

Public History in Global Perspective

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Inquiry, Exchange and Practice

Edited by
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and Hannah K. Smyth

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Ciaran O'Neill and Hannah K. Smyth

The Radical Potential of Public History in Global Perspective

We are clearly entering an era where scholars have begun to conceive of the field of public history in more global terms. Over the past ten years we have witnessed the growth of the International Federation for Public History, which has held conferences in Colombia, Brazil, and China. De Gruyter publishes two series on public history with transnational or global emphasis, as well as a journal, *International Public History*, which aims to compete with *The Public Historian* for top spot in a field which has been more locally and nationally focused for much of its short lifespan. Public History programs have mushroomed globally in the past decade (there are four in Ireland alone) and now we are in the strange position of having a *de facto* global field in public history without ever having adequately theorized it. In their recent collection of essays *What is Public History Globally?* Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik have shown us the extent to which public history remains mapped onto Anglocentric and Eurocentric hierarchies in the professional and academic contexts in which it is generally taught and practiced.¹ This linguistic and cultural bias remains one of the major auto-critiques of the emerging field. Equally, scholars such as Jensen and Cauvin have shown us the intellectual roots of public history in the European nineteenth century by focusing on Rankean intellectual histories, but textbooks and articles that have been published since have challenged the idea of European roots either implicitly or explicitly.² Australia, like North America, has been at the forefront of the developing scholarship and

1 Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik, eds., *What is Public History Globally? Working with the Past in the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Serge Noiret and Thomas Cauvin, "Internationalizing Public History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Serge Noiret, "Public History," in *Research Handbook on Public Sociology*, ed. Lavinia Bifulco and Vando Borghi (MA: Edward Elgar, 2023), 86–104; Rebecca Conard, "Still Grappling with the Definition Question," *The Public Historian* 40, no. 1 (2018): 115–19; Na Li, "Public History in a Global Context," *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v30i0.8372>; Thomas Cauvin, "For a New International Public History," *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 71–78, <https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v30i0.8382>.

2 Bernard Eric Jensen, "Usable pasts: Comparing approaches to popular and public history," in *People and Their Pasts: Public History Today*, ed. Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2009), 42–56. For alternative genealogies of public history see Thomas Cauvin, "The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective," *Historia Crítica* 68 (2018): 3–26; Michihiro Okamoto, "Public History in Japan," *International Public History* 1, no. 1 (2018): 20180004, <https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2018-0004>.

thus questions of settler colonial dynamics have been at the forefront of many recent debates in the field.³ Elements of what we call Public History have existed in scholarship and practice across time and space, of course, and what we have yet to reconcile is our understanding of this fact and its relation to the field of public history as it has developed since the 1970s. Public history prides itself on the dialogic principle at its core: that history should be done “with” as opposed to “to” or “for” people. But does our scholarship really deliver on that dialogic potential?

Public History was, and remains, a radical and subversive field, so it is no surprise to see dominant power hierarchies made visible and critiqued in this way, even by those most prominent in the field. The question we are left with is where can it go from here? Our volume of essays will not smash this Anglocentric/Eurocentric hierarchy but it does seek to further undermine it. Our contributors are academics and practitioners (often both) and their formation is typical of others in the field in that their education has come via a mixture of elite and non-elite universities. Our interests are anything but elite, however, and we have made a concerted effort to publish work that is both spatially distributed and produced by diverse contributors who are conscious of the limitations of their own positionalities. We draw on subject material that pertains to modern-day Iran, Argentina, and Chile, as well as more local contexts in Britain, Ireland, and Europe.

The Problem with Global Approaches

Where should public history sit within the matrix of global, international, (trans) national, and more local histories? Since its emergence in the 1970s Public History has typically been read as community-oriented, and more local in its applications, more likely to tackle a topic such as gentrification or exclusion in a local context than a national or global one. Nevertheless, the academic field in particular has developed along national lines and indeed we see in the many monographs, edited books, and journals that have emerged a distinct tendency to consider public history as understandable mostly in its relation to the nation state and its attendant mythologies.

The pale/male/stale meta-narratives that public history pushes against are the building blocks of “national” histories it works against: political, military, and heroic histories. The histories of the mainstream. Conceiving of a public history

³ Anna Clark, “Private lives, public history: Navigating historical consciousness in Australia,” *History Compass* 14, no. 1 (2016): 1–8; Paul Ashton, “The Birthplace of Australian Multiculturalism? Retrospective Commemoration, Participatory Memorialisation and Official Heritage,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 15, no. 5 (2009): 381–98.

in global perspective, then, seems to us to have more radical potential than an international public history, which arguably simply collects these national histories and considers them to be separate, or a transnational public history, which requires us to prioritize flow and movement of people, ideas, and things. What would a more global approach to public history look like and how can it disrupt the field if interpreted radically?

Global History – broadly defined – has itself become an embattled category, even despite its rise to prominence over the past two decades.⁴ Derided by its critics as an essentially narrow and methodologically elitist mode of historical enquiry, its relevance has been constantly questioned as political forces in the world turned away from ideas of cosmopolitanism and one-world thinking in the mid 2010s and embraced instead a resurgent populist ethno-nationalism that defines itself outwardly as opposed to aspirant citizens of the world. One of the major debates in the field of global history has, perhaps as a result of this challenge, centered on the place of the micro-unit of analysis in the field. The question of how to pair the micro and the macro is, of course, an old debate in fields that have to balance empirical analysis and grand narrative, and perhaps there is no field of history where that need is as acute as it is in global history. Yet here is where public history can really shine, as public history is very often focused on the micro, or local, and is almost always preoccupied with the concrete effects of larger social forces on precarious groups in society. Furthermore, if Global History has often been (unfairly) characterized as a top-down methodology more concerned with abstract ideas of integration and the interactions of historical units, then the ingrained bottom-up approach that is so fundamental to the practice of public history ought to act as an interesting corrective to that perception.⁵ There is also no reason beyond the limits of its practitioners why public history should focus on people, things, and natural phenomena in a regionally biased way.⁶

Let us try and advocate for a public history based on aspirant or potential future directions. As Faye Sayer and others have argued, a more “global” public his-

4 For coverage of this see Richard Drayton and David Motadel, “Discussion: The Futures of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–21; James Belich et al. eds., *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

5 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Doing Global History: An Introduction in 6 Concepts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Pamela Kyle Crossley, *What Is Global History?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2008); Friedrich N. Ammermann, “What is Global History of Technology (good for)?”, *Global Histories: A Student Journal* 6, no. 2 (2021); Stefanie Gänger and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds. *Rethinking Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.)

6 Thomas Cauvin, “The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective,” *Critical History*, no. 68 (2018): 3–26.

tory can also be conceived of as an inherently political one.⁷ It is a mode of history which can seek to confront an issue in the present and to historicize it with political or activist intent. Rather than retrospectively analyzing an historical event in a somewhat passive manner, we can instead proactively seek to historicize injustice or inequity in our present. In this way topics of global significance such as race/racism, poverty/wealth, and so on can come into view, and not just in a way that lends itself to accusations of “woke” analysis or “ahistorical” commentary. Nevertheless, as Rosenthal points out, “what has driven proponents of change is the idea that public spaces should not be occupied – or at least unproblematically occupied – by ‘heroes’ on pedestals judged to be deeply implicated in a racist or imperialist past.”⁸ Much of this energy has come “from below.”

Contemporary Issues in Public History

One very obvious transformative aspect in public history with potential for a more global consideration emerges from the very disparate worldwide responses to *Black Lives Matter*, the killing of George Floyd, and the consequent demolition of statues and re-articulation of public space. This has led to, or accelerated, many institutional initiatives on “colonial legacies” across universities, museums, and public bodies, which has in turn led to an ugly and rather intemperate public debate about “culture wars,” performative wokery, and “audit culture,” largely (though certainly not always) from people to the right of the political center.⁹ This critique predates 2020, of course, and is partly indicative of what critics increasingly refer to as the problem of decolonial initiatives. As Tuck and Yang argued more than a decade ago, the problem with decolonization is that it so

7 Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (Bloomsbury, 2019), x.

8 David Rosenthal, “Revisioning the City Public History and Locative Digital Media,” in *Hidden Cities: Urban Space, Geolocated Apps and Public History in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Fabrizio Nevola, David Rosenthal and Nicholas Terpstra (Routledge, 2022), 21–38 at 21. See also Gianfranco Bandini et al. eds., *La Public History tra scuola, università e territorio Una introduzione operativa* (Firenze University Press, 2022).

9 For some coverage of this relative to public history especially see Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural England's Colonial Connections* (Leeds, 2020), chapter 1; Gvyk Tang, “We Need to Talk About Public History's Columbusing Problem,” *History@Work* (2020); Priya Satia, “Britain's Culture War: Disguising Imperial Politics as Historical Debate about Empire,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 24, no. 2 (2022): 308–20; Ana Lucia Araujo, *Slavery in the age of memory: Engaging the past* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Axelle Brodriez-Dolino and Émilien Ruiz, “Les écritures alternatives: faire de l'histoire hors les murs?,” *Le mouvement social* 4 (2019): 5–45.

often “re-centers whiteness, and extends innocence to the settler.”¹⁰ Their trenchant critique reveals a potential obstacle to a truly global public history, namely the economic, class, and racial inequities that allow easy platforming and publication for scholars in a field which remains stubbornly white, middle class, and somewhat Euro-centric. Thinking about this from the perspective of the repeatedly colonized, indigenous, or displaced peoples of the world very much ought to be the work of public historians. Mariko Smith has proposed the idea of dialogic memorialization as a way of undermining these sorts of unhelpful hierarchies.¹¹

Despite sharing radical roots and emerging in the same era as women’s history, gender history, and black history, public history has to some extent operated outside of these fields. Indeed an (often unspoken) critique of public history would have to center on its whiteness. How then, to confront this? What would a public of history of whiteness look like? Mary Rizzo’s recent work on processes of elision and the invisibility of whiteness in Baltimore’s theater scene indicates the ways in which Public History as a field might develop.¹² So too do more “orthodox” interventions into the history field. The political utility of a book like Olivette Otele’s bestseller *African Europeans* (2019) should not be underestimated. By centering a global narrative in Africa, and with Africans, as well as deftly undermining the Eurocentric suppositions of generations of historians of imperialism and colonialism, Otele’s work is itself an agent or instrument of global public history, and one that proves its radical potential.

Historians of transatlantic slavery and memory have long grappled with the difficulties of scale inherent in analyzing a trade that spanned the globe, was run for profit by several empires, and with such uneven distribution of documentation across regional archives, if we are lucky enough to retain them. It is not possible, really, to be historian of this entire global phenomenon, but the potential of a global digital history has revealed the huge potential of collaboration stretching ahead of that field.¹³ Two major initiatives demonstrate this point. The first is the ESRC-funded Legacies of British Slave-ownership project (2009–2012) and the database it created. The other is a separate digital initiative which has now joined forces with the LBS, the NEH-funded Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database,

10 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization* 1, no 1 (2012): 3.

11 Mariko Smith, “Who controls the past... controls the future: A Case for Dialogical Memorialisation,” *Public History Review* 28 (2021): 1–12, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v28i0.7787>.

12 Mary Rizzo, “Who Speaks for Baltimore: The Invisibility of Whiteness and the Ethics of Oral History Theater,” *The Oral History Review* 48, no. 2 (2021): 154–79, DOI: 10.1080/00940798.2021.1943463.

13 For an excellent overview see Serge Noiret, Mark Tebeau, and Gerben Zaagsma, eds., *Handbook of Digital Public History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022).

originally published as a CD-ROM in 1999 but re-branded for the present as the *SlaveVoyages* website, the latest iteration of a global collaboration that is constantly evolving and adding new datasets.¹⁴ These types of enabling projects are inherently political as well as inherently “public” by nature.

Another obviously global topic could be the perennial subject of gentrification. This affects just about everywhere and public historical work has long focused on a mixture of advocacy work and an attempt to platform the voices of those whose lives are made precarious or are in fact displaced by global process of gentrification with local applications.¹⁵ Various attempts have been made to do this, and indeed these “urban” preoccupations are at play in one of the most influential public history works of the past 30 years – Delores Hayden’s *The Power of Place* (1995) – and in several other studies looking at what was then sometimes referred to as “third wave” gentrification.¹⁶ While gentrification has generally been centered in studies of urban planning and social geographies, it has rarely dominated in Public History on a global scale despite operating as a “site” of the type of conflict that is often at the heart of any public historical problem, the encounter between the marginalized and the powerful. Standard texts on gentrification and globalization do not generally adopt or integrate public historical approaches and this seems to us an obvious failure on both sides.¹⁷ If public history purports to try to platform the voices of the marginalized in a collaborative mode of shared inquiry, surely a phenomenon such as gentrification is the perfect fit? As Lopez-Morales argues, in most cases gentrification is “the superimposition by the dominant strata of market rules in spaces where other, alternative social structures pre-exist them.” In other words, the history of people and place is intrinsic to understanding this process. Gentrification is, he continues, “more than a class-imposed dispossession of land value. It is instead the loss... experienced by the poor who inhabit urban places now deemed desirable for political and economic goals.”¹⁸

14 For a full history of the evolution of both projects see <https://www.slavevoyages.org/about/about#history/1/en/> and <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/project>.

15 Tim Verlaan and Cody Hochstenbach, “Gentrification Through the Ages: A Long-term Perspective on Urban Displacement, Social Transformation and Resistance,” *City* 26, no. 2–3 (2022): 439–49; Manuel B Aalbers, “Introduction to the Forum: From Third to Fifth-Wave Gentrification,” *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 110, no. 1 (2019): 1–11.

16 Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, “The Changing Face of Gentrification,” *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 92 (2002): 464–77.

17 See for example Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, eds., *Gentrification in a Global Context* (Routledge, 2004); Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales, *Planetary Gentrification* (London: Polity Press, 2016); Jack Denton, “Is Landmarking a Tool of Gentrification or a Bulwark Against It?,” *Pacific Standard*, July 3, 2019.

18 Ernesto López-Morales, “Gentrification in the Global South,” *City* 19, no. 4 (2015): 564–73.

Critical Perspectives: Social Justice, Activism, and Public History

What more radical possibilities does this open up for rethinking Public History in global contexts? Combined with the recent growth in university courses, the visibility and professionalization of the “public historian” figure is ever increasing. Public History increasingly sits at a crossroads between the radical and anti-elitist roots of its modern iteration and its authorizing status as a globally-recognized academic field. It is at the interface of public debates about contested heritage. In recent years these trends have often developed alongside late-modern cultures of commemoration and socio-political shifts that have turned attentions towards the memorialization of contested historical figures and institutions. The Covid-19 pandemic propelled many of these longstanding grievances into the spotlight and into the streets just as public history and commemoration became an act of grassroots visibility and justice-seeking for those lost to the virus. They were also acts of solidarity-building among those disproportionately affected by it. It is useful to consider these developments and memory contexts that were, after all, the backdrop against which many of the essays in this volume were conceived, and which are provocations on the ways that we might conceptualize public history in a “global” perspective.

In the past ten years, the First World War centenaries across Europe and initiatives such as the “Decade of Commemorations” (2012–2023) on the island of Ireland have underlined the “political role of the Historian” and the place of the Historian as public intellectual.¹⁹ In the Republic of Ireland this has extended further to the creation of novel public historian jobs embedded in local libraries and archives.²⁰ Major commemorative initiatives across Europe have also injected community and public history-making with significant visibility and funding with a

¹⁹ *Decade of Centenaries*, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/>; David Motadel, “The Political Role of the Historian,” *Contemporary European History* 32, no.1 (2023): 38–45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000716>; Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, “Historians and the Decade of Centenaries in Modern Ireland,” *Contemporary European History* 32, no.1 (2023): 21–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777322000522>; Dominic Bryan, “Ritual, Identity and Nation: When the Historian Becomes the High Priest of Commemoration,” in *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, ed. Fearghal McGarry and Richard S. Grayson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 24–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316550403.003>.
²⁰ E.g. Dublin City Council, “Dublin City Council Historians-in-Residence,” accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/arts-and-events/decade-commemorations/historians-residence>.

particular focus on “diverse” or “hidden” histories.²¹ In Ireland’s commemorative decade, a multifaceted program of public history explored the less well-known stories of soldiering across the political divide in the First World War, socialism, feminism, and the “forgotten” women of the revolution (1916–1923).²² Though such national commemorative initiatives inevitably reinforce authorized narratives, addressing such issues as race, gender, class, and sexuality have also characterized these late-modern remembrance cultures alongside more familiar discourses of “shared authority” and reconciliation. Likewise, a scholarly turn towards understandings of that conflict as a global event have been reflected back in commemorative initiatives and discourses.

Such has been the place of race and empire in memorializing the First World War in different global contexts. In various post-imperial and settler colonial nations this has manifested in many forms of public media, art, historical programming, and participatory remembrance highlighting the plight of colonial soldiers as well as the role of, and imperial influences on, women and ordinary citizens in the war machine.²³ These more critical approaches to the commemorations in the UK, for example, have linked into wider efforts to challenge the absence of colonialism in the national curriculum and to develop crowd-sourced teaching materials on race, migration, and empire.²⁴ Likewise, calls by Māori students and educators to include New Zealand’s colonial history in the national curriculum were heightened during the First World War centenary, as were calls for a national day of commemoration for the Waikato War. That the First World War commemorations were greatly prioritized for funding over the coinciding one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Waikato War was not lost on those calling for re-

21 Lucy Noakes and James Wallis, “The People’s Centenary? Public History, Remembering and Forgetting in Britain’s First World War Centenary,” *The Public Historian* 44, no. 2 (2022): 56–81; Karen Brookfield, “The People’s Centenary: A Perspective From the Heritage Lottery Fund,” *Cultural Trends* 27, no. 2 (2018): 119–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453455>.

22 Mary McAuliffe, “Commemorating Women’s Histories during the Irish Decade of Centenaries,” *Éire-Ireland* 57, no. 1 (2022), 237–59, doi:10.1353/eir.2022.0011. See also Ann-Marie Foster, “Complicated Pasts, Promising Futures: Public History on the Island of Ireland,” *Public History Review* 30 (2023): 6–14, <https://doi.org/10.5130/phrj.v30i0.8376>

23 For examples during and since the centenary period see Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, eds., *Commemorating Race and Empire in The First World War Centenary* (Providence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pup.49703>; Noakes and Wallis, “The People’s Centenary?”

24 “Teaching British Histories of Race, Migration and Empire,” *Institute of Historical Research*, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.history.ac.uk/library/collections/teaching-british-histories-race-migration-and-empire>.

form.²⁵ In Ireland, the centennial commemorations have been directly implicated in public and political debates about the geo-political future of the partitioned island. Thus, many aspects of this historic period of international commemoration that have been revisited or “re-imagined” have also traversed wider discourses around identity, heritage, and historical justice.

Just as there has been an undeniable historical consciousness-raising engendered by this period of internationally significant commemorations, Public History is increasingly at the epicenter of social justice struggles within and transcending national borders. With growing visibility and reach, acts of participation in radical public history (re)making have been playing out on a global and digitally mediated stage. Some of the most visceral examples of this have been the removal or defacement of statues and monuments to slave owners or prominent colonial figures in settler-colonial and postcolonial contexts. As Tebeau has pointed out, although “historians helped establish the intellectual groundwork, the impetus for change has been driven by grassroots activists” on the back of existing local frustrations and spurred by the *Black Lives Matter* movement (BLM) and social media.²⁶ Ballantyne has recounted how these “global currents” sparked by BLM and the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol in 2020 “reignited debates about statues” in New Zealand, where disputes over the commemoration of colonial rulers have been long-running.²⁷ This rejection of authorized heritage and the question of how to come to terms with these contested pasts has sparked intense debate across the public, political, and cultural spheres. In some cases, these actions have led to highly politicized interventions in the curatorial direction of memory institutions, in others the passing of laws banning the unauthorized removal of statues.²⁸ In the UK, conservative activist groups such as “Restore Trust” have been formed out of shared criticism of the National Trust – the governing body for protected historical sites in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland – and the ways in which it is allegedly “driven by modish, divisive ideologies” advocating instead to “present history responsibly and use it as a tool for understanding, not as a revisionist weapon.”²⁹

25 Michael Belgrave, “Brave New Curriculum: Aotearoa New Zealand History and New Zealand’s Schools,” *International Public History* 3, no. 2 (2020): 20202007, <https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2020-2007>.

26 Mark Tebeau, “Apples to Oranges? The American Monumental Landscape,” *International Public History* 1, no. 2 (2018): 20180012, <https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2018-0012>.

27 Tony Ballantyne, “Toppling the Past? Statues, Public Memory and the Afterlife of Empire in Contemporary New Zealand,” *Public History Review* 28 (2021): 18.

28 Geraldine Kendell Adams, “Dowden Letter on Contested Heritage Stokes Fears of Government Interference,” *Museums Association*, October 2, 2020, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2020/10/dowden-letter-on-contested-heritage-stokes-fears-of-government-interference/>; Tebeau, “Apples to Oranges?”

29 Restore Trust, “About Us,” accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/about-us>.

Some of this resistance came on the back of an interim report in September 2020 by the National Trust that revealed the extent of the links between its historic properties, colonialism, and the slave trade, and manifested in a (failed) campaign to install conservative trustees to the Board in November 2022. With buy-in from across the academic, public, and political spheres, as well as from within institutions themselves, groups such as this and “History Reclaimed”³⁰ highlight yet again the insidious dialogic between white supremacy and notions of what an “impartial” interpretation of History is or is not. Indeed they reveal the extent to which the language of inclusivity and radical public history have been co-opted to push back against those very movements that have reached global momentum.

Some of these pivotal moments of public outcry and activism also took place during the onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when many looked anew to the “forgotten” global influenza pandemic of 1918–19, the centenary of which had been marked the previous year. Cycles of pandemic lockdowns between 2020 and 2021 forced many cultural institutions to close and to find new ways of engaging their publics beyond physical boundaries, such as rapid response collecting of “covid memories.” Both grassroots and institutional efforts to document the pandemic sprouted all over the world and many heritage institutions, universities, and community archives were proactive in collecting lockdown memories and ephemera, as well as capturing the online record of the pandemic response during the crisis.³¹ Some such initiatives, like *A/P/A Voices: A Covid-19 Public Memory Project*, emerged from a need to document the specific impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the spike in xenophobia and anti-Asian violence on Asian/Pacific American communities in the US.³² As we have seen, the pandemic lifted the lid on many undercurrents of social and civil unrest. The lockdowns brought into sharp relief the ways in which the urban landscape, access to healthcare, and greenspace has progressively contracted for those outside the dominant culture or economic elite. Documentation and memorialization became part of a public desire for accountability and recognition of the national and global health inequalities that, during the

³⁰ History Reclaimed, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://historyreclaimed.co.uk/about-history-reclaimed/>.

³¹ Thomas Cauvin, “Mapping Public History Projects about COVID 19,” *International Federation for Public History* (2020), <https://ifph.hypotheses.org/3225>; Amanda Greenwood, “Archiving COVID-19: A Historical Literature Review,” *The American Archivist* 85, no.1 (2022): 288–311, <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-85.1.288>; Frédéric Clavert, “Traces et Mémoires en Devenir D’une Pandémie,” *C²DH*, accessed March 6 2023, <https://www.c2dh.uni.lu/thinkering/traces-et-memoires-en-devenir-dune-pandemie>.

³² “A/P/A Voices: A COVID-19 Public Memory Project,” accessed January 10, 2024, <https://apa.nyu.edu/apa-voices-covid/>.

crisis and beyond, have disproportionately affected global majority people and the economically disadvantaged.³³ Thus, in its aftermath, calls to adequately commemorate those lost to the pandemic – in stark contrast to the lack of memorials to the 1918 flu – have in many places taken on a political valence.³⁴

Extending this critical public history yet further and into the streets and social media spheres have been the controversies surrounding many prominent art and heritage institutions that rely on funding from neo-colonial corporate entities or who court philanthropic donors of dubious ethical repute. In 2019, the Louvre Museum in Paris removed the name of the Sackler family – whose pharmaceutical enterprise sparked an opioid crisis in the USA and who have donated large sums to cultural institutions across the world – from its exhibits and its website following protests by the “Sackler PAIN” activist group. The same group stormed the V&A Museum in London, and these protests and takedowns have spurred a number of institutions internationally to rescind further donations from the family.³⁵ Likewise, the British Museum faces continued protests by climate activist groups over its sponsorship by the multinational oil and gas producer BP, further heightened by unprecedented temperatures reached across Europe in the summer of 2022.³⁶ Indeed, the case of the British Museum’s sponsorship by BP exemplifies the relationship between climate justice and the “decolonization” of museums and heritage institutions. Demands for the repatriation of heritage items and human remains acquired under colonial or pseudoscientific circumstances have likewise been bolstered by this public momentum of, and grassroots participation in, the discourse of “decolonization”. Some institutions and national governments have begun the process of returning artifacts and collections to their originating countries, while many more international disputes over looted heritage and displaced archives continue unresolved.³⁷

33 Katherine Franz and Catherine Gudis, “Documenting COVID-19,” *Journal of American History* 107, no. 3 (2020): 692–95, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jaaa455>.

34 For example, the Covid Memorial Wall opposite the UK Parliament in London was organized primarily by the campaign group Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice. The National Covid Memorial Wall, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://nationalcovidmemorialwall.org/>.

35 Naomi Rea, “The Louvre Museum Has Removed the Sackler Name From Its Walls and Website Following Protests by Nan Goldin’s Activist Army,” *Art News*, July 17, 2019, accessed March 6 2023, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/the-louvre-museum-has-removed-the-sackler-name-from-its-walls-and-website-1602979>.

36 Joe Ware, “Pressure on British Museum to Ditch BP Mounts Following UK’s Record Summer Heatwave,” *The Art Newspaper*, September 13, 2022, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/09/13/pressure-on-british-museum-to-ditch-bp>.

37 Emma Gregg, “The Story of Nigeria’s Stolen Benin Bronzes, and the London Museum Returning Them,” *National Geographic*, September 17, 2022, accessed March 6 2023, <https://www.natio>

As Li observed in a recent special issue revisiting “global perspectives” in public history: “Such radical social movements are not only unique to a specific country; they are indeed part of a global movement. What does this mean for public history as a field and as a social movement?”³⁸ This emphasis on public history as a field and as a social movement echoes the “glocal” approach, whereby “local practices can affect international public history discussions”³⁹, while also re-asserting its twentieth century roots as an applied historical tool of recognition and counter-culture. Might we push this global perspective further towards a public history of not just collaboration and enrichment but also of solidarity? The various examples above are indicative of the intensification of global currents concerning the future of contested public monuments,⁴⁰ museum and archive collections that hold materials acquired through imperialistic coercion, the global financial ties of publicly owned heritage institutions, the implication of heritage institutions in the perpetuation of climate breakdown, and the social justice value of public history-making and memorialization in the present. In these examples we can see radical and globally connected public history in hyper local contexts, but also resistance and counter-politicization of history from conservative political circles and activist groups. These questions are not new to the Public Historian but the ways in which they are enfolding with global crises and movements is cause to reconsider them in a global perspective. And although the examples

nalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2022/09/benin-bronzes-return-to-nigeria; Catherine Hickley, “Netherlands Takes Lead in Europe’s Efforts to Return Artefacts to Former Colonies,” *The Art Newspaper*, February 4, 2021, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2021/02/04/netherlands-takes-lead-in-europes-efforts-to-return-artefacts-to-former-colonies>; John Bartlett, “Easter Islanders Call for Return of Statue from British Museum,” *The Guardian*, June 4, 2019, accessed 6 March 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/04/easter-islanders-call-for-return-of-statue-from-british-museum>; “University to return skulls to Irish island,” BBC News, February 24, 2023, accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ck5y95394l8o>; Mobeen Hussain, Ciaran O’Neill, and Patrick Walsh, “Working Paper on Human Remains from Inishbofin held in the Haddon-Dixon collection at TCD” (March 2022), accessed January 10, 2024, <https://www.tcd.ie/seniordean/legacies/inishbofinTLRWGworkingaper.pdf>; James Lowry, *Disputed Archival Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003057765>; Mandy Banton, “History Concealed, History Withheld: The Story of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office ‘Migrated Archives’ and the Decades-long International Search for Redress,” *Archives* 55, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3828/archives.2020.1>; this has also included moves to open access to data about restitution processes e.g. Open Restitution Africa (n.d.), accessed October 13, 2023, <https://openrestitution.africa/>.

³⁸ Li, “Public History in a Global Context,” 2.

³⁹ Thomas Cauvin, “For a New International Public History” *Public History Review* 30 (2023), 76.

⁴⁰ For a survey of international case studies see: Laura A. Macaluso, ed., *Monument Culture: International Perspectives on the Future of Monuments in a Changing World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

given here have taken center stage mainly in Western contexts, they and the publics that drive them are also implicated in global networks of historical consciousness, affect, and solidarity, however flawed or contradictory.

Chapter Descriptions

Memory and commemoration cut across most of these chapters, but many other themes and questions that have been raised in these global debates mirror those that are addressed in these parts of the book. These range from the conceptual, such as competing memories of revolution and liberation struggles (Monica Parisa Rabii) and the public historian at the nexus of scholarship and activism (Alissa Cartwright) to the practice-based, such as community heritage and the professional public historian (Samantha Wells; Jennifer Mitcalf), to the politics of heritage/public history funding in a neo-liberal cultural economy (Nora Katz; Alexandra D'Astolfo). Our essays range across Europe, South America, and the Middle East, and in many cases they focus in on something happening at a micro level rather than speaking directly to the macro. Nico Ferguson explores the role arpilleras played in providing a voice for the women who made them and their lasting legacy in contemporary Chilean society. Her piece speaks to that evergreen preoccupation of Public History, the voice of the marginalized in society and the ways in which we might learn to hear them. It shows the power of the micro in accessing peripheral voices. Peripherality is also a feature of the work of Agata Gigante, whose chapter addresses the complex history of a tiny Jewish community museum in rural Entre Rios. She raises fundamental questions that are mirrored in Jennifer Mitcalf's work on the enduring local heritage and material culture of a Lancashire mill town. Both authors are working with, interviewing, and analyzing a community whose local contexts have changed in remarkable ways but are still shaped by urban planning, and the industrial or agricultural architecture that continues to shape and influence their environment for the generations that followed. What connects these approaches is precisely what makes public history valuable. It is a process, as Alissa Cartwright argues, more than a set of prescribed outcomes, that defines public historical work. Her searing analysis of the state-funded Landscapes of Injustice Project (2014–21) tries to grapple with the sustainability and intentionality of a large scale history project that genuinely attempted to decenter academics and orthodox outputs in favour of centering and platforming both the history of thousands of Japanese Canadians dispossessed of their lands in the Vancouver region in the early 1940s by the Federal Government and those communities who carry that history with them most closely. Seldom has a project so clearly aligned with public history been funded to the extent that this one was,

and we have much to learn from it. It has some common points with the Irish Folklore Commission, explored here by Beibhinn Breathnach, who sees similar public historical principles at work in this Irish state sponsored project from the 1930s.

Our collection draws from a wide spectrum of subject material, encompassing modern-day narratives from regions such as Iran, Argentina, and Chile as well as exploring more localized contexts within Britain, Ireland, and Europe. By doing so, we hope to take our approach to public history one step closer to realizing its full dialogic potential, truly engaging with, rather than merely about or for, the people it seeks to serve.

Monica Parisa Rabii

Representing Revolution: Politics of Performance and Memory at Iran's Freedom Square

"The fascination with monuments lies in the contrast between the illusion of performance and solidity they create and their actual vulnerability to time and circumstance."¹ Ian Germani wrote this in reference to the use of monumental space at the *Place de la Nation* in Paris by different political groups and movements. The fascination lay in the latent ability of these concrete symbols to be re-interpreted and appropriated – of course not only via the agency of those creating these successive narratives but also the ability of the public to assimilate these layers of meaning in one place. This chapter considers this concept of the multiple narratives and appropriations of a national monument and applies it to the site of the most concentrated protests of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Tehran, Iran. As such, it will bring readers a welcome contextualization of the recent nationwide civil protests in Iran, notably those known as Bloody Aban, beginning in November 2019, and the Women, Life, Freedom Movement following the death of Mahsa Amini in custody in September 2022. Additionally, many dynamics developed in this chapter will find an echo in cases from around the world of political appropriation and reinterpretation of monuments.

Completed in 1971 and originally named Shahyad, or the "Remembrance of the Kings" by the last Shah of Iran – Mohammad Reza Pahlavi – the monument was later renamed Azadi or "Freedom" Tower by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.² As a revolutionary icon, the monument is embedded in the collective memory of the Iranian public, a remembrance that has been further solidified with the performance of annual anniversary rallies and rituals over the past four decades. What is striking about the space is that in 2009 these memories were used again, this time by protests for a new movement countering the contested re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. For the first time since 1979 the monument was extremely "vulnerable to time and circumstance," a vulnerability that reflected the changing political landscape of Iran as well. What, if anything,

1 Ian Germani, "Revolutionary Rites: Political Demonstrations at the Place de la Nation, Paris," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 22, no. 2 (2011): 58.

2 The two names will be used interchangeably in this paper, coinciding with what the site was called in the era under discussion (pre- or post-revolution).

does the ritual use as well as the attempted contemporary appropriation of the space tell us about the relationship of the site with the public and power?

Part 1. Making a Monument: The Creation of a Pre-Revolutionary National Icon

The last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (ruling 1941–1979), linked a set of values and a first identity narrative during the creation of Shahyad square and monument. The 1960 and 1970s were an era of rapid urbanization and population growth in Tehran. This was a desired consequence of the Shah's "White Revolution": an ambitious program of social, political, and economic reform and industrial expansion that would centralize power in the capital.³ Often following urban growth is the construction of public spaces and monuments that can serve as icons of these new landscapes. For the Shah, his modern capital needed a modern icon. The identity constructed at Shahyad was that of a monument connecting conceptual places and historical eras: pre- and post-Islamic Persian capitals with the contemporary capital of Iran, Tehran. This narrative worked to legitimize the Shah's nation-state project by reinforcing a direct link between the present monarchy and previous Persian dynasties, with the conceptual identity of the site constructed for the public through its highly symbolic architecture as well as the opening ceremonies coinciding with the two thousand and five hundredth anniversary celebrations of the Persian Empire at Persepolis in 1971. This metaphorical tie would also be reiterated in the use of the space by the state – like the gates of Persepolis, Shahyad would be the site of the Shah's civic rituals.

The Architecture of National Identity

To build this monument, the Shah launched a contest in 1966 to design a monument to commemorate the 2,500 years of the Persian monarchy. Advertised in the national newspaper *Ettela'at*, the contest called for a modernist tribute to the Anniversary of the Persian Empire founded by Cyrus the Great.⁴ Not only would it be the first large monument travellers and citizens would see upon enter-

³ Vahid Vahdat, "Spatial Discrimination in Tehran's Modern Urban Planning 1906–1979," *Journal of Planning History* 12, no. 1 (2013): 54.

⁴ "Announcement for the Competition Design for Shahyad-e Aryamehr Monument," *Ettela'at*, September 1, 1966, 1.

ing Tehran from the airport, it would hold a new regional bus terminal and be placed on the median line that separated the North and South of the city. The winning design was a tower and archway that incorporated both Persian architectural features and modernism. Construction started shortly after in 1966 and was completed in 1971, in time for the two thousand and five hundredth anniversary celebrations.

As the architect explained in a 2016 interview, the tower's evolution into a "symbol of Iran" lay in its power as an aesthetic manifestation of the capital: "modern, yet very Persian, with aspects of both pre- and post-Islamic architecture."⁵ The monument features two central arches each representing these two narratives: the "sweeping parabola" of ancient Iranian architecture and the traditional arches of Islamic architecture seen in many grand mosques.⁶ The parabolic arch was specifically a nod to the Sassanian ruins at Ayvan-e Kasra, the ancient archway to the city of Ctesiphon in modern-day Iraq.⁷ The underbelly of the arch also features multiple squinches, the filling of the corners of a square or polygonal shape to support the base of a dome, which are a feature often attributed to the Sassanid Empire.⁸ Additionally, the pattern of the roundabout's gardens and fountains was inspired by the pattern found on the dome ceiling of Sheikh Lotfallah Mosque in Esfahan,⁹ a nod to the golden age of another of Persia's capitols during the Safavid Empire.

For the architect, this marriage of Persian and Islamic architectural forms is distinctly Iranian, as he states that "if this was erected somewhere else it would have no meaning; you can't put Shahyad in Cairo."¹⁰ In the 2011 biography of the Shah, Abbas Milani states that "Shahyad became the perfect metaphor for the many cultural paradoxes that were rapidly changing Tehran [...] Shahyad

5 Rozita Riazati, "The Man Behind Iran's Most Famous Tower," *BBC*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35295083>.

6 Yeganeh Torbati, "Tehran Azadi Tower, Witness to History, Victim of Neglect," *Reuters*, February 20, 2013, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-azadi/tehrans-azadi-tower-witness-to-history-victim-of-neglect-idUSBRE91J0QU20130220>.

7 David Douglass-Jaimes, "Architecture Daily Classics: Azadi Tower by Hossein Amanat," *Architecture Daily*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.archdaily.com/774683/ad-classics-azadi-tower-hossein-amanat>.

8 Britannica, Editors of Encyclopaedia, "squinch," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 19, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/squinch>.

9 Hossein Amanat, "Interview with the Architect of Azadi," *Radio Zamaneh*, July 2018, http://radiozamaaneh.com/rohani/2008/07/post_236.html.

10 Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "After Azadi: Man Behind Iran's Freedom Tower on How His Life Unraveled," *August* 15, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/15/azadi-tower-tehran-hossein-amanat-architect-iran>.



Fig. 1: Azadi/Shahyad Tower.

Copyright Massoud Mohebbi, 2018 (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1008-1-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%AC_%D8%A2%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C.jpg)

was a gateway to the future and a celebration of the past.”¹¹ Iranian historian Ali Mozaffari argues that starting with the Shah’s father in 1925, the Pahlavi Dynasty’s particular brand of nationalism would draw on pre-Islamic identity and a “romanticising of ancient dynasties – the Sassanids (226–651 CE) and the Achaemenids (550–330 BCE) – the founders of the first Persian Empire.”¹² But it was not just in monumental architectural form that the Shah wanted to legitimize the lineage of his modern-day capital to the ancient Persian Empire. He sought to emphasize this identity for both domestic and international audiences by situating the opening of Shahyad in the anniversary celebrations of the empire.

¹¹ Abbas Milani, *The Shah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 353.

¹² Ali Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity in Iran: The Idea of Homeland Derived from Ancient Persian and Islamic Imaginations of Place* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2014), 26–27.

Heritage as Propaganda: The Celebrations of 1971

The Shah most clearly attempted to establish the link between his modern Iranian nation and ancient Persia by using Tehran and Persepolis as the sites of lavish ceremonies of commemoration in honour of the two thousand and five hundredth anniversary of the Persian Empire. As human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan explains, “the identity of a place is achieved by dramatizing the aspirations, needs, and functional rhythms of personal and group life.”¹³ This dramatization of both sites to emphasize the hegemonic narrative in these public spaces was in full force during “The Celebrations.” In October 1971, the Shah would hold a lavish ceremony at Persepolis, creating a full “tent-city” at the archaeological ruins. He would be referencing the historic scene at the site when emissaries from nations subject to the Achaemenid empire would bring tribute to the Persian king. Of the 600 guests, there were 37 heads of state with 69 nations represented.¹⁴

Millions tuned into the broadcast of the event on national television and heard the Shah’s speech at the foot of Cyrus’s tomb at Parsgarade. The Shah would also go on to commission a documentary film of the commemorations at Persepolis entitled *Flames of Persia*, narrated by Hollywood star Orson Welles. As Welles would dramatically state in the film, “Persia was on parade.”¹⁵ Mozaffari emphasizes the significance of such an ostentatious celebration: “for the first time in the twentieth century, Persepolis was inscribed as the place of modern Iranian identity and the metonym for the Iranian homeland in the global popular imaginations of people through an international celebratory event.”¹⁶ The celebrations were meant to present the Shah’s nation to the world and also situate that identity at sites that could provide historical continuity to the present.

Meanwhile, rapid construction had been underway since 1966 in Tehran to complete Shahyad in time for the celebrations. The inauguration of the monument was held on October 16, 1971, only four days after the events at Persepolis. Again, emphasizing ancient Persian heritage, the opening exhibitions inside the monument included archaeological artefacts and reliefs from Persepolis.¹⁷ The Shah was not only conceptualizing the two symbolic centers of his nation-state at Sha-

13 Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

14 Kamyar Abdi, “Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 1 (2001): 68.

15 Shahrokh Golestan, *Flames of Persia* (Tehran: Iranian State Film, 1971).

16 Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity*, 55.

17 “Shahyad Aryamehr: A Synthesis of Yesterday and Today’s Iranian Architecture,” *Ruznamehe Jashne Shahanshahi Iran*, October 24, 1971, 1.

hyad through its aesthetic architecture, he was also making a direct connection through these successive celebrations at each site. In his analysis of four Parisian monuments as a reflection of French national identity, Avner Ben Amos reflects that ceremony and ritual practices of a site are “high-intensity times” to charge a place with a “special meaning” possibly “never meant by the builder.” They are also characteristic of hegemonic national narratives and power-holders as they are meant to be “one-sided,” where there is only space for a singular presentation, without room for opposition.¹⁸ Shahyad was now “charged” with the symbolism of pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture, but also as the seat of the “modern capital” of the empire via its location as the concluding ceremony of The Celebrations. Symbolically “passing the torch” from Persepolis to Tehran after the opening ceremony, Shahyad continued to be the Shah’s stage for the state’s civic and national rituals. Perhaps the most famous of these ceremonies was when President Nixon visited the site in May 1972. He was escorted to the scene with a presidential motorcade and made a short speech speaking to the alliance between the U.S. and Iran and the “progress” he had seen since his last visit to Tehran 19 years earlier. The ceremony ended with the Shah presenting Nixon with the keys to the city. Ben-Amos explains that the ritualization of civic ceremonies such as these is extremely important to maintain the relevance of national monuments to not only international audiences but domestic ones as well. Otherwise, they are at risk of becoming merely a tourist attraction and losing their relevance for the nation.

There were mixed public reactions to the 1971 Celebrations in which Shahyad was opened. While international media coverage was largely congratulatory, there was also criticism that it was gaudy and excessive. *Life Magazine* and *The New York Times* praised it as the “the party of the century”¹⁹ while *The Guardian* pointed out that the excessiveness was considered by some as “tacky.”²⁰ Domestic reactions were more critical, especially from student groups and Islamic leadership. The opposition pointed to the lack of actual Iranian public at the ceremonies, underlying the feeling that it was a show meant for international over domestic audiences. Student activists considered it an attempt to situate Iranian heritage within a markedly Western framework that they argued contradicted such commemora-

18 Ben-Amos, Avner, “Monuments and Memory in French Nationalism,” *History & Memory* 5, no. 2 (1993): 51.

19 William A. McWhirter, “The Shah’s Princely Party,” *Life Magazine*, October 29, 1971, 22 and John L. Hess, “Made in France – Persia’s Splendorous Anniversary Celebration,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 1971, 36.

20 Walter Schwarz, “A Kingdom Remembered – 2,500 Years on,” *The Guardian*, October 13, 1971, 1.

tions.²¹ Popular Islamic clerics like Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini referred to it as an “illegitimate festival,” noting the disparity between the wealth of the monarchy and their foreign allies and the Iranian rural poor.²² Tension in perceptions of the monument and the commemorative festivities surrounding it underlined growing conflict between sections of the public and government. The most notable critics, Iranian student groups and Islamic leadership, would go on to be two of the most important agents during the years leading up to the Revolution of 1979. Shahyad was already shaping up to be a site of contestation and a reflection of the relationship between political power and the Iranian public.

