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The Museum of London 1976-2007: Reimagining Metropolitan Narratives in Postcolonial London

Thesis

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The Museum of London 1976-2007: Reimagining Metropolitan Narratives in Postcolonial London

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Abstract

Since the 1990s, cultural historians have developed exciting new scholarship charting shifting representations of empire at museums. Yet city museums feel strangely absent from these conversations, which have principally focused on national and regional museums in Britain, its former colonies and Europe. This thesis responds to this gap in the literature by mapping the shifting representation of empire and colonial histories at the Museum of London between 1976-2007. Opened in 1976 by Queen Elizabeth II, the Museum of London was an amalgamation of the London Museum (1912) and the Guildhall Museum (founded 1826), situated in the heart of the City, at the south-west corner of the Barbican Centre. Given its location, once the heart of the British Empire, the Museum of London provides a unique space to examine the changing place and value of empire in Britain's foremost metropolitan museum. The thesis begins then by charting the origins of the Museum of London, analysing the place and value of empire within the Museum's permanent galleries in 1976. It proceeds by untangling the complex relations underlying shifting representations, to explore how and why changes in narrative orientation occurred in 1989 when the Museum started planning a new exhibition, 'The Peopling of London', launched in 1993. This marked the Museum's initial serious engagement with the legacies of British colonialism in relation to its urban constituents. The legacy of this small exhibition led to increased engagement with postcolonial histories, culminating with 'London, Sugar and Slavery' in 2007, staged at the Museum of London Docklands to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The cumulative picture is a complex, sometimes ambiguous, relationship between the Museum and London's colonial past.

Acknowledgements

Für Meine Liebe Ionna

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Glossary

ACE – Arts and Crafts in Education

AHD – Authorised Heritage Discourse

ANL – Anti-Nazi League

BAME – Black Asian Minority Ethnic

BECC – Black Emergency Cultural Coalition

BECM – British Empire and Commonwealth Museum

BHS – Brooklyn Historical Society

BNP – British National Party

BPA – Black People's Alliance

CAMOC - International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities

CNER – Centre for New Ethnicities Research

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport

GLC – Greater London Council

HLF – Heritage Lottery Fund

ILEA – Inner London Education Authority

ISML – International Slavery Museum Liverpool

LCC – London County Council

LDDC – London Docklands Development Corporation

LSS – London, Sugar and Slavery

MHDT – Mayor's Heritage Diversity Taskforce

MiDP – Museum in Docklands Project

MoL – Museum of London

MoLD – Museum of London Docklands

PLA – Port of London Authority

THACMHO – Tower Hamlets African Caribbean Mental Health Organisation

UNESCO – United Nations Education, Scientific Cultural Organisation

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Museum of London and Museum of London Docklands Timeline	
1826	Guildhall Museum established.
1910-1912	London Museum is established.
1939-1945	London Museum repurposed as a conference centre for the Foreign Office.
1949	Process of amalgamating the Guildhall Museum and London Museum begins under the guidance of Raymond Smith (curator of the Guildhall Museum).
1959	Treasury invites trustees of London Museum and Guildhall Museums to discuss plans for amalgamation.
1960	Sir Francis Boyle puts forward a suggested constitution for the Museum of London.
1961	Draft constitution is approved in principle.
1965	Museum of London Act passed.
2nd December 1976	Museum of London is officially opened.
16th November 1993 – 15th May 1994	**Peopling of London: 15,000 years of settlement from overseas.**
14th May 1998 – 28th June 1998	Windrush: Sea Change.
2003	**Museum of London Docklands Opens.**
23rd September 2004 – 27th February 2005	Uzo Egonu's London – An exhibition of paintings and prints.
1st October 2005 – 26th February 2006	Roots to Reckoning.
20th September 2006 – 4th October 2006	Three Generations of Bengalis in Britain.
23rd November 2006 – 13th May 2007	Journey to the New World: London 1606 to Virginia 1607.
2007	**London, Sugar and Slavery exhibition opens.**
6th April 2007 – 10th June 2007	Campaigning against Slavery, from the 18th to 21st Century.

22nd June 2007 – 23rd September 2007	Out of India.
July – September 2007	India Now (festival).
20th June 2008 – 3rd August 2008	Mandela in London 1962.
12th Jun – 6th Sept 2009	Forward to Freedom: The Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Liberation of Southern Africa.
2010	Museum undergoes £20 million redevelopment.
18th January 2010 – 30th June 2010	Post Abolition: Commemorative stamps from around the world.
7th December 2012 – 14th August 2013	Take Another Look at Museum of London Docklands.
March 2015	Museum of London proposes move to Smithfield's Market.

Table 1: Museum of London and Museum of London Docklands Timeline, Key Dates and Key Exhibitions

Part One: The Origin Story 1826-1976

Chapter One: Introduction, Shifting Representations of Empire at the Museum

Introduction

Before the 1990s, the Museum of London (MoL hereafter) and other notable port/city museums had generally not engaged with the legacies of empire in any sustained way. Opened in 1976 by Queen Elizabeth II, the MoL was an amalgamation of the London Museum (1912) and the Guildhall Museum (founded 1826), both prominent museums with collections covering archaeological antiquities and discoveries, the built city and urban development. The London Museum also held contemporary collections relating to London's working life. As one of London's foremost metropolitan museums, the MoL had focused chiefly on the lived experiences of London's white British inhabitants over the last 250 years, and London's pre-history. Yet, in 1989, the MoL began planning a new exhibition, 'The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas' ('Peopling' hereafter), which opened to the public in 1993. The title's emphasis on 'from overseas' and the exhibition content signalled the MoL's engagement with multicultural histories of London and the beginning of the Museum's exploration of the legacies of empire.

The acknowledgement of the legacies of empire in the 1990s by the MoL continued to gather pace over the subsequent two decades. In 2003 the Museum of London Docklands opened (MoLD hereafter), telling the history of London's rivers, port life and economy, and people from the arrival of the Romans to the post-war period. It culminated with the opening of their 2007 exhibition 'London, Sugar and Slavery' to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, which went on to become the first permanent slavery exhibition at the MoLD, and in London. Since the commemorations in 2007, broader public engagement with the legacies of empire has also deepened. Recently, on the 26th April 2017, for instance, Bristol City Council agreed to rename its Colston performance venue, after several years of sustained protest from civil rights activists, artists and performers, who were concerned about Colston's role as an eighteenth-century slave-

trader.[1] Bristol Colston Performance Hall was named after Edward Colston who founded a school on the site in the eighteenth century. There remain several other prominent places in Bristol bearing Colston's name including Colston Tower, Colston's School and Colstons' Girl's School, all of which continue to receive similar scrutiny from the public indicating ongoing concern.

Public activism and broader public criticism of the legacies of empire, have intensified alongside calls to decolonise the museum and material culture more broadly. Decolonial activism and scholarship attracted greater public interest with the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign which began at the University of Cape Town South Africa when students called for a removal of a statue of the imperialist Cecil Rhodes from the campus grounds. The movement began on the 9th March 2015, and the statue was finally removed on the 9th April 2015. This movement then spread to Oriel College Oxford, with students demanding the removal from the college façade a statue of Cecil Rhodes. As protest mounted, a consultation process was initiated by the university to discuss potential solutions. Already in January 2016, the University stated that the process had shown '"overwhelming" support for keeping it.'[2] Decisively, however, many former Oriel college students and former and current donors threatened to pull financial backing if the statue was removed.[3] These calls to decolonise are founded on the argument that decolonisation is an ongoing process, and one that needs to be addressed in order to tackle structural inequalities and colonial ideologies which continue to permeate western society, including in the museum where they have perpetuated inequitable narratives surrounding people of colour.

One concern about western museums in particular, furnished as they often are by the spoils of colonial expansion, is whether 'they are so embedded in the history and power structures that decoloniality challenges, that they will only end up co-opting decoloniality.'[4]

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[1] Steven Morris, 'Bristol's Colston Hall to drop name of slave trader after protests', *The Guardian,* 26th April 2016, [online], <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/26/bristol-colston-hall-to-drop-name-of-slave-trader-after-protests>, accessed 4th July 2017.

[2] Kevin Rawlinson, 'Cecil Rhodes statue to remain at Oxford after "overwhelming support"', *The Guardian,* 29th January 2016, [online], <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/28/cecil-rhodes-statue-will-not-be-removed--oxford-university>, accessed 4th September 2019.

[3] Anthony Lemon, '"Rhodes Must Fall": The Dangers of Re-writing History', *The Round Table,* Vol. 105, No. 2, (2016), p. 217.

[4] Sumaya Kassim, 'The museum will not be decolonised', *Media Diversified,* November 15th 2017, [online], <https://mediadiversified.org/2017/11/15/the-museum-will-not-be-decolonised/>, accessed 25th May 2019.

These arguments are largely inspired by Audré Lourde who in 1978 wrote that, 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.'[5] Some have argued that museums are not even willing to confront these structural inequalities.[6] These views are necessarily deterministic, perhaps fatalistic.

In response to these more radical decolonial arguments, Paul Basu and Ferdinand De Jong, have argued that the archive - which in Foucauldian analysis was an artefact of knowledge production by European empires - can contribute, however, 'to the making of decolonial public spheres'.[7] They suggest that museums have developed 'repertoires of actions' that allow curators to use their archives and through 'reassemblage', 'recirculation', and 'reconfiguration', to strive towards 'decolonial futures'.[8] Looking towards those third spaces – that is those museums that emerged in the post-war period and are not normatively implicated in colonialism – might shed some light on this new debate, and how museums have attempted to strive towards more equitable futures through more critical museological practice around collections and interpretation.

I will revisit these themes in chapters eight and nine when considering the impact and legacies of 'Peopling' at the MoL. For this thesis is in large parts an effort to speak to the efforts of museums to tackle such concerns, refracted primarily through the lens of those involved in creating the MoL's 'Peopling' exhibition, and its subsequent attempts to engage with the postcolonial present. My aim is to provide a critical assessment of these developments, which nevertheless take seriously the innovation and sincerity of purpose when the latter is evident in the source material and my interviews with practitioners. Nonetheless, UK port/city museums had generally not engaged with this history of empire in any sustained way before the 1990s. Why was that? Why did the change come, and then deepen, from the 1990s? Using the MoL and the MoLD as a case study I will address these

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Sarah Jilani, 'How to decolonise a museum', *Times Literary Supplement Online,* 7th June 2018, [online], <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/how-decolonize-museum/>, accessed 7th August 2019.

[7] Paul Basu and Ferdinand De Jong, 'Utopian Archives, Decolonial Affordances Introduction to Special Issue: Utopian Archives, Decolonial Affordances', *Social Anthropology,* Vol. 24, No. 1 (February 2016) pp. 1-2.

[8] Ibid, pp. 5–19.

questions by analysing a number of exhibitions that addressed Britain's colonial past since the 1990s, and subsequent changes to permanent galleries and wider practices.

Chapter one begins the analysis with this question: what the nature and limitations of UK museums' engagement with empire was up to the 1990s, that is up to the period just before the 'Peopling' exhibition. It looks at key literature concerning the impact of empire on British culture and museums in the twentieth century. Historians over the last several decades have argued that the chronological development of imperial museums and their collections imitates the contours of imperial history. From popular imperialism in the late nineteenth century to crisis and reorientation as decolonisation gathered pace in the mid-twentieth century, after which, empire as a frame of reference for deconstructing the material world was relegated, according to Barringer, Flynn, and Fordham to the 'museums' picture stores and haunting the footnotes of journals and monographs.'[9]

It has been argued, however, that postcolonial critiques in the 1980s forced museums to respond to an increasingly critical discourse. Both Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi K. Bhaba's 'Of Mimicry and Man' (1984) are often cited as key works that furnished postcolonial debates around the way in which the west had entrenched attitudes towards the east as a way of dealing with 'otherness'.[10] As postcolonial critiques matured, national museums which were suffused with imperial essence began to reconsider their representation of empire.[11] It was not until the 1990s, however, that museums were pressed to adopt more inclusive approaches, as a means of appealing to communities that demanded greater representation.[12] My literature review in chapter one will use this timeline as a heuristic device. Situating the 'Peopling' exhibition and the MoL's subsequent engagement within this broader context, as well as building up a new body of knowledge about an important London museum, my thesis will question this narrative, focusing on the

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[9] Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (ed.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 4.

[10] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and Homi K. Bhaba, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse'*, Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis,* Vol. 28, (Spring 1984).

[11] Ruth Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism?', *Museums and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (2010), p. 75.

[12] Ivan Karp, 'Museum and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture', in Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer and Steven Lavine (ed.), *Museums and Communities*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), p. 12.

specific role and remit of the MoL and how it responded to social and political issues in London.

Chapter one will address shifting interpretations of empire at the museum from the 1990s, relating these to my question about how the MoL and MoLD have represented empire over the last twenty years. Imperial historians have become increasingly concerned with the way in which UK museums have represented individual and collective memories of empire. This has occurred alongside more informed ways of thinking about empire.[13] Previous studies in this area have mostly focused on the way in which former national museums, and those museums which emerged concomitantly with European colonial expansion, have attempted to re-represent Britain's role in the transatlantic slave trade, as well as coming to terms with their own historical associations with empire.[14] The Merseyside Museum in Liverpool, which in 1994 curated an exhibition about Liverpool's role in the slave trade, is often cited as the precursor to a large-scale engagement.[15] The MoL has been largely ignored in this discussion, not least because it is less implicated as a new museum. Yet, the MoL also began to engage with the impact of colonialism around the same time, albeit as an aside to the theme of immigration. Situating 'Peopling' within this historiography then allows me to ask how the MoL framed empire in a local context, specific to London and its communities. What can we learn about how the UK's foremost city museum approached the place and value of empire in constructing metropolitan narratives in the postcolonial era? The remainder of this thesis can be divided into three parts. The first part looks at the origins and history of the MoL (chapters two-three). The second part focuses in on 'Peopling' as the locus for change (chapters four-six). The third part, finally, looks at how this impacted back out onto the museum as a whole, and beyond the museum too (chapters seven-nine).

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[13] John McAleer, 'That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood', Reflections on Representing Slavery and Empire in British Museums', *Museum History Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (November 2013), p. 83.

[14] Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.) *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), E. Kowaleski-Wallace, *The British Slave Trade and Public Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), Anthony Tibbles, 'Interpreting Transatlantic Slavery: The Role of Museums', in Anthony Tibbles (ed.), *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity* (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2005).

[15] Jennifer Anne Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths: British museums and the legacies of slavery in the bicentenary year, 2007', *Federation of International Human Rights Museums*, (2010), [online], <http://www.fihrm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FIHRM-Carvill-British-Museums-and-the-legacies-of-Slavery-in-the-Bicentenary-Year.pdf>, accessed 14th August 2017.

The first part of this thesis, then, consists of chapters two and three, and considers the origins, amalgamation and formative galleries at the Museum of London. These chapters together provide the baseline with which to establish the change that came with 'Peopling'. Chapter two is about the origin story of the Museum of London, that is the amalgamation of the Guildhall Museum (1824) and the London Museum (1912), and the extent to which their approach to collecting and display shaped the MoL. The first half of the chapter, therefore, outlines their origins and early history. The remainder then looks at how the amalgamation took place. It situates the creation of the MoL both within its specific historical context within the emergence of new types of social history museums in the UK, and at a time when the 'heritage industry' signalled a post-war museum boom, before moving on to look more closely at its displays. Chapter three looks more closely at the permanent galleries as they were when the MoL opened in 1976. There are two main aims of this chapter. Firstly, to establish the character of the permanent galleries and to try and understand the interpretive approach and key themes that were used to create a narrative of the history of London from prehistory to the present day. Secondly, to establish the place and value of empire in creating that history of London. This chapter will, therefore, shed new light on shifting interpretations of empire in a formative city museum in the postcolonial era.

The second part of this thesis, which forms the main body of my work, focuses on my case-study of 'Peopling' as the locus of change towards London's multicultural present. As well as looking to the exhibition itself, the more visible and public-facing part of the 'Peopling' programme, my analysis takes seriously the catalogue and educational activities as additional interpretive layers. A secondary aim of these chapters in seeing 'Peopling' as a creative event is to explore the lasting impact of 'Peopling' moving forward across all the museum's activities. Altogether, this part of the thesis will provide a holistic analysis of the exhibition and the influences that shaped it, placing peopling within its historical and museological context.

Chapter four starts by locating 'Peopling' within broader socio-political and museological shifts taking place at the time, and by tracing the concept and planning of the exhibition. From the late twentieth century, minority demands for greater political and cultural representation forced postcolonial critiques onto the museum. Britain, like other former

European empires, increasingly struggled towards the end of the twentieth century to reconcile their colonial past with contemporary postcolonial and multicultural realities. The MoL was not immune to these external pressures and debates. Chapter five moves on to address the 'Peopling' displays as a means of articulating how the re-telling of London's history through immigration resulted in a shift in the way in which the histories of empire were interpreted. In this way we can see how their engagement with histories of empire changes when compared with their 1976 permanent galleries amidst shifting contexts. Chapter six considers additional interpretive layers including the 'Peopling' book and educational resource pack as a way of further exploring this shift and identifying additional contextual vectors.

The third part of this thesis moves onto reception, impacts, legacies and ongoing influence. It begins with chapter seven looking at reception, which is both a part of the experience of the exhibition, and in a way already an impact of the exhibition. I will identify the various socio-cultural contexts through which visitors understood the displays, later focusing how visitor comments may illuminate public understanding of this representational shift as bound up with the broader contours of British colonial history. To date, studies that have considered contemporary responses to exhibitions about empire are limited. Evidence to qualify public responses is scant, with most scholars relying on newspapers, comment pieces and limited archival material.[16] However, this is an exciting area which has generated greater awareness of the challenges museums face in attempting to engage with Britain's colonial heritage, whilst simultaneously aiming to generate greater public awareness and cohesion around Britain's colonial past.

This debate is also part of a larger discussion concerning difficult heritage, that is 'a past that is recognised as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation with a positive, self-affirming contemporary identity'.[17] How did the museum negotiate difficult histories around immigration and empire? How did people in London respond to 'Peopling'? How did visitors frame their experience through various

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[16] McAleer, 'That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood'; Smith, Cubitt, Wilson and Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums;* Dominic Thomas (ed.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

[17] Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 1.

socio-cultural contexts of the time? My case study will address these questions in order to provide a new understanding of the nature of public responses to representations of empire. It will, therefore, be a critical contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the place of museums in society.

Chapter eight moves to trace the impact of 'Peopling' in the longer term. The chapter is divided into found parts to see how the legacy of 'Peopling' impacted across the MoL's activities, including permanent and temporary programming as well as community and outreach events, before moving on to see how the legacy of 'Peopling' can be traced in the MoLD programming. The principal aim of this chapter is to argue that this small temporary exhibition had a profound, albeit piecemeal at first, impact on the Museum's engagement with histories of empire, as presented through a number of temporary exhibitions and changes to the permanent galleries at both the MoL and MoLD from 1993 and leading up to the opening of the 'London, Sugar and Slavery' gallery at the MoLD in 2007. Put simply, it looks at those processes largely invisible to the visitor's eye, which continue to work in the background shaping the Museum's programming.

Chapter nine is the conclusion, bringing together the findings from my case-study in order to show how and why 'Peopling' came about, returning to the research questions set out at the start of this thesis. This will bring the thesis full circle in dealing with shifting representations of empire at the UK's foremost city museum, making an original contribution to the historiography outlined below in chapter one, and bring the history of the MoL up to date. Before the planned move of the MoL to the abandoned Smithfield's Market in 2023, a reassessment of the MoL, its history and its social role is timely.[18] My thesis will provide a fitting look back on how the museum has met the challenge of representing the multicultural realities of London in the postcolonial era.

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[18] Richard Waite, 'Museum of London's £250m+ move to Smithfield: "It's like a giant game of Tetris"', in *Architects' Journal,* Online, 12th April 2019, [online], <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/museum-of-londons-250m-move-to-smithfield-its-like-a-giant-game-of-tetris/10041902.article>, accessed 7th August 2019.

Museums and Empire 1680s – 1940s

What, then, was the historical legacy of museum representation and acknowledgement of empire that the MoL inherited when it began to consider its 1993 'Peopling' exhibition? Critical assessments of this relationship between museums and empire have emphasised museums' long historical associations with empire building. Formative studies that have addressed this relationship from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century have focused principally on national and regional museums, arguing that since the eighteenth-century museums have mirrored the socio-political arguments for the necessity of empire.

Two areas of historiography that strongly exhibit this approach are postcolonial and museum studies, brought together in Barringer and Flynn's *Colonialism and the Object* (1998). Influenced by postcolonial critiques such as Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha's *Of Mimicry and Man* (1984), works which expanded our understanding of the connections between culture and empire, Barringer and Flynn examined the influence of colonialism on the way in which museum objects are understood by visitors, using theories from material culture studies.[19] This volume influenced formative understandings of the way in which objects and material culture tell us something about the societies that produce and consume them, and the transactional inequities and power imbalances in the relationships between coloniser and colonised.

In speaking to issues of power revealed through material culture and colonial objects in museums, many of the essays in *Colonialism and the Object* endorse the concept of the colonial project, that is, the idea that there was centrally organised imperial museum project.[20] Such pronouncements have been informed by influential museum history texts which have considered the relationship between museums and power. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill in particular, building on the concept of the 'disciplinary society' developed by Foucault, has argued that the nineteenth-century museum was a site of discipline and control. Museums were instruments, or technologies, which allowed the state to 'survey,

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[19] Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object* (London: Routledge, 1998); Said, *Orientalism*; Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993).
[20] Barringer and Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object,* pp. 1-10.

classify and control time, space, bodies and things' to create disciplined societies.[21] As Sarah Longair has observed, these formative museum studies texts which 'focus upon the exertion and entrenchment of power relations' naturally lent themselves to the study of museums in a colonial context. Building on these formative museum texts and influenced by the approaches of, for example, Edward Said (which will be discussed later), Longair argues that earlier studies about the relationship between museums and empire, such as Bernard Cohn's *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (1996), which placed museums alongside, for example, the census as a disciplinary technology of empire, led scholars to view museums as intimately 'tied with the exercise of power in the formation of their collections, bounded by a series of underlying dichotomies between coloniser and colonised'. This Longair argues became the 'benchmark by which we consider colonial relationships and cultural productions.'[22]

The concept of a unified project is now highly contested. More recently, studies have prioritised the specific historical context of individual institutions to avoid generalisation about the role of museums in reifying the 'perceived ideologies of empire'.[23] As Longair has argued, though earlier works have drawn our attention to the significance of the relationship between museums and power, there 'was no centrally endorsed "imperial museum project"', and that placing museums alongside other disciplinary technologies of empire, 'misunderstands the particular and peculiar working of a museum' in diverse temporal and geographical contexts.[24] In Longair's essay 'The experience of a 'lady curator': negotiating curatorial challenges in the Zanzibar Museum' (2012), she demonstrates through the fraught relationship between Ailsa Nicol Smith, curator of the Zanzibar Museum (1936-1942), and the protectorate government, that there was hardly a centralised imperial museum project. Smith's struggle with the government, partly an issue

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[21] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'The Museum in the Disciplinary Society', in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Museum Studies in Material Culture* (Leicester: Leicester University Press 1989), pp. 61-72.

[22] Sarah Longair, *Cracks in the Dome: Fractured Histories of Empire in the Zanzibar Museum, 1897-1964* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), pp, 7-8

[23] Sarah Longair and John McAleer, *Curating empire: museums and the British imperial experience* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 5.

[24] Longair, *Cracks in the Dome,* pp. 8-9.

of gender, was characterised by a lack of central funding whilst having to cope with a range of duties including acquisitions, mounting exhibitions and scholarly output.[25]

The collections of essays in *Colonialism and the Object* remain important texts as they sought to challenge structural and historical narratives of museums, prevailing ideologies of display, and the way in which museums had entrenched Orientalist discourses in their displays.[26] These two areas of historiography will be discussed in more detail later. For the following section what is important is that *Colonialism and the Object* set a precedent for subsequent work concerning the historical relationship between empire and national museums through the prism of material culture; that museums and institutions and their practices from the eighteenth to the twentieth century were a metonym - an expression - of colonialism and Victorian enthusiasm for categorising the natural world. Before moving on to a closer inspection of the relationship between empire and museums, and its contested nature, an outline of the emergence of the public museum, and its function in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century is necessary to contextualise the following discussion.

The universal type museum, which emerged in the eighteenth century in Europe drew on a culture of collecting from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as part of an early scientific culture of inquiry into nature. Drawing on Pliny the Elder's 37-volume encyclopaedia of the material world, early princely collections in Europe utilised a similar taxonomic template with which to organise the natural world.[27] The British Museum and other public museums in the eighteenth and nineteenth century grew out of this culture of collecting, alongside a new sense that museums could be of public benefit in line with Enlightenment thinking. Museums also served to mirror the power of the state. The British Museum, the first to claim the title of a universal museum, subscribed to the notion that a comprehensive collection could communicate historical progression from barbarism to civilisation.[28]

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[25] Sarah Longair, 'The experience of a "lady curator": negotiating curatorial challenges in the Zanzibar Museum', in Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating empire: museums and the British imperial experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 122-144.

[26] Barringer and Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object*, pp. 1-7.

[27] Tom Flynn, *The Universal Museum: A Valid Model for the 21st Century,* (Online: Lulu Press, 2012), p. 10.

[28] Ibid*, p. 14.

The emergence of the universal museum was thus implicated in the history of colonialism.[29] The universal museums entrenched ideas of 'exotic' non-Western cultures, through representations of them as 'uncivilised', 'barbaric' and 'inferior', on the bottom end of the civilisation ladder. Representation of the 'other', and in contrast the west's own identity, was built on the contrast between 'civilised white' and 'uncivilised non-white'.[30] This culture underpinning the universal museum would be deconstructed and challenged by former colonies in the latter-half of the twentieth century and will be discussed later.

Museums then, both at home and abroad expanded in 'lock-step' with the march of empire.[31] The British Museum (founded 1753), like other prominent museums at the time, including the Ashmolean (1683), the Glasgow Hunterian Museums (1807) and the South Kensington Museum (1855), were furnished by the spoils of imperial expansion, '…wherever in the British Empire railways and roads, telegraphs and modes of exploitation of the environment advanced, surveyors and engineers, miners and farmers were inevitably sucked into the fascinations of geology, palaeontology and archaeology.'[32] The technologies of colonialization could, therefore, be seen as contributing to the national storehouse of knowledge.

Over the last two decades, historians and art historians have sought to broaden our understanding of the nature and context of imperial collections. Eleanor Hughes shows that marine paintings hung at the Royal Academy in 1784 attempted to bolster 'national self-regard in the aftermath of devastating territorial loss by prompting the public to reconceive Britain as a maritime empire'. According to Hughes, marine paintings, such as Dominic Serres' pictures of the battles of Frigate bay and the Saints, both tactical victories for the British, when juxtaposed to history paintings depicting Shakespearian subjects and royal personages, subjects held in high regard by the nation, elevated marine paintings to make a statement about national identity. Events that depicted empire were therefore situated

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[29] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the museum: History, theory, politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

[30] Mona Domosh, 'A 'civilised' commerce: gender, 'race', and empire at the 1893 Chicago Exposition', *Cultural Geographies* Vol. 9, (2002), pp. 181-201.

[31] Paul D. Brinkman, 'Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identity', *Annals of Science*, Vol. 70, (2011), p. 1.

[32] John MacKenzie, 'The Persistence of Empire in Metropolitan Culture', in Stuart Ward (ed.) *British Culture and the end of empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 23.

within the national story.[33] There are many more examples of colonial displays and collections at public institutions from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, all reflecting this relationship between museum, display, and empire.

Thomas Baines, a marine painter who established himself as a professional painter in Cape Town in South Africa 1842, curated the Africa Display at the King's Lynn Athenæum inauguration in 1854. Baines' Africa display comprised his own works depicting his time as David Livingstone's official painter during Livingstone's exhibition to the Zambezi, and pieces on loan from the London Society of Art's Indian, African and Chinese collections. Baines was responsible for creating interpretive texts for the general public. Part of Baines' display featured a 'miniature display of an African glen on the Kat River, in which the Hottentot rebellions broke out in 1850'. In addition, a 'tent, about 7 feet long and 3 feet in height … the actual tent in which Mr Baines found shelter for six months while serving on the staff of General Somerset' was erected in the display. McAleer argues that the Eighth Frontier War (1850-53) frequently appeared in the popular press, so visitors would have had a particular understanding of Baines' display and collections. Here as with many other museum exhibitions, curators used the museum to create visual displays of the colonies for British visitors.[34]

Far from being neutral participants in empire building, the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge of the 'other' are therefore seen as key impulses 'driving the establishment of museums' which became 'intertwined with the promotion of commerce and consequently, the development of empire.'[35] The acquisition of artefacts, extracted from the colonies to be displayed at home, is said therefore to have been indicative of an imperial nexus, which in the latter part of the nineteenth century increasingly transformed museums into visual explanations of the natural world and empire, and Britain's national identity.[36] Recent imperial histories have developed this discourse, acknowledging museums as rich sites for

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[33] Eleanor Hughes, 'Ships of the 'Line': marine paintings at the Royal Academy of 1784', in Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (ed.), *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 139-145.

[34] John McAleer, 'The case of Thomas Baines, curator-explorer *extraordinaire,* and the display of Africa in nineteenth century Norfolk', in Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 25.

[35] Longair and McAleer (ed.), *Curating empire*, p. 2.

[36] John Mackenzie, *Museums and Empire: Natural Histories, Human Cultures and Imperial Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 3.

analysing shifting interpretations of empire and imperial citizenry in a range of British museums from the eighteenth century.[37] Historians have argued that visitors' readings of colonial objects and displays, and their subsequent understanding of empire, was contextualised by a wider imperial culture that emerged in the late nineteenth century.[38] Visitors readings of colonial objects were, therefore, complex and evidence the often contested and multiple readings and understandings which challenged official interpretations.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the number of museums in Britain increased. Greater interest in the material past developed in the early nineteenth century as antiquarian societies emerged, interested in preserving a past disappearing in the face of industrialisation, attempting to recover a lost pre-industrial heritage.[39] Archaeological societies, in particular, played a key role in the emergence of new museums. These archaeological museums operated under the belief that objects properly categorised, based on, for example, Thomsen's three-age system, could illuminate historical time-periods and the cultures that produced them.[40] These approaches were informed by a belief in the 'explanatory powers and the epistemological transparency of objects…'[41] Archaeology museums, as with natural history museums and other museums that were dividing along disciplinary lines, developed new evolutionary taxonomies, first introduced by Otis Mason at the Smithsonian in the nineteenth century, and notably developed by General Pitt-Rivers in Oxford, UK. These approaches allowed museums to develop displays and organise collections to further emphasise the progress of cultures from savagery to civilisation, reifying the west's superiority in contrast to the other and the east.

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[37] Longair and McAleer (ed.), *Curating Empire*; MacKenzie, *Museums and Empire*; Ruth Craggs and Claire Wintle (ed.), *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational productions and practices 1945-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Thomas (ed.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europe*.

[38] Claire Wintle, 'Visiting empire at the provincial museum, 1900-50', in Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), and Sadiah Qureshi, 'Tipu's Tiger and images of India 1799-2010', in Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

[39] Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[40] Alex W. Barker, 'Exhibiting Archaeology: Archaeology and Museums', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2010), pp. 293–308.

[41] Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 5-7.

Late in the nineteenth century, civic reform agendas also led to the creation of new local and regional museums. Museums acted as signifiers of civic improvement. Local and regional museums attempted to capture the character of their respective areas, however borrowing much of their approach from the larger national museums, they ended up with similar archaeological materials alongside ephemera. More significantly perhaps, this 'first museum' age was largely precipitated by the international exhibitions popular in the 19th century.

The great exhibitions and world's fairs became increasingly popular in the nineteenth century and began in earnest with the Great Exhibition in 1851. The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations showed empire products, as an expression of the Victorian age of industry, alongside other European, British and international displays to celebrate art and manufacturing. These exhibitions amalgamated this idea of cultural progress. Mackenzie argues that the Colonial and India Exhibition of 1886, the first overtly imperial exhibition, was indicative of growing popular imperialism.[42] Mackenzie used the term 'popular' to encapsulate various popular cultural modes that emerged in the Victorian period such as exhibition, poster art, music halls, literature, and moving pictures. MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire* (1984) argued that empire created for the British 'a world view which was central to their perceptions of themselves'. This emerged in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and coalesced around a renewed militarism, devotion to royalty, identification and worship of national heroes, and racial ideas associated with social Darwinism.[43] Mackenzie claims that museums and the great exhibitions, alongside intensified imperial propaganda that saturated British culture, offered pleasure and instruction, suffused with imperial themes, representing the national obsession with all things exotic and imperial. The 1902 Glasgow Empire Exhibition, for example, attracted more than 12 million visits, and the 1924-25 Wembley Exhibition more than 27 million.[44]

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[42] Tim Barringer, 'The South Kensington Museum and the Colonial Project', in Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (ed.), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 11.

[43] John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)*,* p. 2.

[44] Ibid*,* p. 97-101.

Museums and the great exhibitions, therefore, have been used to highlight the way in which the public came to know about their empire which, bolstered by wider cultural experiences, was seen as something conducive to British prosperity. Andrew Thompson, however, has argued that the influence of empire on domestic culture was complex and that there was 'never likely to be any single monolithic imperial culture in Britain'.[45] This has led scholars to question individual museums and their specific historical contexts when dealing with displays and visitors' interpretations of empire, rather than expecting to find a uniform experience at each museum.[46] Rather locality and specificity are important. A number of cities across Britain, not surprisingly port cities, were more heavily steeped in imperial culture than others, notably Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool and London, which had a significant influence on visitors' experiences of objects.

Analysing public reactions to the Royal Pavilions and Museums in Brighton from 1900-1950, Wintle claims that 'Collections of non-European material culture were important in establishing British perceptions about the peoples of their empire…' by drawing on wider local cultural references and experience. Brighton, in the first half of the twentieth century, was a popular place for the returning colonial elite, where local charity bazaars, theatre and lantern shows, all suffused with an imperial flavour, provided a 'sociable, dynamic environment, ripe for individual involvement and group participation', an environment in which Brightonians furnished their understanding of the outside world. Whilst the museum provided an official interpretation of empire, albeit messy and unintelligible as a result of overcrowded displays and a lack of text explanation, visitors were able to challenge interpretation and make it intelligible as a result of their wider cultural experiences.[47] Visitors could, therefore, go to the museum, gaze upon objects and, prior to any modern didactic forms of display, ascribe their own meaning to them which in turn helped them to understand their relative position as imperial citizens.

Wintle's approach is revealing of her background in museum and gallery studies, and of the interdisciplinary nature of these new imperial histories. As well as assessing shifting

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[45] Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the MoLD-Nineteenth Century,* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), p. 4.
[46] Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating Empire,* p. 5.
[47] Wintle, 'Visiting empire at the provincial museum'*,* pp. 37-50.

interpretations of empire at the museum, Wintle emphasises discrepancies between official interpretations and popular understandings at the museum, discussed above. In doing so, she highlights the importance of specific historical context and cultural experience, and how both impact visitors' readings of material culture, and how objects are imbued with meaning.

This type of approach is central to Laurajane Smith's concept of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). Smith argues that it is often those in authority that ascribe meaning to objects through the accompanying explanatory material and the way they choose to display objects, creating official interpretations.[48] Earlier museum studies have claimed that well into the nineteenth century the attitude of the museum profession was that 'objects on display were best left to speak for themselves'. To some extent such notions remain.[49] But in the latter-half of the twentieth century, the New Museology challenged the intrinsic nature of objects. Objects were thus displaced into discourse.[50] As with Smith's AHD thesis, it is through discourse objects are imbued with meaning, and though 'tangible' heritage exists, meaning is not innate.[51]

Wintle's study is also indicative of a shift in museum studies, recognising the importance of the visitor. In the nineteenth century, 'museums served as sites of connoisseurship and class distinction, at the same time as civilizing and educating the masses; this created an ambivalence which resulted in conditions that were both "constraining and enabling" for different types of visitors and modes of visiting.'[52] In the 1960s Bourdieu and Darbel conducted a study of European museums, *The Love of Art* (1966)*,* and concluded that there was a causal relationship between those who visited art galleries and their level of cultural capital.[53] Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital put simply states that an individual's level of education is not only the sum-total of their schooling but that there exists a vast array of

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[48] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge 2006).

[49] Peter Vergo, 'The Reticent Object', in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), p. 48.

[50] Randolph Starn, 'A Historian's Brief Guide to New Museum Studies', *American Historical Review,* Volume 110, No. 1, (February 2005), p. 83.

[51] Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* p. 3.

[52] Lee Davidson, 'Visitor studies: Toward a culture of reflective practice and critical museology for the visitor-cantered museum', in Sharon Macdonald and Helen Rees Leahy (ed.), *The international handbooks of museum studies* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2015) [online]

[53] Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper, *L'amour de l'art, Les musées d'art et leur public* (Paris: Minuit, 1966).

social and cultural education predicated on an individual's social stratification and community; the more cultural capital they acquire the more likely they are to participate in culture. The individual visit must, therefore, be taken seriously to understand how visitors engage with material culture, and how their understanding is furnished by their individual background in relation to culture more broadly.

Though these studies were not recognised in the UK for some time afterwards, from the 1980s, alongside the emergence of the New Museology, there was a focus on the role of visitors and how they are active participants in meaning-making; not simply passive receivers of knowledge. This acknowledgement helped to deconstruct the notion of the universal museum approach, in which museums were believed to communicate expert knowledge, and universal truth, to empty vessels. The visitor turn will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven. What is important here, is that such studies are indicative of an obligation to consider the visitor in negotiating histories of museums and material culture.

London, the hub of empire, was also shot through with empire and will provide the backdrop for my thesis insomuch the greater part of what is considered imperial architecture remains hiding in plain sight today. Several collections of essays, including Felix Driver and Adam Gilbert's *Imperial Cities* (1999)*,* and Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose's *At Home with the Empire* (2006) have analysed the way in which global processes of imperialism were key in shaping the modern European city, creating an imperial identity which was represented in the urban environment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[54] Anthony King, for example, argued that the global economy was significant in shaping former colonial cities such as New Delhi and Cairo, and also that cultural forms of empire had a significant impact of the development of metropolitan spaces. In several key pieces of work Doreen Massey built on this argument, claiming that the character and identity of places in the modern world is informed as much by its relationship to other

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[54] Felix Driver and Adam Gilbert, *Imperial Cities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (ed.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

places as its own qualities.[55] Building on Anthony King's work on the colonial city and Doreen Massey's assertion that the identity of a place is shaped by its relation to other places, Driver and Gilbert argue that empire as a category with which to analyse the development of the modem European city has been neglected. They claim that London was a place in which a variety of imperial sights could be seen. Particular aspects of empire including 'political authority, commercial power, cosmopolitan consumption, scientific progress, popular display' were represented by different urban sites, for example, from Admiralty Arch at Westminster to the memorial of Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace.[56]

Hall and Rose, have gone further, arguing that empire was never entirely off the political and civic agenda from the 1770s, understood as something critical to the development of metropolitan culture and society. At times the empire was greatly visible, at other times it was simply just there. Rather than considering whether empire had an impact, they are concerned with how empire was lived through everyday life in London, such as consumption of imperial products like tea, or the impact of immigration on London.[57] Or to take another example pageantry.

In Deborah S. Ryan's essay 'Staging the Imperial City: The Pageant of London 1911' (1999) she argues that pageantry at the 1911 Festival of Empire was indicative of the way in which London was at times self-consciously staged as an imperial city. The 1911 Pageant of London, hosted by the Festival of Empire, told the history of London from pre-history to colonial power, over three days. Ryan argues that such elaborate displays were designed intentionally, with educational and imperial propagandist agendas, to stage the city of London as the imperial capital, the 'seat of national government at the heart of the British Empire'. Ryan conceded, however, that the participatory element of pageants was critical to their success. Pageants often recreated the far-flung reaches of empire allowing visitors and pageanteers to explore the colonies. Performing the role of travellers, visitors could take the 'All Red Tour', which would take people on a mile and a half trip by electric railway

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[55] Anthony D. King, *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World-Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World urban System* (London: Routledge, 1990), Doreen Massey, 'The conceptualisation of place', in Doreen Massey and Pat Jess (ed.), *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1995), pp. 46-79.

[56] Driver and Gilbert, *Imperial Cities*, pp. 1-2.

[57] Hall and Rose, *At Home with the Empire*, pp. 1-5.

through the overseas colonies. Ryan argues that this instilled in people a sense of colonial progress, how to be a part of empire and how empire was a part of them.[58]

Ryan argues, however, participation allowed some to subvert this meaning. 15,000 volunteers from across London's boroughs meant that there were conflicting local identities. Each borough was in charge of their own scene and as a result, suburban rivalries, personal aims and objectives and individual's meanings influenced participants' experience. Ryan, looking at the diary of one female participant, found that there was no mention of a sense of citizenship gained from her participation, rather she valued the sociability and friendships on offer. Whilst the majority of visitors bought into the pageants intended message others simply found pleasure in the entertainment.[59] Whilst explicit notions of empire have disappeared, Driver and Gilbert claim that remnants of London as an imperial city continue to hide in plain sight throughout London and other imperial cities in Britain, notably Bristol, Glasgow and Liverpool.[60] This will help to frame my discussion later concerning why the MoL began to engage with the history of empire.

Bernard Porter has criticised Mackenzie and other new imperial historians for exaggerating the impact of empire on British domestic culture. To what degree was empire merely a backdrop, or staging? To what extent did empire permeate popular public knowledge when compared with the plethora of information on other global issues? In response to *Propaganda and Empire* (1984), Porter argues that the very need for the Empire Marketing Board, founded in May 1926 to encourage empire trade and publicity, was a sign that most people did not think imperially, and therefore had to be convinced. Rather Porter claims that:

> the ordinary Briton's relationship to the Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was complex and ambivalent, less soaked in or affected by imperialism than these other scholars claimed – to the extent that many English

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[58] Deborah S. Ryan, 'Staging the imperial city: The Pageant of London, 1911', in Felix Driver and Adam Gilbert (ed.), *Imperial Cities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)*,* pp. 119-121.
[59] Ibid*,* p. 130-132.
[60] Driver and Gilbert, *Imperial Cities*, pp. 3-12

people, at any rate, possibly even a majority, were almost entirely ignorant of it for most of the nineteenth century.[61]

Either way, from the perspective of this study what matters is that Empire and its imagery clearly had a prominent place in British museums, material culture and culture more broadly at this time, and was self-consciously espoused as positive.

Decolonisation and Reorientation at the Museum 1940s-1970s

Decolonisation, a process visible from the 1940s to the 1960s, especially with the independence of India in 1947, precipitated a change in the place and value of empire in contemporary culture. Colonial independence movements began to challenge the authority of the British across Africa and subcontinental Asia. Events such as the Suez Crisis of 1956, it has been argued, exposed Britain's military and financial weaknesses, making its position in the world as a global geopolitical force untenable.[62] This process was reflected in many aspects of material culture that had before promoted empire as modernising force. In 1951, the Festival of Empire staged an exhibition entitled 'A Focus on Colonial Progress'. This is seen as indicative of Britain's attempt to reimagine itself as benevolent trustee of the Commonwealth, leading emerging nations towards self-government, and providing an example of good government to which all could aspire.[63] This was reflected in museums and how they sought to redisplay their collections to reflect this wider process of decolonisation.[64]

Sadiah Qureshi documents this transition from displays complicit in mirroring the colonial project, to display being used to reframe empire with the onset of decolonisation.[65] Tipu's Tiger, an Indian mechanical organ which depicted a tiger mauling a European, was taken by the British at the siege of Seringapatam in 1799 during the last Anglo-Mysore war.

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[61] Bernard Porter, 'Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 1, (April 2008), p. 102.

[62] Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (ed.), *Film and the End of Empire* (London: British Film Institute, 2011), pp. 1-2.

[63] John MacKenzie, 'The persistence of empire in metropolitan culture', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture at the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 29.

[64] Claire Wintle, 'Decolonising the Museum: The Case of the Imperial and Commonwealth Institutes', *Museum and Society,* Vol. 11, No. 2, (2013), pp. 185-186.

[65] Qureshi, *Tipu's Tiger and Images of India 1799-2010*, p. 212.

Displayed in the East India House in London from 1808, and one of their most popular objects, it was originally displayed in a way that reinforced popular perceptions of the Anglo-Mysore war, as a victory against anti-colonial aggression. From 1808-1858 visitors to the East India House library would have encountered Tipu's Tiger with a sense of vitriol towards Tipu as the 'black bogeyman.' British victory in the second Anglo-Mysore war quickly became the subject of ballads and plays in London, which ensured widespread public awareness of the events, sustained throughout the century. Qureshi argues that these vitriolic treatments of Tipu informed encounters with Tipu's Tiger.[66]

After a period in storage from 1868-1874, upon the dissolution of the India Museum in 1879, Tipu's Tiger was moved to the Imperial Institute in South Kensington where it remained still displayed as a trophy of a war against a supposedly aggressive eastern ruler. From 1947 Tipu's Tiger was accompanied with other objects scantily labelled as belonging to Tipu, displayed in the 'Eastern Galleries' of the South Kensington Museum, before it was moved to the Victoria and Albert museum in 1956 where it remains. Despite the paucity of interpretive texts, the museum attempted to recontextualise these redisplayed objects, through leaflets and accompanying information, as 'masterpieces' of Indian art. Qureshi argues that this was intended to reflect Britain's acknowledgement of former colonies' independence and the road to self-determination, each with their own unique material cultures. Nonetheless, its origins as imperial loot were ignored.[67]

Several scholars, Wintle included, have reinforced this argument that several colonial museums engaged in a reorientation of their colonial displays as a reaction to the wider process of decolonisation. Stuart Ward has argued that decolonisation was a traumatic period for Britain and its public, and that '…the stresses and strains of imperial decline were not safely contained within the realm of high politics…' Rather, the impact of decolonisation was felt throughout civic society, and shaped certain political and cultural processes and institutions, museums included.[68] A number of studies have claimed that after the Second World War, museums reconfigured their colonial and ethnographic

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid, p. 219.

[68] Stuart Ward, *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 6.

displays reflecting the wider political process of decolonisation.[69] They argue that decolonization entailed a questioning of the relationship between former colonial powers and colonized subjects, which was reinforced alongside claims and demands that had been made by ethnic minorities insisting upon improved representation.

Robert Aldrich has pressed these arguments within a European context, arguing that attendant with museums' attempts to present an image of cooperation while divesting from their colonies, this period set a precedent for the 'erasure of specifically imperial allusions' both in the UK and across Europe.[70] Eventually with the accession to the European Economic Community (EEC), which left the Commonwealth in the background, 'empire museums' reimagined themselves as universal ethnographic and art institutions, celebrating the achievements of the now-former colonies. One could argue, however, the National War Museum, which was renamed in 1918 to the Imperial War Museum, partly as a propaganda move, is evidence that these allusions continued in some ways into the present day.[71]

Wintle has argued, however, that it would be untrue to say that museums in this period simply reflected the larger process of decolonisation. Alongside decolonisation was a parallel shift in curatorial practices. In her study of the former Imperial Institute she looks at how it was rebranded as the Commonwealth Institute in 1958 (moving to a new building in 1962), and how at that time it changed its practices to accommodate the susceptibilities of newly independent countries. She demonstrates the Institute's efforts to develop shared curatorial practices between former colonies and exhibitions in Britain. New organisational and financial structures enacted at the new Commonwealth Institute gave new Commonwealth nations the opportunity sit on the institute's board of directors. This allowed them to assist in funding the displays. That in turn gave newly independent nations

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[69] Robert Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in postcolonial Europe', *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2009), pp. 137-156; Annie E. Coombes, 'Inventing the Post-Colonial: Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating', *New Formation*, Issue 18, (December 1992), pp. 39-52; Wintle, 'Decolonising the Museum', pp. 185-201; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'Multiculturalism and Museums: Discourse about others in the age of globalization', *Theory Culture and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (November 1997), pp. 97-105.

[70] Robert Aldrich, *Colonial museums in postcolonial Europe,* p. 143.

[71] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum', *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 23, No. 1, (January 1988), pp. 77-97

the opportunity to set agendas and display their own histories and cultures.[72] India, for example, voiced disapproval of including any British connection with India in the new exhibitions, asking that a statuette of Lord Clive, the British officer who established the East India Company, be removed. That allowed a large statue of M. K. Gandhi to be included, featuring his traditional shawl, to symbolise the Indian challenge to the dominance of western traditions.[73] Wintle shows that the new organisational structure of the Commonwealth Institute meant that it became a useful space for new Commonwealth nations to depict their independence.

From the perspective of this study, it is important to note that empire as a frame of reference for deconstructing or explaining material culture, and culture more broadly, became far less prominent at this time. If the idea of empire was increasingly condemned as a result of decolonisation, kept away from public view, ignored or reframed in other contexts, scholars have argued that it gradually returned from the mid-1980s. This return is indicative of a broader representational shift in museums, which began to address the more difficult place of empire in a postcolonial era.

The following part of the literature review will selectively address key works from the 1970s and 1980s that precipitated a fundamental shift in the way in which a range of fields thought about the past, and its role in contemporary society. This included rethinking who has access to the past; who should be represented; and which groups had been marginalised by dominant heritage discourses. In doing so, the literature review will survey postcolonial studies, heritage and museum studies, which challenged the historical and philosophical base of museums, as well as their social role, which in turn helped to prime attitudinal shifts in the 1990s resulting in more multicultural and inclusive agendas.

The Past in the Present: the 1980s and 1990s

It is generally acknowledged by scholars concerned with contemporary manifestations of empire in museums, that this recent episode of coming-to-terms with Britain's colonial past

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[72] Claire Wintle, 'Decolonising the Museum', pp. 185-201.
[73] Ibid, p. 194.

is a result of a broader conversation about Britain's relationship with its past. Heritage is understood as a past received and reworked through the tangible and the intangible. This includes, but is not limited to, display, representations, locations, events, memories, practices and commemorations. More recently, heritage scholars have come to concern themselves with how these 'things and practices' are consumed and expressed as ideas of culture, identity and politics.[74] Imperial historians in turn have turned their attention to how the heritage of empire has been expressed and consumed in museums, culture and politics in the UK, and developments since the 1980s around debates about postcolonialism.

Before moving on, it is important here to discuss the concept of memory. This will provide context for my later discussion about recent controversies over the legacies of empire. Maurice Halbwachs has written about the way in which individual memories are embedded in collective memories shared by larger groups.[75] According to Halbwachs, collective memory is a number of individual recollections of people with a shared experience that has been constituted by mutual interaction with the larger group.[76]

In 1983 Benedict Anderson put forward his own thesis of the imagined nation. Anderson argues that the nation is 'imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'[77] Collective memory can in part be constructed through a nation's material culture through which individuals create a shared understanding of their national past. In this sense the museum is not merely an archive but 'selects certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display – a process which recognises and affirms some identities and omits to recognise and affirm others.'[78] Here is it pertinent to return to Laurajane Smith's argument that 'The "heritage" discourse […] naturalizes the practice of rounding up the usual suspects to conserve and

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[74] Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, 'Heritage as a Focus of Research: Past, Present and New Directions', in Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 1.

[75] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (F.J. Ditter and V.Y. Ditter Trans., with an introduction by M. Douglas) (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), (original work published 1950), p. 48.

[76] Ibid, p. 48.

[77] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1983), pp. 6-7.

[78] Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 4.

"pass on" to future generations, and in doing so promotes a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable.'[79] Museums are places in which both individual and collective memories are negotiated. This has become increasingly problematic given the rise in multicultural communities and multiple epistemic perspectives which have created interpretive groups that ascribe diverging meanings to material culture.

Academic research in heritage went through a threshold moment in the 1980s, alongside developments in museum studies, archaeology and tourism. This was a response to a perceived growing romanticising and commercialisation of official versions of the past, sanitised and pre-packaged for visitors. Museums were seen as part of this 'heritage industry'.[80] David Lowenthal's *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985) was the most influential text to critique this heritage industry. His book sought to understand how 'people in general see, value or understand the past.' His basic argument was that the past, 'in the late eighteenth century came to be conceived as a different realm … [and] gradually ceased to provide comparative lessons but came to be cherished as a heritage that validated and exalted the present.' Put simply, 'The more it is appreciated for its own sake, the less real or relevant it becomes.'[81] Heritage in this sense was seen as at odds with the pursuit of history and was more concerned with the re-packaging of the past for some purpose in the present. These purposes, Lowenthal argued, were often political in nature, such as creating national identities through official discourses.

Robert Hewison saw this heritage as peddling a sanitised version of the past, a popular form of entertainment which distracted its patrons (typically from low socio-economic classes and backgrounds) from developing an interest in contemporary culture and society, providing them instead with a finished version of the past. Hewison also saw heritage as debased history, which favoured the values of the dominant classes. These works moved

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[79] Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* p. 11.
[80] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Algernon Methuen, 1987), pp. 43-45.
[81] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)*,* pp. xxvi – xvii.

the heritage debate on from thinking about objects, towards an analysis of objects in their social and cultural context.[82]

Patrick Wright, however, asserted that the popularity of heritage attractions should not be ignored.[83] Far from reinforcing dominant interests, Raphael Samuels argued in *Theatres of Memory* (1994) that heritage can serve to make the past more democratic '…offering more points of access to "ordinary people", and a wider form of belonging.' For example, 'Family history societies, practising do-it-yourself scholarship and filling the record offices and the local history library with searchers, have democratized genealogy, treating apprenticeship indentures as a symbolic equivalent of the coat of arms, baptismal certificates as that of title deeds.'[84] The perceived idealisation and abundance of picturesque heritage, however, precipitated critiques about the way in which dominant classes had attempted to assert their own interests. Museums, as sites that facilitated national identity and memory, had to be treated critically. Criticisms of this type were stimulated in part by the growth in the number and type of museums in the second half of the twentieth century, and closely linked with the tradition of open-air museums, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.

New histories emerged in the postcolonial era, such as women's history and indigenous histories; non-elite groups that had for the most-part left limited textual records of their experiences. Cultural history and gender studies in particular helped to unearth subaltern narratives and to deconstruct meanings that had been ascribed to material objects by dominant heritage discourses entangled with colonialism. Together, these fields allowed for new critical readings of collections.[85] Groups like the Social History Curator's Group emerged in the mid-1970s, launching the journal *Social History in Museums*. This facilitated discussions about the proliferation of open-air museums, recording industrial histories, sound recording and other new technologies of display. This group was linked to local

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[82] Hewison, *The Heritage Industry,* pp. 43-45.
[83] Patrick Wright, *On Living in and Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (New York; Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 27.
[84] Raphael Samuels, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 160.
[85] Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, *History Through Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 30.

history societies and a growing historiographical trend towards history from below. These developments would facilitate new readings of old collections and more inclusive displays.

Around the same time as Wright and Hewison were writing, formative museological texts including Peter Vergo's *The New Museology* (1989), and Robert Lumley's *The Museum Time Machine* (1988), were situating the social role of the museum within this broader conversation concerning the 'museumification of the past', and the transformation of museums into attractions.[86] Tony Bennett, paying deference to Antonio Gramsci's observation that 'folklore has been studied primarily as a picturesque element', argued that whilst the number of museums dedicated to displaying working-class histories (notably open-air museums) exploded in the twentieth century, they were not 'of the people'. Bennett was concerned with the way in which open-air and living museums idealised the lives of the working class, and so failed to 'display any [genuine] interest in the lives, habits, and customs of either the contemporary working classes…'[87] MoL curator Nick Merriman's analysis of visitor numbers in Vergo's *The New Museology*, showed that this misrepresentation and underrepresentation of working-class histories and interests had resulted in the low turnout of visitors from low socio-economic backgrounds.[88]

The New Museology, which came to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, resulted in a gradual shift in museological practice. Museums began to adopt more inclusive approaches in an attempt to appeal to broader audiences and to communities that were beginning to demand greater recognition. As a result, new methods of interpretation were devised to adjust for representational approaches; approaches that focussed on who was represented, how, and what for. Foundational museological texts sought to deconstruct the 'historical and structural narratives [of the museum], practices and strategies of display, and the concerns and imperatives of governing ideologies.'[89] They contended that

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[86] Peter Vergo, *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion, 1989); Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine* (London: Routledge, 1988).

[87] Tony Bennett, 'Museums and the "People"', in Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine* (London Routledge, 1988), pp. 63-64.

[88] Nick Merriman, 'Museum Visiting as a Cultural Phenomenon', in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), pp. 149-172.

[89] Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff, 'Introduction: Frameworks for Critical Analysis', in Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (ed.), *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles* (London: Routledge, 1994); Robert Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine* (London Routledge, 1988); Vergo, *The New* Museology; Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992); Sharon Macdonald's *'The Politics of Display: Museums, Science and Culture'* (London: Routledge, 1998).

museums were subject to the same political, historical and cultural influences as other institutions. This movement signalled a 'change in attitudes…which drew museums into the arena of national politics.'[90] The museum became an intellectual battleground where proponents of the New Museology argued that they should be more concerned with issues of power, community engagement, and a place of 'pluralism and inclusion', no longer 'disinterested and apolitical'.[91]

These criticisms of museums were also informed by postcolonial studies, and questions concerning the representation of communities that had gained independence, often through violent struggle, but whose perspectives had been under-represented in museum displays. This questioning is often referred to as the representational critique. The representational critique similarly brought into question how meaning comes to be inscribed and by whom, and what were the dominant modes of representation within the museum, and most importantly what was, and had been, excluded.[92]

In her study of the V&A African Art collection, Ruth Adams considers the extent to which postcolonial critiques from the late-1970s onwards, notably Edward Said's *Orientalism*, encouraged museums to address Britain's transition from the imperial nation to postcolonial, and to articulate shared histories. Under the assault of decolonisation, and postcolonial critiques, the V&A, and other art institutions, allegedly felt compelled to address the origins of some of their colonial collections and objects. They also started to think more about the views of the communities who had produced their objects, how to display them, and their historical associations with colonialism.[93]

This new sensitivity to representation was then fuelled by Said's arguments, namely that the West's 'orientalism', had artificially exaggerated the differences between the colonial powers and the 'east'. Defined by Said as:

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[90] Tim Benton and Nicola J. Watson, 'Museum practice and heritage', in Susie West (ed.), *Understanding Heritage in Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 128.

[91] Simon J. Knell, *Museums in the Material World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p.3.

[92] Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies,* p. 3.

[93] Ruth Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to Multiculturalism?' *Museums and Society,* Vol. 8, No. 2, (2010), pp. 63-79.

...the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western-style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient...[94]

Broadening the study of empire beyond the official record, *Orientalism* inspired scholars to re-address a wide range of imperial texts, and also material culture, in order to understand the way in which museums had upheld and entrenched Western discourses of the other and excluded non-western perspectives. Homi Bhaba expanded on Said's work, developing a theory of the 'hybridity [mixing or mixed nature] of colonial culture and the paradoxical interdependency of coloniser and colonised', in forging national identities against knowing the other. Binaries, Bhaba argues, such as those enacted by colonial policies of divide-and-rule, 'us and them', and racial hierarchies were reflected in museums. Taken together, such postcolonialism 'orientalist' critiques are thought to have been influential in precipitating precipitated significant changes in museums.[95]

In 1983 the V&A, in collaboration with the Bradford Art Galleries and Museum, staged an exhibition of highlights from the V&A's African Art collections. The director had prompted the keeper of the collections to start thinking about ethnic minorities (Bradford had a predominantly South Asian community), yet the main impetus was to decentralise the V&A. The exhibition catalogue advertised the exhibition as one that should help to facilitate a tolerant multicultural society. The V&A consulted the Asian community in Bradford, a clear expression of willingness to make the exhibition inclusive and address representational issues. The exhibition included events and literature such as cookery courses, lectures and essays sought to illuminate the objects on display. Adam argues, however, that the rhetoric of many of the accompanying lectures and pamphlets still contained 'Orientalist' language. John Lowry's accompanying essay stated that 'India has a tribal people who still live in an almost prehistoric society...', later on emphasising the benefits of colonial rule in India. Other essays were less orientalist.[96]

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[94] Said, *Orientalism,* p. 3.
[95] Barringer and Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object,* p. 2.
[96] Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism?'*,* pp. 67-68.

Adams argues that it was not until 1987, under the directorship of Elisabeth Esteve-Coll, that the V&A made a more concerted effort to address multiculturalism. Adams adds that this was never universal or without prompt, and there was always a reluctance to acknowledge the origins of their collections. The 'Nehru Gallery of Indian Art' at the V&A (the result of the Nehru Exhibition referenced in Qureshi's work) which opened in 1990, displayed only a small fraction of Indian art held by the museum. This was in response to restitution claims that had increased in the 1980s. However, with the exception of notable cases including the refusal of the British Museum to return the Parthenon Marbles to Greece (1983), and the ongoing dispute between the British Museum and Nigeria over the return of the Benin Bronzes, most repatriation claims in the post-war era have centred on human remains (discussed later, pp. 46-47).[97] The V&A remained, however, concerned that if they displayed too much, India would ask for it back. Despite attempts to promote a more inclusive approach towards Commonwealth history, the V&A and other museums denied restitution claims, citing the universal nature of their collections. As with the new Commonwealth Institute, however, the V&A did consult consuls and officials from Commonwealth nations and included five different south Asian languages on text panels.[98]

Some problems persisted in the minds of the public and press, with the *Asian Times* arguing that for the V&A to have accumulated 35,000 objects, the British must have been immoral in their acquiring of them. Adams nevertheless notes that the exhibition was well received and marked a period of genuine transformation, whereas in the period the museum was established there had been no obligation 'to represent the margins to the core, in order to reinforce the status of the latter. In the contemporary context, however, the fact that the histories of margins and core are inextricably linked can no longer be ignored.'[99] Despite efforts by some to promote a sense of multiculturalism, museums were still reluctant to fully acknowledge their historical associations with empire. That would be a gradual process, gathering pace throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

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[97] Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations in the Postcolonial Era* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 225-227.

[98] Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to multiculturalism?', p. 69.

[99] Ibid, p. 75.

Heritage and museum scholars alike have therefore addressed the way in which subaltern groups have challenged or asserted their own values and meanings onto material culture. Laurajane Smith has written about this at length through her AHD concept, whereby the inherent qualities ascribed to objects are usually at the behest of those in authority – the museum curators for example. This process is enacted by curators selecting some objects over others, giving them prominence and attaching to them text panels that ascribe to them specific qualities.[100] Therefore, rather than seeing museum professionals and academic disciplines as engaged in value-free discovery, the production of knowledge and dissemination of knowledge through material culture is inherently political. Macdonald has similarly argued that what was being researched, how and why, and what was being ignored, came to be matters of wider social and political concern, around the ways in which inequalities were being reproduced through displays. This critique has precipitated greater attention to the 'process by which knowledge is produced and disseminated, and to the partial and positioned nature of knowledge itself', and a 'flourishing of work that sought to deconstruct cultural products, such as texts and exhibitions, in order to highlight their politics…'[101] This representational critique cut across disciplines, each raising a number of different issues which refocused museums' attentions in the 1990s.

