarly, Wilberforce House has put a lot of thought into their use of the MyLearning website, through which their PDA tour of the gallery is facilitated; the PDA devices connect wirelessly to the Internet and stream content straight from the website. Although there wasn't the space to discuss these issues in detail in this thesis, it seems that the question of how best to utilise exhibition spaces for school

field-trips is often being answered through use of technology and mobile devices, which bring with them a whole range of opportunities and problems that would benefit from further research.

The final idea for future research this section presents is inspired primarily by the discussions in Section 5.2 about disaffected youth and difficult histories and is supported by the following extract from Decety and Ickes' groundbreaking book, *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*:

> Lizarraga and colleagues (2003) addressed the effects of empathy training on self-regulation and self-control, attributes that are not usually included in analyses of the influence of empathy on education. Significant increments in self-regulation, self-control, assertiveness, and empathy were found in the empathy training group. [...] the theoretical relationship suggested between empathy and self-regulation of emotions and behaviour is of interest. A program that has been widely used in the United States and Canada since 1986, called Second Step, includes empathy – recognising feelings in self and others, considering others' perspectives, and responding emotionally to others – are the focus of the first unit of the Second Step Curriculum (Decety and Ickes, 2009: 91).

As evident in the work of Jean Decety and his colleagues at the Centre for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago and elsewhere, interest in the neural components of empathy is more prevalent than ever; there has never been a better time to undertake interdisciplinary research that draws on social cognitive neuroscience to enhance our understanding of why empathy is perceived as playing such an important role in the teaching of difficult histories, especially in experiential environments. Attempting such a study would undoubtedly be a daunting prospect and would certainly entail a massive learning curve for all involved; however, the potential is there.

Perhaps a less risky approach to exploring the connection between empathy and difficult histories further would involve placing 'empathy' at the centre of an investigation into the perceived and actual transformative value of teaching socially-excluded young people about traumatic pasts. Such research might seek to critically examine the principle that by engaging at-risk young people with the atrocities of the Holocaust – in particular providing an opportunity to meet a survivor – it is possible to cultivate their capacity for empathic responses; first with the historical figures whose lives they learn about, then with their peers, their communities, the strangers that they meet, and that as a result, it is claimed that they develop a deeper sense of social responsibility. Such claims are predicated

by a contemporary understanding of the human faculty of empathy and the role of experiential, affective education in developing an individual's 'empathic consciousness'. Therefore, this approach to tackling social exclusion is of great interest to those engaged with both the theories and practice of heritage, trauma, memory, citizenship and education; however it has not yet been comprehensively investigated by researchers in these fields.

Based on the suggestions above, it is clear that future studies could take a number of paths that would serve to further our understanding of teaching and learning about difficult histories and how this relates to wider social, cultural and memory matters.

9.4   Final thoughts

This research indicates that the various discourses that constitute the historical consciousness of transatlantic slavery within the context of the 2007 bicentenary have been (re)articulated through the production and consumption of a few dominant pedagogical trends within the field-trips observed in the English case study museums. The value of the comparative case study in Canada, as requested by Aim 5 of this research, allows the analyses presented in this thesis to consider the influence of the milieu of a period of heightened commemorative activity that the three English case studies share.

At times, the context of the bicentenary seems to be all-defining in the (re)articulation of modes of representation through the field-trip sessions, for example through the focus on abolition, campaigning, or the exploration of 'Africa before the slave trade'. However, at other times, the distance and differences between the sessions in England and those in Canada seem less apparent in regards the topics covered, for instance the ubiquitous references to the horrors of the Middle Passage and the methods and equipment used to punish the enslaved. This serves to illustrate that transatlantic slavery circulates as a transcultural memory within the twenty-first century and that certain tropes and motifs of slavery have endured through such cultural and literary texts as nineteenth century slave narratives and twentieth century fictions, such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997 [1987]) and Alex Haley's *Roots* (1978).

In general, this investigation has centred on identifying particular pedagogical trends within the data set and offering an analysis of why and how this traumatic past is taught

outside of the classroom. In doing so, this thesis articulates some of the difficulties of teaching and learning about this history in the twenty-first century. These issues are situated within the wider political and sociocultural context of the bicentenary. By combining micro- and macro-level analyses of the representation of slavery in the context of the museum field-trips in both England and Canada, this thesis offers a response to the calls for more holistic and comparative research in memory studies, as outlined in the literature review.