Part 2. Revolutionary Re-Inscription: Place, Protests, and New Rituals

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 completely changed the Shah's Iran and most notably the capital city. Shahyad, which after the revolution was called Azadi or “Freedom” Tower, was the epicenter of these events. This monument by the last King of Iran was appropriated by the revolution and then by the new government, the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the remarkable protests that culminated with over half the population of the capital taking to the streets in the fall and winter of 1978–79, Shahyad was reshaped for the public as the site of the democratization of space and power, a turning point and place in the process of self-determination of the revolution. It was the site of battle and celebration: first the protests and violent clashes with the Shah's forces and then the celebratory return of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini. After the fall of the monarchy, these collective memories were used and ritualized through annual commemorations at Azadi by the regime as an attempt to further re-inscribe the monument as not just one of the revolution, but also one of the Islamic Republic.

21 Press Release by the Confederation of Iranian Students, “Whose Celebrations?” October 1971, MS-I- Ref, Box 15. University of Tehran Reference Collection, National Archives and Library of Iran, Tehran, Iran.

22 Ruhollah Khomeini, “The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islam,” Speech at Najaf, October 13, 1971, in *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 200.

A People's Monument

The irony of seeing the Shah's icon of his modern capital and nation become the site where Ayatollah Ruhollah Mousavi Khomeini, the would-be first supreme ruler of the Islamic Republic of Iran, returned from exile was not lost on spectators of the events of 1978–79. Unlike other monuments and symbols of the Shah that the new regime demolished after the revolution, Shahyad, rebranded as “Azadi,” was the only Pahlavi-made monument dedicated to the monarchy that was left standing. This was for two reasons: the collective memory of the images of the revolution imprinted on the site as the place of change, which was aided by continual commemoration and veneration of those events annually, as well as the aesthetic capability of the monument to be incorporated into the values of the new regime. Unlike other statues and emblems of the monarch, the monument had no overt royal imagery. The Shah's brand of nationalism at Shahyad, one that tied itself to pre- and post-Islamic traditions, was not a direct threat to the Islamic Republic. In terms of society's collective consciousness of the site, the square would become what Karen Till has coined a place of “symbolic democratization,” where “groups and individuals often struggle with one another for authority to represent their version of the past in the built environment.” These struggles in turn bind those sites with “a right to the city intricately tied to the processes of democratisation.”²³ By flipping its ownership on its head but purposefully keeping the place unchanged, it is a constant reminder of the power of the public to subvert that space and therefore subvert the ruling power. Because what could be more of a triumph than to reclaim the spaces of your opponents as your own? However, it is not just the importance of Shahyad as the symbolic center of the Shah's nation before the revolution that made it an obvious choice. Shahyad, its surrounding thoroughfares, and the location of the “hubs” of the countermovement network made for a natural and powerful protest space.

The East-West thoroughfare of Tehran, Reza-Shah Road, that leads to Shahyad was of crucial importance to the protest movements in advance of the revolution. The eight-mile road connected these three crucial spaces for the counter-movement: The University of Tehran, the Tehran Bazaar, and the transportation hub at Shahyad. The University of Tehran housed the socialist and anti-US imperialist student groups of the countermovement, who often demanded a return to the social-democratic rule of President Mohammad Mossadegh prior to the 1953 CIA coup. The Tehran Bazaar housed the traditionally conservative Muslim merchant

²³ Karen E. Till, “Wounded Cities: Memory-work and a Place-Based Ethics of Care,” *Political Geography* 31 (2012): 7–8.

class who grew to strongly oppose the Shah's creation of "western-style" supermarkets and tax breaks given to these chain-stores that were a part of the modernizing reform of the Shah's "White Revolution."²⁴ Lastly, Shahyad Square itself was an important transportation hub for Tehran. Not only was the proximity to the airport important, it was also the roundabout housing the regional buses that connected Tehran and the provinces—populations which entered Tehran *en masse* to support the protests when called upon by Ayatollah Khomeini. Proximity to Mehrabad International Airport also made it easy for foreign journalists to cover the protests at the square.

Protests against the Shah increased in both frequency and number of people in the fall of 1978. In early September, the number of protesters going through Shahyad was around 100,000, and by January 1979 it was estimated at two million, about half the population of Tehran at the time.²⁵ Escalation was largely a response to increased police violence, when September saw the Shah enact martial law and orders to shoot protesters as well as permit the use of tear gas.²⁶ This is where the memorialization of the site as a battlefield takes root, as the place of violence at the hands of the Shah's state. Some of the largest demonstrations until that point took place on December 10–11, staged by Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters on the Shia holy days of Ashura Tasu'a at Shahyad – the commemorative rituals remembering the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his family. By referencing the battle of Karbala protestors were aligning themselves with Shia revolutionary imagery, which paralleled the oppressive forces of the historic Umayyad army with that of the Shah's army.²⁷ At the feet of the monument made from the imagery of the Shah's nationalism, this new brand of Shia influenced identity would formally take root at Shahyad. It was also in these two days that the first draft of a "16-point proclamation of the formation of an Islamic Republic" was read out

24 H.E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 95. The scope of this chapter does not include an analysis of the creation of these networks, of which there is already substantial research. For further reading see Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

25 "Iran's shah said to have agreed to give up power," *United Press International*, December 20, 1978, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1978/12/30/Trans-shah-said-to-have-agreed-to-give-up-power/5250430138417/>.

26 Ervand Abrahamian, "Structural Causes of the Iranian Revolution," *Middle East Report* 87 (1980): 24.

27 Ervand Abrahamian, "The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution," *Radical History Review* 105 (2009): 27.

loud in the center of Shahyad square, again demanding the return of Ayatollah Khomeini from exile.²⁸

Protests and police violence continued for the next month, with the Shah eventually leaving Iran on January 16, 1979, fully expecting to return. In the hopes of appeasing protestors, he established the provisional government of Shapour Bakhtiar, the leader of the National Front, one of Iran's leftist parties.²⁹ Three days later, a 10-point declaration of the Islamic Republic was read at Shahyad, demanding Bakhtiar to step down from his provisional government and also calling on soldiers to join the revolutionary movement.³⁰ The following day one million protesters filled Reza Shah and Shahyad. From Paris, the Ayatollah announced that the Shah had been dethroned by the demonstrations and that "we will take power through the legitimate referendum of the streets."³¹ Finally, the tide turned at Shahyad from the place of revolutionary battle to the site of celebration with the return of Ayatollah Khomeini from exile on February 1, 1979. From Mehrabad Airport to Shahyad, and down Reza Shah to Behest Zahra Cemetery, an estimated three million people lined the streets. As *The New York Times* would write, "for this one day, whatever the weeks ahead may bring, the nation went mad with joy."³² After this day, foreign reports began to mention that people referred to Shahyad as Azadi or even Khomeini Square.³³ On February 11, Bakhtiar's provisional government officially stepped down, making this the date the Islamic Republic of Iran took power of the state.³⁴ These collective memories of battle and celebration at Azadi would be used annually from then on in commemorations of the revolution. While the protests and return of Khomeini at Azadi allowed "the people" to re-inscribe the space that was the last Shah's national icon, it was up to these commemorative rituals by the new government to legitimize their appropriation of the space for the next four decades.

28 Jonathan C. Randal, "1.5 Million Holy Day Protesters," *The Washington Post*, December 10, 1978.

29 Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York: New Press, 2007), 171.

30 Andrew Whitley, "Record Rally in Tehran In Support of Khomeini," *The Financial Times*, January 20, 1979, 2.

31 R.W. Apple, "A Million Marchers Rally for Khomeini in Tehran's Streets," *New York Times*, January 20, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/01/20/archives/a-million-marchers-rally-for-khomeini-in-teheran-streets.html>.

32 R.W. Apple, "Khomeini threatens to arrest Bakhtiar if he stays in post," *New York Times*, February 2, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/02/02/archives/khomeini-threatens-to-arrest-bakhtiar-if-he-stays-in-post-iranians.html>.

33 Nicholas Gage, "Over a Million March in Teheran, Demanding That Bakhtiar Quit," *New York Times*, February 9, 1979, A1.

34 Dabashi, *A People Interrupted*, 190.

New Rituals: Remembering the Revolution and Forming New Identities

Little was done to change Azadi: the Islamic Republic emblem was not placed on the monument and graffiti left from the revolution depicting anti-Shah imagery and slogans were left untouched for a decade. Some historians point out that this was due as much to the symbolism of the site as it was for economic reasons, with the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) draining most of the state's resources.³⁵ However, even during wartime, Azadi and Engelaab Road became the site of annual commemorative demonstrations that continue to this day. But because it was not a specifically Islamic or Shia symbol, there was also a need to imbed an Islamic identity at the site without altering the architecture of the “people's monument” that became such an icon of the revolution. This was done through the annual commemorative demonstrations and celebrations of the revolution, Shia holy days, and annual al-Quds³⁶ solidarity marches with Palestine. Azadi during the revolution became a “sacred center” of the new republic, a concept that Avner Ben Amos constructed from the anthropological work of Clifford Geertz and which “emphasised the need for polities to establish sacred centres to serve as a focus for the rituals affirming the essential values of the community.”³⁷ With the commemorations post-revolution, these values were implemented to remember the Islamic leadership that led the revolution, and also tie the site to the pan-Islamism central to a republic that opposed the “Westernization” of Iran under the monarchy.

Azadi became the site of significant commemorative rituals for the Islamic Republic. The memorial demonstrations and anniversary celebrations of the revolution have taken place at Azadi annually from 1980 onwards, marking the days Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile. Estimates of anywhere from one to three million people annually pour into Engelaab and gather at Azadi. The commemorations include a special ceremony at Mehrabad Airport on February 1 to remember the return of the Ayatollah, and on February 11 those gathered at Azadi hear from the current head of state. Watching footage of the celebrations on Iranian State Television from various years, the images of the rallies are remarkably similar

35 The Iran-Iraq War destroyed large parts of Tehran so any government funding towards infrastructure would be spent on restoration works instead. Pamela Karimi, “Old Sites, New Frontiers,” in *A Critical History of Contemporary Architecture*, ed. Ellie G. Haddad and David Rifkind, 339–58 (New York: Ashgate, 2014), 347.

36 Al-Quds is the Arabic name for Jerusalem and commonly used by Muslim majority countries.

37 Ben-Amos, “Monuments and Memory,” 59.

to those in 1979, even 39 years later.³⁸ Clips of rallies from other cities as well as those in Tehran dominate most public channels from 7 a.m. until the late afternoon, when crowds start to disperse and regular programming returns. The same posters, the same slogans, and largely the same speeches are all used to emphasize the continuity of the present with the revolution.

Posters of Khomeini and the subsequent Ayatollah, Ali Khamenei, as well as Iranian flags dominate the street. Signs place specific emphasis on the “martyrdom” of the protesters who died at the hands of the Shah’s forces. Those gathered at Azadi square see a stage casting the monument as the backdrop and featuring the orator placed between images of Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei. The program starts with a reading from the Quran, with a well-known theology professor or mullah providing opening and closing remarks, and ends with a speech by the president. The speech lasts about an hour, with the bulk of it resembling a sort of “State of the Union” address remarking on everything from education, healthcare, technological advancements, and diplomatic relations. In 2006, President Ahmadinejad remarked that “we have gathered in this place in the heart of our dear nation to underline once again the aspirations and divine goals of the Revolution... and your magnificent presence in the millions and showing of your strength and resolution. I thank you for this show of strength.”³⁹ Here the sacred center is clear: the old symbol of the Shah is now the “heart of the nation” of the Islamic Republic.

Outside of these anniversary rallies there is one other extremely important annual demonstration that takes place at Azadi: al-Quds Day. These are demonstrations in Tehran, along Engelaab and gathering at Azadi, expressing solidarity with Palestinians and underlining Israeli rule as an illegitimate occupation of Palestine. Khomeini staged the first of what would become annual protests in 1979 on the last Friday of Ramadan, an extremely important Muslim holiday. Though the protests take a different tone than the commemorative rallies of the anniversary, they also have crowds of one to three million people demonstrating along Engelaab and reaching Azadi for a series of speeches. These protests re-inscribe Azadi with an Islamic, and specifically pan-Islamic, polity through the ritualization of these

38 “The Anniversary of the Victorious Islamic Republic” from 1987, 1996, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2015, 2016, and 2017, Republic of Iran State TV (IRIB) Digital Collection, National Library and Archive of Iran, Tehran, Iran, accessed June 6, 2018. Unfortunately, as of yet not all years of IRIB footage of these anniversaries have been digitized for the collection.

39 CSPAN, “Iranian Presidential Speech,” filmed February 11, 2006, at Azadi Square, Tehran, Iran, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?1911974/iranian-presidential-speech>.

marches.⁴⁰ In addition to the re-inscription of Azadi as the sacred center and a site of democratization, there is a re-inscription of the space as one of pan-Islamic concern and struggle. All this within a Muslim temporality, the holy month of Ramadan, makes for a distinct re-inscription without the need to physically alter the site.

During the remarkable protests that culminated with over half the population of the capital taking to the streets in the fall and winter of 1978–79, Shahyad became re-conceptualized to the public as the site of the democratization of space and power. It was the site of battle and celebration: the protests and violent clashes with the Shah's forces and then the celebratory return of the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini. These collective memories were used and ritualized through annual commemorations at Azadi to further re-inscribe the monument as not just that of the revolution but also of the Islamic Republic. However, the new government worked hard to similarly appropriate the space of the "people's monument" through anniversary rallies of the revolution and additionally tie the sacred center to their government's Islamic polity through annual al-Quds Day demonstrations. The ritualization of demonstrations at Azadi in the past 40 years are not about a call to action, but rather an expression of the regime's identity, as well as a continued defense of its legitimacy, at Azadi.

Part 3. Breaking the Ritual: An Attempted Appropriation of Azadi

Contemporary public interactions and perceptions of Azadi outside of ritual commemorations reveal growing tensions between the public and the state. Azadi as a visitor attraction has been largely forgotten by the state, the museum inside remarkably underwhelming and apolitical, and instead attention was turned to the new Milad Tower – a telecommunications tower for state broadcasting that had started construction in 1997 and opened for use in 2007.⁴¹ While Milad Tower became the outward facing monument meant for international guests,

⁴⁰ Annual al-Quds protests have popped up across the Muslim world from East Asia to Africa, even making their way to North America and Europe in smaller protests. For further discussion of Khomeini's rhetoric and ideology around Islamic unity and Pan-Islamism, see Mozaffari, *Forming National Identity in Iran*, 171–73.

⁴¹ The scope of this chapter does not include an analysis of these, in many ways, competing monuments. For further ethnographic research on public perceptions of these monuments see Susan Ghaffaryan and Hamidreza Dastejardi, "Modernization Alignment of Tehran Urban Symbols with Tehran Citizens Ways of Conceptualizing," *Planum The Journal of Urbanism* 27, no. 2 (2013): 1–7.

events, and entertainment, similar to Shahyad's function for the last Shah, Azadi became an inward facing symbol, one that reflected the relationship of the public with the memory of the revolution. The protests after the elections of 2009 clearly re-focused the attention on Azadi as the stage of this conflict between people and power.

In what is commonly called the Green Movement of 2009, protesters challenging the disputed re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wielded the memory of the revolution at Azadi to legitimize their own political ends. On June 13, 2009, the people of Iran awoke to the surprising news of the "landslide victory" and re-election of President Ahmadinejad. Leading up to this day, polls and public sentiment were expecting the win of, or at least a close run-off with, the opposing progressive candidate, Mir-Hussein Mousavi. Historian Hamid Dabashi noted that it ultimately did not matter if the elections were proven fraudulent or not, but that it became a "social fact."⁴² Spontaneous crowds started walking down Engelaab Road and gathered at Azadi. By June 15, the Mayor of Tehran estimated at least three million people had gathered at Azadi with 12 dead.⁴³ June 15 marked the start of a civil disobedience movement that, with the aid of violent suppression from the state, transitioned from merely challenging the legitimacy of Ahmadinejad's presidency to that of the whole government.

The first of their organized protests on June 15 was completely silent. This was a gesture that attempted to hold the government accountable for those same proposed values of the revolution, in the same spaces they demanded them. Although the goal of the protesters was to hold a revote, the visibility of the opposition became just as important. A university student who had marched that day explained that the silence was supposed to be highly symbolic and ironic: "we were saying, hey remember those places you protested for your freedom? Well, we are back here, doing it again. But this time, we have no voice!"⁴⁴ Protesters knew that the Iranian public would understand this subliminal message, seeing past just a rally that could have taken place anywhere in Tehran. Even the website for *Jaras*, the reformist news website close to Mousavi, depicted a green-stained Azadi as its logo.⁴⁵ The movement also capitalized on Islamic imagery, again referencing the Islamic identity of the revolutionary protests. In the following month

⁴² Hamid Dabashi, "Diary of Defiance," *Payvand News*, June 15, 2009, <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/jun/1157.html>.

⁴³ "Qalibaf: At least three million people gathered in support of Mir Huseyn at Azadi Square," *Balatarin*, June 18, 2009, <http://www.balatarin.com/permlink/2009/6/18/1624753>.

⁴⁴ Interview with University of Tehran student and participant of the 2009 protests, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran, June 20, 2018. Translation by the author.

⁴⁵ "Homepage," *Jaras*, www.rahesabz.net.

of protests, the popular slogan “where is my vote?” would emerge. Protesters were playing off the memory of a famous quote by Khomeini shortly after his emergence to power: “the criterion [of our republic] is the vote of the people.” Similarly, protesters would shout “ya Hussein” – a reference to Mousavi’s first name and, more symbolically, a reference to the Islamic call to Imam Hussein that was often used in the revolution, recalling the Shia paradigm of the battle of Karbala where Hussein battles oppressive forces.⁴⁶ Lastly, the color green became the color of the movement as not only one of the colors of the Iranian flag but also the color of Islam and associated with Imam Hussein.⁴⁷

After initial election protests at Azadi, the Green Movement also capitalized on the memory of ritual protests in the space by resurging at extremely significant dates: at the September 18, 2009 al-Quds day and during Islamic holidays like Ashura ‘Tasura on December 27, 2009. Most notably, however, was the movement’s attempt to overtake the anniversary rallies of the revolution at Azadi on February 11. The state managed to suppress counter protests at Azadi with three tactics. First, they bussed in regime loyalists and Ahmadinejad supporters from provincial populations. As in 1979, the bus terminal at Azadi was extremely busy on February 11, again bringing in the more conservative followers of the Islamic clergy. This allowed the state to maintain a majority early in the day at Azadi, before counter-protesters could even make it down Engelaab. Secondly, they used extra police force and Basij militia to disperse protesters farther down Engelaab, where it was easier to use violence away from the coverage at Azadi. Lastly, the state managed a full-scale media blackout with reporters restricted to a specific section at Azadi, even airing footage segments from the previous year’s rally with no audio.⁴⁸ The state had quite literally banned any ability for the counter-movement to appropriate the space, physically and in their coverage. February 11 did prove to be a decisive day, one which led to the “hibernation” of the Green Movement and a clear defeat as the regime placed Mousavi on house arrest.⁴⁹ However, what was most significant on that year’s anniversary was not an outbreak of violence or a clear majority turn-out; it was the state’s unnerving ability and desire to maintain control of the space and demonstrations.

46 Elizabeth Rauh, “Thirty Years Later: Iranian Visual Culture from the 1979 Revolution to the 2009 Presidential Protests,” *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1323.

47 Hamid Dabashi, *The Green Movement in Iran* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 67.

48 “The Nightly Wrap: 22 Bahman,” *The Atlantic*, February 11, 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2010/02/the-nightly-wrap-22-bahman/190507/>.

49 Reza Masoudi-Nejad, “From built to performed space: post-election protests in Tehran,” *Distinction: Journal of Social Theory* 17, no. 3 (2016): 323.

The Green Movement's multiple attempts to occupy Azadi not only underlined Azadi's continued relevance as a national symbol but also its history as a space for public visibility when the values of the revolution are called into question. It was a highly self-aware and historicized protest movement that purposefully used the collective memory of the revolution in its symbols, slogans, and imagery to accentuate these beliefs that were considered under threat, in the same location they were originally formed. The protests were a clear reminder that Azadi is still extremely relevant to voices from the people, even after ritual commemorations became static as the regime consolidated and stabilized their power. As in 1979, perceived ownership over the space – both metaphorically and literally – has become a measurement of political strength and stability of state power. Additionally, the attempted appropriation of the space by the Green Movement showed a new face to the nation than that seen in the space during annual rallies and ritual commemorations. A younger generation of Iranians looked to lay claims over Azadi and, although ultimately suppressed by the government, changed the political landscape of Iran.

Conclusion

The extremely focused attempts of the state to craft their chosen “public” at Azadi reveals the importance of the site in maintaining political control and legitimacy. Because what would happen if they allowed another, as Khomeini had put it in 1979, “legitimate referendum of the streets?” Could the regime survive such a rejection at the same place and through the same means by which they had come to power 30 years earlier? Years of the ritualization of the revolution at Azadi have formed a collective memory of the site as a “sacred center” and place of democratization. These memories have ironically undermined the regime in recent years. The tensions were manifested in 2009 when the public returned to Azadi, outside of commemorations, to bring revolutionary memories literally “back to life” in political opposition protests. Although the Green Movement was ultimately suppressed, the crowds on June 15, 2009 changed Iranian politics as a younger generation came to realize images and experiences they had only ever seen commemorated, and in doing so created their own layer of meaning of the site. The state crackdown on this counter-movement only underlined the understanding by both the people and the state that should the Green Movement, or any subsequent counter-movement, wish to gain political power it would still need to successfully appropriate Azadi as its own. Saved from erasure in the aftermath of the revolution, the importance of Azadi to both the people and subsequent leadership of the Islamic Republic was confirmed. It was the icon of the Shah no longer,

but instead of the “referendum of the streets.” Years of ritualization of the revolution at Azadi have formed a collective vision of the monument as a nexus of democratization. Perceived ownership over the space – both metaphorically and physically – has become a measurement of political strength and stability of state power, as it was in 1979. Not only would a successful new polity have to secure Azadi as a place of demonstration, it would also have to successfully appropriate this narrative of unity in public will.

Nico Ferguson

Crossing Borders in Cloth, from Collectivizing to Commemorating: A Study of the Development of Chilean Arpilleras, their Impact, and Legacy

The trauma of experiencing extreme repression has manifested itself in creative forms across nations and over time. The cunning female weaver trope is used again and again in mythology, from Philomena to Athena, from Helen of Troy to Penelope. The female and the stitch are intrinsically linked. In the case of Chile, the brightly stitched scenes which are synonymous with Chilean *arpilleras* (aplique tapestries) are deeply associated with the fall of Salvador Allende's government, Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, and the repression that followed. The precise origin of arpilleras is contested and unclear. The most common theory predates the coup and connects arpilleras to Isla Negra, a coastal town around 100 km from Santiago de Chile. It was a small fishing village where local women made embroidered wall hangings to sell to tourists to supplement their income. These wall hangings have been cited by the *arpilleristas* (women who make arpilleras) as one of their sources of inspiration.

Arpilleras developed in the capital city, particularly in the areas of extreme deprivation such as the shanty towns, but they were also produced by families of the detained and disappeared. Many of the women from the poorer areas of Santiago were illiterate and so creating arpilleras provided them with an opportunity to voice their concerns, traumas and experiences in a medium that could easily be transported and understood abroad. The arpillera art form was understood to be a threat to the Junta, ultimately resulting in them being outlawed in 1980.

It is this connection between the feminine and sewing, stitching and weaving that has been analyzed by Rozsika Parker who traces the development and division of the categories of "arts" and "crafts" and the social system which separates artist from artisan. The Renaissance is identified as the turning point in the seventeenth century when embroidery and stitching moved from a male profession to an acceptable form of education and activity for women.¹ The rise of the individualistic and predominantly masculine painterly school of art contrasts with the feminine one of embroidery which was frequently a collective act. This collective

1 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 73.

aspect has naturally leant the form to political or revolutionary causes, with examples ranging from its use following the October Revolution to banners made by suffragettes and to Chilean arpilleras. Arpilleras grew out of the historical circumstances of military governed Chile.

The main objectives of this chapter are to investigate the role arpilleras played in providing a voice for the women who made them and their lasting legacy in contemporary society. The following pages question the extent to which Arpilleras can be considered depositories of memories and examine their legacy.

Contextualization

In the 150 years following independence from Spain, Chile prided itself in being one of the most stable and democratic countries in South America. Perhaps this long-standing tradition of democracy is what accounted for the disbelief that the country was about to enter a 16-year-long dictatorship.² Steve Stern talks of the “cultural shock” experienced in Chile, which had seen itself as a civilized nation, one which produced Nobel prizing winning laureates, academics, and was a hub of thought and culture. The reality of the cruel acts that followed the establishment of the dictatorship meant that a large part of the population used denial as a coping mechanism. On September 11, 1973, following the storming of La Moneda Palace, the seat of government, General Augusto Pinochet addressed the nation via the radio and declared, “this is not a coup d’état, but a military movement.” His reassurances that there would be “no victors or vanquished” would ring hollow almost immediately as a 24-hour curfew was imposed and all political parties were systematically outlawed. Neo-liberalism is intrinsically tied up with Chilean society to the extent that even today it is impossible to reflect on the history of the country without considering the implications of the system. Under Pinochet Chile became the first example of a neoliberal state and the so-called “Chicago Boys” reconstructed the economy by creating free trade, opening up natural resources to competition, and privatizing social security.³ The consequences of neoliberal policy resonated throughout the entire country but one of the places where it had the most profound and immediate implications were in the *poblaciones* (shanty towns) on the periphery of Santiago.

² Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela, *A Nation of Enemies: Chile Under Pinochet* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 30.

³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.

The development of poblaciones in Santiago has been traced back to the early twentieth century when the nitrate economy went into recession. Following WWII Chile, like many Latin American countries, industrialized rapidly and many travelled to the capital in search of employment. The elevation of folk culture in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw the población as home to theater, music, and puppetry performances. The poblaciones became creative centers and the nucleus of political discussion. The strong political identity of members of the shanty towns and their development as a seat of folk culture resulted in them facing particularly harsh treatment throughout the dictatorship. An environment of fear was intentionally created; poblaciones were used as temporary dumping grounds for corpses left there until military trucks eventually arrived to remove them. There were random raids on homes where anything that aroused suspicion was destroyed and families feared interrogations.⁴

The anthropologist Paley sought to understand the historical development of La Bandera, a población situated to the south of Santiago. The study reveals the conflicting histories of the area, particularly its foundation myth. The general assumption tended to be that La Bandera was established following the infamous land seizure of January 26, 1969, facilitated by Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, and it was frequently cited as an exemplary case of the success of the land seizures. However, local memory contradicted this version of events; the locals remember the role of community groups and individuals in establishing the población rather than the state.⁵ This exemplifies the lack of control of these marginalized communities when their version of the past had been erased by government rhetoric.

Trauma, Memory, and Collective Cultural Responses

The significance of vernacular culture, folk art or low culture, whichever definition is attached to it, comes not from the distinction between high and low but rather from the connections and meanings created by culture itself, those that bind and differentiate members of society.⁶

4 Julia Paley, *Marketing Democracy: Power and Social Movements in Post-Dictatorship Chile* (London: University of California Press, 2001), 56–62.

5 Paley, *Marketing Democracy*, 32–33.

6 Ted Cohen, “High and Low Thinking About High and Low Art,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 2 (1993): 156, DOI: 10.2307/431380.

The twentieth century was marked as an era of trauma as societies grappled with the atrocities of the atomic bomb, WWI and WWII, genocide, conflict and dictatorship, and as a result trauma theories proliferated. The memory of trauma impacts on collective identity, as a defining marker of a group whose members do not consciously choose to identify as victims but choose to transform loss and incorporate it into cultural narratives.⁷ We can consider arpilleras as one such cultural narrative. Arpilleras were subversive and identified a potential threat to the dictatorship; as an art form they straddle the collective and individual. Individually, they provided arpilleristas with an income and a space to talk. Collectively, arpilleras formed part of the cultural resistance against the regime. Created in collective workshops and moved across the world, arpilleras allowed their makers to recount their stories, not through words but images.

Arpilleras can be read like any other documentary source due to their close connection to the daily reality of the women who made them. The importance of this aspect of truth and reality is highlighted by a member of Association of Families of the Detained-Disappeared (AFDD): “We don’t make the arpilleras just to be making something, to show little nothings or a field of flowers. The arpillera was born to show our real lives, disappeared children, hunger, common soup kitchens, our lack of light and water.”⁸ The idea of a collective memory is stitched out in the collaborative nature of arpilleras. Take, for example, the arpillera referred to as *Hardship in Our Community*, made in 1979 by a group of women under FASIC (Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas). It consists of nine arpilleras, each a vignette of the community’s problems and how the community confronted and challenged them (Figure 1). The top right-hand arpillera shows a textile factory whose workers are on strike, with the *Carabineros* (Chilean police force) with their unmistakable green uniform surrounding two male protestors and a group of women. Many of the women spoke of the dangers of men participating in protests and the tendency for husbands to avoid protests either through fear of danger or lack of belief in the difference it would make. Men were frequently discouraged from public denunciations of the government by their wives, mothers, and sisters, as men were more likely to face arrest. The women knew that they were seen as insignificant and as not constituting a real threat, so they were able to contest the military government in both subversive and public ways.⁹ Other scenes in this collection of arpilleras include collective kitchens and gardens that were community-

7 Shoshana Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 23.

8 Marjorie Agosín, *Scraps of Life: Chilean Arpilleras: Chilean Women and the Pinochet Dictatorship*, trans. Cola Franzen (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1987), 79–81.

9 Agosín, *Scraps of Life*, 50.

led initiatives to help fight hunger. Throughout the stitching of these scenes a group discussion must have occurred. The collaborative effort involved in creating a set of arpilleras must have formed ties and connections among the group to enforce an “imagined community” which counteracted the state sanctioned one which did not acknowledge these women, their pain or problems.



Fig. 1: Penurias en nuestra población/ Hardship in our community
Fundación de Ayuda Social de las Iglesias Cristianas (FASIC) workshop, 1979
Photo Tony Boyle, © Conflict Textiles

Facilitating Arpilleras: Vicaría de la Solidaridad and CEMA

In the 1970s, one of the first organizations to start collecting testimonies from torture victims and family members of the detained and disappeared in Chile was the religious organization Comité Pro Paz (CPP). In addition to their work on human rights they were also a pivotal force behind the development and distribution of arpilleras. Mainly because of Pinochet’s unwavering belief in the standing of the

Church as part of “the moral cleansing of the nation,” it was one of the few organizations which could critique the dictatorship and simultaneously be under its protection. This is not to say that the Church and the Vicaría did not on occasion face arrest and interrogation as a result of their critical stance. Startled by the frequent disappearances and torture cases the CPP was formed a month after the coup by the cross-religious community.¹⁰ The CPP’s assistance expanded to support work in the poblaciones, particularly the groups that had already been set up by women. The CPP and later the Vicaría’s work documenting human rights abuses in Chile was crucial for gaining world recognition of the vast human rights violations. Under mounting pressure the committee was forced to close down by December 1975. And it was following this that the Cardinal set up the Vicaría de la Solidaridad in January 1975, which would run until 1992.

In many ways the Vicaría was established to continue the work started by the CPP, particularly the process of documenting human rights violations and providing aid for political prisoners and their families, as well as carrying on the relief work that had been started in the poblaciones. It also worked to support a growing network of international human rights organizations which had been developing in Chile since 1973, despite the continued threat of repatriations. Following the disbanding of the CPP it became apparent that in order for the Vicaría to remain operational it was essential that they appeared non-partisan: the way for them to achieve this was to campaign for human rights but not specifically for a return to democracy or to challenge the status quo.¹¹ Through their fight for human rights the Vicaría was able to protect their organization and to offer help clandestinely to other groups, for example those in the poblaciones.

The safety offered by association with the Church was crucial. It encouraged women to become involved in arpillera groups because they felt safe in the knowledge that the Church was looked upon favorably by the government.¹² The importance of the Church as an organization and as a focal point of the community can be seen through its recurrence as a theme in many arpilleras. The Church may be represented as a simple cross in a room where a group of children are being fed, or a chapel might be depicted. Although there were other human rights organizations in Chile, and equally although the creation and distribution of arpilleras did occur to some extent without the assistance of the Vicaría, that organization was critical in establishing the process of many women’s arpillera workshops.

¹⁰ Jacqueline Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship: Making and Exporting Arpilleras Under Pinochet* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 40.

¹¹ Pamela Lowden, *Moral Opposition to Authoritarian Rule in Chile, 1973–90* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

¹² Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship*, 89.

The Vicaría's arpillera workshops were to become such a cultural institution that they formed the basis of the critically acclaimed play *Tres Marías y Una Rosa* which rekindled international interest in Chilean culture. It was a social commentary on the unspoken consequences of the so-called "Miracle of Chile": unemployment, poverty, people forced to emigrate, and the reliance on income generated by groups of women making arpilleras. The venture was a collaborative effort between the independent theatre company Taller de Investigación Teatral and a group of women from an arpillera workshop. The play demonstrated how the workshops were run and the collaborative approach taken by the women. The play toured internationally and it proved so successful that the government announced it was of "cultural and artistic value" and lifted the 22 per cent VAT on ticket sales that cultural performances were typically subjected to.¹³

CEMA Chile, like the Vicaría, sponsored arpillera workshops, however, with Pinochet's spouse Lucía Hiriart in charge, the arpilleras produced were explicitly pro-regime. CEMA Chile's focus was to reinforce the nuclear family and traditional gender roles. Women were incentivized to join the organization which granted them access to discounted stores or classes such as hairdressing, baking, and arpillera making. Unlike the Vicaría workshops where women tended to speak freely, CEMA's general committee imposed topics of conversation and determined the scenes depicted.¹⁴ CEMA was a production line for producing standardized artisanal works which removed any freedom of choice or expression from the women who created the arpilleras. The adoption of arpilleras by CEMA as a counteractive movement against the Vicaría demonstrates the powerful role they played in society.

Arpilleras, Human Rights, and Making the Private Public

"Chile's Needled Junta" was the title given to the newspaper article appearing in the national British newspaper, *The Guardian*, announcing that images of arpilleras would be used on charity Christmas cards.¹⁵ From Santiago's poblaciones to homes on the other side of the world, arpilleras were carrying their human rights message. To unpick arpilleras and their movement across the world is to explore

¹³ Martin Wood, "Other Side of the 'Miracle'," *The Guardian*, May 3, 1981, 36.

¹⁴ Norberto Lechner and Susana Levy, *Notas Sobre la Cotidana III: el Disciplinamiento de la Mujer* (Santiago de Chile: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), 22–32.

¹⁵ Enzo Cossi and Guy Brett, "Chile's Needled Junta," *The Guardian*, December 10, 1979, 20.

the various networks that assisted in their creation and distribution. One of the key forces behind these networks was their shared sense of human rights. For the arpillera movement to successfully achieve its goals of providing an income whilst simultaneously raising awareness abroad, the entire process had to rely on the assistance of groups and organizations at both national and international levels.

At first, arpilleras were sold locally to known supporters of the cause. This was partly due to limitations of selling an unknown art form abroad without first establishing the necessary “solidarity chains.”¹⁶ The first public exhibition of arpilleras was in 1975 and was soon followed by a larger exhibition in the San Franciscan Church. The church is located in downtown Santiago and is hauntingly close to Londres 38, an infamous detention and torture center. An example of the risk posed by publicly exhibiting arpilleras is the bombing of the Paulina Waugh Gallery in the central neighborhood of Bella Vista in early January 1977. The exhibition *Navidad Siglo XX* exhibited arpilleras from nearby poblaciones and works by established artists. The story of the bombing was widely reported in the press where it was said that the financial company which occupied the first floor of the building had been burning reports by throwing firebombs in through the window, although the bombs had targeted the gallery rather than their offices.¹⁷ It was later revealed that the secret police were the perpetrators who perceived the arpillera display as a “memory knot” which could incite conflicting memories so they were impelled to annihilate them.¹⁸ The risks posed at home were equalled by those associated with the exportation of arpilleras. By 1976 sufficient links had developed with external organizations for the sale of arpilleras abroad. The making of arpilleras was seen as a subversive act, and thus carrying and distributing them came at considerable risk, a risk which was shared by those in the solidarity chain.

In general, arpilleras were made anonymously, free of text except for the occasional slips of paper attached to a pocket at the back of the work, explaining what the arpillera depicted. Arpilleras provided women with the authority and agency to choose their own images, to select the fabric, to contemplate and disentangle which moment from their past or present reality they wanted to represent. Arpilleras functioned as a form of testimony where the creator of the piece had the authority over what is represented and, crucially, had certainty that it would remain

¹⁶ Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship*, 163.

¹⁷ Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973–1978* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 81–83.

¹⁸ Steve J. Stern, *Remembering Pinochet's Chile: On the Eve of London 1998* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 120.

unchanged and unaltered. It is impossible to unpick an element from an arpillera without unravelling the entire work. As such the arpilleras could be confident that their work would remain unadulterated. Although some arpilleras were made by trained seamstresses they were always seen as a handicraft, with all its feminine connotations. As a result of this characterization, arpilleras were initially considered to be of limited threat to the dictatorship because they were produced by low-status women.¹⁹ What would the response have been had the women chosen to use a more traditional form of protest like posters or print media?

Beyond Chile, arpilleras were exhibited in different locations, including the high art spaces of galleries and exhibition venues. In 1987 the exhibition *Chile Vive* toured Madrid and Barcelona. It was billed as an exhibition of “exilio interior,” formed with works from those who had remained in Chile. The exhibition included a painting by the revered Chilean Roberto Matta and among all this high art were the “famosas y deliciosas arpilleras.”²⁰ Arpilleras attracted the attention of various members of the international community, those who revered them for their subversive messages and those with a continued interest in the nation from prior to the coup. As they were made by impoverished women they also attracted the interest of feminists and socialists.²¹ The admiration resulted in an exhibition of arpilleras held in London’s AIR Gallery in 1979 which was billed as, “the London show that this year most successfully and movingly integrated social concerns and traditional art.”²² The inclusion of arpilleras as part of “high art” exhibitions demonstrates how they began to transcend their “folk art” label.

The transition of women from the private to the public sphere was a crucial consequence of the arpillera movement. The importance of the home was apparent in the sheer volume represented in arpilleras, whether in a positive light, reflecting aspects of the community and hope for the future, or how society failed, ignored and marginalized the poor. Some arpilleras show an entire community tapping into the electric supply as they could not afford to pay for it. They may include scenes that represent the inadequate sanitary conditions of the población. Homes may merely be a backdrop for the unemployed men with no hope of finding work to while away their day. In the poblaciones in particular, it was uncom-

19 Alba Pérez and María Viñolo, “Las Arpilleras, una Alternativa Textil Femenina de Participación y Resistencia Social,” in *¿Por Qué Tenen que decir Que Somos Diferentes? Las Mujeres Inmigrantes, sujetos de Acción Política*, ed. Carmen Gregorio Gil (Stanford: Creative Commons, 2010), 49.

20 O.S., “Se exhibe en Barcelona “Chile Vive”, una muestra de la actividad cultural producida bajo Pinochet,” *La Vanguardia*, March 12, 1987, 46.

21 John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain* (London: Tauris, 2002), 218.

22 Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the Message?: A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1984), 58–59.

mon for women to work outside the home. However, with the arpillera movement these women began to move themselves into the public realm. One arpillera explained how important the process was for her in her own identity formation: “it’s a great joy that people consider that we are making art [and] that we are artists in this. For us, as housewives, we’ve never been, or dreamt of being, artists or working in that sort of thing. In this there’s some compensation for what’s happened. It gives us more strength to go on, to go on struggling to live. God willing, we’ll be able to make them better one day.”²³

The development of a sense of community and belonging among these women was crucial, with some social scientists suggesting that the dictatorship provided them with an opportunity for a distinct form of political power. The majority of those who disappeared or were detained were men. As the women organized themselves they took public stances against the dictatorship. Women chained themselves to the gates in front of the Congress building, demanding to know what had happened to the disappeared. One arpillera dating from the late 1980s illustrates this moment. It shares the story that each woman who participated in the protest was detained for five days. In similar displays of civil disobedience women took part in regular Thursday marches pinning photos of the disappeared to their chests, photos which can also be seen in this arpillera. These women began to organize themselves and through the work they did in the arpillera workshops they were able to see themselves as more than just wives and mothers. They realized the political potential of their experiences and as such their private grief was expressed publicly.²⁴ There was also a shift in the way the women were perceived by their husbands. Many reported spouses who were resistant to the idea of their wives becoming the breadwinner but gradually the financial benefits of women providing an income began to be more widely accepted. There are even reports of women enlisting family members to help complete arpilleras at particularly busy periods – including husbands and sons.²⁵

The Global and Local Dimensions of Arpilleras

President Michele Bachelet’s inauguration speech at the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos was interrupted for several minutes by two women climbing onto the stage to critique the country’s contemporary human rights record. One

²³ Guy Brett, *Through Our Own Eyes: Popular Art and Modern History* (London: GMP Publishers, 1986), 50.

²⁴ Agosin, *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: the Arpillera Movement in Chile*, 44.

²⁵ Adams, *Art Against Dictatorship*, 122.

of the women was identified as the sister of the Mapuche activist Matías Catrileo who had died at the hands of the Carabineros in January 2008.²⁶ Bachelet's speech was laden with references to a space for multiple memories and interpretations of the past. She directly expressed the idea of plurality, "no hay una sola memoria sobre el pasado. Las personas recuerdan de manera diferente, individual y colectivamente."²⁷ She drew attention to former presidents Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei, and Ricardo Lagos sitting in the audience, "que representan 20 años de libertad y de respeto por los derechos humanos."²⁸ This concept of a democratic past and platform for memories was tested twice that day. The other incident came with the arrival of the Peruvian writer, Mario Vargas Llosa who was greeted by cries of "que se vaya," heard coming from members of the group AFDD who were angered by his presence because of his support of the presidential candidate Sebastian Piñera. Responding to the incident, the vice president of AFDD, Mireya García, declared that his presence "fue una ofensa a la dignidad y a la memoria de las víctimas."²⁹ It was apparent that the site was laden with meaning and contention where injustices of the past, and the more recent past, that had not been laid to rest were made visible. The inauguration was also an emotional experience for the President whose father had died at the hands of the military in 1974. The speech suggested that the Museo de la Memoria's intention was to incorporate those who were exiled, tortured, detained, and disappeared under the military government, as well as a space for all types of personal connections and responses, some of which were visible at the inauguration. The President's speech also paid homage to Cardinal Silva Henríquez and the work of the Vicaría. Although not outlined in the speech itself, arpilleras do find a home in the museum both as part of the museum's permanent collection and frequently as part of temporary exhibitions. The permanent collection consists of a wide range of Chilean arpilleras dating from the early 1970s to the early 1990s and it is one of the few places in Santiago where arpilleras are on permanent display. The controversy surrounding the opening of the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos gives some indica-

26 Karina Morales, "Incidentes empañan inauguración del Museo de la Memoria," *EMOL*, January 11, 2010, <https://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2010/01/11/393405/incidentes-empanan-inauguracion-del-museo-de-la-memoria.html>.

27 Michelle Bachelet, "Discurso Inauguración del Museo de la Memoria y Los Derechos Humanos," 4 (speech, Santiago de Chile, January 11, 2010), Museo de la Memoria, <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/discurso-presidenta.pdf>.

28 Bachelet, "Discurso Inauguración del Museo de la Memoria y Los Derechos Humanos," 1.

29 4 "AFDD Criticó Presencia de Vargas Llosa en Inauguración de Museo de la Memoria," *EMOL* (Spanish Language Site), January 12, 2010, <http://www.emol.com/noticias/nacional/2010/01/12/393493/afdd-critico-presencia-de-vargas-llosa-en-inauguracion-de-museo-de-la-memoria.html>.

tion of how sites of commemoration can be catalysts for contentious and opposing memories.