In the 1970s, increasing demands from indigenous peoples in Australia and the United States (as well as other subaltern communities) for greater recognition of their histories, cultures and practices, and the return of cultural objects and ancestral remains, also helped to shape debates about the role of museums. In the UK, similar historical contexts were at work. Moira Simpson in *Making Representations: Museums in a Postcolonial Era* (1996)[102] conceptualised the resulting representational shift as 'History Revisited'. In the UK this emerged as Black people began to voice their dissatisfaction over the failure of museums to represent their history and cultural contribution. Simpson used the example of the Geffrye Museum which in 1988 revised its displays to reflect recent scholarship on the history of Black people in Britain, notably Peter Fryer's *Staying Power: This History of Black People in Britain* (1984).[103] This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four which

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[100] Benton and Watson, 'Museums practice and heritage', pp. 130-131.
[101] Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies,* p. 3.
[102] Simpson, *Making Representations in the Postcolonial Era.*
[103] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Verso 1984).

provides historical context for the emergence of 'Peopling'. Simpson's work has been subsequently criticised insomuch that '…her international approach focuses upon examples from nations like Canada, Australia and the United States, it tends to homogenise, disguising differences both subtle and profound.'[104] As Ashworth noted in *Pluralizing the Past* (2007)*,* the notion that society is plural is banal.[105] In speaking of the role of heritage management in different societies, Ashworth argues that heritage management in settler societies has attempted to integrate new communities into an imagined core defined by a new set of shared ideas and valued.[106] My thesis, in focusing on the specific historical and museological landscape against which 'Peopling' emerged, will seek to discuss differences, whilst recognising the international context.

One significant museological development which accompanied this representational shift was the idea of working with source communities. The practice of consulting indigenous communities when curating displays, foremost in ethnographic and anthropology museums, focused on 'an increased sensitivity for questioning the authority of modern ethnographers to represent cultural "others"'. In the 1980s, James Clifford one of the leading figures in this area was concerned about the role of the curator in presenting indigenous cultures in two ways: 'as premodern, ahistorical, and traditional; or as modern peoples assimilated into Western culture and thus "inauthentic" cultural representatives'.[107] Later in 1996, at a conference held at the Open University, Clifford introduced the notion of 'contact-zones' to museological thinking. The term was used originally by Mary Louise Pratt to describe the space of colonial encounters. Mary Louise Pratt coined the term contact zones to describe the space of colonial encounters in which 'peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of inequality, and intractable conflict.'[108] Clifford repurposed this term to conceive of the one-sided imperial relationship

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[104] Ann McGrath, 'Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era (review)', Journal *of Colonialism and Colonial History,* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2002), [online], <doi:10.1353/cch.2002.0021>, accessed 29th October 2019.

[105] Gregory J. Ashworth, 'Pluralising the past: heritage policies in plural societies*', Architectural Research Journal,* Vol. 16, No. 1, (2007), p. 13.

[106] Gregory J. Ashworth, Brian Graham and John E. Tunbridge, *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

[107] Mary Katherine Scott, 'Engaging with the Past in the Present: Curators, Communities and Exhibition Practice', *Museum Anthropology,* Vol. 35, Issue 1, (Spring 2012), p. 3.

[108] Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession: Modern Language Association,* (1991), pp. 33-40.

still present in museums; their appropriation of indigenous culture. Clifford argued that indigenous communities should, by contrast, now exploit the museum to regain ownership of their heritage, 'When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship—a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull.'[109] Echoing Ashworth's point, Clifford also notes that communities are diverse and that no one community or person is necessarily representative, and that museums work within budgetary, curatorial, cultural constraints and are susceptible to 'community hostility and misconception, that militate against museum practice.'[110]

Recently, the democratising potential of collaborative practice has been challenged. Samuel Alberti and Bernadette Lynch, in speaking of their experience curating the Manchester Museum exhibition 'Revealing Histories: Myths about Race' (2007-2009) have argued that 'There is nothing "post" about colonialism as a view of the world that persists. Encounters between museum professionals and external individuals, particularly those from diaspora communities, still bear traces of coloniser meeting colonised.'[111] Alberti and Lynch's paper reflects growing criticisms of collaborative practices and structural problems at the heart of the museums, which have increased alongside calls to decolonise.[112]

Debates around repatriation also emerged at this time, and Rodney Harrison and others have argued that repatriation is demonstrative of the way in which universal heritage values are tied up with politics, nationalism and colonialism.[113] Universal and outstanding heritage values are enshrined in the World Heritage Convention and understood as

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[109] James Clifford, 'Museums as contact zones', in James Clifford (ed.), *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1997), pp. 192-193.
[110] Trudy Hicks, 'Rethinking Museums', in Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers (ed.), *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 20.
[111] Bernadette T. Lynch and Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production and radical trust in the museum', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol 25, No. 1, (2010), p. 13.
[112] Sumaya Kassim, 'The museum will not be decolonised', *Media Diversified,* November 15th 2017, [online], <https://mediadiversified.org/2017/11/15/the-museum-will-not-be-decolonised/>, accessed 11th February 2020; Miriam Kahn, 'Not Really Pacific Voices: Politics of Representation in Collaborative Museum Exhibits', *Museum Anthropology,* Vol. 41, No. 1 (January 2008), pp. 57-74. Laura K. Peers and Alison Brown (ed.), *Museums and Source Communities* (London: Routledge, 2003). Cara Krmpotich and David Anderson, 'Collaborative Exhibitions and Visitor Reactions: The Case of Nitsitapiisinni: Our Way of Life', *Curator: The Museum Journal,* Vol. 48, No. 4 (October 2005), pp. 377-405.
[113] Rodney Harrison, 'The Politics of Heritage', in Rodney Harrison (ed.), *Understanding the Politics of Heritage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 182.

properties of more than mere national importance. They are therefore not naturally occurring but ascribed from the top down. Perhaps the most well-known case is that of the Elgin Marbles. In 1965 the Greek Minister of Culture called for the return of all Greek antiquities, submitting a formal request for repatriation in 1983. This was rejected by the British Museum in 1984. Despite UNESCO pressure and increased dialogue between the two nations the decision has been upheld. As well as citing the British Museum Act of 1963, which states that objects held by British Museums must remain held in perpetuity, the British Museum argued the Elgin Marbles are integral to telling the story of human cultural achievement, and so as part of our common heritage transcending national and cultural boundaries. For the Greeks, the Marbles are an important national symbol. The case of the Elgin Marbles and other notable cases including the Benin Bronzes, and the Koh-I-Noor diamond are indicative of the way in which objects acquire political significance in a postcolonial context. The Benin Bronzes are brass plaques removed from the Kingdom of Benin (now in Nigeria) during a British punitive expedition in 1897, and the Koh-I-Noor Diamond was acquired for Queen Victoria in 1849 following the British conquest of Punjab. Most of the Benin Bronzes taken by the British remain in the British Museum, and also in many European and American museums, yet some have been returned by private owners to Nigeria. All three objects are part of a nexus in which old colonial power relationships are played out in contemporary cultural politics, with museums often the stage for asserting new postcolonial identities and rights.

From the 1970s indigenous rights groups also began to make demands for the repatriation of ancestral remains from Europe. This found more favour, evident in the UK *Human Tissues Act* (2004), which provided a legal framework for repatriation. In the 1970s and 1980s Indigenous rights groups in Australia began to draw attention to the considerable number of indigenous remains held in European museums, as they began to assert recognition of their pre-colonial common law rights.[114] According to Harrison, it was not until the late 1990s that steps were taken by the UK and Australian governments to begin a serious process of repatriation, resulting in the 2004 act. For a long time, reflecting the universalist argument, museum professionals argued that the scientific value of the human remains was of global importance. In the 1970s, indigenous Australians began to attend

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[114] Hughes and Harrison, 'Heritage, Colonialism and postcolonialism', p. 239.

archaeological conferences to assert their views on when and under what circumstances archaeological fieldwork should take place, ensuring consultation with indigenous communities took place.[115] Over the last several decades these debates have drawn attention to issues of control and ownership within the practice of archaeology. [116]

Jo Litter's and Rosha Naidoo's *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of Race*, has additionally focused on how race has played an integral part in shaping British identity in a postcolonial era, arguing that dominant colonial ideologies were a product of white British middle-class history, exemplified through the monumental, rendering the history and heritage of Britain 'self-aggrandising', and ignorant of its multiculturalism as a result of British colonialism.[117] In the eighteenth and nineteenth century race was increasingly thought to be biologically rooted.[118] By the late eighteenth century, western opinion towards colonial subjects was based on a 'racial ladder of development that placed white northern Europeans at the pinnacle of reason and progress.'[119] Whilst these biologically rooted theories have lasted, though diminished in the late twentieth century, cultural theorists have more recently posited that race is socially constructed through discourse.[120] As a result, however, of a 'deep slow-motion revolution' precipitated by a number of unofficial arts and culture initiatives throughout the UK, this dominant heritage discourse, grounded in part through racial ideas of a dominant white middle-class, has been unsettled in the contemporary period. This has resulted in competing histories and narratives about the colonial past and the postcolonial present in Britain, causing problems for the modern museum.[121]

Around the time that 'Peopling' emerged, prominent cultural theorists like Paul Gilroy were debating the effects of neo-racism, that is the 'the confluence of "race", nationality and culture in the contemporary politics of racial exclusion', which typically results in the

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[115] Smith, *Archaeological Theory and the Politics of Cultural Heritage*, pp. 26-27.
[116] Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992); Flora Kaplan, *Museums and the Making of Ourselves: The Role of Objects in National identity* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996).
[117] Jo Littler, 'British Heritage and the Legacies of Race', in Jo Littler and Roshi Naidoo (ed.), *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of Race* (London, Routledge, 2005), pp. 1-2.
[118] Peter Wade, 'Human nature and race', *Anthropological Theory,* Vol. 4, No. 2, (2004), p. 158.
[119] Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Abingdon: Routledge 2013), p. 124.
[120] Paul Gilroy, *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2002)*,* pp. 45-81.
[121] Littler, 'British Heritage and the Legacies of Race'*,* p. 2

exclusion, on account of a person's 'blackness' from participation in the 'national community'.[122] This was also true across Europe more widely, even as multiculturalism was emerging across Europe in the 1970s. It extended to all ethnic minorities including those from former colonies who were rightfully British citizens. Education became a key locus in which multiculturalism was promoted and racism challenged, though there were those in key educational positions who challenged the multicultural education agenda.[123] In the latter half of the twentieth century ethnic minorities and Black communities also began to assert and celebrate their identities through poetry, reggae and other events, for example, the Notting Hill Carnival, much of which challenged racism in Britain.

Equally important for this study, multiculturalist critiques of imperial history were seen by some groups as 'anti-white' and anti-British', as Elizabeth Buettner has shown. Throughout this period there were regular violent clashes between ethnic-minorities and the police, and minorities and right-wing fascist groups. This culminated in 1993 with the death of Stephen Lawrence, creating a watershed moment for race relations in Britain which subsequently led to the Macpherson report. The report concluded that 'institutional racism' was rampant in the police-force and that the Race Relations Act 1976 needed strengthening. This period was reflected in culture also. There was, for example, the Black Arts movement which took a 'militant stance against the exclusion of ethnic minorities from the British art establishment.'[124]

Migration museums also emerged as key sites where issues of colonialism came to be discussed in the 1980s and 1990s. This occurred principally in former settler colonies where museums were in close proximity to indigenous communities. An early example was the Australian Migration Museum in Adelaide which opened in 1986.[125] Migration museums were a much later phenomenon in the UK, the first permanent museum not opening until

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[122] Paul Gilroy, 'Nationalism, History and Ethnic Absolutism', *History Workshop,* No. 30, (Autumn 1990), p. 114.

[123] Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonisation Society and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 363-364. it was assumed at this time that racism was the result of white ignorance of ethnic minorities' cultures.

[124] Ibid, pp. 365-359.

[125] Eureka Henrich, 'Museums, History and Migration in Australia: Museums, History and Migration in Australia', *History Compass*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (October 2013), pp. 783-800.

2017 in London.[126] It is important to clarify here that the Migration Museum in London has staged temporary exhibitions and workshops since 2013, working towards opening a permanent museum. City museums, however, which have long dealt with immigration, like the MoL, are useful comparators. Recently scholars have become increasingly interested in how city museums have addressed issues of immigration with reference to how they might better represent marginalised groups and multiculturalism.[127] For city museums in particular, according to migration scholars, dealing with colonial histories and legacies was unavoidable. 'Peopling' is an example of this. Interestingly Nick Merriman, as a curator and the project lead, travelled to Australia and North American to visit various museums in conceptualising his project. This will be touched upon in chapter four.

In the second half of the twentieth century, museums became battlegrounds where postcolonial issues, and culture wars, were played out. Power relationships were renegotiated, and greater demands for representation and recognition from former colonial peoples were made. These debates, whilst having far-reaching implications for human rights and social justice, precipitated a new understanding of heritage in terms of power and ownership. Museums have increasingly played an active role in society being shaped by and helping to shape debates concerning former colonial people's heritage, and how this situates in British national identity.

No Longer at Home with the Empire? Museums, Empire and Controversy

Museums offer a rich context in which to question issues of imperialism and the postcolonial. Historically, the national museums of colonial powers, through both their holdings and their displays, have illustrated and thus helped to sustain imperialist discourses. They are useful in helping us to map shifting interpretations of empire. As Thomas notes, 'The metamorphosis of European museums from the colonial to

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[126] Migration Museum, 'About', [online], <https://www.migrationmuseum.org/about-our-project/>, accessed 24th May 2019.
[127] Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, Rhiannon Mason (ed.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People Places and Identities* (London Routledge, 2015), p. 2; Christopher Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason, Susannah Eckersley, 'Place, Identity and Migration and European Museums', in Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, Rhiannon Mason (ed.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People Places and Identities* (London Routledge, 2015), p. 31.

postcolonial era effectively mirrors the disquiet about the heritage of imperialism.'[128] This disquiet has become more vociferous since the 1990s. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, museums' engagement with the legacies of empire have increased alongside growing anxieties around more sensitive aspects such as slavery, taking a central role in shaping debates and promoting a public understanding of Britain's colonial past.

This section will help to situate my questions concerning how the MoL and MoLD have sought to display and frame empire since the 1990s alongside growing public debate, how issues influenced representations of empire, and how the public has responded. Recent studies that have dealt with these questions have focused largely on exhibitions curated for the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 2007. They have addressed: how the bicentenary was organised; the extent, nature and effect of government involvement and funding; the curatorial process in dealing with the challenges of representing difficult heritage; and the way in which museums and the public engaged with the more difficult aspects of the history of empire.

Studies have largely confined their scope to the 2007 exhibitions, such as Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums (2011).[129] Moreover, whilst some scholars have claimed that several of the exhibitions were influenced by museums' experiences in curating exhibitions from the 1990s onwards, this has often been no more than a passing remark. Both John McAleer and Jennifer Anne Carvill have both made brief comments arguing that several exhibitions curated during the 2007 commemorations took account of previous exhibitions that touched upon slavery in the early 1990s, however there are no studies that have produced a sustained analysis of museums' sustained engagement with empire from the 1990s up to the present.[130] Therefore, my study will make a critical and original contribution, by looking at the MoL and MoLD, and their temporary and permanent

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[128] Dominic Thomas, 'Museums in postcolonial Europe: An introduction', *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (July 2009), p. 126.

[129] Smith, Cubit, Wilson, and Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[130] McAleer, 'That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood'; Jennifer Anne Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths: British museums and the legacies of slavery in the bicentenary year, 2007', *Federation of International Human Rights Museums*, (2010), [online], pp. 1-23, <https://www.fihrm.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FIHRM-Carvill-British-Museums-and-the-legacies-of-Slavery-in-the-Bicentenary-Year.pdf>, accessed 31st October 2019.

exhibitions throughout the period 1993-2007. That is, from initial engagement to installing permanent galleries at the MoL and MoLD.

The 2007 bicentenary, which commemorated the two hundredth anniversary of the Act of Parliament that put an end to British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, was marked by critical discussions, which helped to spark concrete changes in government policy and in museums. Before 2009, for instance, slavery and empire were not a permanent feature on the national curriculum.[131] John Oldfield has suggested that many people prior to 2007 were unfamiliar with debates regarding slavery and the heritage of enslaved people.[132] Given the rise in Britain's multicultural communities, and multiple perspectives including those from historically enslaved communities, those involved in the commemorations approached it with caution. According to Cubitt, Smith and Wilson, this was not only to do with questioning:

> how a particular passage of British history should be represented but to larger issues about the relationship between the past and present in British society, about whose voices had a right to be heard when this relationship is discussed, and the implications for all this about understanding of nation, community and identity in contemporary Britain.[133]

In 2006, the Blair Government set up an advisory group of stakeholders, chaired by the then Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, to ensure that the commemorations were relevant to local communities. The group included historians, museum and heritage professionals, faith groups, the media, activist groups and members from cultural events. Carvill has argued that the Government was anxious to ensure that the events addressed prevailing social and political issues, including racism.[134] In November 2006, Blair issued his 'deep sorrow' for Britain's role in the slave trade but stopped short of issuing an apology.

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[131] Diana Paton and Jane Webster, 'Remembering Slaver Trade Abolitions: Reflections on 2007 in International Perspectives', *A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, Vol. 20, (2009), p. 166.
[132] John R. Oldfield, *'Chords of Freedom': Commemoration, Ritual and Transatlantic Slavery* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).
[133] Laurajane Smith, Geoff Cubit, Ross Wilson, 'Introduction: Anxiety and Ambiguity in the Representation of Dissonant History' in Laurajane Smith, Geoff Cubit, Ross Wilson, and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 1.
[134] Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths', pp. 1-6.

Some argued that an apology would have opened up the state reparation claims.[135] Grant funding for projects was made available through central government by the way of the Heritage Lottery Fund[136] allocating £16 million to the bicentenary to support projects.[137] Focusing on the International Slavery Museum Liverpool (hereafter ISML, opened in 2007) and British Empire and Commonwealth Museums (hereafter BECM, opened in 2002), Carvill shows how 'current events in both cities such as racially motivated violence and evidence of a more politicised black community [which she attributes to developments since the Stephen Lawrence murder which took place in Liverpool in 1993], which have been linked to the legacies of slavery, have demonstrated issues [racism] that still exist.' These, in turn, shaped both museums' exhibitions in 2007.[138]

For example, the ISML distributed brochures, conducted radio interviews and curated public events, which emphasised the museum's mission to challenge modern issues around racism. Additionally, the ISML named its educational facility after the murdered teenager Anthony Walker, a British student of African descent who was murdered in Merseyside in 2005, as a means to highlight the persistence of racism in the UK. Concerning objects on display at the ISML, one of the more prominent objects, a Klu Klux Klan outfit, was used to highlight the persistence of racism in Western culture more broadly, and to contextualise discussions about slavery within more contemporary debates around race relations and civil rights.[139]

The BECM took a different approach. Rather than focusing ideological links between race and slavery, it emphasised the empowerment of black people, through galleries about Black Power figures such as Marcus Garvey and the Pan African movement. Other than racism, Carvill notes that the ISML and BECM confronted other specific legacies of empire, including diaspora and culture, in both their temporary and permanent galleries. These

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[135] Colin Brown, 'Blair admits to 'deep sorrow' over slavery – but no apology', *The Independent,* 27th November 2006, [online], <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/blair-admits-to-deep-sorrow-over-slavery-but-no-apology-426058.html>, accessed 13th August 2019.

[136] The former Heritage Lottery Fund, now called the National Lottery Heritage Fund is the government sponsored body responsible for distributing lottery money to fund heritage initiatives.

[137] Marian Gwyn, 'Memorialisation and Trauma: Britain and the Slave Trade'*, Museum International*, Vol. 63, No. 1-2, (2011), p. 86.

[138] Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths'*,* p. 2.

[139] Ibid*,* p. 11.

included: attitudes to African history and the slave trade; modern-day colonialism in Africa; and modern manifestations of slavery.

The BECM, for instance, had been established by supporters who felt the empire deserved a dedicated museum. It spanned more than 500 years of British colonial history. Alongside the 2007 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition, the museum consisted of three main galleries. They were, 'Britain Builds and Empire', 'The Rise of Victoria's Empire', and 'End of Empire'. The museum promoted free guided tours for schools and continuing professional development course for teachers to equip them with the necessary resources, theory and approaches concerning citizenship, slavery, history and sensitive issues. Carvill's study highlights the concerted effort that museums made in 2007 to not only confront Britain's colonial past but to situate it firmly in the present as a tool to combat contemporary issues around race and ethnicity.

Museums in port cities in the early 1990s show how this disquiet around Britain's colonial heritage marked a new period in Britain's relationship with their imperial past. Many, if not all, former port cities 'are steeped in material vestiges of their past. From old maritime waterfronts to grand mercantile architecture, from street names to statues, and from monuments to museums...'[140] As 'sites of memory',[141] and susceptible to the same forces that precipitated representational shifts in museums globally, these former port cities and their museums became important sites where challenges to collective memories and recollections of the imperial past were raised.[142] Liverpool, Bristol and London, and their respective museums are a testament to this. In the early 1990s, several port city museums including the Merseyside Maritime Museum, and Bristol City Archives, began to reflect on their imperial pasts, especially their role in the slave trade. Liverpool in particular was a major slave trading port. By 1795 Liverpool controlled over 80% of the British and over 40% of the entire European slave trade.[143] Bristol, meanwhile, financed over 2000 slaving

[140] Alice Mah, 'From Ports of Empire to Capitals of Culture: Museums of Slavery and Colonial History' in Alice Mah (ed.), *Port Cities and Global Legacies: Urban Identity, Waterfront Work and Radicalism* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), p. 88.

[141] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations, Special issues: Memory and Counter-Memory,* No. 26, (Spring 1989), pp. 7-24.

[142] Mah, 'From Ports of Empire to Capitals of Culture', p. 89.

[143] Liverpool Museums, 'International Slavery Museum', [online], <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/srd/liverpool.aspx>, accessed 22nd May 2019.

voyages between 1698 and 1807, and forcibly transported over 500,000 enslaved Africans from Africa to the Americas.

The Mersey Maritime Museum, a precursor to the ISML discussed earlier, was one of the first port city museums to deal with its slave-trading past, starting from 1994. This evolution itself reflects the ebbs and flows of the impact of empire on Liverpool as a port city. As Tristram Hunt has stated, 'The port of Liverpool had been made by Empire, and as decolonisation gathered pace, it was apparent the city would be unmade by the end of Empire, just as rapidly and messily as those final years of imperial retreat.'[144] This symbiotic relationship between city, museum, empire and urban identity is summed up by Alice Mah:

> One can read the city like a museum or an archive. But one can also read the city within the museum, and the museum in relation to the city. Indeed, museums are important spaces for negotiation and interpretation of urban identities. Museums of slavery and colonial history in Liverpool, Marseille, and New Orleans reveal how uncomfortable legacies are framed within competing narratives about urban identity.[145]

The former imperial port city is, then, a rich site for understanding how museums came to confront their imperial pasts and postcolonial futures. Bristol, for example, began seriously to confront its colonial legacies from the 1990s, and Olivette Otele has demonstrated how disagreements arose over what, and more importantly who, was included in Bristol's collective memory and heritage as a maritime centre. These, then precipitated a move towards more inclusive representations, which actively dealt with the city's slave-trading past.[146] Despite this growing confidence of museums to address Britain's challenging colonial past, a number of museums faced public and scholarly criticism. Slavery and empire continued to constitute 'difficult heritage', that is, topics where conflicting

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[144] Tristram Hunt, Conference Paper (unpublished) *Ten Cities that Built an Empire: Understanding British Imperialism Through the Urban Past*, Museum of London, [online] < https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/ten-cities-that-built-an-empire-understanding-british-imperialism-through-the-urban-past> accessed 22nd May 2018; Sheryllyne Haggerty, Anthony Webster and Nicholas J. White (ed.), *The empire in one city? Liverpool's inconvenient past* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

[145] Mah, *From Ports of Empire to Capitals of Culture,* p. 23.

[146] Olivette Otele, 'Bristol, slavery and the politics of representation: The Slave Trade Gallery in the Bristol Museum', *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2012), pp. 155-172.

memories prove difficult to negotiate.[147] The MoLD, a separate project which ultimately came under MoL control, is an obvious comparator to Bristol, and will be discussed in chapter eight.

Museums across the world have struggled with such potentially divisive histories and memories. Thomas Gieryn's article 'Balancing Acts: Science, Enola Gay and History Wars at the Smithsonian' (1998) is a good illustration of this. He returned from visiting two controversial exhibitions in 1996 at the Smithsonian about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

> unconvinced that the inevitable world of multiple epistemic communities is something to celebrate (but rather, to struggle through), depressed by the realisation that none of our sometimes-well-intentioned rhetorical weapons (objectivity, interpretive skill, dispassion) are fail-safe in convincing everybody else to accept our stories over different ones.[148]

The Smithsonian had attempted to tell both the bombing story and its effects in a balanced script. But devices such as juxtaposing the massive hull of the B29 bomber *Enola* Gay with a child's lunchbox with carbonised food inside, angered some veterans. They felt such devices questioned the morality of the bombing.[149] In short, museums may struggle to accommodate these multiple views.

There are many examples of such controversy arising over not just slavery exhibitions, but empire in general. The BECM is one such case. Opened in 2002, more than 20 years after it was originally conceptualised by arts campaigner John Letts in the 1970s, it was the first major museum specifically dedicated to the history of Britain's overseas empire. According to McAleer, it aimed to present the facts and history in an objective way, to allow people to explore for themselves what empire meant to them.[150] The museum officially closed in

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[147] Laurajane Smith, 'Affect and Registers of Engagement: Navigating Emotional Responses to Dissonant Heritages', in in Laurajane Smith, Geoff Cubit, Ross Wilson, and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 260.
[148] Thomas F. Gieryn, 'Balancing Acts: Science, Enola Gay and History Wars at the Smithsonian', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.) *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1998)*,* p. 225.
[149] Ibid, pp. 205-221.
[150] McAleer, 'That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood'*,* p. 83.

2012, but whilst it was open the museum appeared 249 times in the *Bristol Evening Post* in the four years between 23rd July 2002 and 3rd July 2006, and a large proportion of the stories highlighted negative responses from the public.

Controversy over the BECM began as early as the 1970s when concerns were raised over the inclusion of the word empire in the name. It also had difficulty tapping the HLF for funding as the 2007 slavery commemorative date approach. Katherine Prior, the in-house historical advisor for the BECM, had noted that 'no-one wins plaudits in Britain for funding exhibitions on empire'.[151] McAleer writes that despite money having been allocated by the HLF for museums, the BECM's application for funds was denied in December 2005. The BECM continued to expand through private donations, and their membership network.[152]

The issue of finance, or lack of it, touches a wider point about museums' recognition of the importance of visitors. Scholars have argued that parallel with museums adopting of a more active social role in the 1980s, there has been an increasing emphasis on pleasing their visitors and their 'government paymasters'.[153] In the case of the BECM, Prior has noted that professional and public criticisms of the BECM, before it had even opened, was an obstacle to potential funding. Critics of Britain's Empire, she argues, were concerned the Museum risked engaging in flag-waving jingoism owing to its largely pro-empire sponsors. Prior contends that these particular criticisms were because many academics feared '…that the average white Briton remains a flag-waving imperialist at heart'.[154] On the other hand, since the 1980s, other attempts to engage with empire have been successful. To what degree public affirmation plays a role in the success of such exhibitions remains largely unexplored. Smith concludes that whilst visitors are mindful of wider debate when visiting a museum, the majority go to reinforce their intellectual positions. She concedes, however, that exhibitions still have the potential to modify or change people's views.[155]

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[151] Katherine Prior, 'Museum of the British Empire and Commonwealth', *History Today,* Vol. 52, No. 84, (October 2002), p. 2.
[152] McAleer, 'That Infamous Commerce in Human Blood'*,* p. 82.
[153] Tim Benton and Nicola J. Watson, 'Museum practice and heritage', p. 127.
[154] Prior, 'Museum of the British Empire and Commonwealth', p. 2.
[155] Smith, 'Affects and Registers of Engagement', pp. 300-301.

Evidence of Smith's view is borne out in the case of the BECM. As Carvill notes, on the 9th May 2006, the BECM staged debates about Bristol's role in the slave trade and whether an apology should be issued by Bristol City Council, in 2006, a year prior to its 'Breaking the Chains Exhibition'. The debate was sparked a week earlier when the local *Bristol Evening News* declared that 'It's time the city said sorry'. Carvill notes how this caused controversy, with 96% of the audience voting against apologising for Bristol's role in the slave trade. Subsequently, participants appeared to become more sympathetic towards the idea as the debate wore on.[156] Several newspaper articles covered it at the time including the guardian

The controversy over the 'Breaking the Chains' exhibition, suggests that, in order to understand the discussions, debates and concerns surrounding the 2007 anniversary year, these need to be considered within the wider context of British imperial history. Hall has argued that it is because we are no longer at home with the empire that imperial historians have begun to question the place and value of empire in contemporary British society. The shifting historiography of empire has resulted in a questioning of whether or not the history of British colonialism is conducive to a positive self-affirming British identity.[157] New histories, such as *Britain's Gulag* (2005) by Caroline Elkins, have for instance, challenged our understanding of Britain's exit from empire, as something much more violent than previously been credited: as featuring a series of 'dirty wars'.[158] Furthermore, as a result of immigration from former colonies, multiple epistemic communities have brought multiple perspectives to the history of British colonialism in the postcolonial era, and repeated challenges over time to museums to accommodate new perspectives and claims.

My thesis will be a critical contribution to these debates. It will provide this by constructing a sustained analysis of shifting interpretations of empire at the MoL and MoLD from 1993-2007. My thesis will also situate the MoL experience in the broader story of Britain's attitudes to, and debates about, its empire story by comparing these two institutions with other port/city museums and broader postcolonial politics.

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[156] Carvill, 'Uncomfortable Truths', p. 4.; Amelia Hill, 'City agonises over slavery apology', *The Guardian*, 7th May 2006, [online], <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/may/07/ameliahill.theobserver>, accessed 30th August 2017.
[157] Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, 'Introduction: being at home with the Empire', in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, *At Home with the British Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[158] Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya* (London: Johnathan Cape, 2005).

Museum History

The increase in research on the relationship between empire and museums outlined above has affected how the history of museums has been written. I intend throughout my analysis of the MoL, its galleries, exhibitions and internal machinations to contribute to history writing through material culture more broadly, but also to those themes outlined above. I intend to take a critical approach to my history of the MoL and their engagement with histories of empire, looking both at events within the museum and other socio-political contexts and the external forces which in part shaped those events. It is difficult to overstate the importance of writing the history of museums. As Longair and Hannan have stated in their recent guide, *History Through Material Culture* (2017):

> As long as humans have made material things, material things have shaped human history […] Material things influence our ideas, encode value and convey messages. For historians, finding ways to access the values and meanings embodied within material things bring the past into clearer focus.[159]

Through the MoL as a case study and using 'Peopling' as a microcosm to interrogate shifting interpretations of empire at a key moment in recent history, this thesis contributes to this growing field. It attempts to access the meanings embodied within the MoL displays as a mirror to socio-political discourse with regards to the postcolonial moment in which 'Peopling' emerged. Here I wish to highlight some broader methodological approaches which have informed my approach to this study.

Perhaps one of the most prolific writers and theorists on museum history has been Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, Professor Emeritus of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. In her book *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (1992), Greenhill criticised two formative approaches to museum histories, suggesting instead her own approach building on Foucault's work concerning epistemes: that is how a given culture orders knowledge in any given historical period. This approach favours rupture and discontinuity over continuity, to propose an effective history of museums. Where previous histories have privileged the chronological developments of museums, lacking any serious criticism concerning change, or have been written by people who were deeply entangled within their own institutions,

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[159] Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, *History Through Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 1.

an 'effective history' seeks to 'identify all the various elements that together made up the identity of the "museums" in a particular period, focusing on when and how museums in the past changed, and in which way and why longstanding practices were ruptured and abandoned.'[160]

In thinking about how museums change Simon Knell has gone a step further. He argues that change in museums can be characterised as much by the adopting of norms, or even incremental change around more general inertia, as by 'revolutionary change'. Museums are constantly in flux, never reaching a finished stage.[161] The tension between inertia and change will be central to my thesis, helping to highlight rupture and discontinuity at a key moment in Britain's postcolonial present.

To return to Greenhill, there are obvious methodological limitations concerning the source and archival material as there are with all historical inquiries. Attempting to identify elements that shape museums' identities and change at any given time is often difficult as a result of a lack of archival material.[162] This has certainly been an issue with the MoL, an institution which has struggled with cataloguing material. As a result, not all sources can be identified. The MoL has nevertheless been generous in allowing access to: the 'Peopling' exhibition proposal; internal communications, memorandums, and minutes from internal meetings discussing the planning of the exhibition; confidential letters between curators and executive staff discussing elements of the exhibition; visitor comments books; annual reports; as well as documents concerning the MoL's formative years. This thesis has taken an interdisciplinary approach so as to call on more methods from heritage studies, the New Museology, cultural studies, and oral history (with interviews allowing the filling in of feelings, debates, and details that the traditional archives miss), so that I can reconstruct and deconstruct the displays and galleries using photographs of the displays and of other materials.

My thesis will offer an original and holistic approach to analysing the permanent galleries and exhibitions as creative events. Using planning documents, photographs, draft text panels, guidebooks, oral history and annual reports, I have attempted to build a 360-degree

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[160] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992), p. 11.

[161] Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson, *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. xix – xxvi.

[162] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge,* p. 20.

view of the exhibition (here 'Peopling'), that is to see the exhibition displays as just the visible part of a wider creative process.

This holistic approach includes the standard analysis of curators' and staff members' attitudes and aims, but also additional and equally important layers of interpretation. I have also tried to read as evidence the visible exhibition, the exhibition catalogue and the educational materials, as well as the relationships established with outside groups in putting the exhibition together alongside accompanying events and visions for future programming. This way of analysing an exhibition like 'Peopling' encompasses a wide range of approaches and components, culminating in taking reception of the exhibition seriously by, again, looking at multiple elements including press, formal reports and evaluation, and especially here visitor books (for more recent exhibitions social media would need to be included in this list).

Reception was a particularly important aspect of my method in my attempt to deal with the perceived ephemeral nature of temporary exhibitions. There are limits to a number of these sources. Draft panel texts, for example, may not offer the final version. Guidebooks are also problematic, as they can represent an over-curated view of the Museum's programming, highlighting those elements of the exhibition the Museum chooses. They are also commercial artefacts. As with all primary sources, my sources provide only partial glimpses but together provide a more holistic view of 'Peopling' and its relationship with, and impact on, the Museum over time, and some provide a novel way of understanding past exhibitions. Each type of source and approach adds something new. The guidebooks, for example, were useful in recreating the visitor routes and layout of the exhibition for which photographic evidence no longer exists.

Owing to the problematic nature and paucity of catalogued material at the Museum of London, I also chose to conduct oral history interviews with those involved in the 'Peopling' project to strengthen and fill in gaps from my archival research, and to identify new archival material. I identified my participants using a targeted sampling strategy to ensure I included a variety of voices from individuals involved in the design and execution of 'Peopling', and individuals with a peripheral and executive view of the exhibition. My initial list of potential respondents numbered fourteen including the lead curator, executive staff at the Museum, education staff, external consultants and other staff members from across the MoL. Owing to the death of some potential respondents, the refusal of others and simply being unable

to trace and contact a few, the final number of respondents was six, with one only providing background information and asking not to be recorded. My participants represented the lead curatorial team, executive staff at the time of 'Peopling' and external consultants and project researchers.

Historians have long been concerned about the representative nature of oral history research, however, as my interviews were designed to shed light on official discourses and interpretations embedded in the 'Peopling' exhibition, it was not necessary to gain a fully representative sample.[163] Visitor comments, which are examined in chapter seven, provide a critical counterbalance to how official interpretations were received. I approached my interviews in a conversational manner similar to the 'active interview' method of sociologists. That is, I rejected the questionnaire approach in favour of a more fluid semi-structured method, producing a conducive environment for the participant to volunteer relevant information.[164] I drafted several pertinent questions informed by my archival research to ensure I could address gaps in my materials, however, it was often the case that when left to speak the participants would address my questions and offer relevant information that a more rigid set of questions might have failed to capture. My transcripts and recordings will be deposited with the Museum of London.

More broadly, I have made a conscious choice to use my case-study of 'Peopling', a creative moment, to move away from more theoretically driven approaches which through their criticisms, 'Praising or castigating museums for what they collect or show at one point', can fail to illuminate, 'how those particular understandings and narratives were arrived at.'[165] Resulting from this, according to Bronwyn Labrum:

> There is a tendency to analyse contemporary museums, particularly in the field of cultural studies, from a theoretical standpoint which contributes much to the critical literature but pays less attention to the actual practices in museums and fails to acknowledge their contradictory and complex nature.[166]

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[163] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 5.
[164] Donald A. Ritchie (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 11-12.
[165] Bronwyn Labrum, 'Making Pakeha Histories in New Zealand Museums: Community and Identity in the post-war period', in Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 149.
[166] Ibid*,* p. 149.

Much of the work of historians dealing with museums and their relationship to empire has initially been, as discussed here, driven by theoretical concerns informed by postcolonial critiques. They tend to analyse museums for evidence of their entrenching notions of the other. However, more recent collections, such as the one by Longair and McAleer, have been more concerned to see 'individual museums in their specific historical contexts and to avoid overarching pronouncements about the role of the museum in buttressing perceived ideologies of empire.'[167] Finding a balance between the theoretical and empirical here is a key aim of my thesis, so it can both explain the specific historical context, and yet also the myriad influences that shape museums and their activities.

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[167] Longair and McAleer (ed.), *Curating Empire: Museums and the British Imperial Experience*, p. 5.

Chapter Two: Prelude to the Museum of London, its origins in the Guildhall and London Museums 1826-1976

Introduction

The Museum of London opened to the public on the 1st June 1976. The MoL was the amalgamation of the Guildhall Museum (1826) and the London Museum (1911), a process which began in earnest in the 1960s.[168] The Guildhall Museums was not formerly housed in a separate building on Basinghall street until the middle of the nineteenth century. However, this date is often cited because it was the point at which initial suggestions were made under the administration of the City of London Corporation Library Committee for the consideration to be given to a new museum to house antiquities unearthed through municipal development.

The amalgamation of these two museums was a protracted affair, owing to a complex funding and organisational structure set out in the Museum of London Act in 1965, representing the State, local and regional governance, and through which all decisions had to be negotiated.[169] There were also issues about how to amalgamate museums which featured divergent missions and collections. The Guildhall Museum held mostly archaeological material acquired during the municipal redevelopment of London that began in the 1830s. The London Museum boasted a much broader collection policy, indicative of a growing interest in the recent past, and everyday bygones typical of early city museums that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century across Europe. It is therefore essential to summarise the history of both museums as they both represent different aspects of the development and growth of museums in the UK.

Museum development in Britain did not follow a linear pattern from cabinets of curiosity, through the disciplinary museum, to modern conceptions of the new/post-museum. Simon Knell has argued that tracing a linear evolutionary path from the similarities of museums is possible, however, 'most new museums – are the product of rejecting the perceived norms

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[168] Tom Hume, 'The Museum of London', *Museum International,* Volume 29, No. 2-3, (January/December 1977), p. 104.
[169] Museum of London Act 1965, UK Public General Acts, Chapter 17, [online], <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1965/17/section/15>, accessed on 15th January 2019.

of museum practice as much as they are about adopting them.' Museums have been in constant flux, owing to individual attempts to shape museums and their collections. And, whilst such changes are more often 'fine scale rather than pervasive', such changes are indicative of the dynamic rather than linear development of museums.[170] With this in mind, before moving on to discuss the MoL and its galleries when it opened in 1976, it is necessary to highlight those norms and practices which the MoL inherited from its predecessors.

The Guildhall Museum and Municipal Redevelopment 1826 – 1869

The Guildhall (1440) is one of the oldest remaining non-ecclesiastical stone buildings to have survived in the City of London. It has served as the administrative centre of the City of London Corporation for 500 hundred years, providing many functions from the creation of laws to governing the city's growing wealth from the seventeenth century, to receiving the King of Prussia upon Napoleon's defeat in 1815. The Guildhall held great significance as a site of civic administration and power, when in the early nineteenth century plans to collect and store antiquities were first suggested. The Guildhall remains the meeting place of the Common Council presided over by the Lord Mayor.[171]

The founding of the Guildhall Museum, the first museum to be financed by a local authority, was in part stimulated by the growth of local antiquarian and archaeological societies from the mid-nineteenth century.[172] The following paragraphs outline this relationship alongside changing attitudes towards London's archaeological past, as municipal redevelopment unearthed significant British-Romano archaeological materials in London. Before discussing these local historical contexts, I will outline broader cultural changes that were taking place across Europe in the late eighteenth century and which gave rise to the public museum as a common type of institution.[173]

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[170] Simon Knell, 'Introduction', in Simon J. Knell *et al* (ed.), *Museum Revolutions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. xix-xx.
[171] City of London, 'Development of local government', [online], <https://web.archive.org/web/20130519152438/http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-the-city/history-and-future/history-and-heritage/Pages/Development-of-local-government.aspx>, accessed 12th June 2019.
[172] Catherine Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', in Gaynor Kavanagh and Elizabeth Frostick (ed.), *Making City Histories in Museums* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), p. 115.
[173] Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in Public Museums, 1850-1914,* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2015), p. 38.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *Wunderkammer* (cabinet of curiosity), which had been the principal model by which collections were displayed, was being supplanted by the public museum. Since the Renaissance, museums and collecting had become increasingly popular across Britain and Europe.[174] The French Revolution in 1789, and the emergence of the modern nation-state in Europe, is often cited as the moment in which a public museum culture emerged in Europe. Others have noted that there were public museums in England much earlier. In 1683, Ashmole's Repository, England's first university museums, opened in Oxford University, and remains one of the 'oldest surviving purpose built museum in the world, housing as it did John Tradescant the Younger's famous collection.'[175] The Ashmolean was opened to the public, albeit it with limited access, as was the case with many of Britain's public museums and art galleries.

The British Museum, however, is often cited as the first public museum in Britain. The act that established the British Museum (1753), and which created a board of trustees, in whom the collections were vested in perpetuity for public benefit, set a precedent for state-sponsored cultural provision through a public-private cooperation.[176] Despite boasting free admission, the British Museum was notoriously hard to get into. Visits had to be requested in advance in writing, and numbers were kept to sixty per day.[177] The majority of museums at this time operated limited opening times which rendered them inaccessible to ordinary working people, and most charged a fee. To think of the British Museum as a public museum in the late eighteenth century is therefore problematic because of the restricted nature of the public. Yet, the public museum was increasingly seen as a means of public betterment and education in the latter-half of the nineteenth century.

The Guildhall Museum emerged as this museum culture was evolving, and local and state authorities were beginning to fund museums. By this time there were only two national museums in England, the British Museum (1753) and the National Portrait Gallery (1823), and with the exception of Warrington (1848) the Guildhall was the first museum funded by

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[174] Jeffrey Abt, 'The Origins of the Public Museum', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.) *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 119-123.

[175] Christine Garwood, *Museums in Britain: A History* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2014)*,* pp. 12-15.

[176] Johnathan Williams, 'Parliaments, Museums, Trustees, and the Provision of Public Benefit in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (June 2013), pp. 195–214.

[177] James Delbourgo, *Collecting the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), p. 320.

a civic authority in England. It was not until 1845 that local authorities could use taxes to fund museums. As Sheppard has noted, it is surprising that the Guildhall had even come up with the idea to advance a museum so early on.[178] This suggests that the City of London Corporation was an early museum advocate, perhaps even enthusiastic. However, the emergence of the Guildhall owed as much to the tenacious agitation of antiquarians and the development of professional archaeology as it did to its own efforts. Far from proactive, the Corporation was lambasted on several occasions for its lack of perceived care and duty to London's Roman antiquities.

Under the leadership of Richard Lambert Jones, a committee was established by the City of London Corporation to 'inquire into the best method of arranging and carrying into effect in the Guildhall, a Library of all matters relating to this City, the Borough of Southwark, and the County of Middlesex'.[179] Upon the creation of the new library the Committee in 1824, they began to collect a number of valuable books, and in 1826 the library was opened exclusively for Corporation members. The library increased in size and importance, with a core collection that focused upon London history. Two years after the creation of the library, it was proposed that a museum also be created to hold archaeological acquisitions in response to a request from the Common Council of the City of London Corporation that the Library Committee '…consider the proprietary of providing [a] suitable place for the reception of such Antiquities as relate to the City of London and Suburbs'.[180] It would be several decades, however, until a Guildhall Museum received any serious consideration.

According to Charles Roach Smith, a passionate antiquarian who devoted his life to collecting Roman and medieval antiquities, the Corporation did not care much for London's archaeology. Born in 1806, Smith moved to London in 1827, having trained as a chemist. He was also an antiquarian, and London and its redevelopment from the 1830s provided fertile ground to satisfy his passion. During his time in London he amassed a large collection of more than 5,000 artefacts, which he eventually sold to the British Museum around 1855

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[178] Francis Sheppard, *The Treasury of London's Past,* (London: HMSO, 1991), p. 11.
[179] City of London, 'History of the Guildhall', [online], <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/guildhall-library/visit-us/Pages/History-of-Guildhall-Library.aspx>, accessed 11th June 2019.
[180] Museum of London, 'History of our Collections', [online], <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections/about-our-collections/history-our-collections>, accessed 6th November 2011.

for a sum of two thousand pounds having been turned down by the Corporation.[181] Smith believed the Corporation's lack of attention to London's antiquities was indicative of more general attitudes towards archaeology in Britain at the time. His disdain for the Corporation was also the result of a shared personal animosity discussed below.

In the nineteenth century the antiquarian was stereotyped as 'incapable of abstraction in his love of worm-eaten things.' Yet, Astrid Swenson and others have argued that these '…parodies are testament to the societies' ubiquity rather than their marginality.'[182] Roach Smith was certainly energetic in his efforts to champion archaeology and the proper care of London's Roman past. Smith played a significant role in pushing for the protection and proper care of archaeological remains. He attempted to rescue material excavated by labourers employed by the Corporation for municipal redevelopment projects, offering to buy objects from them.[183] His zealous nature, however, caused enormous friction between himself and the corporation.

Smith's alienation from the Corporation then deepened when, in 1839, the Corporation embarked on an improved east-west route from Princes Street near Smith's premises, and he was evicted from his property nearby in Lothbury. Smith's frustration with the Corporation intensified when he was banned from surveying finds during the rebuilding of the Royal Exchange after it burnt down in 1838. This was due to an accusation, later shown to be false, of his having bribed workmen to bring him artefacts which were the property of the Corporation. Animosity between the two parties heightened over subsequent disagreements, confusions and insults. When Smith published his *Collectanea Antiqua* (1857), he remarked that the French in their enlightened approach to antiquities were in stark contrast to the 'municipal authorities in England in the preservation of antiquities and formation of public museums'. According to Sheppard the development of vitriol between Smith and the Corporation may actually have hindered the development of an adequate museum rather than helped it.[184] Smith's agitation for the protection of London's

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[181] Hume, 'The Museum of London', p. 100.

[182] Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage in Britain, France and Germany 1789-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 66-69.

[183] Martijn Polm, 'Museum Representations of Roman Britain and Roman London: A Post-Colonial Perspective', *Britannia,* Vol. 47 (November 2016), pp. 209–241.

[184] Sheppard, *Treasury of London's Past,* pp. 13-16.

archaeological remains was indicative of the growth and professionalisation of archaeology as a discipline in the mid-nineteenth century, which developed alongside the growth in museums.

Archaeology developed out of those antiquarian societies discussed earlier. In 1707 the Society of Antiquaries was founded, although as Sheppard has pointed out this was a 'lethargic and dilettante body incapable of effective action.'[185] Excavations and early significant finds, alongside the developments of other sciences, most especially geology, began to establish key theories such as the antiquity of man.[186] Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) had further consolidated the view that the history of humankind stretched further back than the bible had suggested, providing the impetus for systematic methods of analysis, a strong focus on fieldwork, 'and the study of material culture found in excavations.'[187] With this, archaeology became concerned with the objective presentation of material within the museum for the study of human prehistory. By the time the City of Corporation began to collect antiquities in the 1830s, the likes of C. J. Thomsen (1788-1865), a Danish archaeologist, had already developed the three-age system (stone, bronze and iron-ages) as a means to classify artefacts based on what they were made of. Others such as Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) helped to develop the 'Sequence Dating System, which used pottery styles as a key to dating archaeological sites.'[188] These new techniques helped to develop chronologies and ideas about phases in the development of cultures.

Alongside these developments there was a boom in museum building. The Museum Act (1845), also known as the William Ewart Act, allowed municipal councils with a population of more than 10,000 people to levy a 1/2d in the pound to establish new museums. William Ewart was a middle-class radical who believed that museums in their systematic approach to classification and display could trace the universal truth of human progress and were important tools in the betterment of the working class. He also believed that they should be partially state funded. This was a growing sentiment shared by much of the bourgeoisie

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[185] Ibid, pp. 10-11.

[186] Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, methods and practice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2016), pp. 21-26.

[187] Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, *History Through Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 21.

[188] Ibid, p. 21.

at the time, owing to their rising disposable incomes and desire to assert their own cultural identity.[189] Increasingly the middle-classes were beginning to visit museums, and high culture was no longer seen as the preserve of the elites. Subsequent acts such as the Library Act (1850) expanded the scope of the 1845 act. The extent to which government and the middle-class were actually concerned with the edification of the wider public is contestable.[190]

It was in this broader context that the City of London Corporation's increasing support of collecting should be understood. Under increasing pressure from antiquarians, and newly formed archaeological societies, the Library Committee sought to prove it was a good trustee of London's urban archaeology. As an aside, it should be noted that the museum's first big acquisition came earlier in 1836 when it received two large fragments of mosaics found in Tower Street donated by Arthur Taylor.[191]

By 1843, Charles Roach Smith had founded the British Archaeological Association along with Thomas Wight, and, as Hume has noted, '…the need to preserve discoveries made in the course of the redevelopment in the city was the principal stimulus in the creation of the museum.'[192] As a result, the question of a museum was renewed in 1845, and the Committee resolved that a small room the library had used to store antiquities was inadequate, and that part of the medieval crypt beneath the Guildhall should be repurposed as a museum.[193] Despite the Corporation accelerating its acquisition of material, a museum was yet to appear. Serious steps to establish a museum as a separate entity, not simply an adjunct to the library, came in the 1860s, as the educational potential of museums received continued support.

Charles Reed, known for his pamphlet *A Plea for a Free Public Library and Museum in the City of London* (1855),[194] appointed Chairman of the of the Library Committee in 1858 and

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[189] Hill*, Culture and Class in English Public Museums*, pp. 38-39.
[190] Tony Bennett, 'Useful Culture', *Cultural Studies,* Vol. 6, No. 3, (1992), p. 398.
[191] Hume, 'The Museum of London', p. 99. It is worth noting that archaeological societies at time were predominantly concerned with ancient Britain rather than the classical world.
[192] Ibid*,* p. 99.
[193] Sheppard, *Treasury of London's Past,* p. 16.
[194] Reed Smith, *Why Not? A Plea for a Free Public Library and Museum in the City of London, established without Taxation* (London, 1855).

again in 1865, and Dr Sedgwick Saunders, also an advocate for public libraries and museums, and Chairman in 1866 and 1869, would finally succeed in establishing a separate museum. Both had secured important Roman and medieval collections during their time as Chairmen and leveraged their position to persuade the Corporation to build suitable accommodation for their collections. In 1866, William Overall, the Guildhall Librarian, persuaded the Corporation to finance the construction of a new building for both the library and the Museum. Having faced much criticism over their alleged neglect towards urban archaeology, on the 22nd of July 1869, the Court of the Common Council finally agreed to create a separate museum.[195] The new museum was located on the West Side of Basinghall Street. The museum opened in 1874. In the following year it opened to the public. By 1910 the Museum was receiving 153,00 visitors each year.[196]

In the 1870s the Museum began to rationalise its collecting practices. Its previous and more eclectic approach led to their refusal to purchase Smith's London collection in 1855 but accommodated the purchase of two Assyrian slabs from Nineveh. From the 1870s onwards, the Museum focused its collecting on antiquities found in the City itself. In 1881 the Corporation purchased John Walker Baily's collection of antiquities, and with that rationalised their focus on Romano-British antiquities. In 1902 the Museum published their first catalogue, and in 1907 they engaged their first museum clerk.[197]

[195] Polm, 'Museum Representations of Roman Britain and Roman London', pp. 21-23.
[196] Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', p. 122.
[197] Hume, *The Museum of London,* p. 100.
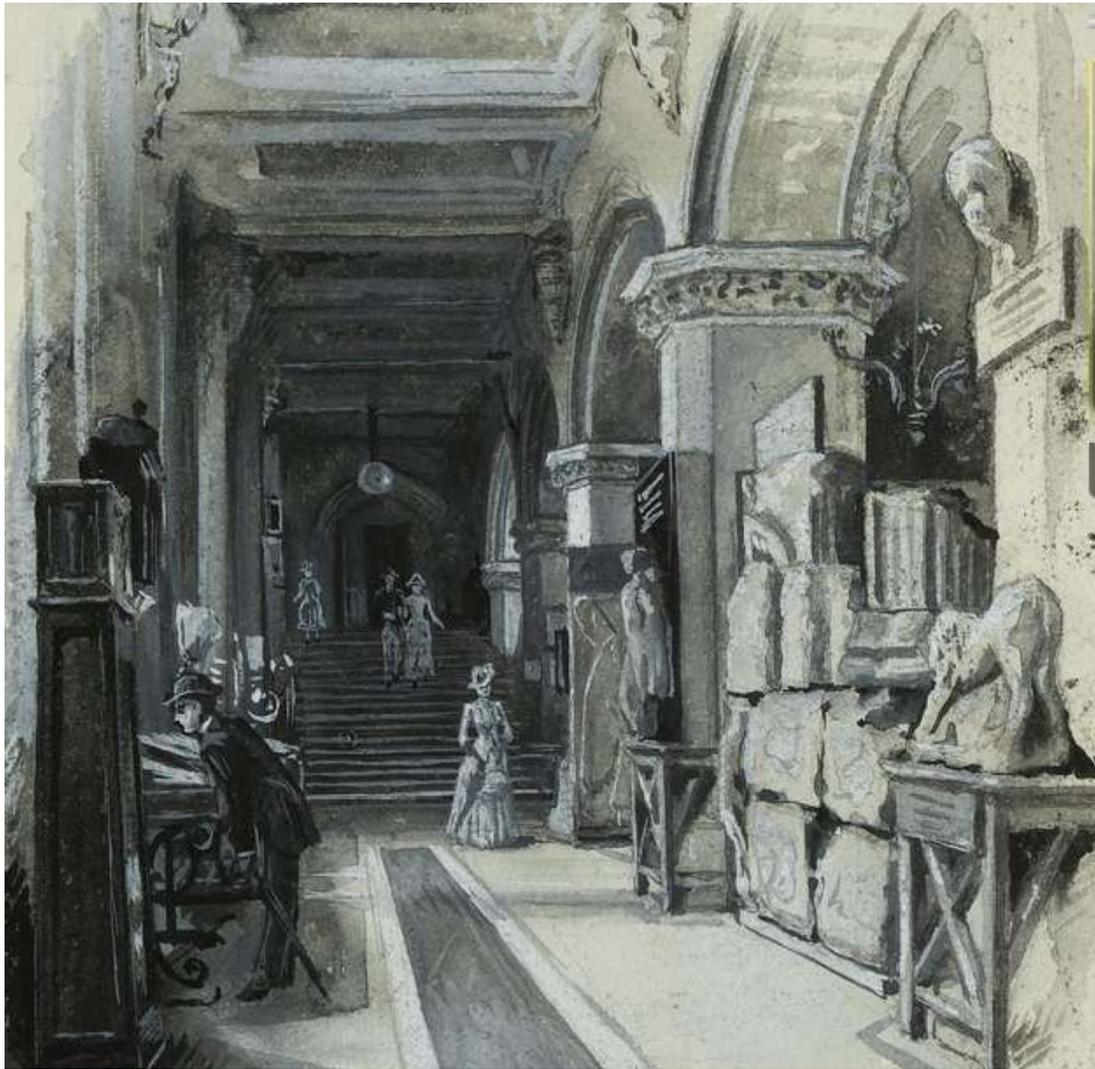
Figure 1: Guildhall Library, Basinghall Street, c. 1870.
Source: Francis Sheppard, Treasury of London's Past (London: HMSO, 1991), p. 25. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

The collections at the Guildhall came to include Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval objects, acquired in a fragmentary fashion from antiquarians such as Charles Roach Smith, and directly. Typical of contemporary archaeology museums, their collections sought to provide visual roots for a supposed history of the nation. Municipal museums at this time were often smaller versions of national museums, mirroring this desire to see the nation unfolded through ancient and prehistory (figures 1-2). Unfortunately, the lack of guidebooks, and other literature from the time, limits how far we can analyse the nineteenth-century Guildhall. What we do know is that the Guildhall continued to work closely with professional bodies such as the London and Middlesex Archaeology Society.

Figure 2: Case with antiquities in the Guildhall Museum, c. 1875.
Source: Francis Sheppard, Treasury of London's Past (London: HMSO, 1991), p. 27. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

Opened to the public in 1875, the Museum was always intended more as a study resource in archaeology than as a popular public museum. This serious strand of archaeological research remains a strong feature of the Guildhall's successor, the MoL, even today,

through its field work and the Museum of London Archaeology centre.[198] When the Guildhall was amalgamated it counted 27,700 items, with the vast majority of those being archaeological.[199] In between, however, the Guildhall's importance in preserving new archaeological finds declined due to competition and major international events. Firstly, a new museum for London opened in 1912. In 1926, this new London Museum appointed Mortimer Wheeler as Keeper, who had worked for the Royal Commission for Historical Monuments.[200] The Guildhall Museum then closed with the onset of the Second World War and did not re-open until 1955 when space was found in the Royal Exchange. Its collections were then amalgamated with the London Museum in 1965, and so it is to the London Museum that we must now turn.

The Growth of the Civic Museum (1869 – 1918): The Prelude to the London Museum

Before outlining the emergence of the London Museum, it is necessary to further outline the growth of museums in the latter half of the nineteenth century, stimulated as they were by a Victorian agenda of civic improvement. In this period there was an exponential growth in the number of museums, not only as a result of the 1854 William Ewart Act, but also as the international exhibition reached its apogee with the 1851 International Exhibition at Crystal Palace. With these developments, the potential for museums as spaces for entertainment and instruction became increasingly central to the debate about their efficacy.[201]

National museums gradually became a symbol of a nation's modernity and progress. This was Britain's first great museum boom, stretching from the 1860s to the end of the First World War.[202] At the height of European colonialism in the late nineteenth century, museums also became the store houses of imperial loot and a nation's measure of its cultural superiority. As discussed in chapter one, imperialism 'was interwoven with a whole

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[198] Museum of London Archaeology, [online], <https://www.mola.org.uk/>, accessed 12th June 2019.
[199] Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', p. 115.
[200] Hume, 'The Museum of London', p. 101.
[201] Paul Greenhalgh, 'Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions, in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).
[202] Garwood, *Museums in Britain,* p. 8.

host of phenomena, from the development of academic disciplines to the growth of institutions like museums…'[203] Together these elements coalesced around the expansion of European nations, and museums increasingly became a significant marker of a nation's cultural capital.

Domestically, the idea of museums as a tool for public betterment was also consolidated in this period. In 1888 Thomas Greenwood argued that museums should be considered 'absolutely necessary for the welfare of every municipality in the country.'[204] The success of the 1851 exhibition, which generated £186,000, led to debates about how best to spend the money. Prince Albert intervened, providing an additional government grant of £150,000 to purchase space south of Hyde Park. Sir Henry Cole, secretary of the Department of Science and Art pushed to rename the Brompton area the Museum District of South Kensington, and work began on the new museum as part of an educational estate nicknamed Albertopolis.[205] Opened in 1857, and subsequently moved to a new building, the South Kensington Museum set two important precedents. One was the move towards more egalitarian opening hours to accommodate the working classes.[206] The second was to provide a visual archive to promote and instruct in the design and production of crafts and industrial production. The South Kensington Museum provided a model that was subsequently repeated across the UK and Europe.[207] This encouraged the growth of municipal museums across the UK, stimulated by Victorian ideas of municipal redevelopment, education, and industry.

Municipal and civic museums emerged across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, usually as a semi-official expression of civic identity. These museums brought together archaeology, antiquarian interests, topography, decorative and fine arts, linking them together. These museums were some of the first to produce popular social and cultural histories of urban life, reflecting the growth of specialist museums that

[203] John M. MacKenzie and John McAleer, 'Cultures of Display and the British Empire', in John McAleer and John M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Exhibiting the Empire: Cultures of Display and the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 1.

[204] Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1888), p. viii.

[205] Garwood, *Museums in Britain,* p. 26.

[206] Ibid, p. 27.

[207] Michaela Giebelhausen, 'Museum Architecture', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, p. 232.

accompanied this late-Victorian museum boom. Gaynor Kavanagh has argued that such museums became a 'signal of urban sophistication, a credential for all those borough authorities which had succeeded in making their towns relatively healthier and better ordered places in which to live.' This was accompanied by changes in local and national government in the nineteenth century, which sought to engender social order and stability through municipal reforms. From 1868, the strengthening of local government powers through various legislation, including the 1888 Government Reform Act, which established county councils and county borough councils, laid the groundwork for the development of these new museums.[208]

From the 1850s the civic ceremonial and processions increased as an attempt to legitimise the new role of local government, and to provide it with legitimacy in the eyes of the public.[209] New municipal and civic museums were central to these developments. Between 1850 and 1902, several museums opened in Liverpool, Birmingham, Exeter, Norwich, and Glasgow. Alongside them was the development of the role of the curator, and professional associations such as the Museum Association which began in 1889. Approaches to collections and display practices at this time became increasingly heterogenous, although many still relied on the model of the national museum.

Collections in the nineteenth century were often gifted by local learned societies, which was in turn influenced by national museums and their approaches, 'Even small towns felt that they had to have their Egyptian and Greek artefacts, collections of oil paintings (not necessarily local) and assorted materials, whether they could afford them or not.'[210] Local products, according to Gaynor Kavanagh appeared:

> …only if suitable, hence the ironwork collection at Birmingham and the ceramics collections at Stoke-on-Trent. Curiosities might also be allowed, but by definition had to be outside present-day experience. Rush nips scold bridles, early slipware

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[208] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'Buttons, Belisha Beacons and Bullets', in *Making City Histories in Museums* (ed.) Gaynor Kavanagh and Elizabeth Frostick (London: Leicester University Press, 1998), p. 4.
[209] Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums,* p. 32.
[210] Kavanagh, 'Buttons, Belisha Beacons and Bullets', p. 7.

and horned lanterns were permissible, representing something remote in time, whereas trade-union banners, oral accounts, and imagery were not.[211]

History in these museums was, therefore, materially represented through classical learning, high art, and vernacular objects, but not popular art or recent social history.