Each venue in this study has a distinct approach to representing, remembering and teaching slavery to school groups, as illustrated throughout this thesis. Many of the distinctions between the museums can be characterised by the variations in emphases given to each of the perceived values of field-trips, for example "cognitive, affective, social, motivational, aesthetic, and so on" (Anderson et al., 2006: 366). However, although the chapters of this thesis are mostly structured to illustrate the differences in the approaches of the museums, to suggest that there are no crossovers or similarities between the educational practices of the venues would be misleading. Instead, this thesis aims to articulate the inherent messiness of trying to understand how slavery is taught in the twenty-first century from a phenomenological standpoint. This is in contrast to the much neater picture that is painted by those who analyse curriculum content and intended learning outcomes (Hodgson, 2011, Silva, 2011), which, as this thesis has demonstrated, are often unreflective of what pupils actually experience (inside and) outside the classroom.

Within each chapter, examples of discrepancies and contradictions have been brought to the fore, highlighting the complexities and 'interconnectedness' of the English museums, which through their involvement with *Understanding Slavery* and the bicentenary commemorations have become 'interconnected'. We must, as Rhiannon Mason states, recognise "the intertextuality of networked sites [and] the co-authoring curatorial processes at work" (2007: 22). Through the co-authored production of resources, the development of multi-site initiatives, attendance at conferences, workshops and training sessions both in the build up to and during the bicentenary, certain modes of representation and pedagogical values were discussed and circulated amongst museum professionals, or "history workers", defined by Sharon Macdonald as "those who are involved in presenting the past in the public realm" (2009: 20). In other words, each of the English case study

museums operates within the framework of a shared 'historical consciousness', however their individual responses to this socio-historically located commemorative context vary in sometimes surprising and sometimes predictable ways.

It is for this reason that the comparative case study in Canada is of such value; Buxton National Historic Site and Museum is situated within such a distinctly different context that it provides an opportunity to critically reflect on the dominant trends in pedagogy and practice that have emerged in England in tandem with the bicentenary. In doing so, this thesis sheds light on the dynamics of how historical consciousness is rearticulated through museum field-trips. By reflecting on the rhetorical devices, pedagogical approaches and learning objectives of a range of sessions relating to these themes, this thesis critically examines the ways in which recent shifts in historical consciousness are rearticulated through museum field-trip experiences, and in doing so it offers insights into how difficult histories are produced, regulated and consumed through learning in the museum. The implications of each of the approaches to teaching the history of slavery in the twenty-first century are far-reaching; they each relate to wider issues, such as the political appropriation of the past, inherited guilt, national responsibility and the symbolic reparation that can take place when the lives and narratives of those who endured and resisted enslavement are unveiled and publicly recognised.

This thesis draws on education and learning theory, memory studies and museum studies to present a complex but coherent analysis of how formal learning opportunities in museums and historic sites might offer a means for young people to develop a more nuanced understanding of the slave trade within the context of the current curriculum concerns, such as citizenship education and social cohesion. Furthermore, it suggests that the multiple sensory and immersive qualities of a museum setting, as well as the opportunities for facilitator led sessions, supports a more thoughtful approach to this sensitive topic than is perhaps possible within the classroom.

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APPENDIX A: EMAIL TO SCHOOLS

I am writing to you in connection with your class's upcoming visit to _____ on _____. I am a research postgraduate at Newcastle University, where I am based in the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies. I am writing to you about a research project I am undertaking, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, under the supervision of experienced researchers within the University.

I am investigating the experiences of school groups learning about the history of the slave trade, slavery and abolition in museums in England (_____ is one of three museums chosen as case studies), therefore I need the help of teachers who are involved in such field trips. My research addresses the question: *what is the character of learning for school groups visiting exhibitions that deal with 'difficult' histories such as the slave trade, slavery and abolition?* Through finding out more about the expectations, experiences and longer-term memories and responses of pupils and teachers to these museum learning experiences, the intended outcome of this research is to develop a more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to a successful and rewarding school group visit.