Commemoration

Michelle Bachelet's first term in office coincided with the country's bicentenary celebrations and as such it was a heavily commemorative period. Events and funding were arranged to mark the anniversary which included several monuments and sites of memory dedicated to the detained and disappeared. This latest period of commemoration may have been a means of leaving behind a governmental legacy and continued a fraught relationship between memory and commemoration. Forms of commemoration, either state sanctioned or grassroots, require a public display that encourages reflection and response. History is selective and what is remembered officially by the state always represents an omission. State-sanctioned monuments have a tendency to commemorate a more heroic past, one that encourages its citizens to re-remember a sanitized version of events where the dominant agenda is represented.³⁰

La Alameda is a vast street that stretches east to west across most of Santiago; it passes in front of La Moneda palace, home to statues dedicated to national heroes, and notably not home to a recent monument, Women in the Memory. Women in the Memory is dedicated to not just the Chilean women who were killed or made to disappear but to all disappeared women across Latin America. This monument was deemed too political to be placed in the central thoroughfare of La Alameda. Instead it was relegated to the forgotten and hidden location on the roof of a metro station, unbeknown to the many commuters who pass by.

Over time monuments have been erected to the "big" names of Chilean history, to Allende and Pinochet. Monuments commemorating the detained and disappeared like the wall of names in the General Cemetery or the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park among others have also left their mark on public space. Arpilleras were never made as a monument to the past; they were subversive works which challenged the present reality. The intention is not to detract from these monuments made of stone, iron, and concrete but it is hard not to view arpilleras as unintentional counter-monuments, made from humbling threads and fabric. Arpilleras share many qualities with counter-monuments. They provide a counter-narrative to the dominant one; they move away from political theory and show the lived real-

30 Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain* (London: Routledge, 2012), 4.

ity. The materials used stand in opposition to traditional monuments, made of fabric and hand-sewn they have a delicacy to them. Arpilleras have been described as “ambassadors” and much like the ambassador they “represent history and pass on culture.”³¹ They were made to travel and pass through many hands. If an arpillera is displayed in an art gallery in Madrid, in a community Library in Derry, or in an individual’s home the meaning and potency of the message is not altered. Their meaning is not dependent on their location because of their universality. Arpilleras stood testimony to crimes and injustices of the past and continue to do so now.

Memory Struggles and the Medium of Cloth

Cloth and its different applications tend to lend itself to this form of memory work because of two striking aspects. The first of these is the importance of the visual when recounting stories, aside from the fact that it is difficult to express with words the experience; this tendency of the oral or visual over the written form is the very essence of “folk.”³² The importance of their “folksiness” stylistically is significant because of the shock and impact arpilleras have: at first they may appear naïve and childlike which is juxtaposed to the scenes of violence and cruelty they depict. Secondly, war textiles, including arpilleras, demonstrate a need to tell stories and to share experience, for the production of folk art relies on “communication in small groups,”³³ and in this way we can see arpillera workshops as a continuation of the collective movement that had been outlawed during the dictatorship.

As well as identity formation, memory is significant because it involves an active process: remembering serves as a form of discovery and engagement.³⁴ For Arendt, memory propels us forward as opposed to holding us back; memory in the present is a crucial part of dealing with trauma.³⁵ Arpilleras with their representations of a moment in time but with the lack of any clear time markers are a

31 Roberta Bacic, in discussion with the author, Benone, June 24, 2016.

32 Marsha MacDowell, “A Document of Cloth: Interpreting History in a Traditional Textile,” in *Weavings of War: Fabric of Memory an Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Ariel Zeitlin Cooke and Marsha MacDowell (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 42.

33 Ariel Zeitlin Cooke, “Common Threads: The Creation of War Textiles Around the World,” in *Weavings of War: Fabric of Memory an Exhibition Catalogue*, ed. Ariel Zeitlin Cooke and Marsha MacDowell (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005), 12.

34 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 56.

35 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), 10–11.

clear cultural act of memory. According to Bell cultural acts of memory must be understood as a political action and as an attempt to place the past.³⁶

The use of textiles as testimony was highlighted in Selimović's comparative study of memory quilts of the Bosnian genocide and of arpilleras from the Southern Cone. Textiles as testimony mean that the women are witnesses twice, once first-hand and then again through the creation of quilts or embroidery.³⁷ The importance of arpilleras and other fibre arts, where the creator portrays their memories and experiences of a particular moment or event, is their position always outside the official historical narrative.

Conclusion

The women who participated in the workshops found themselves discussing and questioning the government which led to greater politicization of those women. This can be seen as a paradox of the regime. The Junta had wanted to enforce patriarchal ideals but women consequently had a greater impact on the public sphere than ever before. Through state-sanctioned repressions and enforced economic hardships women moved from the home and onto the streets to protest. It would reduce the arpilleras and other women to suggest that a direct consequence of creating an arpillera was the breaking down of the public and private dichotomy. However, what does seem apparent is that the greater participation in the public sphere of women came from the collective movements that developed, arpilleras being one of them. Arpilleras were not the insignificant craft that they had initially been dismissed as by the regime. Arpilleras are a distinct version of memory and can be read as historical sources. They are examples of "history from below" and in their own way subvert some of the neo-liberal ideals that were beginning to take effect. They are made from scraps of mass-produced clothes. These scraps go from being a generic item and are transformed into something original, a unique piece of art which is a product of its place and a form of commemoration from a troubled time.

This chapter argues that arpilleras can be considered depositories of memories because of the way they documented daily realities, and how consequently they came to be relied upon by exiles as a means of gaining a snapshot of the sit-

36 Vikki Bell, "Afterword: The Politics of "Memory" in the Long Present of the Southern Cone," in *The Memory of State Terrorism in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay*, ed. Francesca Lessa and Vincent Druliolle (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 211.

37 Inela Selimović, "Seeing Voices: Srebrenica's Filaments of Memory," in *Stitching Resistance: Women, Creativity, and Fiber Arts*, ed. Marjorie Agosín (Tunbridge Wells: Solis Press, 2014), 74.

uation back home. They continue to be depositories of the memories of those who made them. The collaborative and collective nature of arpillera workshops provided women with a space to create testimonies of their lives and played a role in the way the women saw themselves. Very few of Santiago's original arpilleristas are alive today, however, through the scenes they depicted using deeply personal scraps of cloth or locks of hair we continue to be offered an insight into what they experienced and felt. The vast majority of the arpillera workshops faced closure due to the reduced interest from overseas purchasers with the return to democracy and stability. Over time the workshops were forced to close and the Vicaría was disbanded in 1992. The legacy has been their implementation of post-conflict strategies that allow a space for those to remember in opposition to the often encouraged stance of forgetting. When asked why arpilleras have travelled so widely and continue to be a point of inspiration, the director of Guernica's Peace Museum reflected that, *"el lenguaje textil y el arte tienen una gran potencialidad para hablar de cosas, de momentos tan terribles que son casi inenarrables, por eso su importancia."*³⁸ The continuing legacy of arpilleras is their ability to remember, remind, and challenge injustices.

³⁸ Iratxe Momoitio, email to author, April 29, 2016.

Alexandra D'Astolfo

Public Collections, Private Benefactors and Online Audiences: Communicating the Role of Philanthropy in Shaping Museum Collections

The international financial crisis in 2008 had severe ramifications for arts and cultural institutions due to changes in the availability of public funding for the arts across Europe as many national governments imposed austerity measures.¹ Arts institutions also had to face shifting public opinion, with increased skepticism around “the value of public funds devoted to the cultural sector” in light of cuts to public services such as education and health.² In the Republic of Ireland, government expenditure on cultural services dropped from 1% of total expenditure between 2003 and 2008 to a low of 0.6% by 2010.³ From 2011 to 2018 funding rose again but failed to return to the pre-financial crisis levels of 2008 (Figure 1).⁴

The effects of these national funding cuts were dramatic when reflected in arts budgets. This trend continued well beyond 2008, with total cultural expenditure by the then-Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht decreasing by 26% between 2008 and 2013.⁵ As reflected in Eurostat data, by 2020 funding still did not match pre-2008 in real terms. For example, the Oireachtas (Houses of Parliament) grant-in-aid to the Arts Council Ireland announced for 2020 at

1 Vesna Čopić et al., *Trends in Public Funding for Culture in the EU* (Brussels: European Expert Network on Culture, 2014), 6, <http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2573.pdf>; Eurostat, *Government Expenditure on Recreation, Culture and Religion (COFOG)* (Luxembourg: Eurostat, 2018), <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/culture/data/database>; Copic et al., *Trends in Public Funding*, 39.

2 Lluís Bonet and Fabio Donato, “The Impact of the Financial Crisis and its Impact on the Current Models of Governance and Management of the Cultural Sector in Europe,” *ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* 1 (2011): 7, https://www.encatc.org/media/2703-journal_vol1_issue1_dec2011512.pdf.

3 Bonet and Donato, “The Impact of the Financial Crisis,” 7.

4 Eurostat, *Government Expenditure (COFOG)*.

5 The department changed name four times during this period; Alexandra Slaby, “Whither Cultural Policy in Post-Celtic Tiger Ireland?,” *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 37, no. 1/2 (2011): 79, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41955740>.

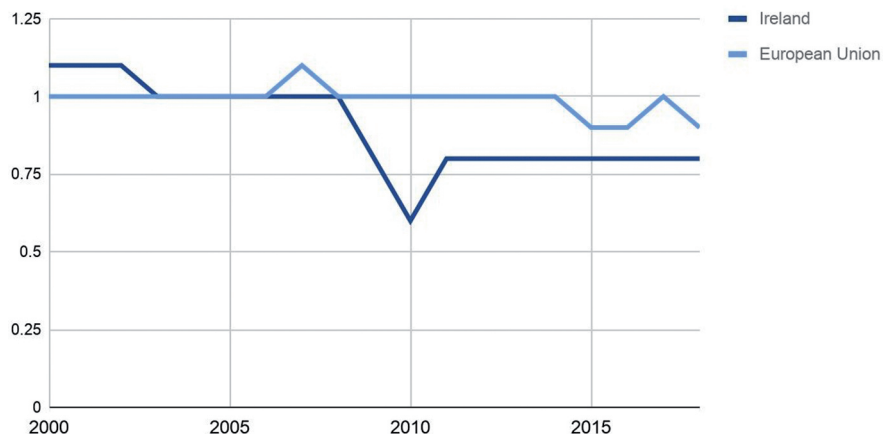


Fig. 1: Total Government expenditure on Cultural Services (as % of total expenditure) from 2001 to 2018. Line chart by author. Data source: Eurostat.

€80 m (Figure 2) represented an equivalent of €68.33 m in 2008's currency value when adjusted for inflation.⁶

These funding cuts also significantly impacted the operating capacity of cultural institutions, with Ireland's national museums explicitly referencing budget shortfalls in their post-recession annual reports and strategic plans. The Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), the focus of this chapter, stated that it had experienced an “overall 48 % cut in funding since 2008.”⁷ These cuts saw IMMA's Oireachtas grant-in-aid drop from a peak of €8.4 m in 2008 to €4.72 m in 2014.⁸ By 2018 funding had increased but still remained well below 2008 levels (Figure 3).⁹

While public funding reductions were first perceived in the arts as a “temporary and external constraint” from which the sector would recover, it soon became apparent that a deeper structural shift in arts funding was occurring, whereby

⁶ Ronan McGreevy, “Mixed Reactions to Budget 2020 from the Arts Sector,” *The Irish Times*, October 8, 2019, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/mixed-reaction-to-budget-2020-from-the-arts-sector-1.4044278>.

⁷ IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2015* (Dublin: IMMA, 2016), 6, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

⁸ IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2009* (Dublin: IMMA, 2010), 45, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>; IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2014* (Dublin: IMMA, 2015), 33, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

⁹ IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2018* (Dublin: IMMA, 2019), 34, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

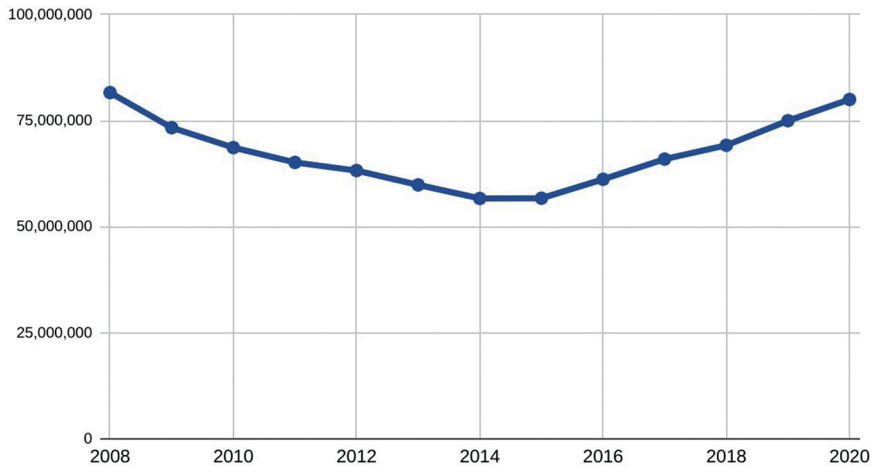


Fig. 2: Arts Council Funding 2008–2020 (€). Not adjusted for inflation.

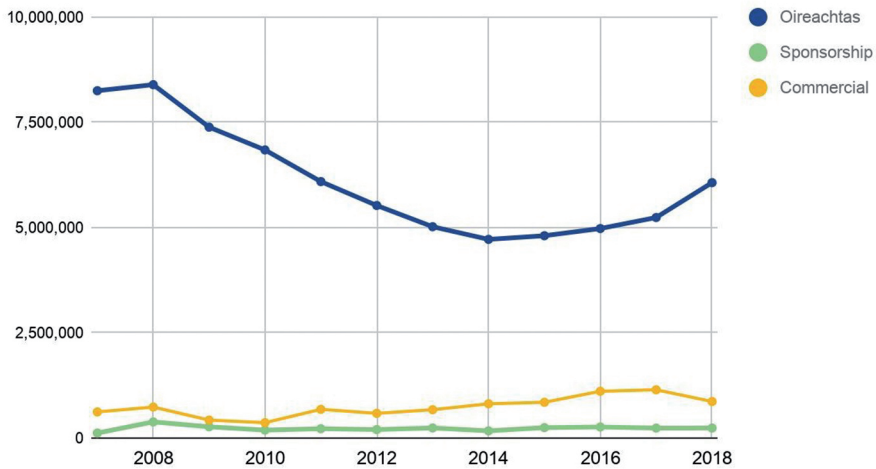


Fig. 3: IMMA Revenue Sources 2007–2018 (€). Data Source: IMMA Annual Reports.

“Public authorities across Europe [began] encouraging cultural institutions to diversify their sources of income,” with a marked focus on raising philanthropic funds.¹⁰ Accordingly, in 2012, the Department of Arts established the Philanthropy

¹⁰ Bonet and Donato, “The Impact of the Financial Crisis,” 8; Jean-Michel Tobelem, “The Arts and

Leverage Initiative which provided tiered matching funds for arts organizations able to attract private support, releasing more public funds to organizations as they raised more philanthropic money.¹¹ In the same year the Arts Council launched RAISE, a program aimed at providing professional support to develop fundraising capacity in the Irish arts sector.¹² It appeared that Irish funding bodies and arts agencies began to turn towards a traditionally American model of cultural support, looking to leverage private sources to subsidize public goods.¹³ However, this shift in cultural policy failed to accommodate the fact that private philanthropy was also affected by recessionary market forces, lagging by 12.9% from 2008 to 2009 in the wake of the financial crisis, though statistics specifically concerning arts and cultural institutions are unavailable for this period.¹⁴

While private philanthropy in museums is nothing new, from 2008 it became an imperative. Without the expected return of public funding to pre-recession levels, art museums internationally needed to raise income from private sources and, importantly, to do so visibly as a means of projecting institutional confidence to attract further support. However, alongside highly publicized museum advocacy campaigns, which called for both a restoration of public funding levels and increased private investment in the arts, came equivalent public scrutiny of museums' private funding sources. Museum fundraising and governance began to garner widespread public attention, extending to both corporate sponsorship and private donors, as audiences increasingly demanded transparency and oversight of museums.¹⁵ As seen in recent protests at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, audiences are now projecting their ethics back at museums in a reversal of the historical model of the museum as a projec-

Culture: Financial Burden or a Way Out of the Crisis?," *ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy* 3, issue 1 (2012): 54, https://www.encatc.org/media/2689-encatc_journal_vol3_issue_1_20135361.pdf/.

11 Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, *Annual Report 2012* (Dublin: Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, 2015), 9, last modified July 25, 2019, <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/380616-annual-report-2012/>.

12 Arts Council Ireland, *Annual Report 2012* (Dublin: Arts Council Ireland, 2013), 2, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.artscouncil.ie/publications/?&Category=Annual%20reports>.

13 Tobelem, "Arts and Culture: Financial Burden or a Way Out of the Crisis?," 55.

14 Sinead Kelleher and Dennis O'Connor, *Fundraising Performance: The First Annual Report on Fundraising in Ireland*, (Dublin: 2into3, 2020), 4, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.2into3.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Final-Draft-Annual-Report-on-Fundraising.pdf>.

15 Andrea Fraser, "It's Time to Consider the Links Between Museum Boards and Political Money," *Artnet News*, May 7, 2018, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/how-are-museums-implicated-in-todays-political-mess-1278824>.

tor of “civilizing” values.¹⁶ Irish museums in the midst of expanding private support must grapple with the questions asked of their international peers: is private philanthropy a “third face of power” which represents “the ability of elites to shape the public’s preferences” through their financial support of certain forms of museums, exhibitions, and artists? Through accepting funds, do museums become complicit in the financial dealings of their donors, which may not align with the values to which certain audiences hold public museums?¹⁷ Or is philanthropy an alternative to limited, uncertain state funding, and a more sustainable method for museums to grow their collections, expand programming, and increase access? These conversations will continue as audiences and benefactors redefine their relationship with each other and with cultural institutions.

This chapter therefore highlights the relationship between private philanthropy and museum acquisitions, examining how museums communicate this relationship to public audiences through a case study of IMMA. The example of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam will demonstrate that IMMA is not unique in its reliance on philanthropy to drive acquisitions. Lastly, it discusses the possibilities for linked data in museum collections to make museum-donor relationships and custodial history more transparent. This research focuses predominantly on online collections, examining how they represent acquisitions made by means of private philanthropic gifts, i.e. IMMA’s Online Collection, using acquisition and donor data available through May 2020.¹⁸ Acquisition data was imported to Google Sheets, converted into a JSON file format, and input into D3.js, the JavaScript data visualization library to create the included visualizations.¹⁹

16 Victoria Stapley-Brown, “Philanthropy, but at what Price? US Museums Wake up to Public’s Ethical Concerns,” *The Art Newspaper*, August 28, 2019, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2019/08/28/philanthropy-but-at-what-price-us-museums-wake-up-to-publics-ethical-concerns>; Fraser, “Links Between Museum Boards and Political Money”; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1995).

17 Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 576, doi: 10.1017/S1537592714001595.

18 “Collection,” Irish Museum of Modern Art, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://imma.ie/collection/>.

19 D3.js, accessed August 12, 2022, <https://d3js.org>.

The Museum-Donor Relationship

Private philanthropy is “voluntary contributions by means of money, goods, and/or time (expertise) by individuals.”²⁰ Philanthropy Ireland states that “giving is strategic, more structured and often on a longer term basis.”²¹ Private philanthropists’ involvement with institutions may therefore extend beyond giving to include board membership and peer fundraising.²² They may direct their giving at a range of programs and priorities within arts institutions including exhibitions, conservation, education programs, and capital works. This chapter focuses on a particular priority: museum collections. It considers the direct donation of artwork and to a lesser extent the provision of ringfenced funds specifically to acquire work.

If museums have frequently been critiqued “as a conduit for a dominant ideology” intended to “normalize a narrative of nation-building, imperialism, corporate power, and elitism,” then it begs the question of how private patrons influence the construction of these narratives through the artwork they donate.²³ As the acquisition of work into a collection “validate[s] art,” the artistic canon thus becomes formed, and stretched, through a social institutional process.²⁴ It is not only museum curators and directors who are involved in this process, but also private patrons. They greatly influence what works are made available to acquire through donations and loans, and have the ability to move museums in the direction of their collecting tastes.²⁵

The state also plays a significant role in encouraging donations through the provision of tax incentives. In the Republic of Ireland, donations of artwork are accounted for in Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act of 1997. This states

20 Barry Hoolwerf and Theo Schuyt, eds., *Giving in Europe. The State of Research on Giving in 20 European Countries* (Amsterdam: Lenthe Publishers, 2017), 1.

21 “Make Your Mark. The Donors Guide to Philanthropy,” Philanthropy Ireland, accessed August 29, 2022, https://philanthropy.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Make-Your-Mark_-Donor-Guide-Jan-2020.pdf.

22 May Lyn L. Cruz, “The Metropolitan Museum of Manila’s Exhibition Program from 1976–1986: Signs and Consequences of a Conflated Patronage,” *Philippine Humanities Review* 19, issue 2 (2017): 18, <https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/phr/article/view/6814/>.

23 Gordon Fyfe, “Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), unpaginated, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996836.ch3>.

24 Victoria D. Alexander, *Museums and Money* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 10.

25 Paul Hirsch, “Processing Fads and Fashion: An Organization-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems,” *American Journal of Sociology* 77, no. 4 (January 1972), cited in Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 10.

that, with some limitations, when donating “heritage items,” which includes artwork, private donors can claim 80% of the value of donations against liabilities for “income tax, corporation tax, capitals gains tax, gift tax and inheritance tax.”²⁶ In 2019, the total value of donated heritage items under the scheme equaled €3.86 m (capped at €6 million annually), representing an “indirect” investment in the museum sector that uses “tax incentives to bring the action[s] of private actors in line with desired cultural heritage policy.”²⁷ While the incentives may aid in “moving important works from the private to the public sphere,” it is also important to consider how they allow philanthropists to avoid public tax liabilities, perpetuating the economic power of wealthy benefactors.²⁸

Evidently, while the museum-donor relationship may have mutually-beneficial elements, it is also asymmetrical.²⁹ Museum collections reflect the various actors who help to build them.³⁰ By examining the interplay between private philanthropy and museum acquisitions, a space opens to consider how philanthropy is involved in determining the institutional logics of public museums, and how these logics might be made more transparent to museum audiences.

26 “Donate an Artefact,” National Museum of Ireland, accessed August 29, 2022, [http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2008/act/25/section/94/enacted/en/html](https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Support-Us/Donate-an-Artefact#:~:text=Under%20Section%201003%20of%20the,liabilities%20for%20certain%20Irish%20taxes; Acts of the Oireachtas, “Finance (No. 2) Act 2008” (S.28 No. 98 of 2009, Irish Statute Book, 2009), accessed August 29, 2022, <a href=); “Donation of Heritage Items,” Office of the Revenue Commissioners, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/donations-and-covenants/donations-of-heritage-items/index.aspx>.

27 “Tax Relief for Donations of Heritage Items under section 176 of Finance Act, 1995 and Section 1003 Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997,” Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://assets.gov.ie/213137/ddb46a2e-ab36-4aae-838d-79ac9fbb0f6e.pdf>; Arjo Klammer, Anna Mignosa, and Lyudmila Petrova, “Cultural Heritage Policies: A Comparative Perspective,” in *Handbook on the Economics of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Anna Mignosa and Lyudmila Petrova (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 45.

28 Emily J. Folas, “It Belongs in a Museum: Appropriate Donor Incentives for Fractional Gifts of Art,” *Notre Dame Law Review* 83, no. 4 (2008): 1783–84.

29 Paul van der Grijp, “The Sacred Gift: Donations from Private Collectors to Museums,” *Museum Anthropology Review* 81, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 23.

30 Mihály Csikszentmihályi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things. Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 43.

Private Philanthropy as Acquisitions Strategy: The National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art at IMMA

As a relatively young museum, IMMA is an example of contemporary collecting practices. Older institutions such as the National Gallery of Ireland and the National Museum of Ireland were founded during a period of Victorian museum-building when the content of initial collections was often overwhelmingly determined by the interests of elite philanthropists and their peers.³¹ In comparison, IMMA was established in 1991 in the throes of new museology sentiments, as museums sought to reflect more diverse audiences and to champion collections, programs, and exhibitions that were “in service to a community, instead of the state or the elite.”³² According to IMMA’s founding Director Declan McGonagle, this model was based on “public participation” and the expansion of “public value.”³³ However, since 2008 IMMA has also been outspoken about the museum’s need to rely on private philanthropy in light of reduced public funding, launching several private philanthropic and sponsorship initiatives.³⁴

Upon establishment, the guiding parameter of the Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art at IMMA was to focus on the “now,” “[representing] the present by collecting works more or less as they are made.”³⁵ Originally, this was manifested through a collections policy whereby IMMA set out to purchase only work by living artists but encouraged “loans and donations of works going back to the 1940s.”³⁶ In 1990, the museum “was given an initial budget for acquisitions [equivalent to] just over €300,000” with which to begin developing the collection.³⁷ However, a substantial cornerstone of IMMA’s collection in its early years were the

31 Zoe Hope Bulaitis, *Value and the Humanities. The Neoliberal University and Our Victorian Inheritance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 177–240.

32 Marjorie M. Halpin, “Play it Again, Sam’: Reflections on a New Museology,” *Museum International* 49, no. 2 (1997): 56, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0033.00092>.

33 Declan McGonagle, “For Them, Not Us: ‘Turning’ the Museum in an Anxious World,” *Eire-Ireland* 52, issue 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2017): 97.

34 Aoife Barry, “How Weddings, Festivals and Hennessy are Helping Irish Art after ‘Devastating’ Funding Cuts,” *The Journal*, August 20, 2017, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.thejournal.ie/imma-hennessy-art-fund-3534924-Aug2017>.

35 Declan McGonagle, Foreword to *The Irish Museum of Modern Art: A Collection in the Making* (Dublin: IMMA, 1998), 4–5.

36 Marta Herrero, *Irish Intellectuals and Aesthetics. The Making of a Modern Art Collection* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), 117, 119.

37 Herrero, *Irish Intellectuals and Aesthetics*, 128.

more than 300 pieces donated in 1992 through the personal trust of Irish art collector Gordon Lambert.³⁸ By the time the museum released their first catalogue, works donated by Lambert still “accounted for well over half the collection.”³⁹ This bequest, and its outsized initial influence on developing IMMA’s collection, underlines a tension within the museum’s founding vision. How might a collection developed through a substantial philanthropic donation from a single donor reflect this donor’s worldview, and does this influence the collection’s ability to speak to proposed values of public participation and service to community above elites?

In 2020, IMMA’s collection included over 3,500 works and the central role of donations has continued to grow.⁴⁰ In the museum’s 2017 published acquisitions guidelines two of the six listed priorities specifically highlight the role of donations as an acquisition method. Priority 4 – “Secure through donation strategic additions of works from 20th century Irish art” – suggests that additions of Irish art to the collection from this time period are likely to be done exclusively through donation, potentially reflecting the prohibitive costs of the works relative to IMMA’s budget.⁴¹ The strategy document refers clearly to the museum’s limited acquisition funds, stating that “a significant increase in resources is required to ensure that IMMA has an acquisitions budget that is appropriate for the National Collection of Modern and Contemporary Art.”⁴² These resources are outlined as potentially coming from sources including “Donor-supported acquisition of specific works identified as priorities by IMMA,” “Donations of major works capitalizing on tax incentives available to do this,” and “Private foundations.”⁴³ The proposed mix of acquisition methods listed therefore leans heavily on leveraging philanthropy to acquire artworks.

The museum’s annual reports tell a similar story. The 2008 report states that “while the number of purchased acquisitions to the Museum’s Collection was reduced considerably on previous years due to budgetary constraints, IMMA attract-

38 Marie Bourke, *The Story of Irish Museums 1790–2000: Culture, Identity and Education* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 313.

39 Rosemarie Mulcahy, review of *The Irish Museum of Modern Art. Catalogue of the Collection May 1991–1998*, by Catherine Marshall and Ronan McCrea, *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 16 (2000): 176.

40 IMMA, *Strategy 2017–2021* (Dublin: IMMA, 2017): 3, accessed 29 August 2022, https://imma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/IMMA_Strategy_2017-2021.pdf.

41 IMMA, *Strategic Collection Development Plan 2017–2022* (Dublin: IMMA, 2017): 4, accessed 29 August 2022, <https://imma.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/The-Strategic-Collection-Development-Plan-2017-2022.pdf>.

42 IMMA, *Strategic Collection Development Plan*, 5.

43 IMMA, *Strategic Collection Development Plan*, 5.

ed a significant number of donations.”⁴⁴ The 2010 and 2011 Annual Reports continue in this vein, noting that “donations were the main source of acquisitions for the IMMA Collection in 2010,”⁴⁵ and “in recent years, due to reduced funding, additions to the Collection have largely been through generous donations by artists, private benefactors and organizations.”⁴⁶ In 2014, it was plainly stated that “there was no acquisitions budget,” a position which was “not sustainable” as “major works on exhibition at IMMA that should have been acquired for the IMMA Collection were not.”⁴⁷ This inability to purchase works also makes it unlikely that IMMA is able to pursue one of its founding purposes noted above, to continuously collect works “more or less as they are made.”⁴⁸

This rhetoric aligns with the sharp reduction in public funding for cultural institutions following the 2008 global recession. However, although IMMA’s narrative highlighting the museum’s reliance on private benefactors for acquisitions has ramped up since 2008, the idea that private philanthropy has only recently played a major role in IMMA’s acquisitions is misleading. Of the 2,688 works in IMMA’s collection who had a record in IMMA’s online collection in 2020, 55.8% of them were donated (Figure 4). Looking at trends in acquisition methods over time, there has consistently been a high proportion of works acquired through donation in comparison to other methods. Throughout most of the museum’s collecting activity, donations have outpaced other acquisition methods by a significant margin (Figure 5). Even during a time period of significant growth in government funding from 2005 to 2008, purchases still barely outpaced donations and generally, throughout the museum’s history, the majority of works added to the collection were acquired through private donations.⁴⁹

44 IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2008* (Dublin: IMMA 2009), 7, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

45 IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2010* (Dublin: IMMA 2011), 6, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

46 IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2011* (Dublin: IMMA 2012), 9, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

47 IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2014* (Dublin: IMMA 2015), 14, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>.

48 McGonagle, “Foreword,” 4–5.

49 “Minister Announces IMMA Programme for 2005,” IMMA, January 18, 2005, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/press-centre/minister-announces-imma-programme-for-2005/>; IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2006* (Dublin: IMMA, 2007), accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>; IMMA, *Irish Museum of Modern Art Annual Report 2007* (Dublin: IMMA 2008), accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/policies-and-reports/reports/annual-reports/>; “IMMA Welcomes Increase in Subvention,” IMMA, November 17, 2006, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/press-centre/imma-welcomes-increase-in-subvention/>.

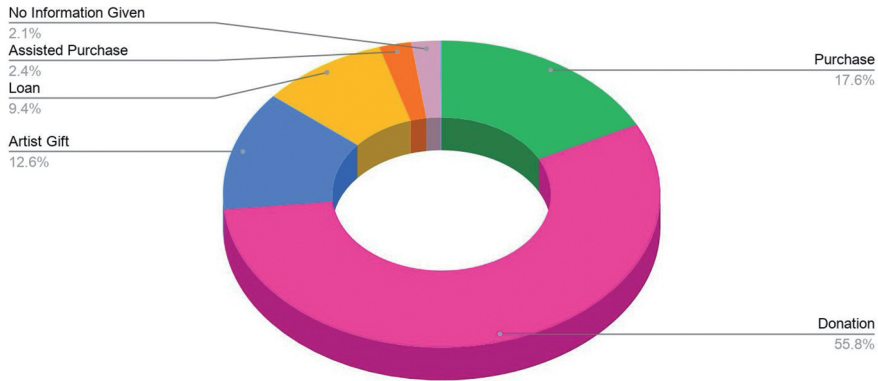


Fig. 4: Acquisition methods of artworks. Data source: IMMA online collection.

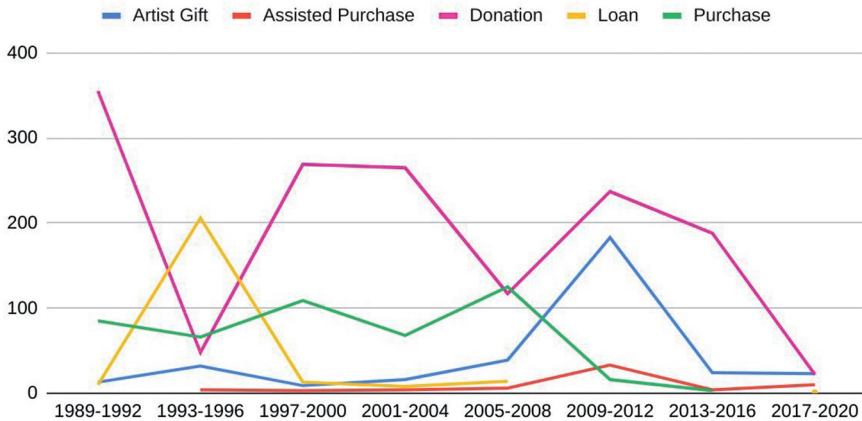


Fig. 5: Trends in IMMA's acquisition methods, 1989–2020. Data source: IMMA online collection.

Not only have donations generally been the primary source of acquisitions, but a handful of donors are responsible for the bulk of works gifted to the collection throughout IMMA's history. Of the 1,501 works classified as donations in IMMA's online collections, the top three donors by volume—Gordon Lambert, George and Maura McClelland, and the Smurfit Kappa Group (an Irish-founded global paper and packaging manufacturer)—have given 43% of all donated works. The top five donors—which then includes Barbara Novak, Brian O'Doherty, and Maire and Maurice Foley—have given 55% of all donated works (Figure 6).

It seems evident that in lieu of a regular, robust acquisitions budget from 2008 to 2019, IMMA's executive and curatorial staff turned to strategic donations, which



Fig. 6: Bubble plot comparing number of works donated by benefactors versus acquired through other methods (1990–2019). Data source: IMMA online collection.

former Head of Collections Catherine Marshall described as an “acquisition-led, purchase-led” donation.⁵⁰ In these cases, the museum approaches private philanthropists with requests for them to purchase specific works, which are then donated to the museum. Assisted purchases follow a similar logic in which private funds are donated to be used for the acquisition of specified works. Initiatives such as IMMA 1000, a private acquisitions fundraising initiative founded by businessman John Cunningham, and the Hennessy Art Fund, a corporate sponsorship program

⁵⁰ Catherine Marshall, quoted in Herrero, *Irish Intellectuals and Aesthetics*, 138.

supporting the acquisition of contemporary Irish art, both fall into this category.⁵¹ These programs were launched in 2016 and 2017 respectively, but did not appear to fully make up for the loss of IMMA's purchasing power in real terms of the number of works added to its collection since 2008.

Communicating Philanthropy Online

It is clear that private philanthropy has had a significant effect in shaping IMMA's collections. However, this outsized impact is not strongly communicated throughout IMMA's online collections. Beyond standard metadata, the online records provide information related to a work's institutional identity, including a credit line detailing how and when the work was acquired, and tags used to categorize and group artwork in the collection based on shared characteristics. Tagging, which links works together, is said to "increase access to online collections," providing opportunities for audiences to draw connections between works.⁵² In the metadata model used by IMMA, tags are only created for three categories: medium, year produced, and artist name. There are no tags for acquisition year, acquisition method, or donor provided in the credit line, which disconnects pieces donated through the same trust or benefactor.

Museum websites can provide possible "entrance points to public collection databases," and play a key role in determining how audiences can interact with collections.⁵³ For cultural institutions, the creation of an online catalogue "carries with it many decisions that affect how data [is] input and retrieved," and importantly the chosen method for organizing metadata can affect "what types of

51 "IMMA Launches Major New Private Fundraising Initiative to Support Contemporary Art in Ireland After Years of Devastating Cuts," IMMA, May 5, 2016, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/about/press-centre/imma-1000-fund-raises-e120000-in-year-one/>; Madeleine Lyons, "The Man Committed to Saving Irish Art," *The Irish Times*, June 11, 2016, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/interiors/the-man-committed-to-saving-irish-art-1.2679777>; Barry, "Weddings, Festivals and Hennessy are Helping Irish Art."

52 Susan Cairns, "Mutualizing Museum Knowledge: Folksonomies and the Changing Shape of Expertise," *Curator* 56, no. 1 (January 2013): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12011>.

53 Bodil Axelsson, "Online Collections, Curatorial Agency and Machine-assisted Curating," in *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Media and Communication*, ed. Kirsten Drotner et al. (London: Routledge, 2018), 67, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/oa-edit/10.4324/9781315560168-6/online-collections-curatorial-agency-machine-assisted-curating-bodil-axelsson>.

searches may be performed” by audiences engaging with a museum’s website.⁵⁴ At a time of expanding access to online museum collections “digitization projects have tended to prioritise descriptive information about the physical appearance of [objects]” over “institutionally-gathered archival information.”⁵⁵ The acquisition and donor information that is presented in sparse, non-linked, decontextualized formats “might technically be available in an online catalogue [but] can remain ‘invisible’ if it is not clear how to search for it effectively,” such that museums cannot fully communicate the impact of philanthropy on their collections, as is reflected in IMMA’s online holdings.⁵⁶

Further afield, it is not only in the Republic of Ireland that museum collections are highly indebted to philanthropic donations. The exhibition *True Luxury... Art Acquisitions 2012–2018* shown at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam—a museum of modern and contemporary art—openly acknowledges this fact. On view from September 2018 to February 2019, *True Luxury* was a survey exhibition drawn from recent acquisitions to the museum’s collection. While it contained works acquired through a range of methods, the press release and associated text for the exhibition specifically focused on donations, stating that “the museum underlines the increasing importance of private donations to the collection.”⁵⁷ The exhibition title also alluded to this: taken from Erik van Lieshout’s installation *Echte luxe is niets kopen/ True Luxury is Not to Shop*, it was billed by the museum as an “ironic reference to the reality that, in a time of shrinking museum budgets and skyrocketing prices on the international art market, collections rely on magnanimous donors to expand their holdings.”⁵⁸

For the period 2012–2017 covered by *True Luxury*, donations to the Stedelijk Museum’s collection outpaced purchases more than 2 to 1.⁵⁹ It is therefore not sur-

54 John S. Hansen, “Cutting Edge and Cutting Corners: Evolving Technology, Expanding Usership, and Responsive Solutions in a Museum Database,” *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 7, no. 3 (2019): 234, doi:10.1017/aap.2019.20.

55 Elizabeth Haines and Anna Woodham, “Mobilising the *Energy in Store*: Stored Collections, Enthusiast Experts and the Ecology of Heritage,” *Science Museum Group Journal* 12 (Autumn 2019): unpaginated, Science Museum Group Journal E-Library, <http://journal.sciencemuseum.ac.uk/browse/issue-12/mobilising-the-energy-in-store/>.

56 Haines and Woodham, “Mobilising the *Energy in Store*.”

57 “True Luxury... Art Acquisitions 2012–2018, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam,” Press Release, *Artforum* (2018), accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.artforum.com/artguide/stedelijk-museum-amsterdam-351/true-luxury-art-acquisitions-2012-2018-165622>.

58 “True Luxury... Art Acquisitions 2012–2018,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/true-luxury>.

59 “Annual Report,” Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/museum/organisation/annual-report>.

prising that the museum's curatorial team developed an acquisitions show that explicitly acknowledged the role of private donors in determining what is hung on the walls of the Stedelijk. In this way, *True Luxury* went a step further than simple acknowledgement. Yet, while the Stedelijk has more confidently addressed this in its physical gallery space, the online collection site follows the pattern of IMMA in minimizing information about philanthropy. A more relational structure is employed, with artwork and object records connected to material held in the Stedelijk Museum Library, however, as with IMMA, this does not include acquisition notes or donor records.

Linked Data for Museum Collections

Collections, whether physical or online, are the means through which museums build meaning for their visitors, and as such become “sites of political, social and cultural power.”⁶⁰ The decisions museums make in the process of digitizing their collections determines what information is made available to online visitors, and sets the lens through which audiences interpret collections. In the IMMA and Stedelijk Museum collection sites discussed, audiences had limited options to draw connections between artworks. Future prototypes for online collections might link collection records with material on the archival context related to an artwork's custodial history and provenance through applying more extensive tagging, adding tags to fields such as donor name, acquisition method, and acquisition year. Making this information searchable and linked through tagging would be a viable way to offer access to the networked web of philanthropic connections that exists within a collection through relatively simplified data structures.

For everyday users the benefits may be limited to seeing the volume of work gifted by a particular donor. However, for museum professionals or researchers, tagging provides a simplified model for applying machine-readable metadata to digital collections records. Museum staff can thus “increase the use of their materials, and allow for more efficient user searches.”⁶¹ Linked Data also provides “op-

60 Rebecca Kahn, “Smudges on the Glass. Tracing and Locating the Museum in the British Museum's Digitised Collections” (PhD diss., King's College London, 2016), 36, [https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/smudges-on-the-glass\(3f46b74b-1fad-44de-b484-ffc7f43318cf\).html](https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/smudges-on-the-glass(3f46b74b-1fad-44de-b484-ffc7f43318cf).html).

61 Lucy McKenna, Christophe Debruyne, and Declan O'Sullivan, “Understanding the Position of Information Professionals with regards to Linked Data: A Survey of Libraries, Archives and Museums,” *Proceedings of The 18th ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries, Fort Worth, Texas, June 2018*, 7, <https://doi.org/10.1145/317026.3197041>.

portunities to create meaningful links between objects across collections.”⁶² Assigning tags to acquisition or donor credit lines makes it possible to visualize how certain artists have entered IMMA’s collection through philanthropic gifts, and to ask multi-dimensional questions around how philanthropic gifts can shape the character of a collection, for example via increasing representation of certain artists, styles, or time periods.

If Irish cultural institutions applied linked data structures to their online collection databases “it could be possible to collaborate with other repositories to create a more rounded digital resource containing a more diverse range of surviving archives.”⁶³ Institutional buy-in is one of multiple challenges inherent to pursuing such projects. These range from logistical (lack of staff expertise or financial resourcing), to technical (incompatibilities between museum cataloguing software and metadata needs for linked data projects), to conceptual (limited museum-based linked data projects from which to draw inspiration).⁶⁴

This prototype was based on the belief that “the future of museum documentation is in relational, interconnected information structures.”⁶⁵ Fundamentally, these structures require a reconsideration of the relationship between museum collections and archives, a model which IMMA itself appears to be embracing with its ongoing Collection and Archive Digitisation Project.⁶⁶ Not a passive witness, the organizational memory stored in the archive is a record of decisions made by museum staff, private donors, and government agencies in determining the institutional character of the museum itself.⁶⁷ Furthermore, both museums and private philanthropists benefit from a view of collecting that pinpoints “the

⁶² McKenna, Debruyne, and O’Sullivan, “Linked Data: A Survey of Libraries, Archives and Museums,” 8.

⁶³ Nicholas J. Wyatt, “Digitising Charles Babbage at the Science Museum, London: Managing Expectations, Enabling Access,” *Circumscribe* 21 (2018): 62, <https://doi.org/10.23925/1980-7651.2018v21;p56-62>.

⁶⁴ Maija Ekosaari and Samuli Pekkola, “Pushing the Limits beyond Catalogue Raisonné: Step 1. Identifying the Digitization Challenges in Museums,” *Proceedings of 52nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences at the University of Manoa, January 2019*, 3172, <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/59753>; McKenna, Debruyne, and O’Sullivan, “Linked Data: A Survey of Libraries, Archives and Museums,” 7.

⁶⁵ Michael Jones, “From Catalogues to Contextual Networks: Reconfiguring Collection Documentation in Museums,” *Archives and Records* 39, no. 1 (2018): 11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2017.1407750>.

⁶⁶ “IMMA Archive in the Project Spaces,” IMMA, 2019, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://imma.ie/whats-on/imma-archive-in-the-project-spaces/>.