Another major development between the middle of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in Europe, following the creation of the Musée Carnavalet in Paris in 1866, was the city museum. This new type of museum aimed to promote the city 'as a single entity by providing its citizens with an explicit past, usually a history animated by the benevolent force of civic or national authority.'[212] The Musée Carnavalet (1888) was accommodated in the Hôtel Carnavalet, a private sixteenth century lodging in the Marais quartier. The museum initially favoured archaeological collections, but moved on to develop collections in textiles, topography, and the history of the French Revolution. The Carnavalet was known for its luxurious interior decorations set up inside exhibition rooms restored from private lodgings that were demolished.[213] These 'civic trophy rooms', produced 'monolithic narratives' within which there were often a celebration of a 'golden age'.[214] Another good example of this type of early city museum is the Copenhagen museum (1901), which contained:

> …a beautiful collection of paintings and drawing with motifs from Copenhagen, heavily representing the flourishing period from the end of the 18th century and the Golden Age in the 19th century. Old signs from trade and handicraft, a very popular model of a palace on fire made in 188 and a lot of items from fire-brigades took up much space. So did furniture and porcelain from famous 19th century Copenhagen families and well-known artists.[215]

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[211] Ibid, p. 7.
[212] Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', p. 116.
[213] Jean-Louis Postula, 'City museum, community and temporality: a historical perspective', in Ian Jones, Eric Sandweiss, Marlen Mouliou and Chet Orloff (ed.), *Our Greatest Artefact: The City, Essays on cities and museums about them,* (Istanbul: CAMOC, 2012) [online], p. 33.
[214] Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', p. 116.
[215] Ibid, pp. 116-117.

Like other city museums, the Copenhagen Museum was housed in an important new building, 'designed to remake civic space and to make a statement about the nature of the urban milieu from which they emerged.'[216] The London Museum grew out of this movement.

The London Museum (1910)

The London museum was founded in 1910 by Mr Lewis Harcourt (1863-1922) and 2nd Viscount Reginald Brett Esher (1852-1930). When Harcourt and Esher founded the museum, they had no collection, no building nor money to purchase collections or pay staff. They were, however, well connected. Both served as private secretaries early in their careers, Harcourt to his father Sir William Harcourt (Home Secretary 1880-1885; Chancellor of the Exchequer 1886, 1892-1895), and Esher to the Marquis of Hartington (Secretary of State for the War Office 1882-1885). During this time, they both developed a talent for securing patronage, which would prove invaluable in establishing the London Museum both financially and in the acquisition of collections. In 1910 2nd Viscount Esher was approached by Queen Mary to consider the best way of exhibiting the history of London.[217]

The London Museum conformed in many ways to the Musée Carnavalet. Mr Harcourt first expressed his intent to establish a museum to King Edward VII's private secretary in 1910, stating that 'it has been the dream of my life to establish a London (Carnavalet) Museum'.[218] The London Museum was housed in the Royal Apartments at Kensington Palace, it focused on collecting local objects that captured the spirit of London. The London Museum differed, however, suggesting a much broader approach than the Guildhall Museum owing to the outgoing character of the Keeper Guy Laking, and his 'pageant paradigm' approach to collecting and display. Yet, it was equally held back by its patrician status which came with its own civic trophies and royal collections.[219] The following paragraphs will outline the founding of the London Museum and its collecting and display practices.

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[216] Jean-Louis Postula, 'City museum, community and temporality', p. 54.
[217] Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* pp. 101-102.
[218] Ibid, p. 36.
[219] Ross, 'Collections and collecting', pp. 118-119

As of 1910, the London County Council (LCC) had no interest in supporting Harcourt's dream. The LCC was engaged in 'the principle of special independent museums at suitable centres', along the philosophy of the V&A, which they saw as the best means by which to provide a public face for the metropolis.[220] The persistence of Harcourt and Esher was, however, indefatigable, and with their royal patronage the LCC proved no more than an inconvenience. Esher saw institutions like the Guildhall Museum as inadequate, failing to account for large parts of the story of London concerning the recent past.

After the death of King Edward VII on the 6th May 1910, Queen Alexandra his widow, expressed her desire for a permanent royal costume collection in London, alongside other personal relics of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. Though Esher and Harcourt wanted the Museum for broader purposes, the Royal impetus would be key. Queen Alexandra was, however, not in a position to gift royal collections and it took some effort to persuade King George V and Queen Mary. Queen Mary had wanted to preserve some of Victoria's personal items in the staterooms in Kensington Palace, but the King was against this on account of potential fire damage. After much persuading by the Queen and Esher, and Harcourt having failed to find other suitable accommodation for the museum, on the 25th March 1911, King George V gave his support for using Kensington Palace as a temporary home for the London Museum.[221] Many of the Museum's initial collections came from Queen Mary and King George V, and despite the LCC's early reluctance to support the Museum, they also donated antiquities found during their rebuilding of the H.M. Office of Works.[222]

Endorsed by the King, but having secured only temporary accommodation, the museum was in a tenuous position. In 1913, Sir William Lever purchased a twenty-eight-year lease on Stafford House and 'offered it to the nation for the purpose of housing the London Museum Collections and for Government Hospitality.'[223] The London Museum, in the renamed Lancaster House, was opened on the 23rd March 1914. Owing to the tireless efforts of the first Keeper Guy Laking, and the patronage of the Royal Family, the new

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[220] Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* p. 37.
[221] Ibid, pp. 40-45.
[222] Hume, 'The Museum of London', p. 102.
[223] Ibid, p. 102.

museum was able to generate a large collection quickly. In 1912 the Museum already boasted over 18,000 artefacts, and alongside royal patronage, Laking was considered a 'dynamic keeper who could charm potential benefactors with a combination of lightly worn scholarship and a very real flair for press and public relations.'[224]

The museum's approach to collecting evidenced a move away from the universal approach of the larger national museums and municipal museums of the late nineteenth century. Local historical and scientific societies increasingly supplied museums with collections in much the same way Charles Roach Smith had done with the Guildhall in the mid-nineteenth century. The London Museum, which had relied on Royal Patronage, and other early city museums often worked on limited budgets, and curators turned to local materials from local societies.[225] Alongside more defined local acquisition policies, an intellectual case was made. In short, curators were becoming increasingly concerned that civic and municipal museums were merely attempting to replicate the universal approaches of the national museums.[226]

The London Museum was interested in objects that represented London's present as well as its past. Its founders and curators made public appeals for donations, their criterion being 'only objects found in London or manufactured in London'.[227] Objects ranged from fine and decorative arts, costume, printed ephemera, theatrical material and social history from nineteenth and twentieth-century London. The London Museum sought to 'acquire objects of historic and local interest to Londoners and … exhibit many things which would find no place at the British or the V&A Museums, but which nevertheless are of value'.[228] Moreover, it attempted to capture the 'spirit of the capital city', and in this way was somewhat different to those earlier municipal museums:[229]

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[224] Quoted in Valerie Cumming, Nick Merriman, Catherine Ross (ed.), *The Museum of London* (London: Scala Books, 1996), p. 12.

[225] Kate Hill, 'Manufactures, archaeology and bygones: making a sense of place in civic museums, 1850-1914', *International Journal of Regional and Local History,* Vol. 8, No. 1, (2013)*,* p. 58.

[226] Ibid*,* p. 59.

[227] Museum of London, 'History of our Collections'.

[228] Ross, 'Collections and collecting', pp. 114–32.

[229] Kavanagh, 'Buttons, Belisha Beacons and Bullets'*,* p. 8.

Where too are the top-hat and umbrella of Dan Leno? Was he not part of London […] there should be a collection of the penny toys now sold in out gutters, of the diatribes levelled at Mr Lloyd George, a set of insurance stamps, programmes of 'first nights', a passive resister's summons, a paraffin lamp, which will soon be obsolete. There should be a penny-in-the-slot weighing machine, examples of costumes of a Billingsgate fish porter, and a door keeper at the Bank of England.[230]

Early city museums like the Carnavalet, and others such as the Budapest (1899), Oslo (1905) and Helsinki (1911), however, did little to interpret their objects. As mentioned earlier, the London Museum was somewhat different owing to their first Keeper Guy Laking. Rather than the Carnavalet approach of showing trophy rooms, or other city museums' use of objects shown with limited text and context, Laking's approach was more akin to Madame Tussaud's using wax models and elaborate diorama displays. Laking wanted to 'stir the imagination and awaked fresh insights', through his displays, hence his inclination to construct elaborate settings and contexts for his objects.[231] He included reconstructed old prison cells, a chamber of horrors, and was reluctant to place costumes simply in glass cases opting instead to display them on mannequins. This 'pageant paradigm', as Cathy Ross calls it, allowed Laking to approach collecting more in the sense of collecting props for theatre rather than a scientific endeavour.[232] Rather, this was indicative of the use of dioramas with the rise of contextual display championed by Franz Boas which advanced an 'empirical approach to research that valued the role of the environment, or nurture in the development of human behaviour.'[233]

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[230] *Daily Star newspaper,* 23rd August 1912 quoted in Ross, 'Collections and Collecting', p. 114.
[231] Ross, 'Collections and collecting', pp. 117-118.
[232] Ibid, p. 118.
[233] Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair, *History Through Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 23.

Picture of the Royal Family at Family at the inauguration of London Museum, Kensington Palace, 1912.

https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections/about-our-collections/history-our-collections

Figure 3: The Royal Family at the inauguration of London Museum, Kensington Palace, 1912.
Source: Museum of London picture library, ID no. 91.172.

Despite their broader approach to collections, Ross has noted that the Museum had plenty of objects that would indeed have suited the British Museum and the V&A. There were plenty of archaeological artefacts, and owing to the Museum's royal patronage, royal collections, alongside luxury goods and garments were prominent. In fact, as Ross has pointed out, Queen Mary was deflated by the excessive amount of 'too fine things', when the 'charm to me [Queen Mary] of the London Museum is seeing amusing little things...'[234] The London Museum was both novel in its approach, and yet adopted many of the traits of early city museums. The floor plan of Lancaster House shows something of the organisation of the galleries, including some of the grand narrative and civic-trophy-room nature typical of other early city museums (figure 4).

During the First World War the London Museum at the State Apartments at Kensington Palace was taken over by the Foreign Trade Department, and then later replaced by the staff of the Shipping Controller. It reopened in 1919. The Museum was once again closed during the Second World War, occupied by the Foreign Office, and in 1948 it was decided that Lancaster House be repurposed, putting the London Museum under pressure to find

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[234] Ross, 'Collections and collecting', p. 119.

new accommodation. It would later be re-accommodated in Kensington Palace for the Festival of Britain in 1951. In 1956 the London Museum was reopened to the public.[235]

We now have accounts of the origin and history of both of the museums that would ultimately be amalgamated to form the Museum of London. The Guildhall Museum was arguably the first civic museum in England and was rooted in the municipal redevelopment of London and the growth of archaeology as a discipline in the eighteenth century. The London Museum, an early city museum, sought to represent more fully the life and spirit of London as a whole, through a more comprehensive approach to collecting and display. In the amalgamation of these two museums their collections and characters would become embedded in the new MoL. The remainder of this chapter will outline the amalgamation of the two Museums before moving on to discuss the nature of the permanent galleries when the MoL first opened.

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[235] Tom Hume, *The Museum of London,* p. 104.

> Aerial perspective of Lancaster House occupied by the London Museum, 1914, detailing galleries and layout of the museum, and images of display cases.

Figure 4: Aerial perspective of Lancaster House, occupied by the London Museum, 1914.
Source: Francis Sheppard, A Treasury of London's Past (London: HMSO, 1991), pp.80-81. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

The Founding of the New Museum of London

The idea to amalgamate the Guildhall and London Museum began as early as 1918, but little progress was made. During the Second World War both museums had been repurposed, the London Museum as a conference centre for the Foreign Office, the Guildhall Museum as a library. The temporary loss of these two institutions inspired Raymond Smith, Librarian and Curator at the Guildhall Museum, to revisit the idea of amalgamation in 1944, stating that 'much closer collaboration is desirable between the London Museum and the Guildhall Museum.'[236] 31 years would pass before a Parliamentary Bill was passed (in 1965), thus providing the necessary basis for the project to go ahead. During the intervening period the London Museum found temporary accommodation once again under the auspices of royal patronage in Kensington Palace in 1956, and the Guildhall exhibitions were dispatched to the Royal Exchange opening in 1955.[237]

The process to amalgamate the two museums was a protracted affair, the result of a convoluted financial structure, and several major setbacks. The funding structure set out in the Museum of London Act 1965 meant that all financial decisions had to be agreed with the board's three constituent financiers which included the Government, the City Corporation and the Greater London Council (GLC hereafter). As a result, the planning, building and construction of the museum at times came to a halt. The inclusion of the Government meant that finances were heavily scrutinised at every turn. Moreover, Government funding at this time was scarce, and there was little in the way of centralised governance for public museums.

On several occasions the GLC threatened to back out. Notably in 1968, Sir Desmond Plummer, Conservative leader of the GLC, intimated the Council might no longer sustain its involvement after the Board of Trade blocked a building permit for an office block as part of the new museum proposed by the City of London Corporation. The Board of Trade's decision (a result of Harold Wilson and the Labour Government's office building policy) was significant given that the City of London Corporation had hoped commercial office space

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[236] Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* p. 162.
[237] Hume, 'The Museum of London', pp. 101-104.

would raise the rent necessary to part-fund the new museum.[238] By 1971 they had agreed to keep their interest in the project, but that vesting day should not take place until the office building was finished. This kept the necessary backing of all the three partners needed to keep the amalgamation on track, namely the Corporation, the GLC and the government.[239]

Lord Harcourt, only son of Lewis Harcourt founder of the London Museum, helped to navigate this difficult time, becoming chairman of the trustees in 1961 and first Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the new Museum of London in 1965.[240] Despite a chaotic start, the tenacity of Lord Harcourt and the then director Dr Donald Harden ensured that a launch date was finally agreed in 1972, and over the next five years the MoL would start to come together in earnest. Significant efforts to plan and design the new galleries began in 1969 with the help of Higgins, Ney and Partners as design consultants. Donald Harden, Director of the London Museum from 1956, was appointed acting director of the MoL from 1965-1970, working with his deputy Norman Cook, previously the director of the Guildhall Museum.

Dr Harden was an important figure in the museum world, having served as Keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford from 1929-1956. He was renowned for his expertise on the study of ancient glass and on the Phoenicians, as well as having broad expertise on British and Mediterranean archaeology. As director of the MoL Harden successfully navigated the many setbacks faced in the early stages of amalgamation before retiring in 1970. Several key decisions were easily reached under Dr Harden's leadership, and the character of the MoL began to take shape. In 1962, the Museum agreed on its new name. The first proposal, 'Royal London Museum' was quickly rejected, having been found lacking at Buckingham Palace.[241] By this time the three governing authorities had also agreed on a site at the south-west corner of the new Barbican development, in the City of London.

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[238] Harold Wilson's Labour Government had issued a ban on all commercial office block building throughout 1964-1965.
[239] Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* pp. 168-169.
[240] Ibid*,* p. 164.
[241] Ibid*,* p. 164.

Thomas Hume, who was director of the MoL from 1972-1977, oversaw the amalgamation of the accumulated staff and collections of the new museum's predecessors into a coherent new entity. Hume had extensive experience as director of the City of Liverpool Museum from 1960. The Liverpool museum had been destroyed in the Second World War, and Hume was brought in to oversee the rebuild. Upon completing the first phase of the Museum in 1967 Hume boasted that the Liverpool Museum had 'the highest provincial museum attendance figures.'[242] Upon his death in 1992 Max Hebditch, who succeeded Hume, having previously been the Guildhall Museum from 1971-1974, wrote that Hume was 'pre-eminent among post-war museum directors, working mainly outside London … [and] … who salvaged large British institutions from the effects of war and austerity and created some of the most progressive museums in the country.'[243]

Hume's talents lay in his organisational management, as Harcourt duly noted when appointing Hume in 1972.[244] Hume would be instrumental in shaping Harcourt's vision for a new amalgamated museum for all of London. In an article published 1977, not long after the Museum opened to the public, Hume laid out his interpretation of Harcourt's vision for the Museum of London:

> …the Museum of London has a precise declared policy of concerning and identifying itself fully with the whole history and life of London, not competing but co-operating with other museums and preservation projects where necessary or desirable and providing a real historical base for the study and appreciation of London's story.[245]

Hume saw the MoL as concerning itself also with the 'life of London', noting that visitors would seek evidence of both the 'ancient' and the 'modern', and that the displays would 'bring the story through to the present day'.[246] This statement paid deference to the two prior institutions, but also acknowledged there was more needed to be done to encompass

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[242] John Millard, *Liverpool's Museum: The First 150 years* (April 2010), [online], <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/wml/history/WML_150_years.pdf>, accessed 12th August 2019 p. 77.
[243] Max Hebditch, 'Obituary: Tom Hume', *The Independent,* 20th June 1992.
[244] Sheppard, *The Treasury of London's Past,* p. 171.
[245] Hume, 'The Museum of London', p. 104.
[246] Ibid*,* p. 105.

contemporary London. Moreover, in seeking to present a panorama of the entire history of London, a level of cooperation with existing institutions was recognised as essential, no doubt a result of the very precise nature of the collections inherited from the Guildhall and London Museum. This was not intended to be a parochial project either. Hume felt that the MoL should command international significance at a time when Britain was in a state of economic and social upheaval. Civic pride, the cornerstone of the early civic and city museums, remained crucial to defining the broader social mission of the MoL.

In a confidential letter to the Board of Governors in September 1972, Hume argued that in order to achieve his aims and to create a museum that was greater than its constituent parts, the future of the MoL would be rooted in its name, which Hume felt encompassed:

> …the whole of this great complex [London]; the life, work and play of its people; its buildings; its specific history as a capital city; its local, national and international importance; must all be portrayed in a way which stimulates interest, pride, and a feeling of belonging to something worthwhile.[247]

Beyond the conservation and display of London's material past, Hume hoped that the galleries would 'provide variety and an opportunity to deal with particular themes of special significant or interest to *society,* […] and to bring into the museum a number of people who might not otherwise visit it' noting that that temporary exhibitions in particular should complement the permanent displays .[248] Hume saw the museum as something more than exalting London and instilling a sense of pride in London at a time when Britain was suffering from economic decline. He wanted the museum to perform a number of additional societal functions beyond a traditional conservation role by emphasising what he saw as forgotten people. Hume continued in his report to the Board of the Governors above by stating that:

> beyond this it will have to persuade, convert, entice and appear to want visitors. A prime requirement is to cater in various ways for the Londoner who is so often

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[247] MoL Business Archives, Box 1, Formative Years, 19A/E, Confidential Letter to the Board 1972, p. 2.
[248] Ibid, p. 5.

forgotten today and show him that there is quality and history of distinction in his home history.[249]

In an interview with a journalist in October 1976, Hume elaborated on this stating that, 'I think some academics make the great mistake in assuming the ordinary working man is not interested in his own history or background.'[250] This thinking was rooted in two new areas that were having significant impact on history museums in the UK. Industrial archaeology and social history.

As Hume had pointed out, the 1970s was a period of social and economic upheaval. London's population at this time was also in decline, something the curators at that time were aware of.[251] Later in the report, Hume speaks of the importance of 'industrial archaeology', and that 'The main problem often springs from the diversity and size of material but unless something is preserved and much at least recorded valuable evidence will be irretrievably lost.'[252] Industrial archaeology developed in the United Kingdom in the 1950s, after post-war redevelopment led to the destruction of much of the landscape associated with early industrialisation. There remain discussions over the definition of industrial archaeology, but one important perspective argued by Michael Rix, a pioneer in the UK, was that '…industrial archaeology as a human achievement must not be overlooked. Behind all its aspects are the people, the inventors, the mills owners, the engineers, the factory hands, and they must always be borne in mind.'[253] The social and human aspects of industrial archaeology may well have played a role in Hume's conceptualisation of the MoL and its broader remit.

Despite the fact that civic and city museums had proliferated in the late-nineteenth century, social history, and the human aspects of Britain's industrial past, did not seriously develop in museums in the UK until the 1970s, when Marxist critiques and new social histories began to challenge the 'class-based nature of museum provision.'[254] The study of

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[249] Ibid, p. 5.

[250] Nicola Tyler, 'Now London Belongs to Everyone', *London Evening News,* 26th October 1976

[251] Conversation with Valerie Cumming, former deputy director of the Museum of London, 9th November 2018.

[252] MoL Business Archives, Box 1, Formative Years, 19A/E, Confidential Letter to the Board 1972, p. 3.

[253] Michael Rix, 'Industrial Archaeology', *Historical Association,* Vol. 65, (1967), p. 20.

[254] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'Buttons, Belisha, Beacons and Bullets', p. 9.

folk-life which emerged in the 1920s out the Skansen movement in Sweden which expanded on narrative-based display using dioramas, performances, oral histories and the built environment itself, had still limited impact. Folk-life studies had a significant impact on social history in museums in Europe, emphasising the role of objects in understanding everyday life of rural communities, and the survival of pre-industrial traditions.[255] However, where this tradition was adopted in the UK, it was largely confined to rural museums and open-air museums in the North of England. City histories in museums were much less aligned with the folk-life traditions of the Skansen movement. Despite this, their spread was influenced by similar concerns, 'that rapid urban expansion and industrial development were surprising or obliterating the physical evidence of past settlement at an alarming rate…'[256] As a result, citizens began to lobby for the establishment of museums to safeguard their urban heritage.[257]

Local history approaches had more of an impact on the development of city museums. Local history also saw the role of objects as telling histories of vernacular architecture, craft industries, textiles, transport and industries; beyond the elite. More importantly, where local history was favourable towards the use of objects, they also emphasised storyline and narrative approaches.[258] Although established much earlier, the People's Palace in Glasgow (founded 1898) embraced this movement in the 1980s under its curator Elspeth King. King mounted radical exhibitions, such as one focusing on the 200th anniversary of the Govan Weavers' strike and massacre that broke away from its own antiquarian nature.[259] A sideway glance to Europe and the Museum of Amsterdam, which opened one year earlier in 1975 suggests this movement was developing around the same time in Europe.

Amsterdam had amassed city collections during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but had only ever managed to house them temporarily. In 1938 calls for a new museum were raised. A committee was formed which decided how to best visualise the

[255] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'History in Museums in Britain: A Brief Survey or Trends and Ideas', in David Fleming, Crispin Paine, and John G Rhodes (ed.), *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for* Professionals (London: HMSO, 1993), p. 15.

[256] Stuart Davies, 'Social History in Museums: The Academic Context', in David Fleming, Crispin Paine, and John G Rhodes (ed.), *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for* Professionals (London: HMSO, 1993), p. 4.

[257] Jean-Louis Postula, 'City museum, community and temporality'*,* p. 33.

[258] Davies, 'Social History in Museums'*,* p. 6.

[259] Mark O'Neill, 'Museums and Identity in Glasgow', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (January 2006), pp. 29–48.

development of the city, and the causes of that development. The focus was to be on the social, economic and cultural factors underpinning that development.[260] In order to supplement their older city collections, the museum introduced a wider range of visual sources such as diagrams and photographs. Something the MoL would also need to do.

Given the prominence of the Guildhall Museum's archaeological collections, and that the London Museum also held a largely patrician and archaeological collection despite its contemporary collecting policy, both collections lacked any serious representation of modern London. Hume therefore lacked the requisite material with which to achieve his aims. The solution as to how to create a modern gallery would come from Colin Sorenson, an experienced teacher, art historian and exhibition organiser. Sorenson had been appointed curator of Modern Collections at the London Museum at Kensington Palace in 1970, having previously worked as deputy director for the Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, before it moved to Yale in the U.S. In 1975 he was selected as the first Keeper of Modern Collections for the new MoL. According to one obituary, Sorenson held a wide-range of enthusiasms from theatre to art, which determined his belief that the MoL 'should take the most comprehensive possible view of the capital...'[261] Hence it fell to him to solve the problem of how to represent modern London despite limited collections.

Sorenson held two beliefs that would be instrumental in this endeavour. Firstly, in discussions between the keepers of the Guildhall and London Museum as to how much space was to be allocated to each period, Sorenson argued that 'at least two thirds of the

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[260] Derk P. Snoep, 'Museum of the History of Amsterdam', *Museum International,* Vol. 29, No. 2-3, (January-December 1977), p. 118.
[261] Anonymous, 'Colin Sorenson, who has died aged 71, was first Keeper of the modern collection at the Museum of London, and helped root that institution securely in the capital's heart', *The Telegraph,* 21st August 2001, [online], <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1338039/Colin-Sorensen.html>, accessed 23rd September 2019.
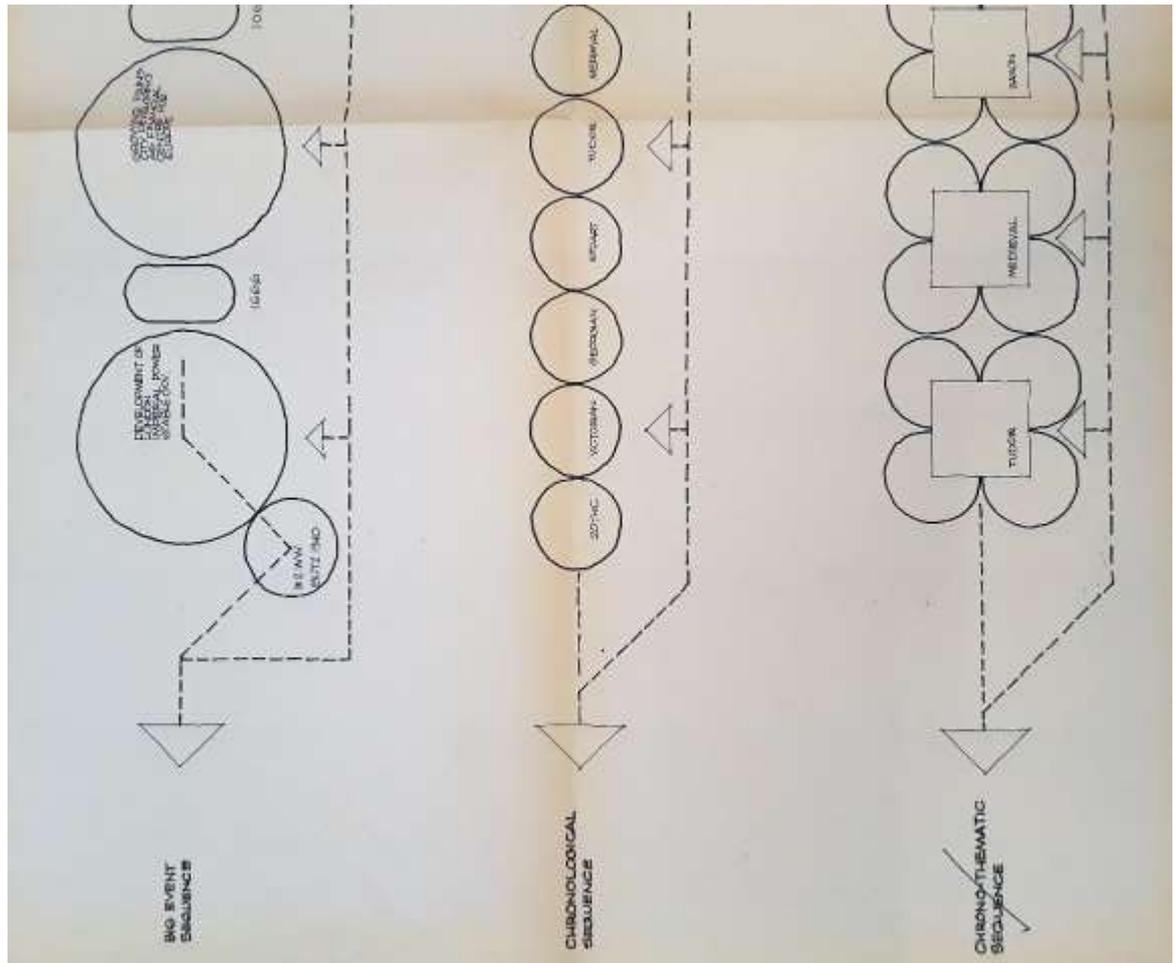
Figure 5: Design strategies for the MoL permanent galleries, 1971.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Formative Years, 19.1-4, Design strategies, Higgins, Ney and Partners.

people who had ever lived in London had done so during the last 250 years or so, [and] this period should be fully represented in the galleries'. Secondly, Sorenson rejected the trope that if you haven't got an object you can't deal with a particular subject, rather opting for the attitude that 'if you haven't got an object, you either go and get one or you find another way of dealing with the subject'.[262] Sorenson amassed a substantial collection to represent modern London, and his efforts were duly rewarded. A receipt from Higgins, Ney and Partners for the display contract costings provides the square meterage given to each period. The Modern period (the seventeenth century onwards) was given 57% of the overall floor space, a testament to Hume's desire to make sure the museum reflected contemporary London, and to Sorenson's desire that the majority of the museum should reflect the last 250 years.[263] Despite this desire to engage with the contemporary past,

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[262]Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* p. 172.
[263] MoL Business Archives, Formative Years, 19.1-4, Higgins, Ney and Partners Contract Display Costing Receipt, 1973.

according to that same obituary, 'the London Sorenson had been bought up with had been principally Victorian' and that he believed 'London as the capital of the British Empire was far more relevant to the present city that London as a remote outpost of the Roman imperium.'[264] This as we shall see in chapter three, was duly reflected in the displays.

Design of the exhibitions started in 1969, before Hume's appointment. Serious work on the exhibitions began in 1972 when the curators and Higgins, Ney and partners began work together in the premises of Kensington Palace at the London Museum. As early as 1971 it was decided that the exhibition would follow a chrono-thematic arrangement (figure 5). Curators wrote the text and captions which in the end amounted to over 250,000 words. A three-tier labelling system was adopted to provide three different perspectives for the visitors; general background, specific subject and individual object. In 1974 sub-contractors finally began work on installing and fitting the exhibitions galleries. On the 2nd of December 1976 the permanent galleries were largely finished. Some of the exhibitions of the London Museum, including Guy Laking's prison cells from Wellclose Square were installed, and other recreations and dioramas were erected. The result, Sheppard has claimed, was 'an elaborate set of environments and contexts for the objects which, while not using the latest devices such as audio-visual presentations, was nevertheless the finest exposition of traditional display techniques and the first big comprehensive exhibition of the development of a geographical area from the earliest times to the present.'[265]

By placing the Museum of London and its progenitor institutions into the broader history of museum development Britain, and by using new primary material and more recent historic accounts of the London Museum and the amalgamation, this chapter provides a more nuanced and critical account of the Museum's development. An important contribution of this chapter is seeing how the Museum of London came to adopt the deeply embedded historical missions of the Guildhall Museum and London Museum, as well as its collections. The Guildhall representing the antiquity of London through its vast British-Romano collections, and the London Museum reflecting civic pride through a contemporary collecting programme. This chapter also underscores how Hume's vision for

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[264] Anonymous, 'Colin Sorenson, who has died aged 71, was first Keeper of the modern collection at the Museum of London'.
[265] Sheppard, *A Treasury of London's Past,* pg. 173.

the new MoL manifested the Museum's civic roots and the characters of its predecessors; this vision would be central to the Museum's programming and displays when it opened in 1976. The next chapter will look more closely at these permanent galleries: their content and layout, and specifically the place and value of Empire in constructing a narrative of the panorama of London life.

Chapter Three: Representations of Empire at the Museum of London 1976

Introduction

The MoL brought together London's finest archaeological remains, royal costume, everyday bygones, ephemera, recreations of both a Roman living room and a Victorian street, and more. Architects Powell and Moya designed and constructed a purpose-built museum for their collections, finished in 1976. The permanent galleries were organised into a chrono-thematic sequence split over two levels, tracing the development of London from pre-history to the twentieth century. The new MoL was envisioned as a museum for the people of London; to inspire a sense of pride of place for its visitors. As one headline in the London Evening News put it, *'Now London Belongs to Everyone.'*[266] The extent to which the history within represented 'everyone' was, however, limited.

The following chapter is an analysis of the MoL permanent galleries in 1976, and specifically the place and value of empire in those displays. In charting the history of the development of London, from pre-history to the present day, and the factors underlying that development, how did the museum shape their narrative through the selection and arrangement of objects, and through specific interpretive themes and moods which they used to articulate a specific image of London? This task speaks to issues of representation which developed out of the New Museology in the 1980s, which sought to deconstruct exhibits and displays to understand their politics, and 'to probe the historical, social and political contexts' in which they need to be situated.[267] Who was represented in the displays, and who wasn't? Whose London was represented? Most importantly, given the main thesis theme, what was the place and role of empire within these representations/galleries?

The first part of this chapter will survey the design and architecture of the MoL, and where it fits into the history of museum architecture more broadly. What challenges did its particular design bring to the visitor experience. It will also provide an understanding of

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[266] Nicola Tyler, 'Now London belongs to everyone…', *London Evening News,* October 26th 1976, p. 12.
[267] Sharon Macdonald, 'Introduction', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 3.

how control was exercised on the visitor through the architecture and how this shaped the meaning and value of the objects on display and the narrative as a whole.

Steven Lubar has noted that the timeline has been a 'natural' and 'intuitive' way of presenting the past, 'As you move from the beginning to then end of an exhibition, you move, in a metaphorical way, from earlier to later, from the beginning of a story to the end. The timeline provides a powerful framework for presenting history.'[268] Susanna Sirefman has also argued that, 'The experiential narrative that a museum embodies is inseparable from its physical condition – its architecture. Architecture represents the museum's public image, defines the institution's relationship to its setting, and constructs the framework of the visitors' experience.'[269] It is therefore necessary to describe the architecture of the building and the layout of the permanent galleries, and how both would have impacted on the visitor experience and the content, before moving onto the displays.

The second half of this chapter will speak to the main aim of this thesis, that is an analysis of how the MoL engaged at different times with the history of empire. There has been a great deal of historical scholarship on the display of once-colonised communities' material cultures in European museums in the period before 1945 and after 1970.[270] However, there has been little historical analysis on the place and value of empire in new museums that were established in the period immediately after Britain had lost the majority of its colonies. How were objects and themes used to articulate the idea of London as the imperial city? To what extent were these choices informed by broader shifts in the place and value of empire in British culture? This will allow, in the second section, for an analysis of whether, and how, the politics of decolonisation influenced the MoL.

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[268] Steven Lubar, 'Timelines in Exhibitions', *Curator: The Museum Journal,* Vol. 56, No. 2, (April 2013), p. 169.
[269] Sirefman, Susanna, 'Formed and Forming: Contemporary Museum Architecture', *Daedalus*, vol. 128, no. 3, (1999), p. 297.
[270] Claire Wintle, 'Decolonising the Museum: The Case of the Imperial and Commonwealth Institutes', *Museum and Society,* July 2013, Vol. 11, No. 2, (2013), p. 185.

Figure 6: Museum of London aerial shot, 1976.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Formative Years, MOL 19-C.

The Permanent Galleries in 1976

The MoL was designed and built in the second half of the twentieth century at a time when museum thinking was undergoing significant changes. This was precipitated by criticisms which focused on the exclusionary nature of the older universal survey model established in the nineteenth century. The MoL building, constructed on the southwest corner of the Barbican estate (figure 6), was built by architects Powell and Moya in the 1960s. The Barbican estate itself, designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon, represented a utopian vision of London in the wake of devastation suffered during the Second World War.[271] The Barbican Estate was built in concrete in the modernist tradition of the Golden Lane Estate (also designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bonn) but mixed 'aggressively urban materials' with public spaces for education and art, reflecting the City's 'global transformation into

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[271] Barbican Centre, 'Our Archive: Construction', [online], <https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/our-archive/construction>, accessed 17th June 2019.

the architecture of big business.'[272] The MoL building was also built in concrete in a similar modernist style. It was also designed with the purpose of providing a dynamic interior for museum exhibitions.

The perimeter of the museum building is a solid enclosing wall encased in white tiles, which was designed to eliminate the traffic noise from outside on London Wall. The museum building is permeated with occasional windows offering the visitor a view of the Roman wall outside, thus incorporating it into the display. The retention of Ironmongers Hall, immediately outside, means that the building is wrapped around it, with the lecture hall and education space on the opposite side to the exhibition areas. Unlike the eighteenth-century universal museum which, with their grandiose neo-classical exteriors, 'effectively conveyed the message of an organisation of knowledge…', the MoL building was typical of 1950s museums architecture, which sought to 'abolish the public façade in line with a belief in the democratisation of public institutions.'[273]

The similarity in style between the MoL and the adjacent Barbican Art Gallery and other public spaces, makes it hardly distinguishable from the rest of the site. The MoL building, however, did not adopt other modernist museum principles. Museum architects at this time wanted to provide a sense of permeability in line with democratising principles, allowing visitors line of sight into the building, so as to 'admit the spectator immediately into the interior spaces…'[274] With the exception of the entrance hall, where one of the walls was made entirely of glass, this was not true of the MoL, 'Were it not for the words "Museum of London" printed stubbornly in stubby capitals on its forehead you would not know it was there.' Or indeed, what it was for (figure 7).[275] The reason for this lack of permeability perhaps lie with how the design consultants and museum staff decided to use

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[272] Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *London 1: The City of London* (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England) (London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 131.

[273] Charles Saumarez Smith, 'Architecture and the Museum: The Seventh Reyner Banham Memorial Lecture', *Journal of Design History*, Vol 8, No. 4 (1995), pp. 244-245.

[274] Ibid, p. 245.

[275] Michael Brawne, '1977 July: The Museum of London by Powell and Moya', *The Architectural Review,* Online, (24th February 2012), [online], <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/viewpoints/1977-july-the-museum-of-london-by-powell-and-moya/8626069.article>, accessed 18th June 2019.

Figure 7: Museum of London entrance, 1970.
Source: RIBA collections, Archtecture.com, library reference, 40446/2.

the main entrance space (figure 8). The true function of this building was said to be in its flexible interior, allowing for a new approach to curating.

The reinforced concrete structure was designed with free-standing columns inside. The perimeter wall was designed to allow flexible exhibition arrangements inside so that the space could be reorganised, '...it produces a condition right at the start which one knows will happen eventually, namely that the building will remain relatively unchanged long after the exhibition layout has been drastically amended.' Despite which the exhibitions had a '…permanent and deeply embedded look.'[276] The original exhibition layout designed by Higgins, Ney & Partners was not changed until 1994.[277]

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[276] Brawne, '1977 July: The Museum of London by Powell and Moya'.
[277] Bradley and Pevsner, *London I: The City of London,* p. 323.
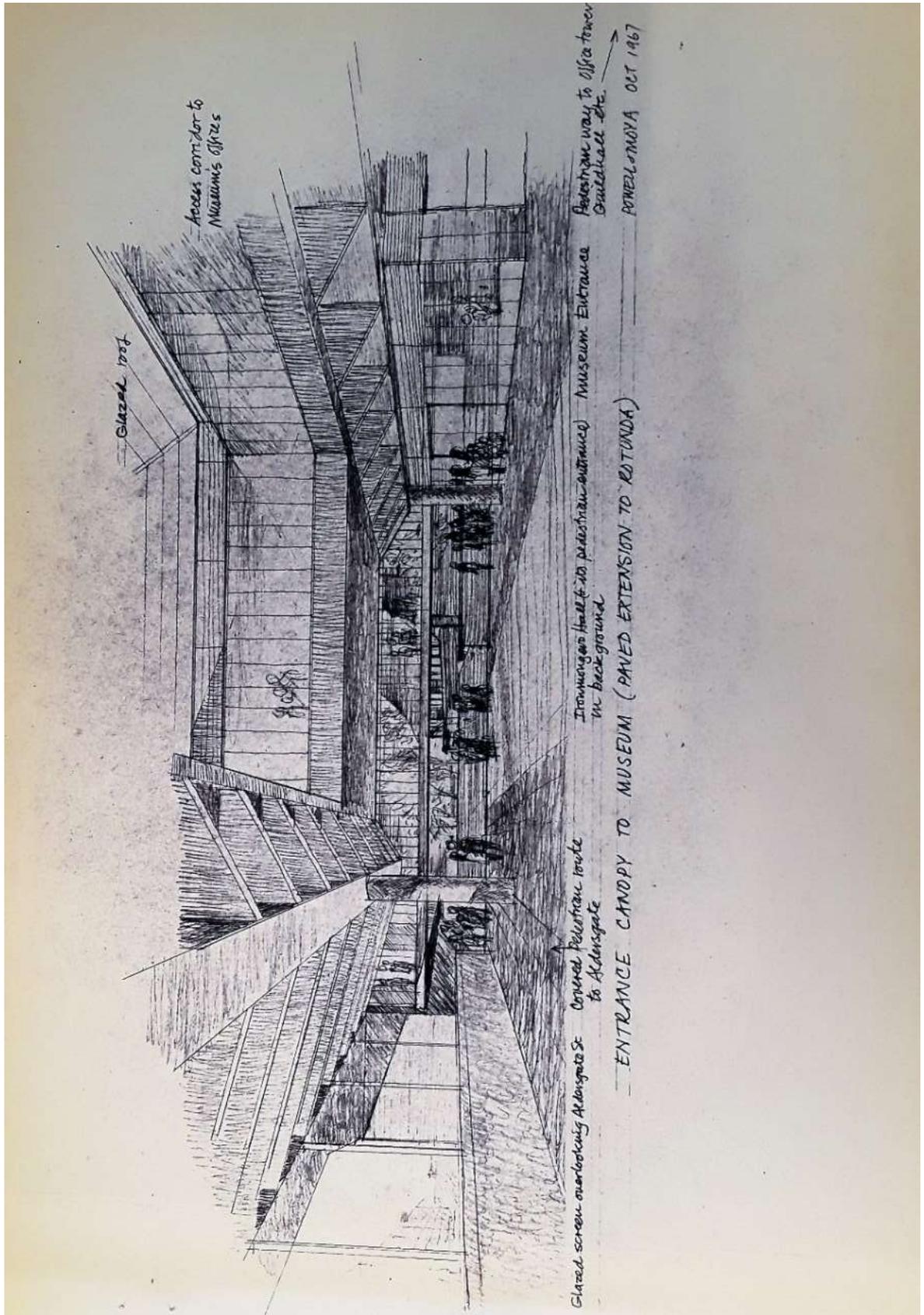
Figure 8: Original Museum of London entrance at walkway level, 1967.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Formative Years, MOL 19-C, Museum of London Entrance. Original canopy sketch by Powell and Moya 1967.

The interior of the Museum was constructed around a courtyard plan, wrapping around an inner garden and split over two levels. This particular design is reminiscent of the idea of the museum as instrument, which provided flexibility and impermanence.[278] In the earlier twentieth century, Corbusier extended this idea of the museum as instrument through his design for a Museum of Unlimited Growth (1936) where the galleries were arranged in a spiral 'to show the cumulative progress of humanity's achievements…'[279] This would allow the building to grow to accommodate the collections.

Owing to the London Wall site being densely populated, the MoL was greatly restricted. The upper level of the Museum was experienced as an L-shaped plan, circulating the visitor to the main descent route to the lower level, which is structured as a complete circuit (figure 9). The upper-level included the pre-history and Roman galleries, with the modern galleries on the lower-level. A temporary gallery space was placed adjacent to the reception. This architectural approach was 'simple and clear […] and fully recognises the essential characteristic of museum viewing: that it is a linear sequence, which demands continuity.'[280]

This courtyard plan presented several challenges when designing and organising the displays and visitor route. These included avoiding an unvaried linear route, with the exception of the transition by ramp between the upper and lower floors which provided a 'welcome incident about halfway through'.[281] Other challenges consisted of differentiating between displays without losing an overall identity; allowing the visitor to breakout from the chronological route without losing a sense of location; grouping non-permanent display requirements such as facilities, temporary exhibition and educational spaces.

Looking in detail at the floor plan specifying the layout of the permanent galleries, printed in the 1976 guidebook, we can see the way in which the permanent galleries were structured (figure 9). Included in the floor plan are the names and periodisation of the permanent galleries, as well as the organisation of large key exhibitions and the intended

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[278] Michaela Giebelhausen, 'Museum Architecture', in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 223–44.
[279] Ibid, p. 232.
[280] Michael Brawne, '1977 July: The Museum of London by Powell and Moya'.
[281] Ibid.
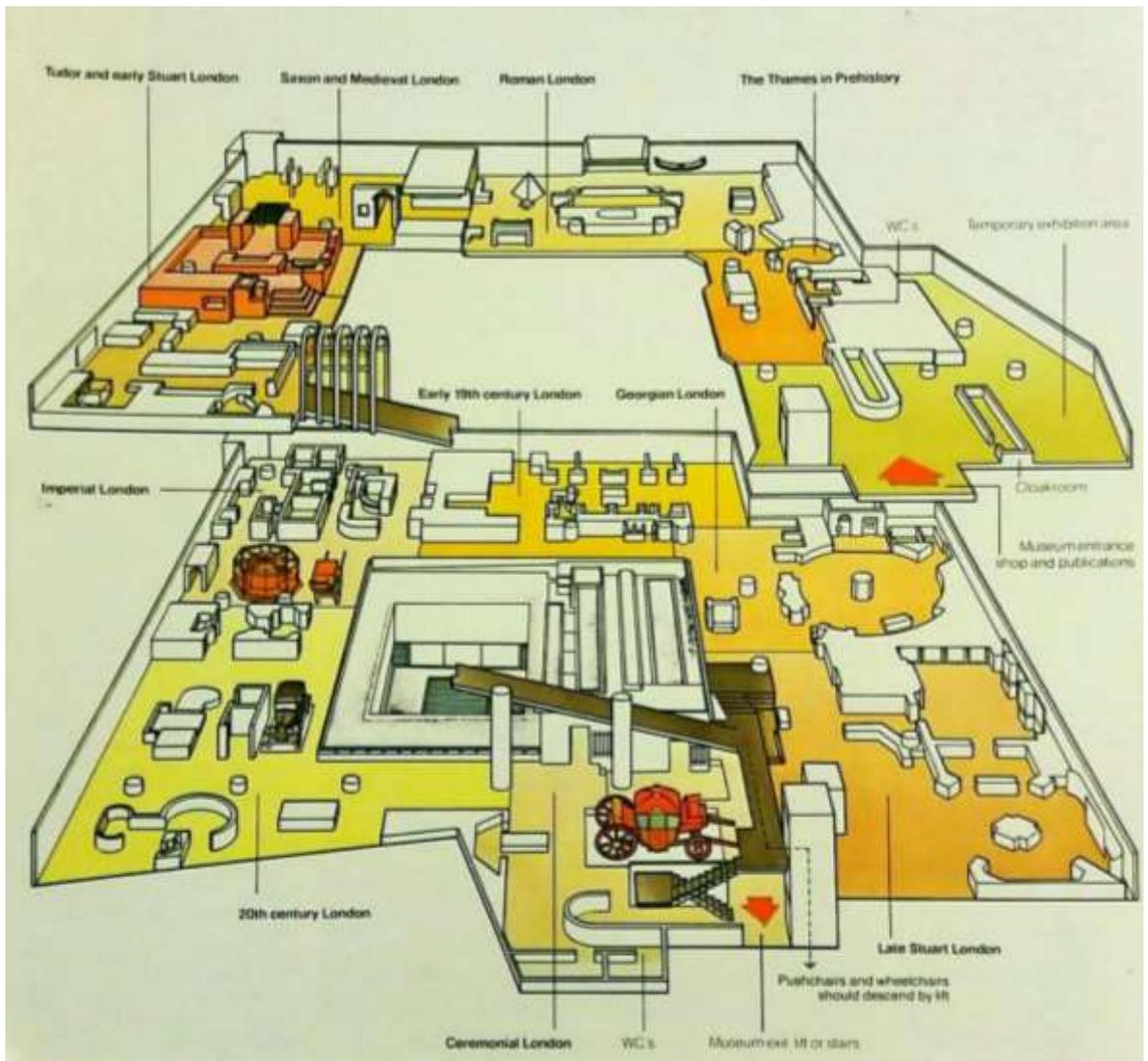
Figure 9: Museum of London permanent galleries floor plan, 1976.
Source: London Metropolitan Archives CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.

visitor route. The chrono-thematic layout of the permanent galleries was designed to lead the visitor on a journey from the pre-history of the Thames through to twentieth-century London. The linear route was shot through with different themes and moods to interrogate each period. At the end of the permanent galleries was a homage to the sustaining relationship between the Museum and the Royal Family with 'Ceremonial London', in the form of Lord Mayor's Stagecoach. The guidebook is useful then in helping to reconstruct the permanent galleries and visitor experience, but also in deconstructing the meaning and narrative imbued within the museum and its displays owing to the detailed description of each gallery.

The guidebook was organised using the same historical periods as the permanent galleries (table 2). Inside the guidebook each section begins with an introductory text providing the visitor with an overview of the gallery, including key themes and subjects, and also summarises key exhibitions and displays. What is immediately clear from the table below is that the permanent galleries are structured teleologically. Also, that 'Early 19th Century London' and the 'Imperial London' between them have nearly 100 displays, so slightly outstripping Saxon and Tudor London as the biggest combined two galleries.

Gallery	No. of Displays	Key Displays
Thames in Prehistory	12	Traces of early hunters, Later hunters and gatherers, the coming of Farming, Farming Develops, The gateway to Britain, A Temple at Heathrow, Tribes defend their territory, The Coming of Iron, The Thames as a barrier
Roman London	36	The Roman army in London, Public Works AD 70-125, Cripplegate Roman Fort, the city wall, Imports and Exports, Buried Londinium, Religion in Londinium, The river wall, The end of Roman London
Saxon and Medieval London	50	Saxon villages, Christianity, The Saxon town, Danes and Normans, The Norman city, King and commune, Merchants and craftsmen, Pestilence and civil war
Tudor and Early Stuart London	49	The status of London, The court, Religious upheavals, London's wealth, The appearance of the capital, The Civil War, Pleasure and perils of the city
Late Stuart London	36	Reconstruction, Wren's churches and St. Paul's, Politics and Religion, Scientists and inventors, London and overseas, Pleasures of the town, Social problems, Property speculation
Georgian London	34	A new German dynasty, Trade and Taxation, The Arts in Politics, Kew and the domestication of discovery, the social conscience, Public entertainment at the Pleasure Gardens, The Law and the Mob, Evangelism shakes and saves,

Early 19th Century London	55	Popular pleasures, Science and Technology, Gentlemen's pursuits, The Great Exhibition 1851, Worthy Citizens, The scandal of London, Escape and illusion, A joyful noise unto the Lord
Imperial London	32	The Port of London, The Railways, The Music Hall, Quality and hygiene for all, The streets of London, Business Ladies
20th Century London	33	Votes for Women, 'All the Latest', The War to end war, London's transport, Cultural Revolution, The Blitz, Britain can make it
Ceremonial London	NA	Coronation Procession, Coronation Crowns, The souvenir market, Coronation mugs, The Lord Mayor's Stagecoach, The Coronation Glove

Table 2: Museum of London permanent galleries, number of individual displays and descriptions of contents, 1976.
Source *London Metropolitan Archives CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.*

Analysis of the MoL 1976 Guide, its interpretive text, and as well as key displays, reveals several dominant interpretative devices which run throughout the permanent galleries, and which together coalesce around a teleological approach which serves to articulate a developmental narrative with London as an imperial city as its apogee. In common with London travel guides in the second half of the twentieth century, which often depicted London as both a domestic capital but also 'the centre of the world's largest and most powerful empire', several dominant interpretive themes/elements are detectable throughout.[282] The interpretive themes are implicit in the introductory texts to each of the main galleries, contextualising each historical period, and framing the collections.

First, and most immediate of the four interpretive themes, is ***continuity***. Notions of continuity, most prominent in the prehistory and Roman London galleries, encouraged the

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[282] David Gilbert, '"London in all its glory – or how to enjoy London": guidebook representations of imperial London', *Journal of Historical Geography,* Vol. 25, No. 3, (1999), p. 280.

reader to make connections between ancient and modern London, and sometimes with the classical world. By linking premodern with modern sites, the galleries produced a sense of continuity of time and place with a great past and great civilisations. More recently nations have emphasised breaks with the past in constructing national identities against difficult pasts. Before the late-twentieth century it was common to highlight how 'nations draw lines of continuity back into the past and how these serves to make those nations seem more legitimate.'[283] London guidebooks in the early twentieth century also focused on this 'sense of the longevity of the city, with its premodern sites displayed as visible connections with an established and sometimes ancient civilization.'[284]

The second interpretive theme, **commercial success**, was prominent throughout all of the galleries. This encouraged the visitor to see London as an important administrative and commercial site, fuelled by overseas trade and migration. As the visitor progressed through the galleries, London evolved from an important administrative province of north-western Rome, growing to become in the 19th century at the height of Victorian imperialism, the 'Warehouse of the World'. This theme of commercial success also reflected the Museum's physical location at the heart of the City, London's financial district.

The third theme is **social conditions (Hogarth's Mirror)**. London's location on the Thames, and as an increasingly global port city, stimulated overseas trade which resulted in growing immigration. Over-crowding was common, resulting in social crises. Addressing more negative aspects of the history of London, such as the social and moral degradation of Georgian London depicted through the English painter William Hogarth, was a means to illustrate the way in which the city was able to transcend these problems through centralisation and reform. This was again typical of those twentieth-century London guidebooks which depicted London 'as a site of power and a unifying central place', which was 'most commonly used in interpreting the landscapes of the capitals of the imperial powers', and a particularly Whiggish interpretation.[285]

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[283] Sharon Macdonald, 'Is "Difficult Heritage" Still "Difficult"?: Why Public Acknowledgment of Past Perpetration May No Longer Be So Unsettling to Collective Identities', *Museum International,* Vol. 67, No. 1–4, (January 2015), p. 6.
[284] Gilbert, '"London in all its glory – or how to enjoy London", p. 280.
[285] Ibid, p. 281.

Finally, and most prominent in the modern galleries (Georgian London onwards), London was presented as an **imperial city**, the capital city of Britain and a great empire. The 'Imperial London' gallery, explicit in the way in which London prospered from the expansion of its empire overseas, declared that London underwent fundamental and *positive* changes, more so than in any other historical period. In this gallery London has reached its teleological apogee, sharply contrasted in the twentieth century gallery with a greater sense of anxiety about the future of London. The British Empire 'could never be the same again', yet 'London life was as rich and varied as ever with fresh vitality coming from its *new* communities…'[286] In this section I will focus on the place and value of empire in creating this first history of London at the museum.

Using the guidebook and the few existing photos of the galleries, focusing on key exhibitions and how particular objects were used to illustrate these themes, I will argue that empire was central to telling the story of London. This speaks to recent arguments set out in chapter one that claim that after the main period of decolonisation museums across Britain engaged in a conscious forgetting of empire. It is my contention that this chapter will provide a more complex picture of the relationship between museums and empire at this time, and that empire remained vital to telling metropolitan histories at the Museum of London. It is first instructive to analyse those other, and equally important interpretive elements, before moving on the London as an imperial city.

Theme One: An Ancient Past

Both the 'Thames in Prehistory' and 'Roman London' galleries, which included 48 individual displays between them, were illustrative of the Museum's desire to embed a sense of permanency and continuous development within the Museum's historical narrative. This was typical of early town and city museums with strong archaeological collections, which they used to articulate settlements as places of ancient and continuous settlement.[287] The introduction in the Guidebook stated that 'Much of London's *historic* past lies buried

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[286] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* '20th Century London'. The Museum of London 1976 guide can be found in both the MoL's Business Archives and Library but are not formally catalogued. The guide does not contain page numbers. Reference hereafter to this guide and other MoL guidebooks will follow this format.

[287] Nicola Johnson, 'Discovering the City', *Museum International* (UNESCO Paris), Vol. 47, No. 3, (1995), p. 4.

Figure 10: Display 9, Caesar's Camp, Heathrow: c.500BC, Alan Sorrell, 1954.
Source LMA, CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.

beneath the City, but traces of a far remote past are to be found in the ancient river gravels underlying parts of Greater London.' It goes on to state that archaeological evidence suggests that 250,000 years ago '…primitive men hunted animals now extinct beside a Thames that had not yet settled into its present course.'[288] A reconstruction of Caesar's Camp at Heathrow was created by Alan Sorrell, an English painter and writer known for his archaeological reconstructions (figure 10). Commissioned by the London Museum in 1954, it was one of the first items visitors would have encountered in the 'Thames in Prehistory' gallery. The accompanying text states:

> During construction of Heathrow airport in 1944, a four-sided enclosure with a bank and ditch was excavated, dated to about 700-500BC. Besides remains of 11 circular huts and an open area, probably a farmyard, there were also traces of a rectangular wooden temple, so far unique in Britain and completely unlike the open-air sanctuaries of north-western Europe. It may be related to the temples of the Mediterranean, having a similar ground-plan to *stone-built classical Greek temples*,

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[288] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976* 'Thames in Prehistory'.

with an outer colonnade of thick wooden posts surrounding a central shrine where a sacred image might have been kept. Clearly, Heathrow was an important religious centre.[289]

The MoL inherited the entirety of the Guildhall Museum's strong archaeological collections, which naturally shaped the new permanent galleries and the interpretation. Hume had stated in his letter to the Board in 1972 that it was his intention to show visitors both ancient and modern London.[290] This display then represents these desires and serves to link modern London with a distant past, and great civilisations.

Upon entering the permanent galleries, visitors were encouraged to make the connection between Heathrow (already London's largest commercial airport at the time the museum opened) and its premodern geography; bringing both ancient and modern London together. Shanks and Tilley, in analysing contemporary archaeological and social history museums have argued that narrative in such displays rarely explain the past objectively, but rather discuss this past within the context of present realities.[291] This was indicative of a contextual archaeological approach whereby 'the context of contemporary society influences any attempt to interpret the symbolic meaning of an object in the past.'[292]

By taking the visitor back to the pre-history of London, where farmers built unique structures unlike those in north-western Europe, the gallery further embedded a sense of continuity and longevity. By dismissing its similarity with other European structures, and drawing archaeological comparisons with classical Greek structures, the exhibition imagined the pre-history of London alongside that of the classical world, engendering a sense of greatness about that geographical past. The introductory text to the 'Roman Gallery' also invited the visitor to think about when London, as a commercial hub, began, in AD43:

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[289] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976* 'A temple at Heathrow'*,* 'The Thames in Prehistory'.

[290] MoL Business Archives, Box 1, Formative Years, 19A/E, Confidential Letter to the Board 1972, p. 2.

[291] Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, *Reconstructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge 1992), p. 95.

[292] Janet Owen, 'Making Histories from Archaeology', in Gaynor Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), p. 203.

> …Merchants and officials quickly realised its [the Thames] importance, and it became a major Roman commercial and administrative centre. Soon after AD 60 it replaced Colchester as capital of the province and was transformed into a city with great public buildings. A fort was built to the north-west, probably as a barracks for the Governor's guards and staff.[293]

One early review of the museum's galleries suggested that, 'The whole of this section is a microcosm of one of the greatest achievements of London in the past three or four generations; the achievement of uncovering its own history.' London was presented as a city that began to emerge nearly 250,000 years ago. A city whose built structure bore similarities with the classical world, but also one which took on new life as one of the main Roman administrative centres in northern-Europe. By introducing the history of London as an administrative centre, the 'Roman London' gallery established another interpretive theme, commercial success. This was one of the more significant themes running through the galleries. One early review of the galleries suggested that commercial success was '…the element that has always in the past been the foundation of its [London's] greatness.'[294] Commercial success is heightened in the modern galleries, particularly in the 'Imperial City' gallery.

Theme Two: Commercial Success

The theme of commercial success was dominant throughout the permanent galleries, overlapping later with imperial expansion in the modern galleries, and often sharply contrasted with poor social conditions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century London. As Gaynor Kavanagh has noted, history in museums from the 1950s to the 1980s was in part shaped by gradual industrial decline, and 'Britain's skill-centred, community-based, industrial and agricultural […] swiftly became the museums' message and central concern.'[295] Commerce was then a common theme to many museums, as it had been in those early city museums.

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[293] MoL Business Archive, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Roman London'.

[294] Jack Simmons, 'The Museum of London', *Museums Journal,* Vol. 77, No. 1, (June 1977)*,* p. 4.

[295] Gaynor Kavanagh, 'History in Museums in Britain: A Brief Survey of Trends and Ideas', in David Flemming, Crispin Paine and John G. Rhodes, *Social History in Museums: A Handbook for Professionals* (London: HMSO, 1993), p. 19.

Next on the visitor's journey, the 'Saxon and Medieval London' gallery, consisting of 49 individual displays, focused on London's rise to be one of the leading cities of Anglo-Saxon England. Whilst the initial paragraph in the introductory text states that London fell into disuse in part due to a lack of centralised government, it quickly moves on to focus on its revitalisation as the revival of trade in luxury goods increased, leading up to the Norman invasion in 1066:

> Trade gradually revived from 600 to 1066 and London grew from a small town in a minor Anglo-Saxon kingdom to the leading city of England united under one king. The building by Edward the Confessor of a palace at Westminster led to the concentration of government there, giving Londoners easy access to the king. Charters bought or bullied from weak kings granted citizens increasing power to run the city's affairs without royal interference […] by the end of period, it had outstripped other English cities in wealth and population…[296]

The remainder of the introductory text focuses more on London's growth, with key displays, such as 'The Saxon town', and 'Merchants and craftsmen', presenting London as an increasingly prosperous commercial city.

The next of the permanent galleries, 'Tudor and Stuart London', also focused on trade and commerce, and London as an emerging global city. This was, however, sharply contrasted with poor social conditions as a result of over-crowding. Yet, commercial success remained prominent in the initial paragraph of the introductory text:

> Tudor London was a prosperous and expanding community, attracting new inhabitants from the country and abroad. By 1600 about 200,000 people lived in the City, in royal and aristocratic Westminster and across the Bridge in Southwark. Despite 20 years of civil war and political upheavals, London's expansion continued and by the 1660s the population was nearly half a million.[297]

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[296] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976* 'Saxon and Medieval London'.
[297] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976* 'Tudor and Stuart London'.