The findings of this research will potentially be used to inform museums, the education sector, teacher training programmes and relevant funding bodies – those responsible for creating, delivering and financing the exhibitions, learning resources and training opportunities relating to the history of the slave trade, slavery and abolition, that schools across the country, like yourselves, use to reinforce and complement classroom-based teaching of the subject.

As a teacher planning a visit to _____ in the coming months, your involvement in this study would be greatly appreciated. Your time, experience and opinions are essential – as is your ability to help secure the cooperation of some of your pupils – to ensuring that the findings of this study offer valuable insights for the museum and heritage sector.

Taking part in this research will involve:

- providing time within school for some of your class to complete 3 short online surveys (1 before the visit, 1 just after and 1 after 3-6 months);

- allowing me to be present during your visit to the museum to observe;

- answering some questions yourself about the visit and related issues.

I realise that as a teacher your time both in the classroom and on field trips is precious, which is why I have chosen to use online surveys to collect responses from pupils, as I feel that this method is less disruptive and time-consuming than visiting schools and interviewing pupils individually. Similarly, on the day of the visit I know that you will have limited time at the museum; therefore I do not intend to pull pupils out of any activities or sessions in order to interview them, because I am keen to ensure that no pupils miss out on any aspect of the visit. On completion of the research, I will provide your school with a summary report of the findings, if requested. Similarly, if there are any questions or data that would be of particular interest or value to your school, that you feel I may be able to integrate into or add to my research, then I would certainly be happy to discuss this with you.

If you would like to be involved in this research or if you have any further questions, please send me an email at: nikki.spalding@ncl.ac.uk (NB: I am fully CRB checked and I will follow any guidelines your school has in place regarding the possible need to gain permission from parents.) If you would like to discuss this with the museum first, then the best person to contact is the Schools Officer, _____, on _____.

Yours Sincerely,

Nikki Spalding

APPENDIX B: SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Consent form

This page outlines the details of study and explains what your participation in this research will involve. Please read this and sign in the box provided on the next page if you are happy to continue, before responding to the questions.

Title of research study

School group visits to museum exhibitions that remember and represent the history of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery and abolition.

1. Investigators

Nikki Spalding (Research Postgraduate, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Bruce Building, Percy Street, Newcastle University, NE1 7RU)

2. Purpose

The purpose of this research is to collect information about expectations, perceptions, experiences and memories of pupils and teachers undertaking visits to museum exhibitions that remember and represent the history of the slavery.

3. Procedures

You will be asked to complete three short surveys – one before your visit, one straight after and one a few months after the visit. You should not consult others about responses to the questions – there are no right or wrong answers, we just want to find out what you think and feel. You will be asked questions about your expectations, perceptions, experiences and memories of your visit to the museum. Each survey will take between 15 and 20 minutes (approx.) to complete. All responses are confidential (see 'Data collection and storage' below for further details). A member of the research team will be present at the museum to observe the visit.

4. Risks

The survey includes a few personal questions, for example, a question about how you think the study visit might make you feel. If your participation causes you to be upset, you may elect not to answer any question for any reason.

5. Benefits

The purpose of this study is to acquire knowledge about Key Stage 3 study visits from school pupils and their teachers: their expectations of the visit, their experiences on the day, their perceptions of the museum and their longer-term memories and responses. This study expands on the literature on museum learning experiences by examining the different factors that affect school group visits to exhibitions that deal with 'difficult' histories. This study will contribute to this literature and can help museum professionals, exhibition designers, educational facilitators, funding bodies, government bodies, schools, initial teacher training bodies and the education sector better understand the character of these types of museum learning experiences, whilst identifying issues and potential areas for improvement in museum practice.

6. Data collection and storage

All data collected will be kept confidential, unless otherwise required by law. When you have completed your responses, you will be asked to submit the survey by clicking on the 'submit' button. Data from completed surveys will be kept separate and all copies will be kept in locked locations accessible only to Nikki Spalding. Results will not be released or reported in any way that might allow for identification of individual participants.

7. Contact information

For other information about the study, you should contact Nikki Spalding through email at nikki.spalding@ncl.ac.uk

8. Consent statement

I have read or have had read to me the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I freely consent to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time.