⁶⁷ Michael Jones, “From Personal to Public: Field Books, Museums, and the Opening of the Archives,” *Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 38, no. 2 (2017): 216, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2016.1269645>.

moment of an object's accession into a public collection as the natural point at which donor impact on collection shape and trajectory comes to an end."⁶⁸ When curators display recently acquired collection gifts and focus solely on art historical or aesthetic themes, they adopt the donation into broader institutional narratives while participating in the minimization of the donor's relationship to the works. The donor is simultaneously cleansed and canonized, going through the "dynamic procedure of valuation" and benefitting from the "hegemonic logic of inclusion" on which canonization is based.⁶⁹

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, digital platforms may create opportunities to develop a richer, deeper contextual environment for audiences, who can make their own decisions about how to engage with collections. Yet, "opening" the archive in this way may also cause museums to face increased scrutiny over their donors, both contemporary and historical. Maxwell L. Anderson, former Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Dallas Museum of Art, has asked "Are we meant to rename the Frick [The Frick Collection in New York] because Henry Clay Frick was a union-buster? What are the limits of retrospective institutional cleansing?"⁷⁰ I would argue that "institutional cleansing" occurs not through the removal of donor names from gallery walls but from a prevailing attitude that the contextual biographies of private donors have no place in the museum. Whether intentional or otherwise, what many museum leaders have defined as a stance that is "above the fray of the political" arguably cedes an element of their authority – to construct, interpret, and communicate art history – to align with the concerns of private philanthropists.⁷¹ In turn, museums, though seen as "institutions that hold works in public trust" and whose "collections have a fundamentally educational role," receive little support to devote time and resources to investigating

⁶⁸ Claire Wintle, "Consultancy, Networking and Brokerage: The Legacy of the Donor in Museum Practice," *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, no. 23 (2010): 72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41416856>.

⁶⁹ Saloni Mathur, 'Why Exhibition Histories?,' *British Art Studies* 13, unpaginated, <https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-13/why-exhibition-histories>.

⁷⁰ Maxwell L. Anderson quoted in Morris, 'The Louvre Took Down the Sackler Name.'

⁷¹ Olga Viso, 'Decolonizing the Art Museum: The Next Wave,' *The New York Times*, 1 May 2018, accessed 29 August 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/01/opinion/decolonizing-art-museums.html>.

their own institutional ethics.⁷² Indeed, such critique may also risk the loss of support from contemporary benefactors. Yet, as activists and audiences increasingly demand that museums have “a voice and a sense of accountability,” there may be an increasing public relations benefit to self-driven institutional critique.⁷³

Increasing online access to archives and more openly engaging with acquisition records will move museums towards a public recognition of the place of private philanthropy within their walls. It may also serve to dispel widespread beliefs that museums are comfortably, if not entirely, funded by government agencies.⁷⁴ IMMA certainly addressed the interrelated nature of decreased public funding, philanthropy, and museum programming in their series of media conversations and press releases announcing private sponsorship. However, they failed to carry these conversations into the museum in a critical capacity, never moving beyond effusive praise for their private backers. Communicating about philanthropy in the museum might be more impactful if it was intended not just to deliver public relations benefits to sponsors but to vocalize the museum’s ongoing financial needs and their effect on decision-making, and the influence this has on what audiences eventually see in the museum.

Philanthropy has never been on the periphery of museum operations. Rather it has always sat close to the core of how museums develop their collections, their institutional identity, and the art historical canon derived from it. As museums increasingly embrace the public history turn they have adopted curatorial and educational approaches to reinterpret their collections, working towards audience-driven goals such as decolonizing gallery spaces or displaying queer histories. In this vein, institutions would be remiss not to engage with and spark richer conversations with their audiences about the role that private philanthropists have played in influencing the stories that have been, and can be, told in their museums.

72 Luigi Di Gaetano and Isidoro Mazza, “Better an Egg Today than a Hen Tomorrow’ On the Implications of Deaccess Policies for Donations to Museums,’ *Journal of Cultural Economics* 41 (2017): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10824-015-9262-5>; Erich Hatala Matthes, ‘Why Museums Need Their Own Ethics Departments,’ *Apollo Magazine*, 4 September 2017, accessed 29 August 2022, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/why-museums-need-their-own-ethics-departments/>.

73 Viso, “Decolonizing the Art Museum.”

74 Elizabeth Rudrud, “Does Money Matter? Visitor Awareness and Perception of Museum Funding Models” (MA thesis, University of Washington, 2015), unpaginated e-thesis, https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/bitstream/handle/1773/33431/Rudrud_washington_02500_14784.pdf?sequence=1.

Agata Gigante

Interpreting Jewish identity in Central Entre Ríos, Argentina: Perseverance, Precarity, and Resilience in the Local Museum

Local museums aspire to represent a history that might be considered both particular and authentic. In common with other institutions in the cultural sector they have come under pressure to portray more inclusive narratives about the past and to facilitate dialogue among multiple communities, particularly in local environments that have diversified considerably since the foundation of these institutions. In this context, museum spaces and narratives have become increasingly contested: tensions between the particular and the universal are displayed, differences are negotiated, and a common future is imagined. This chapter aims to contribute to the discussions of the current role of local community-run museums as expressions of local identity by highlighting the achievements and limitations of the Regional Museum and Archive of the Jewish Settlements of Central Entre Ríos (MJS) in the commemoration of the local past.

This small museum located in the municipality of Villa Dominguez, in Entre Ríos, is far from the cutting edge of the cultural sector in terms of technology, foot-fall, or curation. Such a tiny museum, founded in order to represent the heritage of a long-dispersed and vulnerable minority population in rural Argentina, allows us to ask questions that are just as significant as those we might pose in bigger institutions. What potential do community museums have to represent a history that responds to the needs of contemporary life? How should a museum respond to a drastic reduction of a population that was centrally important to the foundation of the settlements whose heritage it portrays and protects? Can museums help re-establish bonds between estranged members of communities?

Colonization and Jewish Identity in Argentina

The Jewish-Argentine community¹ is one of the largest worldwide, and approximately 0.5% of total Argentine population. Nevertheless, it has been steadily de-

1 Although hyphenated identities are not common in Argentina, they are used here to denote the constructed nature of the term following Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews Or Jewish Argentines?: Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 3–4.

creasing: from 310,000 in 1960 to just over 180,000 by 2009, with current estimates suggesting a further reduction due, in part, to increased emigration during the following decade.² Jewish-Argentines live in the city of Buenos Aires and its metropolitan area where 75% of the population is concentrated.³ Within the national context, the Jewish communities are one of the minorities most prominently represented in museum spaces, including: two central museums in the district capital, dozens of exhibition spaces in the provinces, and 12 regional tourist trails.⁴ It has also been the only minority targeted by large-scale attacks in the last 30 years. In 1992 the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires was destroyed in a bombing and just two years later the AMIA (Israelite Mutual Help Association of Argentina) suffered the same fate. Cases of antisemitism represented only 1.6% of the total cases of discrimination reported in the last decade.⁵ However the number of cases informed to Jewish institutions has been increasing overall during the period, particularly driven by aggressions in virtual spaces including news outlets and social media.⁶ A report on Jewish perception estimates that roughly 60% of surveyed Argentines view Jews as: sectarian; more loyal to Israel than Argentina; and having too much power in the world of business and in international finances; while 8% consider that they have a detrimental effect on Argentina and should emigrate to Israel.⁷ History of the Jewish presence in the region can be traced back to the Spanish colonization, however, the first sizable community was not established until the late nineteenth century. These early immigrant groups mostly settled in the rural landscape of Santa Fe, Buenos Aires, and Entre Ríos where the MJS is located.

The province of Entre Ríos is in central Argentina, bordering Uruguay. Its territory was historically that of the Charrúa, Chaná, and Guaraní: the semi-nomadic

2 In Argentina questions of religious and cultural self-identification have not been included in the national census since 1960, making it difficult to estimate Jewish-Argentine population. For a full discussion on figures and methodologies used for these estimates see Sergio Della Pergola, “¿Cuántos somos hoy? Investigación y narrativa sobre población judía en América Latina,” in *Pertenencia y Alteridad. Judíos en de América Latina: cuarenta años de cambio*, ed. Haim Avni et al. (Frankfurt: Vervuert Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011), 305–40.

3 Adrián Jmelnizky and Ezequiel Erdei, *La población judía de Buenos Aires. Estudio sociodemográfico* (Buenos Aires: AMIA, 2005), 19.

4 Elio Kapszuk, *Shalom Argentina: Huellas de la Colonización Judía (Tracing Jewish Settlement)* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ministerio de Turismo, Cultura y Deporte, 2001).

5 Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo, *Denuncias recibidas por el INADI: un informe histórico del periodo 2008–2019* (Buenos Aires: INADI, 2020), 10.

6 Marisa Braylan, ed., *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina 2019–2020* (Buenos Aires: CES; DAIA, 2021), 18.

7 Néstor Cohen, “Representaciones sociales acerca de los judíos en la Argentina 2019,” in *Informe sobre antisemitism en la Argentina 2018*, comp. Marisa Braylan (Buenos Aires: CES; DAIA, 2019), 100–102, 105.

indigenous populations slowly displaced and eventually decimated by European colonialism. Spaniards first settled in the region in the late sixteenth century but it took almost 200 years for most of its prominent cities to be established. During the following century, Entre Ríos became a center of politics and power that rivaled that of Buenos Aires.⁸ Legislation passed during the 1850s prompted the start of European immigrations and colonization of rural Entre Ríos, including national incentives for Swiss immigrants from the Valais Canton in 1857 and, two years later, for settlers of German-Russian origin from the Volga region who established large colonies in central Entre Ríos (Figure 1).⁹ More pertinently for our purposes, several large settlements were created in the area by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) in Argentina from 1892 onwards.¹⁰ The MJS is devoted to the history of the rural settlements in the center of the province and to the wider history of a small town with a population shy of 2,000, Villa Domínguez, which was one of the main economic and cultural centers of that Jewish community.¹¹

Jewish settlements of central Entre Ríos included three distinct colonies with their respective urban centers. Two of them, Lucienville and Clara, were created as part of a late nineteenth century initiative of JCA founded by Baron Moritz (Maurice) de Hirsch to relocate Jewish families that were being persecuted in Tsarist Russia while the third one, Avigdor, was established in 1935 to receive German settlers escaping the rise of Nazism. The most prominent difference between these enterprises and other regional colonization experiences that started in the previous decades was their programmatic and centralized nature.¹² Unlike similar projects,

8 As a result of five years of civil war the city of Paraná in Entre Ríos became the capital of the Argentine Confederation after the promulgation of the Argentine Constitution of 1853 in which the secession of the Province of Buenos Aires was effectively established.

9 For example see Celia Glády López, *La fuerza del ideal. Historia del cooperativismo agrario entrerriano y su proyección nacional 1900–1970* (Paraná: Programa Identidad Entrerriana, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, GER, 2008), 51–52.

10 For the history of the Jewish Colonization Association in Argentina see Haim Avni, *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1991); and also Theodore Norman, *An Outstretched Arm: A History of the Jewish Colonization Association* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

11 The last national census in 2010 indicates the population of Villa Domínguez was 1,858. Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos. Ministerio de Economía, Hacienda y Finanzas, “Indicadores sociales. Provincia de Entre Ríos según área de gobierno local, población por sexo,” *Indicadores Sociales* (Paraná: Gobierno de la Provincia de Entre Ríos, 2010), <https://www.entrerios.gov.ar/dgec/censo2010/>.

12 For an analysis of the national precedents see Fernando Devoto and Roberto Benencia, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2003), particularly 228–30.



Fig. 1: Map of the town of Villa Domínguez c. 1940 (Image courtesy of the Museum and Archive of the Jewish Settlements of Central Entre Ríos)

the main aim of the JCA was not to increase profitability among settlers but was rather guided by the utopian idea of creating a mass of farmers that would set a firm base for receiving a stable immigration that would gradually recreate a Jewish European community in Argentina. (Figures 2 and 3)¹³ From the moment of its creation, then, Villa Domínguez has been a peripheral node in a global phenomenon: the settler colonialism of Jewish communities which has had such a remarkable impact in Palestine, Brazil, and elsewhere.

¹³ Eduardo Sartelli, "Filantropía y Capital. Las Contradicciones del Desarrollo Agrario de las Colonias Judías (Argentina, 1900–1920)," *Projeto História*, no. 38 (June 2009): 43.



Fig. 2: Synagogue of the Carmel Colony, Department of Villaguay, Entre Ríos Cemetery, Carmel Colony, Department of Villaguay, Entre Ríos (Image courtesy of author).

The Local Communities

JCA semi-urban settlements in Central Entre Ríos, unlike the ones in the province of Santa Fe, were characterized by having a majority of non-Jewish residents, therefore establishing a dynamic of close collaboration among different communities.¹⁴ This was partially the result of JCA policies but also reflected the fact that colonies like Clara were located on territories previously occupied by large cattle ranches. These ranches employed multiple workers, many of whom were based in the area. Recollections of local residents state that people living in the ranches before the arrival of the JCA often had no property title and were thus displaced or

¹⁴ Leonardo Senkman, Preface to *La Desconocida Colonización Urbana de la JCA en Argentina 1900–1930* by Teodoro Bar Shalom (Jerusalem: Ediciones Zur Ott, 2014), vi.



Fig. 3: Cemetery, Carmel Colony, Department of Villaguay, Entre Ríos Cemetery, Carmel Colony, Department of Villaguay, Entre Ríos (Image courtesy of author).

“sold” with the land.¹⁵ They lost position and status as a result and often became workers in the new farms. Even in this difficult situation, a fluid collaboration developed between local communities – Creoles, Minuanes-Charruas, and Afro descendants – and Jewish settlers. This collaboration was particularly significant in overcoming the hardships of life in the rural settlements and facilitated the newcomers’ adaptation, though it was not free from conflict.¹⁶ Immigrant population in many rural settlements were divided by country of origin and sometimes also by religious affiliation, yet testimonies of descendants suggest that these divisions did not prevent their participation in local institutions, like the cooperative

¹⁵ Judith Freidenberg, *The Invention of the Jewish Gaucho: Villa Clara and the Construction of Argentine Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 68–70; and *Memorias de Villa Clara* (Buenos Aires: Antropofagia, 2005), 16–17.

¹⁶ See for example Susana Chiarmonte et al., *Tierra de promesas II: Las colonias judías del siglo XX* (Paraná: Dirección Editorial de Entre Ríos, 2011), 342, 343; and Freidenberg, *Memorias de Villa Clara*, 16–17.

or even Yiddish schools owned by the JCA.¹⁷ An Afro-descendent whose family emigrated from Brazil to escape slavery, for example, remembers that her sisters learned to read and write in the local Yiddish school.¹⁸ Even as the coexistence of different communities in the settlements seem to have been generally cordial, during the 1940s the colonies witnessed a rise of antisemitism including: police brutality and corruption; unjust incarceration; closure of cultural institutions including libraries and Yiddish schools; forbidding of the Shechita; and the dismissal of 100 teachers from regional schools.¹⁹ A report from the Israelite Association of Villa Clara dated September 1944 states: “[o]ne lives in a climate of violence and uncertainty that has been created by arbitrary and arrogant officials. The sacred unity of the Argentine family is undermined at every step with persecutions, abuses and discrimination.”²⁰ A contemporary attempt to erase any commemoration of the local Jewish immigrant past further disenfranchised the local population. The Jewish presence in the area was being progressively diminished and erased.

Decline of the Settlements

The decline of the JCA settlements began almost as soon as the project started. Although causes are hard to pinpoint, histories of the settlements often cite the unreasonable terms imposed by the association as the root of the problem – including restrictions imposed to land ownership, plot extension, and hiring of employees to work the land.²¹ Towns offered an attractive opportunity for rural settlers in this context, many of whom sold their fields and relocated to JCA

¹⁷ Freidenberg, *Memorias de Villa Clara*, 31, 52.

¹⁸ Susana Chiarmente et al., *Tierra de promesas: 100 años de colonización judía en Entre Ríos Colonia Clara, San Antonio y Lucienville* (Ediciones Nuestra Memoria, 1995), 116–17; and for example see Norberto Brodsky and Roberto Schopflocher, interview by Ana Weinstein and Daniel Bargman, Transcript no. 86 (1997), 31, Mark Turkow Centre, AMIA, Buenos Aires.

¹⁹ For example see Dr. Moisés Goldman to Dr. Israel Yagupsky, “Síntesis de las actividades del período,” April 18, 1945, *El nazismo en Entre Ríos 1943–1944–1945*, MJS.

²⁰ “Se Vive en Esta un Clima de Violencia e Inseguridad Creado Por Funcionarios Arbitrarios y Prepotentes. La Sagrada Unidad de la Familia Argentina se Desvirtúa a Cada Paso con Persecuciones, Atropellos y Discriminaciones.” Asociación Israelita de Villa Clara, “Datos Concretos Sobre Irregularidades Registradas en ésta,” September 14, 1944, 7, *El nazismo en Entre Ríos*.

²¹ See Haim Avni, “La agricultura judía en la Argentina. ¿Éxito o fracaso?”, *Desarrollo Económico* 22, no. 88 (March 1983): 543–46; Patricia Flier, “Volver a Colonia Clara. Historia y Memoria de La Colonización Judía Agraria en Argentina, 1892–1950,” *Cuadernos Judaicos*, December 2012, 56; and also see Iván Cherjovsky, “La Faz Ideológica del Conflicto Colonos/JCA: El Discurso del Ideal Agrario en Las Memorias de Colonia Mauricio,” in *Marginados y Consagrados: Nuevos Estudios Sobre la Vida Judía en la Argentina*, ed. Emmanuel Kahan et al. (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2011), 59–61.

towns to develop their trade. In turn the colonies were also affected by national patterns of internal migration towards major cities, particularly Buenos Aires. As the national light industries started to develop in the 1940s many settlers, who had already paid off their debts to the JCA, chose to rent or sell their land.²² But even throughout these changes collective institutions like the farming cooperative would provide a strong sense of social cohesion among those that remained during the following 50 years. By the late twentieth century traditional crops were increasingly replaced by soybean. In the territories of the former colonies by 2018 this crop accounted for nearly half of all the cultivated land.²³ When produced by larger agri-business soybean requires only a few seasonal workers and promotes land concentration.²⁴ Jewish farmer families settled in the rural landscape have become rarer since, and in Domínguez current estimates place them at a couple dozen at best.²⁵ Changes to agricultural production, together with the interruption of train services in the nineties and bankruptcy of the local cooperative in the early 2000s, deepened the local socio-economic crisis and emigration tendencies. As community institutions crumbled, many local spaces where community relationships had been forged subsequently disappeared or lost their community function. The creation of the MJS was guided by the willingness to strengthen these community bonds debilitated through crises and migration waves.

22 Senkman, Preface to *La desconocida colonización urbana*, v.

23 Clara Colony was located in Villaguay Department where soybean production accounts for 86,309 of 183,393 hectares of cultivated land; Lucienville was located between the departments of Uruguay and Gualleguaychú where soybean production accounts for 84,061 of 180,965 hectares of cultivated land and 97,403 of 205,804 cultivated hectares respectively; and in La Paz Department, site of the Avigdor Colony, soybean crops account for 65,579 of 154,148 hectares of cultivated land. Source: Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos, *Censo nacional Agropecuario 2018. Resultados definitivos* (Buenos Aires: INDEC, 2018), <https://consultascna2018.indec.gob.ar>.

24 For example see Walter A. Pengue, "Transgenic Crops in Argentina: The Ecological and Social Debt," *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 25, no. 4 (August 1, 2005): 318–19.

25 See for example "Los últimos Gauchos Judíos Resisten en el Monte Entrerriano," *La Nación*, February 14, 2000, sec. Sociedad, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/los-ultimos-gauchos-judios-resisten-en-el-monte-entrerriano-nid5306/>; Hernan Dobry "Los Gaucho Judíos, Sin Herederos en las Colonias de Entre Ríos," *Perfil*, February 27, 2009, sec. EL Observador, <http://hernandobry.com/los-gauchos-judios-sin-herederos-en-las-colonias-de-entre-rios/>; and also see Ramy Wurgaft, "Las Colonias Judías de Entre Ríos, un Mundo Que Desaparece," *El mundo*, July 22, 2011, sec. América, <https://www.elmundo.es/america/2011/07/22/argentina/1311363620.html>.

Inclusion/exclusion Narratives at the MJS

The roots of the MJS can be traced back to October 9, 1985 when a temporary exhibition was inaugurated in the town of Domínguez in preparation for its upcoming centenaries.²⁶ Just a few years later the museum became a permanent community endeavor. It is devoted to preserving documents and objects belonging to local institutions – most of them created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – and depicting local everyday life. More recently the museum has also extended this preservationist impulse towards rural landmarks of the Jewish colonization. Since its foundation the MJS has consistently worked towards lessening inequalities in the area which is socioeconomically deprived, as figures in the last national census show. There it is estimated that less than 20 % of the local population have completed their secondary education and 40 % of households do not own a refrigerator.²⁷ Outreach programs of the MJS include activities developed with the local school and hospital, which aim to reduce these inequalities.²⁸ Additionally, in 1989 the museum created, in collaboration with other community institutions of the region, a historical trail in order to establish a local tourism industry that would encourage local economic development. Since then, the MJS has strived for balance between developing a sense of belonging common to multiple local communities and creating a distinctiveness that allows the museum to position itself within the emerging tourist industry.

Landscapes of a Common Past

A core element deployed at the MJS for telling a common history of diverse communities is the local landscape. The work of the museum has transformed the territory of the colonies into a common heritage. This was achieved through

26 Villa Dominguez celebrated two centenaries in the following years: first the anniversary of the inauguration of the train station that took place in September 1890 and then, just two years later, the arrival of the first Jewish settlers in March 1892.

27 Ministerio de obras Públicas, “Gobierno Local de Villa Domínguez,” *Unidades territoriales* (Buenos Aires: Ministerios de Obras Públicas, 2022), <https://unidades-territoriales.obraspublicas.gob.ar/Municipalities/Details/b865a8ef-c026-4c36-8cb0-f7d5aa390f1a>.

28 For example see “Domínguez: Museo y Archivo de la Colonia,” *El Heraldo*, December 16, 1987, Comunicaciones 1985–88, MJS, Villa Domínguez, Entre Ríos; “De Villa Domínguez,” *El Pueblo*, April 14, 1996, Comunicaciones 1990–98, MJS; and also see “Museo y Archivo de la Colonia Judía. Una Obra Joven Que se Consolida,” *La Calle*, March 2, 1987, 6, Colonias Agrícolas: Villa Domínguez, Marc Turkow Centre, AMIA, Buenos Aires.

the physical preservation of the old buildings including: Sonnenfeld Synagogue,²⁹ “Immigrants’ Hotel,” and the old pharmacy building named after the town’s “miraculous” physician, Dr. Yarcho. (Figure 8)³⁰ But more meaningfully it channelled a continuous flow of visitors that come into contact with locals and local heritage (Figure 6), generating renewed interactions and interpretations of it. Value is placed on heritage by the viewer rather than being an intrinsic element of heritage itself.³¹ Two of these buildings are now the museum’s exhibition spaces. The Immigrants’ Hotel (Figure 4, 5), that housed newcomers and was the site of the first social club and library, now holds an exhibition on early twentieth century rural equipment, including carts, ploughs, and some furniture, and is used for museum functions. Meanwhile the pharmacy holds the archive and the main exhibition, which is divided thematically. Here historical interpretations of the territory have two focuses: rural and town life in Central Entre Ríos.

The rural landscape of the colonies is mainly articulated in the first room of the main exhibition, in the sections devoted to “The First Harvest.” (Figure 7) It centers on the role of the JCA by displaying early contracts adjudicating land to settlers, portraits of the Baron Moritz (Maurice) de Hirsch and Baroness Clara Bischoffsheim Hirsch, and antique farming tools. A framed photograph documenting bands of locusts in neighboring fields is contrasted here with a quote from the autobiographical text by Alberto Gerchunoff, a prominent writer and journalist who immigrated at the age of seven to the Clara Colony. This contrast creates an idealistic and almost sacred image of the work in the fields. The quote states:

In the morning, the clear, warm and sweet mornings, biblical mornings of the Argentine countryside, the Israelites with wide beards bent over the intact soil, with their round shovels, with their rakes and there was something ritual, mystical, in the gravity with which they performed their simple task...³²

29 For example see Poder Ejecutivo de Entre Ríos, Declárese de patrimonio arquitectónico e histórico el edificio de la sinagoga Sonnenfeld, Departamento de Villaguay, Province decree 5570, 2010, MJS.

30 Noé Yarcho (1864–1912) was a physician hired by the JCA during a typhus epidemic in the early years of the settlements. He later became a prominent leader of the local cooperative movement. Today the hospital and one of the streets of Villa Domínguez are named after him.

31 Brian Graham and Peter Howard, “Heritage and Identity,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 2.

32 “A la mañana, las claras mañanas, calurosas y dulces, bíblicas mañanas del campo argentino, los israelitas de ancha barba, se inclinaban sobre el suelo intacto con sus palas redondas con sus rastrillos y había algo de ritual, de místico, en la gravedad con que desempeñaban su sencilla tarea...” Alberto Gerchunoff, *Entre Ríos, mi país* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Plus Ultra, 1973), 16 (translation by the MJS).



Fig. 4: Immigrants' Hotel (now MJS) and monument commemorating the arrival of the first Jewish immigrants to Villa Domínguez (Image courtesy of the author)

Through this vignette the landscape of Entre Ríos is assigned a dual function: an idealized space of natural virginity with potential to create a new community as well as the symbol of hardship and a shared hurdle that will be overcome through solidarity.

On the other hand, representations of the urban landscape point to other dimensions of the history of the settlements, mainly European immigration as a civilizing agent of modernization.³³ It is presented particularly through the sections devoted to the history of Domínguez: “Life in Domínguez” and “Culture.” Local theatre production posters, musical instruments, a movie projector, and architectural plans for local art deco buildings, including the pharmacy, and neighboring bank, are showcased here to portray the town as a modern thriving cultural center of Clara Colony. Framed and prominently displayed in the archive room, the map of Villa Domínguez (Figure 1) is possibly the most emblematic symbol of its modernity. The small blueprint illustrates a centralized design with eight avenues ra-

³³ Oscar Terán, “La Generación del 37: Sarmiento y Alberdi,” in *Historia de las ideas en la Argentina. Diez lecciones iniciales, 1810–1890* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2012), 65–71, 105–7, and also Devoto and Benencia, *Historia de la inmigración en la Argentina*, 30–31.



Fig. 5: School benches from the Sonnenfeld Yiddish School, exhibition at the Immigrants' Hotel, MJS] (Image courtesy of the author)



Fig. 6: Jaime Jruz, director of the Israelite Association of Villa Domínguez in the town's synagogue (Image courtesy of the author)

diating from a central circular square.³⁴ The shape of the urban plan was inspired by Haussmann's renovation of Paris and contrasts with the omnipresent orthogonal grid characteristic of Spaniard and creole settlements throughout the country.³⁵ Using this layout Domínguez, as well as few other towns in Argentina, differentiated themselves from the traditional past and showed their aspiration to become symbols of European modernity carved into the landscape.

³⁴ In 1897 the JCA commissioned the urban plan of Domínguez to Aristides Sol (1846–1922), a French surveyor who lived in the neighboring town of San Marcial. Georges-Eugène Haussmann's project for Paris (1852–1870) was very influential in Argentina. Its morphology inspired the redesign of downtown Buenos Aires (1894–1910) but also towns created *ex novo* like the city of La Plata (plan from 1882) and Villa Domínguez among others.

³⁵ See Adrian Gorelik, *La Grilla y el Parque: Espacio Público y Cultura Urbana en Buenos Aires, 1887–1936* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2001), 101–24; and also see Gustavo Vallejo, “Ideales de la Ilustración en la Génesis de Una “Nueva Capital” Latinoamericana: La Plata (Argentina), 1882,” *Anais: Encontros nacionais de ANPUR* 9 (2001): 652–53.



Fig. 7: Vignette from 'First Harvest' section, permanent exhibition, MJS (Image courtesy of the author)



Fig. 8: Dr. Yarcho pharmacy now MJS main building (Image courtesy of the author)

Even as the role of immigrants as civilizing agents is tacitly omnipresent through these sections, the MJS has managed to present the urban landscape as the endeavor of the multiple cultures that participated in the town's life. This was achieved mainly through the organization of the exhibition. Unlike other small institutions in the region, like the Regional Historic Museum located in the neighboring Villa Clara, the MJS has not structured its narrative dividing communities according to their origins. Instead it chose to present a cosmopolitan view of the towns that attempted to interpret the local culture as a whole. There, urban landscape can be interpreted alongside the rural landscape as the result of the collaboration between different communities that came together to overcome hardship and share knowledge.

Uniqueness: the Birthplace of the Jewish Gaucho

Although the landscape is used as a democratizing element of local representation, in the MJS the settlements are also presented as the birthplace of the "Jewish gaucho," a slogan used intermittently by the museum. This points to an ambivalent relationship between the representation of multiple cultural collaborations and a differentiating essence of the local. Towards 1999, the project *Shalom Argentina*, which was framed in the program "Argentina Mosaic of Identities," consolidated the touristic trail organized by the MJS, giving the museum greater visibility and a wider audience, as it attracted national and international visitors. Participating in the program required a stronger definition of the museum's identity and an easily recognizable characterization of the local history and culture in accordance to the prevailing conceptualization of diversity as multiculturalism – which derived from UNESCO policies from the nineties.³⁶ Thereafter the museum needed an institutional identity that would put forward the uniqueness of the story it represents. Coined by Alberto Gerchunoff, the term Jewish gaucho became a key symbol of this distinction, one that was deployed for well over a decade in Entre Ríos, as well as other provinces, to transform the Jewish settlements into a touristic destination.

The term first appeared in a series of stories published in the national newspaper *La Nación*, which were edited as a book in 1910. The book, titled *The Jewish Gauchos*, was firmly inscribed in a literary movement with nationalistic overtones

³⁶ UNESCO, "Our Creative Diversity" (UNESCO, July 1994), 15; and for an overview of multiculturalism see Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "The Case of Multiculturalism: Kaleidoscopic and Long-Term Views," *Social Identities* 7, no. 3 (September 2001): 401–4.

called *criollismo*, which was influential in Argentina towards the centenary of the May Revolution.³⁷ There, Gerchunoff constructed a perspective of the Jewish rural communities framed by a romantic historicism, which understood popular traditions to emerge from a spiritual relationship between immigrants and landscape.³⁸ Throughout these stories, the Jewish gaucho is presented as the result of a transformative exchange between creoles and immigrants facilitated by a shared love for the land. However, the overall positive tone is criss-crossed by plots that position the gaucho as the source of violence, suggesting – in contrast to most works of *criollismo* from that period – an essence of savagery that roots him in the past and prevents him from being assimilated within progress.³⁹ Meanwhile, immigrants of Jewish descent are vindicated in their ability to learn from the creoles and adapt to life in the new country. The syncretism between a Hispanic Tellurism (pastoral hispanism) and European modernity can be seen here, as a response to the contemporary rise of the xenophobic discourse that blamed immigrants for dissolving a unifying Hispanic tradition.⁴⁰ Since then the Jewish Gaucho has become a pervasive part of the ethos of Jewish rural communities.⁴¹ Used as a synthesis of layered hybrids emerging from the rural landscape through the contact among cultures, this construct became a symbol of the essence of the local community at the MJS. It was deployed with a lack of depth and historicity characteristic of the post-modern cultural norm, in order to represent it to tourists and encourage them to travel to Domínguez. And more troublesomely, it was done in a place that no longer had a significant population descending from the archetype.

Solidarity, a Common Quest

The museum archive largely preserves documents belonging to the local associationist movement including: the farming-cooperative; the school cooperative; and mutual health association. The work of these institutions became a third key aspect

37 For example see Adolfo Prieto, *El Discurso Criollista en la Formación de la Argentina Moderna* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1988), 20–21.

38 Leonardo Senkman, *La Identidad Judía en la Literatura Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Pades, 1983), 17–18.

39 Jesús Peris Llorca, “Los Gauchos Judíos, de Alberto Gerchunoff: El Gaucho Como Herencia Simbólica Nacionalizadora en la Argentina del Centenario,” *Artifara*, no. 14 (December 2014): 134.

40 For example see Carlos Altamirano and Beatriz Sarlo, “La Argentina del Centenario: Campo Intelectual, Vida Literaria y Temas Ideológicos,” *Hispanía* 9, no. 25/26 (August 1980): 51–53.

41 Cf. José C. Moya, “The Jewish Experience in Argentina in a Diasporic Comparative Perspective,” in *The new Jewish Argentina*, ed. Adriana Brodsky and Raanan Rein (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9.

used by the MJS to portray the local culture and frame the construction of the rural and urban landscape. It was also used to assign local Jewish institutions a significance that transcends their role within that community and highlights the national legacy of the colonies as both modern and inclusive. Historian Celia Gladys López, who was one of the driving forces behind the creation of the museum and its first director, was instrumental in legitimizing the farming-cooperative movement within the national history of immigrant associationism. Her research places the experiments of the German and Jewish communities of Entre Ríos as the firm beginning of a solidarity movement whose influence can still be seen today, and that currently offers – according to the author – an exemplary agricultural model to face contemporary economic challenges.⁴² In a similar vein, the overall message of the museum seeks to instil local pride in the community. It encourages democratic participation and collective work in the process of creating the town's history. The use of these institutions in the creation of a local history has been essential in encouraging local engagement and appreciation of the history of the settlements, particularly as the Jewish presence diminished locally.

Thereafter, the process of creating the museum can be seen in itself as a performative enunciation of a particular sense of identity, much in the same way as national and regional intuitions.⁴³ Here, a sense of identity based on the values of solidarity, democracy, and collective work is the unifying common thread that the museum projects on tangible and intangible heritage. Moreover, these aspects of local history are deployed particularly in the local context through outreach programs: including the internships developed with the local secondary school which involves students in cataloguing the museum archival backlog, as well as a pilot experience of theatrical guided tours developed by local tourism students. Later in 2019 the whole community was involved in a project that allowed history to exit the museums walls through reenactments that took place in the streets of Domínguez. All together these point to ways in which the museum seeks to create a cohesive sense of community. By contrast, the Jewish gaucho in its double function – modern and rural – is a key element in establishing a sense of difference and uniqueness. It places strong constraints on the inclusion/exclusion dynamic of the local community, assigning other cultures a secondary role and creating a fragmented representation of the local history, where the past becomes disassociated from the present and a rigid boundary between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures is constructed.

⁴² Celia Gladys López, *La fuerza del ideal. Historia del cooperativismo*, 369.

⁴³ See Sharon Macdonald, "Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities," *Museum and Society* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 3.

Visitors at the MJS

The preservation of any heritage, including museum objects, is often less about the preservation of material things and more about the effect those objects might have upon individuals who come in contact with them to generate imaginative responses.⁴⁴ Among local and community museums, like the MJS, their ability to establish relationships between history and territory can be a fundamental way in which communities portray their collective identities and become involved in “co-constructing the heritage meaning.”⁴⁵ But it is through a continuous relationship between visitors and museums that these institutionalized narratives may continue to be effective representations of those communities, which inevitably change and are transformed with time. In this context, comments spontaneously recorded in visitors’ books remain one of the most accessible sources of information on their subjective experiences, despite their limitations.⁴⁶

An analysis of the museum’s visitors’ book allows a glimpse at the various levels and meanings of visitor engagement at the site in the 37 years since its foundation. Is there a gap between the conception of identity that the museum attempts to articulate and that perceived by those who visited it?⁴⁷ Visitors’ self-positioning is considered here alongside their perception of the role of the museum, and their understanding of the history represented there. All these provide some insight into the way they articulate their selves with the museum narrative and unveil everyday life practices that offer varying degrees of resistance⁴⁸ to the power held by the museum.

44 For example see Anders Gustafsson and Håkan Karlsson, ““Changing of the Guards”. The Ethics of Public Interpretation at Cultural Heritage Sites,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology*, ed. Robin Skeates, Carol McDavid, and John Carman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 478–95; and also see Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, “Interpretative Communities, Strategies and Repertoires,” in *Museums and Their Communities*, ed. Sheila Watson (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 89.

45 For example see Stephanie K. Hawke, “Heritage and Sense of Place: Amplifying Local Voices and Co-Constructing Meaning,” in *Making Sense of Place: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Ian Convery, Gerard Corsane, and Peter Davis, *Heritage Matters* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 242–43.

46 See: Sharon Macdonald, “Accessing Audiences: Visiting Visitor Books,” *Museum & Society* 3, no. 3 (November 2005): 122–24.

47 This question was raised by Sharon Macdonald, “Museums, National, Postnational and Trans-cultural Identities,” *Museum and Society* 1, no. 1 (March 2003): 10.

48 See Michel de Certeau, “General Introduction to the Practice of Everydaylife (1980),” in *The Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Highmore (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), particularly 68–71.



Fig. 9: Vignette from 'Everyday life' section, permanent exhibition, MJS (Image courtesy of the author)

Personal Connections

A review of the MJS visitors' book shows that over half of the comments included some reference to emotions, expressing feelings of joy or nostalgia, and stressing the ability of the museum experience to move those who visit it, often to tears.⁴⁹ Almost with equal regularity, comments included mentions to a particular family member or specific periods of the visitor's life.⁵⁰ In line with this, most of these visitors then identified the main function of the MJS as keeping the memory of their family or childhood; and stressed its ability to teach them about their own roots. These memories, which the museum is responsible for preserving, go beyond what might be described as the local community history to establish more personal links that record the relationships between each writer and the colonies.

Such perceptions may partially be a consequence of visitors using the museum archive as a source for genealogical research. Although the museum does not provide a service for family history researchers it has in its archive birth records, local land registers, memoirs, school records, testaments, cemetery records, and has even digitized some of them—including manifests of nineteenth and early twentieth century ships traveling from European ports to Buenos Aires. A few of the comments written in the visitors' book explicitly indicated that the visit to the site was prompted by the desire to learn more about their own family history, and many of those comments also shared the discoveries made.⁵¹ These included finding the name of family members in documents or recognizing their images in some of the photographs of the MJS collections.⁵² What is more, occasionally writers also chose to relate stories about finding people that knew their family and encountering old friends or even lost relatives.⁵³

⁴⁹ See comment of April 8, 2005, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, MJS, 4; comment of September 1, 2019, Visitors' Book 2017–2022, MJS, 65.

⁵⁰ For example, see comments of September 20, 1989, September 21, 1990, Visitors' Book 1985–2003, MJS, 119, 142; comments of February 20, 2008, February 13, 2010, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 110, 171.

⁵¹ For example, see comments of April 19, 1987, November 8, 1988, Visitors' Book 1985–2003, 51, 93–94; comments of April 8, 2005, ca. May 15, 2007, ca. September 8, 2007, July 25, 2016, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 4, 80, 92, 340; comments of October 22, 2018, Visitors' Book 2017–2022, 67.

⁵² For example, see comments of October 3, 2010, April 4, 2012, September 14, 2016, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 192, 232, 345; comments of May 15, 2004, Visitors' Book 2003–2005, MJS. Please note that there are no page numbers in this volume.

⁵³ For example, see comments of May 28, 2010, November 28, 2011, April 4, 2012, September 20, 2015, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 181, 227, 232, 318; comments of June 30, 2019, Visitors' Book 2017–2022, 53.

The common denominator of these experiences is a sense of discovery and personal connection with their history, an access to the past mediated by local people – often members of the Jewish community associations and most commonly museum staff, people that are then seen as keepers of that knowledge and memories. The combination of storytelling and the museum setting seems to conjure a kind of direct relationship with the past. Here, histories and stories (both meanings of the Spanish word *historia*) allowed visitors to “feel connected” with that past and construct it as their own, as a visitor stated: “I am very moved being here today, encountering part of my history, stories that resonate with similar ones, which I heard during my childhood.”⁵⁴

Most of these visitors described the history in the museum as representing “our roots,” “our people,” “the history that shaped my life,” or even “my family and personal history.”⁵⁵ By including in their comments the names of their parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents, and sometimes a combination of these, some visitors created something akin to a family tree which furthers this conceptualization. Moreover, these were sometimes accompanied with the year of immigration, the name of the settlement, and the occupation or economic activity they developed there, placing their own family in the local historical narrative represented in the museum. As the visitors’ book is certified by a notary and has been used by the museum to register meetings with stakeholders and some donations, it is possible that visitors’ inscriptions of their family history aimed to formalize that knowledge. Using the book as a register, inscriptions become a way of articulating those stories of self and family in the frame of commemoration that the museum offers, simultaneously conferring them a worth that exceeds the personal memory realm. This practice may be understood as a particular alternative to the donation of objects that, when presented in the MJS exhibition, include the name of the donor family in their labels (Figure 9), or even as an attempt to overwrite the power wielded by the museum in the selection and exhibition of those objects. If so, the museum visitors’ book effectively functions as a way of incorporating the family name and the writer’s own – through a kinship relationship – in the museum’s historical narrative, a practice of resistance aimed to subvert the power of the museum.

54 “Me siento muy emocionada de estar hoy aquí, encontrándome con parte de mi historia, con relatos que me resuenan similares a los que escuché en mi infancia,” comments of July 13, 2005, Visitors’ Book 2005–2017, 11–12.

55 For example, see comments of July 28, September 13, 1997, July 15, 2002, Visitors’ Book 1985–2003, 266, 282, 386; comments of March 25, 2005, October 30, 2017, Visitors’ Book 2005–2017, 2, 390; comment of March 31, 2018, Visitors’ Book 2017–2022, 9.

Establishing and Erasing Differences

Although comments written by visitors who do not identify their family past with that of the settlements of Central Entre Ríos are harder to pinpoint, a few explicitly indicated a different self-positioning. Among these there are three distinct types. Some visitors identified themselves as non-Jewish family members of Jewish descendants from Entre Ríos settlers, generally by marriage.⁵⁶ Others identified as descendants of communities from other settlements, often including a statement of interest in Jewish culture.⁵⁷ A third group identified themselves as members of the Jewish community while also indicating a qualifying difference often related to the period of immigration of their ancestor, or their ascription to the Sephardic culture.⁵⁸ In most cases, these writers chose to combine the categories through which they express a sense of difference, with qualifying factors that mitigate – and in rare occasions even negate – such differences.

In the world of MJS this mixture of familial connection and nostalgia is bolted to a version of the Jewish colonies as representative of a successful epic story of immigration. Recurring references to “struggle,” “toil,” and “sacrifice” appear in the visitors’ characterization of the life of the settlers. One visitor called them “heroic” while others summarized the colonization enterprise as the “immigration epic” or the “unforgettable quest of our forefathers,”⁵⁹ all of which echoed in some sense MJS interpretation of the local landscape as a collective endeavor achieved through shared knowledge. Among these, some also foregrounded the Jewish contribution to the national Argentine history, and to the history of the global or national Jewish community. Additionally, a few comments availed themselves of regional references to the history of the province to highlight the relevance of the settlements and their influence, although these tend to be scarce, as are cases interpreting the Jewish immigration alongside others, all presented as collective contributions that “make the motherland great” and helped “build” the country.⁶⁰

None of these wider historical narratives found a place for the Jewish gauchos, nor did they appear prominently among the multiple categories of self-inscription presented in the visitors’ book or role assigned to the museum. References to the

⁵⁶ For example, see comment of December 1, 1986, Visitors’ Book 1985–2003, 45.

⁵⁷ For example, see comments of ca. September 25, 2009, October 31, 2009, February 9, 2013, Visitors’ Book 2005–2017, 159, 163, 261.

⁵⁸ For example, see comments of September 20, 2003, Visitors’ Book 2003–2005.

⁵⁹ See comments of ca. March 15, 2006, Visitors’ Book 2005–2017, 41; comments of August 14, 1995, February 15, 1998, Visitors’ Book 1985–2003, 248, 289.

⁶⁰ For example, see comments of ca. March 12, 2006, February 13, 2010, ca. January 26, 2014, Visitors’ Book 2005–2017, 41, 171, 287; comments of April 14, 1995, Visitors’ Book 1985–2003, 243.