Figure 11: Display 117, Delft Plate honouring Elizabeth I, 1600.
Source *LMA, CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.*

One particularly striking object which emphasised this prosperity, and one that remains in the MoL, is a commemorative Delftware plate (figure 11). This plate exhibited in the 'Tudor and Early Stuart Gallery', said to have been made at Aldgate around 1600 by two potters from Antwerp, Jasper Andries and Jacob Janson, in honour of Queen Elizabeth I, was one of the earliest dated examples of British commemorative Delftware.[298] The delftware plate exhibited in the museum was used to illustrate London's growing wealth and prosperity. Many of the key displays were used to support this narrative of London as a global city. The introductory text for the 'Tudor and Early Stuart Gallery' was entitled 'London's Wealth':

> English and foreign ships filled the Thames. Cloth was exported to Europe in return for manufactured goods, foodstuffs, wine, spices, and silks. New trading areas like North Africa and the Indies were explored. Gresham's Royal Exchange was the appropriately splendid meeting place for Tudor merchants. Cramped streets

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[298] Museum of London, Elizabeth I Commemorative plate or charger, [online], <https://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/113880.html>, accessed 9th January 2018.

discouraged lavish domestic building. Merchants spent their money on charitable projects, country houses, improving their modest town houses or investing in gold and silver plate.[299]

Notably, it is in the 'Tudor and Early Stuart Gallery' where commercial success becomes increasingly linked to empire. In this gallery visitors were increasingly encouraged to see London as a wealthy and global city, commanding great significance as one of the 'the largest towns in England, and by 1660 nearly the largest in Europe…'[300] In focusing on London as a commercial hub, the narrative encourages the visitor to see the history of London mostly in these terms. This idea of London the heart of the global empire, and a city in which imperial sights could actually be seen, was prevalent in the later eighteenth and early-nineteenth century and remained a strong theme here.[301] It is worth noting the neutrality of the language in the above extract used to discuss London's interaction with Africa and the Indies, as the British Empire expanded, as indicative of a reluctance to talk about the nature of British colonial history prior to the postcolonial turn. This will be discussed in more detail later, but shows that whether conscious or benign, imperial allusions, as Aldrich has noted, were conspicuously absent when discussing empire.[302]

In the subsequent gallery 'Late Stuart London', commercial success was sharply juxtaposed with poor social conditions. Paradoxically, this created a sense of triumphalism, a history of London in which the city at several points in its history was able to transcend domestic challenges. This was further indicative of a Whiggish interpretation of history, presenting the past as an inevitable progression towards ever greater liberty and enlightenment which grew out of the prosperity and reform of the nineteenth century.[303] Herbert Butterfield coined the term which derives from the British Whigs advocation for the power of

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[299] MoL Business Archive, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'London's Wealth', 'Tudor and Early Stuart London'.

[300] MoL Business Archive, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Tudor and Early Stuart London'.

[301] Felix Driver and David Gilbert, 'Imperial Cities: overlapping territories, intertwined histories', in Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 2.

[302] Robert Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in postcolonial Europe', *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2009), p.143.

[303] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931).

Figure 12: Display 173, Lacquer Cabinet, imported by the East India Company, early-18th century. *Source: LMA, CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.*

parliament and interprets history as a story of progress toward the present, and more specifically towards the British constitutional settlement. This Butterfield contended, with its emphasis on the inevitability of progress, failed to identify causes of historical change privileging a teleological narrative.

Commercial success remained a dominant theme alongside migration and began to overlap more explicitly with the notion of London as an imperial city. This is best illustrated by an eighteenth-century lacquer cabinet, which introduced London's imperial connections overseas (figure 12). Lacquer cabinets were brought to London by the East India Company in the early eighteenth century and were indicative of London's expanding overseas trade. Lacquered furniture made in Japan and China was exported to the Western European market in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries along established trade routes. They

were considered exotic by western Europeans and were therefore extremely popular imports in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[304]

This display (which remains in the MoL today) was used to highlight the impact of overseas trade and imperial expansion on the growing prominence of London as a commercial, social, cultural and scientific hub of Europe at the time. Such items, which 'embody the spoils of imperial warfare, trade and bureaucratic service' are ubiquitous in museums collections today, though having received little analysis.[305] The accompanying text stated that:

> By Queen Anne's death in 1714, trade had changed English dress, diet and social life. Lighter fabrics were becoming popular. Chinese silk, spun in London, and cheap Indian printed cottons supplemented traditional English woollen cloth. Oriental lacquer furniture and porcelain became fashionable. Tobacco was becoming cheap enough to be a poor man's pleasure. A handsome new Custom House was built on the river-front after the Fire, and the prosperous East India Company acquired a large ship repair dock downstream at Rotherhithe.[306]

Here the image of luxury products, some imported, others made from goods imported from across the globe, encouraged the visitor to view overseas trade and prosperity as synonymous. The 'prosperous East India Company' was noted as making new acquisitions, with no mention of their imperial and predatory conduct in India or Asia at the time. Sven Beckert has demonstrated how the Company's entrance into Asian trading in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was through commercial and military efforts he has called 'war capitalism'.[307] Here the cabinet represented simply the global character of Company trade, and western demand for luxury products.[308] Indeed, it would seem that any consideration of the nature of Britain's overseas rule, explicit or otherwise, ignored its

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[304] David Beevers (ed.), *Chinese Whispers: Chinoiserie in Britain, 1650-1930* (Brighton: Royal Pavilions and Museums, 2008), p. 15-16.

[305] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'Introduction', in Margot Finn and Kate Smith (ed.), *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* (London: UCL Press, 2018), p.1.

[306] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'London and overseas', 'Late Stuart London'.

[307] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A New History of Global Capitalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), p. 30.

[308] Finn and Smith, 'Introduction', pp. 6-1.

impact on people in those places. However, in this and in subsequent galleries dealing with the nineteenth century, this prosperity is sharply contrasted with poor social conditions, with references to overcrowding.

Theme Three: Social Conditions (Hogarth's Mirror)

References throughout the displays in the 'Late Stuart London' gallery speak to population size. One of main displays, 'Social Problems', introduced Hogarthian motifs to deal with poor social conditions, focusing on the growing population:

> By 1700 London's population was perhaps 700,000. More people lived in the suburbs than within the City and the built-up area stretched from Mile End almost to Hyde Park. Responsibilities for the new inhabitants fell to the suburban parishes, but they were not able to cope. Private benefactors set up charity schools from 1690 and built almshouses and other institutions. Bedlam, the City's asylum for the insane, was rebuilt in Moorfields in 1675, but no new hospitals were built before 1721.[309]

Despite this, London's commercial success and prosperity remains a strong theme, In the 'Pleasures of the Town' display this theme is viewed through Samuel Pepys' diaries, speaking as they do about of the luxury of London. The accompanying text notes how:

> The diarist Samuel Pepys depicts the pleasures of restoration London. New beverages, tea, coffee and chocolate, were changing social life. Gentlemen visited coffee houses to gossip and read papers, and taking tea became a fashionable pastime. Visitors noted shops, crammed with exotic luxuries, and bookshops stocked with maps, engravings, and volumes of geography, history and religious controversy. New theatres were opened in Drury Lane. Popular entertainments included fairs at St. Bartholomew's, Mayfair and Southwark, and the river carnival

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[309] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976*, 'Social Problems', 'Late Stuart London'.

with the Lord Mayor's procession to Westminster, and public punishments and executions.[310]

Seen through the diaries of Pepys, a Member of Parliament (and naval administrator in the seventeenth century, both positions owing to patronage), London was a marvellous city of luxury and pleasure. Throughout the permanent galleries the social life of London is seen through the perspective of notable persons, rarely ordinary people. The historical narrative is one that centres on parliament and reform, further highlighting a traditional Whig interpretation of history. Though Hume had wanted to show the lives of ordinary Londoners, that too was largely absent in the permanent galleries at this time. Despite the MoL's social history agenda, David Fleming, who has written extensively of city histories, has noted that despite some progress across city museums, a 'safe and conservative, preoccupation with object-based material culture' has excluded 'all but a minority of townspeople from museum interpretation, production, exhibitions and programmes where the technology, design and aesthetics of largely unrepresentative objects has a clear primacy.'[311]

Yet in the 'Georgian London' gallery, squalid social conditions are juxtaposed with the pleasures afforded by an increasingly prosperous London. This contrasting of social conditions with increasing wealth is based on the work of Hogarth, one of Britain's most celebrated eighteenth-century painters, satirists and cartoonists, known for his canonical works concerning morality. 'Gin Lane', created by Hogarth in 1750, depicts ordinary people descended into a dysfunctional community drinking large quantities of gin, portraying its associated problems in an 'exaggerated reality.'[312] The introductory text to the Georgian section is contextualised through his work:

Something of 18th century London, where great elegance co-existed with appalling degradation, can be sensed through Hogarth's paintings and prints. The city increasingly attracted the hopeful and ambitious. The rich variety of goods in the

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[310] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Pleasures of the Town', 'Late Stuart London'.
[311] David Fleming, 'Making City Histories', in Gaynor Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), p. 131.
[312] Published in Elizabeth Einberg and Judy Egerton, *The Age of Hogarth: British Painters Born 1675-1709*, Tate Gallery Collections, II, (London: Tate Gallery, 1988).

shops reflected the expansion of trade and commerce. Luxury trades like watch and furniture-making flourished in London [...]

But, as Hogarth shows, there was another side to Georgian London. Outdated, corrupt administrative systems could not cope with widespread crime and other problems of an expanding population. Most Londoners had no direct representation in Parliament and the established Church seems indifferent to their spiritual hunger. Small wonder that frustration often exploded in outbursts of mob violence, or that the concern for the individual expressed by John Wesley and other evangelists should attract thousands.[313]

Several of the displays in the 'Georgian London' gallery further engender a conservative narrative around social conditions in the eighteenth century, where those with the power to affect change are the elites through parliamentary reform.

Poor social conditions were, however, set against an image of London that continued to attract people from overseas, and whose trade and commerce brought pleasure and luxury. The agents of change included electoral reform and cause-based politics, which were to come later (under Queen Victoria), and evangelism. The history of London was moving along its teleological trajectory, transcending moral degradation, all the while growing in commercial and global significance. This teleological approach would reach its apogee in the subsequent galleries. The remaining modern galleries which included, 'Early Nineteenth Century London', 'Imperial London' and '20th Century London', would focus increasingly on metropolitan reform, centralisation and most prominently of all on the expansion of London as an imperial capital, a city 'larger and wealthier than many other sovereign states'.[314]

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[313] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Georgian London'.
[314] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Imperial London'.

Theme Four: Imperial London

The introduction to the 'Early Nineteenth Century London' gallery acknowledged that poor domestic social conditions continued. But it also encouraged the visitor to see the latter half of the nineteenth century as one increasingly marked by reform, exalting the role of parliamentary politics, and priming subsequent displays which presented London at the height of its strength and prosperity, the 'capital of an Empire increasingly growing larger and wealthier':

> During the Napoleonic Wars and under the Regency, London remained 18th century in character although there were various schemes of "metropolitan improvement", of which perhaps the best known is the cutting of the grand new Regent Street through the tightly packed West End slums to Regents Park. Immense wealth and poverty appeared in sharper contrast in the capital of an Empire increasingly growing larger and wealthier. Crime raged largely unchecked until the institution of a new and incorruptible police force was established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829. Almost simultaneously a new generation of prisons were built.

> By the time the young Queen who was to give her name to the succeeding age came to the throne in 1837 widespread concern for the appalling social problems was beginning to have effect. The eventual massive reform slowly improved the general health and welfare of Londoners. Two of the greatest influences were the replacement of the patchwork of parish authorities by one overall and effective system, and the practical effects of evangelism.[315]

'Imperial London' depicted London as a city which had undergone significant transformations to become a city 'larger and wealthier than many sovereign states', and at the centre of a great empire, with little mention of domestic social problems.[316] As Gilbert and Driver have noted in their formative studies of the imperial city, the representation of London has either been viewed as a 'place of chaos and restless commerce, difficult to render as a whole, perhaps even incapable of representation; on the other, it was pictured

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[315] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Early 19th century London'.
[316] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London guide 1976,* 'Imperial London'.

as a unity, the site of imperial power, the heart of the world.'[317] Both pictures are present here, moving towards the latter.

The gallery also connects the prosperity of imperial London with the growth and popularisation of industry, entertainment in the form of the Music Hall, improved hygiene, 'Business ladies', and luxury products for working people in Victorian London:

> By her death in 1901 Queen Victoria had reigned for more than 60-years, a period in which more fundamental changes took place in the appearance of London and the way of life of its citizens than at any previous time in its history. In the year of her accession, Dickens had published the *Pickwick Papers* which depicted a rural England linked by mail coaches and the earliest railways. By the turn of the century, virtually all her empire was within instant communication with London by telegraph and telephone. Everyone expected an elementary education. Although there was much to be done to improve the lot of the working population, the initial efforts of concerned individuals and groups were beginning to be absorbed and expanded by large-scale voluntary organisations. The most powerful, the London County Council, replaced the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1888. It had unprecedented administrative responsibility, as the government of the world's largest city, larger and wealthier than many sovereign states.[318]

'Imperial London' is elevated in status, afforded its own gallery outside the chronological periodisation. Empire is implicitly located as the source of London's prosperity in this period through the interpretive text found in the guidebook, and also in the way that particular objects were framed through a narrative of everyday life in the Imperial capital. In line with other studies of twentieth century representations of empire, 'Imperial London' is absent of any sense of doubt about empire, or any self-awareness that what was good for London might not be good for the colonised, offering only a positive narrative.

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[317] Felix Driver and David Gilbert, 'Heart of empire? Landscape, space and performance in imperial London', *Environment and Planning: Society and Space,* Vol. 16, (1998), p. 11.
[318] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London guide 1976,* 'Imperial London'.

Figure 13: 'Victorian Imperialism' display, 'Imperial London' gallery, 1976.
Source: Francis Sheppard, A Treasury of London's Past (London: HMSO, 1991), p. 160. Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

One particularly striking display towards the end of the gallery is 'Victorian Imperialism', in which can be seen an officer's uniform, and a bust of Queen Victoria, among other less prominent objects. It is also and decorated with Union Jack flags (figure 13). As discussed in chapter one, John Mackenzie described four pillars of popular Imperialism which occurred in the late Victorian period; renewed militarism, devotion to royalty, identification and worship of national heroes, and racial ideas associated with social Darwinism.[319] It is impossible to discern all of this on what was on display. There is, for instance, a significant presence of regalia and military costume. The cumulative effect that is evoked by the display is reminiscent of the popular imperialism that emerged in the late-nineteenth century. There are no remaining text panels available, and it is impossible to make out all

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[319] John MacKenzie*, Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984)*, p. 2.

Figure 14: Display 286, 'Warehouse of the World' display, 1976.
Source *LMA, CLA/076/01/016, Museum of London: Guide 1976.*

of what was on display and whether or not the gallery dealt with prevailing racial ideas at the time or acknowledged the existence of anti-imperialist sentiments.

The objects that are discernible include a marble bust of Queen Victoria, made by R. J. Morris in 1887 to mark her Jubilee. More of this commemorative, celebratory, and popular flavour of empire imagery is repeated throughout the gallery. The military uniform and the flags, which altogether appear decorative, though again the text panels are not visible, speaks to regimental museum arrangements which Simon Jones argues are used to instil an *esprit de corps* among a particular group. Here though that group is not a regiment, but London.[320] It is unfortunate there is not information from the text panels, but it seems likely that they continued the celebratory visual approach of the texts we do have, and the associated passages in the guide.

Visitors were further encouraged to see 'Imperial London' as a period when London transcended some of the poor social conditions prevalent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This despite the fact the lot of the working class still required

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[320] Simon Jones, 'Making Histories of War', in Gaynor Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums* (London: Leicester University Press), p. 154.

improvement. The city at the time was known as the 'warehouse of the world' (figure 14), and the displays suggest that this provided a booming import economy which provided opportunities for work, and which saw an incredible influx of overseas goods, including tea:

> The wet docks lining both sides of the Thames were, by the 1880s and 1890s, filled with ships from every part of the Empire. They were largely iron-built, and sail was slowly giving way to steam. Wharves and warehouses were crammed with an incredible variety of commodities; ivory and peacocks' feathers, textile raw materials, timbers, tobacco, food and drugs. Each dock system was surrounded by high walls and protected by its own armed guards to prevent the massive pilferage that had been characteristic of commodity handling on the Thames for centuries. Of all the commodities passing through London, by this time known as the 'warehouse of the world' perhaps that most affectionately regarded by Londoners was tea. The Indian mahogany or Baltic pine shelves of everyday local grocer's shop were filled with various blends and varieties in strikingly painted cannisters with exotic, if not always accurate, oriental lettering on them bearing names like Orange Pekoe and Twankey.[321]

This focus on the Docklands area was a result of a Colin Sorenson's remarks in 1971 during a broadcast on a need to focus on the 'social, physical and industrial scene' in the docks as containerisation was laying waste to the working life of the area.[322] The focus on the Dockland area would intensify under the Keepership of Chris Ellmers and his cooperation with the Port of London Authority in the 1980s, which will be discussed later in chapter eight. What is significant here is that the notion of London as the 'Warehouse of the World' at the MoL, and subsequently in the MoLD, would last well into the twenty-first century. What really stands out is the focus on everyday life, the bustle of the Docklands, but also the grocer's shop and new products for consumption from overseas.

The history of empire is the history of European strategic and economic interests overseas, settlement and colonisation. Joanna De Groot has argued that equally important to the history of empire is the role of 'commerce and imported products within Britain.' This new

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[321] MoL Business Archives, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'The Port of London', 'Imperial London'.
[322] Sheppard, *The Treasury of London's Past,* p. 178.

perspective has allowed for more nuanced interrogation of the colonial aspects of production and domestic consumption. Products like tea and tobacco were important constitutive elements in the relationship between the metropolitan centre and colonial periphery, which established new forms of culture and consciousness around the idea of empire.[323] In 'Imperial London', any notion of consumption of new luxury goods was divorced from any discussion about, or awareness of, their conditions of production. In this way the grittier realities of Victorian imperialism overseas remained absent. This particular narrative of imperial London focused largely on local everyday life in the City. By doing this though, the tea cannisters and the luxury products are seen as inseparable from the everyday life of Britain.

One display, 'Quality and Hygiene for all', also spoke of the prosperity and luxury goods afforded to London as a result of overseas expansion under Queen Victoria. The interpretive text spoke of the 'revolution in shopping habits' which resulted in new 'chains of shops in London selling goods of consistently reliable quality.' Whilst the 'central areas of the Imperial Capital over which Victoria, Queen and Empress, ruled, remained unlike Vienna and Paris, comparatively disorganised and unplanned until relatively late in the nineteenth century' […] 'Gradually London began to assume the appearance of an international capital as crowded slums were replaced by streets lined with hotels, office blocks, and the first great department stores….'[324] The last sentence further reflects a Whiggish narrative approach with the Victorian rationalisation of the city becoming a reoccurring theme.

A significant portion of the 'Imperial London' gallery was made up of a large Victorian street, which remains a popular exhibit at the MoL, and which was designed to capture the atmosphere of everyday London life at the close of the 19th century. The Victorian Walkway included a grocery shop, tobacconist, toyshop, tailor and pawnbrokers. Tea was often invoked as a symbol of the growth of luxury goods, and their increasing availability to the masses; 'The teashops of the Aerated Bread Company, Slaters and Lyons, equally

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[323] Joanna De Groot, 'Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Expansion', in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (ed.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)*,* p. 170.
[324] MoL Business Archives, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'The Port of London'*,* 'Imperial London'.

Picture of the Victorian Tobacconist display at the Museum of London from the 1976 Museum of London guidebook: https://www.museumoflondonprints.com/image/68301/general-view-of-a-victorian-tobacconist

Figure 15: General view of a Victorian Tobacconist, c. 1837-1901.
Source: Museum of London print collections, Image Number: 001192.

attractive, hygienic and respectable, were a welcome alternative to the crowded, predominantly masculine public houses and dining rooms.'[325] During the eighteenth century, tobacco, sugar and tea, originally luxury products, became more widespread. Already by the 1800 tobacco exports to Britain from colonial settlements rose from 30 million pounds to around 76 million pounds. Tea imported by the East India company rose to 2 pounds per head by the 1790s.[326]

Tea cannisters, visible in the background of the 'Victorian Imperialism' display, were highlighted in the guidebook alongside a tobacconist's shop sign to illustrate Britain's 'affection' for that great imperial product. The tobacconist shop sign, displayed in the Victorian Walkway (figure 15), was displayed alongside other wooden figures including 'the Blackamoor', used in the nineteenth century to show customers that tobacco from the

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[325] Ibid.
[326] De Groot, 'Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Expansion', p. 171

Caribbean was available.[327] . Blackamoor statues, and 'stylised' depictions of African men, often dressed to represent 'savagery' on jewellery and design products became increasingly popular during the period of transatlantic slavery to the degree that 'Where coffee and tobacco shops sprang up in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe to cater to the growing taste for these fashionable new products, the "blackamoor" came to advertise such trade.'[328] The power of these displays to capture the globalising effects of consumption, and to tell complex stories that integrated centre and periphery remained at best marginal, with domestic consumption emerging as the most obvious theme. Also, the caricature nature of the Blackamoor, which embodies those nineteenth century racist attitudes discussed in chapter one, goes uncontested.

'Imperial London' was then more explicit about the role of empire than in the 'Early Nineteenth Century London' gallery. The influx of raw materials from overseas, growing public infrastructure as a result of underground railways in the 1860s, and popular entertainment in the form of the Music Hall, were all seen the result of a prosperous imperial London. A poster for a production of the 'Forty thieves' at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in the late nineteenth century was included as one of the main exhibits to illustrate the growth in popular entertainment. This also spoke to Sorenson's desire to unearth what Londoners did with their 'spare time' and 'popular metropolitan past times and recreations…'[329] With its late nineteenth century imperial imagery, however, the 'Imperial London' gallery was established as the apogee of a teleological approach. This is further illustrated by the more anxious tone in the '20th Century London' gallery, which focused on post Second World War London.

One surprising focus in the Imperial London gallery was the mention of women and the 'inevitable revolution in the status of the working woman.' Despite its rather crude title, 'Business Ladies', it spoke of the generations of 'lady typewriters' and telephonists…', which resulted in the 'dramatic speeding up of national and international

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[327] Museum of London Print Collections, 'General View of a Victorian Tobacconist', [online], <https://www.museumoflondonprints.com/image/68301/general-view-of-a-victorian-tobacconist>, accessed 24th June 2019.
[328] Susan B. Iwanisziw, 'Behn's Novel Investment in "Oroonoko": Kingship, Slavery, and Tobacco in English Colonialism', *South Atlantic Review,* Vo. 63, No. 2, (Spring, 1998), p. 75.
[329] Colin Sorenson, 'Theme Parks and Time Machines', in Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), p. 60.

communications...'[330] Yet, the narrative, far from representing 'everyone' as reviews suggested, clearly spoke more to a male working and middle class society.

The galleries then move on to '20th Century London', which if to further cement the idea of imperial London of the height of progress and prosperity, acknowledged that 'London and the Empire could never be the same again'. This seems to encourage the visitor so see the legacies of Victorian imperialism with a sense of pride and nostalgia. It is with this that the '20th century London' gallery is much more anxious in tone, a period marked by loss of a 'carefree existence', precipitated in-part by the financial crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. London remained however, 'rich and varied as ever with fresh vitality coming from its new communities, drawing from many parts of the world...'[331] The introductory text therefore, whilst nostalgic and anxious, finishes with a sense of hope for the future, subtly alluding to commonwealth migration as a positive force:

> The short-lived Edwardian period era left a distinctive mark on the capital. New hotels, restaurants, theatres and public buildings were created to accommodate a more exuberant and cosmopolitan way of life. But this carefree gaiety could not hide the stark social problems. By the end of the First World War, which directly involved both privileged and poor, it was clear that London England and the Empire could never be the same again [...] The 2nd World War brought London directly into the firing-line and it suffered massive destruction of a massive scale [...] on closer examination London life is still as rich and varied as ever with fresh vitality coming from its new communities, drawn now from many parts of the world and continuing the London tradition of 2,000 years.[332]

The narrative here is ambiguous, including a mixture of mourning for a lost empire, tragedy at the destruction wrought by two World Wars, but followed by a sense of the British stiff upper lip. The narrative therefore whilst covering distressing topics, continued to create a narrative which included those dominant interpretive elements. The displays within the '20th century London' gallery was a mix of anxiety concerning social and financial crises, but

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[330] MoL Business Archives, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Business Ladies', 'Imperial London'.
[331] MoL Business Archives, *The Museum of London Guide 1976,* '20th Century London'.
[332] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* '20th century London'.

overwhelmingly of overcoming adversity. If, as John Darwin has argued, the post-1945 period and the end of empire was surprisingly undisruptive,[333] then here is some indication that the notion of 'imperial decline became more commonplace…'[334] The final exhibition in the gallery, however, 'Britain Can Make It', illustrated by the festival of Britain symbol concluded that:

> War-battered London learned to live with peace time 'austerity': everything was 'short and rationed, including bread. Fuel shortages and power cuts made life difficult. An early symbol of peace and rebuilding of international contacts was the 1938 Olympic Games at Wembley Stadium. In 1951 came the *greatest* demonstration of renewed vitality, when the festival of Britain opened in a *blaze of fireworks* on a reclaimed site on South Bank Inventive, colourful ideas in architecture, design and technology showed that the hopes and aspirations that had inspired wartime morale could now be realised.[335]

The '20th Century London gallery' whilst at first seeming ambiguous, best underscored the Hume's attempt to engender a sense of pride about London. The permanent galleries from prehistory to modern London created a historical narrative of London that was triumphant, evolving from a small village at Heathrow, then expanding both in size, population and wealth from the Saxon and Medieval period, through Tudor, Stuart and Georgian London, to reach its height as the 'world's largest city' during the age of Victorian Imperialism.

The Place and Value of Empire at the Museum of London in 1976

This chapter began with two questions. Firstly, to what extent did the museum architecture and layout of the permanent galleries exert influence over the way in which the visitor experienced them? Secondly, what was the place and value of empire in the permanent galleries? Moreover, what can this tell us about the place of empire in popular culture in museums at this time more broadly? Whilst there is not much evidence regarding the

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[333] John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonization: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

[334] Stuart Ward, 'Introduction', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British culture and the end of empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2001), p.9.

[335] MoL Business Archives, *Museum of London Guide 1976,* 'Britain can make it', '20th century London'.

rationale of the design consultants or curators in putting together the content and interpretation of the galleries, there are clearly several factors which impressed upon the place and value of empire within the MoL permanent galleries at this time.

As Francesca Lanz has noted, 'it is important not to underestimate the crucial importance of the connection between the museum's design and the museum's contents, as well as the intellectual exhibition design itself…'[336] We know little about the intellectual exhibition design owing to the lack of archival evidence, however, according to Giebelhausen, 'architecture determines the viewing conditions both conceptually and physically. It not only frames the exhibitions but also shapes out visitor experience.'[337] The chrono-thematic layout of the permanent galleries, the linear progression of the galleries, which as Lubar has noted remains common to museums, engendered a teleological narrative. This when connected with the content of the permanent galleries allows us to draw conclusions as to the place and value of empire within the permanent galleries.

As noted in chapter two, Sorenson's idea of London was of a Victorian London. Other than this, we know very little concerning his thinking behind the content of much of the modern galleries, where the idea of London as a capital city of empire was central to the overall narrative. Social history was popular at this time, and, as discussed in chapter two, had an influence on the museum. Sorenson was also keen to capture the everyday past times and recreations of Londoners. Social history at this period was however, as Catherine Hall has argued, 'resolutely domestic in its focus' and that not until the 1980s did 'debates over questions of race and difference, riots in Britain's inner cities, and the Falklands war' make their way back onto the historical agenda.[338] Whether the MoL could claim to have made a narrative that represented working class people was questionable.

What is clear, is that empire here in the MoL's permanent galleries suggests that far from people forgetting empire, in the 1970s old attitudes and presentations seemed to continue

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[336] Francesca Lanz, 'Staging Migration (in) Museums: A Reflection on Exhibition Design Practices for the Representation of Migration in European Contemporary Museums, *Museum and Society,* Vol. 14, No. 1, (2016), p. 179.

[337] Michaela Giebelhausen, 'The Architecture *is* the Museum', in Janet Marstine (ed.), *Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006), p. 42.

[338] Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (ed.), *At Home with the British Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 9.

almost unchallenged, and there was perhaps a sense of imperial decline which impacted on the interpretation. The character of the London Museum in particular, with its early-twentieth-century city museum character as a civic-trophy-cabinet, shaped much of the new MoL's interpretation alongside this. A grand narrative with a golden age, which here was Victorian imperialism.

This chapter has shown that the amalgamation of the Guildhall and London Museum resulted in old objects and stories being integrated into a new chrono-thematic teleological success story, albeit with a sense a that London's apogee as an imperial centre had passed. Indeed this chapter has shown that the idea of London as an imperial city could continue largely unchallenged a little longer, as local urban tension around immigration did not immediately seem to relate to empire, and the Falklands gloss on that desire to look back to a more romantic past saw a rise in empire nostalgia in the 1980s.[339] Empire at this point had receded far enough into the past by 1976, after decolonisation had had its most profound impact, and greater store was being placed on heritage and memory, that empire resembled a nineteenth-century romantic impulse which had performed a similar function in response to the loss of the old and the rise of antiquarian societies discussed in chapter two. One significant finding of this chapter is, then, that contrary to the claim that the cultural value of empire was relegated after the main period of decolonisation, empire remained a vital tool for narrating the metropolitan landscape, at least to the Museum of London. The turn towards a much more critical and politicised approach to empire and its legacies for the most part still lay in the future, in and beyond the 1990s. It was the slow emergence of such new sensibilities, critiques and agendas, increasingly concerned with representing minorities that would provide the backdrop for the MoL to rethink some of these issues.

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[339] Andrew Thompson, 'Afterword: The Imprint of Empire', *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 331-339.

Part Two: The 'Peopling of London' 1993-1994

Chapter Four: The 'Peopling of London' 1989-1993 Concept and Approach

Introduction

In 1989 Nick Merriman, Assistant Keeper in the department for Antiquities, Prehistoric and Roman at the Museum of London, put forward a proposal to stage a temporary exhibition provisionally titled the 'Peopling of London', a '…remarkable exhibition for a number of reasons, least not that for the first time a major museum in London had addressed the truly multicultural history of London life.'[340] This signalled a significant departure for the MoL, not least because it was the first time the Museum began to acknowledge London's increasingly diverse population. It also signalled a more critical and serious engagement with those hidden, and more difficult, aspects of London's colonial past. The principal question of this chapter, and the proceeding chapters, which deal with the various interpretive strategies of the 'Peopling' exhibition, is: why, and how did the MoL begin to address more seriously London's colonial past and postcolonial present?

The first section will outline the changing socio-political and cultural conditions around race, immigration and minority demands for greater representation, that shaped why and when more inclusive histories in museums began to emerge in Britain. It will also highlight the specific challenge this posed to urban history museums across the globe – certainly across the Anglophone world – as toxic rhetoric around immigration, and responses to it, began to undermine more homogenous notions of national identity. This will help to situate 'Peopling' within a transnational museological moment. The second half of the chapter is concerned with internal circumstances at the MoL, and the emergence of 'Peopling' as a programme which sought to increase ethnic minority representation, but also access to the Museum.

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[340]Sylvia L. Collicott, 'The Peopling of London, London, November 93-May 94', *History Workshop*, Vol. 38 (1994), p. 261.

Race, Anti-Racism, and 'Ethnic Heritage' at the Museum 1948-1989

During the 1980s, curatorial approaches and representations of multiculturalism were increasingly shaped by, and in response to, socio-political and cultural shifts taking place in Britain. Post-war immigration brought with it demands for a more multiracial and liberal Britain. This was accompanied by demands for greater representation from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. The confluence of anti-racist activism in response to racialised violence towards Black and minority groups, and calls for greater representation from minority communities, lay the foundation for new diverse histories in museums in the 1980s and 1990s. The principal aim of these museum responses, like those emerging elsewhere in former settler colonies, was to integrate ethnic minority, indigenous, and Black experiences into more pluralistic narratives, and often to 'make meaningful contributions to contemporary social and political discourse; such as to inform the general public as to the wider benefits and contributions of the value of cultural diversity.'[341]

These issues seemed urgent in Britain because a large number of migrants who came to Britain in the post-war era were from former colonies. Questions around managing race-relations in an increasingly multi-racial Britain became, therefore, entwined with issues about empire and its legacies.[342] It was against this environment that objects and stories belonging to those who had been socially, politically and culturally marginalised could be considered an important part of London's history and inspire new exhibitions and museological approaches. Previously, phenomena such as domestic consumption, overseas production, immigration and empire had rarely been brought together into one coherent museum narrative.

One reason why these phenomena had largely been treated separately was because there was, until recently, a historiographical divide between modern British history and imperial history that has meant 'issues of colonialism, race, and ethnicity, associated with empire, are generally seen as belonging to the imperial past that had little impact on domestic

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[341] Eureka Henrich, 'Museums, History and Migration in Australia: Museums, History and Migration in Australia', *History Compass*, Vol. 11, No. 10, (October 2013), pp. 784.

[342] Angela Woollacott, 'Making Empire Visible or Making Colonialism Visible? The Struggle for the British Imperial Past'*, British Scholar*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2009), p. 163.

history and identity.'[343] The principal question of this chapter then, is in what ways was 'Peopling' shaped by, and a response to, contemporary discourses around the politics of race, immigration and minority demands for greater representation? To what extent can this exhibition be placed within the boarder historical processes of empire and decolonisation?

The twentieth century was a volatile place for non-white British citizens, marked by race-riots, racism, political and public anxiety towards coloured migration, and the delegitimisation of new commonwealth migrants' claims to citizenship; but equally, anti-racist protest. Violence and disenfranchisement were not simply done *to* Black and minority communities. It was also resisted, and BAME citizens made claims to their citizenship through anti-racist activism and demands for better representation all of which helped shape British culture at this time.[344]

The background to these currents and counter-currents are complex. The 1948 British Nationality Act had given equal right of entry to all subjects of the British Empire in response to post-war labour shortages. In effect, all subjects of empire had a right to come to Britain to take up full citizenship. Between 1948 and 1952 the number of migrants arriving each year numbered between 1,000 and 2,000.[345] Between the period 1952 and 1962, almost half a million migrants are said to have arrived from the West Indies, India, Pakistan and other former colonies.[346] The arrival of the SS Windrush, which brought with it 802 Caribbean migrants in 1948, has often been used to mark the beginning of this change in the nature of Britain towards a more multicultural place.

This framing can downplay the long presence of Black people in British history. More importantly, as the size of the immigration flows increased, a substantial hostility to non-white Commonwealth immigration arose, notably in some areas of cities such as Birmingham and London. Both political parties placated demands to restrict the increasing

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[343] Wendy Webster, 'Immigration and Racism', in Paul Addison and Harriet Jones (ed.), *A Companion to Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005)*,* p. 94.

[344] Kennetta Hammond Perry, 'Black Britons and the Politics of Race in Twentieth Century Britain', *History Compass*, Vol. 12, No. 8, (2014), p. 654.

[345] Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (London: Routledge 2013)*,* p. 225.

[346] Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Race Relations in Post-war Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell 1992), p. 13.

flow, even if the mainstream did not endorse the more radical calls to 'Keep Britain White'.[347] Most jobs open to migrants were low-paid, and many were unable to obtain suitable accommodation as a result of colour bars which in part refused accommodation to Black migrants in the 1940s and 1950s. Tension caused by competition for housing and jobs, and greater densities of immigrant housing in initial periods of settlement, increased, as did straightforward racist reactions and racist groups. Sporadic racial violence and race riots erupted, notably the Notting Hill Riots in 1958. These riots signalled a protracted period of racial violence and tension in Britain that would continue throughout the 1990s, and further.

Enoch Powell's 1968 Rivers of Blood Speech stoked anxieties around non-white immigration, stressing the 'foreboding' he felt around the potential social unrest that would result from large-scale non-white immigration. This is now understood as a metonym for the political and public anxiety felt at that time. Schofield has argued that Powell's staunchly Tory vision for post-war Britain was anchored through his conceptualisation of the Second World War as a conservative war to preserve Britain's imperial character.[348] It was a vision which he sought to defend as seismic changes were taking place against the backdrop of an empire in sharp decline.

Broader political developments throughout the post-war period show a political elite struggling to grapple with these realities. Successive immigration acts introduced by the Conservative party further limited immigration. Whilst the acts themselves, such as the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, purportedly reduced immigration by providing preferential treatment to those migrants coming with jobs in hand, the then Home Secretary R.A.B Butler admitted that 'its restrictive effect is intended to and would in fact operate exclusively on coloured people'.[349] Subsequent acts in 1968 and 1981 further limited the flow of non-white immigrants from former colonies, giving preferential treatment to migrants from the Old Commonwealth. When the Labour Government came to power, they further restricted immigration controls through the 1968 Commonwealth

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[347] Fred R. van Hartesveldt, 'Race and Political Parties in Britain, 1954-1965', *Phylon (1960-)* Vol. 44, No. 2, (1983), p. 126.

[348] Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 41.

[349] R.A.B Butler quoted in Levine, *The British Empire,* p. 226.

Immigration Act, which was explained in terms of placating white fears around coloured immigration; what John Solomos argues was a proxy term for racism.[350] Black people increasingly viewed violence against them as having been legitimised and exacerbated by immigration restrictions and their framing.[351]

By the late 1960s, Black people were increasingly marginalised and were presented as a threat to domestic social stability. Immigration acts simultaneously eroded the notion of a harmonious multi-racial Britain and led to colour discrimination towards a largely Black migrant population. The broader public anxiety stoked by figures such as Powell, legitimised far-right groups in their anti-black violence. Whilst politicians on both sides attempted to characterise race-riots as the result of an aberrant section of society, mostly Teddy-Boys and fascists, who saw their economic situation threatened by new commonwealth migration, the events of 1958 challenged previously held views of British racial liberalism.[352]

The government attempts to limit immigration were part of what became a two-pronged attack on the problem of racial tension and discrimination. In the 1960s and 1970s legislative measures were passed to quell racial tensions. Race relation acts in 1965, 1968 and 1976 were introduced, with the intention of banning discrimination on the basis of race, colour or ethnic origin through legal sanctions.[353] These measures claimed to provide equality in regard to employment, education, housing and public facilities. The results, however, were uneven.[354] The 1971 immigration act under Edward Heath's government, meanwhile, removed the right to immigrate from hundreds of thousands more Commonwealth citizens. Newspapers like *The Sun*, in response to alleged mugging's by disenfranchised Caribbean males who were not succeeding at school, grossly exaggerated a notion of crime and violence perpetrated by West Indian youths.[355]

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[350] Stephen Small and John Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain: Changing Policy Agendas and Conceptual Paradigms 1940s–2000s', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 47, No. 3–4, (August 2006), pp. 238.

[351] Ibid, p. 127.

[352] Kennetta Perry, *London is the Place for Me*, pp. 123-125.

[353] Race Relations Acts 1976, UK Public General Acts, 1976 c. 74, [online], <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/74/enacted>, accessed 24th September 2019.

[354] Tariq Modood, *et al*, *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*, (London: Policy Studies Institute, 1997) p. 1-2.

[355] Small and Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain', p. 244.

Margaret Thatcher exacerbated this toxic discourse further. In January 1978, prior to her appointment as Prime Minister, she had already told ITV's World in Action that people 'are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture.'[356] This continued the Conservative party's hard-line stance on immigration, which arguably stoked racist attitudes. The outbreak of the riots in 1981 was condemned by Thatcher as criminal, however, the riots have often been viewed as being fuelled by the congruence of her economic measures and underlying structural issues.[357] It was also around this time that the newly formed British National Party (BNP), by ex-National Front leader Tyndall, emerged.

Racist movements re-emerged both in east and west Europe in the 1990s in response to new waves of immigration. Immigration debates during this period were bound up with the social and political situations of many second and third generations that had established themselves after the Second World War, which brought a new dimension to the discourse. In the 1990s, there was also the prospect of migration from former communist states under Soviet Russia, which added new anxieties and stirred up fears among various communities. However, it remained that racist attitudes and violence towards many ethnic groups and migrant communities persisted, exacerbated by right-wing and neo-fascist organisations that used the immigration debate to stoke anxieties and fears. Perceived economic disenfranchisement by 'outsiders' remained a principal driver of racist attitudes, as had been the case in the 1950s and 1960s.[358]

To some, Britishness remained conceptualised as exclusive, or at least mainly based on notions of kith and kin and associated cultural inheritance, which equated whiteness with being British. Black and South Asian migrants from the new Commonwealth found it difficult, in this context, to fully assert their rights to citizenship, and found themselves subject to racism and at times to more violent far-right attacks. In this context groups emerged to press their claims to full and inclusive citizenship, and to recognise that they had their own perspectives on colonial history and legacies. This found expression within

[356] Daniel Trilling, 'Thatcher: The PM who brought racism in from the cold, *Verso Books Online,* [online], <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1282-thatcher-the-pm-who-brought-racism-in-from-the-cold>, accessed 09th January 2019.
[357] Small and Solomos, 'Race, Immigration and Politics in Britain', p. 245.
[358] John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain* (Essex: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989)*,* pp. 2-6.

the cultural and heritage sector, with encouragement from anti-racist movements and groups concerned to influence educational policy. What then, if anything, did this shifting social, political and cultural environment mean for museums and their representation of ethnic minority groups?

Minority Demands for Greater Cultural Representation in the 20th Century

Alongside growing racial tension, there was a 'blossoming of indigenous voices', and calls by ethnic minority groups for greater representation in museums and other spaces across Europe and North America. Moira Simpson has attributed this to a growing awareness of the importance of cultural heritage coupled with 'the desire for free expression and civil rights.'[359] These demands were indicative of a reckoning with what Paul Gilroy called 'strategic silences' around the history of the Black presence. Gilroy argued that strategic silences were often mobilised alongside the persistent myth of national homogeneity which in turn helped to 'crystallize popular conceptions of the nation as an "Island Race" whose boundaries of inclusion and exclusion had only recently been upset by a relatively new population of non-White migrants…'[360] Moira Simpson locates this flourishing of indigenous voices first in 1960s North America.

In the United States, Civil Rights groups challenged exploitation through calls for greater civil liberties and cultural representation in the 1960s. For example, the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC, 1968), challenged the Whitney Museum of American Art in Autumn 1968, advocating for the voices and representation of Black artists in the New York museum and art world.[361] The BECC demanded for the inclusion of Black artists in the Whitney's 1968 exhibition, and also for representation in decision making and authority roles in the Museum.[362] Similar challenges occurred in Britain stemming from anti-racist movements which sought to challenge the exclusionary nature of the immigration acts, but

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[359] Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations in the Postcolonial Era* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 7.
[360] Paul Gilroy quote in, Perry, 'Black Britons and the Politics of Race in Twentieth Century', p. 653.
[361] Simpson, *Making Representations in the Postcolonial Era,* p. 9.
[362] Caroline V. Wallace, 'Exhibiting Authenticity: The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition's Protest of the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968-1971, *Art Journal,* Vo. 74, No. 2, (Summer 2015), p. 5.

which also brought into question the homogenising myths of Britishness engendered through education.[363]

In Britain, anti-racist and multicultural education initiatives, whilst fractious, broadly coalesced around a desire for greater equity in education. British anti-racism 'emerged as a radical and oppositional political project: a project conceptually structured around two central and hostile social agents, racism and Black resistance.'[364] In the 1970s, significant anti-racist struggles occurred including the Grunwick Strike, and the creation of the first Asian youth movement, and the birth of Rock Against Racism. These events were, in part, a response to racially motivated attacks on the Black community such as the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar on the 4th June 1976 in Southall by the National Front (founded 1967). As early as 1958 papers such as the *West Indian Gazette,* and its founder Claudia Jones, became a space for Black voices to raise their concerns and anger at immigration legislation. Such efforts showcased a growing Black political consciousness, and anti-racist organisation.[365] These efforts continued into and through the 1980s.

Alongside immigration acts, government education policy was seen as promoting a monocultural and homogenous version of British identity in the national sphere.[366] As Laura Tabili has argued, Britain had been a diverse society at the centre of global flows of diverse peoples from across the British Empire long before the twentieth century. Yet popular belief in the twentieth century held that migrants were a recent phenomenon that were increasingly disrupting a broadly harmonious and homogenous society.[367] In part, anti-racist activities sought to dismantle this popular belief, along with the structure that had engendered it. By the mid-1980s anti-racist policy was being progressively adopted by museums. A principal example of this is the Geffrye Museum and their development of an anti-racist policy in 1988.

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[363] Alastair Bonnett and Bruce Carrington, 'Constructions of Anti-Racist Education in Britain and Canada', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (1996), pp. 274.

[364] Ibid, p. 273.

[365] Perry, *London is the Place for Me,* pp. 172-173.

[366] Bonnett and Carrington, 'Constructions of Anti-Racist Education in Britain and Canada'., p. 274.

[367] Laura Tabili, 'A homogeneous society? Britain's internal 'others', 1800–present', in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 53-76.

The Geffrye Museum opened in 1914 to showcase domestic room interiors for the British middle class from 1600 to 1939. In 1987 Rehana Minhas, then ILEA's (Inner-London Education Authority) Divisional Co-Ordinator for Multi-Ethnic Education in Hackney was commissioned by the Geffrye Museum. She was asked to analyse the Eurocentric perspective of the museum and to help inform their anti-racist policy. Rehana Minhas had long advocated for anti-racist educational policy in Britain and brought this perspective to bear on the museum. The ILEA had been established in 1965 under Harold Wilson's Labour government, when the London City Council was replaced by the Greater London Council, with devolved responsibility for inner-London education. The ILEA had been instrumental in serving areas with large multi-ethnic populations for which it played a leading role in multi-cultural and anti-racist education, and often held a Labour majority.[368] Minhas advised that the museum hire two Black historians, which led to the engagement of Rozina Visram and Peter Fraser. Both would later work with the MoL's Nick Merriman on 'Peopling'.

Rozina Visram was an independent historian who had concluded a fellowship at London's Institute of Education in the 1980s. During this fellowship she had intended to create educational packs for distribution throughout ILEA schools. These education packs would provide students with an introduction to Black and South Asian histories in Britain.[369] Given the size and scope of the project, and subsequent financial restraints introduced in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, Visram instead published this research in 1986 as *Ayahs Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians in Britain 1700-1914*.[370] This was a unique and original contribution to the history of ordinary Indians which documented both their contributions and their experience of racism.[371] Peter Fraser was a prominent historian who lectured at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and was instrumental in disseminating research on the Black contribution to global history. Fraser had previously organised an exhibition for the Commonwealth Institute called 'Africa Beyond Africa: The African Influence Abroad' in 1984.

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[368] Peter Figueroa, 'Multiculturalism and Anti-racism in a New ERA: A Critical Review', *Race Ethnicity and Education,* Vol. 2, No. 2 (October 1999), p. 282.
[369] Personal Communication with Rozina Visram, 17th August 2018.
[370] Ibid. Visram published her book with Pluto Press having been turned down by many other mainstream publishers.
[371] Rozina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: The Story of Indians Britain 1700-1947* (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

Visram and Fraser's recommendations for the Geffrye Museum were brought together in a report; *The Black Contribution to History* (1988)*.* This was one of the first of its kind, illustrative of where the political discourse around racism, anti-racist education and calls for greater representation intersected with museum practice in the UK. The foreword to the report reflected the aims of anti-racist campaigners, that is to achieve structural changes, and began by highlighting critical absences around the presence of Black people in Britain in the Geffrye's narrative:

> Both the education and curatorial staff have been aware for some time that the displays and printed information [in the museum] do not properly and accurately acknowledge the influence and contribution other countries and their people have made to the homes and lives of the British over the last 400 years. In addition, the displays make no reference to many groups of immigrant people who settled here during this period.[372]

One recommendation was that it would be easier to change written captions rather than the objects and permanent exhibition, not least because it was comprised of fixed rooms. Visram and Fraser noted that there was an 'emphasis on upper-middle class life and the absence of women's history.' They suggested that a greater focus on 'working class histories would help illuminate and integrate the Black contribution.'[373] Visram and Fraser also argued:

> …that the chronological span of the Museum's permanent exhibition (and its teaching) provides a wonderful opportunity. It covers the modern period of British History when exploration and conquest become an integral part of the nation's history. Parts of India, the Caribbean and Africa, and people from those areas become intimately connected with Britain and influence the development of modern society. Our recommendations therefore deal with both aspects of that relationship; the ways in which links with Africa, Asia and the Caribbean affect

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[372] Rozina Visram and Peter Fraser, *The Black Contribution to History: A Report Commissioned by Cues Community Division and the Geffrye Museum* (Geffrye Museum, 1988), p. 1.
[373] Ibid*,* p. 2.

British social life, and the presence and contribution of Black people in Britain from that time.[374]

With this they made several more recommendations. Firstly, that reading lists be compiled for the staff focusing on such topics as commercial links between the centre and periphery including the trade of coffee, tea and sugar. Secondly, that piecemeal changes should be made to the displays where themes and subjects lent themselves to easy amendments. Rather than over-emphasising difficult histories, this was about unearthing the histories of communities that had been neglected in the historical record:

> We need not take sides in the disputes about the inequalities of these trades, or the effects of economic imperialism, to acknowledge the openness of British economy, its great effects on the rest of the world after 1600, and the reciprocal effects on the rest of the world. Empire, in the sense of control over other regions, clearly affected the development of British politics. The importance of the West India lobby of planters and merchants may have been exaggerated but the defence of their interests at the expense of both slaves and the living costs of British workers is an important theme in British politics for the century after 1750. The mere possession of colonies in the twentieth century increasingly brought into question assertions that Britain was fighting for freedom and democracy in both World Wars.[375]

There was in this a matter-of-fact questioning of empire as a liberal force. They also wanted to highlight the positive contribution of Black people to Britain, whilst acknowledging the that 'Black people had often occupied the same low-status and low-wage jobs that the white working class occupied' and that 'both the contribution and the skills of working-class people tend to be under-valued and a museum with so many objects made by one class and enjoyed by another should bring this to the attention of the public and pupils.'[376]

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[374] Ibid, p. 3.
[375] Ibid, p. 4.
[376] Ibid, p. 5.

Both Visram and Fraser also wanted to emphasise the contribution of Black political activities in the struggle against slavery and the movement for colonial freedom.[377] They noted that the emancipation of slaves was of particular importance owing to recent revisions to the history of the abolition of slavery, notably the works of Douglas Lorimer. These new studies argued for a new narrative in which slaves were responsible for their own independence.[378]

Visram went on to discuss her work with the Geffrye at conferences which focused on the lack of representation of what was then called 'ethnic heritage'. This signalled the start of a museological shift towards an increasing focus on the demographic of visitors and issues of representation. These conferences, which focused principally on ethnic heritage, touched on other topics such as ownership, working with communities, repatriation and interpretation, and were demonstrative of how these initiatives were disseminated throughout the arts and cultural profession.[379] This was part of a broader social history moment. Social history museums, advocates of feminist histories and of history as a tool for anti-racist teaching informed exhibitions that touched on postcolonial histories. Rachel Hasted, a key figure in this movement explains:

> I don't think people in museums realise the influence of the approach that teachers in Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) had on creating new, inclusive ways of looking at the past in this way. […] Rozina Visram, author of *Asians in Britain* was commissioned by ILEA to do a study at the Geffrye Museum in the 1980s looking at how they could adopt an approach that had an emphasis on pulling out the documentary sources through original research and making the local, national and world links. […] Rozina then went on to be an advisor for Nick Merriman's influential 'Peopling' of London exhibition at the Museum of London. So, whilst historians such as Collicott and Visram didn't ever have a permanent job in a museum they influenced the course of public social history very greatly.[380]

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[377] Ibid, p. 6.

[378] Douglas Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978).

[379] Personal communication with Rozina Visram, 17th August 2018.

[380] Quoted in, May Redfern, 'Social history museums and urban unrest: How a new generation of social history curators set out to modernise museum practice in the 1980s', *Social History Curators Group Journal*, Vol. 34, (2010), pp. 19-26.

Other initiatives contributed to the growing demand to address postcolonial and multicultural issues. In 1986, the Ethnic Minorities Unit of Greater London staged the exhibition 'Black Presence' at the Royal Festival Hall, which sought to 'bring to attention the lost history of Black people in London.' In the main, this exhibition described the reasons for the Black presence in Britain from as early as the Roman times, using letters, photographs, documents and paintings.[381]

The 1980s was also a crucial time for grassroots developments across the museum profession around how to better represent Britain's culturally diverse communities. In 1982 the Leicestershire museums service appointed a full-time Assistant Keeper of Indian Arts and Crafts. In Bradford, in 1985, the post of Assistant Keeper of Arts was created, with the term 'ethnic' 'deliberately deleted from the title.' From 1985 then, a slew of exhibitions dealing with 'diversity' were staged across the UK in these areas including 'Double Vision' (1986) in Bradford, 'Warm and Rich and Fearless: An Exhibition of Sikh Art' (1991), 'Arts from the Muslim World' (1992) in Leicester and 'The Peopling of London' (1993) at the Museum of London. Increasingly these exhibitions signalled a more critical engagement with histories of colonialism.[382]

There were also early signs of willingness to confront the legacy of slavery more directly. In 1988 in response to the concerns of the Black community that their history was being ignored in cursory exhibitions about the slave trade, Liverpool City Council set up an enquiry to examine race-relations. The report that was published as a result, named 'Loosen the Shackles' (1989), criticised the treatment of slavery presented in Liverpool's Maritime Museum for not adequately addressing Liverpool's own role in the slave trade.[383] The report highlighted a significant lack of concern by the museum about whose history was represented in the galleries and whose wasn't, and dealt with broader issues concerning histories of colonialism, illustrating a belated willingness to deepen its engagement with postcolonial concerns.

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[381] Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Postcolonial Era,* p. 21.

[382] Nick Merriman and Nima Poovaya-Smith, 'Making Culturally Diverse Histories', in Gaynor Kavanagh (ed.), *Making Histories in Museums* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 178.

[383] Tony Gifford, *Loosen the Shackles: first Report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry into race relations in Liverpool* (London: Karia Place, 1989).

By the early 1990s, therefore, there were multiple forms of activism and early engagements of museums with postcolonial issues. These in turn fed into a new type and range of museum representation in the postcolonial era. The case study that follows argues that 'Peopling' was the beginning of a more critical engagement with histories of colonialism by the MoL, and though piecemeal and rudimentary at first, under the larger banner of immigration and cultural diversity, 'Peopling' marked a creative moment for the museum.

Towards a post-colonial representation of London 1976-1989
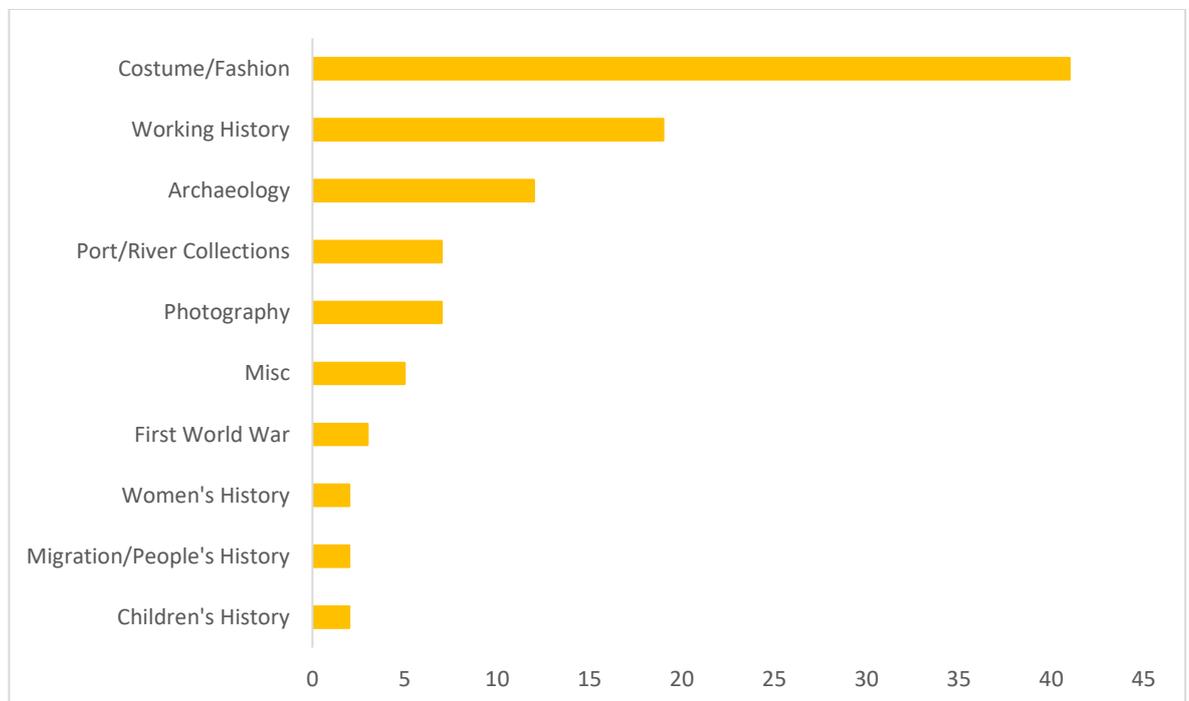
Figure 16: Share (%) of total exhibitions by themes, 1976-1989.
Source: Museum of London Annual Reports 1976-1989.

Temporary exhibitions in this period did little to disrupt the 'drum and trumpet' history - that is history that focused on statesmen, monarchs, generals and battles - in the permanent galleries.[384] A survey of annual reports since the museum opened provides an insight into the nature of special exhibitions staged prior to 1989. Exhibitions during the period 1975 to 1989 focused principally on costume and fashion, working history, and archaeology (figure 16).[385] These three areas accounted for more than half (72%) of all

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[384] John R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London: Macmillan, 1888), pp. xvii – xviii.
[385] Information compiled from Annual Reports 1976-1989, MoL Business Archives.

special exhibitions for the period, reflecting the weight of collections inherited from the MoL's predecessors. Photographic exhibitions were also popular and allowed more scope for modern subjects and newer themes. Modern Keeper Colin Sorenson had a passion for photography and new display technologies which facilitated his desire to represent stories absent in the older collections.[386] Unsurprisingly, women's history, and migration histories accounted for only 4% of all exhibitions.

Annual reports indicate that Black and South Asian people, colonial and Commonwealth citizens, and formerly colonised peoples were largely absent from both the permanent and temporary galleries. Victorian imperialism remained a positive binding narrative in the permanent galleries, metropolitan consumption of goods manufactured and imported from across Britain's empire remained divorced from notions of production. The centre remained divorced from the periphery, and the colonised both at the margins and the core remained largely invisible. In the 1985 guidebook, for instance, Queen Elizabeth was still noted for having turned London into 'a major European market and port trading with America, Africa and the Far East', but slavery goes without mention.[387] The lack of post-war galleries meant there was no recognition that former colonised nations had gained independence, or of other significant post-war and postcolonial topics.

Conceptualising the Peopling of London 1989-1993

'Peopling' responded to those shifting social, political and cultural contexts outlined above. It was also born of the aspirations of then Keeper of Roman and Prehistory at the Museum of London, Nick Merriman, which evolved in response to a number of internal and external forces. Principal amongst these was a shift in museum practice towards a better understanding of visitors and why they visit museums.[388] It is important to note here that in 1989, the same year that Merriman proposed this new exhibition, a survey had been carried out by Greater London Arts concerning visitor attitudes of ethnic minority groups towards museums. It found that 'white people were 50 per cent more likely to visit

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[386] Sheppard, *The Treasury of London's Past*, (London: HMSO, 1991), pp. 172-173.
[387] LMA, CLA/076/01/017, The Museum of London: Guide to the Collections, 1985, p. 41.
[388] Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London Project', in Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museums and Their Communities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 336.

museums than Asian people, and 100 per cent more likely to visit than people of African Caribbean background.' It was argued that the reason for this was that museums were seen by these groups as 'intimidating and almost totally devoted to educated white culture', and as of little relevance to them.[389]

Internally, there was an interest around visitor numbers and the share of visitors from ethnic minority groups. Market research surveys conducted by the MoL in the late 1980s and 1990s concluded that only 4% of the museum's visitors were from ethnic minority groups. The Museum was also in the process of redeveloping their prehistoric gallery and thinking about ways to link the prehistoric past with the present. It was decided that migration of peoples historically was a useful means to this end.[390] Merriman was also concerned that the Museum's permanent exhibitions did not speak to the cultural diversity of London historically, and that:

> …xenophobia and racism were becoming more prevalent across Europe (including Britain) as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism led to large-scale movements of people and the unleashing of long-standing hatreds previously held in check. This was combined with the onset of deep recession amongst the Western industrialised countries, which in turn led to unemployment, increased poverty and the perennial selection of immigrants as scapegoats.[391]

Unpacking these internal and external factors and placing them within their specific historical and museological contexts allows for a nuanced re-examination of the many conditions that allowed for 'Peopling' to emerge alongside similar representational developments at museums from the 1980s. Taken together these vectors, and the creative event that was 'Peopling', provided the stimulus for new representations of London, its multicultural character, and histories of empire as they related to the urban *milieu*.

Prior to joining the MoL, Merriman studied for a postgraduate qualification in Museum Studies at Leicester University in the early 1980s. After graduating from Leicester, he

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[389] Merriman and Poovaya-Smith, 'Making Culturally Diverse Histories', p. 176.
[390] Merriman, The 'Peopling of London Project', p. 336.
[391] Ibid, p. 336.

returned to Cambridge University to read for a PhD in Archaeology in 1983. Towards the end of his degree, he joined the Museum of London in 1986 as Assistant Keeper of the Prehistoric and Roman Department. According to Valerie Cummings, then deputy director of the MoL, the Museum wanted to nurture young and enthusiastic staff, and therefore despite Merriman's lack of formal experience he was recruited.[392] It was not long after that Merriman submitted his proposal for 'Peopling', an exhibition that reflected the intellectual interests that he had developed during his studies at Cambridge and Leicester.

Merriman's PhD at Cambridge focused on structural and cultural barriers to museum visiting. Despite the substantial growth in the number of museums since 1971, little was understood about museum visitors and their relationship to the past.[393] Merriman had noticed the extent to which these issues were absent from his museum studies training at Leicester. Through his research, Merriman discovered that people were on the whole interested in their past and heritage, but that large parts of the population rarely visited museums. He noted that it was neither cost nor ease of access that prevented people from visiting museums, but socio-cultural factors. For example, Merriman argued that if museums have little relevance to people's lives, if they do not reflect contemporary issues important to them, people are unlikely to visit them.[394]

To understand these socio-cultural barriers Merriman turned to Bourdieu and Darbel's 1969 analysis of art galleries, *L'amour de l'art: Les musees europe'ens et leur public*.[395] Bourdieu and Darbel argued that inequalities in access to art galleries were linked to socio-demographic variables. Bordieu and Darbel argued that an individual's position in social space is defined by the various types of capitals they possess. That is, for example, the higher their revenue, the higher their economic capital. Alongside economic capital, intellectual capital, cultural capital and social capital, individuals possess varying degrees of symbolic capital that, 'corresponds to a set of rituals linked to honour and distinction. It is the credit and authority that a social agent receives for having three other capitals.