Name:

Signature: **Date:**

APPENDINX C: PRE-VISIT PUPIL SURVEY

PRE- MUSEUM VISIT SURVEY

You have been asked to complete this short survey, because we want to know what you think about your upcoming visit to the slavery exhibition.

There are no right or wrong responses to the following questions, we just want to know what you honestly think and feel.

This survey and study are not linked to your school or the museum - your responses will only be used for the purpose of this research.

Thank you for taking part in this study!

First, we just need to know a few things about you…

a. Are you   Male ❑   **or**   Female ❑ **?**   [APa]

Please tick one box.

b. What is your age? _____   [APb]

c. What is your ethnic group? *Please tick one box.*   [APc]

White

White British	❑
White Irish	❑
Other white background	❑

Mixed

White & Black Caribbean	❑
White & Black African	❑
White and Asian	❑
Other mixed background	❑

Chinese ❑

Asian or Asian British

Indian	❑
Pakistani	❑
Bangladeshi	❑
Other Asian background	❑

Black or Black British

Caribbean	❑
African	❑
Other Black background	❑

Any other group ❑

Please write in: _____

Question 1: [AP1]

Have you ever heard, seen or read anything about the slave trade and slavery before you started learning about it at school? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please select from the following sources: *Please tick one box.*

Music   ❑

Television   ❑

Books   ❑

Internet   ❑

Family   ❑

Friends   ❑

Other   ❑   *Please write in:* _____

If yes, please provide a few details of what it is that you heard, saw or read:

┌───┐
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
└───┘

Question 2: [AP2]

Have you spoken with anyone other than your class and teacher about what you are learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please select from the following:

My family   ❑

My friends   ❑

Other   ❑   *Please write in:* _____

If yes, what sort of things have you talked to them about?

┌───┐
│   │
│   │
│   │
│   │
└───┘

[AP3]

Question 3:

Have you visited a museum before? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please select from the following:

I have visited a museum with…

My school	❑
My friends	❑
My family	❑
Other	❑ *Please write in:* _____

Question 4: [AP4]

Have you spoken about your upcoming visit to the museum with anyone? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please select from the following:

My family	❑
My friends	❑
My school	❑
Other	❑ *Please write in:* _____

If yes, what sort of things have you talked to them about?

Question 5: [AP5]

Learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery in a museum will be different to learning about these histories in a classroom because…

Please complete the following sentences.

we will be able to see…

we will have the chance to hear…

we will have opportunities to…

Please write any other comments you have about how you think it will be different:

Question 6:

[AP6]

I think that it will be better to learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery *(Please tick one box)*

in the classroom ❑   in a museum ❑

I think this because… *(Please complete this sentence)*

Question 7: [AP7]

Which of the following activities have you done at school in preparation for your visit to the museum? *Please tick a box for each activity you have done.*

Watched videos relating to the history of the slave trade and slavery ❏

Discussed what will happen at the museum on the day of the visit ❏

Discussed why we are visiting the museum ❏

Discussed what work we will do in relation to the visit when we get back ❏

Had lessons about the history of the slave trade and slavery ❏

Discussed why it is important to remember and learn about the slave trade and slavery ❏

Question 8:
[AP8]

Please complete the following sentence.

I think that our teacher wants our class to visit the slavery exhibition because…

[AP9]

Question 9:

Pupils are sometimes asked to complete tasks and activities during visits to museum exhibitions. *Please complete the following sentence.*

When we visit the slavery exhibition, I think that we will be asked to…

Question 10: [AP10]

Are there any particular aspects of the history of the slave trade and slavery that you hope to find out about at the museum? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, what do you hope to find out about?

[   ]

[AP11]

Question 11:

Please complete the following sentence.

I think that when we visit the slavery exhibition I will feel…

[   ]

[AP12]

Question 12:

I think that remembering the slave trade and slavery is… *(Please tick one box)*

important ❑   not important ❑

I think this because… *(Please complete this sentence)*

[   ]

Question 13:

I think that learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery is… *(Please tick one box)*

interesting ❏   not interesting ❏

I think this because… *(Please complete this sentence)*

```
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
```

Question 14:

I think that the history of the slave trade and slavery… *(Please tick one box)*

does relate to my life ❏   does not relate to my life ❏

I think this because…

```
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
[                                                                      ]
```

END OF SURVEY

Thank you for completing this survey before your study visit to the museum – we really appreciate your cooperation and input.