Jewish gaucho are altogether very scarce throughout the volumes. Despite the prominence held in the self-fashioning of the MJS identity for many years, only a handful of entries identified the settlers as Jewish gauchos, and just one visitor identified himself as their descendant.⁶¹ This suggests that genealogical links, multiple self-identification categories, and wider framing of the MJS narrative all function as subtle forms of resistance to the museum's portrayal of a cohesive and differentiated local Jewish identity based on that hybrid. That is to say, visitors do not fully endorse the MJS narrative but instead make something more intensely personal from their experience.

Invisible Antisemitism

The MJS displays an uncomfortable ambivalence in relation to the long and troubled history of antisemitism locally, nationally, and globally. In part this is an inevitable result of the impulse to display local accomplishments that instill a sense of pride in Jewish settlers' achievements in Central Entre Ríos. Such an epic story, however, runs the risk of eliding the prejudice that those settlers encountered since relocating to Argentina. Moreover, given that antisemitism is such a pervasive part of the Jewish-Argentine experience, it is remarkable that only one, among the hundreds of the comments in the visitors' book, alluded to it. This comment highlighted that the exhibition does not deal with either "the pogrom that took place in Buenos Aires in 1919" nor does it mention the decree used to "forbid ... the entrance of Jews from Poland" during the 1930s.⁶²

⁶¹ The term appeared in comments of February 29, 2000, November 6, 2002, Visitors Book 1985–2003, 334, 394; comments of September 27, 2008, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 127; comments of September 29, 2019, November 11, 2019, May 5, 2022, Visitors' Book 2017–2022, 73, 99, 109.

⁶² "Este museo es una obra meritoria porque retiene datos históricos muy impresionantes. Con respecto a la Argentina, no se menciona el pogromo que hubo en Buenos Aires en 1919 con la presidencia de [Hipólito] Yrigoyen. Según los radicales lo hicieron gente "extraña". Otra evidencia es la anulación del decreto de prohibición que existía desde 1929 de no dejar ingresar judíos polacos, por [Néstor] Kirchner. Era una orden "secreta" a las embajadas argentinas en el exterior. Importante esta información a historiadores serios." Comment of a settler who emigrated to the colonies in 1929 from Poland and later emigrated to Israel in 1976, ca. November 4, 2012, Visitors' Book 2005–2017, 254.

Antisemitism and its Representation in Argentina

Antisemitism has a long and complex history in Argentina, one tied to internal and external political and ideological configurations. During most of the twentieth century it was often part of the political discourse of nationalism of the extreme right. It has had multiple manifestations from popularized prejudice to institutionalized ideology sometimes with access or control over state resources and institutions.⁶³ These antisemitic ideologies reached their highest institutionalization with the state terrorism that emerged during the last dictatorships between 1976 and 1983, just prior to the foundation of the museum.⁶⁴ The return of democracy marked a turning point in these political tendencies, although conspiracy theories survived for the next decade in specific sectors of the media, often catholic-antisemitic publications, and small neo-Nazi parties.⁶⁵ In the nineties the bombing of the Israel Embassy and the AMIA brought forward a sense of solidarity among the population, in spite of that in reporting the events the discourse often slipped into divisions that constructed differences between Argentines and Jews, which partially recreated the common places of political antisemitic discourse.⁶⁶ In 2009, surviving parties overtly based on Nazi ideology were definitely dissolved, through a ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice, which found them unconstitutional for promoting hatred based on race.⁶⁷ Politicians linked to these small parties remain a part of the national political landscape although explicit references to Nazism have mostly gone underground since.

The 1853 Constitution of Argentina set the basis for a national myth based on equality and the elimination of all prejudice towards the residents of the territory, on which most representations of immigration are still framed today. There, not

⁶³ For example see Haim Avni, "Antisemitismo en la Argentina: Las Dimensiones del Peligro," in *El Legado Del Antisemitismo*, ed. Leonardo Senkman and Mario Sznajder (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1995), 197.

⁶⁴ For example see Martina Libertad Weisz, "Argentina Durante la Dictadura de 1976–1983: Antisemitismo, Autoritarismo y Política Internacional," *Índice. Revista de ciencias sociales* 37, no. 24 (May 2007): 11–24; and also see Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews Or Jewish Argentines?: Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora* (Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2010), 194–200.

⁶⁵ For example see Jorge Saborido, "El Antisemitismo en la Historia Argentina Reciente: La Revista Cabildo y la Conspiración Judía," *Revista computense de historia de América* 30 (2004): 209–23.

⁶⁶ Daniel Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y Antisemitismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Javier Vergara, Grupo Z, 2003), 18.

⁶⁷ See Raúl Kollmann, "El Führer Local Tendrá Que Esperar," *Página 12*, May 10, 2004, sec. El país, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/135144-2004-05-10.html>; and also see Raúl Kollmann, "Los Neonazis san Maquillaje," *Página 12*, December 24, 2003, sec. El país, <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/elpais/129682-2003-12-24.html>.

only slavery and nobility were definitely abolished but also article 14 of the fifth chapter guaranteed that “all inhabitants of the nation had the right to work and exercise their industry ... petition the authorities; enter, stay, transit and leave of the Argentine territory” while also guaranteeing their freedom of the press, religious freedom and freedom to teach and learn.⁶⁸ Still legislative and administrative measures adopted to regulate the immigration process were often in tension or even contradicted those principles.⁶⁹ These included both incentives to certain European groups and discriminatory regulations that imposed ethnic, cultural and religious limitations to others. Since the 1920s administrative regulations aimed to dissuade “beggars, subversives and [the] sick” from immigrating were implemented through the use of exclusion categories based on religious, social and medical rationales.⁷⁰ These were to be implemented entirely at the discretion of the migration directorate. Moreover, during the following decades, when refugees of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War were perceived as a subversive menace by governing conservative elites, the national government tightened the measures to insure that “undesirable elements” would not infiltrate the country.⁷¹

During the nineties and early 2000s Argentina started to come to terms with this troublesome part of its past, firstly, through the creation of the Commission of Enquiry into the Activities of Nazism in Argentina (CEANA) and later with a series of public presidential apologies for Argentina’s refusal to receive Jewish immigrants during the Holocaust as well as harboring Nazi war criminals after the end of the war. However even today most museums in Argentina avoid memorializing these and other aspects of the past that portray a contradictory history of immigration and the difficulties faced by Jewish-Argentine communities. Commemoration

68 “Todos los habitantes de la Nación gozan de los siguientes derechos conforme a las leyes que reglamenten su ejercicio; a saber: de trabajar y ejercer toda industria lícita; de navegar y comerciar; de peticionar a las autoridades; de entrar, permanecer, transitar y salir del territorio argentino; de publicar sus ideas por la prensa sin censura previa; de usar y disponer de su propiedad; de asociarse con fines útiles; de profesar libremente su culto; de enseñar y aprender.” Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación, ed., *Constitución de la Nación Argentina. Publicación del bicentenario* (Buenos Aires: CSJN; Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación; Biblioteca Nacional, 2010), 32–33.

69 Fernando Devoto, “Las políticas migratorias argentinas (1930–1955), continuidades tensiones y rupturas,” in *Informe final de la comisión de esclarecimiento de las actividades del nazismo en la República Argentina*, ed. CEANA (Buenos Aires: Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, 1999), 22–75, <http://desclasificacion.cancilleria.gov.ar/abril>.

70 Ibid., 38.

71 Dora Schwarstein, “Actores Sociales y Política Inmigratoria en la Argentina. La llegada de los Republicanos Españoles,” *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos*, no. 37 (1997): 446; and also see Uki Goñi, *The Real Odessa: Smuggling the Nazis to Perón’s Argentina* (London; New York: Granta Books, 2002), 31–32.

of negative aspects of the national history of immigration are still by and large relegated to a few private institutions, most of which only emerged in the last decades, among them the Holocaust Museum inaugurated in 2000, the Ana Frank House Centre that opened in Buenos Aires in 2009, and Jewish Museum of Entre Ríos created in 2007 in the city of Concordia by Shoah survivor, Victor Oppel, all of which have actively commemorated the history of the Holocaust, though establishing varying degrees of reference to the national context. Museums narratives widely inform visitors' understanding of what a museum is supposed to do and what the past is.⁷² Invisibility of antisemitism in the national context has consequently meant that positive myths about immigration and coexistence of different communities prevailed in the national ethos and became "the past." Thereafter its absence from museum spaces seems to have gone mostly unnoticed, as the role of museums themselves has been equated to showcasing the most positive aspects of the past.

Antisemitism in the Local Context

The MJS archive preserves a collection of documents with accounts of discrimination and harassment towards the local Jewish population, and testimonies of local de-commemoration of the Jewish immigrant past that took place during the 1940s. These include, for example, testimonies on the events surrounding the day of mourning on March 14, 1945 when the Jewish community observed a journey of fastening and prayer in most of the country to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust. The events had to be cancelled in the town of Basavilbaso as local police forbade residents from closing their shops and only authorized a gathering at the synagogue on the condition that participants would "not speak ill of enemy countries."⁷³ They also register changes in the names of streets and institutions, and the removal of symbols associated with Judaism from public spaces. One such document, dated early 1944, describes how local police forcefully changed the name of the library and social club of Villa Clara from Max Nordau to Pancho Ramírez, in honor of the local separatist leader Francisco Ramírez who created the independent state of Entre Ríos in the early nineteenth century, removed the Magen

⁷² See Susan A. Crane, "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum," *History & Theory* 36, no. 4 (December 1997): 45.

⁷³ "[N]o se Hablará Mal de los Países Enemigos," Presidente de la Asociación Israelita de Basavilbaso to Presidente de la DAIA Buenos Aires, "Evento "Luto por las Víctimas de Guerra" Suspendido," letter (March 16, 1945), El nazismo en Entre Ríos.

David from the door and “purged” the books of the library.⁷⁴ In Domínguez, where the library had undergone a similar de-commemoration process that year, an ordinance signed by the municipal commissioner on September 27, 1943 ordered the main street name be changed from Baron Maurice Hirsch to San Martín, also indicating that “all stars of David should be removed from the central square.”⁷⁵

Although the systematic discrimination portrayed by these documents is no longer common in the area, the prejudice against the Jewish culture is still evident in the region.⁷⁶ One of the most prominent cases recently involved General Campos, a municipality located not far from Domínguez, where in 2013 a property tax bill was printed with an antisemitic slogan which translates as “be patriotic, kill a Jew. General Campos on the road to the centenary,” accompanied by two additional words, an onomatopoeia of a gun being fired, and the surname of a local councilman towards whom the threat was directed.⁷⁷ This case gained notoriety for its crassness, although it has hardly been the only one. Vandalism in the synagogues and cemeteries, as well as overtly Nazi graffiti, seem to occur with some regularity. Additionally, a recent report on hate speech showed that over 36% of surveyed Argentines in the center region either agree, or strongly agree, with antisemitic conspiracy theories fuelled by the pandemic.⁷⁸ In this context, commemorating the local history of antisemitism is undoubtedly difficult but also necessary.

However here, as is the case with difference, the MJS has adopted an ambivalent position, preserving its collection on antisemitism but simultaneously restraining its visibility through its elision from its exhibition and other communication strategies. Even with its ambivalence, the museum has encouraged the

74 See Asociación Israelita de Villa Domínguez, “Hechos Ocurredos en Villa Domínguez,” September 13, 1944, *El Nazismo en Entre Ríos*; and also see Asociación Israelita de Villa Clara, “Datos Concretos Sobre Irregularidades Registradas en ésta,” September 14, 1944, *El nazismo en Entre Ríos*.
75 Municipalidad de Villa Domínguez, Ordenanza Municipal, September 27, 1943, *El Nazismo en Entre Ríos*.

76 For example see Marisa Braylan, ed., *Informe Sobre Antisemitismo en la Argentina 2019–2020* (Buenos Aires: CES; DAIA, 2021), 143, 207, 304; and also see Marisa Braylan, ed., *Informe sobre antisemitismo en la Argentina 2018*, 193, 204.

77 “Haga Patria, Mate un Judío. Gral. Campos Camino al Centenario Pum!!! Raff!” Jorge Riani, “En Entre Ríos Emiten Una Boleta Municipal Con un Mensaje Antisemita,” *La Nación*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1564680-en-entre-rios-emiten-una-boleta-municipal-con-un-mensaje-antisemita>.

78 The national survey involved 3,140 participants along a wide socio-demographic range. Participants were asked to indicate – using the Likert scale – their level of agreement to the following statement: “Behind the Coronavirus pandemic there are figures like Soros and labs of Jewish businessmen that are trying to benefit economically.” See Ezequiel Ipar, dir., *Informe LEDA 3. El Antisemitismo en Argentina: Tramas e Interrogantes* (Buenos Aires: LEDA; GEDIC, 2021).

valorization of positive aspects of the rural Jewish immigration and, in that sense, its mere existence has been useful in dissolving the idea of a single bourgeois-entrepreneur class which has been used traditionally to explain the rise of antisemitism as a sub-product of class struggle.⁷⁹ Since its creation the MJS has been trying to leave behind any history of conflict. The book on the history of Domínguez, edited for the centenaries, affirms: “It was not the intention of the author, nor that of the Commission in general, to touch upon issues that cause controversy, [and] resentment ... [this book] has to be a collection of family anecdotes, as the celebration of the centenary will certainly be.”⁸⁰ Then the invisibility of antisemitism might be considered a conciliatory gesture. Nonetheless this collection of documents remains an untapped resource to further dislodge any rationalization of antisemitism available to those that seek it.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter suggests that community museums have a strong potential to portray aspects of local identities and engage visitors and local communities in their construction. Nevertheless, it also points to the fact that the ability of these museums to portray local history is often constrained to show positive aspects of community relationships which inevitably provide a slanted representation of local identity. Through local museums, like the MJS, visitors meaningfully engage with locals and share their stories. These experiences allow visitors to establish explicit and personal links with the history represented in the museum, links that effectively construct a common history, even if many engagements show subtle forms of resistance to the power wielded by the museum. Among those personal links, renewed bonds between descendants and the area or local community offer some insight into what maybe one of the most successful contributions of the MJS, especially when considering that the regional population has been progressively affected by several migration cycles. Through its perspective on local landscape and the role of cooperative institutions, the museum has successfully reconciled the memory of different communities. Using the most positive events from the past it has encouraged local pride and showcased the value of col-

79 For a review of these perspectives see Lvovich, *Nacionalismo y antisemitismo en la Argentina*, 32–33.

80 “No era la intención del autor ni la de la comisión en general, tocar temas que originan polémicas, resquemores... [este libro] tiene que ser un anecdotario familiar como lo será, sin duda, el festejo del centenario.” Osvaldo Cesar Quiroga, *Villa Domínguez 100 Años de Historia* (Villa Domínguez: Comisión pro-festejo del centenario de Villa Domínguez Provincia de Entre Ríos, 1990), 10.

lective work while engaging locals and particularly the younger generations in the process of preserving the past. The participatory nature of these institutions points to the fact that local museums retain a meaningful role in contemporary representations of history, as they have a strong potential to present cultural and historical aspects that seldom find their way into mainstream narratives of history, as well as identities generally marginalized in historic national narratives.

However, local museums can also reinforce the limits of the identity they aim to portray. In the case of MJS particularly, the figure of the Jewish Gaucho was used intermittently as a synonym of local heritage, not only restricting the museum's ability to represent plural local communities but also its capacity to comprehensively portray the Jewish community of Central Entre Ríos itself. In the same vein, ambivalence towards antisemitism has generated a distorted version of the local history. Conflicts among communities are neither widely represented in mainstream institutions nor in traditional accounts of immigration, which forge our expectations on museums. Therefore, tackling these issues is challenging for most museums, but particularly for community institutions as they risk alienating their local public. Considering that antisemitic prejudice is still pervasive in Argentine culture, antisemitic testimonies are a valuable educational resource which has the potential to promote a reflection on the current context. This might be particularly true if testimonies are presented alongside other forms of prejudice or conflict among and within the communities of the region. Currently the museum is at a crossroads which provides a unique opportunity to do just that. On the one hand, a thorough renovation of the exhibition under advisory of professional curatorial staff is under way; on the other, the government of Entre Ríos is expected to launch a new tourism initiative created for the Jewish colonies later this year called *Nooks with history*.⁸¹ Both upcoming changes have the potential to assist the museum in portraying the multiple and complex relationships among local communities that give Villa Domínguez and the settlements their local identity. The scope of the changes to come will much depend on the ability of the MJS to seize these opportunities.

⁸¹ The program *Rincones con historia* (Nooks with history) includes a survey of the material heritage in the colonies and a public consultation on their conservation. The survey is opened to all inhabitants of the colonies that wish to express their opinion in the process of selection of heritage, touristic plan, or strategy. See Estudio Singerman and Makón, *Plan Rincones con Historia: Circuito de las Colonias Judías en Entre Ríos* (Buenos Aires: Singerman & Makón, 2022), <https://singerman-makon.com/plan-rincones-con-historia/>, and also Secretaría de comunicación. Gobierno de Entre Ríos, *Turismo: impulso al Circuito de las Colonias Judías* (Paraná: Gobierno de Entre Ríos, 2022), <https://noticias.entrerios.gov.ar/notas/turismo-impulso-al-circuito-de-las-colonias-judas.htm>.

Nora Katz

No More Fourth Wall: Performing Reality, Witnessing History, and the Rise of ANU Productions

History and theatre are both performed, negotiated, and altered by time and interpretation. In the past 50 years, history and theatre have grown more connected through the rise of site-specific work in historic sites and other sites of memory. Site-specific theatre uses many of the theoretical underpinnings of “environmental theatre” but requires stagings in “found spaces... locations, both used and dis-used”—that is, spaces not originally intended for theatre productions.¹ It requires an intimate connection between performance and site.

Site is deeply material; we can touch and move through a physical environment, but places also have layers of intangible meaning that mediate our relationships with them.¹² The “site” in site-specificity is often a *lieux de mémoire*, inscribed with memory not only because of its past but because of the layers of meaning added to it by theatrical production.² Site-specific theatre responds to history and memory but it also creates, transforms, and re-inscribes memory. Theatre is a creative, interpretive project, much like history, but it is also a representational and emotional medium that relies on personal experience and deep intimacy, like memory.

Contemporary site-specific theatre emerged directly from the environmental theatre tradition established by the Performance Group and East Coast Artists in New York in the 1960s and 1970s, though its origins go back (according to some scholars) to ancient Greece.³ More recently, this form of theatre and its varied offshoots has been applied in performances that traverse themes in public history and cultural heritage such as *Ngale kweNdlu* (“The Other Side of the House”), a devised, site-specific performance grappling with a complex heritage of colonialism and apartheid in a former mining magnate house in Johannesburg, South Af-

1 Arnold Aronson, *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1977), 183; Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.

2 Pierre Nora, “Between History and Memory: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 8, 18.

3 Arnold Aronson, *The History and Theory of Environmental Scenography* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1977), 183.

rica,⁴ and the “reconstruction” of local memories through “historic environment theatre” in the old city of Zuoying, Kaohsiung, Taiwan.⁵ Site-specific theatre was a feature of the 2014 First World War centenary commemorations in Britain whereby, according to Benzie, the producers aimed to recreate “the aesthetics and atmosphere of combat, rather than relying on symbols as the mode for commemoration.”⁶

Site-specific theatre is an effective medium for the exploration of history because of the intimate relationships it fosters between performers and audiences; the connections it engenders between people and places; and the ways in which it uses memory to add new layers of meaning to historic sites. Site-specificity involves negotiating public memory, history, and contested heritage while maintaining an ethical relationship with marginalized communities and found spaces. In this chapter, the “disused” space is the historic site or “found space.”

This chapter addresses the rise to prominence of the Dublin-based site-specific theatre company ANU Productions between 2011 and 2017. Why the demand for site-specific and experimental theatre during these years and beyond? The success of ANU is the result of a commitment to experimental work, a relationship with history as a performance tool, and shrewd associations with arts funding interests. However, an economic and cultural shift has also been critical. Grene and Loneragan identify the global economic crisis of 2008 as a key turning point for Irish theatre whereby “increased globalization of Irish society has led to a new awareness within the Irish theatre of international dramatists and practices—which have in turn helped to shape and reshape Irish awareness of its place in the world.”⁷ This was coupled with an increased interest from Irish government funding bodies during the “Decade of Centenaries”⁸ which heralded an expansion of site-specific theatre and broader public awareness of the genre in Ireland. A crucial moment was

4 Alex Halligey and Tamara Guhrs, “Space for Haunting: Site-Specific Theatre as Method for Engaging with the Complexity of Heritage Sites,” *South African Theatre Journal* 36, no. 1 (2023): 1–15.

5 Ching-Pin Tseng, “Historical Environmental Theater as a Catalyst for Recalling Citizens’ Collective Memories: The Performance Revealing the Old City as an Example,” *The International Journal of Architectonic, Spatial, and Environmental Design* 17, no. 1 (2022): 115–31.

6 Rebecca Benzie. “Commemorating the War,” in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre of the First World War*, ed. Helen E. M. Brooks and Michael Hammond. Cambridge Companions to Theatre and Performance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 248.

7 Nicholas Grene and Patrick Loneragan, “Introduction,” in *Irish Drama: Local and Global Perspectives*, ed. Nicholas Grene and Patrick Loneragan (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2012), 1.

8 The Decade of Centenaries was a program established by the Irish government to commemorate the hundred-year-anniversaries of major events in early-twentieth-century Irish history, especially as they relate to the struggle for Irish independence. See “Decade of Centenaries 2012–2023,” *Decade of Centenaries*, accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/about/>.

the 2016 centennial commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising. The association between arts and revolution was a key part of the narrative surrounding the centennial.⁹ In 2015, a budget of €30.8 million was allocated for the centenary program, which drew contributions from the Arts Council, Culture Ireland, the National Museum of Ireland, and others.¹⁰

How, in this context, has ANU engaged with audiences by invoking collective memory? How has their oeuvre impacted Irish heritage work and what does this mean for public history? This chapter is based on interviews conducted from April to July 2017 with company members, spectators, and creative collaborators of ANU Productions: ANU actors Laura Murry and Lloyd Cooney, lecturer in philosophy at University College Dublin and researcher and activist for Justice for Magdalenes (JFM)¹¹ Katherine O'Donnell, costume and set designer Niamh Lunny, lecturer in Folklore and Celtic Civilization and director of the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin Kelly Fitzgerald, and the former Head of Special Projects at the National Archives of Ireland and historical advisor to ANU Catriona Crowe.

ANU Productions, 2009 – 2017

ANU Productions, founded by theatre maker Louise Lowe and visual artist Owen Boss, is responsible for the most significant site-specific theatre being produced in the Republic of Ireland today. ANU's first work, *Basin* (2009), premiered at the Dublin Fringe Festival, and subsequent works were funded through the Arts Council, Culture Ireland and other initiatives. The second installment in the four-part "Monto Cycle" (a 2010–2014 production series exploring the so-called Monto area of North Dublin) was 2011's *Laundry*, performed in a former Magdalene laundry on Sean McDermott Street.¹² The play was based on historical research on the

9 Ronan McGreevy, "Easter Rising Commemorative Programme Revealed," *Irish Times*, March 31, 2015, accessed May 20, 2017, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/easter-rising-commemorative-programme-revealed-1.2160368>.

10 Tim O'Brien, "Heritage and Culture Sectors to get €300 m by 2021," *The Irish Times*, September 29, 2015, accessed May 20, 2017, <http://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage-and-culture-sectors-to-get-300-m-by-2021-1.2371903>.

11 JFM sought a state apology and compensation scheme for Magdalene Laundry survivors, received in 2013, and now operates as a research organization raising awareness and supporting survivors. See "About JFMR," *JFM Research*, accessed July 20, 2022, <http://jfmresearch.com/aboutjfmr/>.

12 ANU Productions, "Laundry," video, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/34489217>. Magdalene laundries were carceral institutions run by the Roman Catholic Church with sponsorship from the Irish state that, for over 200 years, imprisoned unwed mothers and other women

laundries in the 1950s and 1960s but was firmly rooted in the principles of social justice that defined the Monto Cycle; although the production was clearly concerned with history ANU saw it as a polemic on contemporary social issues—namely, the continuing silence around this part of Ireland’s traumatic past.

Laundry’s success led to a 2013 commission from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to create *Living the Lockout*, a re-enactment-style “experience” to take place in a tenement building at No. 14 Henrietta Street.¹³ This received significant structural and financial support from Dublin City Council and the soon-to-be-opened Tenement Museum (now called 14 Henrietta Street). *Living the Lockout* was enormously popular and although Lowe had never set out to do history-based work, *Lockout* set the stage for a major commission in 2015. *Pals – The Irish at Gallipoli*, exploring the lives of members of the D Company of the seventh Royal Dublin Fusiliers in World War I and staged in the National Museum of Ireland – Collins Barracks, received rave reviews.¹⁴ This success led to a larger commission to create a triptych of works for the 2016 Easter Rising centennial program: *Sunder*, about the 1916 retreat through Moore Street; *On Corporation Street*, performed in Manchester and dealing with the 1996 IRA bombing of the city; and *These Rooms*, about the 1966 commemorations of 1916 and the North King Street Massacre, performed in a purpose-built space.¹⁵

ANU Productions uses devising—the practice of developing a production as a collective rather than through the hierarchies of playwright-director-actor—as its primary way of working.¹⁶ O’Gorman and McIvor see devised theatre as the newest wave in the world of Irish art,¹⁷ building on the physical theatre movement of

(at least 10,000) deemed “unfit” for life outside of confinement. The laundries ran for-profit businesses (mainly laundry and needlework) using the unpaid labor of inmates. For more information see “About the Magdalene Laundries,” *JFM Research*, accessed July 20, 2022, <http://jfmresearch.com/home/preserving-magdalene-history/about-the-magdalene-laundries/>.

13 Irish Congress of Trade Unions, “ANU Productions – Dublin Tenement Experience – Living the Lockout,” video, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWAYCfZwdw>.

14 “Pals,” ANU Productions, August 3, 2015, accessed December 6, 2016, <https://anuproductions.wordpress.com/2015/08/03/pals/>; Peter Crawley, “Theatre Review: Pals – The Irish at Gallipoli,” *Irish Times*, February 16, 2015, accessed May 20, 2017.

15 “Sunder,” ANU Productions, March 22, 2016, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://anuproductions.ie/sunder/>; “On Corporation Street,” ANU Productions, March 21, 2016, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://anuproductions.ie/on-corporation-street/>; “These Rooms,” ANU Productions, March 20, 2016, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://anuproductions.ie/these-rooms/>.

16 For more on devised theatre see Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, *Devising Performance: A Critical History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

17 Siobhán O’Gorman and Charlotte McIvor, “Devising Ireland: Genealogies and Contestations,” in *Devised Performance in Irish Theatre: Histories and Contemporary Practice*, ed. Siobhán O’Gorman

the 1990s (informed by French mime and clowning traditions and Japanese Noh, among other influences) and the leftist theatre of the 1970s (including Brazilian practitioner Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and the use of guerrilla theatre as protest by groups like Vietnam Veterans Against the War and ACT UP). In 2017, ANU was one of only a few companies in Ireland creating site-specific, immersive, and environmental work and one of the few with a relatively sustainable revenue stream.

ANU represents, in many ways, the future of historian-artist collaboration in Ireland, inching ever closer to the mainstream. How will this connection to establishment commemoration practice affect the validity of their future work? In what follows, I explore the company's approach to art and memory, and the dangers and challenges of engaging in history through theatre.

“It’s Only a Game.” Ethical Remembrance, Audience Engagement, and the Aesthetics of Memory

Government funding and artistic license determine not only what is presented but also who gets to present it, and in what spatial and temporal context. With “ethical remembrance” we seek to critically examine the past with all its faults and successes while using it as a guide for a better future.¹⁸ Pine notes that “the opening up of the Irish past falls short of full ethical remembrance because too often it has been politically and aesthetically shaped, or is still subject to the perils of amnesia.”¹⁹ For a history-based site-specific theatre production to work, its creators need to take aesthetic liberties, but in Pine's framework, those liberties are at odds with ethics. ANU's version of history may not be “accurate” in the academic sense but performances are made to feel so real that audiences no longer question the facts.

The ANU development process begins with extensive research by the whole company, and includes improvisation sessions, devising movement pieces, and interacting with physical spaces. Actress Laura Murray described the process of creating *Laundry*: “We would have looked at a lot of the testimonies... from the

and Charlotte McIvor (Dublin: Carysfort Press, 2015), 1; see also Sandy Fitzgerald, ed., *An Outburst of Frankness: Community Arts in Ireland – A Reader* (Dublin: Tasc at New Island, 2004).

¹⁸ Emilie Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 16–17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

women who were there, and we would have each took something from one of those person's stories and... tried to show that or re-live it."²⁰ *Laundry* relied on interviews that outside researchers had completed with Magdalene survivors. Costume designer Niamh Lunny expressed deep concern for the need to make both actors and audience members feel that the women were really working. When pressed for her sources on the clothing that the women would have worn in the laundries, Lunny confessed that this involved listening to their interviews, hoping to hear them describe their clothing. Mostly, she used Google Images. The authenticity she sought was not a historically accurate garment but rather one that had the superficial appearance of authenticity.²¹

For professional historians who later worked with ANU, the process has been rewarding. Kelly Fitzgerald commented that "The integrity to the research has the same rigor as any kind of academic experience, but then it's that whole... bringing back the human voice into them..."²² ANU seems to empower historians, giving them opportunities to share their work with diverse audiences and to explore avenues frowned upon within the academy. Initial contact with ANU was a welcome addition to Catriona Crowe's work in public history and digitization. She "could see the potential of site-specific theatre, particularly, to bring the lessons of history to people in a digestible and exciting and moving way."²³ For Fitzgerald, the issue of access was also important, but her main focus as a folklorist has been emphasizing untold stories: she recognized ANU's work as: "coming from the vernacular, coming from the grassroots... It's not from books or from state records that we draw our material, but it's from the narrative, it's from the voice."²⁴

ANU's historical focus emerged from its early work on social justice issues and betrays a deep emotional attachment to the source material. This is appropriate, especially in the case of *Laundry*, but can sometimes mean that the work feels overly didactic or even aspirational. Katherine O'Donnell was concerned that in *Laundry* so many of the narratives that actors had chosen to embody were of women who escaped incarceration. She noted that a minuscule number of women even attempted to leave, yet stories of escape made up approximately one sixth of the narratives in the performance.²⁵ Crowe came to the defense of ANU's historical process: "To find a theatre company that was willing to use the

20 Laura Murray, interview with Nora Katz, June 12, 2017, transcript.

21 Niamh Lunny, interview with Nora Katz, June 1, 2017, transcript; neither Catriona Crowe nor Kelly Fitzgerald were involved in the development of *Laundry*.

22 Kelly Fitzgerald, interview with Nora Katz, July 6, 2017, transcript.

23 Catriona Crowe, interview with Nora Katz, July 8, 2017, transcript.

24 Kelly Fitzgerald.

25 Katherine O'Donnell, interview with Nora Katz, May 4, 2017, transcript.

documents that I cared about in a respectful and accurate way – and accuracy is really important. They don't make things up. They'll often embellish slightly, but only for the sake of smoothness, of how things will go.²⁶

While ANU may embellish or speculate, a deep respect for the source material and for the people whose stories are put on display underlies every aspect of the process. In recent years ANU has invited historians to be central players in the collaborative process, creating an environment in which every member of the company does archival research and gains an appreciation for the primary source material.

“There is no Fourth Wall”

Murray summarized the distinctive experience of performing in an ANU production: “There is no fourth wall.”²⁷ Performers directly address, engage with, and even touch audience members in spaces that often only house one performer and one spectator. Singleton views this structural choice as causing spectators to be “implicated through intimacy,” involved bodily in the performance at a deep level and therefore responsible for its outcomes and explorations. For him, intimacy is a “dramaturgical strategy” that forces audience members to conceptualize what is happening around (and often to) them in the context of their own memories.²⁸ The play becomes a part of the spectator's life.

The structure of an ANU show immediately facilitates a close relationship; small audiences in non-frontal stagings mean that spectators are participating in the play rather than watching events unfold. Actor Lloyd Cooney described this: “[The] beauty of that is... the intimacy that you have as an audience member. You feel like you're having a one-on-one experience with these people.”²⁹ Spectators also make decisions about how they will present themselves. Fitzgerald loved that “as an audience member... you can have such an influence on a performance...”³⁰ Cooney concurred: “The whole beauty of it is anything can happen...” Murray described how, on being instructed to “genuflect” at the altar in the chapel of the former Magdalene laundry where *Laundry* was staged, an audience member made an obscene gesture up to the holy cross. Murray, along with other interviewees, embraced the uncertainty of the experience: “When you offer for people to get

²⁶ Catriona Crowe.

²⁷ Laura Murray.

²⁸ Brian Singleton, *ANU Productions: The Monto Cycle* (London: Palgrave Pilot, 2016), 2, 5.

²⁹ Lloyd Cooney.

³⁰ Kelly Fitzgerald.

involved ... even if it's in the smallest of ways, you're leaving yourself open to every possible scenario. So you have to be prepared [for] that..."³¹

ANU actors are trained to respond to and interact with spectators. In *Angel Meadow*, their 2014 production in Manchester, performers relied on code words to communicate issues that arose with audience members. If a spectator got too upset by (or involved in) a scene, actors would reassure them by saying, "It's only a game."³² If someone refused to help her escape from the laundry, Murray would still find a way to get them to the next scene. It would be almost impossible for an audience member to meaningfully change the outcome of a performance, but ANU manufactures a feeling of uncertainty that adds perceived weight to a spectator's every decision. None of it is real.

Of course, audience members enter productions with agendas and experiences of their own. Cooney performed *Living the Lockout* with an audience that included President Michael D. Higgins. The show moved through the rooms of the tenement building and ended in a cramped hallway with Cooney's character in a heated debate with his brother about whether to sign a pledge not to unionize. During every performance, Cooney asked an audience member to read the pledge aloud, and then asked them if they would sign it: "So we had Michael D. Higgins... in this tiny...derelict hallway, ...And we're having this argument and I ask him to read [the pledge] and he defiantly reads it out, and I just go, "Would you sign that?" And he just looks me bare in the eye and goes, "Never!"³³ President Higgins imagined himself and his modern political agenda in a fictionalized context. ANU uses historical documents (and sites) as a means of accessing this imagined past rather than as a means of investigating it beyond previous understandings. It is a new performed narrative based on contemporary relationships with the past.

"Kind of Haunted."

All six interviewees talked about the experience of doing theatre in a historic site in terms of engagement with the physical space. Unlike a traditional proscenium stage, historic buildings have their own personalities that shape ANU's work. ANU performances layer history, memory, and personal experience onto the physical fabric of a location. This reliance on the site as storyteller, as an object that can

³¹ Laura Murray.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lloyd Cooney.

communicate its personality simply through physical presence, is itself devised. The “sense” or “vibration” that audience members and actors feel when entering a site is overwhelmingly caused by ANU’s construction of a performed environment in which these seemingly ordinary buildings gain resurrected lives.

This is not to say that ANU’s connection to historic physical spaces is negative; it is a hallmark of the company’s work and is what sets them apart. Typically, company members of an ANU show will try to get into a space as soon as possible so that it can inform the devising process. For *Living the Lockout*, the actors and crew spent the entire rehearsal process in the tenement building. By the end of the show, Murray noted, it felt like she actually lived there. For *Laundry*, however, scheduling and access issues meant that the company could not visit the building until technical rehearsals. For Murray, that last-minute site visit was what finally brought her performance to life: “Until you’re in the building, until you’re there, it doesn’t quite yet feel real...”³⁴

Interviewees also expressed the idea of the building having an energy of its own. Murray told a story of a break between performances of *Laundry* when she and a group of cast and crew members were sitting in a corner room. The crew had handheld radios to communicate throughout the show and suddenly they heard the noise of babies crying through the receiver.³⁵ Murray is hardly a believer in ghosts and spirits, but spending all day in a former laundry caused these hallucinations for the entire cast. Lunny, too, felt that the building was “kind of haunted.”³⁶ Pine states that “[G]hosts are a sign of... the ‘excesses’ of memory, a manifestation of the excessive grip of the past on the imagination of culture in the present.”³⁷ Whether figurative or perceived as real, there is a sense of the past coming back to haunt people in the present, because the traumas of history remain unresolved. How much are these “ghosts” really present in spectators’ and actors’ minds, and how much are they manufactured by ANU to lend gravity to performance spaces?

For O’Donnell and Lunny as audience members, entering the Magdalene laundry on Sean McDermott Street caused visceral reactions. Upon being let in the front gate of the laundry, O’Donnell “was immediately on edge... I could feel... this aggression rising in me, and it was my reaction to the... colonial architecture

³⁴ Laura Murray.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Niamh Lunny.

³⁷ Pine, *The Politics of Irish Memory*, 16; Joanne Tompkins, too, refers to what she calls the “host/ghost connection”: the host is the site itself, and the ghost is what a performance brings to the site. See Tompkins, “The ‘Place’ and Practice of Site-Specific Theatre and Performance,” in *Performing Site-Specific Theatre*, ed. Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 8.

of the religious institution.” Having grown up in the Catholic Church, O'Donnell felt that she was “hard-wired to respond with reverence and obedience and docility to Catholic hierarchy, particularly nuns... They own me. It's kind of in my system. And I could feel myself trying to resist that... And I could feel all of this kind of rush of... being a child, a product of this... formation... coming up.”³⁸ Lunny reported the most evocative physical response of the interviewees: “The smell in that building was just, it's not that it was disgusting, but it was so evocative, it was... one of those things. And, actually, it's funny that I'm saying that now, because I've since lost my sense of smell, and I can still smell what that smelled like, and the carbolic soap...”³⁹

Audience members took the smell home with them in the form of a bar of soap, a physical connection between the traumatic, forced labor of the Magdalene survivors and the simple act of doing laundry in one's home.⁴⁰ Oddey posits that “the empty space of the building, like the theatrical performer, has an identity, history, memory, and soul.”⁴¹ The “site” in site-specificity is not only the place where the work is performed but also the bodies that are involved in that performance, either as actors or spectators.⁴² Holding soap in one's hand after seeing *Laundry* expanded the site of the production to not only the spectator's home but also their body.

“It was Only in Hindsight That I can say When the Show was Over.”

What happens when a performance takes place in what we perceive to be “the real world”? Immersive theatre relies on the blurring of reality and the play, of art and life. ANU's work encourages audience members and actors to forget what is real and what is staged. For Lunny, an immersive ANU show left her wondering if the people she saw on the street before and after the performance were actors or ordinary people: “It was only in hindsight that I can say when the show was over.”⁴³ For her, “Instead of a design or a vision, it was about making things as

³⁸ Katherine O'Donnell.

³⁹ Niamh Lunny.

⁴⁰ Owen Boss, “Practitioner Workshop,” presented at Trinity College Dublin, April 3, 2017.

⁴¹ Alison Oddey, *Re-Framing the Theatrical: Interdisciplinary Landscapes for Performance* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 96.

⁴² Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001), 135.

⁴³ Ibid.

real as possible.” She recalled spending hours in her back garden breaking down wellies for *Laundry* to make sure they looked authentically worn. Her favorite detail was the effect she developed to make actors’ hands look work-worn by dyeing them red with poster paint: “It had an impact... I think sometimes for an audience those things are subliminal. You don’t come out going, “My God, did you see those red hands?” But you have a sense that was a really tired, wrecked... person, or someone who had been working hard.”⁴⁴

The blurring of reality and the play can sometimes result in situations in which audience members do not know how to react to what they see unfolding before them. *Living the Lockout* began with audience members viewing a short video that explained the historical context of the 1913 Lockout, after which Cooney entered singing “The Red Hand Badge.” His hands and chest were covered in stage blood, as his character had just been in a fight. At one performance, the audience was made up of older women who were so concerned for his safety that they would not let the performance continue: “[They] just would not let me get through the piece. I was just trying so hard. But they totally believed me...”⁴⁵

Normally, the structure of the proscenium is a barrier between audience and actor; prop guns, stage blood, and pratfalls are only representations of real violence and injury. In the intimate setting of an ANU production there is no suspension of disbelief; there is no disbelief. The fact that these moments feel real is the greatest fiction of all—this is aestheticized history devised in order to create a sense of authenticity based on understandings of how the past should feel. But all attempts at re-creation are mere representations. The more ANU strives to create an authentic experience, the more it becomes theatre.

This focus on hyper-reality exposes a more deep-seated theatricality and aesthetic sensibility. Pine calls into question the ethics of aestheticizing the past, and the need for accuracy and sensitivity in representing traumatic history through artistic media. Kelly Fitzgerald, who trained as a performance artist before becoming a folklorist, also questioned this distinction between real life and performance. Her insight—that the aesthetic of reality itself is a performed process for ANU—makes the ethical quandary far less dire.

But regardless of such high-minded artistic philosophies, audience members still see these performances as representations of the past. This is in many ways troubling but also an unsolvable problem. As long as ANU maintains a sensitivity to historical trauma and strives for accuracy, these performances are an important medium for the theatre-going public to learn from and about the past.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lloyd Cooney.

The Ethics of Performing the Past

For actors Lloyd Cooney and Laura Murray, the sense of responsibility in portraying real people is ever-present:

We try to portray their lives in the most realistic way we can from their perspective and from the world that they live in... We try to find out about them, research, chat to them, "What do you do? Where do you live?" Workshop with them, bring them into the show, let them know that this is for them as well as just an audience coming to see it.⁴⁶

ANU's devising process contributes to the ethics of the final product; if everyone in the rehearsal room is equally invested in the research process, the performance will involve a deep level of respect for the source material. As an outsider, Katherine O'Donnell saw it as highly collaborative:

Art is created within constraints, but the... constraints of this new process they've... put on themselves is around trying to work collaboratively... They were all able to really fully embody and incorporate the knowledge they had gained and transmitted. And that seems to me to be a very ethical way of approaching... traumatically enforced silences, or silences, also, around traumatic experiences.⁴⁷

The crucial aspect of ANU's ethical process is the distinction it creates between participation and entertainment. Putting traumatic history on stage to be watched is different from throwing audience members into the thick of it, experiencing and critically engaging with it. Niamh Lunny's mother:

was a social worker..., and I would tell her about ANU's work and she would say... there was no way she would ever... see an ANU show, and it's not out of disrespect to ANU, it's because she's like, "No, I lived that. That was my job for 25 years. I don't want to see it as entertainment." But I... don't think anybody comes to an ANU show expecting to be entertained. I think that's the difference...⁴⁸

O'Donnell also feared an exploitative portrayal of the Magdalene laundries, but was pleasantly surprised:

We didn't consume, in the way I was fearing, [a]... sentimental or sensational or shocking thing. We weren't made into consumers who just... passively drew that in. We were bodily

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Katherine O'Donnell.

⁴⁸ Niamh Lunny.

involved, we were involved with every capacity we had. And that changed us into... people who had both an authority but also... an obligation to speak about the experience we'd had.⁴⁹

Her description resonates with Pine's concept of ethical witnessing, the performance of the traumatic past for the purpose of education and understanding. For these audience members, the ethics of the production manifested in the memories and emotions that spectators carried with them out of the play.

Ultimately, this type of ethical witnessing begs the questions: what do audiences, performers, and creators get out of ANU's work? Are they spurred to action or left with more questions? Murray hoped that audiences would leave with a greater openness to diverse perspectives and gain "a real insight... into how a person actually lived and, hopefully, for them to see life from their point of view."⁵⁰ For Lunny, ANU shares stories "that needed to be told and that needed to be remembered, and that had kind of been buried by us as a society."⁵¹ Her experience of *Laundry* also cemented her firmly-held beliefs and contributed to her deep anger at the atrocities perpetrated by the Irish state: "I thought about the women, mostly. Those poor women. And actually, what I thought about was the men. Where were the fucking men? Where were they? They all got off scot-free. No man ended up working for free in an institution for the rest of his life. Just... oh, my blood starts to boil."⁵²

For O'Donnell, the experience gave her hope in the Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) campaign and made her understand that she was not alone in the struggle for justice. She noted that, after seeing *Laundry*, it would be impossible for audience members not to talk about the experience.⁵³ This is why theatre works so well to explore the traumatic past—it is ephemeral, experiential, and determined by the personal experiences of audience members, performers, and creators. It is alive.