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[392] Personal communication with Valerie Cumming, 9th November 2018.

[393] Nick Merriman, 'Heritage from the Other Side of the Glass Case', *Anthropology Today,* Vol. 5, No. 2 (April 1989), p. 14.

[394] Ibid*,* pp. 14-15.

[395] Ibid*,* p. 15, citing *L'Amour de l'art les musées d'art européens et leur public* [par] Pierre Bourdieu et Alain Darbel avec Dominique Schnapper (Paris: Les Éditions de minuit, 1969).

Symbolic capital is necessarily based on approval of others.'[396] Bourdieu and Darbel believed that people's preference for the arts strongly corresponded with their social status; the higher it was the more likely they were to attend an art gallery. They also argued that the development of museums as part of 'high culture' had led to a negative image being held by groups without high social status, and that 'those not socialised into museum competence' will tend to exclude themselves from it, justifying this with negative images of the museum and seeing the exclusion as a deliberate choice.'[397]

Whilst Merriman understood that on one level museum visiting was an act of 'cultural affiliation', he recognised that this did not mean that 'the individual visit is meaningless'. He believed that Bourdieu and Darbel's thesis did not account for the rise in museum visiting and the growth of museums since 1971. Rather, increased access to museums was evidence of 'educational democratisation which has made the "code" of museums decipherable by larger numbers of people' alongside increased availability of leisure time and disposable income.[398] Contrary to Hewison's assertions that the boom in the 'heritage industry' was indicative of decline, an attempt to recapture a foreign past and sanitised with regards to the present,[399] Merriman saw the democratisation of museums as the relative success of certain sections of society. Therefore, the aim of museum should be to further democratise by, for example, including local communities within the planning and design of exhibitions, and making them relevant to broader sections of society in order to further increase visitation from those still culturally marginalised.[400] Exhibitions should attempt to represent those communities that had been historically marginalised, and whose history and heritage had neither been reflected on the TV nor in art and cultural institutions.

Another intellectual thread running through Merriman's planning was London's prehistory. Merriman initially studied archaeology at Cambridge as an undergraduate. As well as

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[396] Jason Luckerhoff, Stéphane Perreault, Rosarie Garon, Marie-Claude Lapointe and Véronique Nguyên-Duy, 'Visiting Art Museums: Adding Values and Constraints to Socio-Economic Status', *Loisir et Soci*ety / *Society and Leisure*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (2008), p. 71.

[397] Merriman, 'Heritage from the Other Side of the Glass Case', p. 15.

[398] Ibid*, p. 15.

[399] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (London: Algernon Methuen, 1987).

[400] Nick Merriman, *Beyond the Glass Case: The Past, the Heritage and the Public in Britain* (London: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 133-135.

wrestling with museological concerns around cultural barriers to access, Merriman was also thinking about 'London before London was there', and the notion of the 'original' Londoner which at that time was an epithet being bandied about by far-right groups; 'original' being a metonym for White Anglo-Saxons. Merriman saw far-right groups promoting a narrative that 'the proper state of London' was a 'white unchanging population, and that post-war immigrants that had come to London and were taking our jobs […] were not British, and a bad thing, and should expelled.' Archaeology, as Merriman saw it, provided irrefutable evidence that Britain was an immigrant nation and had been since prehistoric times.[401] This undoubtedly fed into the museum's redesign of the prehistory gallery.

Notes on a Proposal 1989

Merriman's 'Notes on a Proposal', which he submitted alongside the temporary exhibition proposal in August 1989, illustrates how he consolidated these two strands of thinking, and provides first-hand insight into his conceptual thinking, motivations and plans for 'Peopling', speaking also to those contexts outlined at the top of the chapter:

> According to the 1981 census data that was released the same year as the Brixton riots, at least 20 percent of London's current population belongs to a household whose head was not born in the United Kingdom […] therefore, London is ethnically very cosmopolitan. In popular consciousness, however, there seems to be a widespread view that these post-war groups are really the only immigrants that Britain have had […] they become defined in terms of 'Native' versus 'immigrants', 'black' versus 'white' and 'us' versus 'them'. In fact […] if we take a much longer time scale and go back to the end of the Ice Age, around 10,000 BC when the London area was uninhabited, it can be argued that all people living in London are descended from immigrants…so to talk about an 'original' London population is misleading: London's population has always been shifting and diverse. It is to highlight this neglected aspect of London's history and to correct unfounded

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[401] Personal Communication with Nick Merriman, 20th August 2018.

assumptions that this exhibition, provisionally entitled 'The Peopling of London', is proposed.[402]

1981 was a significant moment in British history and for race-relations, with 'indiscriminate and disproportionate' use of stop and search helping to spark large-scale riots.[403] The riots were triggered in-part by 'Swamp 81' (an ironic choice of language) which saw Brixton saturated with plain-clothes police officers tasked with tackling crime in the area. On the 10th April a young black man was stabbed. In the context of anger about police pressure in the area, the police officers who came to his aid were mistaken by passing Black youths as either having caused the man's injuries, or as trying to arrest him. Rioting quickly spread with 65 civilian injuries and 299 police injuries, along with widespread damage to property.[404] There followed riots in other cities, most notably in Toxteth, Liverpool, Manchester, and parts of the West Midlands.[405] Merriman hoped that an exhibition which spoke to these events and the broader discourse around immigration could challenge anti-immigrant myths, and the notion that non-white immigration was a post-war phenomenon. Juxtaposition of the Brixton Riots and the augmentation of nativist rhetoric in Britain, illustrates the way in which the proposal spoke discursively to those shifting socio-political and cultural contexts outlined above.

Racial tensions had been rising sharply throughout the twentieth century, and immigration continued to dominate public discourse throughout the 1980s and in the early 1990s. Before eastern European migration under New Labour in 2004 which saw an increased backlash against immigration in the context of anti-globalisation and anti-neoliberalism concerns, multiculturalism was gaining more support. 'Peopling', therefore, can be placed crudely at the end of this first big moment of race-immigration-postcolonial issues in the UK. Merriman was just in time to make sure the MoL could piggy-back onto this rising multicultural trend and contribute to it. In this he was acutely aware of the political stance the MoL would be taking.

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[402] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London': Notes on a Proposed exhibition in the Museum of London 1989, p. 1.
[403] Leslie Scarman, *The Brixton disorders 10-12 April 1981: report of an enquiry by Lord Scarman*, (London: HMSO, 1981), p. 45.
[404] Rob Waters, *Thinking Black: Britain 1964-1985* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), p. 175.
[405] Rebekah Delsol and Michael Shiner, 'Regulating Stop and Search: A Challenge for Police and Community Relations in England and Wales', *Critical Criminology,* Vol. 12, (2006), p. 243.

Merriman was, therefore, concerned that 'Peopling' placed the museum within the realm of socio-political discourse, and would provoke a certain amount of 'political controversy':

> One further problem that usually does not occur in MoL exhibitions is that of possible political controversy. Dealing as it does with immigration, the exhibition is likely to generate a good deal of press and public interest and is likely to be used by different groups to make their own political points. Right-wingers for example, use the exhibition as ammunition to suggest that there have always been too many immigrants; black people might object if we exhibit National Front material as part of a section on racism; different groups might argue about the space allocated to them and at the museum writing 'their history'.[406]

Museums at this time were beginning to take more provocative stances, increasingly addressing matters of social concern, marking the 'sometimes painful steps' that museums began to take 'to develop new museology which is of greater relevance to the cultural needs of both audiences and those whose cultures are represented in the collections.'[407] 'Peopling' was an example of the MoL taking a provocative stance on a contemporary subject. Merriman was aware of the various perspectives through which visitors would encounter this exhibition, and the affective nature of some of the proposed material. He felt that a certain amount of controversy was, however, not an altogether a bad thing. On the contrary, Merriman believed that 'Peopling' would demonstrate the potential of the MoL to make a meaningful contribution to social and political discourse:

> Much of this is inevitable and will be a good sign that the museum is addressing issues that have relevance to people's lives today. The only way to counter criticism is to strive to present an even-handed picture of the topic and be able to back up the exhibition with good academic research. The potential of controversy should be no deterrent to doing the exhibition; indeed, it should be an indicator of success.[408]

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[406] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London': Notes on a Proposed exhibition in the Museum of London 1989, p. 10.
[407] Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era,* p. 261.
[408] Personal Communication with Nick Merriman, 20th August 2018.

Merriman still wanted to present an even-handed picture of the topic, and the exhibition was also motivated by more pragmatic concerns. 'Peopling' was designed to broaden the Museum's visitor demographics, and to show that the Museum was at the forefront of museological developments:

> The exhibition will demonstrate the museum's commitment to widen and increase the range of our visitors, especially amongst those sections of the community which tend not to go to museums […] tackling this subject on this scale: it is dealt with only piecemeal in the permanent galleries. The subject deals with a hidden aspect of London's history that, by being brought to light, will enhance the museum's reputation as a pioneer in museum display and interpretation.[409]

We also find that Merriman was not so much concerned about political controversy as with potential criticisms from those immigrant communities he sought to address. In line with representational critiques at that time, he worried that:

> …it would be possible to criticise the exhibition as being yet another example of white educated museum worker appropriating the past of groups to which they do not belong. However, this is a standard process when dealing with the history of earlier periods […] and, in the absence of appropriate staff in the MoL, it is better to do something than nothing. Full consultation will be made with relevant museums such as the Museum of the Jewish East End and the Black Cultural Archives Museum. Consideration was given to appointing a committee consisting of representatives of different communities. However, the experience of curators in boroughs shows that this rarely works, a) because representatives only represent a small section of their community (usually middle-aged men) and b) it can lead to disputes about allocation of space, vetting of text, etc. On balance, then, it may be better to produce drafts of text and illustrative material and show it to interested parties.[410]

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[409] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London': Notes on a Proposed exhibition in the Museum of London 1989, p. 2.
[410] Ibid, p. 11.

In the second half of the twentieth century there were growing concerns in museums and from ethnic minority and activist groups around the relationship between museums and 'the communities from which museum collections originate.'[411] Concerns began to emerge around how museum representations are experienced and perceived by their diverse audiences, and how representations affect visitors from source communities. Who could speak to the meaning of particular objects and histories of source communities? This was the first time the MoL would need to work with such a diverse range of communities, and Merriman had anxieties about how best to do this.

Merriman, a young museum curator with little experience, was attempting to do something innovative. He wanted the MoL to speak to contemporary discourse around racism and immigration, while at the same time attempting to allay the concerns of the Museum around declining footfall by broadening the Museum's visitor demographics. Those more complex questions around representation and how best to tell the history of immigration to London would require the outsourcing of criticality and expertise.

Rozina Visram and Community Approaches to Museum History

With little knowledge of the communities that this exhibition sought to speak both *about* and *to*, Merriman appointed an external researcher.[412] In February 1990, upon the recommendation of a colleague at the Museum in Docklands Project, (Annie Harris), Merriman contacted Rozina Visram. As discussed at the top of this chapter, she had worked with Peter Fraser at the Geffrye Museum. In his letter to Visram he mentioned he had read Rozina and Fraser's report *The Black Contribution to History* (1988).[413] Owing to her experience working with the Geffrye Museum, and her book, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes,* Merriman felt that Visram would ensure that 'Peopling' would not be another case of 'of white educated museum workers appropriating the past of groups to which they do not belong.'[414]

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[411] Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown, *Museums and Source Communities* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 1.
[412] Personal Communication with Nick Merriman, 20th August 2018.
[413] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences Letter from Nick Merriman to Rozina Visram, 13th February 1990.
[414] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London': Notes on a Proposed exhibition in the Museum of London 1989, p. 11.

Bringing Visram on board represented changing museum practice, increasingly common to those regional museums working on culturally diverse histories, in moving away from a single authoritative voice to a view of the past which was plural and shared. If the permanent galleries represented the belief that white culture encompassed the history of London from pre-history, this exhibition was a way of shattering that philosophy, but one that would need to outsource criticality and expertise. Increasingly museums were facing new challenges to traditional interpretation. Already, in Merriman's proposal we see this around concerns about who speaks for a community, but also around questions about how communities can be legitimately involved. How should the museum deal with critical questions around race and racism?

Visram was briefed by Merriman to research twenty communities for representation in the exhibition. Having read Peter Fryer's book *Staying Power* (1984), and with her own expert knowledge of South Asian communities, she set about researching those communities which she knew less about. Once she felt she knew enough about each community she approached local archives and libraries hoping to find people with additional expert knowledge. At that time, archives seldom indexed their material by community groups, and Visram felt secondary research would help her to navigate the archives with greater ease. Visram found it difficult to locate Black and Asian histories in the archives, and much of her research was facilitated by local archivists willing to share their time and expertise. After she had concluded her preliminary research of each community, which included locating potential objects, she wrote summary sheets which were used when writing panel texts and curating the displays.[415] Based on her research and notes, the museum then began to request loans of material for display.

A significant element of Visram's approach was the way she wanted to address the objects selected for display. Labelling of objects at that time included only basic descriptors such as what the object was, dates and periods from which it originated. Rarely did the labels reveal who had made the objects, its social context, and the philosophies of the people who made a particular object. Visram and Merriman decided it was important to try and

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[415] Personal communication with Rozina Visram, 17th August 2018.

acquire objects from local people, objects which held significant value to them, and to collect oral testimony to provide context.[416]

Early work with source communities has been criticised for using community support without changing traditional museum working practice. It has been suggested that arrangements often resulted in the museum retaining their perspective and offering only superficial involvement.[417] Merriman had counter-argued that no one can speak for past peoples. In effect, museums were grappling towards ways of including source communities, and the development of practices was at an exploratory and rudimentary stage. Ruth Phillips has argued that these more collaborative approaches, beginning in the 1990s, have cumulatively resulted in a paradigmatic shift.[418] The resulting experiments and thinking have also raised fundamental questions about the:

> ways that contemporary museums are repositioning themselves as they respond to the powerful currents of cultural pluralism, decolonisation and globalisation, but also about the changing relationship between museums and the societies within which they operate.[419]

Whatever the failings of these initial attempts, this signified a changing relationship between the MoL and its communities.

Visram connected with several academics, archivists and local researchers during her research. These contacts in turn put her in touch with local community leaders. It was also decided to adopt the museum-on-the-move model that the Museum in Docklands Project (chapter 8) had already developed. That involved deploying a museum caravan which travelled around London and collected objects, oral testimonies and promoted the 'Peopling' project. This was conceptualised as bringing the museum into the community, rather than asking the community to simply visit the museum. Visram noted that many

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[416] Ibid.

[417] James Clifford, 'Museums as contact zones', in James Clifford, *Routed: travel and translation in the late twentieth century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 208.

[418] Ruth B. Phillips, 'Introduction', 'Part 3: Community collaboration in exhibitions: towards a dialogic paradigm', in Laura Peers and Alison K. Brown (ed.), *Museums and Source Communities* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 155.

[419] Ibid, 155.

people shared personal accounts and experiences of racism when visiting the caravan. Visram also insisted that people who donated objects would be credited.[420]

The mobile museum was significant in that it reflected a growing museological trend to capture memories from source communities.[421] It was also another strategy used by museums to encourage visitors from particular areas who would not otherwise visit the Museum. The museum caravan went around London and collected oral histories from many of the communities that were treated in the exhibition. It included panel displays and a video-player. Between October 1992 and May 1993 it visited diverse locations including: Hackney Town Hall; Surrey Quays Shopping Centre, Tesco's Brixton; Ridley Road Market; Kensington Town Hall; Tottenham Leisure Centre; Spitalfields Market; Ponders End Shopping Centre; Asda, Lavender Hill and Lampton Park.[422] Rory O'Connell, the Museum's Curator of oral history taped many interviews. Many spoke of how their 'colonial education' had given them strong, positive images of Britain, so helping to precipitate their eventual decision to migrate. These tapes formed part of an ongoing effort to create an oral history archive which had begun with the Docklands Outreach Project (the predecessor to the eventual MoLD), and which will be discussed in chapter eight.

'Peopling' was a project that sought to illuminate the varied experience and contributions of communities, and to ensure that those communities contributed to the exhibition and helped negotiate representations of their shared history in Britain. This approach significantly changed the relationship between the Museum and its communities. This was further reflected in the community consultative groups set up to advise on elements of the exhibition, and the essays in the 'Peopling' book which were written by a member of each community which will be discussed in chapter six. The MoL also organised a focus week during the exhibition, during which several community groups could stage their own events to showcase their cultures, bringing them into the museum as living witnesses and participants.

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[420] Personal communication with Rozina Visram, 17th August 2018.

[421] Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museums and their Communities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 15.

[422] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman (ed.) *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation of the Exhibition,* (London: Museum of London, Arts and Society, University of East London 1996), p. 22.

Learning from Others: Australia and North America

'Peopling' was also shaped by, and in turn shaped, broader transnational developments. During the planning stages, Merriman and his team travelled to other countries to see similar exhibitions. Correspondence and letters from the Museum's archives illustrate how Merriman and his team began to establish networks with urban history and migration museums, predominantly in Australia and North America. One example of this was a relationship that Nicola Johnson, then Head of the Later London Department, developed with the Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) in New York. She also visited the Chicago Historical Society (CHS). With such expanding links, the Museum was beginning to develop more sophisticated practices around community engagement and more inclusive representations by inserting themselves into a vibrant transnational conversation about museums and cultural diversity. These trips provided insights into practices of engaging with communities and interpretation strategies which fed back into 'Peopling'.

Merriman visited the Smithsonian (1990) where he looked at two new exhibitions, 'Field to Factory' (1987) and 'A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution' (1987), and also took part in a visitor studies conference in Washington hosted by the Smithsonian. Merriman also visited Australia's Migration Museum, and the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. Sydney's Migration Museum was of particular relevance to the 'Peopling' theme of migration. In Australia there had been an efflorescence of migration history in the late twentieth century, which set the scene for the emergence of a museum on the topic. In 1986, the Migration Museum in Adelaide, South Australia, was opened to the public as the first of its kind in the world. In telling the history of immigration to Adelaide since 1836, it 'explored the multicultural nature of contemporary society and the immigration policies which shaped the population.' Henrich argues that the Migration Museum emerged as a result of multicultural policies introduced in 1973 which sought to '…improve the social and economic welfare of Australians from "non-English speaking backgrounds"', as well as highlighting the need to educate the wider Australian community about the value of cultural diversity.[423] More specifically, the idea for the new museum emerged as plans were discussed to mark the sesquicentenary (150th anniversary) of the

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[423] Eureka Henrich, 'Museums, History and Migration in Australia', *History Compass,* Vol. 10, No. 1, (October 2013), pp. 783-784.

founding of the State of South Australia in 1836. Plans to open several new museums included one for a new ethnic museum. This name was changed shortly after when migrant groups who were working with the new museum wanted to avoid the negative connotations and marginalisation, they feared might come with the term ethnic.[424]

Part of the Museum's mission was to position the history of minority groups within the broader narrative of South Australian History. For example, it challenged the construct of the peaceful settlement of Australia, and the 'nation of immigrants' story, which neglected power relationships between the indigenous and settler populations. One particular gallery, 'Colonisation or Invasion?', stated that the violence committed against the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains was in fact a 'genocide'.[425] The Migration Museum used difficult topics in an attempt to find more inclusive histories. In 1989 a federal policy paper called *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia: Sharing Our Future,* which came out of discussions held by museums and libraries at this time, saw the introduction of equality statements and community liaison officers.[426]

Merriman also visited the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, which opened in 1988, a museum which also dealt with migration and indigenous histories. The Powerhouse Museum declared that its '…exhibitions aimed to disrupt the idea that migrants or "ethnics" were different from "Australians"'. An idea that had seemingly not yet reached Britain. In Britain, by contrast, immigrants were challenged to consider their own migrant heritage and cultural traditions, 'whether they were of British ancestry or otherwise.'[427] These two visits to pioneering migration museums, exposed Merriman to community working groups, exploring difficult histories and presenting the histories of migrants within mainstream narratives, these ideas and approaches would have been known to him when he started working on 'Peopling'.

In June 1990, Merriman also travelled to Washington D.C. He had been invited by James Sims, Acting Director of the Office for Museums Programs at the Smithsonian Institution,

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[424] Ibid*,* p. 785.
[425] Ibid*.*
[426] Eureka Henrich, 'Museums, History and Migration in Australia', p. 787.
[427] Ibid, p. 786

to a conference on visitor studies. Merriman's immediate task was to present a paper based on his PhD around why people don't visit museums. In a letter from Sims about Merriman's visit to Washington (1990) he noted that 'Peopling' was '…appropriate, timely and urgently needed.'[428] The Smithsonian Institution was by this time exploring questions around how to adequately represent indigenous communities. It ran two related conferences, at the International Centre of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC: The Poetic and Politics of Representation (1988); Museums and Communities (1990). These took place either side of Merriman's visit. Out of these came two significant publications, Karp and Levine's *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991) and Karp, Kreamer and Lavine's *Museums and Communities* (1992).[429] They debated how Western museums could develop strategies of representations when 'different cultures and perspectives come into contact with them [museums], as they inevitably do.'[430] Both Merriman and Sims' interests were timely.

One of the more significant partnerships that the Museum developed at this time was with the BHS. The BHS was founded in 1863 as the Long Island Historical Society, located in Brooklyn Heights. It was housed in a landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881.[431] In the second half of the nineteenth century Brooklyn had grown to become the third largest borough in New York City. In much the same way that the Guildhall Museum and London Museum emerged, many of Brooklyn's prominent citizens, imbued with civic pride, were concerned about the loss of their pre-industrial past. The society was established to create a library committed to preserving the history of America, New York State, and most especially, 'the counties, towns and villages of Long Island.' In the 1970s and 1980s the library suffered amidst a broader economic climate of deindustrialisation, decline, and social change, then re-established itself as a museum. The institution changed its name to the Brooklyn Historical Society in 1985 and began to embrace social history practices in an attempt to better capture the diversity nature of Brooklyn's history and people.[432] The development of the BHS was not that dissimilar from that of the MoL.

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[428] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, letter from James Sims (acting director of the Smithsonian Institution) to Nick Merriman, 25th June 1990.

[429] Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era,* p. 13.

[430] Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (ed.), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Politics and Poetics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), p. 1.

[431] Brooklyn Historical Society, [online], <http://www.brooklynhistory.org/about/aboutbhs.html>, accessed 9 February 2019.

[432] Ibid.

In 1991 Nicola Johnson visited both the BHS and the CHS to learn about their approaches to community engagement. In correspondences between the Director of the BHS David Khan, and Director of the MoL Max Hebditch, speaking of Nicola's visit, we find evidence of a potential collaboration between the two museums. Khan suggested that the two museums should carry out a feasibility study to this end and shared with Hebditch a proposal for 'Brooklyn's West Indian Carnival'.[433] Khan had drafted a proposal for this exhibition at the BHS in November 1993. There is no evidence that a collaboration happened, and the BHS subsequently launched their own exhibition, possibly influenced by his conversations with the MoL and his visit to 'Peopling'. In short, the MoL was involved in discussions about exhibitions that were emerging almost in parallel, and with similar reasons and aims.[434] He had hoped that the two museums would work together in exploring the West Indian communities in their two cities.

The 'West Indian Carnival' exhibition (1994) was similar to 'Peopling' in important ways. They shared objectives, and used oral histories, including personal experiences of the West Indian community:

> The Brooklyn Historical Society and The Brooklyn Museum propose to carry out a joint project to document the history and evolution of Brooklyn's West Indian Carnival […] During the project, oral history interviews will be conducted with key individuals in the West Indian American Day Carnival Association, which sponsors Carnival, as well as costume makers, musicians, and ordinary participants in the festival. A project photographer will be engaged to record photographs of interviewees and a limited number of additional subjects. A list of Carnival-related documents, photograph collections, films and videos, and other materials in both public and private hands will be compiled. And the records in the possession of the West Indian/American Day Carnival Association itself will be partially arranged and described.[435]

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[433] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Letter from David Khan to Nick Merriman 11th March 1994
[434] MoL Business Archives, Peopling/Planning the Exhibition/Correspondences, Brooklyn's West Indian Carnival, A Collaborative Documentation Project of the Brooklyn Historical Society and the Brooklyn Museum, November 1st, 1993 – October 11th, 1994, A Proposal Prepared for the Ford Foundation.
[435] Ibid, p. 2.

Whilst this project lacked an exhibition component, other than the proposed partial arrangement of the West Indian/American Day Carnival Association possessions, it was similar in its approach insomuch that it sought to capture one element of Brooklyn's diverse urban community. These transnational exchanges were undoubtedly influential in the conceptualisation and planning of 'Peopling'.

Having considered the internal and external forces that impacted on and focused Merriman's conceptualisation of 'Peopling', and the broader socio-political and cultural environment within which it emerged, I am able to say with confidence why and how this exhibition came about. Merriman's concept for 'Peopling' emerged against a backdrop of rising multiculturalism in response to anti-immigration rhetoric. This coincided with intellectual developments around Black history, and the impact of these new histories on the museum sector in the latter half of the 1980s, whereby educators and historians were pushing for greater representation of the contribution of Black people throughout British history. In viewing 'Peopling' against this backdrop, this chapter shows that these early temporary exhibitions, though not explicitly about empire, can be placed within a broader historical trajectory bound up with Britain's break from empire, as decolonisation led to a flourishing of demands from subaltern groups across the globe for better cultural representation. Viewed in this context, this chapter demonstrates that 'Peopling' developed within a vibrant transnational urban museum context wherein museums in the U.S. and Australia were experimenting with similar exhibitions. This finding is important as it speaks to recent work tracing museum networks and offers contemporary evidence of how networks and influence functions between institutions. The following chapter will deconstruct the exhibition, and the extent to which it evidenced a shift in the Museum's treatment of colonial histories and its representation of minority groups, especially Black and South Asian peoples as evidence of this shift.

Chapter Five: The 'Peopling of London' 1993-1994 Exhibition and Displays

Introduction

This chapter will deconstruct the 'Peopling' exhibition using archival material including draft panel texts, caption texts and photographs of the displays. Its fundamental aim is to analyse how immigration was portrayed across the exhibition, specifically its coverage of empire. It will attempt to map the changing place and value of empire in the MoL's representation of London as a multicultural and multiracial metropolitan space. To what extent was 'Peopling' an attempt to negotiate the tension between an inclusive and multicultural London story, and the more difficult histories of conflict, othering, racism and exclusion? Around this time there was very little public discussion or acknowledgement of slavery, and other cognate subjects to do with colonialism and immigration, and there were significant omissions in those museums of the large port cities. It is, therefore, instructive to zoom-in on the way in which formative exhibitions, like 'Peopling', dealt with these subjects, subjects we now consider to be more mainstream in museums.

Around the time 'Peopling' was staged, museums began to shift their focus away from being a place for showing collections *per se*, and towards places of education as well. According to Gail Anderson collections increasingly took a supportive role 'that advanced the educational impact of the museums. The collection holdings are no longer viewed as the primary measure of value.'[436] This trend was indicative of a broader museological shift whereby museums became increasingly defined by their relationship to their visitors, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter seven. Exhibitions, whilst only one aspect of a museum's rationale, had, as a result, become a cardinal measure of their value. Though I will consider how objects in the exhibition were used to illustrate certain themes, my focus here is the exhibition and how, as an assemblage, and through the framework of immigration, the museum presented a particular image of postcolonial London.

The chapter will begin with a brief summary of the exhibition layout, intended route, space afforded to each section of the exhibition and sequencing. This will help to reconstruct the

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[436] Gail Anderson, (ed.), *Reinventing the museum: historical and contemporary perspectives on the paradigm shift* (California: Altamira Press, 2004), p. 4.

over-arching ideological framework of the exhibition. The chapter will then move on to interrogate the narrative and interpretation created through the galleries, in particular the value of empire in constructing a history of London as a city in which immigration was central to its development. How successful was Merriman in unearthing those hidden histories whilst striking a balance between these more negative aspects of London's past and the positive contributions of immigrants? Furthermore, in striking this balance in what ways did this exhibition signal a sea-change in the way that the museum dealt with those more difficult aspects of Britain's colonial past?

These are important questions which will shed light on how museums that are not 'colonial museums', but increasingly spoke to their legacies through intersecting and cognate subjects, engaged with these histories. This chapter will provide an original contribution insomuch it will show how Britain's largest city museum began to engage with legacies of colonialism at this crucial moment in Britain's reckoning with their postcolonial present. In doing so it will further elaborate on the social role of the city museum, in particular how the MoL began to recognise the needs of their multicultural population, and the topics they felt important to telling a more total account of London's past and present.

The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas

Image of the 'Peopling' floor plan and gallery layout with arrows showing the visitor route, adapted from the 1996 summary of the Peopling of London exhibition.

Figure 17: 'The Peopling of London' floor plan, 1993-1994.
Source: Source adapted from the floorplan illustration found in Sara Selwood et al, The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas: An Evaluation of the Exhibition (London: Museum of London, 1996).

The exhibition was organised along a chrono-thematic progression illustrated in the floorplan (figure 17). The timeline covered 10,000 BCE up to the then present day, engaging with several periods spanning 15,000 years including:

- 'Settlers and Traders' (10,000 BCE – 100BCE)
- 'Invaders and Marauders' (100BCE – 1080AD)
- 'Merchants and Craft Workers' (1080AD -1560AD)
- 'Religious Refugees' (1560AD – 1730)
- 'The Pace Quickens' (1730-1939)
- 'The Promised Land' (1939 – present)

There was one slight contradiction to that linear chronological flow. Visitors entered the exhibition through 'A World in a City', which provided the visitor with an overview of contemporary London and contemporary issues around immigration such as work, life, leisure, food, religion and other topics, before progressing onto the chronological route. The intended effect of this was of travelling back through time to the beginning of what made us what we are today. The chronological route itself started with 'Before London (15,000BC-AD50)' and ending back at 'After Empire (1945-present)'. The following section will deconstruct the 'Peopling' galleries paying particular attention to those elements of the exhibition that spoke to more difficult aspects of London's past as they related to immigration: that is those aspects that challenged a positive self-affirming identity, and particularly those difficult and before hidden aspects of London's imperial and colonial past.

On entering the exhibition at 'The World in a City' gallery there was an introductory panel. The text encouraged the visitor to think of London as an inclusive city, cosmopolitan 'from its very beginnings', and 'vibrant' and 'diverse' in the present. In keeping with Merriman's brief, it began by challenging the notion that immigration was a post-war phenomenon. It then moved on to highlight the strong impact immigration had on the development on London since Roman times.[437] The text reproduced the chronological development set out

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[437] Varun Uberoi and Tariq Modood, 'Has Multiculturalism in Britain Retreated?', *Soundings*, No. 53, (April 2013), p. 129.

in the permanent galleries, but shot through with multiculturalist thinking indicative of the late-twentieth century, which sought to engender a more inclusive notion of Britishness:

> London today is a multi-cultural, multi-faith city with a population from all over the world. How long it has been like this? 50 years? 100 years? 200 years? Or longer? This exhibition shows that in fact London has had a cosmopolitan population from its very beginnings – not just since the Second World War as some people believe. The first Londoners were Roman who came from all over the Empire and since then the energy and skills of people from overseas have strongly influenced the city's development.
>
> Your visit begins with a panorama of London's most recent overseas population, before taking you back to a time before London existed. You can then trace the long history of settlement from overseas in the capital. Finally, you are brought back to where you began – the vibrant and diverse city of today. Enjoy your journey![438]

There was little in the introduction to suggest that the exhibition would take a critical stance on the theme of immigration, or towards more controversial histories such as that of slavery. The use of the phrase 'your journey', however, suggested that visitors were on a common journey which linked every Londoner. The overall effect was to imply that ultimately every Londoner is an immigrant. Though, of course, individuals may have taken different messages from the experience, and some visitors may have even explicitly rejected the idea. The panel intended to capture the imagination of the visitor and encourage them to advance through the rest of the exhibition, with their fellow visitors, to understand how London came to be the diverse contemporary city it was. In a similar way, the 1988 touring exhibition in Australia 'The Great Australian Journey', which marked the 200th anniversary of British colonisation, all Australians, indigenous and settler, were united through a common '*Journey',* and that the erasure of 'difference of time, and of power, and domination' provided a simple interpretation of an otherwise complex history.[439]

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[438] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Caption Texts, 'London Today'.
[439] Eureka Henrich, 'Museums, History and Migration in Australia: Museums, History and Migration in Australia', *History Compass*, Vol. 11, No. 10 (October 2013), p. 785.

'The World in a City' gallery included a cacophony of subjects, peppered with oral histories and personal memories, and more critical content which questioned, for example, the perceived liberal nature of London. The formative text panel of this gallery 'London Now', which was placed directly opposite the entrance to the exhibition, invited the reader to think about the impact of immigration, and the 'vital contribution [of immigrants] to the city's development', but also that immigrants *had not always been welcomed,* juxtaposing the two competing visions of postcolonial London, that of multiracial London and of a city divided between us and them, setting the tone for the rest of the exhibition:

> Since the end of the Second World War, London has become home to settlers from many parts of the world. People from Poland, Italy, Cyprus, South Asia, the Caribbean, Hong Kong, Africa, Australasia, the Arab lands, North and South America - amongst others – have all developed thriving communities in the city.

> Their impact on all aspects of London's life has been substantial. From keeping London's services going, to influencing what we eat, drink and wear, London's overseas communities have made a vital contribution to the city's development. They have not always been made welcome, though and life has been very difficult for many. This section gives an impression of overseas communities in London in the last 50 years. This is only the most recent part of a process of enriching London that has been going on for thousands of years. The doorway in the far wall will take you back to the beginning of the story.[440]

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[440] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Caption Texts, 'London Now'.

Photo showing photos and panel texts from 'The Peopling of London' 'A Taste of London' display, 1993-1994

Figure 18: 'A Taste of London' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994. MoL Business Archives

Photo showing photos, panel texts and the listening booth for oral histories from 'The Peopling of London' 'London Lives' display, 1993-1994

Figure 19: 'London Lives' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994. MoL Business Archives

Moving on from the notion of a common journey, the exhibition becomes more ambiguous, highlighting the difference between each community *within* the city, emphasised by the individual text panels for each one. As was the often the case with these new types of postcolonial representations, there was a tension between exploring sensitive issues around migration and focusing on the positive contributions of immigrant communities. In summary, the introductory text panel provided an overarching ideological message and narrative, that London was, and remains, a multicultural city, but not without tensions, and that notwithstanding the contribution of immigrants in helping to maintain public services they had not always been made welcome.

The final paragraph stated that migration had a long past, and by implication, was a *normal* process that had developed over thousands of years. This formative panel also subtly highlighted the discursive nature of the exhibition, through its reference to immigrants supporting public services and influencing culture; a sub-text which spoke to contemporary debates around immigration. Such a teleological conceptualisation of the history of immigration, with multicultural Britain as its apogee, was nevertheless slightly problematic. It sat uneasily with Merriman's aim of problematising those aspects of London's past that were indeed problematic, preferencing continuity over rupture, and situating multiculturalism as the final stage of modernisation which had over-time resulted in the increasingly diverse movements of people globally; not wholly unlike the 1988 Australian touring exhibition.

The remainder of 'The World in a City' gallery was organised thematically, and included eight displays: 'London Lives'; 'Making a Living'; 'A Liberal City?'; 'Literature and Entertainment'; 'Celebration Time'; 'Religious Life'; 'Coming to London'; 'A Taste of London' (Fig. 18). 'A Taste of London', was indicative of many of the text panels. Photographs, posters, and ephemera crowded boards, with little interpretive text. The colour and vibrancy of the displays, the many photos of the lives of immigrants in London and their contribution to the city was supported through the use of objects such as tinned goods and interpretive device such as listening posts in 'London Lives' (figure 19). This helped to integrate the many voices of immigrants and their experience. Also, by having thematic storyboards that had different communities represented for each theme, they suggested that there was unity in diversity.

A transcript of one of the oral histories displayed next to the listening posts in 'London Lives' gives a sense of the types of stories told. One by Elma Sampson, born 7th August 1930 in California, Trinidad, and who came to London in 1959, spoke of the shock of seeing 'English men' working in manual labour. A stark contrast to Trinidad, where Europeans occupied other more 'respectable' jobs:

> What was strange was that the morning I got up and looked out my window I saw English men digging up the pavement. […] that was a sight I'd never seen before, because at home you only saw our type of people digging the roads. […] seeing Europeans digging, it was physical work, you know, digging the streets.[441]

There was no context or commentary on these oral histories, simply allowing the voices to speak for themselves (figure 19).

The 'Coming to London' storyboards, as with most of the 'World in a City' gallery, consisted mostly of photographic collections depicting immigrants arriving in London in the latter half of the twentieth century. These photographs were used to illustrate the reasons why immigrants came to London and their experiences upon arrival, the plight of refugees and their dislocation, travel and immigration, documentation, labour, as well as reference to increasingly stricter immigration controls in the 1970s which was illustrated by immigration cards from the time. One such photograph depicted Mr Quadras, a British passport holder who arrived in 1967 in London, to illustrate the expulsion of Kenyan and Ugandan Asians following policies of 'Africanisation' in parts of East Africa.[442] The treatment of this particular episode of history was typical of migration histories in the 1990s which focused on the impact on the destination countries, rather than on what some scholars have viewed as postcolonial reformulation in these newly independent countries where the 'natives' regained control.[443] The exhibition was focused on immigration *from overseas*, and therefore these complex postcolonial histories, global in nature, were often superficial and failed to deal with its complexities. The history of South Asians arriving in Kenya as a result

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[441] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, Memo from Rory O'Connell to Nick Merriman, 'Oral History Selection', Friday 14th May. Not all internal correspondences have page numbers.

[442] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Caption Texts, 'South Asians in London'.

[443] Margret Frenz, 'Migration, Identity and Post-Colonial Change in Uganda: A Goan Perspective', *Immigrants and Minorities,* Vol. 31, No. 1, (March 2013), pp. 48–73.

of British policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be used as labour was not part of the story here.

One of the main aims of course was to speak to domestic issues concerning anti-immigration rhetoric. Visitors were next encouraged to question Londoners' tolerance of newcomers, which was also part of the 'World in a City' gallery. Here was a direct questioning of not only the liberal nature of London, but of the pride that Londoners placed in their perceived tolerance of newcomers. This was a peculiar break with the Museum's original mission to engender a sense of pride about place, as discussed in chapter two. The panel text referred to particular language indicative of contemporary discourse around immigration such as 'scapegoat' to characterise the treatment of many immigrants. This panel was straddled on either side with those listening posts that played oral histories of migrants and their experiences on coming to London.

A Liberal City?

Most Londoners like to pride themselves on living in a liberal city, tolerant of newcomers. However, immigrant communities have always met with active hostility from a minority of people, who have made them scapegoats for London's social and economic problems.

Because of this, communities themselves have had to fight for their equal rights to live here as ordinary Londoners. Often they have been joined by sympathetic people from outside their communities who have shown their solidarity against such racism.

Figure 20: 'A Liberal City?' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Panel Texts, 'A Liberal City'.

This aspect of the exhibition deliberately challenged people's perceived tolerance, which would have defied visitors to find a positive self-affirming identity within the narrative. Visitors' responses to this will be examined in chapter seven. The extent to which this questioning of Londoners' tolerance towards immigrants was either piecemeal or wholesale in the remaining displays will be highlighted throughout my analysis. Clearly, there was an attempt to do something different, which fundamentally challenged the Museum's historical mission. That being said the second paragraph states that, 'Because of this communities have had to fight for their equal rights to live here as ordinary Londoners. Often, they have been joined by sympathetic people from outside their communities who have shown their solidarity against such racism.'[444]

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[444] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels Panel Texts, 'A Liberal City'. The 'Peopling' archive was set up by Rozina Visram.

Figure 21: Paul Trevor, anti-Nazi demonstration, Curtain Road, 1978, p. 23.
Source: Nick Merriman, The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas (London: Museum of London, 1993). © Paul Trevor (permission to use granted)

Accompanied mostly by photographs, 'A Liberal City' (figure 20) covered a number of difficult elements of London's history, including racially motivated attacks, such as the death of Altab Ali. Ali was murdered by three teenagers in a racially motivated attack in 1969 in the East End of London. This attack took place a decade after Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, and Ali's murder was symptomatic of the racial violence and intolerance that far-right groups continued to encourage into and throughout the 1970s.

'A Liberal City?' dealt more broadly with right-wing movements. Photographs were used to illustrate anti-racist protests (figure 21). Paul Trevor was a London-born photographer, and between 1973 and 2000 worked on a major project which sought to document the lives of ordinary Londoners in the East End.[445] Photographs by Paul Trevor and others, helped to demonstrate distinctive social, economic and political contexts during a time of rapid social change in inner-city London. Several of his photos were used in this display. This was a

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[445] Liverpool Museums, 'Paul Trevor Exhibition', [online], <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/exhibitions/paultrevor/biography.aspx>, accessed 28 January 2019.

dangerous time, as discussed in chapter four, where routine acts of violence against the Pakistani community were acted out by skinheads in east London, albeit that the violence was enacted by extremist minority. Other images and objects used to illustrate racist and anti-racist movements in late-twentieth century London included anti-racist literature from the 1970s – 1990s. There was also critical commentary on the Nationality Act of 1981, and other immigration regulations. The pictures used in the exhibition created a powerful visual collage of the human aspects of immigration.

The 'World in a City' gallery would have instilled within the visitor an over-arching ideological message before they proceeded through the remainder of the galleries. The 'World in a City' highlighted the contributions, culturally, socially and politically of immigrants that had settled in London in the post-war years, but also the many negative experiences they endured including racism. The gallery touched on many difficult aspects of London's late-twentieth century history, including fascism, racism, and intolerance more broadly, and its sub-text spoke to contemporary political contexts and discourse around immigration.

After 'World in a City', visitors progressed through a narrow corridor to the sections dealing with pre-history up to the early-modern period: 'Before London' (15,000BC-AD50) (figure 22 below); followed by 'Roman London' (AD50-410); the 'Age of Migrations' (410-1066); and 'Medieval Europeans (1066-1500)'. These galleries accounted for only a third of all display cases. Merriman had noted that the first half of this section, initially conceptualised as 'Settlers and Traders (10,000-100AD)' would be 'relatively short, giving a picture of the London area as initially deserted, then colonised by hunter-gatherers, Neolithic farmers, and other vaguely attested movements of settlers and traders.'[446] The Museum held a greater store of material evidence attesting to increasing diversity in Roman London, and were thus able to show the diversity of Roman London through archaeological evidence including tombstones and various European crafted mosaics.[447] But the exhibition sought to project that diversity back earlier. One of the first story-panels that visitors encountered

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[446] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondences, Project Update, 17th October 1990, p. 4

[447] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, *Memo*, 17th August 1992, p. 1.

focused on the origins of those who settled in London 'Before London', stating that, 'Before London was established by the Romans, peoples occupied the area for nearly half a million years. The first people may originally have evolved in Africa and arrived in Britain in a warmer part of the Ice Age.'[448] This was significantly different to the permanent pre-history and Roman galleries. Whilst the idea that humans had originated in Africa was not new, there was here a clear emphasis on the theory of pre-historic migration out of Africa in order to emphasise the deep origins of migrations to Britain. The following text panel further emphasised the pre-historic continuity of migration, and that 'The area [Southern Britain] has been continuously occupied since this time. If we go back far enough, everyone in Britain today is descended from people who have come from abroad.'[449] Here was Merriman's evidence to counter anti-immigrant narratives. Immigrants had in fact been the status quo as far back as pre-history.

'Roman London' was much more decisive in its tone. One of the first text panels in this gallery bore the title 'A Cosmopolitan Town'. It also emphasised continuity:

The first town of London was established around AD50 by Roman colonists. It was a cosmopolitan town from the start and has been ever since.

These earliest Londoners came from all over the Roman Empire. They included soldiers and officials of the army of occupation, the merchants and slaves who came in their wake, and the craft workers brought in to embellish fine Mediterranean-style buildings. The inscriptions and graffiti they left behind show some inhabitants came originally from modern-day Italy, France, Germany and Greece. People from other parts of the Empire such as Spain and North Africa may also have been present.[450]

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[448] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP1 '500,000 BC: Out of Africa'.

[449] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP2A '15,000 BC: Settling an Empty Land'.

[450] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP3 'A Cosmopolitan Town'.

Picture of the 'Before London' display from 'The Peopling of London' showing panel texts and objects from the display.

Figure 22: 'Before London' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994'.
Source: Museum of London Business Archives

The first paragraph emphasised the continuity of London's cosmopolitan character, having been settled by migrants from across the Roman Empire. The text also speaks of the possibility of migration from 'parts of North Africa' undoubtedly in an attempt to move away from a uniquely Eurocentric perspective, and to suggest the possibility of an early Black presence. Many different figures were included in the display, indicative of the influence of the Black presence scholarship, with images of Black Roman soldiers.

The following gallery, 'Age of Migrations' detailed the reasons why people came to settle in London. Specifically, it focused on the presence of soldiers from the Low Countries in the fourth and fifth centuries employed as mercenaries in Britain to defend against raiders, to the Norman invasion of 1066. Emphasis was placed on the influence of settler groups on an emerging British culture, through for instance, the development of the English Language being heavily influenced by Anglo-Saxons,[451] and the lasting impact of Norman society in Britain.[452]

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[451] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP4 'Germanic Soldiers and Settlers'.
[452] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP5 'Britons, Saxons, Norsemen and Normans'.

'Medieval Britain' also discussed the many forces behind settlement including overseas religious orders establishing monasteries and Jewish settlement with the Norman conquest.[453] The text panel which describes the Jewish presence in medieval London was the first panel to highlight another continuity, anti-Semitism:

> After the Norman Conquest, Jews were encouraged to settle in England. They played a vital role as moneylenders and developed a flourishing community near Cheapside. They also suffered from crippling taxes and the hostility of others until their expulsion in 1290 […]

> Restrictive Laws meant that moneylending was one of the few occupations open to Jews […] Resentment of the Jews resulted in the attacks against Jewish property and people on a number of occasions. Many were also burdened by heavy taxes. By 1272 when Edward I came to the throne, the Jews were almost penniless, and were expelled from England eighteen years later.[454]

These initial pre-modern galleries, much like the permanent galleries, served to engender a sense of longevity, a London before London. This version was however shot through with evidence of immigration at the heart of London and foremost in its development culturally, socially, linguistically and economically. It also highlighted continuity of intolerance.

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[453] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP6 'Christian Settlers'.
[454] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, SP6A 'The Jewish Presence'.

The Place and Value of Empire in the 'Peopling' displays

Section of 'The Peopling of London' floorplan highlighting the three sections of the exhibition that focused on London as the heart of the British Empire.

Figure 23: 'London and the Wider World 1500-1837', 'The Heart of Empire 1837-1945', The Heart of Empire 1837-1945 continued', floorplan, 1993-1994.
Source: Source adapted from the floorplan illustration found in Sara Selwood et al, The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas: An Evaluation of the Exhibition (London: Museum of London, 1996).

The following galleries were 'London and the Wider World'; 'The Heart of Empire'; 'The Heart of Empire Continued'. The floorplan shows that half of all display cases and content was set within three of the exhibition's principal galleries covering the early modern and modern periods. Despite the capacious chronology of the exhibition considerable focus was placed on the period in which Britain expanded and consolidated its empire. These sections will be the main focus of my analysis for mapping shifting interpretations of empire at the museum. These galleries helped to emphasise Britain's global and local links, of which London became a hub.

'London and the Wider World' began with the role of the Royal Court, and their encouragement of overseas artists and craftsmen in London, as well as their strong overseas relationships which stimulated German and Dutch Settlements. It also gave considerable attention to the 'Early Black Presence', 'The Jewish Resettlement', 'Religious Reformation and New Crafts', and 'Attitudes and Reactions'. This section aimed to tell a story of tolerance, of Protestant England welcoming religious refugees such as the Huguenots, and that whilst 'all newcomers have sadly usually met with hostile reactions at some stage, the reactions have been due to such factors as economic insecurity rather than characteristics inherent to the newcomers themselves.'[455]

'At the Heart of Empire' focused much more on imperial connections and the impact of empire on the movements of people. It is worth pointing out that the name of the gallery itself implies that London was the capital city of an empire, in this respect echoing the permanent galleries. 'Building London: the Irish Connection', focused on the Irish role in helping to build the city. 'Living and Working in the Port' focused on the presence of Lascar sailors, as well as the Chinese presence in Limehouse. 'Imperial Citizens' focused on the communities whose settlement in London was a direct result of their citizenship under the British Empire. It was also noted that separate sub-sections would deal with African/Caribbean, South Asians, Cypriots and other community groups covered in the book.[456]

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[455] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, Memo from Nicola Johnson and Nick Merriman, 'Development of Storyline', 17th August 1992, p. 2.
[456] Ibid, p. 3.
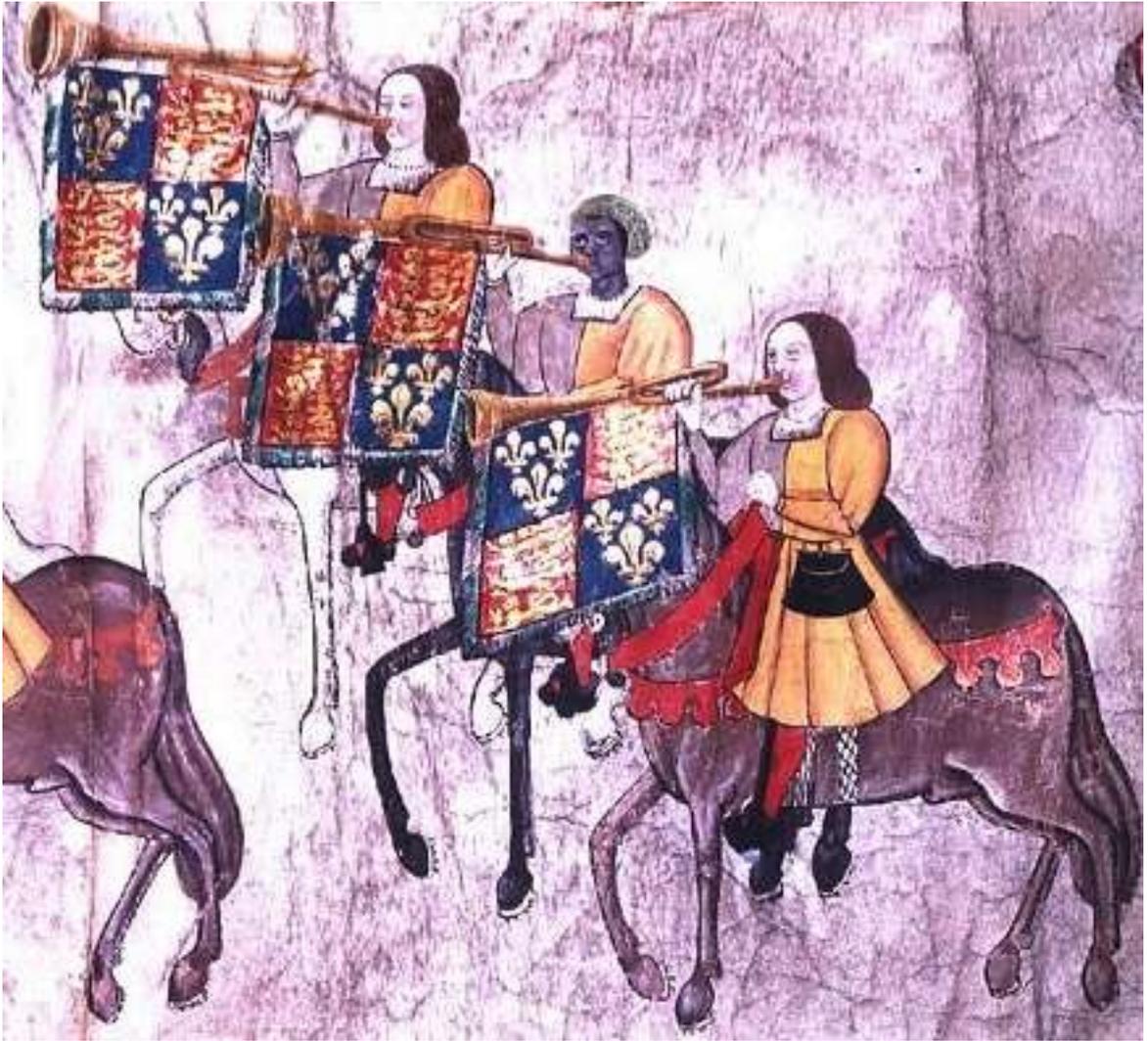
Figure 24: John Blanke (fl. 1507–1512) by unknown artist, 1511, p. 150.
The College of Arms, *The Westminster Tournament Roll*: 1511; artist, unknown; by permission of The College of Arms, London E 36/214 f.109: 7 Dec 1507; author, unknown; Crown copyright

'After Empire' focused on post-1945 arrivals to London who were invited in the 1940s-1960s to come and work in London, despite successive restrictions that were placed on them through immigration acts.[457] 'In Search of a Better Life', would provide an overview of all groups who migrated to London as a result of the open-door policy up to 1905 and 'economic hardship or persecution' in their own countries.[458] We have now traced the overall structure of the three sections that have a greater empire-focus, what follows is a more in-depth look at how they deal with difficult issues, starting with the Black presence and slavery.

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[457] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation of the Exhibition* (London: Museum of London, 1996), p. 27.
[458] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, Memo from Nicola Johnson and Nick Merriman, 'Development of Storyline', 17th August 1992, p. 4.

'London and the Wider World', which began in the 1500's, started with the 'Early Black and South Asian Presence'. One of the first images the visitor encountered was a picture of what is thought to be one of the earliest pictures of a Black person in London, an image that was fundamental to demonstrating the presence of Black people historically in Britain and archival issues with locating Black histories (figure 24).[459] As Miranda Kaufmann has noted, this image has come to pose critical questions about formative English engagement with the slave trade, and has come to symbolise England's relationship with the wider world at that time, not just Europe.[460] 'John Blanke' was employed as a court trumpeter in the courts of Henry the VII and VIII in the sixteenth century and is thought to have arrived in England in 1501 as part of the staff of Catherine of Aragon.

This image, one that remains iconic of the early Black presence in England and Britain, was used to encourage the reader to think of the long presence of Black people in England, and London. The accompanying text panel read:

> There has been a continuous Black presence in London for over 400 years, from the 1570s when Africans were brought here as a result of the slave trade. Indians began to arrive from the 1620s.

> Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, it was fashionable to have a Black slave-servant. Many Londoners, including Samuel Pepys, Samuel Johnson and Joshua Reynolds had one. Some eventually obtained their freedom; others simply ran away. By the mid-eighteenth century there was a thriving free Black population.

> Economic circumstances made many Black people continue as servants, cooks and maids. Others became labourers, soldiers, sailors, entertainers and boxers. Some distinguished themselves as writers and musicians.

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[459] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Verso 1984).
[460] Miranda Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: The Untold Story* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2017), p. 9.

A number of Black people were active in the campaign against slavery, which virtually ended in Britain by the 1790s. Then with fewer new arrivals, the Black population declined in the 19th century.[461]

The emphasis on the continuous presence further demonstrates the discursive nature of the exhibition's interaction with contemporary scholarship of Fryer and Visram. This panel also emphasised other difficult and hidden histories, namely the slave trade. In the exhibition brief we find draft text that accompanied the 'triangular trade' image on the panel below (figure 25):

This began in the 1550s and developed much more after 1650 and led to the increased presence of Black people in England. Many slave ships operated out of London, and profits from the slave trade went to build many of London's finest buildings.[462]

Within the exhibition brief it was also stated that more information was needed in the exhibition on the Royal African Company, the personal fortunes made through slavery and the links between slavery and London merchants. Only more recently have there been new studies which have sought to re-examine the relationship between Britain, its towns and cities, and slave-ownership in the Victorian period after the abolition of slavery in the British imperial world after 1833.[463] Surprisingly the briefing showed little desire to add any significant commentary on the horrors of slavery, the slave trade and the middle-passage. The vast majority of immigrants to London itself, however, were not, directly at least, part of that trade.

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[461] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'The Early Black Presence'. Not all text panels have numbered designations 'SP' and are stored by name only. It is worth mentioning that the 'Peopling' archive survives only because Rozina Visram sought to ensure that the 'Peopling' material was kept and stored at the MoL, though most, if not all, has not been properly catalogued.
[462] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondences, The Peopling of London, Exhibition Brief, p. 10.
[463] Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper and Keith McClelland (ed.), *Emancipation and the remaking of the British Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donnington and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): Both were published to complement the Legacy of Slave-Ownership Database: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>, accessed 22 October 2019.

It is hard to make out much of the detail in the final representation of this part of the exhibition (beyond the briefing notes used here), but its general approach was clearly novel for its time. The exhibition overturned previous heroes presenting them in a more critical light. In the permanent galleries Samuel Pepys was used to illustrate the growing prosperity of London, and the influx of luxury goods as a result of England's overseas expansion and trade. In the 'Early Black and South Asian Presence' display he was given as an example of Londoners who had owned Black slaves, which was 'fashionable' at that time.[464]

There was a clear tension in the texts between unearthing hidden and difficult histories and recounting a history of London in which economic circumstances allowed for a thriving free Black population from the mid-eighteenth century. This was indicative of Merriman's desire to illustrate the positive contribution of immigrants as well as their experience of intolerance, racism and in this case having been enslaved. Arguably, this coming desire to tackle difficult histories was important, but also to emphasise agency and positive contributions could come across as ambiguity to the visitor. Merriman, Visram and other members of the team were determined to ensure that Black agency was highlighted. This reflected, for instance, shifting narratives around subjects including emancipation such that slaves' contributions to ending slavery were now emphasised by some.[465] Perhaps most surprisingly, then, there was a focus on abolition. There was also a focus was also on the 'thriving free Black population', and the fact that slavery had 'virtually ended' in Britain by the 1790s. Slavery, of course, remained legal in most of the British Empire until the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.

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[464] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels., 'The Early Black Presence'.
[465] Catherine Hall, 'Afterword: Britain 2007, Problematising Histories' in Cora Kaplan and John Oldfield (ed.) *Imagining Transatlantic Slavery*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2010), p.197.

Figure 25: 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence' display, text panel proof, the 'Peopling of London', 1993-1994.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels.

Smaller interpretive texts included on the text panel contained illustrations of the triangular trade (figure 25):

> Ships left England with trade goods, which were exchanged in West Africa for slaves. The slaves were transported in horrifying conditions to the West Indies, where they were forced to work. The ships left the West Indies for England, laden with the products of the plantation.[466]

The language accompanying the description of the triangular trade was a radical departure from the discussion of Britain's relationship with North Africa and the Indies in the permanent galleries in 1976 which used euphemistic language such as 'explored' to characterise this relationship. Here there was an explicit acknowledgement of the role of slavery. The notes also highlighted the 'horrifying' conditions of the middle passage. This signalled a clear departure from the way in which empire was used to create a positive binding narrative in the permanent galleries, though empire was not directly implicated in these texts. Also included in the text was a depiction of the Gordon riots of June 1780 in which 'black and white saw themselves as fellow victims.'[467] Then there was a double portrait by Johann Zoffany, of two young women. Lady Elizabeth Mary Murray, daughter of the Earl of Mansfield, and her cousin Dido Elizabeth Lindsay. The original text stated:

> Portrait by Johann Zoffany, c. 1779, of Lady Elizabeth Mary Murray, daughter of the Earl of Mansfield, with her cousin Dido Elizabeth Lindsay at Kenwood. Dido Elizabeth was the daughter of Sir John Lindsay and an African slave. She was bought up by Lord Mansfield who granted her freedom.[468]

Contemporary accounts of Dido Elizabeth, daughter of an enslaved African woman Maria Belle, viewed her as the well looked-after companion of Lady Elizabeth Lindsay her cousin. Contemporary accounts often focused on Lord Mansfield's famous judgment in 1772 which

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[466] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels., 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence'.
[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.

Photo of the 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence' display from 'The Peopling of London' showing objects on display including a portrait of Olaudah Equiano.

Figure 26: 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994. *Source: Museum of London Business Archives.*

held that chattel slavery was unsupported by the common law in England. The subtitle from one *History Today* article in 1981 reads 'Lord Mansfield employed his precise legal mind and his reasoned humanitarianism to expose the iniquities of slavery – and thus helped pave the way for its abolition.'[469] This ignored the contribution of Black people like Olaudah Equiano to the abolition movement (discussed below), and would have helped feed into ideas of British exceptionalism about their humanitarianism past. More recently historians have argued that the parity with which these two figures were viewed is misleading. Dido Elizabeth occupied a lesser status in the Mansfield home living between the family and servants, and on a lower allowance than her cousin.[470]

Moving on to some of the objects displayed, we can see in the above photo of the 'Early Black and South Asian Presence' (figure 26) some of the material included in this section of the gallery. One of the objects most visible is a portrait once believed to be of Olaudah Equiano, now known to be Ignatius Sancho.[471] The accompanying caption text read:

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[469] Stephen Usherwood, 'The Abolitionists' Debt to Lord Mansfield', *History Today,* Vo. 31, No. 1, (March 1981), p. 40.
[470] Sarah Minney, 'The Search for Dido', *History Today,* Vol. 55, No. 10, (October 2005), p. 2.
[471] In the education pack this picture is again used and said to be Olaudah Equiano.

Olaudah Equiano was born in Nigeria and brought to London as a slave age 12. Eventually he sought his freedom and became the first political leader of the British Black community and an outstanding contributor to the campaign for the abolition of slavery. He addressed meetings through the country and in Ireland. His autobiography reached a wide audience, raising public awareness and support for the movement.[472]

The oil portrait was lent by the Exeter City Museum and Art Gallery. Other objects on display included a copy of the *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), and an engraving of Ignatius Sancho and his letters. Another caption spoke of the 'The fight against slavery':

The fight against slavery was a long and hard one. Black slaves often freed themselves by running away and were supported by campaigners in the Black and White communities. Through such actions the climate of opinion had turned against slavery in England by the 1790s, although it was not abolished in the British Empire until 1858.

Slavery was abolished in 1833, and it is not clear where the date 1858 comes from. The apprenticeship system came to an end on 1st August 1840, with the exception of the 'territories in the possession of the East Indian Company, or to the Island of Ceylon, or to the island of Saint Helena.' These exceptions were ended in 1843.[473] More recent criticism over representations of the abolition of the slave trade have spoken of how before the 1990s itself slavery was part of a 'collective forgetting'.[474] There have also been accusations that much of what has been done since with regards to remembering the abolition of the Slave Trade amounts to a 'Wilberfarce', focusing on the efforts of a few white individuals, and forgetting that slavery rather than the slave trade remained in the British Empire after

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[472] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels., 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence'.

[473] Slavery Abolition Act 1833, Section XXIV, 28th August 1833, accessed 24th September 2019.