APPENDIX D: PRE-VISIT TEACHER SURVEY

Question 1:

Is there anything that you would particularly like your pupils to see, hear or do at the museum? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❏   No ❏

If yes, please explain what and why:

Question 2:

Do you think that there will be any difference between how your pupils learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery in the museum environment rather than in a classroom? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❏   No ❏

Please explain why you think this:

Question 3:

During the visit, what resources, spaces, learning materials and staff members do expect will be available to you and your pupils?

Question 4: [AT4]

What do you think the role of museum staff should be during a school group visit?

[   ]

Question 5: [AT5]

Are you planning on doing any preparatory activities or having any discussions with your class before the visit? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details:

[   ]

Question 6: [AT6]

Do you have any particular activities planned for your class to do during the visit? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details:

[   ]

Question 7:

Do you have any follow-up activities planned for you class after the museum visit? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details:

Question 8:

How does this museum visit fit in with the teaching unit back at school?

Question 9:

Do you think it is important that your pupils learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

Please explain why you think this:

Question 10:

What, for you, is the main purpose of taking school pupils on a visit to a museum that deals with the history of the slave trade and slavery?

Question 11:   [AT11]

Have you ever encountered any difficulties or issues in teaching the history of the slave trade and slavery to school pupils? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please give details:

[AT12]

Question 12:

Are you aware that during 2008 Anti-Slavery International ran free teacher training programmes across England designed to support and empower established and trainee teachers to deliver classes on the Transatlantic Slave Trade at Key Stage 3? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

Would you be interested in attending this type of INSET day? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

Why?

Question 13: [AT13]

Finally, if you have any other comments you would like to make relevant to this study, please write them in the box below (or over the page).

END OF SURVEY – THANK YOU FOR YOU INPUT

APPENDIX E: POST-VISIT PUPIL SURVEY

POST- MUSEUM VISIT SURVEY

You have been asked to complete this short survey, because we want to know what you think about your recent visit to the slavery museum.

There are no right or wrong responses to the following questions, we just want to know what you honestly think and feel.

This survey and study are not linked to your school or the museum - your responses will only be used for the purpose of this research.

<u>Thank you for taking part in this study!</u>

Question 1:

Have you spoken about your recent visit to the slavery museum with anyone? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please select from the following: *Please tick the relevant boxes.*

My family   ❑

My friends   ❑

My school   ❑

Other   ❑   *Please write in:_____*

What have you talked to them about?

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 _____

 
 
 
 
 
 _____
```

[BP2]

Question 2:

Have you used anything you did, saw, found out about or discussed at the slavery museum in your studies back at school yet? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please explain what and how:

```
 _____

 
 
 
 
 
 