In developing the concept of "postmemory" Hirsch argues that aesthetics can offer a bridge between the traumatic past and the present.⁵⁴ Art, therefore, can be a mediation point between an imagined and remembered past and a hopeful future. ANU gives the public, many of whom have never personally experienced the atrocities of the laundries, the hardship of tenement life, or the horrors of

⁴⁹ Katherine O'Donnell.

⁵⁰ Laura Murray.

⁵¹ Niamh Lunny.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Katherine O'Donnell

⁵⁴ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012).

war, the tools to speak about the traumatic past. When spectators enter that immersive historical world, they, too, witness trauma: “I wanted it to go on and on and on and on. Every person needed to have that immersive experience of being made a witness.”⁵⁵

ANU Productions and Public History

ANU’s work contributes to public history as much as it contributes to the development of site-specific theatre in Ireland. A turning point was *Living the Lockout*: the performance and its aftermath were crucial in the development of what is now 14 Henrietta Street (which at the time was called the Tenement Museum Dublin). Catriona Crowe was adamant that “[ANU’s] input really changed the way that that house was perceived and understood.”⁵⁶ A follow-up production, *Hentown*, opened at the Tenement Museum in August 2017, in advance of the official museum opening in September 2018. It explored the troubled history of Dublin housing, with a focus on June 1963, when two tenement buildings collapsed.⁵⁷

ANU followed *Living the Lockout* with *Pals – The Irish at Gallipoli*, commissioned and proposed by Lar Joye of the National Museum of Ireland – Collins Barracks and Catriona Crowe of the National Archives. Like *Lockout*, it was far less experimental than ANU’s typical work and it was billed more as an “experience” than a “performance.” *Pals* also served to raise foot traffic in Collins Barracks, and drew a diverse crowd: “They had that lovely combination of hitting a chord with the general population who don’t necessarily go to the theatre...”⁵⁸

These productions helped these institutions to gain attention, as well as contributing to changes in the ways in which they conceived of their audiences and the diversity of ways in which it is possible to interpret history.

There are ethical implications to a theatre company, rather than a professional historian, doing the most groundbreaking work on intangible heritage at these important sites. This leads to questions about why, historically, Irish heritage professionals have not been doing more to engage audiences through performance. If ANU’s involvement leads to increased public interest in heritage, and innovative interpretive plans for these institutions, the collaborations may well be justified.

⁵⁵ Katherine O'Donnell.

⁵⁶ Catriona Crowe.

⁵⁷ “Hentown by ANU Productions,” Dublin Tenement Museum, accessed July 20, 2022, <http://anuproductions.ie/work/hentown/>.

⁵⁸ Catriona Crowe.

ANU's first production—*Basin* (2009)—was an exploration of working-class life on the north side of Dublin and took place in director Louise Lowe's childhood home. How did this same company get a commission from the National Museum of Ireland to do a history-based production about Irish rugby players marching off to war in 1915 (*Pals*)? ANU's early work embraced social and political commentaries and rarely dealt with history, but unprecedented financial support from national funding organizations has allowed ANU to break boundaries and gain notoriety in the context of twenty-first-century commemorative programming. *Pals* had a budget of almost €200,000, according to Crowe, a significant improvement on the shoe-string budgets of previous ANU works. This major financial boon has likely contributed to the company's recent focus on history-based productions and set the standard for future funding. ANU's 2017 Dublin Theatre Festival offering *The Sin Eaters* earned them a €139,948 project award from the Arts Council.⁵⁹ Crowe commented that "the Arts Council has now recognized what a wonderful company [ANU is] and anything they apply to them for they usually now get": "there are people [in the Arts Council], shall we say, who smile on what ANU is doing and understand that they... eminently deserve to be an RFO [regularly-funded organization]. If they got that it would change their lives, because it would just mean security, safety."⁶⁰

What does it mean for an avant-garde theatre company to have such a close connection to the arts establishment? Can the company continue to create theatrical indictments of the Irish government if they are so indebted to the Arts Council? This cozy relationship may complicate the further development of ANU's most political work.

ANU company members are loath to admit that funding plays such a large role in the content of their productions, insisting that the company follows their own artistic vision. The reality is far more interesting: in describing the beginning of the process for creating *Pals* at Collins Barracks, Crowe noted that Lowe apparently expressed trepidation at:

doing something on posh boys, because her entire milieu up to that had been working class Dublin... And she was, like all great artists..., full of self-doubt. So we convinced her... and after it was over she said, "I'm so glad I did that, because it broadened my perspective, it gave me another view of what was happening in Dublin and Ireland at the time."⁶¹

59 These estimates are based on Arts Council data from 2009 to 2017. Not all grant allocations are publicized and ANU also receives project-based funding from other sources, including partner institutions. See "Who We Funded," *Arts Council*, accessed July 26, 2017, <http://www.artscouncil.ie/funding-decisions/>.

60 Catriona Crowe.

61 Ibid.

The commission led to ANU being featured in the 2016 centennial commemorations. *Sunder* and *These Rooms* (2016) were more experimental and social justice-themed than *Pals*, but both were central in the centenary program. ANU's 2016 partnership with Dublin Bus, titled *Beyond Barricades*, invited visitors to board specially-decorated Dublin buses for tours of the city with actors: "Through the eyewitness testimonies of those involved, we invite you to traverse the significant events of the week, immersing yourself in an adrenaline-fueled experience."⁶² ANU also played a central role in RTE's Reflecting the Rising event in the Dublin city center on March 28, 2016.⁶³ When asked whether she thought ANU would continue with more history-based productions or more experimental works, Kelly Fitzgerald commented that she assumed they would be "Continuing both, in order of sustainability."⁶⁴

The genesis of these productions did not come from within the company, and ANU's featured presence made the government's commemorative program appear more radical. At what point does the work serve to further an artistic and philosophical vision or external institutional needs? While ANU's history-based productions engaged the centenaries as sites of dissonant heritage, they also, arguably, legitimized the commemorations as a ritual (if repackaged) national identity project, a critique also levelled at historians during the commemorative period.⁶⁵ But if it is not sustainable to only do projects that completely align with the company's core philosophy, leveraging state commissions may keep theatre companies like ANU financially solvent while leaving them the freedom to pursue other, more experimental, projects. It is difficult to quantify the extent to which the renewed commitment to arts funding precipitated by the commemorations has actually resulted in any net financial gains for the sector writ large. What is certain is that grant funding awards continued to be shaped by the Decade of Centenaries, with disparate project applications molded to its themes.

⁶² "Journey back to 1916 with Dublin Bus," *Dublin Bus*, March 23, 2016, accessed August 3, 2017, <https://www.dublinbus.ie/News-Centre/Media-Releases-Archive1/Journey-back-to-1916-with-Dublin-Bus/>.

⁶³ "RTÉ Reflecting the Rising," *RTÉ*, accessed August 3, 2017, <http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland/index.php/articles/rte-reflecting-the-rising>.³⁴KellyFitzgerald.

⁶⁴ Kelly Fitzgerald.

⁶⁵ Dominic Bryan, "Ritual, Identity and Nation: When the Historian Becomes the High Priest of Commemoration," in *Remembering 1916: The Easter Rising, the Somme and the Politics of Memory in Ireland*, ed. F. McGarry and R. S. Grayson (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 38–41.

Conclusion

ANU Productions exists at a very specific moment in the world of Irish and international experimental theatre. Arts funding in the last decade and a half—a period that has included both the economic collapse and the revitalizing force of the centenary commemorations—has proven lucrative for experimental, and specifically history-based, theatre, driven by both necessity and opportunity. ANU has capitalized on this ever-increasing demand for history-based theatre during the Decade of Centenaries and international commemorations of the first world war period, and has done so with immense state and institutional support.⁶⁶

ANU's performances also work largely because of the purposeful blurring of reality and art, asking difficult questions and embracing audience discomfort. As ANU moves from the fringe to the mainstream, will ANU maintain its artistic and ethical integrity? Time will tell. ANU audiences will continue to witness, participate in, and learn from the traumatic past: "They've been at it a long time, but it still feels fresh and new... All sorts could still happen."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Recent productions like *Staging the Treaty* (2022) about the 1922 Anglo-Irish Treaty debates; *Hammam* (2023–24), a collaboration with the Abbey Theatre, based around the ruins of O'Connell Street after the opening battle of the Irish Civil War in 1922; and *The Dead* (2024–25), a collaboration with the Museum of Literature based on James Joyce's 1914 short story, prove that history-based theatre of or adjacent to the revolutionary period continues to hold currency.

⁶⁷ Kelly Fitzgerald.

Alissa Cartwright

Cultivating Cultures of Attention? The Landscapes of Injustice Project 2014–21

Public history is a discipline that eludes easy definition. Nevertheless, as practitioners we must strive to articulate a philosophy of our field that emphasizes the processes—instead of the products—of our work. With this task in mind, my chapter calls on public historians to cultivate what I call “cultures of attention.” Building on Thomas Pfau’s definition of “attention,” I argue that a culture of attention is generated when public historians approach their work with critical self-awareness; when they situate themselves consciously at the confluence between scholarship and activism; and when they facilitate community-academic partnerships with the potential to flourish beyond their own involvement. I root these arguments in tangible case studies provided by *Landscapes of Injustice (LoI)*, a multi-million-dollar public history project based at the University of Victoria between 2014 and 2021. By using *LoI* to explore concrete examples of what a “culture of attention” might look like in practice, I seek to critique the project itself and to reflect on what lessons might be taken from this generously funded public history initiative. I do so as a former researcher on the project, writing now from the perspective of one who has observed the project since 2017 as an outsider and in the spirit of critical friendship.

Public historians are mostly practicing historians whose attempts at reflexivity generally devolve into “kaleidoscopes of PH [public history] practices and cases.”¹ As Katharine Corbett and Howard Miller write, “the special character of public history derives less from formulaic definitions than from the nuances of contexts of practice.”² By definition, the quiddity of public history is always in a state of flux, for no conclusive generalization can encompass the ever-expanding forms in which public historical work manifests. Michael Frisch is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that, while we can talk about “doing history, or studying it, or reading and writing and teaching it,” there is simply “no way to express concisely the activity of rendering the past comprehensible.”³ Despite these sometimes-produc-

1 Irina Savelieva, “Public History’ as Vocation,” *National Research University Higher School of Economics*, Basic Research Program Working Papers, Series: Humanities (2012–2013), 3.

2 K.T. Corbett and Howard Miller, “A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry,” *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (2006): 119.

3 Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 21.

tive tensions, the ecosystem of academic research requires that scholars set visible goals for their collaborative research agendas whenever they apply for large scale research funding. The impact agenda within academia, combined with a greater emphasis on research outcomes that have a demonstrable impact on people's lives, has meant that a project on the scale of *Landscapes of Injustice* generates a great deal of paperwork that we can analyze in retrospect.

The Landscapes of Injustice Project

Landscapes of Injustice (LoI) was a seven-year multi-sector research project funded by a Canadian federal government Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant and its home institution was the University of Victoria. It has published widely since its inception.⁴ It sought to platform the little-known history of thousands of Japanese Canadians dispossessed of their lands in the Vancouver region in the early 1940s by the Federal Government and forcibly relocated to central Canada. The project followed in the wake of a public apology from the Mayor of Vancouver, Gregor Robertson, in September 2013 that focused specifically on a 1942 resolution passed unanimously by the Vancouver City Council that led to that dispossession. His apology followed similar apologies at a federal level in 1988 and at provincial British Columbia in 2012. The project was granted about 5.5 million Canadian dollars and employed about 20 researchers every year.⁵ Although the project was primarily financed by SSHRC, it also enjoys the support of various partner institutions, from Uvic itself to the Canadian Museum of Immigration to the Japanese Canadian Cultural Center.⁶ These diverse partnerships are reflected in *LoI*'s structure which includes a Community Council—made up of Japanese Canadian community leaders who advise and guide the project—as

4 Jordan Stanger-Ross and Pamela Sugiman, eds., *Witness to Loss: Race, Culpability, and Memory in the Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2017); Jordan Stanger-Ross, ed., *Landscapes of Injustice: A New Perspective on the Internment and Dispossession of Japanese Canadians* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); E. Adams, with J. Stanger-Ross and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective Promises of law, "The Unlawful Dispossession of Japanese Canadians," *Osgoode Hall Law Journal* 54, no. 3 (2017): 687–740; Eiji Okawa, and Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "Japaneseness in Racist Canada: Immigrant Imaginaries During the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 37, no. 4 (2018): 10–39.

5 The details above are all taken from M. James, J. Stanger-Ross, and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective, "Impermanent Apologies: on the Dynamics of Timing and Public Knowledge in Political Apology," *Human Rights Review* 19 (2018): 289–311.

6 For a full list of all the project's partner institutions, see "Partner Institutions," *Landscapes of Injustice*, accessed on August 15, 2023, <http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/partner-institutions/>.

well as research clusters dedicated to producing museum exhibits, public-facing websites, and primary- and secondary-level teacher resources.⁷ In the first phase, which was more research-focused, the project held a “Spring Institute” every year, and in which I myself was an active participant between 2015 and 2017.

On the first day of the very first Spring Institute in 2015, after a presentation entitled “How Property Matters to the *Landscapes of Injustice* Project” by geographer Nick Blomley, a particularly spirited dialogue ensued when a history professor from the University of British Columbia challenged the project to articulate its purpose and intentions more cogently.⁸ His concerns centered on *LoI*’s ability—or inability—to address the elephant(s) in the room: what was the point of the project’s historical research? Why should we bother re-hashing a relatively well-known period of Canadian history? What tangible justification could there be for the diversion of government funds to an endeavor like *Landscapes of Injustice*?

Unlike most other SSHRC projects, *LoI* was designed to undergo a drastic transformation partway through its seven-year mandate. By 2018 the project had shifted definitively from its focus on research-based work to a new emphasis on public-facing dissemination. Extant research clusters broke down and re-formed into new groups focused on connection and “knowledge mobilization”; the research was converted into museum exhibits, public presentations, educational resources, and media releases; and the project’s overall focus changed from uncovering historical evidence to revealing the past’s present-day implications to a national audience.⁹ This unusually explicit structural metamorphosis makes *LoI* a fascinating case study. We have much to learn from a project that so explicitly embodies the processes—from research to public-facing product, from university campus to kitchen-table conversation, or from jargon to transformative dialogue—of public historical work.

The first lesson we can take from *LoI* is that the processes I just mentioned are malleable and in constant flux. For most of its duration the project hovered—at times uncertainly, but most of the time productively—between scholarly research and the kind of on-the-ground, social-justice-oriented interventions public historians often find themselves in a position to make. It is here in this liminal space—between research and what we might call advocacy or activism—that I would like

7 For detailed information on the project’s structure and research clusters, see “Project Office,” *Landscapes of Injustice*, accessed on August 15, 2023, <http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/project-office/>.

8 Nick Blomley, “How Property Matters to the *Landscapes of Injustice* Project” (presentation, *Landscapes of Injustice* Spring Institute, Victoria, B.C., April 27–May 1, 2015).

9 “Project Structure,” *Landscapes of Injustice*, accessed on August 16, 2023, <http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/what-we-do/#land-project-structure>.

to dwell, not only because the project speaks so fruitfully to the matter but also because it is a tension I regard as fundamental to the practices of public history. Consider for a moment *LoI*'s position in its broader political milieu. Recent developments in both Canada and the United States regarding immigration, nationalist insularity, and discriminatory public policy propelled the project's work to a new and unexpected level of relevance. And yet *LoI* was at its core a university-based, research-driven, and institutionally funded project with a limited ability to intercede in current affairs. One compelling answer seems to arise in the cultivation of what I call a "culture of attention." Like the field of public history, a culture of attention does not lend itself well to concise definition; rather, we can identify three constitutive elements that cumulatively engender a mode of attending to the past through public historical work. First, we must actively probe the needs, purpose, and philosophy of our field. Secondly, public historians must consciously situate themselves at the confluence between research and advocacy. In this liminal space we can mediate productively between the inherently political nature of our work. That space is where a culture of attention can pay dividends. Thirdly, and most importantly, we must forge community-academic partnerships that can flourish beyond our direct involvement. Removing ourselves from our own equation, though a difficult task, is necessary to foster engagement that is durably meaningful.

A Culture of Attention?

With this goal in mind, let us apply the notion of "attention" to the processes of public history. Consider for a moment the sometimes-competing tendencies that have no doubt contributed to the difficulties public historians face in defining their work. As Frisch argues, the field grew in part out of a desire to "create, legitimize, colonize, credentialize, and protect" non-academic history jobs, leading to the common perception that public-facing historical work is always carried on outside the university.¹⁰ Conversely, the field has waged a fierce battle against the notion that scholars are the judge and jury of knowledge-production (leading to the other common understanding of public history—namely that its participants are not a small coterie of elbow-patched academics but a broader public from all walks of life). Carl Becker's famous pronouncement that "Mr[s]. Every[wo]lman" could vanquish any historian with his convictions, or Raphael Samuel's assertion that if "history was thought of as an activity rather than a profession, then the

10 Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xxi.

number of practitioners would be legion,” seem to render the professional historian obsolete, a relic of a less democratic past.¹¹ And yet this zero-sum game—in which the empowering of Mr[s]. Every[wo]man somehow renders the historian passé—hardly provides a way forward for community-academic partnerships.

Thomas Pfau’s notion of attention offers several solutions to this dilemma of authority. Firstly, we can note that his belief that attention constitutes “a habit of focused seeing” and already carves out a place for the historian. Historians are trained to engage in sustained, intensive research in a way that may be outside the purview of the interested non-academic.¹² Consider, for example, the relationship between the Community Council and the rest of the *Landscapes of Injustice* research collective. At the 2016 Spring Institute, a member of the council whose family was violently uprooted from their home on Saltspring Island in the early 1940s reflected on her limited ability to research this traumatic personal history. “Reading through the archival documents,” she confessed, “is not good for my health.”¹³ For this member, the role of the project is to shoulder this heavy burden, to engage intensively with her difficult past, and to situate it within a broader context of dispossession. We cannot remain passive spectators when listening to her words. Rather, the academics and public history professionals in a scenario such as this one ought to listen intensively to the stories of survivors. In other words, it is our job to give attention—and to give it generously—to those involved and to the potential meanings of their past. After all, Pfau’s definition of the term is rooted in the everyday colloquialisms of “paying attention” and “taking an interest.” Thus, unlike some types of jargon, “attention” does not presume to encompass a particular expertise or specialization: anyone can pay attention to history but few would claim that this action encompasses every aspect of history-making. Rather, attention is a first step, a beginning, and one that cannot be accomplished fruitfully in the context of public history without collaboration. As such, the call to academics for assistance in uncovering personal histories initiates a process that can only be carried out with the participation of those most intimately involved. Attending to these voices hardly renders the academy obsolete (to the contrary, it arguably creates a role only the public historian can fill) but it does demand partnership.

11 Carl Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian,” *The American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1932), http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/1838208?pq-origsite=summon&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), 17.

12 Thomas Pfau, “The Art and Ethics of Attention,” *The Hedgehog Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 37; Thomas Pfau, “On Attention,” *Salmagundi* 194 (2017): 145–63.

13 Mary Kitigawa, “Community Council Presentation” (presentation, *Landscapes of Injustice* Spring Institute, Victoria, B.C., April 28–30, 2017).

Indeed, without community reciprocation, we may devolve all too easily into the act of merely taking an interest.

For a large, government-funded history project grounded in institutional discourse like *Landscapes of Injustice*, perhaps entirely avoiding the perils of interest is impossible. As Pfau reminds us, the very nature of grant-writing, of funding agencies, and of publicity-garnering can sometimes render “humanistic inquiry” susceptible to “confus[ing] means with ends.”¹⁴ Indeed, Samuel’s admonition to historians—that “however jealously we protect the integrity of our subject matter, we cannot insulate it from ourselves”—might be expanded to include the institutional pressures that inevitably seep into and shape our discipline.¹⁵ What is perhaps most interesting about LOI is that in its foundational design and documentation it consciously promised to avoid such pitfalls.

The Catch-22: Mediating Between Advocacy and Research

Landscapes of Injustice, like many public history endeavors, faced an ongoing challenge. In its application for a Partnership Grant from Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the project was required to outline its “Connection” goals.¹⁶ In keeping with SSHRC’s emphasis on knowledge mobilization, *LoI* promised to “inspire and institutionalize the public memory of a critical historical episode”; to “stimulate deep and sustained public engagement” with a difficult period of Canadian history; and to “ensure” that the next time a diverse Canada faces a national emergency, “[it] will do better.”¹⁷ In other words, the project pledged to ignite at least some form of social change, to intervene meaningfully in public memory, and to shift entrenched paradigms of discourse. SSHRC funding, however, is primarily intended to “promote and support postsecondary-based re-

¹⁴ Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 15.

¹⁵ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (Verso Books, 2012, orig. 1994), 430.

¹⁶ “Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice*,” Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, October 21, 2013.

¹⁷ “Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice*,” 2; 7; 8. For SSHRC’s emphasis on knowledge mobilization see “Connection Program,” *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, last modified May 3, 2023, accessed on August 1, 2023, http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/connection-connexion-eng.aspx.

search and research training in the humanities and social sciences.”¹⁸ As such, SSHRC applications require extensive literature reviews, explanations of research methodologies, detailed theoretical frameworks, and exhaustive breakdowns of personnel, travel, and equipment costs. These research-oriented stipulations inevitably demarcate the types of interventions that a recipient like *LoI* can make in public discourse. Put differently, direct advocacy is rarely within *LoI*’s purview.

We are left, it seems, with a quandary. On the one hand, funding agencies like SSHRC require their recipient projects to specify and produce products—be they museum exhibits, media publications, documentaries, or public presentations—capable of generating some kind of social transformation. On the other hand, these products are limited in scope by a myriad of pragmatic considerations, from the mid-term review SSHRC conducts to ensure the appropriate use of its funds to the constraints applied by the partner institutions that match SSHRC’s contributions and provide support to *LoI*.¹⁹ This tension between ideal and reality is worth pondering, for it is far from a unique phenomenon. John Milloy, the former Special Advisor to the Chair of Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), reminds us that the archive is not a “site of quiet scholarly activity” but rather “one of contestation. Political dynamics often determine what is possible and how those results will be achieved, indeed, even what those results might be.”²⁰ His warning cannot help but resound loudly in the ears of those attempting to justify and disseminate public historical work. If even quiet scholarly activity is inevitably political, it follows that historians working in the public realm have a particular duty to think through the ramifications of their research.

In thinking through these tensions, I suggest we heed David Neufel’s argument that “public history does not lend itself well to direct advocacy.” Rather, he maintains, public history can facilitate “participants and observers working together in the construction of new sets of relationships, the reframing of existing understandings to better reflect belief in what is right, and the recognition and pursuit of multiple visions of a future.”²¹ Though he writes within the specific context of practic-

18 “Funding,” *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*, last modified May 3, 2023, accessed on August 13, 2023, <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/index-eng.aspx?tab=0&aID=1&pID=0&pedisable=true> (emphasis added).

19 For a breakdown of the ways in which partner institutions (including the University of Victoria and various Canadian museums) support *LoI* through financial contributions and human resources, see “Application for a Grant: *Landscapes of Injustice*.”

20 John Milloy, “Doing Public History in Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” *The Public Historian* 35, no. 4 (2013): 13, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/tph.2013.35.4.10.pdf>.

21 ⁶³ David Neufeld, “Ethics in the Practice of Public History with Aboriginal Communities,” *The Public Historian* 28, no. 1 (2006): 121, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/stable/pdf/10.1525/tph.2006.28.1.117.pdf>.

ing public history with Indigenous communities, Neufel implicitly hints at an answer to our broader quandary. By maintaining a reflexive awareness of our own limitations we can situate ourselves productively at the confluence of two disparate yet intimately related ways of approaching the past. In other words, public historians can cultivate cultures of attention in the liminal space we find between the methodical process of research and the often-urgent practice of activism. But what does that liminal space look like in practice? And how do we know it when we see it? To answer these questions I turn to something I myself experienced as part of the 2015 Spring Institute of the *LoI* project, a historically informed walk through a part of Vancouver locals once referred to as Japantown, or Nihonmachi. This area was once the heartland of those people whose dispossession and removal the project was designed to highlight and in some senses redress.

Walking Down Powell Street: Advocacy and the Presence of the Past

During *LoI*'s first Spring Institute in 2015 members of the research collective were invited to take a guided tour down Powell Street and past Hastings Park, an incongruous sprawl of green-space in the midst of otherwise urban surroundings.²² Had we wandered through this neighborhood before the Second World War, our group would have encountered what Vancouverites referred to as “Japantown” or “Nihonmachi.” Had we walked down Powell Street during the 1940s we would have witnessed Japantown’s forced fragmentation, a process that included incarcerating Japanese Canadians in former horse barracks at Hastings Park. Today, the Powell Street area is home to a vibrant but marginalized community fighting the often-deleterious effects of gentrification.²³ And yet, as public historians, many of us visited not with the intent of directly interceding in these injustices, but rather with an eye to crafting another narrative about Japantown and the dispossession(s) it embodies. As this tour of Powell Street suggests, *LoI* has flirted with—but never fully participated in—direct advocacy. The latter is instead exemplified by, for instance, Wendy Pederson, an activist featured in a documentary shown at the 2017 Spring Institute called *The Right to Remain*, directed by Greg Masuda. As a long-term res-

²² This explanation of the tour is based on my personal attendance as part of the 2015 *LoI* Spring Institute.

²³ “About: The Right to Remain,” *Revitalizing Japantown: A Unifying Exploration of Human Rights, Branding, and Place*, accessed on April 16, 2023, http://www.righttoremain.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/20151102.1856_rjcatalogue_web.pdf.

ident of the downtown eastside neighborhood, Pederson has a firsthand awareness of the dispossession and forced relocation of her neighbors.²⁴ She advocates on behalf of her community by leading pickets outside of high-end restaurants that contribute to gentrification; enlisting legal assistance for forcibly evicted tenants; and engaging directly with the politicians and bureaucrats who represent the City of Vancouver. In other words, her work targets manifestations of past injustices by directly addressing present-day inequities. Though admirable, this type of on-the-ground intervention is undoubtedly outside the purview of *LoI*. There is a telling difference between viewing a documentary about Pederson's activism and participating directly in her work and the work of those like her. This difference highlights a fundamental friction within public history to which I have already alluded: namely, the tendency of the historian to render the past distant versus the tendency of the "every[wo]man" (a category to which historians also belong) to treat the past as intimately and urgently entangled with everyday life. Without oversimplifying the matter, we may note that Pederson's advocacy is dependent on the latter paradigm—on the immediacy, or the presence, of the past. I am borrowing here, of course, from the title of Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen's well-known monograph, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. After interviewing hundreds of Americans, Rosenzweig and Thelen concluded that for most "the past" was neither absent nor distant, but rather "ubiquit[ous]" and "connect[ed] to current-day concerns."²⁵ This intimate relationship with past events is precisely what public historians rely upon when they seek an audience and what the advocate—rightfully and necessarily—often addresses in his or her work. And yet, as Rosenzweig admits, this "emphasis on the firsthand, the experiential, the intimate, and the familial [can also] be confining."²⁶ For historians, the presence of the past may be somewhat discordant with historical understanding.

For those who participated, the Powell Street area and its environs stimulated a powerful process: some participants recalled raising a totem pole or having large get-togethers in Oppenheimer Park (a green space located on Powell Street), while others simply noted that in the neighborhood "there's always someone there to

24 "Right to Remain documentary explores development pressure on Vancouver's DTES," *cbc.ca*, last modified August 7, 2015, accessed on August 1, 2023, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/the-right-to-remain-documentary-explores-development-pressure-on-vancouver-s-dtes-1.3183890>.

25 Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*, ed. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 18.

26 Roy Rosenzweig, "Everyone a Historian," in *The Presence of the Past*, 186.

have a conversation with about what's happening."²⁷ As a resident of the downtown eastside, Pederson has an intimate familiarity with the places that inform these memories, a stake in what Robert Archibald calls the "shared remembrance" of her community.²⁸ If we follow Pfau and define remembrance as the "engaging of an idea or conception in such a way as to recognize ourselves to be implicated," the import of Pederson's lived experience in the Powell street area becomes clear: effective advocacy, it seems, is bound up in the shared remembrance of a place.²⁹ Though we cannot presume to engage places like Powell Street with the same familiarity as advocates like Pederson, public historians can still follow her example in making a community's remembrance an integral aspect of their work.

Documenting Powell Street: Research and the Distance of the Past

As a newly-minted research assistant in *LoP's* Community Records cluster in 2015, I documented the changing demographics of Powell Street in the 1940s by scanning community directories (address information books akin to the modern-day phone book) for Japanese Canadian surnames. Many of these names were from within the Powell Street block. Mrs. M. Yokoyama, for example, lived at 56 Powell Street in 1941 and worked as a barber. By 1944, however, her home was listed as "vacant."³⁰ As a research assistant, it was my job to notice and document this change over time. The tangible injustices that almost certainly resulted from Mrs. Yokoyama's forced dispossession—her home's rapid devaluation, her neighborhood's loss of a local business, the fragmentation of her social and familial networks—were largely outside my purview. Although discovering the erasure of Mrs. Yokoyama's name from city records was egregious enough to unsettle me, even palpably so, this moment paled in comparison to what I experienced in the comparatively simple act of walking around the neighborhood. This sense of historical dissociation, however, is not inherently a bad thing. Research is perhaps one of the more accre-

27 Wendy Pederson, "A Resident Advocate's View of the Downtown Eastside," *State of Vancouver: Frances Bula on City Life and Politics*, last modified February 20, 2009, <http://www.francesbula.com/uncategorized/an-resident-advocates-view-of-the-downtown-eastside/>.

28 Robert R. Archibald, *A Place to Remember: Using History to Build Community* (Lanham: Altira Press, 1999), 24.

29 Pfau, *Minding the Modern*, 38.

30 "British Columbia and Yukon Directory: 1941," *British Columbia City Directories*; "British Columbia and Yukon Directory: 1944," *British Columbia City Directories*, accessed on May 30, 2023, <https://bccd.vpl.ca/>.

tive processes of history-making; it requires adding new layers of comprehension and interpretation onto extant knowledge. Though this process can become detached and sedentary it can also allow us to return to our base understandings, to pause and examine with clarity our background assumptions. Effective public history work requires a willingness to utilize one's research for practical purposes.

Any process of learning, even if it is only undertaken by the researcher, can be transformative in and of itself. As professionals united by a common interest in intervening in the public realm, we have a responsibility to ensure that our public(s) are not harmed or marginalized by our research processes. This duty has not always been fulfilled. Indeed, the practice of public historical work with Indigenous groups in particular has been deleterious. Insidious elements of “fervent advocacy” have sometimes mixed with poor research practices to produce work that is far from collaborative, and it is only very recently that scholars have begun working “with” instead of “on” or even “for” Indigenous communities.³¹ One might add that those who performed this distorted version of public-historical work forgot that the self-implicating type of remembrance that Pfau speaks of is necessary for true advocacy. Perhaps worse, they were not reflexively aware of this limitation.

What About Our Legacy? Cultivating a Culture of Attention

At the 2017 Spring Institute, attendees were asked to reflect in small groups on their vision for *LoI*'s future. Among the questions asked were the following: how do we translate research into public communication? Who needs to be connected to *LoI*? How do we ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts? What does success for the project look like?³² The last question, in particular, stimulated reflective ruminations on the project's legacy. Participants in the discussion variously noted that *LoI* must act as a “cohesive resource,” not just a “cohesive project”; that the research collective must look beyond its own temporal existence to the needs of future students and researchers; and that, in order to avoid devolving into a “very good set of individual knowledge silos,” the project must practice continuous and intensive integration with an eye to the future of

31 Neufeld, “Ethics in the Practice of Public History with Aboriginal Peoples,” 117; Carlson, Lutz, and Shaepe, “From the Archives and the Field.”

32 Sense of Direction Panel, Landscapes of Inequality, Spring Institute (2017).

its findings. Both implicitly and explicitly, these concerns centered on sustaining *LoI*'s work beyond the duration of the project's funding.

LoI wound up in 2021, and the project director has delivered several keynote lectures summarizing the gestation and evolution of the project as well as its eventual outcomes in the form of academic publications, exhibitions, and other aspects of engaged research.³³ One particularly notable organic development within the *LoI* framework was the Scholarship and Activism Forum which emerged in 2017 and was a response to the challenges set out by key voices in 2015. The Forum was a student-led initiative that encouraged research assistants to interview scholars or activists whom they admired and post reflective blogs about their interviews. Envisioned as an ongoing, accretive process of learning, the S&A Forum sought to benefit not only current research assistants but also those students who were to be hired in the future. The goals of the Forum were simple but fruitful: as the S&A website noted, "success in this project will be sustained engagement and an extended knowledge of the subject for project members."³⁴ In other words, the Forum was intended as a sort of growing legacy for future students, a chronicle of what the editor-in-chief called the "concerns" and "conversations" that inevitably arise when working for such a large, complex project. Their interest in "tracing" these dialogues through the project and "capturing them" speaks to the need to create a record not only of research but also of the introspective and often disquieting process of wrestling with its present-day implications. This task of "thinking *with* history" instead of simply about it, as Tosh reminds us, "enables us to 'orient ourselves in the living present.'"³⁵ By attending to the questions and concerns of future *LoI* employees, the Forum initiated a process through which research assistants might think with history in a collaborative atmosphere. It has been, along with a project-defining engagement with activists and artists, one of the more positive outcomes of the *LoI*.

Conclusion

Public History involves an especially acute awareness of the permeable boundaries between the academy and the public, between the expert and the neophyte, and between the audience and the teacher. We are contributors to a "shared authority,"

³³ Jordan Stanger-Ross, "LANDSCAPES OF INJUSTICE," Vancouver Historical Society, recorded September 23, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vv2KRw6oLvo>.

³⁴ "A Forum for Debate on the Relation Between Scholarship and Activism," *Scholarship & Activism Forum*, accessed on June 19, 2023, <https://scholarshipandactivism.wordpress.com/>.

³⁵ John Tosh, *Why History Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), 6.

as Frisch has phrased it, and as such our profession rests on a foundation of collaboration, partnership, participatory knowledge, and the transformation of historical practice and methodology. Our work is variable but these underlying ideas are constant. At its best *LoI* has demonstrated many of these elements throughout its lifespan as an engaged research project. The qualities of attention that I have sought to highlight here, drawing on Pfau's work, are emblematic of how the project has been conducted. Through distributed authority and a wide interpretation of collaboration and publication, the project delivered on its potential and endeavored to accommodate its early critics and responded to their legitimate concerns in creative ways.

One of the reasons I find the notion of “attention” so compelling is its simplicity. And yet, like the profession it complements, attention also contains submerged and profound complexities. Its significance is rooted not in esoteric or veiled meanings but rather in an everyday phrase most school-children or university students hear at least once: “pay attention.” As Pfau reminds us, this oft-used colloquialism indicates that “attention is something we can only ‘give.’” One cannot bargain for attention, nor demand it. Rather, the concept carries with it an “underlying ethos... of generosity rather than some claim staked in conceptual or quantifiable form.”³⁶ Attention, moreover, is inherently communal. In the world of artwork, attention requires a piece for the viewer to examine; in the world of public history, it requires a community to engage. If the community is offered the opportunity, in turn, to attend to and transform the processes of history-making, then a culture of attention can emerge. And once our internal research forums or our art exhibits or our community-academic partnerships have been forged, our cultures of attention can endure beyond our own interventions.

LoI's legacy, then, only ever depended partially on the completion of its various goals. Undoubtedly, the project's merit can be measured in metric terms by looking at the attendances at the exhibitions, or the impact of the scholarly and outreach publications. Our cultures of attention, however, are not necessarily contingent upon the same deadlines and requirements as these products. Rather, they hinge upon our willingness to be transformed by the public realm in which we work—a realm that public historians are also part of. In this sense, *LoI*'s legacy rests in the cultures of attention it has begun to cultivate. The relationships forged between Japanese Canadian elders and budding scholars; the reciprocal exchanges of knowledge fostered at the Spring Institutes; the interdisciplinary research communities that will endure beyond *LoI*'s duration: such are the fruits of a project rooted in public history principles. It is the process that matters.

36 Pfau, “The Art and Ethics of Attention,” 38–39.

Jennifer Mitcalf

Percy the Pig and the Bacon-Eaters: The Politics of a Community Heritage Project in post-industrial Low Moor, Clitheroe

Between February 2016 and August 2017 this author facilitated the work of a local community heritage project in the village of Low Moor, Clitheroe: a former nineteenth century mill-town in Lancashire, UK. The project aimed to investigate the ways in which members of this community understand, engage with, and utilize their local history, and then, led by those findings, to perform a service to that local community. The creation of Low Moor Community Heritage Group was intended to facilitate the “grassroots activity of creating and collecting, processing and curating, preserving and making accessible” material on the village’s history.¹ It did not begin with an established understanding of that community or as an attempt to define its margins.² The project hoped instead to attract all those who identified as having a stake in Low Moor’s heritage. In a sense it was expected therefore to form a new “community,” in providing a space for those people to engage in dialogue³ and perform a sense of common interest.⁴

The project gained an unexpected boost at the midway point by attracting Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) to the tune of £24,600: a transformative sum of money for what was, to that point, a modest community heritage project housed in Low Moor Reading Room and Club.⁵ This sum of money facilitated the regular meetings of the core group, a number that fluctuated between 15 and 30 members for the duration of the project. It also helped to pay for the restoration of an important local cultural artefact: a taxidermied pig – named Percy – who had since 1907 or so been an iconic “mascot” attached to the “Ancient Order of the Bacon Eaters,” a worker’s club belonging to the locality and drawing on the rich traditions of workman’s clubs and parades in this particular part of the UK. The Ancient Order of the Bacon Eaters had a banner, dating to 1925, and this too was restored

1 Andrew Flinn, “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (2007): 151–76 at 152–54.

2 Margaret Stacey, “The Myth of Community Studies,” *British Journal of Sociology* 20, no. 2 (1969): 134–47 at 134.

3 Paul A. Shakel, “Pursuing Heritage, Engaging Communities,” *Historical Archaeology* 45, no. 1 (2011): 2–5.

4 Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

5 The HLF rebranded as The National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2019.

under the HLF funding. In addition, three other local monuments were restored: a WWI Cenotaph, a memorial to the Royal Engineers, and the Garnett family mosaic above the door of the Low Moor Club.⁶ The community in Low Moor has a very potent sense of local identity. It is bound to the locality and largely invisible to the outsider. While several published accounts of the history of Low Moor Mill exist, its cultural histories remain under-represented. The choice to locate the study in Low Moor was a recognition of this inequality and the insights it would therefore likely provide into the use of heritage in the contemporary political concerns of a small and isolated community.

Watson and Waterton's call for the "revival of the subject of community engagement in heritage" and for research into the "power relations that underlie these processes" was a central influence on the study. "To place the notion of community beside that of heritage is to revive a series of questions." "Community heritage" is typically discussed as if it were inherently valuable, on account of its intentions to democratize access to history.⁷ Drawing on Nancy Fraser's "politics of recognition" and understanding of the word "community" as being inherently political and power-laden, this study takes the opportunity to dissect politically-engaged community heritage practice.⁸ Community heritage production in this context is recognized as a "political and subversive... endeavour by individuals and social groups to document their history, particularly if," as it has been in this case, "that history has been generally subordinated and marginalized."⁹

6 For a full report on the activities associated with the HLF project see Heritage Lottery Fund Evaluation Report – OH15–05554: The Heritage of Low Moor Mill.

7 Steve Watson and Emma Waterton, "Heritage and Community Engagement: Finding a New Agenda," in *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation*, ed. Steve Watson and Emma Waterton (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 9–12.

8 Ruth Lister, "(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: A Critical Social Policy Perspective," in *(Mis)recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice: Nancy Fraser and Pierre Bourdieu*, ed. T. Terry Lovell (London: Routledge, 2007), 157–76. See also Elizabeth Crooke, "The Politics of Community Heritage: Motivations, Authority and Control," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 16–29; Steve Watson and Emma Waterton, "The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 4–15.

9 Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, "'It is Noh Mistri, Wi Mekin Histri.'" Telling our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the United Kingdom, Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream," in *Community Archives. The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeannette Allis Bastian and Ben Alexander (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 3. See also Edward W Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

History of Low Moor

Low Moor is situated approximately a mile south-west of the center of Clitheroe, a medieval market town in Lancashire, North West England. From 1799 to 1968 Low Moor was associated with the Ribble Valley's largest cotton mill, adjoined to the east by a purpose-built workers' residential hamlet, which remains today as the core of Low Moor. Although development since the twentieth century has almost entirely obscured the boundary between Clitheroe and Low Moor, it is still locally referred to as being a "village" separate from Clitheroe.

The original Eadsford Factory was built in 1782 on land leased by the Parker family, presumably chosen for its access to the river for power and proximity to Clitheroe's trade links. After several years of financial insecurity the original factory was destroyed by fire in 1791. A new five-storey mill was built to replace it, but in 1796 the Parker firm folded. The mill was passed into the hands of the Liveseys of Blackburn before being sold again in 1799 to Garnett and Horsfall, in whose hands it stayed for the remainder of its lifetime, manufacturing both yarn and cloth. The isolated position of Low Moor in relation to Clitheroe necessitated the provision of workers' housing, and the Parkers built 28 cottages to rent to workers. This is the origin of the Low Moor community of workers. From 1785 Clitheroe parish records describe residents of Low Moor collectively as mill workers. By 1827 the village had grown to 146 cottages. The expansion of the village's population reached its peak by 1841, and subsequently declined in line with the fortunes of the cotton industry.¹⁰

At its peak, the mill consisted of four main five-storey blocks of iron frame construction. In the 1851 and 1861 censuses there are many examples of full households being employed in the mill (upwards of 90% of the village's population, in comparison to a total of 39% for the population of Clitheroe as a whole). The severe depression of 1861–65's Cotton Famine, brought about by over-production, was a very difficult time for Low Moor. The Clitheroe Board of Guardians, chaired primarily by farmers, did not concern itself with distress in Clitheroe's cotton industry.¹¹ The surviving diaries of mill owner James Garnett¹² and weaver John

¹⁰ Owen Ashmore, "Low Moor, Clitheroe: A Nineteenth Century Factory Community," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 73–74 (1966): 142; Owen Ashmore, *The Industrial Archaeology of North West England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982).

¹¹ Rosalind Hall, "A Poor Cotton Weyver: Poverty and the Cotton Famine in Clitheroe," *Social History* 28, no. 2 (2003): 235.

¹² Ashmore, "The Diary of James Garnett, Part one," 77–98, and "The Diary of James Garnett of Low Moor, Clitheroe, 1858–65: Part two," 109–11.

O'Neil,¹³ both living and working in Low Moor, provide insights into the experience of the community at this time.

There were two Methodist chapels in Low Moor, both of which remain. The main provision for leisure in the village was the Mechanics Institute which opened in 1852, and then again in 1861, in one of the houses on the north side of High Street.¹⁴ These were eventually replaced by the institute opened in 1903, now Low Moor Reading Room and Club. This club became the center of the HLF project and has been the de facto community center in Low Moor historically.