[474] Geoffrey Cubitt, Laurajane Smith and Ross Wilson, 'Introduction: Anxiety and Ambiguity in the Representation of Dissonant History', in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kaliopi Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 3.

1807. 'Peopling', however, does seem to give a more nuanced representation then, albeit still with a heavy focus on abolition.

Other objects were used to illustrate the place of Black people in nineteenth-century popular culture. One such item was a figurine of Billy Waters:

> Black people played a significant part in London, popular culture in the early 19th century. One of the best known was Billy Waters who had lost his leg fighting for the British Army and became a street musician. Together with a number of other real people, such as 'African Sal', he was immortalised in the book, *Life in London,* by Pierce Egan and George and Robert Cruikshank…[475]

The figurine of Billy Waters was used to illustrate free Black people, who were 'immortalised' in nineteenth-century popular culture. As the title implies, the rationale of this particular section was to illustrate the presence of Black people in London from Henry VIII to the Victorian Period, touching on a number of subjects including popular culture, slavery, emancipation and labour. Despite the lack of commentary on other negative aspects one might expect today around, for example, Victorian notions of race, this was a radical departure from the MoL's former treatment of this period in the permanent galleries, both because it included the lives of ethnic minorities, and because it was more critical.

The following gallery, 'At the Heart of Empire (1837-1945)' included 6 text panels addressing separate community panels for 'Black African and Caribbean People', 'South Asians in London', and 'Cypriots'. It also included a text panel 'Imperial Citizens' (figure 27). Many of these panels touched on aspects of London's imperial past and demonstrated the same negotiation of those more difficult aspects, as well as positive.

The choice to name this particular part of the exhibition 'At the Heart of Empire' was perhaps indicative of a contemporary historical shift at that time, where historians began

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[475] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels., 'The Early Black and South Asian Presence'.
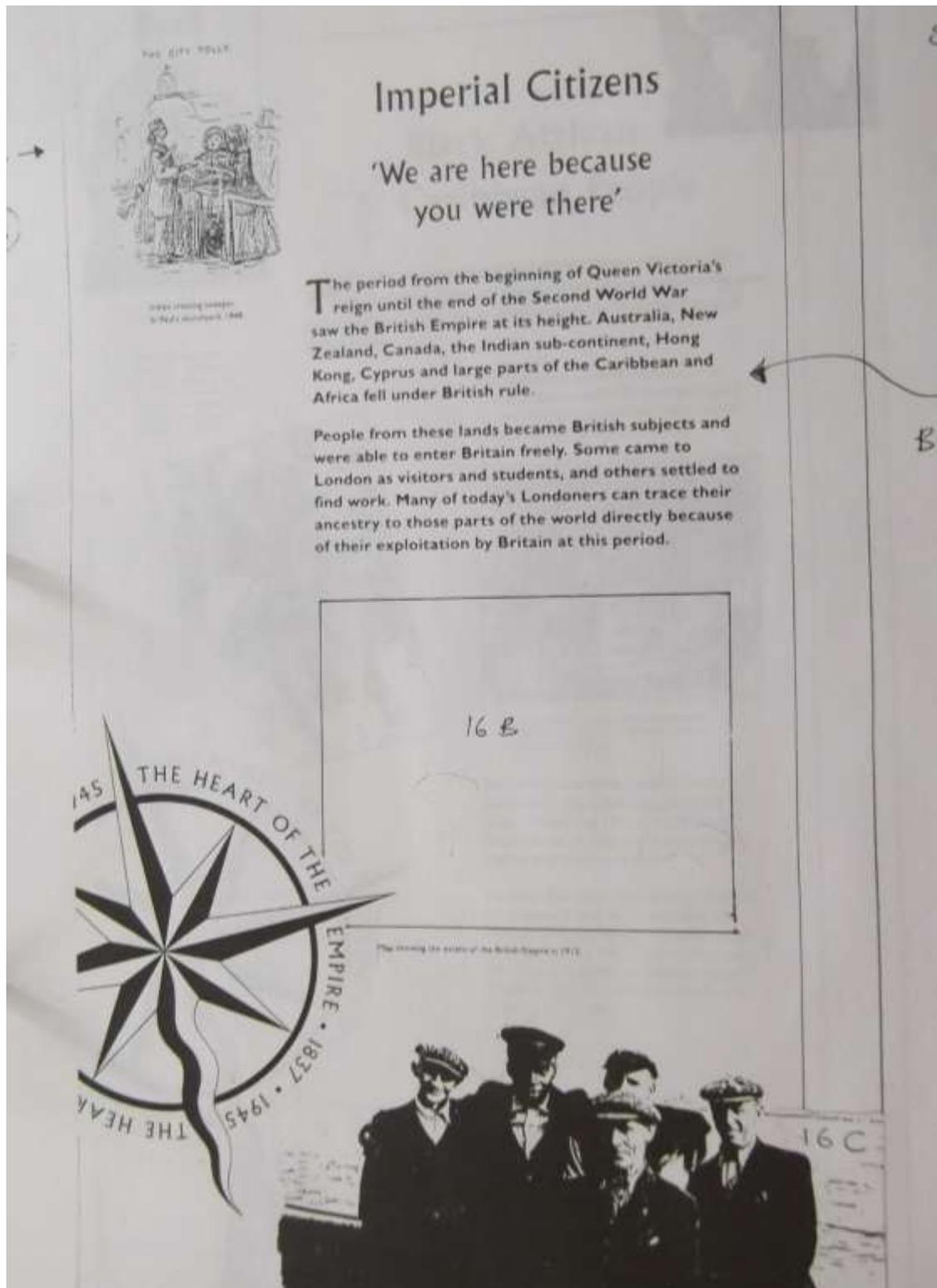
Figure 27: 'Imperial Citizens' display, text panel proof, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994
Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels.

to think more about the impact of Empire 'at home' (chapter one). Conscious or not, this

section encouraged the visitor to see London as the 'heart' of an empire, much like the

'Imperial London' section in the permanent galleries, but paying greater attention to the

impact of empire at home, and the flows of migrants that resulted from colonial expansion,

and the effects this had on life in Britain. This was further illustrated by the phrase 'we are here because you were there' at the top of the 'Imperial Citizens' panel. This was one of a number of aphorisms coined by Ambalavaner Sivanandan.

Sivanandan was a leading intellectual with regards to race relations in the UK. From 1973 to 2013 he was director of the Institute for Race Relations, and editor of the journal *Race and Class*. He was particularly concerned with the connections between, race, class and British colonialism, and this particular aphorism addressed postcolonial migration. In response to the McPherson report of 1999 (instigated after accusations of failure by the police over apprehending those who had murdered the Black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993), Sivanandan argued that racism was the result of the failure of the British state to adapt to a multiracial society.[476] Use of his aphorism thus says something about the intellectual allegiance of the exhibition. The remainder of the panel was as follows:

> The period from the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign until the end of the Second World War saw the British empire at its height. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Indian sub-continent, Hong Kong, Cyprus, and large parts of the Caribbean and Africa fell under British rule.

> People from these lands became British subjects and were able to enter Britain freely. Some came to London as visitors and students, and others settled to find work. Many of today's Londoners can trace their ancestry to those parts of the world directly because of their exploitation by Britain at this period.[477]

Despite mention of 'exploitation', euphemisms such as 'fell under British rule' remained. This failed to acknowledge those more violent means such as displacement and frontier wars. Visitors were also reminded that under the British Empire 'people from these lands became British subjects and were able to enter Britain freely…' with little commentary on the restrictive immigration Acts from the 1960s, or on wide-spread racism. Other text

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[476] Ambalavaner Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1990).
[477] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'Imperial Citizens'.

panels included in this section chose to focus more on the achievements of Black people in London at this time, rather than on those more negative experiences outlined above.

Still in 'The Heart of Empire' (1837-1945) section, was 'The Black African and Caribbean People' panel (figure 28), beginning with, 'After the ending of slavery, fewer Black people came to London.' However, it noted that a number of prominent figures emerged in public life in the century before the Second World War.'[478] The text panel focused on prominent Black figures including Mary Seacole, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and John Archer. Mary Seacole was depicted using a *Punch* cartoon published in 1857, illustrating her efforts as a nurse alongside Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War:

> Mary Seacole, who nursed British troops in the Crimea, at the time rivalled Florence Nightingale in her fame. Samuel Coleridge Taylor was a notable composer around the turn of the century.

> John Archer pioneered African and Caribbean involvement in local politics when he became Mayor of Battersea in 1913. In 1931 Dr Harold Moody founded the League of Coloured Peoples, the first Black pressure group.

> From the 1930s West African students in London, such as Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah, were also influential. Supported by residents such as George Padmore and C.L.R. James, they were central figures in the African liberation struggles. The Jamaican pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey also ended his days in London.

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[478] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'Black African and Caribbean People'.

Photo showing the 'Black
African and Caribbean Peoples'
display from 'The Peopling of
London' including objects on
display and the main text panel.

Figure 28: 'Black African and Caribbean Peoples' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994.
Source: MoL Business Archives.

The text was less critical than the 'Imperial Citizens' panel. It nevertheless remained aligned with the intellectual tradition of the scholarship of Visram and Fryer insomuch it aimed to fill in the gaps of the Black and Asian presence in Britain and document their political contributions. It also highlighted the many political activists who made London their home in the first half of the twentieth century. Photographs and portraits were used to highlight prominent Black figures.

The 'South Asians in London' panel (figure 29) was similar, and undoubtedly reflected Visram's own research for her book *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes,* featuring many of the prominent figures and settings from her book. The introduction stated:

A diverse community of South Asians lived in London in the century before 1945. In addition to the sailor population around the port, there were nannies, pedlars, merchants, doctors, lawyers and students. Several became involved in the campaign for Indian independence.[479]

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[479] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'South Asians in London'.

1945 was after all the moment which this exhibition more broadly sought to disrupt, as Visram and Fryer had in their books, showing that Black and Asian people had existed in London before 1945. Like the 'Black Africans and Caribbean People' panel, it focused on the contributions of South Asian people and less on the negative experiences of racism they endured upon their arrival in London, engendering a positive narrative. The remainder of the panel read:

> Amongst these were Dadabhai Naoroji, Britain's first South Asian MP in 1892, Shapurji Alcavala, MP for Battersea North in the 1920s, and Krishna Menon, who also launched the Pelican Books imprint with Allen Lane. Chuni Lal Katial became the country's first South Asian mayor in 1938 and was also one of around 200 South Asian doctors in pre-war London.

> Less well-known were the nannies (ayahs) brought to London with British families returning from India. Often discharged and left penniless on arrival, many found shelter at the Ayahs Home in Hackney from the 1920s. Sikhs from the Punjab settled in the East End and made a living selling goods from door to door. The first Indian restaurants opened in the same period.

Sophia Duleep Singh, the daughter of Maharaja Duleep Singh, was also pictured in the South Asian text panel. She was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union. As a Suffragette, she campaigned for votes for women. On 'Black Friday', 18th November 1910, she led 400 demonstrators to Parliament together with Mrs Pankhurst. The MoL had acquired the Suffragette Fellowship collection in the 1950s, and the Suffragettes had long been a part of the Museum's permanent galleries. The exhibition provided another way of framing this collection, along with the breadth of the Museum's collections.[480] Whether Duleep Singh was always a part of the displays is not clear. Her father, Duleep Singh, who had been close to Queen Victoria was also included in the displays. Maharaja Duleep Singh was the former Maharaja of Punjab who was removed from the Punjab in 1849, at the age of 10, along with his title and power, eventually residing in Elveden Hall in England

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[480] Museum of London, 'Suffragette Spirit', [online], <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london/whats-on/exhibitions/suffragette-spirit>, accessed 5th July 2019.

Photo showing 'South Asians in London' display from 'The Peopling of London' including objects on display and text panels.

Figure 29: 'South Asians in London' display, 'The Peopling of London', 1993-1994.
Source: Museum of London Business Archives.

(purchased by the India Office). The Koh-I-Noor Diamond, which has now become a symbol of imperial dominance over of India, and was recently the subject of repatriation claims, was surrendered to Queen Victoria at that time. Despite his exile and the removal of sovereignty, Duleep Singh became famous as a friend of Queen Victoria, though his life was lived under British scrutiny. We can see in the South Asians in London display a picture of Maharajah Duleep Singh in Victorian garb.

The final section which included the text panel 'In Search for a Better Life', focused on the lives of various communities which had come to London before and after the post-war period. The Introduction read:

> Alongside the citizens of Empire, large numbers of people from other countries came to London in the century before the Second World War. Some came as refugees from political upheavals and revolutions in Europe. Political exiles such as Karl Marx, Giuseppe Mazzini and Sun Yet Sen also found a haven in London.

> Jews came following the persecution and attack in eastern then central Europe. Others, such as the Italians and Germans, were attracted by the employment opportunities offered in the industrial capital. During the Second World War, several governments in exile were established in London. A large Polish community developed from the military units which regrouped in Britain in 1940.[481]

The text panel emphasised London as a 'haven' for immigrant communities, rather than the racism and struggles experienced by many of those communities. This is surprising given that one of the main aims of the exhibition was to deal with the experiences, both positive and negative, of immigrants coming to London. It did, however, produce a representation in which empire played a different role than in the permanent galleries. Colonialism was reconfigured as a principal driver of migration, as well as the experience of many migrants from around the empire and former colonies that came to Britain.

If visitors to the MoL expected to find histories that bolstered their sense of pride in London and their past, these histories would have challenged their preconceptions. Here was a complex history of immigration which celebrated the contribution of London's immigrant communities and also raised difficult histories of intolerance. This complex story had been shaped by several factors. The emerging scholarship of Black history and the Black presence in Britain brought new histories and visibility to histories of slavery, and of how the slave trade and colonialism more broadly was responsible for migration from overseas to Britain since the sixteenth century. Representational questions around how to represent London's

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[481] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'In Search of a Better Life'.

multicultural communities also shaped the way in which the museum engaged with histories of colonialism, emphasising the potential of inserting hidden histories within the developmental narrative of London. In charting these historiographical and museological developments, this chapter alongside chapter four, also highlights the activism of Rozina Visram as a key factor in shaping 'Peopling', and the importance of Visram herself as important advocate for more nuanced representations of London's diverse communities at this time across the heritage and museum sector more broadly.

The ambiguity inherent in how to represent diversity is particularly interesting and offers some useful practical examples for museum practitioners about the challenge of both representing and celebrating diversity whilst not enhancing perceptions of othering. It also raises questions about the very difficult task of representing community without flattening these diverse groups and raising further questions about exclusions. Specific to city museums, this chapter also shows that in the process of unearthing those difficult histories, 'Peopling' challenged the historically embedded mission of the Museum which raises further questions about the problematic in tackling hidden histories at museums founded upon the principle of boosting civic pride. The following chapter will question the extent to which this representational shift was reflected across the 'Peopling' book and educational resource pack.

Chapter Six: The 'Peopling of London' Catalogue and Educational Resources

Introduction

Accompanying the main exhibition was a series of what were termed personal views compiled as a collection of essays. This was the book to accompany the exhibition edited by Nick Merriman, entitled *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas* (1993). There was also an educational resource pack designed to support the national history curriculum key stages one to three (ages 5-14), and which was intended to 'outlast the exhibition and serve as a permanent resource for classroom teaching…', beyond the walls of the Museum.[482] The book sold out and was reprinted. By 1996 the Museum had sold around 3,500 copies of the book. By 1995, 427 copies of the education pack had been sold to schools.[483] The Museum also distributed free worksheets to school parties that visited the Museum, and from April 1993 to March 1994, 2454 school parties had visited.

In this chapter I am concerned with how both elements provided an additional level of interpretation, and that both were designed to communicate the key messages of 'Peopling' to different target demographics. These additional elements, together with the mobile museum, signalled the range and breadth of the museum's interpretive strategy. Contextualising each element as artefacts in their own right, as well as extensions of the exhibition, will provide a more nuanced picture of the external forces that shaped them and the exhibition, and highlight the full suite of 'Peopling' resources. The first section of this chapter will deconstruct the book as an extension of the exhibition and an original contribution to immigration history. The second section of this chapter will deconstruct the educational pack which was symptomatic of multicultural education initiatives at the time. In keeping with the cardinal purpose of this thesis, my analysis of these two elements will be guided by the same questions as the previous chapter. To what extent did these two elements illustrate a negotiation between those more difficult aspects of London's past

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[482] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman (ed.) *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation of the Exhibition,* (London: Museum of London, Arts and Society, University of East London, 1996), p. 26.
[483] Ibid, pp. 25-51.

such as racism and anti-immigrant sentiment, and more affirmative shared histories around migration? To what extent did these elements evidence a representational shift in the way the MoL interpreted histories of British colonialism?

Ruth Adams has analysed the way in which the Victoria and Albert Museum addressed Britain's transformation from an imperial to a postcolonial power through their Indian collections. Adams acknowledges that from the 1980s the V&A Museum demonstrated a greater willingness to engage in with its 'own imperial past and Britain's postcolonial present' by analysing the language used across the 1983/4 exhibition 'Petals from a Lotus'.[484] Adams argued that:

> the exhibition and related events may well have been successful in their inclusive aims but the text in much of the catalogue often reiterates 'Orientalist' preconceptions, presents India and Indians as 'Other', and speaks for the Asian community (in both the subcontinent and Bradford), rather than offering them the opportunity to speak for themselves.[485]

The MoL had a less dramatic imperial legacy to respond to, but its mission was to properly reflect London and its multicultural present, which till now it had failed to do. The 'Peopling' catalogue, and the essays within, were written by community advisers and academics who were members of their respective community, and it therefore offered them the opportunity to speak for themselves. At the time that the V&A Bradford exhibition was staged there was no national curriculum for history. With the establishment of a national curriculum for history in 1989, new opportunities were provided for history museums to engage with schools in different ways. In what ways did the 'Peopling' book and educational pack address Britain's transformation from an imperial power to a postcolonial society?

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[484] Ruth Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to Multiculturalism?' *Museums and Society,* Vol. 8, No. 2, (2010), pp. 63-64.
[485] Ibid*,* p. 68.

Front cover of Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas* (London: Museum of London, 1993).

Figure 30: Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas* (London: Museum of London, 1993).
Source: Museum of London ©.

The 'Peopling of London' Publication

The 'Peopling' catalogue (figure 30) was different to other museum catalogues at that time, in that it was a collection of personal views. This was significant, as it is an early example of a museum allowing communities to reclaim ownership over how their artefacts are presented and contextualised. Visram had recommended to Merriman that a collection of essays each written by a member of each respective community was more appropriate because it would ensure that the exhibition did not to speak *for* those communities.[486] It also provided a means by which to further integrate voices from immigrant groups about, and *to* whom, the exhibition spoke.

Colin Holmes, Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield at the time specialising in the history of migration, racism and fascism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, wrote the foreword to the book. According to him, 'where the traditional historian restricts themselves exclusively to the written source, other mediums might provide more effective tools with which to 'listen' to the 'voices of the newcomers'. This was indicative of the changing value of oral histories in the historical profession, and of social history approaches which sought to include the subaltern voice. The book was therefore an attempt to let those communities speak *for themselves.* Holmes' inclusion, which will be addressed later, says something concerning the specific cultural, social and political atmosphere in which this book emerged, as do some of the essays which I will also address. It does this by speaking to 'the range of groups who have come to Britain' and also the 'various forms of racism which immigrants and refugees have encountered', alongside their 'varied contributions, economic, social and political...'[487]

Unlike the traditional museum catalogue that highlighted and provided additional commentary on key objects and works of art, the book elevated personal accounts and personal experiences. Images were used sparingly and to support the narrative, rather than the other way around. It was also designed as a stand-alone resource for teachers, students and members of the public to dig deeper into issues raised in the exhibition, rather than

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[486] Personal communication with Rozina Visram, 17th August 2018.
[487] Colin Holmes, 'Foreword'*,* in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London:* 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas (London: Museum of London, 1993), p. ix.

simply reproducing a list of objects on display and their caption texts.[488] The book was simultaneously intended for as broad a public as possible, but also with highly engaged readers in mind. According to MoL Director Max Hebditch, this was a specialist text:

> Much of the information presented here has been drawn together for the first time from widely scattered material. In the hope of encouraging people to undertake further work on this important subject themselves, we have indicated some of the basic sources in an extensive bibliography and a guide to libraries, archives and museums in London that can provide further material.[489]

The book supported the aims of the exhibition, and also acted as a tool for those wanting to take the community work further and help to create histories.

Holmes' foreword emphasised where 'Peopling' was making an original contribution as an exhibition to the history and politics of migration, and where it complemented existing historical literature, as well as reinforcing the ideological thrust of the exhibition. It provided a more nuanced discussion of the exhibition rationale than the introductory panels to the exhibition allowed. Holmes' work questioned the widely held belief that London was a tolerant and liberal city in its reception of immigrants. Whilst there is no evidence as to the circumstances under which Merriman approached Holmes, Merriman undoubtedly felt that Holmes would have been the right person to introduce the book and that its arguments and trajectory complemented the exhibition.

There were clear points of convergence between Holmes' work and concerns with contemporary debates about immigration and the exhibition which Holmes chose to highlight in the foreword. For example, Holmes' 1991 monograph, *A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain,* which examined responses to immigrants and refugees arriving in Britain since the late nineteenth century, in several ways chimed with Merriman's desire to highlight immigrants' long presence, experiences and their contributions to London:

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[488] Max Hebditch, 'Preface', in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London:* 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas (London: Museum of London, 1993), p. xi.
[489] Ibid*,* p. xi.

…Jews in the capital have been well-served by historians, the same cannot be said of other groups […] one might expect to find a study of that process [the importance of London as a centre for immigrants and refugees], a study which melds together the diverse histories of the groups who have arrived from other lands. In fact, no such history exists […] In its attempt to fill the gaps The Peopling of London should be welcomed.[490]

Holmes' work also emphasised the contribution of migrants to the social, economic, political and cultural development of Britain which he also mentions in the foreword:

…we are made more knowledgeable about various forms of racism which immigrants and refugees have encountered. We are also made aware of the varied contributions, economic, social, political, which these groups have made to the capital; such detail acts as a reminder of the wider role they have performed in building the nation.[491]

And, towards the end of the foreword, Holmes states that:

taken in tandem, the book and the exhibition might act as catalysts which stimulate an even more probing analysis of immigration into London, which asks why people uprooted themselves to come to the city, how they fared after their arrival, how they helped to influence the city through their continuing presence, and also how they were themselves changed in that process.[492]

Holmes clearly saw this exhibition as a novel attempt to fill a particular gap in migration history, and perhaps more significantly, one that allowed migrant communities to speak for themselves.

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[490] Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas* (London: The Museum of London, 1993), p. ix
[491] Holmes, 'Foreword', p. viii.
[492] Merriman, *The Peopling of London*, p. ix.

The book was divided into three parts. Part I reinforced the ideological framework of the 'Peopling' programme and contained two chapters. The first chapter carried the same name as the formative gallery from the exhibition, 'A World in a City', and provided the framework for the remainder of the book. The second chapter, 'The Invisible Settler', summarised pre-historic and pre-modern immigration, much like the first three chronological galleries in the exhibition. Part II, the main thrust of the book, was a series of personal views. There were seventeen essays covering a substantial number of the communities included in the exhibition, namely: African and Caribbeans; Americans; Arabs; Australians and New Zealanders; the Chinese; Cypriots; Germans; the Irish in London; Italians; the Poles; Somalis; South Asians; the Spanish; the Vietnamese. Part III of the book contained additional resources, including a guide to 'Finding Out More About London's Overseas Communities'; 'Appendix 1: Principal Events in the 'Peopling' *of* London' which was a timeline of events; 'Appendix 2: Statistics' which contained both a table of residents born overseas as of 1991 and a table of 'Ethnic Affiliation of London Residents' as of 1991; and a list of contributors and an extended bibliography. Data included in appendices one and two were taken from a 1991 census survey conducted by the Office of Population and Census Surveys.[493] Table 3 below summarises the book structure.

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[493] Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London*, p.212.

The Spanish in London	Javier Pes	179
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Finding Out More About London's Overseas Communities	193	
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Table 3: 'Peopling' catalogue contents page.
Source: Nick Merriman (ed.), The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas (London: Museum of London, 1993).

The introductory chapter 'The World in a City' was written by Nick Merriman and Rozina Visram and provided the overall framework for part two of the book. The reader was encouraged to see London in the 1990s as a vibrant and cosmopolitan city and that cultural diversity was not new to London and that it was 'certainly not just a post-war phenomenon.' It went on to summarise the settlement of London since prehistoric times, covering the various communities which had settled in London and why, and declared that '…twentieth century immigration has simply continued this trend…'[494] As was the case with the 'World in the City' section of the exhibition, continuity was clearly an important theme in constructing the 'Peopling' book narrative.

The first chapter also provided an overview of the exhibition content, with individual sub-sections covering its major themes and content. 'Motivations for Settlement from

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[494] Nick Merriman and Rozina Visram, 'The World in a City', in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas* (London: The Museum of London, 1993), pp. 3-4.

Overseas' ranged from peaceful settlement after the Norman conquest as a result of 'the geographic position of the immigrants' country of origin and its historical ties with Britain (the Low Countries and Scandinavia), to those brought involuntarily as slaves or servants from the Roman period onwards'. This chapter also spoke of the 'sugar barons from the West Indies or "nabobs from India"' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who 'brought their slave-servants with them.' Merriman stressed however, that the '…over-riding motivation for migration to London from abroad over the centuries has been economic.'[495] There was little problematising of the spatial power relations between Europe and the wider world, which will be addressed later.

The remaining sub-sections returned to those principal topics outlined in the 'World in a City' gallery. One section highlighted 'the vast contribution of immigrants through the centuries to London's development' choosing to confine the analysis to the 'economic and cultural'. Concerning the economic impact of migrants, Merriman and Visram were careful to state that '…it would be wrong to concentrate exclusively on stories of successfully entrepreneurs. The great majority of immigrants have not been so distinguished yet have contributed greatly to London's economic prosperity.'[496] There was then an acknowledgment of the inequitable distribution of wealth created using immigrant labour.

In writing about the docks, we start to see a shift in representation of the role of migrant labour in contributing to the wealth of London when contrasted with the old 'Imperial London' gallery in the permanent galleries: 'Mention must also be made of the sailors of many nations which transported manufactured goods to the corners of the Empire and contributed to swell the tide of wealth poured upon our shores'.[497] Also, whilst the permanent galleries had acknowledged the role of Indian troops in the Second World War, there was a readmission of that along with an acknowledgement of the contribution of immigrant labour to rebuilding post-war London:

> During the Second World War, Chinese, African, and South Asian sailors helped keep lines of communication open, enabling vital food supplies to reach London. During the

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495 Ibid, p. 7.
496 Ibid, p. 15.
497 Ibid, p. 15.

Second World War, immigrant labour kept industries going in London, while after the end of the war, as we have seen, people from Europe, the Caribbean and the Indian Subcontinent were brought in as replacement labour to rebuild London's infrastructure and supply the needs of industry.[498]

Acknowledgement is also made of the cultural contribution of immigrants. For example, the book mentions the rise of the Continental catering style which emerged in the nineteenth century. The growth of Anglo-Italian dining and eating-out in the post-war period as leisure time increased is also highlighted along with the growth Chinese and Indian cuisine.

An individual section is given over to 'A Liberal Tradition', which reflected the 'London: a Tolerant City' display in the 'World in a City' Gallery. It begins with a similar reflection on the pride many Londoners held in their belief about their own tolerance of newcomers borrowing a quote from the institute of Race Relations (IRR): 'It has generally been felt, in theory at least, Britain prides itself on the strength of its toleration seeing hostility as the monopoly of others.'[499] The Open Door policy which operated until 1905 allowed for political exiles as well as famous anti-colonialists such as Jomo Kenyatta and C.L.R. James the influential Trinidadian historian to come to London. This is then sharply contrasted with accounts of intolerance. Mention of Oswald Moseley and his British Union of Fascists is used to illustrate anti-Semitism in the 1930s. Anti-Black violence is highlighted through the 1919 Race Riots which broke out in a number of large port-cities in Britain. Concerning the post-war period colour bars are mentioned, challenging the positive narrative of recruitment drives by London Transport and the expansion of citizenship under the 1948 British Nationality Act. It also covers the 1960s race-riots, the emergence of the National Front in 1967 which was coupled with broader public anti-immigrant anxieties emboldened by Enoch Powell in his 1968 'Rivers of Blood' Speech.

Of particular interest is one paragraph which remarks on the causes of intolerance drawing on Holmes' work:

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[498] Merriman and Visram, 'The World in a City', p. 15.
[499] Ibid, p. 20. Quote found in Eliot Joseph Benn Rose *et al, Colour and Citizenship: A Report on British Race Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 587.

What causes such hostile responses is too complex a question to tackle in a general introduction of this kind. Economic factors, religious and cultural differences, a history of colonial exploitation, with its pseudo-scientific racism, sexual jealousy and nationalism, are all ingredients. Among these, however, some have suggested that a persistent fundamental influence has been 'the perception of immigrants and refugees as an immediate competitive threat for society's scarce resources.' The political consequences have been manifesting in a long history of official control of immigration policies.[500]

This was a bold statement for the Museum to endorse at that time reflecting anti-racist activity in London in the second half of the twentieth century. London was a city that from the 1980s was experimenting with anti-racist policies. Paul Gilroy noted that with the Brixton Riots of 1981, Labour administrators elected to local municipal authorities emphasised the need for a sustained campaign around 'anti-racist' objectives. This entailed anti-racist training initiatives, equality of opportunity programmes at workplaces, committees to explore the needs of ethnic minority communities, along with financial support programmes for ethnic minority communities; all amounted to a declaration of London as an 'ani-racist' zone. In 1982-1983, the Ethnic Minorities Committee, chaired by Ken Livingstone spent a budget of £850,000 on such activities which was raised to £2.5 million the following year.[501] The passage reflected the spirit of these broader metropolitan anti-racist initiatives. The above passage then moves on to briefly outline where intolerance and immigration controls had served to galvanise anti-immigration anxieties. This passage concludes: 'From the foregoing it could be concluded that Britain's liberal tradition – if it exists at all – is only a relative one. Tolerance of ethnic communities has tended to be a thin veneer covering far from liberal attitudes, both at the official and popular level.'[502]

This section of the book also dealt specifically with anti-racist movements in the second half of the twentieth century, including the mobilisation of Black and South Asian movements such as the Black People's Alliance (BPA, founded 1968). It also argued that at

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[500] Merriman and Visram, 'The World in a City', p. 22.
[501] Paul Gilroy, *Ain't no Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), p. 168.
[502] Merriman and Visram, 'The World in a City', p. 23.

times there was a broad coalition against anti-immigrant sentiments across communities, invoking a more positive shared history of struggles against intolerance. The chapter finished by focusing on 'Londoners All' concluding that:

> The long history of overseas immigration into London shows that the city's inhabitants can come from a great diversity of backgrounds, and that most Londoners of today could ultimately find ancestors who have come from overseas […] Their children and grandchildren have grown up to see themselves as Londoners. […] their aspirations and interests despite the frequent structural disadvantages they encounter as British-born members of immigrant groups, are the same as any others of their age. Through them, London is slowly absorbing another element in its rich history of cultural diversity, something that we can all celebrate and of which we can be proud.[503]

Bringing the ideological arc back to contemporary multicultural London, the chapter finishes with an affirmation of London's rich and diverse character, at once washing away past and present intolerance and more difficult aspects of London's chequered past and calling for a recognition of the aspirations of young people from ethnic communities to be celebrated.

Part II of the book contained the seventeen essays from community members that constituted a series of personal views. The individual essays chose to focus on additional themes specific to the unique historical contexts of their respective communities' histories and metropolitan pasts and present. Several of the essays were illustrative of a broad representational shift, challenging notions of otherness. These essays focused on visibility, racism and migrants' various contributions to society. Colonialism, and the political and economic imperialism that was in part responsible for immigration, was an inescapable theme in many of the essays. Still, many of the essays recapitulated the narrative established in the exhibition which saw migrants' experiences and their socio-economic status determined by their skills and educational attainment, but also by white fears about economic competition and resulting restrictions and barriers. It is impossible to treat each

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[503] Ibid, p. 25.

essay in depth, so I will focus on three particular essays which all, in part at least, dealt with immigration from former British colonies. This will allow me to gauge the extent to which the catalogue (in echoing the exhibition) similarly reflected a negotiation of tensions between an inclusive and multicultural London story, and histories of conflict, othering, racism and exclusion.

'Africans and Caribbeans in London', written by Peter Fraser, focused on slavery and racism, and where these issues intersected. Fraser, born in Guyana, taught history and cultural studies at Goldsmiths College, University of London, and focused on the history of Black people in Britain. The principal thrust of his essay was to highlight the presence of Black people in Britain, and to suggest a framework for examining the Black diaspora in London:

> Although there is evidence for the presence of Black soldiers [...] studies of African and Caribbean people in Britain usually start with the development of the English slave trade and plantation slavery in the English Caribbean. [...]

> Yet can there be any justification for dealing with both African and Caribbeans together in one chapter of this book? In discussing the history of African and Caribbean people in London, we are not dealing with a single community, or even with two communities [...] *Yet two features bind people from the two regions together: the existence of slavery and the persistence of racism.* The majority of Commonwealth Caribbean people have African ancestry because of the slave trade to the Caribbean. Caribbean people of African descent suffer the effects of racism just as much as those who are visibly, and actually, from Africa.[504]

This essay provided a more critical take on the Black presence in London than the exhibition itself did. Fraser highlighted enforced migration and racism as common experiences. Despite this, he picked up the exhibition theme of celebrating contributions. The remainder of his analysis focused much more on the cultural, political and economic contribution these groups made to the city.[505]

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[504] Peter Fraser, 'Africans and Caribbeans in London', in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: 15,000 of Settlement from Overseas* (London: Museum of London, 1993), p. 51.
[505] Ibid, pp. 53-60.

Fraser also engaged with the tensions over immigration and race, which increased into the early 1980s and culminated in the Macpherson report in 1999 (discussed in chapter one). This gritter reality is, however, missed in the book. Fraser was writing before institutional racism was seriously tackled. But he does pick up on the contemporary conditions around education and unemployment that restricted the potential of the African and Caribbean communities, touching on the perpetuation of myths that suggested a 'special aptitude for music and sports of Black people in general.' Fraser finished by stating that 'discrimination still remains, and a depressed and declining British economy cannot provide the certainty of employment…'[506] Fraser's essay was indicative of a new approach to Black British history, which began with Fryer in the 1980s, and which focused on the lives of individuals to highlight issues such as slavery and racism, as well as how minorities contributed to British society.[507]

Camilla Fawzi El-Solh's essay on 'Arabs in London' focused on the absence of archival 'data' on the Arab diaspora in Britain, a theme common to the works of Fryer and Visram, and on their experiences 'outside White Britain mainstream society'. El-Sohl was a Research Associate at Oxford University at the time, researching Arab immigrant communities in Britain. She characterised the early presence and experience of Yemenis as thus:

> As with other immigrant groups, they came from countries which had colonial or other political or economic links with Britain. Yemeni seafarers recruited by the British merchant navy began to settle in areas nearest their sources of livelihood, namely London's docklands. By the beginning of the twentieth century, they had established their own links with relatives settled in other British ports such as Cardiff, Liverpool and South Shields. Lodging houses and seamen's cafes provided many Yemenis with a niche which served to reinforce their sense of identity. In the absence of Yemini women, they were apparently inclined to marry indigenous British women, at least during the early settlement phase, but the minority who did inter-marry continued to find themselves as socially marginalised as those who did not. This was due to manifestations of racism against them as newcomers, partly

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[506] Fraser, 'Africans and Caribbeans in London', p. 60.
[507] Kathleen Charter, 'Black British history', Institute for Historical research, [Online], <https://www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/black_history.html>, accessed 15th July 2019.

because of their socio-economic status as a largely unskilled migrant labour force, but also as a consequence of their seafaring life.[508]

El-Solh concludes that 'This social marginalisation prevailed, in spite of Yemenis' hard labour contribution during times when the British economy needed every available hand'. El-Solh's emphasis on economic factors in determining the experiences of Arab diasporas in London continues through her treatment of Moroccans, Egyptians, Iraqis and Somalians. Those more prosperous groups held higher socio-economic status owing to their education and due to their prior status in their mother country. Those that fared less well were either political refugees, as was the case with post-revolution Iraqis fleeing their home country in 1958, or low-skilled and low-educated groups such as the Moroccan diaspora in the 1950s and 1960s.[509] Whilst similar to Fraser in highlighting racism as a formative experience for Yemenis in London, El-Solh focuses more on their socio-economic status.

'Australians and New Zealanders in London' was written by Rick Bouwman. Born in Australia, Bouwman was formerly a research curator at the Australian Gallery of Sport. He also acknowledges the importance of economic drivers of migration but tells a very different story where race and ethnicity are concerned. His essay begins by evoking memories of transient Australasian backpackers in London, showcased by a picture of young Australians in Market Road, Islington, next to a van. Bouwman states that for many Londoners, the presence of these young expatriates in visible occupations […] reinforced a long-lived stereotype of Australians as young, care-free, self-reliant and transient, here to have a good time…', a stereotype that developed from the '1950s when the first group of Australians settled in London, most notoriously in bedsits in Earl's Court.' Bouwman then sharply contrasts this with a history of gradually increasing independence, from the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand in 1840 and the federation of Australia in 1901, which saw their respective links with their 'mother country' become increasingly tenuous. He nevertheless depicts the process of 'cultural independence' as both incomplete and complex.[510]

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[508] Camilla Fawzi El-Solh, 'Arabs in London', in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: 15,000 of Settlement from Overseas* (London: Museum of London, 1993), pp. 73.

[509] Fawzi El-Solh, 'Arabs in London'*,* pp. 74-77.

[510] Rick Bouwman, 'Australians and New Zealanders in London', in Nick Merriman (ed.), *The Peopling of London: 15,000 of Settlement from Overseas* (London: Museum of London 1993), p. 80.

Bouwman frames his essay with a sensitive account of a history of cultural exchange and the formation of a larger white settler identity formed within the British Empire. It begins by focusing on aspects of identity. Bouwman argues that over a long period Australia and New Zealand underwent similar social changes including 'migration, recession, the influence of Nationalism and policies promoting multi-culturalism.'[511] These, Bouwman concludes:

> Have changed them from monocultural and, some felt, complacent societies they were, even two decades ago. In both countries, a significant proportion of the population now has no social or cultural links with the UK. Encouragement of identification with local regions […] is having an effect; many people including those with an Anglo-Celtic heritage, now look towards Europe and the United States rather than Britain. This trend has been accentuated by the widely held perception that when Britain joined the EEC in 1973 it was Britain who cut the apron strings and, in the worlds of a New Zealand historian, 'mother deserted'.[512]

The remainder of the essay traces hidden histories of the 'first Australians to visit London […] Aborigines Bennelong and Yemmerawanyea, who went to England with Governor Phillip in 1792 and were feted as exotic Noble Savages'. Bouwman then details the artistic exodus to the UK, precipitated by cheaper travel in the 1950s and 1960s, which saw the likes of Clive James and Germaine Greer migrate to London. The 'great period of the Australian presence in London' Bouwman tells us, was from 1963 to 1973, as a result of an energised youth with ambitions for travel, and nearly unfettered access through Commonwealth citizenship rights.[513]

Towards the end of the essay Bouwman speaks of the cultural contributions of Australians and New Zealanders, such as the growth of small tourist business from the 1960s around areas like Earl's Court Road. Bouwman concludes his essay by reflecting on the contemporary feelings of Australians and New Zealanders in London, and their cultural affiliations, characterising the community as independent: 'The desire and motivation to fit

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[511] Ibid, p. 81.
[512] Ibid, p. 81.
[513] Ibid, p. 83.

in is not so strong; on the contrary, there is a strong feeling of difference and sometimes superiority, mixed with a feeling of making the most of their desire to enjoy the experience of living in what is increasingly a foreign country.'[514] Bouwman, then, stresses that kinship was a positive identifier binding the white British world, and that growing multiculturalism might threaten shared heritage and value.

The 'Peopling' book clearly set out to reflect, and intervene in, ongoing attempts to engage more positively with immigrant and minority groups. Before asking how far the book succeeded in its aims, however, it is worth noting how sceptical some authors have remained about the chances of such success. Returning to the Victoria and Albert museum and the reconfiguration of their Indian collections in the 1980s, Ruth Adams questioned the extent to which the V&A engaged with questions posed by postcolonial theory and whether it endeavoured 'to incorporate these within its discursive frameworks?' Adams' rationale is that institutions like the V&A are (and remain) discursive institutions that helped to engender Western notions of the material culture and civilisation of the East, and therefore leave themselves open to postcolonial critique. Adams' conclusions were critical, noting that much of the language both in the exhibition 'Petals from a Lotus' exhibition in Bradford 1983 – 1984, and in the accompanying essays, served to perpetuate orientalist tropes and assumptions about the other.[515]

Did the 'Peopling' book do any better? In a sense, yes. It was an extension of the exhibition which provided the foundation for others to embark on their own community research, and a contribution to migration history. It also served to expand on topics addressed in the exhibition for the more engaged reader around important issues of representation. Beyond that, to what extent did the 'Peopling' book engage with postcolonial critiques which seek to deconstruct the modes and ways in which notions of the other had been embedded in Western cultural production? Does it reveal sufficient influence from near contemporary postcolonialism as a field, or is it more predictably haphazard in revealing intellectual allegiances?

Before answering these questions, we need to note the state of play in postcolonial studies

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[514] Ibid, p. 86.
[515] Adams, 'The V&A: Empire to Multiculturalism?', pp. 64-69.

at the time. Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and its accusation that Western culture produced a version of other cultures, was long established, and had a profound impact on enquiry into colonial culture.[516] But the 1990s represented a watershed for postcolonial studies, with its influence over museology becoming more pronounced.[517] Key protagonists were attempting to consolidate and also challenge earlier postcolonial interventions, for instance emphasising the two-way exchange of cultural ideas and hybridity. It was during this time that formative works also brought orientalism to the forefront of museum criticism.

Historians of visual culture and art historians in particular responded throughout the 1990s to postcolonial theory. Most of these studies reflected on issues of race and representation. One key work was from the curator of the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, Jeanne Cannizzo, who in 1989 through an essay entitled *Exhibiting Culture: Into the Heart of Africa* (an exhibition about Canadian missionary collectors in Africa) argued that the museum was a 'cultural text […] that may be read to understand the underlying cultural or ideological assumptions that have informed its creation'.[518] Elizabeth Edwards' essay in *Anthropology and Photography* (1992) in dealing with the way in which photography has fixed a geography of colonialism in stasis, broaches representation of the other in exhibitions.[519] Though these works, with the exception of Cannizzo, were not specifically of the museum they all in part dealt with visual representations of the other various institutions. These works also greatly informed subsequent key works like Barringer and Flynn's *Colonialism and the Object* (1998), discussed in chapter one. These built on postcolonial critiques to show museums had both perpetuated and sustained colonial discourses of the other.

Barbara Bush has summarised postcolonialism as the 'decolonisation of representation'. Its development in the 1990s focused on the 'symbolic empire'.[520] Concepts such as diversity and hybridity, discussed in chapter one, helped to deconstruct essentialist notions of

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[516] Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn (ed.), *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture and the Museum* (London: Routledge 1998), p. 2.

[517] Elleke Boehmer and Alex Tickell, 'The 1990s: An Increasingly Postcolonial Decade', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 50, No. 3, (Sept. 2015), pp. 315–352.

[518] Jeanna Cannizzo, 'Exhibiting Cultures: "Into the Heart of Africa", *Visual Anthropology Review,* Vol. 7, No. 1, (1991).

[519] Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

[520] Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and Postcolonialism* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), p. 54.

identity and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of Imperialism on colonial and postcolonial societies and culture, both at the centre and the periphery, evident in the works cited above. Postcolonial theory helped to deconstruct identities of BAME diasporas in the imperial heartlands. At the heart of these postcolonial interventions was a recognition of the effect of imperialism on both colonised and coloniser, and a desire to 'revise those nationalist or nativist pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition.'[521] Postcolonial analysis was, put simply, the analysis of colonial discourse, mainly through textual representations, and colonial culture. To what extent did 'Peopling' acknowledge, and speak to these arguments?

In terms of space, the chapters in the 'Peopling' book are skewed to Anglophone settler immigrants and to Europeans. There are ten chapters dedicated to these communities, with only seven for the rest of the world, and very few on former colonies. Many of those groups from once-colonised nations are clustered together rather than getting separate treatment. For example, 'African and Black Caribbean', and 'South Asians'. Fraser's chapter, however, did acknowledge the dilemma in grouping communities together, arguing that this was to highlight the pervasiveness of racism and the historical experience of slavery.[522] The other essays also recognise the heterogenous nature of the communities they are writing about. The editors arguably should, and could have, sub divided these groups more to reflect their cultural nuance, and given them a greater share of the space?

The nature of each of the origin postcolonial nations is also relatively neglected, although Fraser does touch on post-independence Guyana. He states that 'political and economic motives were indissolubly linked as instability in either the economy or the political system affected governments and people's livelihoods.'[523] In many of the essays, the political and economic motives cited are not related to their imperial story. Then again, the exhibition itself was about immigration *from overseas,* and it never intended to provide an analysis of the origin colonies and countries. Its intellectual alignment was with emerging Black histories, and one would not expect the exhibition to have picked up on those formative

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[521] Homi K. Bhaba, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 28, (Spring 1984), p. 171.
[522] Fraser, 'Africans and Caribbeans in London', p. 51.
[523] Fraser, 'Africans and Caribbeans in London', p. 52.

works addressing museums and postcolonial theory that were emerging as planning for *Peopling* began.

The 'Peopling of London' Educational Resource Pack

The educational resource pack was aimed at an altogether different audience and was intended to support specific elements of the national curriculum. The resource pack was part of a larger school programme that the education department developed throughout the making of the exhibition. The programme comprised of a number of elements including exhibition trails, gallery drama presentations, poetry writing workshops and creative arts workshops.[524] The resource pack was sponsored by Carlton TV and contained several elements: notes for teachers; background information; case studies; and oral history recordings on cassette from the oral history collecting programme. The pack also contained source material printed on picture cards. The education pack, written by Emma Webb, the museum's education officer, and researched by Rozina Visram who distilled much of the exhibition content.

This part of the chapter will show how the resource pack further evidences a shifting interpretation of histories of colonialism through the framework of immigration, but more closely aligned and shaped by emerging multicultural education initiatives. Before discussing the resource pack more closely, it is pertinent here to discuss the MoL's education department from its inception. The education department was a new departure when the MoL opened in 1976. Neither the Guildhall nor the London Museum had any formal educational facilities. The education department was headed up by Geoffrey Toms. Toms had trained at Cambridge University, later becoming a secondary school teacher in Classics before joining the MoL as their education officer. In 1976, the Museum began 'publicising the Museum's new future education policy.'[525] The policy itself is not accessible, but the enthusiastic language in the report used to describe the new department demonstrates the MoL's sincerity towards education. The education

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[524] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman, *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation* (London: Museum of London, 1996) pp.25-26.
[525] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1975-1979*,* p. 50.

department, however, had a difficult start, failing to meet the demand from schools in its formative years.[526] Despite this, the MoL was perhaps ahead of its time, with many other museums doing less to support this area.[527] The Education Department provided 'structured use of the Museum by school groups, students in further and higher education, groups of adults, and teachers in service and training.'[528] School groups were provided with introductory lessons to contextualise the galleries, as well as objects during object-handling lessons.

It was around this time that the role of museum education began to expand. Museums have always had educational purposes or been linked to education in one form or another. When the first universal museums emerged in Europe in the late eighteenth century they were envisioned as rational enlightenment projects which carried, through their collections and obsession with ordering the natural world, universal truths that could be unlocked by those with sufficient education. With the South Kensington Museum, later the V&A, museums came to be seen as places for instruction in crafts and artisanal arts as well. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has pointed out, the way in which education in museums has been understood has nevertheless changed enormously. Before the 1980s, what unified museums' approaches to education was that it was always seen as a secondary function. For much of the twentieth century little changed, and education remained a discretionary service. Museums remained largely disconnected from new forms of educational theory that arose in the 1960s and 1970s.[529]

A big step-change came in the 1970s and 1980s as the idea of the exhibition as a learning environment, engendered by behavioural educational theory's focus on the efficacy of learning environments, became popular. Museums were increasingly seen as appropriate learning environments in which learning outcomes could be observed and measured. This will be discussed at greater length in chapter seven. It was not until museums began to focus more on their audiences, and the development of marketing officers and government

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[526] London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/076/01/003, Flowers of Cities All, First report of Governors, 1st June 1975 – 31st March 1979, p. 7.

[527] Eilean Hooper Greenhill, 'Museum Education: Past, Present and Future', in Roger Miles and Lauro Zavala (ed.), *Towards the museum of the future: new European Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 140-142.

[528] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1975-1979, p. 50.

[529] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'Museum Education: Past, Present and Future', p. 138.

pressure to prove their public good, did museums begin to think more critically about their educational services. This change also coincided with the introduction of the national curriculum (1989) and the idea of active learning from and at curriculum-appropriate sites. Museums were seen as obvious sites to support the national curriculum. With this there was greater alignment between old-guard curators and educational staff, seeing their constituent roles as supporting the museum mission. As a result, museums became more confident in their provision of experiential and object-based education for schools.[530]

Initially, little seemed to change in the 1980s in relation to MoL education. The lead was taken instead by the linked Museum in Docklands Project (MiDP hereafter). In 1987, the MiDP introduced the museum-on-the-move, as discussed in chapter four. The museum-on-the-move toured communities and schools taking objects from the Docklands collection into these local spaces to provide educational provision.[531] With the introduction of the national curriculum, the MoL also moved its focus towards producing educational packs to support school groups that came to the Museum, of which the 'Peopling' pack was an example.[532] At this time there was greater emphasis placed on multicultural education both nationally and in museums. Here we can find an additional context which helped to shape 'Peopling' and its interpretation, and in turn shaped the Museum's approach to empire. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the resource pack, especially those parts concerned with empire, as speaking to these initiatives.

The overall aim of the resource pack was outlined in the 'Notes for Teachers', under the sub-heading 'Applications of *The Peopling of London* for the History of [the] National Curriculum', which focused on where and how 'Peopling' could be used to support the national curriculum:

> People have come to Britain from near and far: for example, Celts, Romans, Anglo-
> Saxons, Vikings, Normans, Jews, Huguenots, Poles, Ukrainians, people from African,

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[530] Ibid, p. 140. More progressive educational theory which emerged at this time, focussing on how the meaning was constructed by the learner, had less impact on museums

[531] London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/076/01/004, Flowers of Cities All, First report of Governors, 1st April 1980 – 31st March 1981, p. 43.

[532] London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/076/01/004, Flowers of Cities All, First report of Governors, 1st April 1980 – 31st March 1981, p. 43.

from Asia, and from the Caribbean. An even greater number of people have migrated from Britain, for example to the USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. For centuries, people have also migrated within Britain; there are regional differences not only of speech but in customs, cuisine, sports, architecture, and many other things. The study of history is concerned with the cause and effects of these movements and consequences for shaping British culture.[533]

It went on to outline how it would address the different aspects of the new national history curriculum:

The project explored how this process of immigration and settlement has shaped the growth and development of one city over 2,000 years. It can be used to demonstrate that:

- People have settled in London for many different reasons
- Immigration and settlement of people from overseas has always been part of London's and Britain's history
- Experience of settlement in London vary depending on who came, why they came and when
- The history of London and Britain is also the history of the many different cultural and ethnic groups that make up Britain's population today
- The history of London and Britain cannot be separated from world history[534]

Much of what was included in these introductory notes reflected debates around the nature of history teaching in the UK. 1989 was the year in which debates emerged around the nature of history teaching in school, and in particular the place of British history in the new curriculum. Alongside this, within the field of museum education, discussions around the place of museums in promoting multicultural education accelerated in response.

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[533] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, The Peopling of London 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, p. 4.
[534] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, The Peopling of London 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, p. 4.

Historians had long played a significant role in constructing national identities, playing a pivotal role in 'disseminating knowledge *about* and securing a sense of belonging *to* a community.'[535] In the UK, however, schools had not had any formal role in such nation-orientated use of history, notwithstanding some nationalistic schools, masters and texts such as H. E. Marshall, *Our Empire Story* (1908).[536] Prior to 1989, history was not a compulsory subject in UK schools. In the late twentieth century, history education veered away from events and dates and towards a more skill-based approach; emphasising using sources to develop key historical skills. In addition, the very introduction of a national curriculum inevitably started a debate over what should be taught. Even if history teaching had varied widely from school to school before and had been patchy in terms of covering key periods, some historians and public figures now argued that the curriculum should do more to give students a complete framework of British history as a basis for their identity and citizenship.

Under the 1988 Education Reform Act, the same one that undermined the ILEA as a coordinating power in London, history was made a core foundation subject. It was now compulsory for all pupils aged 5-16. This signalled a recognition of the value of history and created a curriculum. Geographically, it focused on World history and European history, enlarging the scope of content from previous years. The change encouraged the production of third-party material to support teaching history now the scope and quantity had increased. 'Peopling' responded to these developments, which provided an opportunity to engage a broader section of the population on topics relevant to World and European history and grounded in multicultural museum education.

A paper written by Moira Simpson at the time gives some indication as to the nature of multicultural education provision. Though provision existed it was fragmented and confused. This she found based on interviews with 43 museums across the UK. Few, she noted, had a policy. The purpose of multicultural education, she stated, should have several aims: to engender a more tolerant understanding of ethnic minorities in the majority

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[535] Susanne Grindel, 'Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts of History Textbooks', in Mario. Carretero *et al* (ed.), *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 259.

[536] H. E. Marshall, *Our Empire Story* (London: T. C. and E. C. Jack, Ltd., 1908).

population; for ethnic minorities to facilitate members of their community to learn about their own cultural heritage; to create cross-cultural understanding and tolerance; to tackle racism that existed between majority and minority groups, but also cross-cultural racism.[537] Simpson received 22 responses from the 43 museums she contacted, which allowed her to illustrate what some museums in the UK at this time were doing with regards to multicultural education.

Several museums had created a specialist post for 'Ethnic Arts' or multicultural education. One might conclude from ethnic arts that museums at this time were still struggling to break free from colonial dichotomies of western art, and ethnic or primitive art, separating ethnic arts from art more broadly. Many museums, including larger national museums like the British Museum, claimed to be running exhibitions around the theme of multiculturalism, but mostly in areas with 'a fairly large black population.' Simpson quoted Sudha Daniel, the Multi-cultural Education Officer for the Leicester museums service, arguing that, for her museum, this was largely due to a more 'politically and socially more vociferous' Indian community.[538]

Across the breadth of multicultural museum activity, Simpson noted that the main problem that arose was about how information was, and should be, put across. Some, she notes, believed that only a positive perspective should be shown and that 'images of poverty or deprivation serve only to reinforce stereotyped images…'[539] Already, there are some indications that the 'Peopling' exhibition spoke to some of these concerns, especially regarding presentation of information. It sought balance between showing the positive contributions of migrant communities, whilst at that same time unearthing those hidden and more difficult aspects of London's past. At the end of her survey, Simpson argued that museums needed to deal with both positive and negatives histories if they were to be seen as properly executing their function in providing an accurate historical picture.[540] Public responses to 'Peopling' reflected this tension (and strive for balance) and will be dealt with in chapter seven.

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[537] Moira Simpson, 'Multicultural education and the role of the museum Moira Simpson', *Journal of education in museums,* Vol. 7, (1995)*,* pp. 1-2.
[538] Ibid*,* p. 4.
[539] Ibid*.*
[540] Ibid*.*

At the time of writing her report in 1995, Simpson concluded that '…too few museums appear to have decided that multicultural education is an important area of development…'[541] 'Peopling' was then one of a few museums at this early stage to do so. An internal exhibition brief from 1992, in which the central objectives of the education programme were laid out, makes it clear that it spoke to this emerging emphasis on multicultural education initiatives coalescing, as they did, around tackling racism:

> The 'Peopling' of London project challenges us as a museum, as it involves us in attempting to think of ways of presenting histories that are not predominantly white and middle class. The new emphasis has to be on equal access for all social groups, […] In doing this, we have to confront issues such as cultural stereotyping and racism…[542]

The first part of the education pack included 'Notes for Teachers'. This section outlined where the resource pack could support key stages one (5-7 years), key stages two (7-11 years) and three (11-14 years). For key stage one it was suggested that the schools could incorporate personal stories with images to illustrate how different people's lifestyles have changed over time. The notion of 'journeys' was suggested again to illustrate why people migrate, and that a range of images and artefacts could 'stimulate pupils' ideas about the past'. For key stages two and three, suggestions were a little more comprehensive, and reflected thinking around multicultural education initiatives. It was suggested that the educational pack could help to 'reinforce pupil's understanding of the cultural diversity in London, and Britain, throughout the past.'[543]

The pack was distilled from the exhibition content, and questions guided the selection and presentation of material. Such questions as, 'Beginnings of the Empire: what impact did voyages of exploration and encounter have on London and on new people and commodities coming to London? E.g. tea, coffee, tobacco', 'the British Empire: to what extent did London rely on resources and people from overseas?', 'building Victorian

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[541] Ibid, p. 5.
[542] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondences, Internal Exhibition Brief, March 1992, p. 2.
[543] MoL Business Archives, The Peopling of London 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, pp. 4-5.

London: the contribution of the Irish' and 'what different features of architecture have been brought to England by settlers from overseas?'.[544] These questions were clearly designed to highlight the contribution of immigrants to London. Particularly questions like the one above which asks students to focus on the extent to which London had relied on resources and peoples from *overseas,* as a rebuff to the idea of immigrants as a problem, as discussed in the gallery, 'A Liberal City'.

The second part of the educational pack, 'Background information', provided historical digests along with images and supporting material from the galleries for each of the periods addressed in the exhibition. In 'London and the Wider World: 1500-1837', focus was on religious refugees fleeing persecution, 'voyages of exploration', and the 'growth of trade with countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas', as well as the 'establishment of political and economic control in overseas Empire colonies.' Illustrated by the image of John Blanke, the Black trumpeter, the same one displayed in the 'Early Black and South Asian Presence' gallery, the text emphasised the early Black presence in London. Slavery was said to be a driver of Black movement from Africa and the West Indies, and Samuel Pepys was recast as one of a number of affluent slave holders who 'returned from abroad with a little Turk and a negro for his daughter'. Olaudah Equiano was again used to illustrate the contribution of free Black people to the fight against slavery.[545] It is worth noting here, that it was not until 2008 that the nature of the slave trade, and the impact of empire on Britain was prescribed in the national curriculum for all pupils aged 11-14.[546] These initiatives as such then were an early intervention.

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[544] Ibid, p. 7.

[545] Ibid, pp. 10-11

[546] Deana Heath, School curriculum continues to whitewash Britain's imperial past', *The Conversation,* 27th January 2016, [online], <http://theconversation.com/school-curriculum-continues-to-whitewash-britains-imperial-past-53577>, accessed 7th October 2019.

Photo of the 'London and the Wider World 1500-1837' digest from the 'Peopling' resource pack, including an image of John Blanke.

Figure 31: 'London and the Wider World 1500-1837' digest from the 'Peopling' resource pack.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, p. 10.

Figure 32: 'London and the Wider World 1500-1837' digest from the 'Peopling' resource pack.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, p. 11.

The guide then continued to advise on teaching using 'The Heart of Empire: 1837-1945' (figure 31/32) section of the exhibition. For this gallery, it focussed above all on how London as the 'capital of the British Empire, and at the centre of an international network of trade and commerce…' resulted in many different communities settling in London from across the globe by the 1850s. Empire citizenship, and labour opportunities encouraged by the flourishing of the docks and building of railways, were also said to be principal drivers of migration, emphasising again the economic drivers.

Photo showing the 'The Heart of Empire 1837-1945' digest from the 'Peopling' resource pack.

Figure 33: 'The Heart of Empire 1837-1945' digest from the 'Peopling' resource pack.
Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, Resource Pack, p. 11.

More difficult topics were also covered such as the 'starvation' in Ireland between 1845-51 (figure 33). Interestingly, where empire is seen as a benefit to migrants in providing citizens of empire free entry to the UK, and by implication providing them with new opportunities, empire is not implicated in the Irish famine. Despite the relatively uncritical stance to the famine and emigration, the text goes on to question the liberal nature of London, in keeping with one of the principals aims of the 'Peopling' program:

> While London attracted many settlers, they were not always welcomed. In 1905, the Alien Act was introduced to reduce Jewish settlement, and this was followed by the Aliens Restrictions Act in 1914. Such legislation was relaxed during both World Wars, when many British citizens from all over the Empire came to help with the war effort. Sometimes overseas settlers met with hostility and prejudice...[547]

Encapsulating some of the concerns of multicultural education and the role of museums, these historical digests of the exhibition sought to further highlight the Black presence in London. A city which had relied on goods and labour from *Overseas*, was also a city in which minority communities had often been made to feel unwelcome. Case studies were provided to teachers to help students to engage more explicitly with material around histories of colonialism in order to probe issues of tolerance, inclusion, race and cultural diversity.

The third and final aspect of the educational pack was a series of case studies. The case studies comprised of various mixed-media and material and were intended to allow the students to 'explore some of the themes of immigration and settlement in London in greater depth, and to explore more critical questions around cultural diversity.'[548] Four case studies were included covering a range of periods and communities, with the resources pack indicating how each supported specific aspects of the national curriculum. Three of the four case studies touched on aspects of colonial history.

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[547] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, Education Resource Pack, p. 11.

[548] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, *Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas,* Education Resource Pack, Case Studies, p. 4.

Photo showing 'Case Study 1 –
Dido Elizabeth Lindsay and Lady
Elizabeth Mary Murray c.1779'
from the 'Peopling' education
pack case study materials.

Figure 34: 'Case Study 1 – Dido Elizabeth Lindsay and Lady Elizabeth Mary Murray c.1779' from the
'Peopling' education pack case study materials.
*Source: MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of
Settlement from Overseas, Education Resource Pack, p. 5*

For example, case study one included a well-known portrait by Johann Zoffany of Dido Elizabeth Lindsay, and Lady Elizabeth Mary Murray (figure 34).[549] Background information described Dido Elizabeth Lindsay. Born in 1763, Dido Murray was the daughter of an African slave. Her father Sir John Murray had brought her mother to England, and he subsequently placed Dido in the house of his uncle and aunt, Kenwood House in London. The painting is described in detail. The text focuses on the style of dress worn by Dido, her position and thereby her status, as well as the intended exoticism. Following this is a rudimentary suggestion for class activities along with a set of questions ranging from 'how many people are there in the painting?', 'where are the people standing in the painting?', 'how are they different from each other?', 'are they related?', and 'do they look happy or sad?'