 
 _____
```

Question 3: [BP3]

Now that you have visited the museum, how do you think learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery in a museum is different to learning about these histories in the classroom?

(You might want to think about things you **saw**, things you **touched**, things you **heard**, things you **talked** about, things you **did** and how you **felt**)

[BP4]

Question 4:

In relation to this, now that you have visited the slavery museum, do you think it is better to learn about the history of the slave trade and slavery…

in the classroom ❑   or   in a museum ❑

(Please tick one box)

I think this because… *(Please complete this sentence)*

Question 5: [BP5]

Please complete the following sentence.

I wish that during our visit to the slavery museum we had had an opportunity to…

Question 6:

During your visit to the slavery museum, you were asked to complete some activities.

Please complete the following.

The things that I enjoyed the most about the activities at the museum:

Question 7:

The things that I enjoyed the least about the activities at the museum:

Question 8:

Please complete the following sentence.

Visiting the slavery museum made me feel…

Question 9:

Now that I have visited the slavery museum, I think that remembering the slave trade and slavery is… *(Please tick one box)*

important ❑   not important ❑

I think this because… *(Please complete this sentence)*

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Question 10:

Now that I have visited the slavery museum, I think that learning about the history of the slave trade and slavery is… *(Please tick one box)*

interesting ❑   not interesting ❑

I think this because... *(Please complete this sentence)*

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Question 11:

The most interesting thing I found out during the visit to the slavery museum was… *Please complete this sentence.*

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Question 12:

Now that I have visited the slavery museum, I think that the history of the slave trade and slavery… *(Please tick one box)*

does relate to my life ❑   does not relate to my life ❑

I think this because…

┌───┐
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END OF SURVEY

Thank you for completing this survey after your study visit to the museum – we really appreciate your cooperation and input.

APPENDIX F: POST-VISIT TEACHER-SURVEY

Question 1:   [BT1]

What did you think of the resources, spaces and learning materials made available to you and your group during the visit to the museum?

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Question 2:   [BT2]

Is there anything that you were hoping the pupils would be able to do, to see, to hear, or to find out about at the slavery museum that they did not have the opportunity to? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details:

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[BT3]

Question 3:

Were your expectations of how the visit and the sessions would fit with the relevant teaching units and the overall curriculum met? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

In relation to this, is there anything in particular that impressed you?

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Question 4:   [BT4]

Similarly, is there any ways in which you think the sessions could be improved?

Question 5:   [BT5]

What did you think of how the museum staff handled the group and the task of delivering the sessions?

Question 6:   [BT6]

Has the visit to the slavery museum given you any ideas for follow-up activities and related lessons back at school? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details:

Question 7:   [BT7]

Looking back on the visit, do you think that there was any significant difference in how the pupils engaged with the history of the slave trade and slavery in the museum in comparison to at school? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

Please explain why you think this:

```



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Question 8:   [BT8]

Do you think that any of the pupils had a particularly emotional or personal response to what they saw, heard about, discussed or did at the museum? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ❑   No ❑

If yes, please provide a few details or examples:

```



```

Question 9:

Finally, if you have any other comments about your recent visit to the slavery museum that you think are relevant to this study, please write them in the box below (or over the page).

END OF SURVEY – THANK YOU FOR YOU INPUT

APPENDIX G: OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Museum: _____

School group: _____

Date: _____

Time	Space	Activity	Notes

APPENDIX H: QUESTIONS AND ISSUES FOR OBSERVATIONS

What to observe?

Conversations

Who is leading the conversation?

Who initiates / continues / terminates exchanges?

What is being discussed? What is the purpose of the conversation?

- between pupils and pupils

- between pupils and museum staff

- between pupils and teachers

- between teachers and museum staff

- between museum staff and museum staff

Affective learning (feeling, emotions)

- evidence of emotional responses

Cognitive learning (thinking, knowing)

- evidence of knowledge learnt, knowledge built on etc

- are pupils encouraged to be questioning and critical or is the visit more approached as an opportunity to gather 'facts'?

Psychomotor learning (doing, interacting with objects / physical spaces)

- interaction with art/exhibition elements/memorials / artefacts / interactives

Interpersonal learning

- pupils undertaking solitary activities

Intrapersonal learning

- pupils working / learning in groups, pairs

Socio-cultural perspective

Learning as an interpretive act of meaning-making, a process rather than an outcome, a

joint activity of a group – do not analyse the learning of individual visitors, but rather try to characterise learning by the group

- How do the social aspects of learning play out on the visit?

- How does the teacher seek to shape and control the sociocultural aspects of the learning experience?

- Do these strategies seem successful?

- Are they akin to what you would see in the classroom?

Issues relating to:

- orientation around the site

- pupil behaviour and disciplining

- time restraints

- space restraints

- limited resources

- misunderstood / unclear / unconstructive instructions

Other questions to consider:

- Is there any evidence of an awareness or interest in what the aims of the exhibition / session / visit are?

- Is there any talk / reference to how the visit relates to the pupils lives / experiences / builds on what they know as humans / citizens?

- Is abolition and Wilberforce the key message?

- What other areas of the history are discussed?

- Are there any particular exhibition elements / objects / aspects of the experience that the pupils seem to react to strongly?

- Are all group members 'collaborative learners', or are there discernible differences in roles and relationships?

- Is there any specific reference to cross-curricular or citizenship issues?