There is little record of the history of the village between 1870 and 1900, but these years marked a period of stagnation for the mill. As the mill reached the end of its life the community turned a great deal of attention to investing in the village's culture outside of the workplace. Between 1900 and 1940, several sports teams were established in the village and references to the villagers as the "Low Moor Bacon Eaters" begin to appear in the local press. Much of what has been preserved by the community project dates from this period and highlights a burgeoning associational culture in the village. Clitheroe's first Torchlight Procession took place in 1902, and Low Moor contributed a float themed on the Bacon Eaters, driven by a fictional "Lord and Lady Bacon." Percy the Low Moor Pig made his first appearance at the procession in 1911, but its origins are obscure. The "Ancient Order of the Bacon Eaters" banner, entirely unique for Clitheroe, was painted by local resident Elijah Bolton in 1925, replacing the original. The origin of the name is uncertain, but it is said to refer to the popularity of pig keeping in the back yards of the terraced housing as a means of providing for the family without spending money in Clitheroe.

The Garnett's Low Moor Mill celebrated its centenary in 1899, and it continued to operate successfully until 1930. The whole village belonged to the firm, and each of the 214 houses were offered for an annual rent of £2,900. It was ultimately sold off piecemeal to a number of buyers. By the 1990s, the village no longer had any of its own shops, as supermarkets in Clitheroe had provided a cheaper alternative. An account of growing up in the village in the early twentieth century was published by a local lady in 2005. For the author, the "wealth of Low Moor lay in the working community with its sense of neighborliness, compassion and absolute commitment to their work and responsibilities. Nowhere in the land could there have been a more complete community than this village at that time. The green fields where we played and which separated us from the town of Clitheroe were the barrier be-

¹³ John O'Neil, *A Lancashire Weaver's Journal: 1856–1864, 1872–1875*, ed. Mary Brigg (Lancashire: The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1982).

¹⁴ Ashmore, "Low Moor, Clitheroe," 150–51.

tween our world and the other one – with its beginnings of greed, crime and over-affluent living.”¹⁵

Since 2011 Low Moor has had a population of around 2,700, a significant number of which are descended from mill workers. The village’s churches, Club, and sports teams are still operating. Land around the village has recently been sold for housing development, and the most recent addition to the north of the village was completed in 2012: Kingfisher Crescent, Mallard Row, and Heron Mews. As has been seen, development down Edisford Road and at Henthorn have entirely obscured the village’s previous separation from Clitheroe, and much of this has come at the expense of the historic fabric of the village.

Since it came into existence, the village has been physically and socially isolated, and has a distinctive political tradition of voluntary community activism against inequality. The village has undergone periods of hardship and great losses which the community has been forced to endure in isolation. It has illustrated numerous faults along the lines of the village’s relationship with Clitheroe, and tensions between worker and master. The community’s culture is rooted as much in relations outside of work, and since the decline of the mill it has created a variety of symbols which reflect its sense of individuality. Today the core of the village stands as a monument to the Industrial Revolution in Lancashire. It is against the background of new housing development, at the expense of the historic fabric of the village, that Low Moor Reading Room and Club published an appeal for information about the Low Moor Banner in 2015. This provided the departure point for the project.

Establishing a Low Moor Community Heritage Group

My personal interest in Low Moor began as a research project on Low Moor Mill I conducted as part of my undergraduate studies. Although I was brought up locally, I did not have any prior knowledge of the mill. Two years later I was employed by Waddow Hall, which was the previous home of the Garnett family. Although it is now managed by Girlguiding as a Training and Activity Center, it has a successful Heritage Committee which focuses its activities on researching the history of the house in general. In early 2015, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, they ran activities based on the history of the mill and as part of this I had the oppor-

15 L. Wallbank Christy, *Old Clothes and Hotpot: A Story of Old Low Moor* (privately published, 2005), 27.

tunity to visit Low Moor for a tour of the village with a local resident. I was not aware until this point of the strength of the sense of separation Low Moor residents felt from Clitheroe. The richness of the stories she told, and the pride she had in presenting them to us, made an impression on me. The village she described no longer existed and was invisible to an outsider. I felt that if a record could be created it would make a highly valuable contribution to the local heritage resource.

I decided to pursue the project as the opportunity also came at a time when local libraries and museums were suffering from funding cuts and two local mill museums had announced they were being forced to close. Low Moor presented the opportunity to highlight the importance of local industrial heritage and I hoped to draw attention to the village's history of struggle for economic security as a resistance narrative.¹⁶ From my previous visit, I knew that some members of the community felt threatened by the development of expensive new housing around the village and that it was considered to be to the detriment of the social and physical character of the village. The call for information relating to the banner in 2015 also demonstrated the desire to build on the village's heritage resources. From my point of view, in terms of timing, I could see the potential for an organized heritage initiative and I felt that it would be possible to combine our aims in a mutually beneficial relationship.

My intention was to enable a collaborative contribution to a shared and more representative memory of Low Moor, and I began the process as an attempt to initiate the creation of a heritage group as a forum for conversation. The project intended to emerge out of conversation with the community and for it to perform a service to it, and its success therefore depended entirely on support from the community. I sought at first to understand what the community valued about their history, and for the products of the process to then evolve out of that. The initiative would be initiated by myself but, taking heed of the conflicts that arose in a similar situation in the case of the Sedgeford Project,¹⁷ I was hopeful the community would take ownership of it. In this sense it would be neither a "top-down" or "bottom-up" initiative, as I would be operating as a facilitator. There were time constraints to the project, in terms of it yielding useful results in terms of this chapter, which meant that at the outset I produced a project plan but limited my expectations to a loosely defined intention of assisting the community to create a heritage resource, as they had expressed the desire to do. Watson and Waterton's collection of case studies based on community heritage addresses projects led by heritage

¹⁶ See Jeffrey Helgeson, "Chicago's Labour Trail: Labor History as Collaborative Public History," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 76 (2009): 60–64.

¹⁷ Neil Faulkner, "The Sedgeford crisis," *Public Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (2009): 51–61.

professionals or those fully in community ownership. This case study hopes to address an absence in community heritage literature relating to the negotiation of such an approach,¹⁸ and to explore the process of sharing authority.¹⁹

On the advice of the Chair of Waddow Hall's Heritage Group, who had previously made contact with the community, I arranged to meet with a local church leader, Reverend Pickett of St. Paul's church, in February 2016. As he was in a visible leadership position I felt this was an appropriate start. I openly explained the basis of my research and interest in public history, my personal background, and what I saw as the aims of the project. He was optimistic about the project being popular with the "old Low Moorites" but explained he wasn't heavily involved with the community as he had just been moved from a church elsewhere in Clitheroe and that many considered him to be an outsider. He put me in contact with the church warden. The initial meeting confirmed my expectations in terms of current local concerns and the challenges I could expect in terms of myself being an outsider.

The church warden agreed that St. Paul's could host the first meeting, and on their advice I advertised the launch of Low Moor Community Heritage Group in the parish magazine, at Henthorn Community Centre and at Low Moor Club. I created a Facebook page for the group. I intended to make the group as visible as possible and for the use of the word "community" to attract as broad a group of attendees as possible. I was contacted on February 27 by a committee member from Low Moor Club who told me about the plans for the banner and about correspondence they had had with the Heritage Lottery Fund. She asked if we could work together and if I would be able to help with the bid process. Before this point I had been concerned about the group appearing too much as if it was led by the Church. As I felt I now had a relationship with several members of the community, I was more confident that my approach would attract a broad cross-section. From that point onwards news of the meeting spread by word of mouth and I was contacted by several people who were interested in attending.

The introduction of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid was something I was unsure about at first, as I felt that as it would take a lot of my time and therefore be a strong influence on how the group developed. The Club planned to apply for the funds to provide for the restoration of the banner, Percy the Low Moor Pig, the Low Moor cenotaph, Royal Engineers' memorial, and the Garnett mosaic above the Club door. Community engagement activities were to include a booklet and

18 Suzie Thomas, "Review of Watson & Waterton, eds., *Heritage and Community Engagement*," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 54, no. 3 (2011): 371–74.

19 Lorraine Sitzia, "A Shared Authority: An Impossible Goal?," *Oral History Review* 30, no. 1 (2003): 87–101.

oral histories. I had not been involved with a HLF project before and my initial concern at this stage was that this might serve as a straitjacket for the interests of group members if it meant they were required to depoliticize their narratives. I could see, however, that it was necessary to secure the funds to produce a record of the village's history at all. As the initiative for it had come from within the community it was something I was ultimately happy to support.

The first meeting of Low Moor Community Heritage Group was attended by 25 people. Registration forms confirmed ten had heard about it through the church and ten through the Club. I was interested to see that these groups did not interact much with each other, and was later told that the Club has Methodist associations and that the groups do not usually socialize. The rest were from Henthorn Community Centre, and one had seen it on Facebook. All apart from one (who had heard about the meeting through Facebook and who lived on Riverside) were aged over 50, and there was an equal split of men and women. While I expected some members of the community will have been alienated by the time and location of the meeting, I was confident that my methods in terms of initiating the project were sound, as from what I was told by group member ER, the group reflected political relationships within the community.²⁰ The meeting was based on a roundtable discussion about the potential of the group,²¹ the proposed HLF project, and then, based on what the vicar had told me, a look at historic maps. I hoped this would encourage people to share their opinions on the changes in the village in recent years and allow me to see if my assumptions about local attitudes to housing development were correct. One attendee said it was now "too late" to preserve the village's history in light of the housing development, and that someone ought to have established a group as a means of campaigning against it "twenty years ago." I invited attendees to complete registration forms and for them to suggest plans for subsequent meetings, but people were reticent to do so at this stage. Some people had brought photographs and had splintered into smaller groups to share them with each other, so I decided the second meeting should be given to allowing people to share their memories in smaller groups. This would, I hoped, enable me to speak to as many people as possible in order to understand what they saw as important parts of Low Moor's history and what they saw as the value of being involved with the group. As I was expected to lead the meetings, for the meantime at least, I could not take extensive field notes as I had planned and instead man-

²⁰ Shakel, "Pursuing Heritage," 2–5.

²¹ I built my suggestions on Llanteg Local History Society's constitution as this offered an example of a highly successful community-driven heritage initiative based on a village of a size similar to Low Moor. The group intended simply to be "open to everyone" and to "bring like-minded people together," accessed December 28, 2015, <http://llanteghistorysociety.blogspot.ie/p/constitution.html>.

aged to record key quotes. Before the meeting I felt very anxious about my own role. I was regularly challenged about my own stake in the project but, as described above, remained open about my intentions, and considered the meeting to be a success. My previous visit to the village and links that could be made through Waddow Hall were sufficient to develop a rapport with attendees.

The second meeting was attended by upwards of 30 people. It was hosted by the Club, rather than St. Paul's, which meant that several members of the Church community did not attend. I invited people to bring any photographs, objects, or anything based on the village that they were keen to share. By May I felt that engagement with the group was growing and that my relationship with the community had been established, so I decided to focus the third meeting on discussing plans for the group. The meeting was fruitful in that one member offered to give a walking tour of the village, and a suggestion was made to open the Club for a Heritage Open Day in September. To ensure the project was community-driven as early as possible, I was keen to encourage members to take on an organizational role. This discussion revealed some disagreements. While from the outset my own interest in the village had been questioned, and I was openly keen for the group to be community-led, I was still considered to have a lot of authority simply for starting the group, but also due to the fact that I had some academic training. Members were satisfied to contribute to the meetings as a leisure activity while it was still in the early stages, but none presently had the time to organize the meetings. There were no organized heritage activities in Low Moor prior to my arrival so I was not surprised that it was still too early to take a more passive role, but I did not expect to find that I was considered to have so much authority.

The third meeting in June was based on the diaries of John O'Neil and James Garnett. This involved members bringing their copies and discussing them in smaller groups. July's meeting was based around a tour of the village, suggested by and led by a group member. By this point we had received news of the success of the HLF bid, which meant I was now a paid staff member responsible for delivering the community engagement project. As a result of this, encouraging someone to replace me became less of a priority while I created smaller focus groups for the booklet and oral histories. Now a heritage "professional" rather than a student and participant, I have a greater stake in ensuring the project achieves its HLF-sanctioned outcomes.

Assembling a Community Heritage project

The history told by group members in heritage group meetings revealed important insights into their motivations for engaging with local history. Although it was not

possible for me to record each conversation, I recorded several quotes which revealed insights into local understandings of the value of local history. Important key quotes include a comment that the closure of the mill “stopped a village.”²² For DT, life in the village used to be “far better. It was a lot better. Everybody knew everybody.” It is rare that post-1970 is mentioned. Discussions regularly lapse into sharing childhood memories, which are often impossible for an outsider to engage with. Sharing memories of the old shops and changes to street names are the most frequent topic of discussion.

Several members have expressed the desire to “build on records” relating to the village and to share resources with each other. The group’s archive was initiated by group member SP in April. Contributed to by several members, it contained articles which focused on the decline of the village and years of hardship experienced by the community, but also on local celebrations and exceptionalism.²³ Members contributed maps, photographs, and newspaper articles relating to the shops which used to provide for the village, the destruction of the mill, the subsequent sale of the houses, and eventual intrusion of new housing into the village.

The community’s choice of heritage assets, as revealed by the content of conversations and the Club’s choice of physical artefacts to restore, illuminates the social and political essences of the local community’s view of the value of heritage.²⁴ As was demonstrated at the beginning of this study, each of the objects chosen to be restored has historically been a marker of Low Moor’s sense of independence and each is an expression of local sense of place. The choice to renew the local heritage resource and refresh local capacity for community action appears to reflect a desire to build and demonstrate resilience in the face of what is seen as negative change in the form of contemporary housing development. As demonstrated in chapter one, interesting relationships have been developed through the voluntary activities of the group which have seen this shared historical sense of place impact on the present by allowing members to build their networks. Beel et al. have observed this process in similar heritage initiatives in Portsoy and Lewis in Scotland,

²² Unpublished notes taken by the author from conversations with heritage group meeting attendees, Low Moor Reading Room and Club, Clitheroe, between March 31 and July 27, 2016 (hereafter Author Notes, 2016).

²³ “Low Moor sale: All Cottage and Shop Property Disposed of. No Offer for Mill. Bad Times but this Mill has Known Worse,” *Clitheroe Advertiser and Times*, July 24, 1930.

²⁴ Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 150–53.

and understand it as evidence of purposeful attempts to preserve a sense of place and the use of heritage as a catalyst for community development in the present.²⁵

The group's discussions about heritage focus primarily on change which is understood to have been to the detriment of the community. This is understood as the arrival of supermarkets in Clitheroe at the expense of local traders and therefore the village's ability to self-sustain, the sale of land for housing development and the subsequent changes to the social profile, and the physical proximity of the village to Clitheroe. Members of the group subscribe to a single romantic view of loss, which is a conversation that necessarily excludes residents of new housing, as exhibited by the departure of DB from group meetings and the demographic profile of attendees.

The project formed at the interface between institutional and community visions of the value of heritage. In distilling the power relationships implicated in the production of the history concerned, and their respective views on cultural value, it has shown how this history has been formed as a product of negotiations between localizing and nationalizing forces.²⁶ Respective viewpoints seek either to highlight the uniqueness of the heritage or to promote aspects of it which have universal resonance. The negotiation process between the apparently oppositional aims of the community and the HLF, although the project was accepted entirely on the community's terms, has raised the question of which of the interest groups will succeed in its objectives in the long term. The following section will dissect the political motivations at play in the context of this project, in light of the threats the community sees itself as subject to, in order to facilitate an evaluation of the success and failures of the project.

What was at Stake?

Material contributed to heritage group activities by group members typically relates to what contributors consider the village to have lost. This usually addresses the closure of the mill and sale of the village, the original streets and shops in the paleo-industrial core of the village, and images of community activities which no longer occur. The choice of heritage assets has a "pivotal relationship to the politics of identity."²⁷ The cenotaph, Percy the Pig, the Garnett mosaic, Low Moor banner,

25 D. Beel, C. Wallace, G. Webster, H. Nguyen, E. Tait, M. Macleod, and C. Mellish, "Cultural Resilience: The Production of Rural Community Heritage, Digital Archives and the Role of Volunteers," *Journal of Rural Studies* (2015): 1–10.

26 See Jim Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1985).

27 Stuart Hall, ed., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1996).

and Royal Engineers memorial are expressions of the village's sense of individuality, and each is visible to an external audience. In identifying these things as symbols of the village's past²⁸ and essentially choosing to recreate them together in heritage group meetings, members thereby perform their sense of collectivity. The decision to present these assets to an external audience is an outward expression of this collectivity.

Although not referred to by members explicitly in those terms, the symbolic meaning of what has been selected as heritage assets reveals that the local community sees globalizing forces as having resulted in the homogenization of the village's physical space, economy, and culture, which has all come at the expense of the village's sense of community. There is an anguished sense of the breakdown of old security and self-sufficiency. As has already been illustrated, the boundary between Low Moor and Clitheroe is referred to as if it were the shoreline between local and global, and local heritage has been used to reinforce and now recreate that separation. Extensive housing development in recent years has further obscured the boundary, and this appears to have been the trigger for the decision to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding. As a single-industry village, with the mill as the traditional hub of the social structure, the community has a tradition of voluntary solidarity manifested in trade unions, Co-ops, and the Club itself. Subject from the beginning to the fortunes of the cotton industry and the decisions made by the Garnett family, the community now finds itself once again struggling to make its voice heard in the face of development by wealthy interest groups.²⁹ Memories of similar past struggles are used to help bind the community, and the group therefore operates at the interface between understandings of past and present. Low Moor has so far been denied the opportunity to express those feelings as it does not have the resources, in terms of finances but also perhaps in terms of skills, to produce and present a record of its history. The heritage group is seen, amongst other things, as a stage on which to perform that sense of exclusion and disorientation. Voluntary contributions to the group's activities, both in terms of the history produced and the social networks formed as a consequence, all contribute to the community's resilience and collective capacity to respond to change.³⁰

²⁸ Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 150–53.

²⁹ See Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1971), 166–71; Howard Newby et al., *Restructuring Capital: Recession and Reorganization of Industrial Society* (London: Macmillan Press, 1985).

³⁰ Beel et al., "Cultural resilience."

It is now worth considering the relationship between this understanding of the community's use of heritage and the threats the community considers itself to be standing in opposition to, in order to understand the significance of the roles played by various stakeholders in the group's activities. The history produced by the group is intensely territorial, focused on recalling the history of a community that is resilient as an inherent characteristic, based on a long history of having a sense of identity based on separation from Clitheroe. It is essentially inward-looking, using previous examples of the community's isolationism as a tool with which to renew it. Globalizing forces are discussed in terms of the homogenization³¹ and destruction of the village's heritage, in both a tangible and intangible sense. The best response to the perceived threats, as illustrated by the activities of group members, is seen as resistance in the form of increased localization.

In light of the local community's approach to negotiations between localizing and globalizing forces, the introduction of the HLF was, in a sense, potentially a Trojan horse. The HLF aims to universalize access to historical narratives and develop the skills of participants. These aims, although of course well-meaning, are aligned with neoliberal definitions of productive and inclusive citizens, and are therefore aligned with the forces the community seeks to challenge.

Funding in the UK is moving in this direction at community level. On July 28, 2016 the Heritage Lottery Fund launched its "Resilient Heritage" scheme which aims to "build the skills of your staff and volunteers to better manage heritage in the long term" by helping them to acquire "new skills and knowledge." They only accept projects "defined at the outset" and which "have not yet started." Such projects must be in line with the HLF's "required outcomes for heritage, people and communities." This is loosely described as them becoming "better managed" by increased "skills development" and through "exploring new business models" in order to "build a firm financial footing" which will allow them to "take on new responsibility for heritage." This is problematic as said organizations must have the appropriate capacity at the outset,³² therefore eliminating the smallest from applying for funding and necessarily controlling the behavior of the larger organizations. The adoption of the term resilience by external groups is problematic in any case, as institutional conceptualizations of community are necessarily externally defined and therefore force it to become an object of regulation. The consequence is the likely sanitization of locally-formed narratives.

31 Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), x.

32 Heritage Lottery Fund, "Resilient Heritage," accessed July 28, 2016, <https://www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/resilient-heritage> & <https://www.hlf.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/heritage-lottery-fund-launches-new-%C2%A38million-resilience>.

The activities of the Low Moor group were “very much contained within the micro-politics of place.”³³ In its isolated position, however, the community has so far been unable to resist the forces it sees itself struggling against, as its voice is too small. Using heritage as a means of recreating social structures of years gone, as the group often does, negates progressive social change.³⁴ Refusing to engage with the HLF at all would have perpetuated existing inequalities and ultimately meant that local histories would be lost, as the community does not have the financial resources to produce a record of its own heritage, and least of all to challenge the sale of land in the village to property developers. Mackinnon and Derickson suggest that in such a situation, “resourcefulness” is a “more productive means of challenging the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism than to frame activism in a definition of resilience.”³⁵ A more effective way of preventing the loss of local historical narratives, in this sense, is to build capacity in the community to enable it to enter negotiation with the oppositional forces, rather than resist them outright.

Did it work?

The introduction of the HLF into the decision-making process added a complexity to the project and my own role in it. Despite my best intentions, I am of course implicated in the universalizing aims of the HLF in accepting to work with them, and beyond that my decisions are necessarily colored by personal judgement. As the community uses heritage as a means of resisting globalizing forces, I have had to think very carefully about how far I may have furthered the homogenization of the meaning of the community’s heritage, rather than countered it. Crucially, the HLF project was initiated and formed by the Club, rather than myself, and was accepted on all of the original terms with which it was submitted. I prioritized the interests of group members at all times, as my involvement was based on their mandate.

The basis of the HLF-approved project is public “improvement.” The instrumentalization of heritage for this purpose disregards the value communities attach to their heritage. Although willingly operating under the banner of the HLF, I do not suggest that my contribution “improved” the local community or locality. I as-

33 Beel et al., “Cultural Resilience,” 2–3, and D. MacKinnon and K. D. Derickson, “From Resilience to Resourcefulness: A Critique of Resilience Policy and Activism,” *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* 37, no. 2 (2013): 253–70; see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2010).

34 Mackinnon and Derickson, 253.

35 MacKinnon and Derickson, 267.

sisted a historically subordinated community to articulate their own narrative and produce a record of their history, with their consent. The products, in my opinion, are at once outward-looking (in line with HLF objectives) and counter-hegemonic (in line with the group's objectives). The narratives produced highlight and celebrate local individuality without being oppositional and without sanitizing its meaning. I intended to facilitate a negotiation between these two interests. I think this was the best outcome the community could achieve in these circumstances.

The project and the activities of the heritage group involved over 150 community members, bringing together descendants of both the mill workers and the Garnetts alongside more recent arrivals in the village. It facilitated inter-generational contact and fostered the development of research skills and new relationships between the participants. It widened access to the Club and to engagement with local history through the collection and preservation of memories and stories at a critical time in which their loss was threatened. It allowed all those with an interest in the village to share their ideas and perspectives, therefore raising awareness of the village's history and allowing the Club to refresh its image as an inclusive and welcoming place.

In the years following the completion of the project, the photographs and articles collected were recorded on CDs which are held by the Club, and the oral histories were submitted to the archive at Lancashire County Council, so a permanent record of the project has been created. The booklet was distributed to local schools and copies are available in Clitheroe library. It was later referenced in the published work of a local historian.³⁶ Photographs collected by participants are now mounted in the Club's meeting rooms, and the restored memorials are on prominent display. The heritage group has not continued to meet regularly as the volunteers were not interested in leadership positions once the project was complete. While the failure to gain enough traction in this way is perhaps a failure of the project, each of the goals outlined in the Club's original project proposal were achieved. The products of the group's work have continued to benefit the community in the years since the project was completed and will continue to do so into the future.

³⁶ Roger Smalley, *Dissent: A Radical History of the Clitheroe Parliamentary Constituency* (Scotforth Publishing, 2018).

Samantha Wells

Collaborative History Projects and Their Impact on Communities: A Case in North City Center, Dublin



Fig. 1: “Rutland Street Lower.” June 27, 2014. Image by author.

Walking down Sean MacDermott Street in June 2014, entering north central Dublin, is an area of Ireland’s capital city that is marked by its unique cultural characteristics and signs of socio-economic disadvantages.¹ The hustle and bustle of the city surrounds the community, and the area is thriving with the day-to-day grind of

¹ “Northeast Inner City Project,” Dublin City Council, accessed August 21, 2014, <http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-your-council-your-area-central-area-regeneration-projects/north-east-inner-city-project>.

its people. A group of women lounge at the front steps of their connecting houses while smoking cigarettes and telling tales of daily gossip, as they watch children kick around a ball in the front garden and ride scooters on the sidewalks and in the street. Families stroll past on their way to and from O'Connell Street and Parnell Street with shopping bags in tow, while a group of men repair a brick wall outside Our Lady of Lourdes church, famous for its shrine dedicated to the "venerable Matt Talbot."² They say hello by giving a nod, and we share a curious glance at one another as they continue to crack jokes with the group in their sharp north side Dublin accents.

The area can be challenging to an outsider as parts of it are newly renovated with modern architecture and beside them sit derelict buildings left to wither away, their remnants providing clues of a time gone past. There are noticeable marks of deprivation such as faded street signs, litter in the streets, graffiti adorning the sides of abandoned buildings and houses, and stray dogs roaming the neighborhoods. It is easy to assume that North City Center (NCC) is just another urban area, marked by poverty, in the midst of ongoing urban development and gentrification. After engaging with members of this community, listening to their concerns, and researching the area, it became evident that NCC faces many social, political, and economic obstacles that distinguish it from other areas of Dublin.

This chapter focuses on the importance of community-based historical projects and how they allow further understanding of an under-represented demographic and their heritage.³ It is based on a co-designed series of classes focusing on the history of an underrepresented community in Dublin's NCC in 2014. I led the series as part of an internship with Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS). An ethnographic approach was used to examine the significance of public history and its role in collaborative historical education projects that emphasize community participation. The next sections focus on some of the economic and socio-cultural factors that have impacted the NCC community over time.

² Matt Talbot, revered for his piety and charity, and considered by some as a patron to those struggling with alcoholism.

³ Paul Born, "Community Collaboration: A New Conversation," *The Journal of Museum Education, Museums and Relevancy* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 9–12.

North City Center

When first starting this project in NCC, I asked an elderly woman from the area who owned a fruit stand on Talbot Street if she would be interested in being interviewed for a local history project. She replied, “Why do you want to know? There’s nothing here worth talking about, no one else cares. Why do you?”⁴ This, arguably, demonstrates how many residents from this area believe that their history and culture is less significant than other sectors in Dublin. This is unfortunate because the area is rich in history and culture, such as the street names and historical landmarks that commemorate the heroes of modern Irish history, remnants of Georgian architecture, the distinct accent, and the demonstrable camaraderie among neighbors in the area;⁵ the community’s heritage is not only worthy of study but imperative to understanding Dublin and Ireland. As Kemp and McKinley Parrish explain: “The voices of the marginalized are often missing... However, those interested in moving past the story of the elite of society use creativity and persistence to piece together remarkably rich stories that document the lives of others within society.”⁶

Dublin is known for its widely diverse neighborhoods. Not only do the accents differ from place to place, but so does the way of life.⁷ Popularly known as North Inner City, the northeast portion of central Dublin has been socially and economically deprived though a great deal of its history.⁸ In this chapter this area is referred to as “North City Center” due to a request from a local community member, Una Shaw, who claimed: “It has always been City Center, not North Inner City. Even when we get our voting papers it says City Center. I feel like they just copied what London was doing at the time, and it stuck, but it doesn’t define us correctly. To me, it stigmatizes us.”⁹

4 Samantha Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes* (Dublin, Ireland, n.d.).

5 Jimmy Wren, *Crinan – Dublin: A History of 13 North Inner City Streets* (Dublin, Ireland: North Inner City Folklore Project, 1993); Ben Trawick-Smith, “Dublin: A Tale of Two Accents,” *Dialect Blog*, accessed August 21, 2014, <http://dialectblog.com/2011/02/02/dublin-a-tale-of-two-accents/>.

6 Amanda Kemp and Marilyn McKinley Parrish, “(Re)membering: Excavating and Performing Uncommon Narratives Found in Archives and Historical Societies,” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 127 (2010): 46.

7 Lee Komito, “Politics and Clientelism in Urban Ireland” (University College Dublin, 1985), www.ucd.ie/lkomito/thesis5.htm.

8 *Common Goals and Unmet Need: Meaningful Collaboration in Tackling Exclusion in Dublin’s North East Inner City* (Dublin, Ireland: Integrated Services Initiative, 1997), 5.

9 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

It was decided by the community group that the best way to identify the area was as “North City Center” because the term still recognizes the division between the north side and south side of Dublin while keeping the original “City Center” title.¹⁰

Although the 2006 census showed a significant decrease in unemployment, unemployment continues to be an issue for many NCC residents, which leaves sections of the local area at an economic disadvantage.¹¹ In the mid-1990s new urban regeneration schemes caused a population growth in Dublin’s inner city, which created new opportunities. However, the new employment generated has been white collar or highly skilled work, leaving much of the area’s largely traditional labor force excluded from new economic opportunities.¹² NCC has seen some of the most concentrated redevelopment throughout the city since the last recession. These new accommodation developments are highly segregated with gated communities and high-tech security systems, enabling extreme divides between wealthy newer residents and the disadvantaged, local long-term residents. Some of these challenges are new and can be attributed to the evolving city that continues to emerge around them, while many other challenges lie within the area’s historical backbone.

Historical Context

Up to the beginning of the 1800s, a large section of the north side of Dublin’s city center was considered one of the most desired areas to reside, set to the backdrop of attractive Georgian townhouses, grand thoroughfares, and illustrious parks.¹³ However, in 1801 the Act of Union dissolved the Irish Parliament and all political power and influence shifted solely to Westminster. As the nobility withdrew they left their stately Georgian houses in Dublin to fall to decay, be converted into offices, hotels, charitable institutions, or divided into residences.¹⁴ Dublin became the epicenter for the desperate masses during the great famine and its aftermath, be-

10 “Dublin Northsiders vs Dublin Southsiders. The Great River Liffey Divide,” accessed August 21, 2014, <http://www.dublinscape.com/dublin-northsiders-vs-dublin-southsiders.html>.

11 Komito, “The Inner City and Flatland.”

12 *Common Goals and Unmet Needs*, 6.

13 Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 274.

14 O’Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899–1916*, 7.

tween 1841 and 1900, and particular areas of Dublin were especially noted for their tenement slums, many of these at the core of NCC.¹⁵

Although most of these slums were removed by the late 1950s, some occupants remained in their Georgian houses well into the 1970s. Many of these stood out noticeably in the modern cityscape of a changing Dublin.¹⁶ Una Shaw, a participant in the collaborative history project in NCC, explained: “We just want to put that past behind us. It seems that every historian that comes to the area only wants to talk about the depressing stories of Dublin tenement life on the North Side, but that’s not our only history, and it’s something that residents around here would prefer to forget.”¹⁷

However, the area continued to face hardships well into the latter half of twentieth century. By the late 1980s the population of inner city communities had declined rapidly due to suburbanization and the decline of traditional industrial employment. This caused enormous change and high levels of unemployment. Many facilities such as schools and community services closed or were left neglected.¹⁸ Larry MacAulay, a long-time community member, reflected on this loss of population and urban infrastructure: “The fifties and sixties were great here. Everyone knew one another, and everyone was close, but by the 1970s all that changed. Dublin became a ghost town overnight and vandalism took over. Everyone left, everything was knocked down. It was like a warzone; it was that bad. They even filmed war movies here because the area looked like it had been bombed.”¹⁹

Another factor that contributed to the stigmatization of the area was the heroin “epidemic” in the 1980s. Many of the community members interviewed for the project mentioned the effects of heroin in some way. Kathy Moore, a local, explained: “Everyone in the area has been affected by heroin. It’s better now than it was back then, or at least it is not as noticeable anyway, but we have all seen the toll it can take, either by addiction or the loss of a friend or family member, or from our own experiences.”²⁰

15 Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), 7.

16 *Ibid.*, 21.

17 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

18 Haase, *Changing Face of Dublin’s Inner City*; Andrew Maclaran, “Suburbanising Dublin: Out of an Overcrowded Frying Pan and into a Fire of Unsustainability,” in *Renewing Urban Communities: Environment, Citizenship and Sustainability in Ireland* (Aldershot, 2005), 60–74; H. A. Gilligan, *History of the Port of Dublin* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill and MacMillan, 1988), 64.

19 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

20 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

Heroin usage reached a “plateau” in Dublin in the mid-1980s, although the availability of opiates continued in the inner city and was believed to be “contained” in these areas. Due to this, the heroin problem in NCC disappeared from the public agenda and there was little support for the communities affected.²¹ NCC remains in a constant state of change. Although the population has regenerated, many of the older inhabitants have been left comparing the community to the way it was then to the way it is now. Christy McGee, a NCC resident, explained: “We can tell that the area is in much better shape than it was back then, but the transition, from old to new, has been a challenge as well, and the area is still very deprived in some circumstances.”²²

Paul Hansert, a local from NCC, who worked as a scaffolder in Dublin for over 30 years, and later as a trade unionist, described the conditions of NCC and how it has changed for some local residents:

Well, for the ordinary person that has lived here, probably going back a hundred years, very little has changed. The conditions, more or less, are better than they were, but they still struggle to find work. There's a lot of addiction in the area, either alcohol or a drug addiction. It tends to be an area that's not too much thought about. There's early school leaving and many social problems. They've been there for generations. So, in that way, I don't think much has changed for those people, but the area itself has changed. First of all, there's not as many people living in the area because they cleared a lot of them, and then you have new apartments which would mostly be people from outside this area that live in those apartments. They wouldn't really mix in the area; they wouldn't see themselves as part of the area.²³

Some of the NCC neighborhoods have become the most segregated of all inner city areas, largely on account of the International Financial Service Center (IFSC) being located in what used to be one of the most derelict areas of the city. Urban development in the inner city over recent years has been successful in attracting large numbers of new residents to the area. This has helped to create a new population of much younger, affluent, and ethnically diverse residents. This has caused divisions between the newer residents and members of the older established community.²⁴ Many of these renovations were needed and welcomed but have contributed to other challenges in the area.²⁵ Hansert explained:

21 Aileen O'Hare et al., “The Opiate Epidemic in Dublin (1979–1983),” *Irish Medical Journal* 78, no. 4 (April 1985): 107–10; Emer Coveney et al., *Prevalence, Profiles and Policy: A Case Study of Drug Use in North Inner City Dublin, Case Study* (Dublin, Ireland: North Inner City Drug Task Force, 1999), 30; Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

22 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

23 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

24 Peter Howley and Brian Clifford, “The Transformation of Inner Dublin: Exploring New Residential Populations within the Inner City,” *Irish Geography* 42, no. 2 (July 2009): 225–43.

The old community is there, but it is not as vibrant as it was, and the new apartment blocks, you see, those people, they don't associate themselves with the inner city. They tend to keep to themselves. If you look at the Docks area, they have a wall separating them from Sheriff Street. A physical wall going around it. It's like an enclave, but a middle class enclave. They have their own shops, chemists, doctors, all in that area, which is surrounded by a wall.²⁶

The area experiences pockets of acute poverty while other areas are completely gated off from the neighborhood, leaving segregation and lack of connection between newer and older residents. NCC has also seen an increase in ethnic minorities, a side effect of progressive migration policies initiated by the European Union in May 2004.²⁷ This has led to more multicultural urban areas where such groups tend to gravitate due to their proximity to job opportunities.²⁸ This influx has also impacted the identity of NCC, creating segregated enclaves.²⁹ As Hansert related, "In the 1970s it was just one community in the whole North Inner City, everyone knew each other. It's not like that anymore."³⁰ This juxtaposition raises questions about the impact these changes have had on how community members view themselves, their history, and their identity. From extreme poverty to loss of residents through suburbanization and government policy, to the impacts of heroin on the community, to constant redevelopment and change in infrastructure: what does this do to their definition of their community, their history, their memories? This chapter asserts that history projects based on community participation, stories, and individual memories can help create a sense of identity within a community that feels they have been forgotten, or rather, left behind, in a city that continues to change.

25 *Expanding Dublin's Horizons to Meet the Critical Challenges, Dublin City Development Plan 2005–2011* (Dublin, Ireland: Dublin City Council, n.d.), www.dublincity.ie/development_plan/2.pdf.

26 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

27 *Towards Integration: A City Framework* (Dublin, Ireland: Office for Integration and Dublin City Council, n.d.).

28 Peter Szlovak and Ian McCafferty, *Monitoring Integration in Dublin City: Challenges and Responses Full Report, Towards Integration: A City Framework* (Integration Centre, Dublin City Council, March 2012).

29 Neil O'Boyle and Bryan Fanning, "Immigration, Integration and the Risk of Social Exclusion: The Social Policy Case for Disaggregated Data in the Republic of Ireland," *Irish Geography* 42, no. 2 (July 2009): 145–64.

30 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

Co-Designing a Collaborative History Project in North City Center

Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) is located in the heart of NCC and most of the work for the project took place here. LYCS is an integrated community-based education, training, recreation and development project whose mission is to give participants the opportunity to become involved in their own development and the development of the community. LYCS emerged in Dublin's NCC in the late 1970s and early 1980s as an attempt to "combat the relentless economic and social decline experienced in inner city Dublin."³¹ A very active Adult Education Program developed at this time, providing a wide variety of services primarily for women. At the time of the project, LYCS was located where the Rutland National School used to reside on Rutland Street Lower. The Victorian red brick building (Figure 2) is iconic in NCC and the school's history carries many memories from the area for many residents.³² LYCS made its basement and ground floor suitable as a shared space for the community.

There was only one goal agreed upon by the LYCS supervisor and me, to create a series of history classes for community members involved in the Adult Program at LYCS that focused on local history. The collaborative project was generated as part of the classes as an alternative approach to teaching local history. Quotes, ideas, and procedures were documented through dated field notes from January to October 2014.

As an outsider to the community it was difficult to teach a history class without having previous knowledge of this particular subject matter, the history of NCC. The solution was to learn local history together, through the group's stories, memories, and knowledge of the area, and through utilizing my access to historical resources. The group decided that an oral history project that highlighted the area's history was an effective solution. The class decided on three main goals for the project: to show NCC in a positive light, rather than a negative one; to learn about past and current issues in the community; and to exhibit the history of the community for the local population.

31 "Lourdes Youth and Community Services," October 12, 2005 accessed August 26, 2014, <http://www.lycs.ie/LYCSweb/aboutContent.aspx?pageType=1&list=98&im=n&id=56&TierSlicer1TSMMenuTargetID=56&TierSlicer1TSMMenuTargetType=1&TierSlicer1TSMMenuID=22>.

32 "Give up Yer Oul' Sins, or Give up Yer Oul' Name . . . That Is the Dilemma," *The Irish Independent*, accessed August 26, 2014, <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/give-up-yer-oul-sins-or-give-up-yer-oul-name-that-is-the-dilemma-25961255.html>.



Fig. 2: LYCS Building Past. ‘GD113 Rutland Street | a Whole New World,’ Dublin City Council Photographic Collection, 1982. This image shows the LYCS building from Summerhill, shortly after the demolition of tenements. June 17, 1982

At the first meeting, the group began to swap stories with each other about NCC. One participant, Peter Egan, began to tell the class a story about how he used to work in a wool factory. He left school at 13 because he “needed a few bob.” He reminisced on how he used to stamp down on the wool with his bare feet in order to separate the wool, and to clean and compact it. The class began to exchange their work experiences with each other as responses to this. One of the members suggested that the topic for the history project should highlight all of the ways people used to work in the area, whether working down by the docks, or in garment and sewing factories, or selling newspapers or flowers on the streets, that any and all occupations in NCC could be addressed. The project’s theme was then decided: the group would capture and record stories from the area on how they worked and their occupations, entitled, “Working Lives of Dubliners in North City Centre.”

Each week the class met every Thursday afternoon at the LYCS from January to October 2014 to learn, discuss, and develop the project (Figure 3). In total, the group involved about 30 community members. I would usually present historical data and/or past and recent forms of media about or from the area to spark historical discussions. The group also investigated newspaper articles from the past and present to view how the community is represented in the media and to stimulate and enhance the classes. We also watched movies such as *The Commitments*, *Strumpet City*, *Unspoken Truths*, and Nora Connelly’s interview about her father,



Fig. 3: 'The History Group', August 2014. Image by author.

James Connelly, a socialist and revolutionary of the 1916 Easter Rising, which was recorded in the 1960s and found on YouTube. I also shared articles to read about the area and about Irish history, public history, and oral history. Archival images were used to supplement the classes and were found at the National Library of Ireland, Dublin City Archives, or online. The images were used for the series to promote the area's history, as well as for comparisons between what the area used to look like in the past and what the area looks like today. The class used the images as part of the presentation that coincided with the exhibition, which took place during the second week of October at a local library in NCC.

Sometimes I would impose an informal leading question on them such as: what was your favourite past-time growing up in the area? Where was the best place to grab a bite to eat in the area in the 1960s? Or "I have been doing research on Mitchell's rosary bead factory off Waterford Street, did you know anyone that used to work there? I read that the smell from the factory used to be stifling, do you remember it?"

The series gained interest outside the class and new participants attended or joined the discussion frequently. The group that attended the series became close, and it developed into a social connection for community members who participated. Members began to meet outside of class, on some occasions to tour the commu-

nity in search of historical buildings and landmarks, other times to meet for a cup of tea or a pint in order to further discuss local history. They began to celebrate each other's birthdays during the class and send cards of condolence from "the history group" when another member was sick or had a loss in their family. The class meeting came to be not only about the history of NCC community but about friendship. These connections were made by their similar interests in local history and through the sharing of their memories and stories. This at times was challenging, however, because when new participants attended, the group, although welcoming, would be hesitant to engage them in the project, and would sometimes speak over new members or not interact with them fully. Over the course of nine months, the group evolved, some members began taking leadership roles, others who rarely participated and mostly listened to the others began to speak up on historical, political, and social issues in the community, and many made connections between their community's history and current problems. At times there would be heated arguments about local history or political and social views within the class. As an outsider, I learned an immense amount from these discussions.

Oral History

The oral history interviews were the most challenging aspect of the project. The community group was involved in almost every aspect except for the recorded interviews. This portion of the project was done by the author and a community member, Maria MacAulay. There were two main obstacles in conducting effective interviews: some interviewees did not trust having an outsider interview them, which led to unsuccessful interviews in some cases, and some did not like being recorded, especially for a project that would be presented to others in the community. Some of the interviewees therefore remained anonymous. One solution was having Maria join me for the interviews. She knew the area and residents well, having lived there her entire life, and for many of the cultural nuances that I did not identify with or understand she was able to help fill in the gaps and make the interviewees comfortable.

Another obstacle of the interviews was getting people interested in the project and encouraging them to participate. Ger Doherty, the LYCS supervisor, also helped coordinate the interviews. He contacted everyone on the LYCS mailing list and arranged meetings, posted an ad about being interviewed in the community newspaper, and then allowed me to present to the community at their end of year certification ceremony. The two of us also walked around the community and gave flyers to businesses and organizations about the project. In total, Maria and I interviewed 16 people for the project.

Before beginning the oral history interviews, the history group met to discuss effective procedures for interviewing, watched clips and learned about other oral history projects on the internet from around the world, and I discussed the importance of ethical interviewing. I created a legal document for the interviews to be used for academic and community purposes, and then the group decided on what questions should be asked in the interview. As the project progressed, the interviews were revised to only asking two or three broad questions about their experiences working in the area and how the area has changed. Then the individual was asked to help plot different locations, buildings, and factories on a map of the area from 1966.

Many pertinent findings emerged from the interviews, and I was able to make fitting comparisons with Shopes' work: "Oral history is long haul work. Making contact with community representatives, gaining *entrée*, cultivating trust, and then doing, analyzing, and presenting a body of interviews cannot be accomplished in one or even two semesters. It requires a commitment of years."³³

This demonstrates three caveats in this public history project: how difficult it can be to gain a community's trust and rally behind a local cultural project; how much effort, time, and will power it takes to successfully construct a project like this; and that despite many efforts, the project needed much more time than allotted for the internship to produce a project that effectively represented NCC. Shopes' work also demonstrates an ethical challenge that I encountered: how should the information I have gained through the interviews be presented to the public? What aspects of the project should be highlighted and what aspects of it should be omitted? Should I try to portray NCC only positively, as discussed by the group, creating a glossed-over version of its inconvenient history, or should the project present some of the frustrations, challenges, and concerns of the community that were revealed through the interviews?³⁴ These tensions point to the essential disjunction between academic history and popular history as seen through the public eye. These projects, however, provide an opportunity to bridge the gaps between the two mediums, opening up dialogue about the nature of historical inquiry.³⁵ I believe this makes them eminently worth doing.