The case study emphasises aspects of abolition through this account of the daughter of a former slave and her relationship with the Murrays at Mansfield Park. Emphasis is placed on the role of Sir John Lindsay in bringing Dido's mother to England, and the subsequent role of Lord Mansfield, a Chief Justice, in both freeing Dido through his will upon his death, and in the abolition of slavery. There was no critical commentary or background on the transatlantic slave trade, or on the link between the Mansfield's wealth and plantation slavery, and no agency is given to Dido. The text does refer to Lord Mansfield's King's Court decision that a slave brought to England could not be forced to return to a slave colony, and also that '…the decision did not mean that slaves in England were set free.'[550] The text is limited in its critical value, side-stepping the more brutal realities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and London's place in it, and representing Lord Mansfield's decision as an example of British benevolence. Postcolonial critiques, by contrast, would seek to highlight the less savoury aspects of the story, criticising such narratives as diminishing cultures of colonialism.

At the very moment that the exhibition was being held, and the educational resource packs going out, postcolonial critiques were seeking to further expose the exploitation underlying Western domestic settings. Edward Said used Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) as an example of the previously unexplored relationship between landed estates and sugar

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[549] This painting has subsequently been attributed to David Martin.
[550] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Open Shelves, Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, Education Resource Pack, p. 5.

plantations in the West Indies. He argued that such literary work, which 'sublimates the existence of Caribbean existence to a mere half-dozen passing references to Antigua', entrenched the co-existence of colonial ideology which emphasised humanitarian British values alongside a diminished culture of colonialism.[551]

The same sort of gap still occurs in the pack's account of the painting. Where the text highlights the exotic aspects of this painting, created through the emphasising the difference in Dido's dress, there is little criticism around the political implications of its context, except for the statement that, '…the painting gives clues as to her status of servant or companion…', which is itself ambiguous. Moreover, the questions focus on either the formal aspects of the painting, or on what makes the two women *different.* The reason for such limits, however, may lie mostly in the target audience. This case study was aimed at primary and lower secondary schools. Clearly the questions were designed to be accessible to primary school children, and the aim was normalising the place of Black and mixed heritage peoples in British culture and society in order to challenge intolerance and promote cultural diversity.

More recently museum education has been conceptualised as a means to tackle important contemporary issues around cultural diversity. In 2008, Julia Unwin argued that:

> Museums and their education programmes can allow people to learn about different, perhaps largely unknown cultures, can dispel myths, and move away from stereotypes. This kind of learning emphasises the value of separate heritages and cultures as well as the shared; allowing people to feel they belong to a common heritage as well as making them aware of others – and thus acting as agents of reconciliation.[552]

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[551] Edward Said, *Imperialism and Culture* (London: Vintage Books, 1993), pp. 69-70.
[552] Julia Unwin, 'Heritage learning: addressing contemporary social evils', *Journal of Education in Museums,* Vol. 29, (2008), p. 7.

Unwin nevertheless cautioned that whilst 'valuing the unique heritages and cultural developments of different groups is important, the aim is to break down barriers, and understand the tensions of history in order to learn from them, not reinforce them.'[553] The education pack attempted to address issues of tolerance and understanding through the theme of immigration where it spoke to areas of the new national history curriculum. This was clearly shaped by contemporary multicultural museum education thinking, as well as fitting into the 'Peopling' container.

Questions from the case study demonstrate this in their attempt to emphasise different heritages and cultures in an attempt to speak to shared histories and to foster tolerance. The Dido Lindsay and Lady Elizabeth Murray case study is evidence of this. In trying to break down barriers, however, 'Peopling' may have been working against itself by pointing out and reinforcing the difference of communities, not least through presenting all communities separately in the exhibition and catalogue. Wendy Webster has spoken about the atomising of Commonwealth identities in the twentieth century:

> As a highly diverse group by, for example, nationality, religion, and language, the self-identification of most first-generation migrants was not as 'Asian'—a term widely used to describe them—but as Bangladeshis, Indians, Pakistanis, Sri Lankans, or by regional identity.[554]

This highlighting of separate heritages may have played to diverse audiences who identified in different ways, but grouping them at times together, as Fryer and El-Solh had done, may have also provoked negative responses. Either way, the book, the catalogue and the exhibition chose to highlight separate heritages in London, but also their contributions to the city over time. Intolerance was the experience, as Fraser had noted, which often connected these groups and brought them back together under the banner of migrant.

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[553] Ibid, p. 8.
[554] Wendy Webster, 'The Empire Comes Home: Commonwealth Migration to Britain', in Andrew Thompson (ed), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century* (Abingdon: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 152.

An important contribution of this chapter is to show how analysis of these additional and equally important interpretative layers, that is the book and educational resources, are important vectors in conducting a more holistic view of the 'Peopling' programming and are useful in analyses of museum exhibitions more broadly. Taken together, they shed light on how the representation of immigration in 'Peopling' was negotiated at this time and highlights the influences that shaped it. Analysis of the intellectual framing of the 'Peopling' book shows how new emergent scholarship concerning the Black presence in Britain, and new immigration histories that focused on the racism experienced by immigrants, and which emphasised oral histories and memories, were influential in shaping the book and framing the individual chapters, whilst allowing communities to speak to their own histories and experiences. Analysis of the education resources and the development of the Museum's education department alongside the new history curriculum introduced in 1989, reveals the extent to which 'Peopling' was shaped by emerging multicultural museum initiatives. This also served to highlight the important role of museum education in exhibition programming, an element often left out of traditional analyses of exhibitions.

Despite these changes to the Museum's interpretation, analysis of 'Peopling' alongside other multicultural museum initiatives taking place at that time shows a lack of acknowledgement of contemporary postcolonial critiques. This was revealed in the way in which the book and educational pack in trying to highlight the individual contributions of immigrant groups paradoxically focused on what made them different, potentially embedding a type of othering across the programming. However, far from a fixed mode of communicating a particular set of experiences, the 'Peopling' book was envisioned as a resource to allow others to pursue their own research after the exhibition had ended. In much the same way the educational resource pack would have potentially led to more informed discussions around the theme of immigration in schools across London for some time after the exhibition. This chapter naturally leads to the next question: how did visitors to the exhibition experience these histories? The following chapter analyses how visitors responded to 'Peopling'. In short, it tackles reception.

Part Three: Reception and Legacy of 'Peopling' 1994-2007

Chapter Seven: Understanding Visitor Responses

Introduction
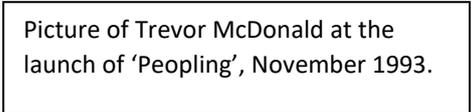
Figure 35: Trevor McDonald at the launch of 'Peopling', November 1993
Source: MoL Business Archives, Annual Report, 1993/1994, p. 2.

'The Peopling of London: 15,000 Years of Settlement from Overseas' was formally launched on the 15th of November 1993 by Trevor McDonald OBE, the well-known Trinidadian-British newsreader and journalist (figure 35). The exhibition received 94,349 visitors in total. Having reconstructed and interrogated the interpretation set out in the exhibition, book and educational programme, this chapter focuses on the visitor experience: how those 94,349 visitors, including the key museum target of ethnic minorities, experienced 'Peopling'. The first section focuses on the historical shifts around the importance of museum visitors in the latter half of the twentieth century, and the MoL's own attempt to mediate their visitors' experience of 'Peopling'. I will first analyse the visitor numbers collated for 'Peopling' alongside the MoL's visitor figures collated from annual reports. How significant were they? I will then move to address the museological and historical shift which saw museums turn towards their visitors, and within this, distinguish between

museums' rationale for wanting to count visitors and their method for measuring experience.

The second half of this chapter will be an analysis of visitors' experience of the 'Peopling' exhibition. Now that 25 years have passed, to what extent can a fresh look at the 'Peopling' comment books tell us about the discursive nature of migration exhibitions, and the socio-cultural contexts through which visitors framed their experience? I will start by summarising various works which have used visitor comments books to interrogate visitors' experiences at past exhibitions. I will then move on to briefly explain my method before presenting my findings. In addition to identifying various structuring issues – that is issues that visitors deeply cared about - I will question the extent to which visitor comments can provide evidence that the public understood the exhibition as a postcolonial critique of the present. Visitor books have been all but ignored as a potential source for understanding shifting representations of empire in city museums, and how the public have responded to them. This chapter will therefore make a significant contribution to how we understand the impact of empire and colonialism in British culture during this period.

Counting Visitors or Making Visitors Count?

Starting with the actual visitor numbers, 'Peopling' was amongst the highest performing temporary exhibitions at the MoL. The counting of visitors began in Britain as a way to gauge interest in national collections by opinion-formers in the nineteenth century. This changed after the Second World War with the 'advent of central government funding for museum improvement and development', which 'resulted in the collection and maintenance of visit numbers to demonstrate the scale of the audience that might benefit from such awards.'[555] The MoL collected overall visitor numbers for each financial year

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[555] Adrian Babbidge, 'Who's Counting Whom? Non-National Museum Attendances in the UK: Part 1', *Cultural Trends* Vol. 27, No. 4, (8 August 2018), pp. 239-241.
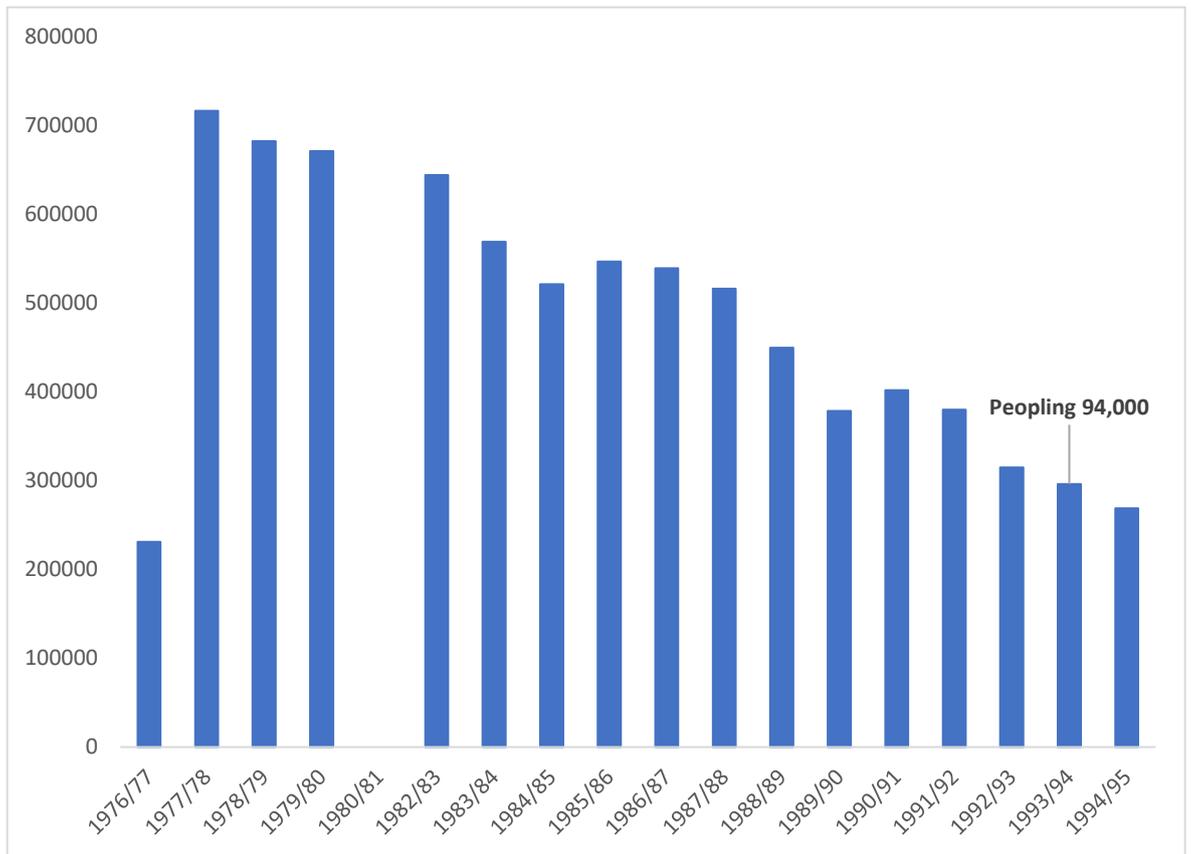
Figure 36: Total number of visitors per year, Museum of London, 1976-1995.
Source: compiled from visitor numbers found in the Museum's annual reports from 1976-1995.

which they published in their annual reports along with their consolidated balance sheets for the purposes of their now two funding bodies, the Department of National Heritage and the Corporation of London. They did not, however, formally record visitor attendance figures for all temporary exhibitions year on year.

When compared with past special exhibitions, 'Peopling' attendance figures, were amongst the highest. For example, 'The Quiet Conquest: The Huguenots 1685-1985', staged by the MoL in 1985/86 drew in a similar figure of around 90,000 visitors. This exhibition was similar to 'Peopling' in that it was a migration themed exhibition which presented the historical contributions of Huguenots to national life in Britain. Visit data for much of the Museum's temporary programming prior to 'Peopling' is too scarce for any serious analysis.[556] When set against overall visitor numbers, however, some aspects of the attendance figures for 'Peopling' are more striking and indicate success at a time when overall attendance was in decline.

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[556] We are not told how figures quoted by the Museum in Annual Reports were collected, and therefore it is unclear whether they counted overall visits or visitors, or how they collected their data.

From the opening of the MoL in 1976 up to the launch of 'Peopling' in 1993, visitor numbers decreased (figure 36). Between 1987 and 1989, the Museum complained of the effect of continuous redevelopment in the surrounding area on visitor numbers In the 1987/88 Annual Report, the board stated that 'individual attendances (but not school parties) have fallen in number' citing the 'explosion of office development in the London Wall area.'[557] It is important to note here that there are no visitor numbers for the full 12 months in 1976 which accounts for the low visitor numbers for 1976/1977. Visitor numbers were counted over a financial year from April to March. Also, no numbers were recorded for 1980/1981. Despite these inconsistencies, it remains clear that visitor numbers over this period evidence a continuous decline.

The Museum suffered another set-back with the introduction of admission charges in September 1991 by HM Customs and Excise. This meant that the MoL could no longer recover VAT paid on supplies and services.[558] The years between 1982 and 1990 were therefore significant in that the Museum suffered a big slump in visitor numbers losing almost a third of its visitors. By 1993 annual visitor numbers had declined to just 296,247, half of what it was for the financial year 1977/78. When 'The Quiet Conquest' was staged, the Museum received a total of 546,768 visitors overall, almost double the 296,247 they received in the year 1993/94. One could argue, therefore, that 'Peopling' was exceptional in that the 93,349 visitors it received was equal to almost a third the MoL's total visitors for that year.

As a consequence of the decline in visitors in the late 1980s, the Museum commissioned '…independent consultants, Price Waterhouse, to advise on management and organisation matters.' Having suffered from another disappointing decline in visitors, The MoL set-up a new Marketing Department in 1991, along with a new Head of Marketing. That year the MoL boasted of creating an enhanced awareness of the Museum through greater media coverage, better print distribution and the promotion of the Museum's new visual identity. Initial results were promising with attendances up by 6.1% for the year.'[559] Following this success, the Museum created an ongoing research programme into their visitors. This was

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[557] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1987/88.
[558] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1990/91.
[559] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1990/91.

indicative of a broader shift whereby museums were becoming increasingly concerned not only with their visitor numbers, but also the profile of their visitors. It is worth recounting this shifting landscape against which 'Peopling' emerged.

In the 1980s and 1990s there was a push from the government for museums, and the arts and cultural sector more broadly, to think of themselves as an industry with 'an economic role in social life, and with customers to satisfy.' As a result, marketing officers were appointed and tasked with communicating museums' 'public benefit'; a notion that for many museums became the means to survival.[560] Alongside consecutive attempts to introduce an enterprise culture to the arts and cultural organisations, the government had ensured a decrease in public funding for museums. 'Peopling' was in part a response to this shift. The MoL's forward plan (1991) opened with a message of caution concerning financial pressure and restraints, although not explicitly highlighting government funding cuts, and expressed a need to encourage visitors from more 'diverse' backgrounds as one way of firming up their financial position.[561] One reason for these financial pressures was the introduction of admissions fees which encouraged museums to think of new ways to attract and improve the experiences of visitors.[562] Oddly, over the first full year from 1992-1993 that the Museum introduced admissions fees, the Museum recorded a 12% increase in attendance, which they felt to be 'encouraging at a time when visitor numbers to many other London attractions had declined.'[563] It is unclear how they came to this conclusion, given that in 1992/1993 the overall visitor numbers for the year were 314,846, compared with 379,706.

This turn towards the visitor was also precipitated by new research in visitor studies, which among other things argued that museum visits, and visitor experiences, did not happen in a vacuum, but that context was important. In 1992, a year before the launch of 'Peopling', Falk and Dierking argued that 'the museum experience begins before the visit to the museum.'[564] They argued that whilst visitors' experiences are largely dictated by their

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[560] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (ed.), *Museums, Media, Message* (Abingdon: Routledge,1995), p. 1-2.
[561] LMA, CLA/076/01/020, Museum of London 'forward plan', 1991/2-1995/6, p.2.
[562] Nobuko Kawashima, 'Knowing the Public. A Review of Museum Marketing Literature and Research', *Museum Management and Curatorship,* Vol. 18, No. 1, (1998), p. 19.
[563] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1992/1993.
[564] John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington, D.C: Whalesback Books, 1992).

immediate experience in doing 'museumy' things such as reading texts, listening to audio, watching video and observing and interacting with objects, visitors are not passive:

> Each individual actively engages with his immediate environment, moving through the museum, selectively attending to, and on occasion more closely examining, objects, and the various interpretive materials in the exhibition. […] They ask questions about what they see, hold discussions with each other, and attempt to personalize and make sense of what they see. […] they do this based upon their prior experience, interests and understanding of museums generally and this particular one specifically.[565]

Visitors made sense of what they saw at exhibitions and art galleries based upon their prior experience, and the individual context of each visit. Museums were also beginning to recognise that museumgoers were not homogenous. They came from different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. Therefore, each visit needed to be contextualised to better understand visitor motivations and experience. Two significant developments which emerged from this shift were, the acknowledgement of the public as pluralistic, and that visitors are active in their negotiation of meaning based on their previous experiences:

> In terms of how visitors are conceived, there is a shift in thinking about visitors as an undifferentiated mass public to beginning to accept visitors as active interpreters and performers of meaning making practices in complex cultural sites. […] in respect to the theoretical approaches, there is a move from a narrow, backward looking paradigm based on behaviourist psychology and a transmission or expert-to-novice model of communication to a more open and forward-looking interpretive paradigm that employs a cultural view of communication involving the negotiation of meaning.[566]

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[565] Ibid, pp. 67-68.

[566] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, 'Studying Visitors' in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Chichester: Blackwell, 2011), p. 362.

This recognition of the public as pluralistic was significant, indicating a shift in the relationship between the museum and its audiences. Previously museums saw their role as communicating expert knowledge to passive receivers, which was redefined in the 1980s as a partnership in which visitors could construct their own meaning; a more democratic conceptualisation of the museum-visitor relationship.[567] With regards to theoretical developments around a cultural view of communications, Hooper-Greenhill therefore echoes Falk and Dierking's framework based on constructivist learning approaches.[568]

As museums began to re-evaluate their social role, this produced a tension between old guard curators and younger ones eager to understand their visitors (not unlike Merriman). By the early 1990s, the notion of the curator as a border guard between the museum and the outside world had become much diminished. Merriman had written his PhD thesis on why people visit museums (chapter four), and 'Peopling' was partly an exercise in diversifying the Museum's visitor demographic. In his proposal Merriman stated that the 'Peopling' programme would demonstrate the MoL's 'commitment to widen and increase the range of our visitors…'[569] Also, in the 1991/2 'Forward Plan' there is recognition that whilst museums exist for collections and their care, the other 'side of the balance' is 'in most instances, public funding, and their public accountability.' The Museum also acknowledged that it had to develop a better understanding of its visitors, 'Measuring visitor attendance figures gives a rough indication of rises or falls, or steadiness…However, knowing more about visitors and/or non-visitors, may indicate preferences which museums are ill-equipped to meet. This is at the heart of much of the present soul-searching in museums.'[570] The MoL clearly responded positively to these broader changes.

The MoL nevertheless stated that the extent to which the museum can speak to everyone is 'limited by the basic policies of sound curation and conservation, but not limited by entrenched attitudes.' There was a tension between the fiduciary responsibilities of the Director, as an administrator, and a sincere recognition that visitors were central to their existence, 'History is concerned with people, their individuality and their collective

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[567] Max Ross, 'Interpreting the New Museology', *Museum and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2, (2004), pp. 84-85.
[568] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Their Visitors,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1994).
[569] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, Nick Merriman, 'Notes on a proposal', p. 3.
[570] LMA, CLA/076/01/019, MoL Forward Plan 1991/1992, p. 8.

achievements; this basic knowledge provides a doorway into wider understanding of social, artistic and cultural history'. The Forward Plan expressed the hope that 'Peopling' would spearhead the Museum's attempt broaden their visitor demographic.[571]

Evaluating the 'Peopling of London' 1996

In an attempt to capture the experiences of visitors and contribute to the Museum's on-going marketing programme, the Museum commissioned an external consultant to produce a summative evaluation of 'Peopling'. An evaluation process had been planned into the exhibition when it was first proposed. Merriman hoped it could analyse the 'extent to which the messages given out were assimilated and the extent to which the histories portrayed avoided falling into cultural stereotyping…'[572] Note the unidirectional nature of transmission implicit in the word assimilated; the curator communicating specialist information to their audiences. There was no mention of visitors resisting the discourse.

The evaluation was a co-operative effort between the University of East London's Centre for New Ethnicities Research (CNER) and Sara Selwood, an independent consultant. The research was carried out over the course of the exhibition and included focus groups and interviews with visitors and staff. Her research also drew on material collected by the Museum over the course of the exhibition such as comment books. The introduction to the report was written by Bill Schwarz, a leading member of the CNER at that time, whose own work focused on issues of race, racism and cultural identity, which included ethnographic studies of the urban environment and racial conflict.[573] The involvement of the CNER and Schwarz should not be overstated. The report was principally written by Selwood.

The practice of evaluation had grown significantly in the 1980s in both North America and the UK, focusing on organizations and projects, finances, value for money, quality, environmental effects and learning. In the UK, early evaluation work also focused on 'education exhibitions' and emphasised what, and how much, visitors learned from their

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[571] LMA, CLA/076/01/019, MoL Forward Plan 1991/1992, p. 8.

[572] Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London', in *Social History Curator's Group,* Volume 21 (1994), p. 38.

[573] Phil Cohen, 'Biography', [online], <https://philcohenworks.com/phil-cohen-biography/>, accessed 1st March 2019.

museum experiences. In focusing on educational exhibitions these early evaluations were closely aligned with the 'constructivist' learning approaches discussed above, which claim that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences.

Wanting to evaluate an experience is one thing, being able to do so effectively is another. One major limitation of formal summative evaluations as they emerged to meet the demands of marketisation was that:

> the professional practice of evaluation in museums stems from business and political expediencies. Evaluations tend to be commissioned by individual institutions and may reflect their funders' demands for accountability and control, and – sometimes – their need for advocacy.[574]

Merriman had hoped that 'Peopling' would impact the Museum's collecting and display policies. This evaluation was one possible tool Merriman might use in advocating for broader change.

The cardinal aim of the 'Peopling' evaluation was to see whether the exhibition had achieved its aim of changing visitors' perceptions of the 'post-war immigration myth'. The evaluation was principally qualitative in nature and sought to measure learning outcomes. Summative evaluations were derived from traditional education research based on Piaget's developmental theory and new approaches to social science developed by James Henry in the 1960s. In short, it was necessary to recognise *how* institutions work and their effect on learning, and that *context* and environment was important. The main aims of the exhibition were restated at the top of the summative evaluation, namely:

> The project sought to widen the audience to the Museum, in particular by attracting new audiences from ethnic minority communities; to challenge the notion that immigration was a post-war phenomenon; and to change the way in which the

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[574] Sara Selwood, 'Critical Commentary Looking from the Outside in: How Critics Measure the Success of Museum Exhibitions', ICOM, discussion papers, 2012, p. 9.

> Museum represented London's history by presenting the histories of communities of people not represented in the permanent galleries...[575]

The evaluation had recorded an increase in the number of ethnic minority visitors of almost 800% percent over the period of the exhibition, '…in the equivalent six months the year before, about 4 percent of the Museums visitors came from ethnic communities. With Peopling, this had risen to 20 per cent.' According to Nick Merriman, however, 'It is difficult to give a truly reliable figure for the change in audience profile', owing largely to the small sample sizes and methods used.[576] Still, this increase in the number of ethnic minorities visiting the MoL owing to this small exhibition should be seen as a considerable achievement in realising a key aim of the exhibition.

Selwood identified several objectives to guide her investigation and most were qualitative. I will focus on those that dealt primarily with visitors' experience:

1. communicating its intended message – that London has always had a diverse population and that this is a strength.
2. encouraging regular (and new) visitors to reflect on their perceptions of London.
3. challenging, if not changing, people's preconceptions of who Londoners are.
4. broadening the Museum's public, in particular visitors from London's ethnic minorities.

Selwood drew two major conclusions from these objectives. Firstly, that many visitors' perceptions around immigration had changed. Secondly, that most visitors were positive in how particular groups were represented. I will deal with each of these briefly in turn. It is unclear how ethnic minority representation was structured in the focus groups. In the 'Methodology' section Selwood notes that groups were 'selected with regard to their cultural origins, gender and general association with London (first, second or third

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[575] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman, *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation of the Exhibition* (London Wall: Museum of London, 1996), p. 15.
[576] Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London Project', in Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museums and their Communities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 356-357.

generation).'[577] On average there were nine participants in each focus group, but no further information was given about how the groups were organized.

In section 4.1, 'Challenging People's Attitudes to Immigration', Selwood concluded that many of the comments in the visitor books were on the whole positive, and that their perceptions had changed. She identified several comments in particular that reflected this, for example: 'Shows that London has been settled by many nationalities for thousands of years.' She concluded, however, that 'focus group participants were reluctant to discuss whether the exhibition had changed their attitudes to immigration'. Selwood pointed out that this may have 'less to do with the exhibition, as much as people's willingness to appear ignorant', and that participants were more inclined to talk about what they had learnt; 'Learnt about the contribution the Irish made. I was quite impressed.'[578] Higgins and Murray have found that participants fail to articulate what they have learned in focus groups, and participants are often eager to please and say the 'right thing'.[579] This, they argue, is particularly true when focus groups questions are structured.

A more significant conclusion that Selwood drew from her focus groups, and more indicative of the discursive nature of visitors' comments, was that racism was a concern for many visitors:

> The subject of the exhibition inevitably prompted focus group participants to raise the issue of racism. Given that the exhibition coincided with growing public concern about the activities of the British National Party in London, and the rising level of racial violence directed against Blacks and Asians it was considered timely.[580]

Selwood also noted, however, that the exhibition served '…to reinforce the opinions of a small minority of others – evidenced by racist remarks made in the comment books.' Selwood did not include any of these comments, but rather highlighted comments that spoke out against racism. In section 4.2 'Responses to the Exhibition', which considered

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[577] Selwood, Schwarz and Merriman, *An Evaluation of the Exhibition,* p.20.
[578] Ibid*,* p. 29.
[579] George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum* (Abingdon: Routledge 1998), p. 123.
[580] Selwood, Schwarz and Merriman, *An Evaluation of the Exhibition,* p. 30.

more broader responses, Selwood again concluded that responses were on the whole positive. Quoting Merriman, she highlighted issues with the data, 'There is a problem with assessing this, because – to a certain extent – museum exhibitions are always preaching to the converted or to the unsympathetic.'[581]

Concerning representation of specific groups, Selwood concluded that responses were generally positive and therefore highlighted negative feedback. Several visitors criticised the lack of representation of their particular communities including Welsh, Scots, Yugoslavians and Anguillans. Other comments were identified as broadly criticising the lack of serious commentary around illegal immigration, and topics such as Black youth culture, and that the categorisations of communities came across as crude and simplistic.[582] Selwood finished her report, however, by concluding that the exhibition was 'successful in making visitors realise that London had always had a diverse community…', that it managed to extend the 'range of its audiences', and that it had stimulated museum staff to think more broadly about who the museum is for. She also concluded that the exhibition had achieved its aim in shifting visitors' opinion, despite several remarks throughout about the paucity and limitations of the data collected and what it actually could show. The extent to which this report is useful in historicising visitors' experience is limited by the political and institutional expediency of such evaluations. That is, everyone involved understood that the museum needed to demonstrate public good. Selwood was aware of the Museum's desire to demonstrate the overall cultural content and value of the exhibition, particularly as a challenge to racism and to the myth of post-war immigration.

'Peopling' was a way of communicating a certain set of values it believed reflected the better nature of Londoners, and the report confirmed their success. But was this the whole story? As Sandell has pointed out, visitors often resist and challenge displays that are designed to create a set of shared inclusive values, sometimes creating contrary meanings.[583] Analysis of the visitor comment books, using methods developed over the last two decades, may allow us to access past visitors' experiences more directly, and to see in what ways they challenged and affirmed the values put out by 'Peopling'.

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[581] Ibid, p. 31.
[582] Ibid, pp. 37-38.
[583] Richard Sandell, *Museums, Society, Inequality* (London: Routledge, 2002) p.15.

Accessing Past Visitors' Experience

<div align="right">

'Very political, but history is excellent!'

Visitor Comment

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'Peopling' sought to take a view on various issues bound up with discourses on immigration. Museums had long been perceived and thought of themselves as institutions that made universal claims about knowledge and the past. In the 1960s, however, they were 'abruptly thrust from their historical contexts into the vicissitudes of contemporary life…'[584] The visitor comment books from 'Peopling' show how rich and varied the responses of visitors were. They allow us to see the manifestations of arguments pertinent to discourses around immigration, identity, cultural meaning, collective memory and representation.[585] They also demonstrate that visitors are both engaged and conflicted in negotiating such discourses, responding implicitly and explicitly to messages in the displays. For example, one visitor felt that the exhibition was complacent in failing to address concerns around 'illegal immigration':

> Interesting but complacent. The rapid illegal immigration from non-Western countries is putting a heavy load on schools, welfare services, and (look at the statistics) prisons. For example, the teachers in Eardley Road Primary School in Streatham – see colour photograph at the end of the exhibition – are not likely to be able to give as much attention to the British children as they have to give to the children from non-Western cultures, with all their learning problems.[586]

Such comments can be read as indicative of a process of othering, concerned that 'children from non-Western cultures' are a burden on the school system 'with all their learning problems.' They suggest that there was a perceived homogenous British culture and space, which in the mind of the visitor was being diminished by 'non-Western' cultures. Another comment was demonstrative of an acknowledgement of the postcolonial nature of

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[584] Brian O'Doherty, 'Introduction', in Brian O'Doherty (ed.), *Museums in Crisis* (New York: George Braziller, 1972), p. 2.

[585] Tasslyn Frame, '"Our Nation's Attic?": Making American National Identity at the Smithsonian Institution', *Material History Review,* Vol. 50, (Fall 1999), p. 57.

[586] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves. The 'Peopling' comment books are not catalogued and stored on open shelves as part of the 'Peopling' archive.

'Peopling', and that the displays, for some, went some way to reflecting cultural diversity and recognising the heterogenous nature of London's population, 'Finally – an exhibition that has made a start on acknowledging all our contributions – nice to see myself as a black person become visible in a positive way.'[587]

To what extent can such comments, and by extension museum visitor books, tell us something about structural issues: about the social and cultural contexts that framed visitors' experience, and meaning making? Put simply, what issues can be understood to be significant in shaping visitor responses? Also, what can these comment books tell us about the discursive nature of immigration exhibitions, and about how the exhibition spoke to postcolonial critiques of modern Britain and attitudes towards the other? I will start by summarising more recent work which has used museum visitor books to understand visitor meaning making, and their efficacy in understanding past visitors' experience of museum exhibitions. I will then move on to my own findings addressing the questions outlined above, paying particular attention to comments that echo postcolonial critiques, and which evidence a public understanding of the historical continuity between the colonial past and postcolonial present.

Using Museum Comment Books to Access Past Experiences

Recent approaches to visitor studies research have expanded to include technology-based approaches, to better understand how visitors' construct their own meanings.[588] Whilst these methods have become sophisticated, they do not allow direct access to past visitors' view of their experiences close to the actual event:

> One source that has been relatively little used, however, is the museum visitor
> book. In some ways this is surprising as almost all museums offer visitors the
> opportunity to record their comments in a visitor book. For information on visitors

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[587] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[588] Sharon Macdonald, 'Accessing Audiences: Visiting Visitor Books', *Museum and Society,* Vol. 3, No. 3, (2005), p. 120.

to past exhibitions in particular, visitor books may be the only source of information available.[589]

Selwood's evaluation, for example, provides only a limited glimpse into past visitors' experience. Current research, which I discuss below, can enhance our understanding, situating the comments in their historical context.

Since the early 1990s, scholars have increasingly used visitor comments in their analysis of museum exhibitions and have shown that much can be learnt from them, but comment books have only recently been considered an important part of staging museum exhibitions. Whilst no exact date can be given as to when the first visitor comment books were introduced, several scholars have shown that as early as the sixteenth century museums used books to record the names of visitors.[590] This was true in Europe up to the early nineteenth century.[591] However, in the twentieth century, various 'cultures of comments' can be identified as having emerged across the globe conditioned through varying contexts.[592] These studies show that comments range from the banal and polite, to the sophisticated and dissenting.

In a study of Israeli settlement museums in the 1980s, Tamar Katriel argued that visitor comments were a poor source of insight given their polite and acquiescent nature. In her book *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums* (1997), which considers the way in which museums allow visitors to orient themselves to other people, and space, she argues that 'visitor books give audience responses in the highly constraining frame of a tradition of self-selected, appreciative responses, given out from guests to their hosts thereby affirming that the museum has accomplished its rhetorical mission'. She goes on to conclude that, 'Very few comments I have seen were critical or indifferent in their responses, and [...] never questioned the value or relevance of the enterprise as a whole'.[593]

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[589] Ibid, p. 119.

[590] Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 143.

[591] George Kaltwasser, *Die Bibliothek als Museum. Von der Renaissance bis heute dargestellt am Beispiel der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek* (Wiesbaden: Harrossowitz, 1999).

[592] Macdonald, 'Accessing Audiences', p. 121

[593] Tamar Katriel, *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), p. 71.

Susan Reid and Sonia Schmidt's works on museum exhibitions in Soviet Russia in the 1950s and 1960s, demonstrates the contrary, and how visitors, despite a prevailing culture of surveillance, used comment books to voice dissenting views. Mary Alexander, having been asked to review an exhibition at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. concerning the history of the American Sweatshop found that, contrary to her assumptions, visitor comments ranged from 'intelligent' to 'vehement' with much in between.[594] More recent studies such as Rachel Hughes' analysis of photographs displayed in exhibitions dealing with genocide in Cambodia, have also demonstrated the sophisticated nature of visitor comments which:

> …debated historical events, individual and state actions, and specific notions of justice, memory and moral responsibility. Some comments suggest a deliberate visit to the exhibition, while other visitors report coming upon the exhibition in the course of larger exploration of the photography galleries. Most visitors considered the photographs to be more than documentary evidence. People wrote of the images as providing a way of 'seeing' an otherwise unseen history. Many termed the photographs 'art' in a wholly positive sense, as something which enables greater consideration and understanding of events and emotions.[595]

One has to be sensitive to those visitor responses at more established institutions, and often non-controversial exhibitions, or smaller museums. Public controversy over the Enola Gay exhibition at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington D.C., in 1995-1996, which dealt with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is indicative of the divisive nature of larger exhibitions that manifest arguments over issues such as national identity. After careful discussions and negotiations about how to display the Enola Gay exhibit, the exhibition was cancelled because veteran groups were outraged at what they saw as an attempt to questions America's actions in dropping the atomic bomb. It was subsequently restaged in its *proper context*. References to the effects of the bombing and its afterlives were stripped back. The exhibition produced a range of responses from affirmation to those concerned with the symbolism of the exhibition which

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[594] Mary Alexander, 'Do visitors get it? A Sweatshop Exhibit and Visitors' Comments', *The Public Historian*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2000), p. 86.

[595] Rachel Hughes, 'The Abject Artefacts of Memory: Photographs from Cambodia's Genocide', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2000), p. 37.

demonstrated '…the ability of an arrogant nation to impose untold devastation and create a legacy of nuclear fear for future generations.'[596] Thomas Gieryn, a Sociology Professor who visited the exhibition, noted that that he felt:

> unconvinced that the inevitable world of multiple epistemic communities is something to celebrate (but rather, to struggle through), depressed by the realisation that none of our sometimes-well-intentioned rhetorical weapons (objectivity, interpretive skill, dispassion) is fail-safe in convincing everybody else to accept our stories over different ones.[597]

Owing to the heterogenous nature of museum visitors, and the various socio-cultural contexts through which they frame their responses, museums can never be all things, to all people, at all times. There is no doubt that visitor comment books are a rich source which can provide access to the ways in which visitors engage with exhibitions, whether challenging or affirming to the museum's rhetoric and interpretation. Contrary to Tamar Katriel's conclusions, there are in fact lots of insights that can be drawn from visitor books, so much so, that more recent work has begun to focus more on how to incorporate visitor books into analysis of museum exhibitions. Andrew Pekarik has argued that 'because comments tend to be written by people with strong emotional or ideological responses to the exhibition or museum, they can reveal – directly or indirectly – issues that visitors care deeply about'.[598]

'Peopling' broached a number of themes that are inextricably bound up with Britain's loss of empire and decolonisation, not least post-Second World War migration and public and political discourse around race and citizenship. To what extent do visitor comments demonstrate an awareness of these historical continuities? And, more broadly, to what extent are comments illustrative of an awareness of the impact of decolonisation and Britain's loss of empire on British culture and society in the late-twentieth century?

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[596] Frame, '"Our Nation's Attic?"', p. 61.

[597] Thomas F. Gieryn, 'Balancing acts: *Enola Gay* and History Wars at the Smithsonian', in Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London: Routledge 1998), p. 221.

[598] Andrew J. Pekarik, 'Understanding Visitor Comments: The Case of Flight Time Barbie', *Curator Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 1, (March 1997), p. 57.

Looking Back and Understanding Visitor Responses to Peopling

Two comment books were inscribed by visitors over the course of the exhibition. Approximately 6,000 comments were recorded. The following section is an analysis of a sample of 277 comments which can be considered as written by engaged visitors taken from the two comment books. The comment books were basic, asking visitors for their name and address, with a space for undirected comments.

My method was informed by the approaches of Pekarik and Macdonald. Pekarik uses an inductive method to reveal the 'range of ideas, the themes around which they coalesce, and the relationship between them, even if we cannot determine to what degree any of these ideas might have been shared by the overall audience.' To this end Pekarik suggests a rigid method by which the analyst codes the comments comprehensively and systematically, using qualitative computer software.[599] I blended this with a more informal approach for identifying structuring issues similar to Macdonald, whose approach is informed more broadly by semiotic and interpretive techniques.[600] I started by taking a sample of what I considered to be engaged comments – that is those comments that indicate a thoughtful response – rather than a simple endorsement or rejection.

Many comments were modest positive or negative comments as to whether they enjoyed the exhibition and have largely been excluded. A large number of comments can safely be assumed to have been written by school children, most of which reflect feelings of boredom, indifference or dissatisfaction. These were also excluded. I ended with a sample of 277 comments. I then proceeded by reading through the comments, making notes of the various issues raised by visitors. I went through the comments a second time and grouped those that could be placed into similar analytical categories based on key words and emerging themes. I was left with several analytical categories and sub-categories, shown below (figure 37). This visual method of analysis (below) allowed for a more fluid categorisation of cognate themes, and to visualise where they intersected within broader categories expressed by the range of visitor comments. It also allowed for simple reorganisation of themes that appeared increasingly significant and recurrent as the

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[599] Pekarik, 'Understanding Visitor Comments', p.57.
[600] Macdonald, 'Accessing audiences', p. 123.

process evolved, and to experiment with different groupings by making slight adjustment in order to identify patterns around which to build my analysis. Owing to the nature of my sample, no statistical conclusions can be drawn. This, however, is a qualitative assessment, and my analysis reveals several issues which can be seen as significant, and which were indicative of an ideological and emotional engagement with contemporary discourse around race, immigration, representation and broader postcolonial issues.
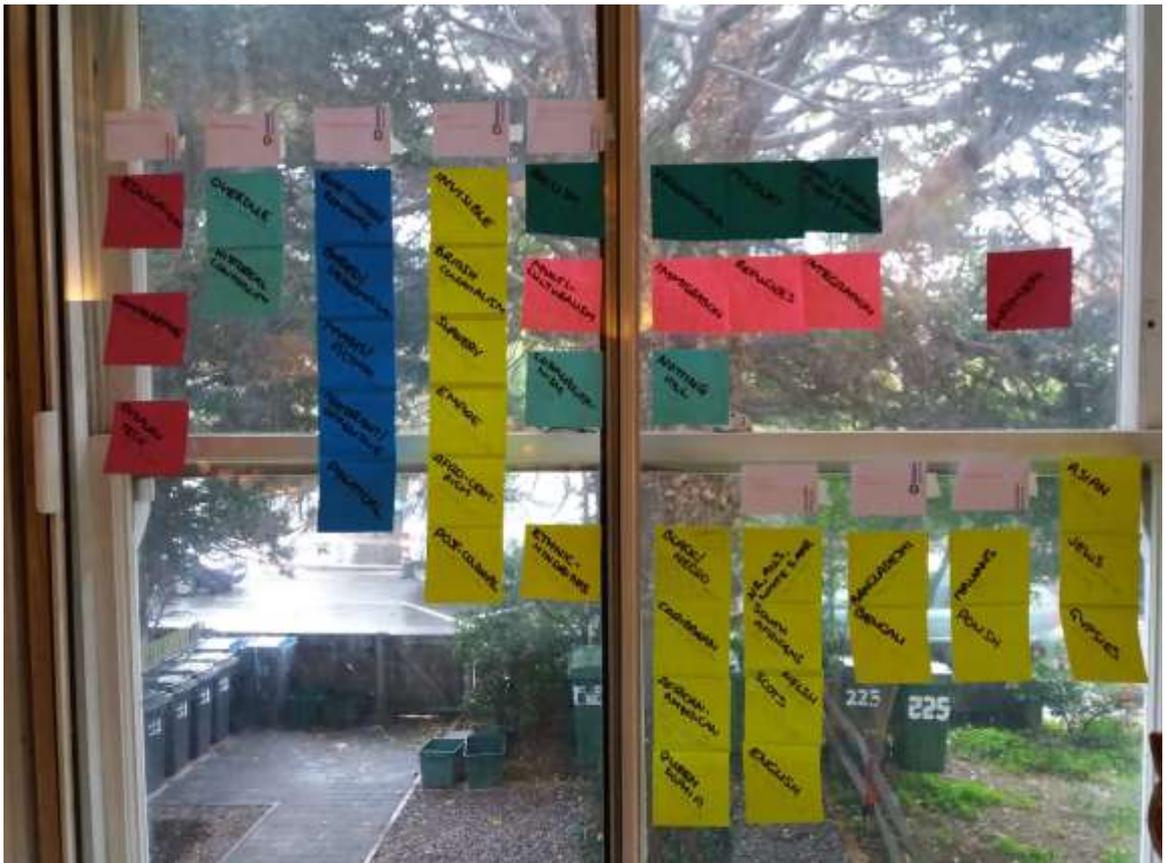

Figure 37: 'Peopling' visitor comments organised into analytical categories, colour-coded by groups and sub-groups.
*Source: Samuel Aylett, 2018 ©.*
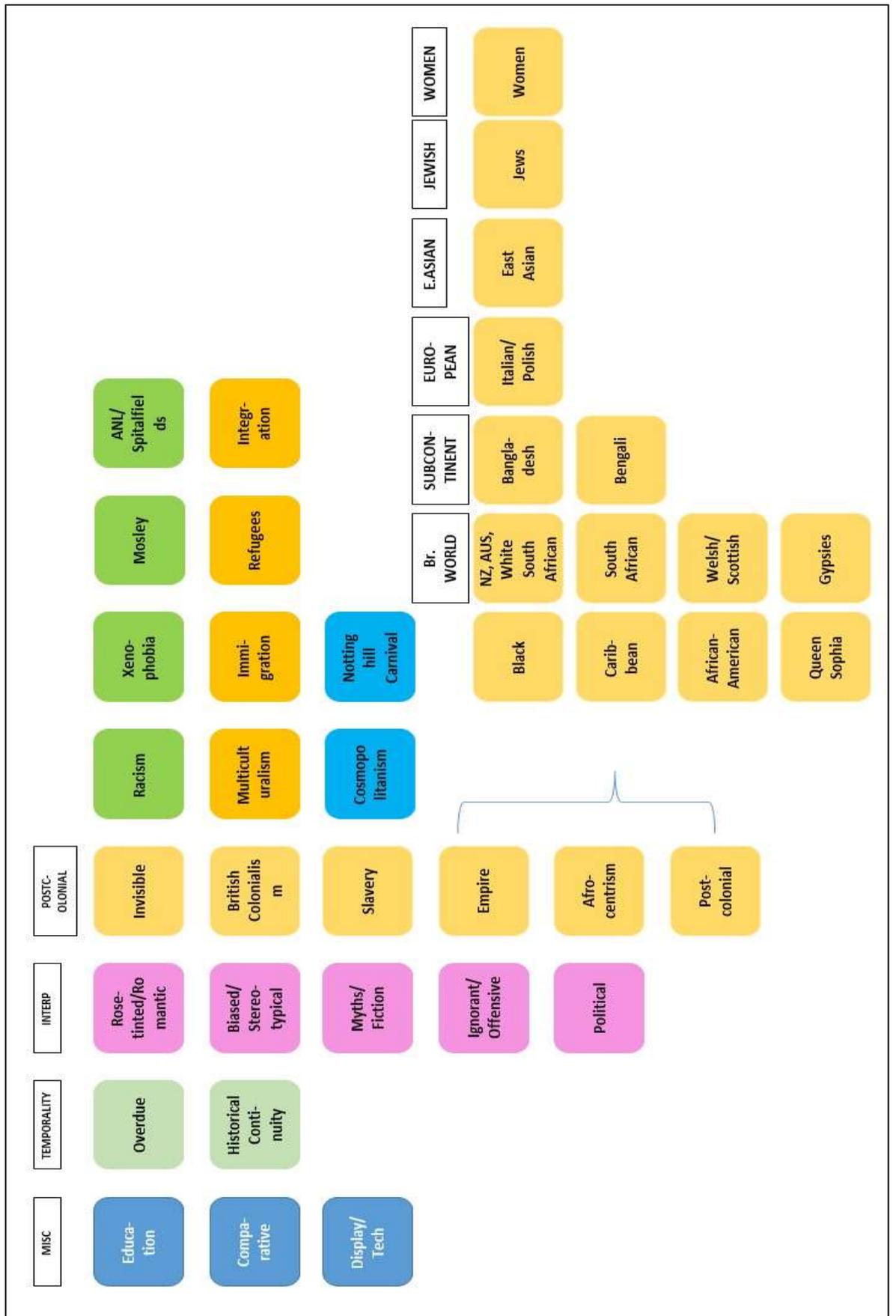
Figure 38: Peopling' visitor comments organised into analytical categories, colour-coded by groups and sub-groups.
Source: Samuel Aylett, 2018 ©.

'Peopling' Visitor Comments and the Politics of Display

Most if not all of my sample revealed the sophisticated and political nature of visitor responses and experiences. In the section that follows, I have attempted to highlight many of these issues including comments concerned with issues of representation to those that spoke to aspects of the exhibition dealing with Britain's colonial past. All the responses included below are testament to the contested and complex nature of visitor meaning making, and evidence the way in which 'Peopling' divided opinion as much as it brought communities together behind its broader aims.

Several visitors viewed the exhibition as perpetuating myth and historical fiction of an all-white male England, and others felt that the exhibition should have done more to challenge historical myths, 'A lot to read. A good selection of pictures, but too bitty…Needed: simple sections not divided on origin of immigrants but on the myths that need to be shattered.'[601] Another visitor similarly felt the exhibition presented particularist readings of individual communities, rather than showing those communities as part of a larger multicultural community, 'The main exhibition was rather too divided by race with separate areas for Italians Jews Blacks etc. this is confusing and dishonest way of presenting London at any stage of its history. The exhibition should be chronological, but more random and mixed. You may be working against what you are trying to do.'[602] Cathy Ross, who started as head of Later London after 'Peopling', later argued that in trying to shatter some myths, 'Peopling' had created some myths of its own by failing to see the differences in historical migrations. Referencing Bill Schwarz's criticism, Professor of English at Queen Mary's and who wrote the foreword to the evaluation of the exhibition, she suggested that 'Peopling created disparate and particularist readings, "here I'm represented"'. Schwarz suggested that the exhibition should have reflected on how different ethnic communities could occupy a single aspect of London.[603]

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[601] Ibid.

[602] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves. The 'Peopling' comment books are not catalogued and stored on open shelves as part of the 'Peopling' archive.

[603] Cathy Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond: The Museum of London Approach', in Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, and Rhiannon Mason (ed.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People, Places and Identities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 67.

Several visitors felt that the exhibition helped to challenge certain myths perpetuated by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of right-wing groups such as the BNP. One read, 'Excellent - completely smashes the lies told by the Nazis in the East End … here to stay here to fight?'[604], and another, 'I salute your initiative, a welcome breath of fresh air that sets out "historical facts", not fiction.'[605] The visitor here is referring to the British National Party which fielded candidates for the 1994 local elections. The polarised nature of the comments is indicative of the way in which each perspective bears truth for each visitor and how museum exhibitions are mobilised in a political way to support individuals' beliefs.

The political nature of the exhibition was visible through a number of visitors' comments which focused on interpretation. Many of these comments demonstrate either an acquiescence with, or rejection of, the values and messages embodied in the displays, and in so doing highlight which side of the debate they are on with regards to the Museum's position. For example, one visitor found the exhibition had too romantic a view of history and was concerned that the interpretation was biased in favour of immigrants. For them, 'it seemed rather romantic almost in its approach. I could have possibly found it more interesting if some of the facts weren't so biased in terms of social, black and overall immigration. I wonder if the immigrants would have been quite as kind. Good attempt.'[606]

Other critical comments focused on the politically correct nature of the displays: 'Literature borders to politically correct; displays excellent.'[607] and, 'Average - politically correct.'[608] Some comments were more explicit in their criticisms: 'Excellent, although I find the phrase "Londoners are tolerant of newcomers" questionable. Is it our place to be merely *tolerant*…?'[609] Merriman had accepted that this might be the case in his proposal, 'Dealing as it does with immigration…it is likely to be used by different political groups to make their own political points.'[610] Most visitors then experienced the exhibition theme of immigration, relating it directly back to concerns about racism, and anti-racist activity. This

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[604] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.
[605] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[606] Ibid.
[607] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.
[608] Ibid.
[609] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[610] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Planning the Exhibition, Correspondence, Nick Merriman, Notes on a Proposal, p. 10.

was apparent through a number of comments that made specific reference to political activities, as with the one above.

Several comments mentioned contemporary anti-racist activities and local elections. These comments show how a portion of visitors interpreted the exhibition through their own personal political activity and knowledge of this specific political discourse, 'A superb exhibition. It is most relevant now with the threat of fascism. Let's hope and build for a massive turnout for the 19th March demo 23rd of April. ANL (Anti-Nazi League) Carnival against racism and fascism.'[611] The ANL was a group set-up in 1977 by the Socialist Worker's party, with support from trade unions, to oppose far-right groups. Though the group was wound down in 1981, in the early 1990s, with a resurgent BNP, which had formed from remnants of the National Front, the ANL re-launched. The 23rd of April references a march that took place, organised by the ANL, in response to the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

Some visitors commented on the 1994 local elections, calling on other visitors to vote against the BNP; 'Immigrants and refugees welcome here and here to stay. Vote against the Nazis 5 May. Well done Museum of London.'[612] The local council elections that took place on 5 May 1994 whipped up passions and diverse opinions among London's diverse population, bringing to the surface racist attitudes. One local resident was quoted in a newspaper saying that they were voting for the BNP because 'there are too many bleeding coons and Asians'.[613] Polling data shows that from the 1990s immigration and race was an important issue to many, with many wanting tighter controls.[614] Under the Conservative government between 1979 and 1997, restrictive immigration policy remained in place, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and conflicts in former Yugoslavia, anxiety over immigration was high. There were criticisms from some visitors who felt the exhibition did

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[611] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.

[612] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.

[613] Mary Braid, 'Local Council Elections 1994: Race splits politicians and people in East End: British National Party challenge causes disarray in London boroughs as Labour seeks to wrong-foot Conservatives over health', *The Independent* Thursday 14 April 1994, [online], <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/local-council-elections-1994-race-splits-politicians-and-people-in-east-end-british-national-party-1369874.html>, accessed on 31 October 2018.

[614] Ben Page, 'British Attitudes to Immigration in the 21st Century', *Transatlantic Council on Migration: A project of the Migration Policy Institute* (Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute, 2009), p. 1.

not go far enough in tackling this racism and xenophobia in Britain, and Britain's long history of intolerance.

Other visitors were concerned more with omissions of particular facts in the exhibition that would have gone further in evidencing a long history of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. Several visitors identified their ethnic heritage. These visitors felt that the omissions diminished their experience of the exhibition, and that the exhibition did not go far enough:

> As an African-American, I found the exhibit very interesting and thought-provoking particularly the treatment of people of African descent. Too bad such an ambitious undertaking was watered down by failing to adequately address the racist policies of the 1981 immigration act.

These comments further evidence the way in which many visitors shared their experience of the exhibition, a result no doubt of their experiences of racism in life. This comment also shows the sophisticated nature of some of the responses, recognising historical precedents of anti-immigrant sentiment. Many scholars in the early 1990s argued that the British Nationality Act 1981, and other immigration acts, were racist in that they attempted 'to circumvent the rights of those Black Commonwealth citizens with a legal right to enter Britain and to construct the question of Nationality along racial lines'.[615] Other visitors similarly commented on earlier legislation to highlight a legacy of racism in Britain, 'Very good - but far too soft on the racist policies of the Government ...'[616] One visitor highlighted Margaret Thatcher's 1978 speech in which she spoke of being 'swamped, by people with a different culture', to highlight a legacy of racism in Britain[617]; 'Great, sensitive. Well done. But why nothing about the 80's and Margaret Thatcher who felt swamped?'[618]

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[615] John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993), p. 71.

[616] 'MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.

[617] Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 'TV Interview for Granada *World in Action* ("Rather Swamped"), 27th January 1978, [online], <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103485>, accessed 31 October 2018.

[618] MoL Business Archives, 'Peopling' of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.

More positive comments came from visitors who felt that the exhibition celebrated multiculturalism, 'It really reveals the immense diversity of London society and its origins as a multi-layered and multi-cultural city.'[619] Another visitor acknowledged the racial and religious diversity of the city; 'Fascinating! I've learned so much more about my city. I love living in this multi-cultural, multi-faith, multi-racial city. This exhibition has added to this belief.'[620] Comments like this say something about how the positive narrative helped to reinforce positive self-affirming identities. This may say something about how visitors, depending on their experience as either a minority or majority ethnic group in London, would have experienced this exhibition. It was perhaps easier to see this as positive if the visitor had not experienced the gritty realities the exhibition spoke to. Several visitors felt the exhibition did not go far enough in emphasising positive aspects multiculturalism; 'Not enough emphasis on today's multiculturalism...',[621] and, '…This exhibition does not <u>fully</u> reflect the multicultural nature of London.'[622] Clearly these visitors were not put-off by the political nature of the exhibition and endorsed the idea that the museums should have a point of view.

Postcolonial Reflections

The extent to which decolonisation and empire had an impact on British culture in the twentieth century remains a contested issue. Since the 1980s however, 'there has emerged a postcolonial critique that connects topics such as neo-imperialism, colonial histories and contemporary British cultures, not least because of racism and anti-racist protest.'[623] Shifts in historiography began to assert that the British Isles were an important site of empire, and that metropolitan culture had implications for racial thinking. As a result, recent work considers these legacies for their impact on equality and racial inclusion today. As discussed in chapter four, historians in the latter half of the twentieth century also began to show how the legacies of colonialism shaped contemporary immigration policies, and anti-

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[619] Ibid.
[620] Ibid.
[621] Ibid.
[622] Ibid.
[623] Angela Woollacott, 'Making Empire Visible or Making Colonialism Visible? The Struggle for the British Imperial Past', *British Scholar*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2009), p. 9.

immigration thinking in Britain. Many of the comments below demonstrate that visitors were to varying degrees engaged with these postcolonial discourses.

Comments range from reflections on the global nature of empire, exploitation, historical continuity, and slavery, and all demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between Britain's past and present. For example, one visitor comments on the cultural ties between the centre and the periphery through empire, 'Very good. It might be an idea to use a few more illustrations of families who moved abroad with the Empire, but whose ancestors returned to Britain.'[624] Several comments revealed both the personal and also professional lenses through which visitors framed their visits.[625] One visitor, who self-identified as an academic with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, raised two questions in their comment, the first of which alluded to the power-relations inherent in colonialism, 'Very interesting, but a) did the empire just "fall" into British hands. B) Why did distinct 'communities' form and persist?'[626] This particular comment refers to the panel text discussed in chapter four that stated:

> The period from the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign until the end of the Second World War saw the British empire at its height. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Indian sub-continent, Hong Kong, Cyprus, and large parts of the Caribbean and Africa fell under British rule.

The visitor was struck by the lack of commentary on the more violent means by which Britain acquired large parts of their empire. Another visitor was more explicit in challenging the violence underpinning empire, being more specific in their condemnation, 'I agree with the person above – The Empire was a method of exploiting and impoverishing millions of people who suffered harsh persecution when they came to this country. You would not know that from this exhibition.'[627] These visitors were clearly sophisticated in their negotiation of these complex topics and demonstrated an understanding of the link between the colonial past and the postcolonial present.

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[624] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[625] Frame, '"Our Nation's Attic?"', p. 58.
[626] 'MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[627] Ibid.

One visitor made this point more explicitly, '…can cover the details of British colonialism history, and the history can link up with racism.'[628] Other visitors specifically invoked the word postcolonial, 'A lot of good information in one exhibit. I would have liked more post-WWII and some of the difficulties faced by postcolonial immigrants.'[629] Another commented, 'Fair enough, but more missing from postcolonial Black deaths in London.'[630] It is likely that this comment was referring to the racially motivated murder of Stephen Lawrence which took place in 1993. If that is true, then it is plausible that the visitor, and other visitors too, had a sophisticated understanding of the link between the colonial past and its legacies and role in racially motivated attacks in the present.

Other comments reflected on the legacy of slavery. One visitor felt that there was not enough emphasis on slavery as a driver of migration, and also felt that there was too much focus on other groups, 'Anyway it's a shame that the exhibition was so short. The question I wanted to ask was why did you concentrate so much on the Jews than Slavery? RSVP.'[631] That being said, one visitor states that, 'The film at the beginning, the community does not give clarity to the African presence. It is still the belief that blacks came as slaves, certainly not the case.'[632] This might suggest that the film had more impact than some of the text panels. The exhibition did, after all, acknowledge the that Black people were present in Britain before slavery. It also shows diversity in opinions within particular ethnic minority groups.

Many other comments focused on issues of representation. Black people in particular were either positive about being represented for the first time at London's principal museum or discouraging in that the exhibition did not go far enough in fully representing their histories and experience, 'Acknowledgement of Black People at last by the Museum.' Another visitor commented, 'Finally – an exhibition that has made a start on acknowledging all our contributions – nice to see myself as a black person become visible in a positive way.'[633] Another reflected on nationalities, 'Excellent. It makes a change to see other nationalities

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[628] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.
[629] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[630] Ibid.
[631] Ibid.
[632] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.
[633] Ibid.

particularly black histories shown in exhibitions. Thanks.'[634] Another visitor highlighted the role of Black people historically in the expansion of England, possibly revealing an afro-centrist view, 'At "last" an exhibition that shows the real inhabitants of the city. We don't have to forget and even never forget that the expansion of England has been possible because of [illegible] and work of immigrants, refugees and slaves of which I am a descendent [sic].'[635] Several visitor comments spoke to Afrocentrist claims being made around that time. For example, one visitor mentions slavery, but questioned the centrality of Black people more broadly:

> You haven't fooled anybody, anything of any relevance to African in this country you have deliberately failed to mention. E.g. no mention of the moors, no mention of the Roman Septimus Clark who was also an African who governed England when the English were Roman slaves. No mention that Africans-cyclopean builders built Stonehenge in Wiltshire. But don't worry some of us African are awake and our time is coming, very soon.

Molefi K. Asante an African American Professor who published *Afrocentricity* in 1980 was seen as one of the leading works in Afrocentrism, and argued that, 'The Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data.' A number of other Black scholars championed similar views. These were attempts to reframe world history from an African perspective.[636] Such comments as the one above was likely informed by these ideas.

There were, however, mostly positive comments about the representation of the Black community, and those that demonstrated experiences of social marginalisation, 'Acknowledgement of Black People at last by the Museum.'[637] Several visitors felt, however, that the museum could have done more, and that it did not go far enough. One visitor even felt the advertisements had misled them, 'The adverts were misleading. I

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[634] Ibid.
[635] Ibid.
[636] Clarence E. Walker, *We Can't Go Home Again: An Argument About Afrocentrism* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[637] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.

expected to see an exploration into Black Britons, not a surface gra[z]e.' Another visitor commented that, 'I would have liked more about the contributions of peoples of African and Caribbean!'[638] And whilst those people from London's Black communities were most vocal in raising concerns about representation, a number of other minority groups also raised concerns.

Other visitors felt that there was not enough representation of the 'indigenous' perspective, however, in this instance referring to the majority white population, 'Very good – But perhaps there could have been a more balanced viewpoint from the "indigenous population" to go with the very full incoming population.'[639] It is interesting to note the way that the visitor uses the word indigenous. The 'Imperial Citizens' display, for example, challenged the notion of an indigenous British population by arguing that 'Many of today's Londoners can trace their ancestry to those parts of the world directly because of their exploitation in that period'.[640] The exhibition in some ways sought to deconstruct the idea of the 'original Londoner' by showing that London has always been populated by immigrants, though clearly the exhibition could have done more in challenging notions and concepts of Britishness.