³³ Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," 269.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Mapping

Mapping of the NCC area's past became a vital aspect of the project and dominated other aspects including the oral history interviews. The suggestion of mapping came up during one of the group meetings to get more people interested in the project, and as a strategy to enhance the interviews. Through mapping the group developed an idea to recreate the area in a creative form to present for the exhibition. I found a map from the Trinity College Dublin Map Library from 1966, issued by Ordnance Survey Ireland that provided detailed coverage of the area. The group began to make lists individually of places that they remembered or used to work that were no longer there.



Fig. 4: Detail of Map created by the History Group. Image by Ciaran O'Neill.

The mapping of NCC was immensely helpful in bringing forth stories and memories. For example, some of the commentary included: “Do you remember that fire at Noyeks off Parnell? Six people died there.” Another group member, Larry, responded:

It wasn't six people who died, it was thirteen. I know, I used to work across the street from there. I remember that was when the hot pants came into fashion for women. Funny, we always thought that would be a style that would go out quickly, and now everyone wears pants! But anyway, all of us lads were watching all the women going to Noyeks that day, checking them out you could say, next thing we know we were watching those same women in the windows, banging on them trying to get out and away from the fire and smoke. I remember I saw one of the women collapse to the floor from the window. We couldn't get them out, it was helpless.³⁶

Mapping elicited elaborative memories to form from the group, and enhanced connection between participants. The mapping procedures demonstrated how shared places, the memory of them, and their history can support social identities among a community group.³⁷ By plotting points on the map, the group remembered their favourite places, such as dance halls and cinemas, triggering memories of music, films, dress, and events that have taken place in their lives. The group shared their stories in vivid detail, coloring their memories and creating a greater bond among them as they connected their stories to NCC and to each other.

Talja Blokland argues that this type of nostalgia can feed into a blurred boundary between community and familiarity, which can be at the source of an often vented regret that "the neighborhood is no longer what it used to be, when it was a real community."³⁸ This occurred in reference to the project, where the more the group plotted points and shared their memories the more frustrated they became at the way the community is changing. As one interviewee, Maureen, stated:

It was great growing up like, even though we had nothing, it was great. The area has changed an awful lot. The youths gone, there's nothing for them to do. I know we had nothing to do, but we had to get up and try and do something to make a living for our mothers. The kids have no jobs for them, everything was cut back. You had to fight for everything back then, these kids today don't.³⁹

The process of plotting the locations on the map demonstrated a massive portion of lost factories, buildings and occupations. After plotting over 60 locations in the community in just two class meetings it became evident that what we were really doing was capturing the history of unemployment, social change, and the transformation of the NCC's physical infrastructure. Unemployment is one of the main stigmatizations of the area, now and throughout its history, and the map demonstrated how it became such an issue: lack of opportunity due to the closing and moving

³⁶ Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

³⁷ Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (April 1995): 182–92.

³⁸ *Expanding Dublin's Horizons to Meet the Critical Challenges*, 271.

³⁹ Maureen, Oral History Interview, March 13, 2014.

of factories and businesses. With this newfound realization the group decided to change the title for our upcoming exhibition to better reflect this outcome, entitled, “Working for a Few Bob: Lost Employment in Dublin’s North City Centre.”

Una Shaw wrote a message to say at the exhibition that is an excellent example of how the project changed through the course of the series, and how the project became more than just an overview of the history of work in the area:

This exhibition is a cross section of workplaces, and how much employment there was in this general area from 1940 to the present day. All are gone, either going out of business, or re-located. Either way, it left unemployment and jobs at an all-time low, and we have never recovered from it. We see little if any commitment from past or present governments to generate employment in this area, and so it continues. We see no light at the end of the tunnel, while those in power have tunnel vision.⁴⁰

The project evolved into something much more social and political, in contrast to a positive representation of NCC’s working history. This evolution brought it full circle to one of the main objectives of the project: to show NCC in a positive light through its local history. Could the project still enhance a positive view of local history within the community and outside the community? This points to another underlying dilemma within the public history field: how dangerous is it to present the history of a community in a glossed over, sentimental way, emphasizing the “we were poor, but we were happy” version of history. This type of history is often presented in marginalized and under-represented communities. Although they possibly allow for a sense of pride to develop within a community, and can increase engagement and interest in local history, historical inaccuracy and disregard for the negative aspects of history can be detrimental to a community, as many social issues and grievances will continue to be ignored. I believe it is more beneficial, in this case, to portray the history of the neighborhood as wholly as possible, in hopes of raising awareness to current problems. The issue lies more in the importance of using history as a catalyst for community involvement and social activism rather than just as a presentation about the community’s history to create cohesion.

Exhibition

The exhibition took place on October 9, 2014, in the Charleville Mall Library. When the group began to brainstorm about how to approach the exhibition there was a desire to reconstruct the map into a piece of artwork that would be done by the

⁴⁰ Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes*.

group and another intern at LYCS, a socially engaged artist, Ashley Moore, who was obtaining a postgraduate degree at National College of Art and Design (NCAD) at the time. The group asked the artist to assist in developing an artistic representation of the map on a laminated poster to first display in the library and then later hang in the LYCS building. The artistic representation of the map included many of the factories and buildings that are no longer in NCC and has quotes from the interviews. The map was bordered with images from the area that the group had found in archival collections. With the map, the group organized a presentation for the library that focused on many of the stories that were collected, and the research throughout the series.

Conclusion

To me, the importance of public history lies in its ability to impact communities and to provide history to others outside of the academy, especially ones that have little access to their own history. When considering the transitional changes and challenges present in NCC, such as social segregation, rebuilding, and redeveloping of urban infrastructure, and for many, a continued lack of social amenities, community engagement and participation in Public History projects can benefit disenfranchised areas.

This project encouraged group members to gain perspective and insight on what the community has endured through its history, and the series of classes gave them the space to discuss these issues in a safe and creative outlet. Although much of what the class discussed in the series ignored elite, national, and academic history, the group was able to occupy their local history and engage in a conversation about the history that surrounds them on a daily basis. Collaborative community projects can enhance an individual's sense of belonging, connect a community to their heritage, and make an area that is often overlooked through traditional methods of documenting history more visible.

Working on this project with NCC community members was a valuable experience, and by collecting stories and sharing local history with residents I was able to see a side of Dublin that many outsiders would not be able to explore. There is a strong cultural character that shines in NCC and it deserves to be celebrated through creative outlets. Through collaborative history projects there is opportunity for greater representations of local histories and the ability to connect communities to aspects of their cultural identity.

The Irish Folklore Collection as Public History in 1930s Ireland

From July 1, 1937 until January 31, 1939, school children aged 11–14 across the newly independent Irish Free State became the collectors of the young state’s folklore.¹ The project was co-ordinated by the Irish Folklore Commission (I.F.C.) and endeavoured to collect “*seanchas*,” the oral tradition which captured “the social life” of the “historic Irish nation.”² Approximately 4,575 notebooks provided to the schools by the Department of Education were returned to the I.F.C., along with additional information in exercise books.³ The material returned from 5,000 national schools contained approximately 740,000 pages of information about folklore from the 26 counties of the Irish Free State, collected by school children from their families and neighbors.⁴ The information contained within this collection ranged from “local cures” to “In the penal times.”⁵ Today, this repository is commonly referred to as the Schools’ Collection and it forms a significant portion of the National Folklore Collection (N.F.C.) in University College Dublin (UCD).

From its inception in the 1930s this was public history, an example of what Bronwyn Dalley, Christopher Hilliard, and others have referred to as the “pre-history of public history.” The National School’s Collection typified the “democratic potential” of Hilda Kean and Paul Martin’s vision of the “public history as a process by which the past is constructed into history and a practice which has the capacity for involving people as well as nations and communities in the creation of their own histories.”⁶ Recently digitized, it has been hosted online by University College Dublin at *duchas.ie* since 2013. The digitization of the Schools’ Collection’s materials

1 Séamas Ó Catháin, “Súil siar ar Scéim na Scol 1937–1938,” *Sinsear* 5 (1988), accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.duchas.ie/download/duchas.ie-suil-siar-ar-sceim-na-scol-2014.pdf>, 5.

2 An Roinn Oideachais, *Irish Folklore and Tradition* (Dublin, 1937), 4.

3 Séamas Ó Catháin, “It’s us they’re talking about,” in *Proceedings from the McGlinchey Summer School*, ed. Margaret Farren and Hary Harkin (1998), accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.duchas.ie/download/schools-scheme-ocathain.pdf>, 14.

4 National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin (UCD), “National Folklore Collection (N.F.C.) and its collections,” *dúchas.ie* (2021), accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/info/cbe>.

5 Headings taken from the digitized version of www.duchas.ie; see “In the penal times,” “The Schools’ Collection, Volume 1118, Page 53,” by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD, licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0.

6 Hilda Kean and Paul Martin, *The Public History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2013), xiii.

was already underway prior to the launch of the site, but the project received an additional boost of €1.75 million in funding from the government and UCD at the launch of *duchas.ie* in 2013.⁷ The project can be contextualized within the rise of new media as a means of opening history to the Irish public.⁸ It brought together “the old and the new in a way which allows for long-term possibilities regarding the understanding of our tradition.”⁹

This appetite for digitization has produced projects like Virtual Treasury and the Collins Papers which were released “In response to the ongoing Decade of Centenaries” and the consequential increase of public interest in history.¹⁰ Digitized primary sources are particularly effective in bringing a public accustomed to instant gratification into direct contact with the past.¹¹ These endeavors were further supported by the launching of the Digital Repository of Ireland in 2015 to assist in the management of digital heritage data.¹² Despite the benefit of increasing public engagement with the past, digitization also risks replicating the power structures entrenched in historical narratives and archives, with the aforementioned projects focusing on political history, a common bias in Irish historiography.¹³ At both the collection and digitization stage, the Schools’ Collection points to the “possibility of a participatory historical culture in which people have a firm hand in the making of their own pasts.”¹⁴ This article explores the context

7 National Folklore Collection, UCD, *Minister Launches Dúchas.ie Giving Global Access to Ireland’s National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin*, December 18, 2013, accessed August 5, 2023, https://www.ainm.ie/pdf/13.12.18_Duchas_pr_EN.pdf, 1–2.

8 Thomas Cauvin and Ciaran O’Neill, “Negotiating Public History in the Republic of Ireland: Collaborative, Applied and Usable Practices for the Profession,” *Historical Research* 90, no. 250 (2017): 821.

9 National Folklore Collection, *Minister Launches Dúchas.ie*, 2.

10 Trinity College Dublin, “About Beyond 2022 – Creating the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland,” *Beyond 2022*, (n.d.), accessed October 10, 2023, https://beyond2022.ie/?page_id=2#vision; Defence Forces Ireland, “The Collins Papers Online Release,” *Military Archives*, October 14, 2019, accessed October 10, 2021, <https://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/news-updates/single-view/article/the-collins-papers-online-release?cHash=9c270b7359f48e5a305d9e8b0623853a#>.

11 Michael Eamon, “A ‘Genuine Relationship with the Actual’: New Perspectives on Primary Sources, History and the Internet in the Classroom,” *The History Teacher* 39, no. 3 (2006): 298.

12 Digital Repository of Ireland, “About DRI,” *DRI: Digital Repository of Ireland* (n.d.), accessed December 12, 2020, <https://dri.ie/about-dri>.

13 Sheila A. Brennan, “Digital History,” *The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook* (2019), accessed August 10, 2021, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/digital-history/>; Maeve Casserly and Ciaran O’Neill, “Public History, Invisibility, and Women in the Republic of Ireland,” *The Public Historian* 39, no. 2, (2017): 26.

14 Hilda Keane, “Public History as a Social Form of Knowledge,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Public History*, ed. Paula Hamilton and James B. Gardner, *Oxford Handbooks* (2017), online edn., Oxford

and delivery of the Schools' Collection of the Irish Folklore Commission as a key moment in the development of public history practice in independent Ireland and examines how principles familiar to public history practitioners today are visible in the history of that state-sponsored project.

Folklore and its Intersections

The Schools' Collection is situated between several broader subjects, namely folklore studies, oral history, and history education, all of which link closely to the key principles of public history. Mythical connotations associated with folklore are not misplaced but they limit the word's meaning and reduce the likelihood of folk material being deemed trustworthy by either historians or the public. Several folklorists have produced and revised definitions of their subject with varying levels of complexity. Francis E. Abernethy's definition of folklore as "the traditional knowledge of a culture" is helpful to understand the extent to which folklore is embedded within communities and the inherited nature of such knowledge.¹⁵ Folklore is categorized not just as folk tales or beliefs but also as music, material culture, and customs, linking it closely with social history.¹⁶ It is a wide ranging subject which not only encapsulates oral histories but also provides insight into cultures past and present, making it a strong pathway for the study of history.

Despite the compatibility of the two disciplines, a tension appears to exist between folklorists and historians. An image is conveyed in the folklore literature that historians are selective to a fault in the sources they value whereas folklorists eagerly accept "all the tales and songs and traditions that the historians allow to fall between the cracks."¹⁷ That said, the digitization of the Schools Collection, along with interdisciplinary approaches to history, means that the material is becoming more popular for traditional historians. Historians such as Clodagh Tait,

Academic, October 5, 2017, 405, accessed April 25, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199766024.013.22>.

15 Francis E. Abernethy, "Classroom Definitions of Folklore," *Between the Cracks of History: Essays on Teaching and Illustrating Folklore*, ed. Francis E. Abernethy (Denton, TX; 1997), 4.

16 Paddy B. Bowman, "'Oh, that's just folklore': Valuing the Ordinary as an Extraordinary Teaching Tool," *Language Arts* 81, no. 5, (2004): 386.

17 Francis E. Abernethy, "Preface," *Between the Cracks of History: Essays on Teaching and Illustrating Folklore*, ed. Francis E. Abernethy (Denton, TX; 1997), vii.

Guy Beiner, and others have published material using the collection, in addition to folklore scholars who continue to use the material collected in the 1930s.¹⁸

For Beiner, “vernacular history” is excluded from narratives when Irish historians do not engage with sources like folklore collections, reducing the depth of an image of the past that the historian can produce.¹⁹ These vernacular histories are linked to the question of authority in the construction of history which is relevant in public history discourse as there is an increasing drive to represent forgotten voices in narratives and cultural institutions. This includes starting conversations between traditional gatekeepers of history and the public surrounding both the narrative presented and the mode of display, fostering shared authority which is a central public history principle.²⁰ The Schools’ Collection is a pre-public history project which encouraged students to be actively engaged with the preservation of the past. The format of the project appears familiar to public historians as an early form of oral history, an increasingly rewarding research methodology. The Schools’ Collection closely aligned with public history principles by meaningfully engaging with vernacular history and sharing authority in constructing an image of the past.

A high proportion of the academic material pertaining to the Schools’ Collection is written in Irish, likely due to a focus from the I.F.C. on Gaeltacht regions which were perceived to be rich in folklore.²¹ The prominence of the Irish language can be seen by surveying the resources segment on *dúchas.ie*, but specific works like *Dúchas.ie: Ré Nua i Stair Chnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann* (2014) prove the limitations placed on non-Gaeilgeoir researchers as this reflection on digitiza-

18 Clodagh Tait, “Worry Work: The Supernatural Labours of Living and Dead Mothers in Irish Folklore,” *Past & Present* 246, Issue Supplement (December 2020): 217–238, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtaa042>; Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison, WI: 2007); Niall Ó Ciosáin, “Approaching a Folklore Archive: The Irish Folklore Commission and the Memory of the Great Famine,” *Folklore* 115, no. 2, (2004): 222–32; Caitríona Nic Philibín and Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire, “An Exploratory Study of Food Traditions Associated with Imbolg (St. Brigid’s Day) From The Irish Schools’ Folklore Collection,” *Folk Life* 59, no. 2 (2021): 141–60; Patricia Lysaght, “Collecting the Folklore of Ireland: The Schoolchildren’s Contribution,” *Folklore* 132, no. 1 (2021): 1–33.

19 Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 12.

20 Kathleen McLean, “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?,” *Letting Go: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, ed. Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski (Philadelphia, PA: 2011): 71–72.

21 Mícheál Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970: History, Ideology, Methodology* (Helsinki: Studia Fennica, 2008), 249.

tion is only available in Irish.²² The Folklore of Ireland Society's journal, *Béalóideas*, is also a bilingual publication, making a number of the articles similarly inaccessible.²³ In addition to hierarchical attitudes to primary source material on the part of earlier historians, the Irish language component of the Folklore Collection may account for subsequent reluctance to engage with the Irish folklore archives by those not fluent in the language; there is a generational element here. Recently, Irish Folklore has found a place in academic works, such as Mícheál Briody's monograph on the I.F.C., but *dúchas.ie* speaks to the more frequent employment of the subject for local history books. A variety of publications have been produced using the Schools' Collection, and other material from the N.F.C., by heritage groups, county councils, and local historians.^{24,25} Folklore is understood in this context as intensely local and nostalgic. A recent publication by broadcaster John Creedon, *An Irish Folklore Treasury: A Selection of Old Stories, Ways and Wisdom from the Schools' Collection* (Dublin, 2022), reveals a newer, popular iteration of more local, and academic, publications that have used the collection in the last decades.²⁶ The national reach of this volume, its production values, and the previous work of the author in highlighting Ireland's heritage has brought the School's Collection to another audience.

22 National Folklore Archive, "Information Resources," *dúchas.ie* (2021), accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.duchas.ie/en/info/res>; Gearóid Ó Cleircín, Anna Bale, and Brian Ó Raghallaigh, "Dúchas.ie: Ré Nua i Stair Chnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann," *Béaloideas* 82 (2014), accessed September 10, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24862792>, 85–99.

23 Folklore of Ireland Society, *Béaloideas* (1927–2015), accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/journal/bealoideas>. The website for the Folklore of Ireland Society, accessed September 11, 2024, <https://bealoideas.ie/en/home/>.

24 Eithne Ní Ghallochobhair, *Sceáltaí: The 1930s Schools' Manuscript Collection in County Donegal* (Donegal, 2017), 4; Jimmie Cooke, *Kilmacow Folklore: County Kilkenny St. Senan's Boys National School Kilmacow for Schools' Scheme 1937–39, Irish Folklore Commission and Memoirs of Kilmacow* (Naas, 2008); Jimmie Cooke, *Kilmacow Folklore 2: County Kilkenny St. Joseph's Presentation Convent Girls N.S., Upper Kilmacow, St. Patrick's Strangsmills Mixed N.S., Dunkitt, Kilmacow Schools' Scheme 1937–1939, Irish Folklore Commission* (Naas, 2014).

25 Kathleen Laffan, "Foreword," in *Kilmacow Folklore: County Kilkenny St. Senan's Boys National School Kilmacow for Schools' Scheme 1937–39, Irish Folklore Commission and Memoirs of Kilmacow*, ed. Jimmie Cooke (Naas, 2008), vi.

26 John Creedon, *An Irish Folklore Treasury: A Selection of Old Stories, Ways and Wisdom From the Schools' Collection* (Dublin: Gill Books, 2022).

Folklore and Identity

The collection of Irish folklore was contextualized within a wider European appetite to salvage a past way of being that scholars, artists, and writers feared would vanish with the rise of modernity.²⁷ Prominent Irish folklorist Séamus Ó Duilearga wrote of this concern and the need “to collect the huge body of tradition which has escaped the ravage of time, and the spiritual decay brought about by the materialism of the machine age.”²⁸ Folklore, as such, was a window into the past. Ó Duilearga spent time in Northern Europe in 1928 where he met folklorists who viewed Ireland as a bastion of folklore in need of preservation, prompting him to write to his mentor Eoin MacNeill about the need to share this heritage with the world: “I also wonder if our Government will ever realize that they owe a duty to Ireland and to the civilized world to make the literature, history and folklore of our people known and respected everywhere.”²⁹ In this, Ó Duilearga expresses his desire to find a public for folklore and history. On this same formative trip, Ó Duilearga met Professor Walter Anderson who had organized the San Marino folklore project which has been credited as the inspiration for the Schools’ Collection.³⁰ Beyond the Schools’ Collection, the I.F.C. had a wider folklore network in Europe, with Séamus Ó Súilleabháin dedicating his seminal text *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (1942) “To the Swedish People whose scholars evolved the scheme for folklore classification outlined in these pages” and to the Irish people.³¹ This dedication reveals the transnational dimensions to the Irish Folklore Commission’s genesis, but also the discipline of folklore itself that moved beyond a purely nationalist Gaelic revival.

Up to that point, collectors of Irish folklore including Sir William Wilde, Jane Francesca Wilde (“Speranza”), W.B. Yeats, Maud Gonne, and others tended to come from elite socio-economic backgrounds. Others such as William Carleton, familiar with Irish oral traditions, engaged in collecting practices and disseminated their findings through texts that have become seminal in Irish studies. The popularity of Irish folklore emerged in part in the course of the Gaelic Revival movement

27 Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 23; Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, *Exotic Dreams in the Science of the Volksgeist: Towards a Global History of European Folklore Studies* (The Kalevala Society, 2022).

28 *Irish Independent*, September 27, 1938. See Eoin Mac Carthaigh, “Seamus O’Duilearga,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography online*, accessed April 24, 2023, <https://www.dib.ie/biography/o-duilearga-seamus-james-hamilton-delargy-a6353>.

29 Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 90; quoted in Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 90.

30 Ó Catháin, “It’s us,” 3.

31 Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*, 2nd edition (London, 1963), xv.

of the second half of the nineteenth century which was vital in moving towards a model of systematically preserving Irish folklore. Douglas Hyde's oft-cited lecture *The Necessity of De-Anglicising Ireland* (1892) encapsulates the drive for a Celtic character which would extend beyond the foundation of the Gaelic League and find a place later in the attitudes of the Free State government towards culture, heritage, and language. For Hyde, the pursuit of an Irish identity required the active promotion of all that was Gaelic in nature: "In a word, we must strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish, because in spite of the little admixture of Saxon blood in the north-east corner, this little island *is and will* ever remain Celtic at the core."³² Folklore was understood as the epitome of this spirit. Anxiety concerning cultural loss through the presence of an outside force as well as traumatic events such as the Great Famine (1845–52) is evident in the impulse behind the preservation of the Irish language and Irish folklore. The emergence of Celtic Studies as well as "scholarly recognition of a scientific field of folklore" during the nineteenth century was equally important.³³ The work of Lady Augusta Gregory and W.B. Yeats in promoting Irish folk tales is just one example of the role of folklore in the foundation of a Gaelic identity, with the lasting legacy of their work seen today in reprints of collections compiled by the two authors.³⁴ In *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902), Gregory speaks to the people of Kiltartan for whom the stories in the collection are dedicated, acknowledging that they "would not have to go far to get stories of Finn and Goll and Oisín from any old person in the place" but "there is very little of the history of Cuchulain and his friends left in the memory of the people."³⁵ The collection was compiled from manuscripts which were deemed to have inaccessible Irish, rather than oral collections, but Gregory notes that she presents the stories in "plain and simple words, in the same way my old nurse Mary Sheridan used to be telling stories from the Irish long ago, and I a child in Roxborough."³⁶ The implication is that folklore is both from and for the Irish people rather than for "the learned men that live in the college at Dublin" who lack respect for "Irish things."³⁷ A disparity is evident here between the attitudes of the public and elite institutions to such traditional knowledge.

³² Douglas Hyde, "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland (1892)," *Handbook of the Irish Revival: An Anthology of Irish Cultural and Political Writing, 1891–1922*, ed. Declan Kiberd and P.J. Matthews (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 13.

³³ Ó Giolláin, *Exotic Dreams*, 286–8.

³⁴ Augusta Gregory, *Lady Gregory's Complete Irish Mythology*, 9th edition (London, 2015).

³⁵ Augusta Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, 4th edition (London, 1911), v.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vi.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vi.

Similarly, Hyde has been credited for increasing public access to folklore by producing the “first book of popular oral tales in Irish” in 1889.³⁸ This harmonious interest in the Irish language and oral traditions by the Gaelic League was central to a “new period” for folklore preservation.³⁹ In 1927, members of the League played a significant role in the founding of Folklore of Ireland Society.⁴⁰ In the first issue of the society’s journal, *Béaloidéas*, the group’s aim is expressed as “a humble one – to collect what still remains of the folklore of our country.”⁴¹ The introduction to the journal emphasizes the need to preserve folklore as a valuable aspect of Irish heritage on the precipice of extinction.⁴² The value of folklore within Irish culture was formally recognized by the Cumann na nGaedheal government who, in 1930, provided a grant for the founding of the Irish Folklore Institute as the task of collecting was deemed too great a responsibility to fall to a voluntary body.⁴³ The public funding of the I.F.C. sees folklore positioned within another type of public history project – one utilized by the state for purposes of nation building and statecraft. While folklore and the state may often appear binary opposites, this state sponsored folklore project in Ireland and elsewhere demonstrates the blurred lines between traditional folk culture and the organs of the state – in the twentieth century, at least, a symbiotic relationship.

The Institute was preceded by another pre-public history endeavor with the Irish Folklife Division of the National Museum of Ireland tracing its origins to the same impulse of state-building through heritage. In 1927, a report by Nils Lithberg, advisor to the Northern Museum in Stockholm, recommended the collection of “ethnological” material as a focus for the museum’s mission.⁴⁴ Some historians have noted that the National Museum received little political support beyond its role as a symbol of the nation, but it is indicative of how proto-public history methodology was used in the Free State.⁴⁵ In 1935, the government further funded folk-

38 *Irish Independent*, September 27, 1938.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Anne Markey, “The Discovery of Irish Folklore,” *New Hibernia Review/ Iris Éireannach Nua* 10, no. 4 (2006): 23.

41 Séamus Ó Duilearga, “Ó’n bhFear Eagair,” *Béaloidéas* 1 (1927), accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20521411>, 5

42 Ó Duilearga, “Ó’n bhFear Eagair,” 3–4.

43 Markey, “The Discovery,” 23. Bo Almqvist, “The Irish Folklore Commission: Achievement and Legacy,” *Béaloidéas*, 45/47 (1979): 9.

44 National Museum of Ireland, *Collections Acquisitions Strategy – Irish Folklife Division* (2021), accessed September 2, 2023, <https://www.museum.ie/getmedia/385f33f3-d554-4b41-b702-e55641dd5974/IFD-Acquisition-Strategy-2021-2026-FINAL.pdf>, 2.

45 Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 2.

lore preservation in Ireland with the establishment of the I.F.C.⁴⁶ The Commission's raison d'être was the "collection, collation and cataloguing of oral and written folklore materials" along with the "editing and publication" of these stories.⁴⁷ Its foundation was testament to the position of folklore in Irish society among those keen to foster an Irish identity post-independence with both the museum and Commission combining to collect the tangible and intangible heritage of Ireland. Significantly, each folklore endeavour contained elements of preserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In addition, by sending school children out to interview local people, the Folklore Commission deployed a methodology that contained elements of shared authority, a key element of contemporary public history practice.⁴⁸

Folklore, Education and the Schools' Collection

Traditionally, history had been taught to children as one "true" and definitive story, with the job of the historian being to unearth "the past "as it was"". ⁴⁹ This approach was compatible with a "Romantic" view of history as a model for the present, or a source of identity.⁵⁰ Prior to the foundation of the Free State in 1922, the leading minds of the Gaelic Revival preached the doctrine of an Irish spirit which was Gaelic and rural, and primarily Catholic post-independence.⁵¹ History was employed in Irish classrooms to promote an "imagined community" founded on a nationalist mythologizing of the past.⁵² Textbooks produced by the Christian Brothers serve as just one example of the intersection between

⁴⁶ Almqvist, "The Irish Folklore Commission," 9.

⁴⁷ *Irish Folklore Commission constitution*, March 1933–December 1934 (National Archives of Ireland, Department of Education, ED/25/1).

⁴⁸ Bill Adair, Stephen Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds., *Letting Go? Sharing Authority in a User-generated World* (Routledge, 2017).

⁴⁹ Joanna Wojdon, "Between Public History and History Education," in *A Companion to Public History*, ed. David Dean (Hoboken, NJ, 2018), 95, 455; Gerald Herman, "Creating the Twenty-First-Century "Historian For All Seasons"", *The Public Historian* 25, no. 3 (2003): 95.

⁵⁰ Robert J. Parkes, "Public History in the Classroom," *Public History and School: International Perspectives*, ed. Marko Demantowsky (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 122–23.

⁵¹ Mícheál Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission*, 45.

⁵² John O'Callaghan, "Politics, Policy and History: History Teaching in Irish Secondary Schools 1922–1970," *Histoire et Culture: Mémoire et Commemoration* 36, no. 1, (2011): 25–27; Alan McCully and Fionnuala Waldron, "A Question of Identity? Purpose, Policy and Practice in the Teaching of History in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland," in *Identity, Trauma, Sensitive and Controversial Issues in the Teaching of History*, ed. Hilary Cooper and Jon Nicho (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press 2015), 11.

history education and national pride. In one such textbook, the introductory note stated the educator “should dwell with pride, and in glowing words on Ireland’s glorious past, her great men and their great deeds.”⁵³ This shaping of historical consciousness through education speaks to the importance of considering the classroom as a site of public history. However, history is only one facet utilized by groups to cultivate a national culture with another avenue being folklore.⁵⁴ History and folklore were bound together, with the latter considered a window into a selective Gaelic past which was promoted through Irish education. Despite nationalist overtones, the Schools’ Collection embodies a number key public history ideas such as collaborative practice, a requirement in folklore fieldwork as the collectors must work with the public to learn about their traditions.⁵⁵ Although the term public history was not coined until the 1970s, public engagement with the past and historians’ interactions with the public have existed long before the formulation of the sub-field.⁵⁶ As such, the Schools’ Collection is a proto-public history example of effective crowdsourcing by collecting the traditions of the people through schoolchildren.

The Irish Folklore Commission’s Schools’ Collection helped to resolve a problem that had been evident in historical pedagogy since the foundation of the new state. The connection between education and nation-building in the Irish Free State emerges clearly from the way that the education system was used to encourage the use of the language with a policy of Gaelicization implemented in National Schools.⁵⁷ Similarly, the potential of history to encourage patriotism was recognized in the *Programme of Primary Instruction* (1922):

One of the chief aims of the teaching of history should be to develop the best traits of the national character and to inculcate national pride and self-respect. This will not be attained by the cramming of dates and details but rather by showing that the Irish race has fulfilled a great mission in the advancement of civilisation.⁵⁸

In early Dáil debates concerning suitable textbooks for Irish primary classrooms, the issue of such works omitting local history and folklore was raised to MacNeill,

⁵³ Christian Brothers, *Irish History Reader* (Dublin: 1916), 1–2.

⁵⁴ John Coakley, “Mobilizing the Past: Nationalist Images of History,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10, no. 4 (2004), accessed October 10, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110490900340>, 534.

⁵⁵ Robert Baron, “Public Folklore,” *The Inclusive Historian’s Handbook* (2019), accessed October 14, 2021, <https://inclusivehistorian.com/public-folklore/>.

⁵⁶ Thomas Cauvin, “The Rise of Public History: An International Perspective,” *Historia Crítica* 68 (2018): 5.

⁵⁷ Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 48.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 49.

the then Minister for Education. The Minister indicated a need to investigate how to bring the local and traditional into the classroom as no significant educational material existed: “we are really making a new beginning, and the provision, for the most part, will have to be anew.”⁵⁹ By 1931 it appears little had been done to incorporate local history into the primary classroom. Fianna Fáil’s Patrick J. Little outlined the failure evident in a report from the DE of teachers’ insufficient attempts to connect the classroom to “local history, folk-lore, antiquities, and the general life of the district.”⁶⁰ The education of Irish teachers in a way that was “divorced from all traditional culture” by British controlled classrooms in their youth was blamed as one of the major obstacles to integrating folklore into Irish history lessons, in addition to the lack of supporting textbooks.⁶¹ Little considered this as a missed opportunity as history and the Irish language were intrinsically bound, and the learning of the former would boost passion for the latter: “if history is taught in such a way as to give the children a real enthusiasm for the traditions of their country they will learn the language like drinking milk.”⁶²

Local history, language, and folklore were repeatedly perceived as tributaries to a bottom-up national pride where the local could inspire a broader Irish patriotism. In 1934, a solution to Little’s educational concerns appeared to have been found when the Department of Education introduced an ambitious local project for schools to collect the traditions and folklore of their district. The handbook for teachers echoed many of the sentiments raised by Little, in addition to reflecting wider discourse surrounding Irish culture at this time. A simple lack of knowledge about folklore and the “denationalizing of education” prior to independence were used to account for the lack of engagement with local life in national schools.⁶³ This project stated its aim as encouraging a love of the local as it was considered the “germ of national patriotism”: “the best way to make our young people take an interest in Ireland, as a whole, is by awakening in them an intelligent interest in the neighborhood.”⁶⁴ This goal was to be supported by teachers collecting folklore from “the people, and preferably from the older and more illiterate, whose knowledge is less likely to be acquired from printed sources” and transcribing the material into manuscripts provided by the Department.⁶⁵ The ra-

⁵⁹ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, November 17, 1925.

⁶⁰ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, May 22, 1931.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Dáil Éireann Debate*, May 22, 1931.

⁶³ An Roinn Oideachais, *National Tradition and Folklore* (Dublin, 1934) (National Library of Ireland, 8 A 2183), 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

tionale behind this project was the creation of material which would supplement the lack of local history books for use in schools. The role of students in this project was rather limited according to the handbook; it advised that collecting be undertaken by teachers, with students acting “as members of an intelligence department.”⁶⁶

The Schools’ Collection reveals a keen awareness of the value of folk culture to inspire a particular identity but, while some teachers were enthusiastic about folklore, the project failed to generate a notable return. This was in part due to a planned evaluation of the project by school inspectors, to which the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation objected.⁶⁷ This suggests an absence of shared authority in the initial iteration of the project which provides an early example, if one is needed, of the value of sharing authority in order to ensure effective participation by the envisaged public.

In 1937, Ó Duilearga and Ó Súilleabháin of the I.F.C. revisited the concept of a primary school project for collecting folklore. The 1934 and 1937 projects were similar in many ways, with both adhering to the basic aim of collecting folklore and traditions in the locality. However, the role of the child was more prominent in the later project as the students, not their teachers, were the primary collectors. This focus on greater participation aligns the Schools’ Collection with common public history endeavors like crowdsourcing by “harnessing” local community knowledge through students.⁶⁸ In the 1937 plan the teacher was to speak to the class about a topic and the students then collected related stories and information after school. Once finished collecting, students wrote their information into copybooks as part of the composition element of the curriculum with the stories later collated in a larger manuscript.⁶⁹ The accompanying project handbook was more accessible than the 1934 guidance, providing prompt questions under headings, “At what period of the year do marriages most frequently take place locally? During Shrove? On Shrove Tuesday?,” and details which should be included, “Is there any ruined castle in the school district?... (Give name of townland, parish, barony, county).”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁷ Séamas Ó Catháin, “It’s us they’re talking about,” in *Proceedings from the McGlinchey Summer School*, ed. Margaret Farren and Hary Harkin (1998), accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.duchas.ie/download/schools-scheme-ocathain.pdf>, 9–10.

⁶⁸ Jason A. Heppler and Gabriel K. Wolfenstein, “Crowdsourcing Digital Public History,” in *The American Historian* (2015), accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tah.oah.org/content/crowdsourcing-digital-public-history/>.

⁶⁹ Séamas Ó Catháin, “Súil siar ar Scéim na Scol 1937–1938,” *Sinséar* 5 (1988), accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.duchas.ie/download/duchas.ie-suil-siar-ar-sceim-na-scol-2014.pdf>, 5.

⁷⁰ An Roinn Oideachais, *Irish Folklore and Tradition* (Dublin, 1937), 11, 33.

Séamas Ó Catháin has suggested this guide was influenced by Ó Súilleabháin's own experience as a primary school teacher, drawing together the art of collecting with pedagogical experience.⁷¹ The "bane" of the school inspector was recognized by issuing teachers with this clear guidance, along with an agreement from the Department to recognize the limits of a teacher concerning the quality of material collected.⁷² Further support was given by project organizers who offered to meet with teaching groups. In addition, a folklore series was broadcast on Radió Éireann in 1936 involving teachers familiar with collecting. The project achieved further publicity when Ó Duilearga himself spoke on air in October 1937.⁷³ This project supported teachers and validated children as cultural collectors, improving on the 1934 project. Simply put, the 1937 collection understood its public, a key factor for successful crowdsourcing.⁷⁴

It is important to distinguish carefully between the impetus behind the 1934 and 1937 projects. The two schemes originated in a society receptive to folklore, fostered by the fetishization of the rural, Gaelic ideal. However, while the aim of the earlier project was in the creation of material for instruction on the local with the intention to inspire patriotism, the I.F.C.'s project was an extension of the organization's dedication to collecting the intangible heritage of Ireland. The introduction to the 1937 handbook emphasized that schools partaking in this scheme would be assisting the national endeavor to preserve oral traditions of Ireland: "When this urgent task of collecting is over a vast store of immensely important material will be available to research. We appeal to the children of the Primary Schools and to their teachers to help in this great work."⁷⁵ This same patriotic impulse to preserve a former way of life that motivated the collections of folklore by Gregory, or the foundation of the I.F.C., informed the genesis of the 1937 project, but the overt ideological intention for children was absent when compared to the 1934 project. As such, the Schools' Collection can be considered a proto-public history project which featured participatory engagement with the public through methods such as crowdsourcing, rather than being merely a vehicle for a nationalist narrative.

71 Ó Catháin, "Súil siar," 4.

72 Quoted in Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 263; Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970*, 263.

73 Ibid.

74 Heppler et al., "Crowdsourcing."

75 An Roinn Oideachais, *Irish Folklore*, 4.

A New Schools Collection for the Twenty-First century?

Replicating such an enormous crowd-sourced project today is certainly worth exploring. The state and its national cultural institutions have proven capacity to run similar projects as we can see from the National Treasures project (known as the “People’s Archive”) run in conjunction with RTE, the National Museum of Ireland and the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.⁷⁶ The project focuses on material culture, producing a “digital archive of historical objects.”⁷⁷ At a fundamental level, a new Folklore Schools’ Collection would have to fit in with the existing curriculum. At present, this curriculum is undergoing review but in a consultative draft for Social and Environmental Education (which includes history), in third and fourth classes (ages 9 and 10 approximately) children are encouraged to “collect, record, and share samples of local and national folklore.”⁷⁸ The “*seanchas*” of the original 1930s project was considered by the I.F.C. to verbally communicate the social history of the Irish people, which fits in with “samples of local and national folklore” mentioned in the new draft curriculum. Digital tools and skills now available and in use in the classroom mean that the methodologies for collecting and recording would likely be different to the original copybook records made in the 1930s.⁷⁹ The draft curriculum, as currently proposed, encourages students to engage in something akin to the Schools Collection.⁸⁰ Deploying the original collection in twenty-first century classrooms would encourage student reflection on continuity and change over time in terms of both content gathered and methods used.

There is obvious potential then for an updated Schools’ Collection project to advance historical thinking skills in Irish primary students in line with their curriculum. This mirrors the aspirations of those involved in establishing the Folklore Society of Ireland in 1926, when it was hoped that the study of folklore would improve knowledge in both Irish folklore and the Irish language.⁸¹ A twenty-first cen-

⁷⁶ <https://nationaltreasures.ie/>, accessed August 30, 2024.

⁷⁷ <https://nationaltreasures.ie/about-us>, accessed August 30, 2024.

⁷⁸ National CCA, “Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification: For all Primary and Special Schools. For Consultation,” March 2024, accessed August 30, 2024, https://ncca.ie/media/353c0fa0/primary_draft_see_2024.pdf.

⁷⁹ Eemer Eivers, “Left to Their Own Devices: Trends in ICT at Primary School Level” (2019), accessed August 30, 2024, <https://doras.dcu.ie/29882/1/Left%20To%20Their%20Own%20Devices.pdf>, 1–56.

⁸⁰ Government, *History*, 28–30.

⁸¹ Ó Giolláin, *Exotic Dreams*, 321–22.

tury project could develop historical thinking through enquiry-based learning, an approach which gives children greater control over their own learning through exploration and collaboration, rather than teacher-centered lessons.⁸² In such a project students would analyze primary material but would also conduct fieldwork to create new, unique sources. However, depending on how the project was structured, gaining access to the primary school system and the children who acted as the main “collectors” in the Schools Collection would mean a detailed ethics process be undertaken at the outset. In line with European Union requirements for all organizations, the research material would have to be gathered and stored with reference to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. A new project would require several elements additional to the original, but fundamental to it all would be the political and financial investment of major institutional bodies including national cultural institutions, the Department of Education, and academic researchers. Alongside such structural support, the active involvement of primary school teachers and their unions, the parents of children attending, to say nothing of the children themselves, would all be required to replicate the success of the original project. A public history project of this magnitude is possible but in the new research and educational landscape of the European Union, it would inevitably take on a very different form than the original.

Conclusion

The success of the project as a folklore and education endeavor resulted in an inquiry from the Scottish Education Department in 1939. The Irish Department of Education responded by sending material which outlined how the project had been achieved, including copies of the circulars sent to schools and the booklet prepared by the I.F.C.⁸³ Similarly, the Committee on Ulster Folklife and Traditions emulated the project in Northern Ireland in 1955.⁸⁴ A number of all-island anniversary projects were also held such as the Irish Life Folklore Competition (1976–79) and the “Newspaper in the Classroom” Folklore Competition (1985). However, by this time, the I.F.C. had been replaced by the Department of Irish Folklore, UCD, and it was no

⁸² Helena Hill, *A Practical Guide to Enquiry-Based Primary Teaching: A Reflective Journey* (Abingdon, 2019), 3.

⁸³ *Scottish Education Department London Enquire re. Collection of Folklore and Oral Tradition by Pupils of National Schools in Ireland* (1939) (National Archives of Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, DFA/4/238/52).

⁸⁴ Patricia Lysaght, “Collecting the Folklore of Ireland: The Schoolchildren’s Contribution,” *Folklore* 132, no. 1 (2021): 16.

longer a nationally important institution.⁸⁵ While the N.F.C. continues to preserve and promote Irish traditions with projects such as *dúchas.ie*, the urgency to use folklore in the construction of a particular historical narrative has dissipated. One modern practitioner of Irish folklore notes the people of Ireland today “hardly at all” engage with folklore, adding that “storytelling has always been the poor relation of all the arts.”⁸⁶ The launch of *dúchas.ie* does not reflect the same nationalist impulses of the Free State, but rather contributes to the establishment of a global heritage brand for Ireland with the digitization enabling “Irish heritage and culture to be disseminated to a global audience.”⁸⁷ The success in reaching this international audience can be seen during crowdsourcing for the project’s transcription which lecturers at Indiana University incorporated into their classes.⁸⁸ Folklore and history education do not connote nationalism to the same degree in Ireland today but the innovative format of the Schools’ Collection can be adjusted to complement a different structure of history education with divergent aims to the origins of this collection. The introduction of the Schools’ Collection to the Commission’s work provided the means of both generating that local historical knowledge as well as fostering an awareness of historical thinking.

⁸⁵ Almqvist, “The Irish Folklore Commission,” 9.

⁸⁶ Eddie Lenihan, *Private Correspondence*, September 11, 2021.

⁸⁷ Lysaght, “Collecting the Folklore of Ireland,” 19–23.

⁸⁸ Joelle Jackson, “How the Homework of 1930s Irish Schoolchildren Invites Folklore Studies Participation Today,” *Folklife* (2021), accessed September 15, 2023, <https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/1930s-irish-folklore-duchas-project>.

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