One visitor in turn drawing a line to the comments above, responded, '"Fasc RACIST SCUM"'.[641] The visitor reinforced his criticism by drawing a swastika next to their comment. Another visitor wrote, 'Keep Britain White?? What a Hope!!'[642] In response to this comment, two other visitors wrote, 'I hope you get run over by a black man you white shit',[643] and, '"Get racists out of Britain" will be a reality one day'.[644] Many of the more ideological comments provoked emotional responses, evidence that these issues were important to many visitors. Kevin Coffee has argued that visitor comments are the manifestation of dialogic social practice, whereby each comment reflects visitors' socio-cultural interaction with others.[645] It also shows the level of vehemence levelled at some

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[638] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.
[639] Ibid.
[640] MoL Business Archives, Peopling, Objects and Images Exhibited, Text Panels, 'Imperial Citizens'.
[641] MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder One, Open Shelves.
[642] Ibid.
[643] Ibid.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Kevin Coffee, 'Visitor Comments as Dialogue', *The Museum Journal,* Volume 56, Issue 2 (April 2013), pp. 163-167.

of the more racist comments. There are more positive comments from European visitors as well who saw the exhibition as speaking to wider European concern around anti-immigrant and racist sentiments, 'This exhibition is very valuable, especially with the rise of racism in Europe now.'[646]

My analysis of the comment books highlights the many experiences which visitors used when interpreting the displays. As James Scott notes, 'It is certainly the case that objects have a promiscuity of meanings and interpretation of a particular object depends on existing knowledge and experience.'[647] Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1957) argued that, 'Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.'[648] Tilden, in speaking to the presence of the past in contemporary society, with regards to interpretation in museums, concluded that when visitors are confronted with historical episodes they connect them to their own experiences.[649] 'Peopling' was clearly relatable for many of the visitors from a variety of ethnic and social demographics, and many visitors celebrated the controversial and unapologetically critical nature of the exhibition.

In this chapter I have moved from visitor metrics to a quantitative analysis of visitor comments using the 'Peopling' comment books to question how visitors experienced the exhibition to provide a more nuanced picture. Analysis of the comment books reveal the socio-cultural contexts through which visitors framed their experience, revealing much about the sophisticated nature of museum visitors and, at times, their consciousness of the postcolonial condition they existed within. Immigration, multiculturalism, the postcolonial, political activism, racism and anti-racism were all contexts through which visitors responded, and thereby to an extent affirmed Merriman's hope that the exhibition would challenge contemporary discourse around immigration in the UK. Several went further viewing the exhibition through a postcolonial context, with several comments revealing an understanding of the historical continuity between the imperial past and contemporary

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[646] 'MoL Business Archives, Peopling of London Visitor Comment Book, Folder Two, Open Shelves.

[647] James Scott, 'Objects and the Representation of War in Military Museums', *Museum and Society,* Vol. 13, No. 4, (2015), p. 490.

[648] Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), p. 9.

[649] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of the Past in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 179.

inequities. However, we must be careful not to overstate the number of visitors who saw the exhibition through a postcolonial lens. This exhibition, though clearly speaking to discourse around immigration, meant many different things to many people.

This chapter has also highlighted the usefulness of visitor books in accessing past visitor experiences of exhibitions dealing with immigration and histories of colonialism, allowing for an empirical investigation into the public's understanding of the colonial past. Whilst traditional analysis of exhibition displays and texts provide useful insights into official interpretations embedded across exhibitions, it is difficult to know how much time visitors spent at any given part of the exhibition. Comment books can shed more light which parts of an exhibition visitors engaged with, as well as their expectations and reactions. Analysis of the comment books also revealed an interesting socio-dialogic component of museum visiting, with several visitor having engaged in debates with one another around racism and anti-racism, a practice which is more common today through social media, and, in the case of 'Peopling', represents an important informal setting in which visitors discussed and challenged interpretations of the exhibition. The extent to which comment books can be used more generally in museum histories rests on their availability. If they are available, they should be seen as a vital element of any museum history for historicising visitors' experiences.

Chapter Eight: The Spirit of 'Peopling' 1993-2007, Legacies and Echoes

Introduction

The Museum of London considered 'Peopling' to be the most 'ambitious' project it had staged to date.[650] It had diversified the MoL's visitor demographics, increasing the number of ethnic minority visitors by almost 800% for the year 1993/94. Both visitors and staff expressed a desire to see the interpretation and content become a permanent fixture at the Museum. However, in her evaluation, Sara Selwood noted concerns about the lack of long-term strategy to incorporate the nature of the exhibition into the permanent galleries. Max Hebditch was quoted in Selwood's evaluation saying that the exhibition had 'changed corporate attitudes' and that many staff members now felt the MoL needed to sustain their community relationships, but Hebditch also expressed reservations about the potential change in direction for the Museum which he thought 'Peopling' articulated.[651] He was concerned that focusing on community projects would limit the MoL's potential to challenge and compete with the larger national institutions such as the V&A and the British Museum.[652] 'Peopling' possibly created a tension by posing a promising new direction, but which Hebditch also saw as a potential limitation to his own ambitions. Hebditch wanted the Museum to command international significance whilst simultaneously advocating for the special role of city museums in saying something 'relevant' about modern urban society. [653] Merriman raised concerns around the MoL's appetite for integrating newly developed practices and approaches into its long-term planning, convinced that 'Peopling' ought to have an impact on the Museum's programming if it was to remain relevant and reflect London's diversity. The tensions expressed over integrating the 'Peopling' interpretation across the Museum's programming will be dealt with throughout this chapter.

'Peopling' was undoubtedly a turning point for the MoL. It was an exercise in reimagining metropolitan narratives and histories of migration for the postcolonial present. As one

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[650] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1993/1994, p. 2.
[651] Ibid*,* pp. 46-52.
[652] Sara Selwood, Bill Schwarz and Nick Merriman, *The Peopling of London: Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Overseas, An Evaluation of the Exhibition* (London: Museum of London, 1996), p. 47.
[653] Max Hebditch, 'Museums about cities', *Museum International*, Vol. 47, No. 3, (January 1995), pp. 7-11.

review put it, it was the first time that a 'major museum in London had addressed the truly multicultural history of London life [...] This exhibition was a celebration of the plural heritage of the city.'[654] It signalled a departure from the anachronistic civic-trophy-cabinet character of the MoL's permanent galleries and previous temporary programming, engaging with contemporary discourse around race and immigration. According to Cathy Ross, who joined the Museum as Head of the Later Department in 1994, it was the start of a 'new sense that migration and diversity were central subjects for the museum'.[655] Hebditch therefore must have seen some value in promoting this new diversity message.

Having looked at 'Peopling' as a creative event in itself and sitting within a broader museological context which was taking museums a certain way, this chapter now asks what its legacy was over the long term. It examines the MoL's deepening engagement with postcolonial histories and representations, be it more explicit histories of slavery or cognate and intersecting subjects like migration. It does this across four sections, covering:

1. permanent galleries.
2. temporary galleries.
3. community outreach and events
4. the Museum of London Docklands.

Before addressing the nature and level of change in each of these areas, however, it sets the scene by relating how the MoL began to rethink its role as a city museum at the time that 'Peopling' took place.

A New Role for the Museum of London

In 1993 the MoL staged the first international symposium to discuss the role of city museums. A central theme was how to represent cultural diversity in cities. The symposium

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[654] Sylvia L. Collicott, 'The Peopling of London, London, November93-May-94', *History Workshop,* No. 38, (1994), pp. 261.

[655] Catherine Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond: The Museum of London Approach', in Christopher Whitehead, Katherine Lloyd, Susannah Eckersley and Rhiannon Mason (ed.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People, Places and Identities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 64.

was staged by Nicola Johnson, Head of the Department of Later London, who was a member of the 'Peopling' project team until she moved to take up a position as Director of Museology at the University of East Anglia. The symposium was important for a number of reasons, not least because it marked the inauguration of an International Association of City Museums, later to become the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities (CAMOC).[656] The symposium brought together museum staff devoted to the study of cities for the very first time to discuss relevant challenges and to promote their significance. The subsequent publication in 1995, which marked the 50th Anniversary of the *Museums International* journal, shows that discussions had a strong focus on the challenge of how museums could better represent the cultural diversity of cities.

Nicola Johnson's article in the *Museums International* special edition focused on the how and why of city museums, and their institutional histories, concluding that, '...responsibility demands that the museum attempt to take account of the histories, aspirations and urban experiences of citizens from many different cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds and to retrieve lost or suppressed aspects of those histories.'[657] This resonated with Merriman's desire to see museums adequately represent the diversity of their visitors and their experiences by undertaking projects that tackled hidden histories and difficult subjects, or by actually having a point of view on a subject as he had accomplished with 'Peopling'.[658] At the same time Hebditch argued that, '...museums, by applying their special skills, have much to say that is relevant to modern society. Museums about cities need to interpret and explain urban society and the processes of change at work within it.'[659] 'Peopling' had acted as an incubator for many if not all of these issues. It had helped the MoL to develop a wider repertoire or suite of actions and practices that in turn helped shape and develop this message across their museum programming.

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[656] International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities, [online], <http://network.icom.museum/camoc/>, accessed 15th July 2019.
[657] Nicola Johnson, 'Discovering the City', *Museum International,* UNESCO, Vol. 47, No. 187, (September 1995), p. 5.
[658] Nick Merriman, 'The Peopling of London Project, *Museum International,* UNESCO, Vol. 47, No. 187, (September 1995), pp. 12-16.
[659] Max Hebditch, 'Museums about cities', *Museum International,* UNESCO, Vol. 47, No. 187, (September 1995), p. 11.

Permanent Galleries

In 1995 the MoL published a new guidebook. Is it possible to see any reflection of the temporary exhibition 'Peopling' in this resource for visitors? The floorplan given in the new guidebook shows that the visitor route was still structured chrono-thematically. The visitor experience was still limited by the layout which embodied a linear, teleological narrative. Larger structural changes had been made to the entrance of the MoL. Visitors now entered through the shop before proceeding through a new entrance hall and into a new orientation gallery. Otherwise, the visitor route remained unidirectional.[660]

Despite the same basic structure, new period names and subdivisions had been introduced. Thames in Prehistory became the Prehistoric Gallery (updated in 1995). Saxon and Medieval London was now subdivided into the 'Dark Age London', 'Saxon London', and 'Medieval London'. 'Georgian London' and 'Early 19th Century London' had split into 'Eighteenth-Century London' and 'Nineteenth-Century London'. The '20th-Century London Gallery' was divided into the 'Early Twentieth-Century Gallery' and 'Second World War London'.[661] 'Imperial London' was renamed the 'Imperial Capital', but the interpretation remained largely the same focusing on trade links and London as the capital of the Empire:

> By the late nineteenth century London stood at the centre of the British Empire, whose dominions and colonies covered a quarter of the world and housed some 500 million people. Political, commercial and economic power was centred in the 'Imperial Capital' […] City business speculated in overseas development ventures, underwrote international maritime risks and traded in all of the world's major commodities. Much of the latter made their way to the busy 'Warehouse of the World' that was the port of London.[662]

Many of the interpretive themes from 1976 remained, but some new ones were added. A new section on 'themes' was added to the new 1995 guidebook, and highlighted subjects that were said to be central to London's *raison d'être*: 'The Commercial City'; 'Industry';

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[660] MoL Business Archives, *A Guide to the Museum of London* (London: Jigsaw, 1995).
[661] Ibid, p. 9.
[662] Ibid, p. 28.

'Leisure and Entertainment'; 'London Women'; and 'London Children'. 'Expansion of trade' remained a euphemism to describe London's relationship with Africa. There was a recognition of the history of women and their status, but as the guidebook stated, there was much still to be done.[663] There was, however, no mention of London's cultural diversity. So initial changes were limited. Instead, changes to the permanent galleries would unfold slowly, evidencing a gradual representational shift at the Museum.

The Roman Gallery was renovated, re-opening in 1996, with early signs of a representational shift. The gallery was formed mostly of reconstructions, traditional case layouts, multimedia applications, and included reconstructed Roman rooms which had been the central feature of the 1976 Roman gallery. In Martijn Polm's 2016 analysis of the impact of postcolonial criticisms of Romano-British archaeology displays at the MoL, he argues that there was an increasing presence within the Roman Gallery at the MoL from the 1990s of the emergence of hybrid culture after the Roman conquest, and an acknowledgement of the presence of 'foreigners' within Londinium's social structure. When contrasted with the Roman Britain gallery at the British Museum, however, Polm argues that the MoL was less explicit about where 'incomers' to Londinium came from. The British Museum acknowledged that people 'came from as far afield as the Middle East and northern African' whereas the 'Adopting and Adapting' panel in the MoL describes the inhabitants of London as a 'European Community' which comprised people from 'Germany, France and Britain Itself.' Polm argues that these changes had been engendered by new approaches in archaeology informed by postcolonial theory which helped to challenge the Romano-centric notion that 'Roman imperialism led to cultural homogeneity in the provinces.'[664]

Whether 'Peopling' directly impacted on the redisplay of the gallery is unclear. In the introduction to the Roman London gallery in the 2003 MoL guidebook it states that 'Roman London was made up of a wide range of nationalities.'[665] According to former Roman London curator Jenny Hall, the Roman gallery was intended to 'highlight the idea of a city

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[663] Ibid, p. 40.

[664] Martijn Polm, 'Museum Representations of Roman Britain and Roman London', *Britannia,* Vol. 47, (November 2016), pp. 234-236.

[665] *Museum Highlights: A Visual and audio souvenir* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2003), p. 13.

constantly changing [...] while also illuminating the stories of Roman occupation of London.'[666] As Polm notes, unlike the MoL that focused principally on its immediate area, the British Museum collects material from across the world and therefore was better placed to show the regional diversity of the Roman Empire.[667] The link between 'Peopling' and the new Roman gallery would have been to show the foundation of London as part of a larger empire, populated by immigrants and flows of peoples, rather than pushing the more marginal interest of the African presence. Having sold the idea that the Roman foundation and expansion was not atypical of London as an immigrant city, how was that message exported from Peopling?

The answer was to keep the Roman galleries with their pre-existing message about London's foundation story, but in addition to distribute 'Peopling' graphic panels throughout the permanent galleries to create an 'immigration trail through the ages reinforcing the picture of London's diversity as a cumulative process, with different groups of people from overseas "moving here" over time.'[668] This allowed the MoL to embed the interpretation across the permanent galleries. The cost and effort involved in making wholesale changes to gallery interpretations are considerable. This was a more affordable solution. The 'Peopling' exhibition continued to tour the UK as late as 2004, though it is unclear where.[669] Internally the 'Peopling' panels were welcomed as evidence that the Museum's new message around multiculturalism was being acted upon.[670]

The visible impact of 'Peopling' in the immediate years following its conclusion was, despite the panel distribution noted above, limited. The MoL remained concerned about the economic climate and reductions in grant-aid were a concern.[671] The distribution of the 'Peopling' panels was a piecemeal solution which allowed them to promote their new message at a time of financial insecurity. The most significant impact was in helping to redefine the MoL's social role as a city museum. More significant changes to the permanent galleries, representing a commitment to the 'Peopling' message, came with the

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[666] Fiona Starr, 'City Museums, Identity and Globalisation', I Musei Della Citta conference, Rome, [unpublished] (2005), p. 23.
[667] Polm, 'Museum Representations of Roman Britain and Roman London', p. 238.
[668] Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', pp. 68-69.
[669] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 2004/2005, p 12.
[670] Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', p. 68.
[671]London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/076/01/020, Forward Plan 1994/95 – 1996/97, p. 6.

introduction of 'London Now' in 1997 and 'The World City' gallery in 2001, as globalisation and issues of diversity began to shape museum responses.

Global London at the Museum of London

In 1998 Simon Thurley took over from Max Hebditch as Director. Thurley was keen to support the work the MoL had done with 'Peopling' and other exhibitions that dealt with London's ethnic minority communities.[672] In 1998 the MoL introduced a new five-year plan which set out his ambitions for larger structural changes to the entrance of the Museum, the creation of additional storage for collections and improved access to collections. Improving access to collections was indicative of contemporary cultural politics pushing museums to become 'agents of social policy' with responsibilities that extended far beyond their perceived original roles.[673] This was duly reflected at the Museum of London and new permanent galleries.

During this period new permanent galleries were created including 'London Now' (1997), and 'The World City' (2001). These new galleries moved away from community histories like 'Peopling' and towards speaking about London's 'cross-cultural commonalities', representing London's diversity.[674] These exhibitions were also a reflection of the cultural politics of the time reframing difference in line with this new idea of museums as agents of social change, and in response to 'accelerated circumstances of social and technological change' which gave rise to representations of place centred on diversity and the global.[675]

New Labour's social inclusion agenda was first formally extended to the museum sector via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport through their 1999 publications *Museums for the Many*.[676] This document was formulated in the wake of the publication in 1998 of

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[672] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1996/1997, p. 9.
[673] Anwar Tlili, Sharon Gewirtz and Alan Cribb, 'New Labour's Socially Responsible Museum', *Policy Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (2007), p. 270.
[674] Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', p. 69.
[675] Bernice Murphy, 'Museums, globalisation and cultural diversity', in *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* Vol. 5, No. 1, (1999), p. 51.
[676] DCMS (Department of Culture, Media and Sport), *Museums for the Many: Standards for Museums and Galleries to Use When Developing Access Policies* (London: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1999), [online] <http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/>, accessed 4th September 2019.

Attitudes of Ethnic Minority Populations towards Museums and Galleries, by Desai and Thomas, commissioned by the Museums and Libraries Commission (renamed as the Museum, Libraries and Archives Council a year later). It set out to understand why ethnic minorities were underrepresented in museums.[677] Its main conclusions were that museums were perceived as 'quiet, reverential and unwelcoming', and that ethnic minorities were concerned with the provenance of objects, particularly in larger national institutions, and the implications of colonial looting. Above all, ethnic minorities wanted to see 'objects that told different and multiple stories that related to their own lives, cultures and histories.'[678] What did this all amount to for museums?

Museums for the Many encouraged museums to shift away from a market-driven approach to audience development, focusing on the potential of the collection, and moving to a widening participation strategy that focused on creating benefits for the public by fostering social inclusion.[679] Museums were increasingly expected to provide the widest possible access to their collections, and the government would set access standards and monitor museums. Museums were also expected to reduce cultural barriers by providing exhibitions that better expressed cultural diversity in the UK. The MoL, along with other local museums, were in some ways ahead of the government by this time, curating displays that attempted to tell different and multiple stories which reflected the diversity and cross-cultural realities of London's past and present.

Contemporary London Inside the Museum: 'London Now'

'London Now' (1997) was the MoL's first permanent statement on post-war London, and spoke to discourses on globalisation that were beginning to emerge within the heritage sector in the 1990s. Thurley had already stressed in his strategic statement in 1997 that the MoL's mission was to 'reach all London's communities regardless of race, wealth or education'.[680] 'London Now' represented those changing cultural politics outlined above

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[677] Tlili, Gewirtz and Cribb, 'New Labour's Socially Responsible Museum', p. 271.

[678] Ibid*,* p. 272.

[679] Ibid*,* p. 273.

[680] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1997/1998, p. 4.

and evidencing a more diverse and globally orientated representational approach at the MoL.[681]

In the Museum's 2003 guidebook, the introductory text to the '20th-Century London' gallery (as 'London Now' was then re-named) stated that 'Globalisation also made London a more culturally diverse city as people from all over the world made their homes in London, injecting a new vigour into the city's life and culture.'[682] Globalisation, the increasingly interconnectedness of peoples from across the globe, which is said to have led to a homogenising of culture, had a profound impact on the urban environment.[683] Globalisation posed new challenges for museums to reconfigure their displays and collections to promote a sense of cultural identity, and a sense of belonging for their culturally diverse constituents. History, according to Lowenthal, is essential in this sense to cement identities and a sense of belonging; 'Remembering the past is crucial to our sense of identity…to know what we were confirm who we are'.[684] In the 1990s, the heritage sector began to think through the challenge of addressing the 'history of all peoples more inclusively than ever before' […] imparting 'a sense of momentous impact of the changes installed by globalisation.'[685] 'London Now' clearly reflected these globalisation discourses.

City museums increasingly recognised that it was not enough to deal only with the past, they needed to reconfigure their displays and collections to reflect the dynamic process of contemporary change in the city to support their engagement with diverse communities. They hoped that this would help them to stay relevant and create that sense of shared identity and place. In the later 1990s and early 2000s this engendered approaches like those above which focused more on celebrating the diversity of all people and their capacity to co-exist in one space, rather than producing particularist readings of separate ethnic groups.[686] For 'London Now' the MoL commissioned Benjamin Zephaniah to write a

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[681] Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', p. 69.

[682] Museum Highlights: A Visual and Audio Souvenir (London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2003), p. 57.

[683] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[684] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 197.

[685] Bernice Murphy, 'Museums, globalisation and cultural diversity', *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* Vol. 5, No. 1, (1999), p. 46.

[686] Bill Schwarz, 'Introduction', *The Peopling of London*: fifteen thousand years of settlement from overseas: an *evaluation* of the exhibition, (London: HMSO, 1996), p. 3.

poem for the exhibition. *The London Breed* (2001) captured what the gallery attempted to convey in moving to a diversity message. The last stanza reads:

> I love [this] concrete jungle still
>
> With all its sirens and its speed
>
> The people here united will
>
> Create a kind of London breed.[687]

'London Now' shows that the influence of 'Peopling' remained strong as the Museum continued to pursue histories and narratives that reflected the cultural diversity of the city. It illustrated a shift away from a migration here approach which 'Peopling' had done by celebrating separate origins and communities towards common experiences and the way these differences created a new shared multicultural space.

Global London: 'The World City'

As part of a long-term plan to renew and expand all of its permanent displays to mark the Museum's 25th anniversary, the MoL launched 'The World City' gallery in 2001. This new gallery recalled 'the spirit of The Peopling of London in its integrative approach to cultures around the world meeting in the city of London…placing London at the heart of a global network of movements of capital, commodities, technologies and people.'[688] This allowed the MoL to further combine its 'Peopling' priorities with these newly emerging concerns with the global and globalisation, helping the MoL to reposition and rebrand London as having always been part of a globalisation story, and emerging even stronger because of it. By adding these new ingredients developed through 'Peopling' the MoL was able to recalibrate the visitor experience from the old permanent galleries.

'The World City' gallery covered the 'area of three former galleries telling the story of London from 1789-1914' charting the '…important historical period from the French Revolution to the First World War when London became the first great metropolis of the

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[687] Benjamin Zephaniah, *Too Black, Too Strong* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2001).

[688] Raminder Kaur, 'Unearthing our past: engaging with diversity at the Museum of London', Discussion Paper', (London: Museum of London, 2005), p. 9.

industrial age, a city with a globally dominant economy, and the financial and commercial capital of an expanding empire.'[689] This global approach precipitated a new understanding of empire and London's role in it by highlighting the link between the flow of goods and the consumption of these goods in the UK:

> An interesting object in the slavery section is a sugar bowl promoting East India sugar as a substitute for that grown in West India, and therefore tainted by its associations with slavery. It is not known whether such bowls were subsidised or distributed by East India merchants, or by reformers anxious to support and promote the abolitionist cause. Such items illustrate the complexities and mysteries of London's history.[690]

The Museum continued then with the story of empire but rebranded it as part of a globalisation story with greater sensitivity to multiple perspectives and experiences. This global approach continued to expand under the new Director Jack Lohman (who took over from Simon Thurley in 2002) who had previously worked as Director of the Iziko Museums in South Africa.[691]

A year after Lohman's appointment in 2003, the Labour Mayor Ken Livingstone launched his Heritage Diversity Taskforce (MHDT), which sought to place cultural diversity at the centre of London's heritage sector, further entrenching Labour's policy towards the arts and culture. The taskforce set up a consultation process with museums across London. It concluded with a report published in 2005 entitled *Delivering Shared Heritage: The Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage.* This report drew upon government policy around social inclusion to focus on groups at risk of disadvantageous stereotyping.[692] The MoL was heavily involved in the taskforce from the outset working on issues of representation and access to museum collections. Jack Lohman was quoted in the report saying:

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[689] Alex Werner, 'World City on Display', *History Today,* Vol. 51, No. 12, (2001), p. 7.
[690] Ibid, p. 8.
[691] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 2002/2003, p. 3.
[692] Jocelyn Barrow, *et al*, 'Delivering shared heritage: The Mayor's Commission on African and Asian heritage', Project Report, (London: Greater London Authority, 2005).

> I would like to speak on something that other people may not say. Many museums
> were born out of the pain of conquest. I feel that there is a need for the museum
> community to acknowledge that pain. Museums that present the culture of the
> world need to acknowledge the story by which those collection were acquired. An
> apology for this pain is necessary.[693]

The MoL was becoming much more conscious of issues of representation and access bound up with popular discussions around museums and their relationship with the colonial past.

Much of what was done across permanent galleries up to this point around representation was further consolidated in 2004 when the Museum undertook a review of its collecting and display practices as part of a project called 'Reassessing What We Collect'.[694] This project drew upon the work the MoL had done with the MHDT. This represented a much more coherent direction for the Museum around how they approached diversity and evidenced a conscious engagement with Britain's past as a colonial power. The purpose of the project was to reconsider how representative the Museum's collections were of their local and national communities, and to reorder them 'into an [searchable] online database sorted according to London communities (as defined by the 2001 UK population census).'[695] The lack of ease in being able to search archives by community groups was an issues familiar to Rozina Visram when she was conducting her research for 'Peopling' (chapter four).

As part of this project the MoL commissioned two academic essays. One was written by Raminder Kaur, Professor of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies, who had co-authored the MHDT report. Her discussion paper, 'Unearthing Our Past', consolidated much of what had been learnt since 'Peopling' in order to devise a toolkit for creating more inclusive displays at the MoL. Diversity here was considered as including a comprehensive range of minority groups, and not just ethnic minorities, although this remained a strong focus. One of the main goals of the project was to think about how to create more inclusive representations across the permanent galleries so as to celebrate multiple identities and

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[693] Ibid, p. 23.
[694] Elizabeth Crooke, *Museums and Community: Ideas, Issues and Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 88.
[695] Ibid, p. 88.

interconnections. Thinking more globally, that is, not in terms of separate communities *per se,* but in cross-cultural and interconnected ways, was one of the recommendations.[696]

This report also signalled a conscious recognition of how non-white communities had been marginalised by museums historically, a conscious recognition of postcolonial discourse as it related to museums (something which 'Peopling' had not directly engaged with). According to Kaur:

> distorted representations of non-white communities and their artefacts in the West have been justifiably put on trial. Historically, images of black or tribal communities, if acknowledged at all, were shown as either demonic or barbaric on the one hand, and, on the other, as the epitome of a nostalgic civilisation in the guise of the 'noble savage' [..] No matter what the details were, they conjured up an image of alterity, Otherness – that is, the cultures were represented as the opposite of the supposedly rational and modern West.[697]

Kaur suggested that the MoL was best placed to respond to this call for greater diversity by creating more inclusive histories, which it had done with 'pioneering cross-departmental' work with 'Peopling'. Whereas 'earlier this issue commanded sporadic attention', this had filtered through almost all museum practice in terms of collections, planning, access, display…'[698] Kaur highlighted that the new gallery 'The World City' was indicative of this. This new global approach also became increasingly visible in the MoL's temporary programming.

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[696] Kaur, 'Unearthing out Past', pp. 2-12.
[697] Ibid, p. 24.
[698] Ibid, p.8.

Temporary Galleries

Exhibition Title	Date	
Half the Sky: Chinese Women in London	1996-1997	Exhibition about the working lives of the Chinese community in London.
Windrush: Sea Change	**1998**	**Exhibition about the cultural contributions and politics of the Windrush generation in London.**
Brazil in Mind	2001	Exhibition about the cultural impact of the Brazilian community in London.
London's Voices	**2001-2004**	**HLF funded oral history collecting programme exploring London's communities.**
Uzo Egonu's London	2004-2005	Art exhibition showing the photographic work of Uzo Egonu documenting London life.
Roots to Reckoning	**2005-2006**	**Photographic exhibition focusing on the Caribbean Diaspora in London.**
Campaigning Against Slavery	**2007**	**Touring exhibition from Anti-Slavery International.**
Out of India	**2007**	**Exhibition focusing on the Indian Diaspora in London and celebrating 50 years of Indian independence.**

Table 4: List of temporary exhibitions at the Museum of London 1996-2007.
Source: compiled from list of temporary exhibitions staged at the Museum of London in Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', pp. 64-65.

After 'Peopling' there was a notable change in the type of subjects deployed in temporary exhibitions, indicative of this gathering postcolonial representational shift. Temporary exhibitions are often where museums experiment with new subjects and themes. I have highlighted those that deal more explicitly with histories of empire, commonwealth, and what can be thought of as postcolonial themes (table 4). Many of these temporary exhibitions built on practices and narratives developed through 'Peopling'.

Community consultation and working with source communities had become a common practice for museums as a way of engaging with cultural groups from whom museums have collected. Later in 2002, the Museum Association *Code of Ethics,* stressed that museums

were expected to 'consult and involve communities, users and supporters, and promote a sense of shared ownership over the work of the Museum.'[699] 'Peopling' had been the first time that the MoL had used community consultation in staging an exhibition, after which it became a vital tool in developing more diverse representations. 'Half the Sky: Chinese Women' (1996-1997) in London for example, documented the lives of the 29,300 Chinese women living and working in the city through oral histories. The MoL invited the Chinese community into the Museum including Chinese women artists, performers and designers for various events, and used consultation as a means of developing the exhibition. Later that year, the museum created a permanent community liaison officer post to develop outreach activities related to London's multicultural history.[700]

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[699] Museum Association Code of Ethics 2002, [online], <https://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>, accessed 13th September 2019.

[700] Cultural Diversity: Windrush sea-change, Museum of London, Museum Association, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/4797, accessed 15th July 2019.

Figure 39: 'Windrush' display panel proof from 'Windrush: Sea Change', Museum of London, 1998.
Source: Windrush panel proof, Museum of London Business Archives, Curatorial, Exhibitions, Windrush, MBA, 2.6, Folder 1, Panel Captions.

'Windrush: Sea Change', launched in 1998, was similarly indicative of this representational shift.[701] This exhibition marked the 50th anniversary of the SS Empire Windrush, and was one of the Museum's new 'Capital Concerns' exhibitions.[702] Introduced by Simon Thurley, these temporary exhibitions were a 'series of fast-changing exhibitions…to highlight and explore topical issues about London and life in the capital.'[703] The exhibition was curated by Gail Cameron, then Assistant Curator of Later London History and Collections. Its purpose was to '…interrogate complex concepts such as 'Britishness' and 'citizenship', to highlight where certain groups had been marginalised.' Like 'Peopling', 'Windrush: Sea Change' also aimed at fostering social cohesion and tackling racism through a diversity approach; these two key aims were highlighted in the new exhibition's educational pack.[704]

'Windrush: Sea Change' spoke critically about the underdevelopment of the West Indies by Britain (figure 39), stating that, 'In the 1940s, the colonies, particularly Jamaica, suffered high unemployment and rural poverty. British rule limited social and economic progress. For over 400 West Indians, the Windrush offered the chance of a new life.'[705] The exhibition did not shy away from the more difficult aspects of this history. 'Windrush: Sea Change' involved a coming to terms with notion that empire didn't simply happen overseas, and that deconstructing 'the social and political reverberations between colony and metropole' is difficult.[706] In this way, 'Windrush' echoed much of what 'Peopling' had done in terms of interrogating the perceived tolerance of London and exposing the imperial nature of Britain's relationship with its commonwealth. Yet it also went much further than 'Peopling', linking centre and periphery and making the political and postcolonial aspects of that more explicit.

This representational shift continued to develop across temporary exhibitions, and community consultation was now an important and frequently used practice at the MoL.

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[701] Cultural Diversity: Windrush sea-change, Museum of London, Museum Association, [online], <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/4797>, accessed 15th July 2019.

[702] Museum of London, Museum of London Business Archives, London Wall, Business Case, Windrush: Sea Change, p. 1. Curatorial, Exhibitions, Windrush, MBA, 2.6.

[703] Museum of London, Museum of London Business Archives, London Wall, Annual Report 1997/1998, p. 4.

[704] Museum of London, Museum of London Business Archives, London Wall, Business Case, Windrush: Sea Change, p. 1. Curatorial, Exhibitions, Windrush, MBA, 2.6., p. 1-3.

[705] MoL Business Archives, Windrush Panel, Curatorial, Exhibitions, Windrush, MBA, 2.6, Folder 1, Panel Captions.

[706] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (ed.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (California: University of California Press, 1997), p. 1.

For example, 'London Voices', which launched in 2001, was a three-year project which included an exhibition of the same name, along with other activities and events. The exhibition programme built on themes and practices developed through 'Peopling' and the MoL's earlier 1997 'Voices' exhibition which had expanded the Museum's collection of oral histories.[707] As with most of the MoL's programmes aimed at minority communities, 'London Voices' was designed to support the MoL's efforts to 'develop new audiences', and to 'reflect London's cultural diversity'.[708]

Community consultation allowed for the incorporation 'of many voices and many perspectives.'[709] The MoL retained control over the process of working with community members and groups. According to Samuel Alberti, many of the relationships which developed between museums and their communities bear the stamp of coloniser and the colonised. Relationships remained, and remain, unequal.[710] Owing to a lack of curatorial expertise, consultation had, however, become a useful practice whereby the museum retained quality control, and could access relevant oral histories, collections and experiences. Alongside consultation, as part of the MoL's community outreach programmes, the Museum provided space for communities to debate issues important to them by staging discussions and events.

Community Outreach and Events

According to Fiona Starr who worked as a curatorial intern at the Museum in 1998, the MoL's community outreach and events grew out of the Focus Weeks established during 'Peopling'. She argued that these focus weeks began a trend whereby communities were given the opportunity to voice their own cultural identity within the city, and set their own agendas.[711] These seemingly ancillary activities were important to the Museum in supporting their broader agendas such as building new audiences, proving their social

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[707] Cathy Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond', p. 75.

[708] Sheila Watson, *Museums and Their Communities* (Abingdon: Routledge 2007), p. 11.

[709] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge 2000), p. 36.

[710] Bernadette T. Lynch and Samuel J.M.M. Alberti, 'Legacies of Prejudice: Racism, Co-Production and Radical Trust in the Museum', *Museum Management and Curatorship,* Vol. 25, No. 1, (March 2010), pp. 13–35.

[711] Starr, 'City Museums, Identity and Globalisation', p. 15.

impact to various funding bodies and in communicating their diversity message, as much as they helped to create more inclusive exhibitions.

For example, in 1999, the MoL invited African Caribbean communities to take part in writing groups. In these writing groups, communities were invited to work with the MoL's collections and to incorporate objects into their own stories and personal histories. This was also the first time the MoL had marked Black History Month. The MoL invited writers, historians and artists for two special workshops, 'Rewriting the Canvas', and 'The Return of Oroonoko.' Participants examined the way in which 'Black characters had been represented through well-known historical texts and images, and through the work of contemporary Black writers and artists Yinka Shonibare, David Dabydeen and Biyi Bandele.'[712] These two events discussed how Black people had been represented, or rather under/mis-represented historically, indicative of a shift in power between the MoL and the communities they served. Black History Month arguably became the main mechanism through which the Museum provided space for communities to set their agendas. By 2001, the MoL could state that it had established itself as 'a leading venue for events coinciding with Black History Month', and that 'the number of people who attended these events at the Museum was more than double the previous year.'[713]

These types of events continued and in 2003 the MoL staged several events culminating in a conference entitled 'City, Nation, Empire'. The conference looked at the legacy of empire, and ideas of British citizenship, race and national identity. A paper published in the *History Workshop Journal* in 2007, which was first presented as a paper during this conference gives a flavour of the 2003 conference. Madge Dresser argued that:

> those statues, monuments and memorials which do explicitly mention slavery and the slave-trade – those honouring abolitionists – generally marginalize the experience of enslaved Africans in favour of a self-congratulatory and nationally defensive political agenda.[714]

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[712] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1999/2000, p. 45.
[713] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 2000/2001, p. 18.
[714] Madge Dresser, 'Set in Stone? Statues and Slavery in London', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1, (Autumn 2007), p. 162.

Her paper focused on public memorials in the 'nation's capital', and how far they represented Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Her paper gives some idea of the tone and scope of the conference, though it was updated to reflect more recent developments around discourses of reparations and apology for Britain's involvement in the slave trade that peaked in 2007. There were other activities that occurred alongside the 'City, Nation, Empire' conference, including a series of black history trails along with a new gallery drama led by storyteller Tu'up and another special gallery tour developed by S.I. Martin.[715]

Thus, we can see, in the influence on permanent galleries and exhibition, that 'Peopling' had been a creative event generating specific narratives on migration and diversity, supporting the aims of the MoL in diversifying its visitor demographics, and speaking to important societal issues. 'Peopling' had allowed the Museum to develop and refine a suite of actions. These were then used, and further developed, in exhibitions and through community events and gallery developments. But it was also a creative event which should be understood as a self-conscious attempt to respond to and contribute to ongoing museological shifts, for example, the gathering representational shift and gathering museum responses to postcolonial and source community critiques.

Change, however, was not always radical. Much of what was done in exploring multicultural histories, and contemporary issues around race, multiculturalism, migration, and the Black community were confined to ancillary activities, and often limited to Black History Month. Piecemeal changes were made to the permanent galleries with the distribution of the 'Peopling' panels, to provide a multicultural trail in place of more radical changes. More significant changes came with the wholesale renewal to the modern galleries with, for example, 'The World City' gallery, which demonstrated a shift towards global histories which countenanced the global impact of empire on the colonies, and on London itself bringing together centre and periphery.

More radical changes to the MoL's interpretation of empire, and slavery specifically, would come later with a new exhibition 'London, Sugar and Slavery' which opened at the MoLD

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[715] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 2002/2003, p. 19.

(2003) to commemorate the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade. Notwithstanding that, it was the spirit of 'Peopling' which had endured and shaped much of the MoL's programming, often referred back to by staff and external consultants, such as the ex-director Simon Thurley in 1998 and by Raminder Kaur author of the 2005 report 'What We Collect' (discussed earlier in this chapter), when rethinking collections and display policy as it related to engaging with diversity and when responding to new challenges posed by globalisation, shifting cultural politics and other external pressures.

The Museum of London Docklands

The MoLD began as a collecting programme called the Museum in Docklands Project (henceforth the MiD-P) initiated and overseen by the MoL in 1979. This project set out recording the deindustrialisation of the Dock area. From 1994, the MiD-P, but not yet the MoLD, fell under the control of a newly established independent trust (The Museum of the Port of London and Docklands Trust – hereafter Trust) for establishing a new museum. The Museum of London Docklands opened in 2003, as it was then renamed, under the formal control of the MoL.

Much of the area that was being deindustrialised has now been redeveloped as the London Docklands financial centre. In 1979 The MiD-P took over stewardship of the MoL's port history collections, and over the years amassed a large collection of material relating to industry, the docks and the river. In 1982 the MoL put together proposals for setting up a new museum to display the history of the Dock area, its decline with the onset of containerisation and the working history of the Docks and the lives of those that had suffered as a result of containerisation.[716] Whilst the objects were in storage awaiting display, the MiD-P began to work closely with the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC hereafter) and Port of London Authority (PLA hereafter) to stage travelling exhibitions which told the story of the Docks up to the closure of the West India Docks in the 1980s.[717]

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[716] John Hall, 'The Museum in Docklands: A Stimulating Introduction to London's Liquid History Past and Present', *The London Journal,* Vol. 29, No. 2, (November 2004), pp. 62–65.

[717] London Metropolitan Archives, CLA/076/01/022, *The Museum of London Docklands Project: The First Five Years*, a publicity brochure produced by the Museum of London (1987), p. 1.

Port cities across the globe, once '…nodes of international trade, channelling movements of cargo and flows of migration', were all affected by global transformation processes.[718] As with many port cities, technological advancement and containerisation significantly affected 'the relation between port and city, the cities' images and representations, and the condition of people living and working around the ports.'[719] With these changes, redevelopment and urban regeneration saw the rise of museums and heritage centres which dealt with the decline of these areas focusing on working life. These new museums often represented the Docks through romanticised notions of the past where mercantile adventure and the emergence of prosperous trading economies became dominant themes. Steeped in material traces of their colonial pasts, Pierre Nora has called these former port cities sites of memories or '*Les Lieux de Mémoire*', where an incomplete break with the past renders a place invested with 'a sense of historical continuity' and significance in the popular collective memory.[720] The rise of postcolonial critiques and more informed and critical ways of thinking about the past, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, gave rise to exhibitions at these sites dealing with histories of colonialism and critical reappraisals of port cities and their role in the slave trade and empire.

The remainder of this chapter will chart the development of the MiD-P and Trust, becoming the MoLD in 2003. I will then move to discuss the creation of the 'London, Sugar and Slavery' ('LSS' hereafter) gallery which was opened to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade in 2007. To what extent was this exhibition a radical departure when compared with other postcolonial representations at the MoL? Given its location, after all, it could have taken a very critical and postcolonial stance from early on. But that stance was slightly limited due in part to the need to address the story of the decline of the dock area and the working lives of the people.

Already in 1994, the MoL and MiD-P had begun to cooperate closely on exhibitions and educational programmes. 'Peopling' played a central part in this. In 1994, the MoL co-opted the MiD-P's mobile museum trailer for 'Peopling'. As part of the 'Peopling' agenda the MoL

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[718] Waltraud Kokot, 'Port Cities as Areas of Transition – Comparative Ethnographic Research', in Waltraud Kokot et al (ed.), *Port Cities as Areas of Transition* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2008), p. 7.
[719] Ibid, p. 7.
[720] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations, Special Issue: memory and Counter-Memory,* No. 26, (Spring 1989), p. 7.

also created an educational programme in cooperation with the LDDC called 'ACE!'.[721] This was a multicultural art project in collaboration with Artists and Craftspeople in Education (ACE). School children were invited to produce artistic responses to 'Peopling' which were later displayed at the MoL in a children's art exhibition in May 1994.[722] Shortly after these initiatives, an independent steering committee was established to draft a memorandum and 'Articles of Association' for the establishment of a charitable trust to take over responsibility for the development and running of the MiD-P.[723] In 1994, this new Trust began to develop a joint business plan with the MoL for the purpose of opening a visitor centre for the display of the MoL's port history collections.[724]

In 1995 a Grade I listed North Quay West Indian Docks was eventually secured as the site for the new museum. At this time the MoL remained in an advisory role and retained ownership of the port and river collections stored at the Royal Victoria Docks.[725] Further developments continued to be made towards establishing a museum in 1996 when the Trustees and the Chairman of the MoL, Alderman Michael Oliver, submitted a £12 million funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.[726] This bid was aided by the MoL's development team who had carried out an exhaustive evaluation exercise on the feasibility of a museum at the West India Quay site. At the same time the LDDC had agreed to provide the West India Quay and a capital grant of £3.5 million.

In 1999 formal organisational ties were cut between the MoL and the new Trust, though close alignment with the project remained throughout, largely because the MoL retained ownership of their collections. As a result, there were 'legal as well as moral obligations behind the Museum of London's decision to re-involve itself with the [new museum's] future'.[727] In 2002 the Heritage Lottery Fund invited the MoL to become much more involved in the future of the proposed new museum. After months of negotiation, agreement was reached in February 2003 for the MiD-P/Trust to merge with the MoL. The new Museum of London Docklands opened on the 10th June 2003, as it was then renamed.

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[721] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1993/1994, p. 4.
[722] MoL Business Archives, London Wall, Annual Report 1993/1994, p. 4.
[723] Ibid, p. 2.
[724] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1994/1995, p. 19.
[725] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1995/1996, p. 17.
[726] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 1996/1997, p. 16.
[727] MoL Business Archives, Annual Report 2002/2003, p. 13.

Within their first year of opening the MoLD received 105,969 visitors. The MoL received 381,528 visitors.

The MoLD was different to the MoL in a number of ways. It focused exclusively on the history of the Dock area and the working histories of the East End. Unlike the MoL which inherited significant archaeological and historical material from both the Guildhall Museum and London Museum, the MoLD was founded on a contemporary collecting programme. It was also housed in a relevant historic building, the West India Quay warehouse, which was in itself an artefact of the history of the docks and slave trade. There were ways in which the two museums resembled one another, as one reviewer suggested at the time, '…the MoLD resembles its Museum of London parent, in which the Romans are aloft, and the Neo-Elizabethans down below.'[728] Though the MoLD lacked prehistoric collections, their London story began with the Romans.

The MoLD galleries began in AD43 with a gallery on Londinium, and the role of the River Thames in facilitating trade and settlement, moving up to the then present day:

1. 'Thames Highway AD50-1600'.
2. 'Trade Expansion 1600-1800'.
3. 'The Rhinebeck Panorama'.
4. 'The Coming of the Docks 1800-1820'.
5. 'City and River 1820-1840'.
6. 'Sailortown 1840-1850'.
7. 'First Port of Empire 1840-1939'.
8. Warehouse of the World 1840-1939'.
9. 'Thame Gallery 1850-1950'.
10. 'Dockland at War 1939-1945'.
11. 'New Port, New City Post-1945'.

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[728] John Hall, 'The Museum in Docklands', *The London Journal,* Vol. 29, No. 2, (2004), p. 63.

In the introduction to the 2003 'Museum in Docklands Highlights', the galleries are described as tracing, 'the fascinating two-thousand-year story of London's river, port and people. It is a story that stretches from the arrival of the Romans to the rise of Canary Wharf.'[729] Motifs found in the MoLD permanent galleries, such as London as the 'Warehouse of the World' (figure 40), were recycled from the MoL. Like the MoL's permanent galleries, empire was used to create a positive narrative of consumption and prosperity divorced from notions of production. In the 'First Port of Empire 1840 -1939' gallery, the guidebook states that 'London benefitted enormously from its position as the trading heart of the British Empire.' Also, in the 'Warehouse of the World 1840-1939' gallery, it is noted that: 'imports were dominated by Empire'. 'Sleek and fast "clippers"

Photo of the Introduction to the 'Warehouse of the World 1940-1939' page from the Museum of London Docklands, 2003.

Figure 40: Introduction to the 'Warehouse of the World 1940-1939' display at the Museum of London Docklands, 2003.
Source: Chris Ellmers, Museum in Docklands Highlights (London: Museum of London, 2003), p. 45.

were built', and 'London handled around 90 per cent of all trade' in the UK, handling 'some of the [...] most exotic and interesting cargoes.'[730]

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[729] Chris Ellmers, *Museum in Docklands Highlights* (London: Museum of London, 2003), p. 9.
[730] Ibid, p. 45.

The MoLD committed only a small corner of the museum to the history of slavery. In the MoLD's 'Trade and Expansion 1600-1800', where one might expect mention of the transatlantic slave trade, none was to be found. It covered this topic far less comprehensively, for example, than the Merseyside Maritime Museum slavery displays which launched to great success in 1994. Ana Lucia Araujo notes that between the 1990s and the opening of 'LSS' gallery in 2007, 'its publicity materials did not mention the slave trade but rather highlighted the warehouses and praised it as one of the "great monuments of European commercial power"'.[731] This began to change in 2005, when the immediacy of the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade became a pressing concern for museums across the UK.

There were a number of interrelated concerns coalescing around the upcoming bicentenary which led to the creation of the 'LSS' gallery in 2007. Some of these were internal, such as the desire to engage more critically with the history of the building. The immediacy of the bicentenary and the promise of funding, however, were also significant factors. Set against this context, and the febrile public debate that emerged around Britain's relationship with its colonial past, it is astonishing how behind the MoLD was when they began to plan this new gallery, compared to the changes gradually happening at MoL.

Before 2007, the majority of museums hadn't seriously engaged with Britain's imperial past with the exception of those notable examples referred to above, such as the Merseyside Museums. Paul Connerton has gone as far as to suggest that Britain's relationship and national collective memory around their imperial past before 2007 can be best characterised as 'humiliated silence' – 'a forgetting that is manifest in a widespread pattern of behaviour in civil society, and it is covert, unmarked and unacknowledged.'[732] 2007 provided a unique opportunity for museums to transcend what Eric Hobsbawm has described as 'essentialist myths of stable and homogenous historical nationhood' that had been for so long central to national development.[733]

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[731] Ana Lucia Araujo, *Shadows of the Past: Memory, Heritage and Slavery* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 27.

[732] Paul Connerton, 'Seven Types of Forgetting', *Memory Studies,* Vol. 1, No. 1, (2008), p. 67.

[733] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

'LSS' needs to be seen within this rising willingness of museums to deal with slavery, slowly at first, rising to a crescendo in 2007. Several other new museums and galleries opened at port cities across the UK in 2007. These museums and galleries built on a legacy of engagement that developed at port cities since the early 1990s, as discussed in chapter one. One notable example was the Atlantic Slave Trade Gallery at the Merseyside Maritime Museum opened in 1994, looking not just at the slave trade, but pre-colonial African culture.[734] In 2007, this became the International Slavery Museum (ISML), funded by the HLF as part of the bicentenary. Its location was symbolically important, much like the MoLD, as a recognition of Liverpool's role in the transatlantic slave trade.

We should not, however, assume that between 1994-2007 museums fully dealt with 'amnesia' around the legacy of the slave trade. This is best shown with Bristol, when in 1996 in celebrating their maritime achievements but failing to recognise their involvement in 'transatlantic conquests', public pressure and controversy led to the opening of an exhibition in 1999 which focused on Bristol and the Slave trade.[735] Since then, the Countering Colston campaign, for example, has challenged the way Bristol engages with the history and legacies of slavery through calling for the renaming of the city's long-standing commemorations of Edward Colston since 2016. Yet this was a meaningful period in Britain's reckoning with its colonial past and postcolonial present during which time a more radical change in representation occurred at the MoLD.

According to critics of the bicentenary moment much of the organisation of public memory, owing in part to government involvement, was predicated on a specific narrative which focused on abolition, and the ending of the slave trade. According to Cubitt, Smith and Wilson, this was because the history of slavery had been viewed 'backward', starting at the abolition of the slave trade, a story of 'mainly white, mainly male and mainly British abolitionist movement…' African-Caribbean British activists, commentators and others involved in the bicentenary criticised this 'abolition myth', reflecting 'the complex emotional relationship that many individuals of African heritage within British society' had

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[734] Stephen Small, 'Slavery, colonialism and museums representations in Great Britain: old and new circuits of migration', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2011), p. 117.
[735] Olivette Otele, 'Bristol, slavery and the politics of representation: The Slave Trade Gallery in the Bristol Museum', *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (2012), pp. 155-172.

to the history being considered that year. For many people of African heritage, there was a desire to see the 'experience of slavery to be given its full weight in public understandings of British history', but also on the 'richness and vitality of African cultural traditions, the strength of African resistance to enslavement, and the positive African and African-Caribbean contribution to modern British Society.'[736] It was this ambiguous relationship with Britain's imperial past that the MoLD had to contend.

The bicentenary then, was 'marked in practice by debates and critical exchanges to do with the content of the content of the commemoration…' Museums were front and centre in these debates. The 1807 commemorations after all spoke to larger issues to do with Britain's 'relationship between past and present in British society, about whose voices have the right to be heard when this relationship is discussed, and about the implications of all of this for understandings of nation, community and identity in contemporary Britain.'[737] How did the MoLD engage with these issues? When Raminder Kaur set out possible changes to the MoL's collecting and display practices in her 2005 discussion paper 'Unearthing our Past' she argued that a 'comparative focus on slavery throughout the ages and cultures could be a stimulating project to investigate, particularly with the bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery in 2007'.[738] It is not clear whether the report had any immediate impact on the decision to expand the gallery, although it was suggested that the MoLD was well-suited to do this.

According to David Spence, director of the MoLD (2004-2012), the idea to expand the slavery gallery at the MoLD began in 2005. In writing about the process of creating the 'LSS' gallery, Spence noted that the MoLD West India Quay building posed an immediate challenge being a 'unique historical artefact that is a testament to a crucial chapter in the history of Britain as well as the African Diaspora'.[739] Echoing Ana Lucia Araujo's remarks,

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[736] Smith, Cubitt, Wilson and Fouseki, 'Introduction' in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.) in, *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 3-4.

[737] Smith, Cubitt, Wilson and Fouseki, 'Introduction', p. 1.

[738] Kaur, *Unearthing our Past,* p. 11.

[739] David Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands', in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Enslavement and Abolition in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 149.

Spence noted that at this time the MoLD did little to address this history before. According to Spence, this was because:

> Little research existed on the role of the West India Docks in the Slave Trade or, for that matter, the part played by London, and the museum focused on the working history of the river and operation of the port of London which was the area of expertise of the first director Chris Ellmers, who led the development of the Museum.[740]

Tom Wareham, Curator of Community and Maritime history at the MoLD, in an interview conducted in 2007, also noted that despite the provocative history of the West India Quay, the MoLD failed to provide a more comprehensive statement on the history of slavery and that the MoLD 'hadn't yet drawn enough attention to that aspect in the museum.' Wareham continued by stating that 'the first thing that we should do as a museum is to adjust that element of the story.'[741] Ultimately, the decision to add this crucial part of Britain's history to the MoLD galleries 'dovetailed with the national interest with the transatlantic slave trade awakened by the imminence of the bicentenary' which 'created funding opportunities that would assist the museum to achieve its ambition'.[742] Though Spence argues that the initiative to 'create a new gallery was not simply because of the bicentenary.'[743]

A Heritage Lottery Fund annual report for 2007 shows that they funded '80 projects in almost every part of the UK which sought in various ways to mark the 200th anniversary of the parliamentary abolition of the slave trade...' with the aim of engendering greater access to museums and heritage sites especially for those who had been historically excluded in 'our island story'.[744] There was a sense that 1807 would stimulate debate around Britain's imperial legacies as a means of thinking about who is included in debates about national

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[740] Ibid, p. 150.

[741] Interview with Tom Wareham, 1807 Commemorated: The abolition of the slave trade, [online], <https://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/interviews/wareham.html>, accessed 28th August 2019.

[742] Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands', p. 150.

[743] Ibid, p. 150.

[744] Heritage Lottery Funding, 'National Heritage Memorial Fund', Lottery Distribution Account For the Year Ended 31 March 2007, [online], <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/corporate/hlfannualreport2006_2007.pdf>, accessed 3rd September 2019, p. 29.

identity. Writing in 2007, Catherine Hall, who worked as a consultant on 'LSS', argued that many of the museum and gallery initiatives staged in 2007 would have been impossible without the £16 million that was set aside by Blair's Labour Government at that time.[745] The MoLD received a total of £506,500 from the HLF, and an additional £230,000 from Renaissance in the Region funding for the new gallery.

The lead up to the commemorations and the event itself was also stimulated from 'below', and one cannot understate the importance of the involvement of Afro-Caribbean communities, the wider Black community, academics, activists and museum professionals in reinterpreting this part of Britain's history.[746] As Catherine Hall, herself an active participant, duly noted at the time:

> Innumerable men and women, teachers, community activists, radio-producers, actors, artists, church members, museum workers, and musicians have been thinking in different ways about shared histories and presents for a long time. It is this body of work and thought which it has been possible to draw on this year and which has in turn inspired so much more activity.[747]

Community consultation was an important element in creating the 'LSS' gallery, and drew upon community activists, academics, afro-Caribbean community groups and others. The MoLD's consultative process drew upon a long tradition of community consultation established by its parent museum, the MoL, first established with 'Peopling' and in subsequent exhibitions.[748] Community consultation as a practice, however, had faced criticisms since the time of 'Peopling'. Spence noted that previous forms of practice are 'no longer convincing' and curators 'whether they admit it or not, cannot be objective… they bring their own views and interpretation to bear on any subject.'[749] The consultative process for 'LSS' attempted then to share authority with grass roots movements much more than 'Peopling' had done, though in practice it was not without problems.

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[745] Catherine Hall, 'Introduction', *History Workshop Journal,* No. 64, (Autumn 2007), p. 2.
[746] Hall, 'Introduction', p. 2.
[747] Ibid, p. 3.
[748] Spence, 'Making the London', p. 151.
[749] Ibid, p. 153.

The MoLD initially consulted Baroness Lola Young. Lola Young was born in Kensington, London, in 1951. After an extensive acting career, Young worked as a Professor of Cultural Studies at Middlesex University from 1990 to 2001. From 2001 to 2004 she was appointed to head of culture at the Greater London Authority, before being made a life crossbench peer on the 22nd June 2004, taking the title of Baroness Young of Hornsey.[750] Young had long been a supporter of the MoLD, having worked extensively across the arts and heritage sector in the UK. Baroness Young met communities 'independent of the museum to consider what a museum's appropriate response should be and then advise the museum of their views.'[751] She brought together community activists, academics and community members with a strong interest in the history of the British slave trade, many of whom were of African and Caribbean heritage, and held meetings without museum representatives present. Spence notes this was to ensure that meetings were not 'inhibited'. So, it was unmediated and un-facilitated with no representatives of the museum present, unlike 'Peopling'.[752]

From this wider group the MoLD invited a smaller number to make up a more formal consultative group which met once a month. The group also included prominent academics such as Professor Catherine Hall, a historian specialising in gender, class and empire in the 19th century, and Dr Caroline Bressey, a specialist in human geography and the Black presence in Britain. Then there were community activists and representative of community groups including the Tower Hamlets African Caribbean Mental Health Organisation (THACMHO).[753]

The consultative group was an important part of the exhibition. Only one member of staff at the MoLD shared African-Caribbean heritage and this new gallery would be 'dealing with a subject that for some was deeply connected to their own family history.' Community consultation helped the MoLD to navigate 'sensitive issues', and also helped the staff to negotiate their own discomfort in dealing with this febrile subject. It also helped the

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[750] Baroness Young of Hornsey, Biography, [online], <https://www.parliament.uk/biographies/lords/baroness-young-of-hornsey/3696>, accessed 3rd September 2019.
[751] Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery at the Museum of London Docklands', p. 151.
[752] Interview with David Spence, 1807 Commemorated: The abolition of the slave trade, [online], <https://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/interviews/spence.html>, Accessed 28th August 2019.
[753] Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery', p. 151.

Museum to destabilise their own 'curatorial voice', by allowing for those with a particular 'life experience' and 'historical views which did not match or agree with received academic opinion' to be included within the displays. In this way the MoLD felt that they were challenging received historical orthodoxies around, for example, 'how plantation slavery came to an end; through Acts of Parliament in London or through the erosion of the will of plantation overseers when faced with irrepressible resistance?'[754] It also allowed the MoLD to seek guidance, owing to their lack of appropriate collections, and difficulties they found in the 'representation of African and Caribbean perspectives within the museum structure.'[755] This process was much more conscious of the challenges presented by making postcolonial exhibitions than with 'Peopling'.

Laurajane Smith and Kalliopi Fouseki analysed the MoLD's consultative process and its outcomes, as part of a larger study of the outcomes of consultations which occurred at seven museums across the UK as part of the bicentenary in 2007. They concluded that many of those that took part in the process were frustrated at what they perceived to be a tick-box exercise.[756] According to Smith and Fouseki this was because of competing definitions about what was meant by 'consultation'.[757] There were indeed difficulties in the consultation process at the MoLD, though it did ultimately produce results.

The consultation group first decided on the scope of the 'LSS' gallery, arguing that it should address the wider Black history of Britain, and other related hidden histories. This was ultimately deemed to be too ambitious, and it was decided that the gallery should focus on the London Docklands, rather than attempt to produce an encyclopaedic gallery about the British slave trade.[758] Early on the group decided on the objectives for the gallery, before moving on to discuss in detail the content of the displays. These were included in the MoLD's HLF bid:

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[754] Ibid, p. 154.

[755] Interview with Tom Wareham, 1807 Commemorated.

[756] Melissa Bennett and Kristy Warren, 'Looking Back and Facing Forwards: Ten Years of the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery', *Journal of Historical Geography,* Vol. 63, (January 2019), 94–99.

[757] Laurajane Smith and Kalliopi Fouseki, 'The Role of Museums as "Places of Social Justice": Community Consultation and the 1807 Bicentenary, in Laurajane Smith, Geoffrey Cubitt, Ross Wilson and Kalliopi Fouseki (ed.), *Representing Abolition and Enslavement in Museums: Ambiguous Engagements* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 97-115.

[758] Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery', p. 156.

- Museum of London Docklands is a surviving structure connected to the triangular slave trade

- London played a central role in the transatlantic slave trade but public awareness of this is very low

- London's wealth and Britain's industrial revolution were fuelled by profits from the plantations of the Caribbean and the labours of enslaved Africans

- West Africa, the Caribbean and London are irrevocably connected by the slave trade and this interconnection shaped nineteenth- and twentieth-century London and is still evident today;

- The Struggle to end slavery and the slave trade united the interests of people on both sides of the Atlantic, and saw the first mass mobilisation in Britain of a diverse alliance of men and women from different social classes and backgrounds

- The abolition campaign highlights conflicted ideas about race which still haunt us today

- The story told in the gallery is about the making of British society. It is therefore *our* story and affects us all irrespective of race[759]

After these objectives were agreed upon, Tom Wareham then set about creating a 'skeleton of what the gallery might contain and the basic story that it could tell'. This included, '…various elements that I thought needed to be there: the story of this building, the story of this dock, London's history of a shipping port, some of the fairly basic thigs really', which was then put to the group. The consultative group then made suggestions for what they wanted included. The group suggested that it should focus more on individuals and the lives of those that were involved in the slave trade, both the enslaved and slave owners.[760] These were written by the museum curators after 'careful discussion, debate and agreement with the group about what it was the panels needed to convey in order to support the overall structure of the gallery.' The group agreed that the panels should express, for example, that: 'that London had a significant Black presence since the sixteenth century; that Africa comprised sophisticated societies with developed skills that in some

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[759] MoL Business Archive, Heritage Lottery Fund Application Document, Museum of London, 29th September 2006.
[760] Interview with Tom Wareham, 1807 Commemorated.

cases surpassed their European equivalents long before the intervention of European slave traders in the sixteenth century.'[761]

Negotiating the texts was a difficult task. Several members of the consultative group were concerned that the gallery would present Black people as victims, where others wanted to show the 'whole terrible truth of enslavement…' This was resolved by creating two types of overlapping experiences for visitors. The first was a normal gallery visit with text written on display panels, objects and interactive displays, which conveyed relevant information about the relationship between the dock area and the British slave trade. The other was a sound and light show which occurred every twenty minutes projecting powerful images over the traditional displays and which included a voice-over describing in 'imperious tones' what happened to enslaved Africans.[762]

Two weeks before the MoLD's deadline to submit the final texts for production, the consultative group were concerned that the displays carried too much of the Museum's authorial voice. In order to get the texts ready on time, and to ensure that the gallery properly reflected the groups ownership in creating this 'new history' for the museum, it was agreed that one member of the group and one museum curator would work together to rewrite the texts. This was successful, and revision were finally accepted by the group.[763] Ultimately, the gallery reflected the objectives set out at the start of the process, and demonstrated a significant interpretive shift dealing much more critically with the history of the British slave trade and London's place in that history.

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[761] Spence, 'Making the London, Sugar and Slavery Gallery', p. 157.
[762] Ibid, pp. 158-159.
[763] Ibid, p. 158-159.

Photo showing the Museum of Docklands Floorplan from the Museum of London Docklands website: https://www.museumoflondon. org.uk/museum-london- docklands/plan-your-visit/floor- plan
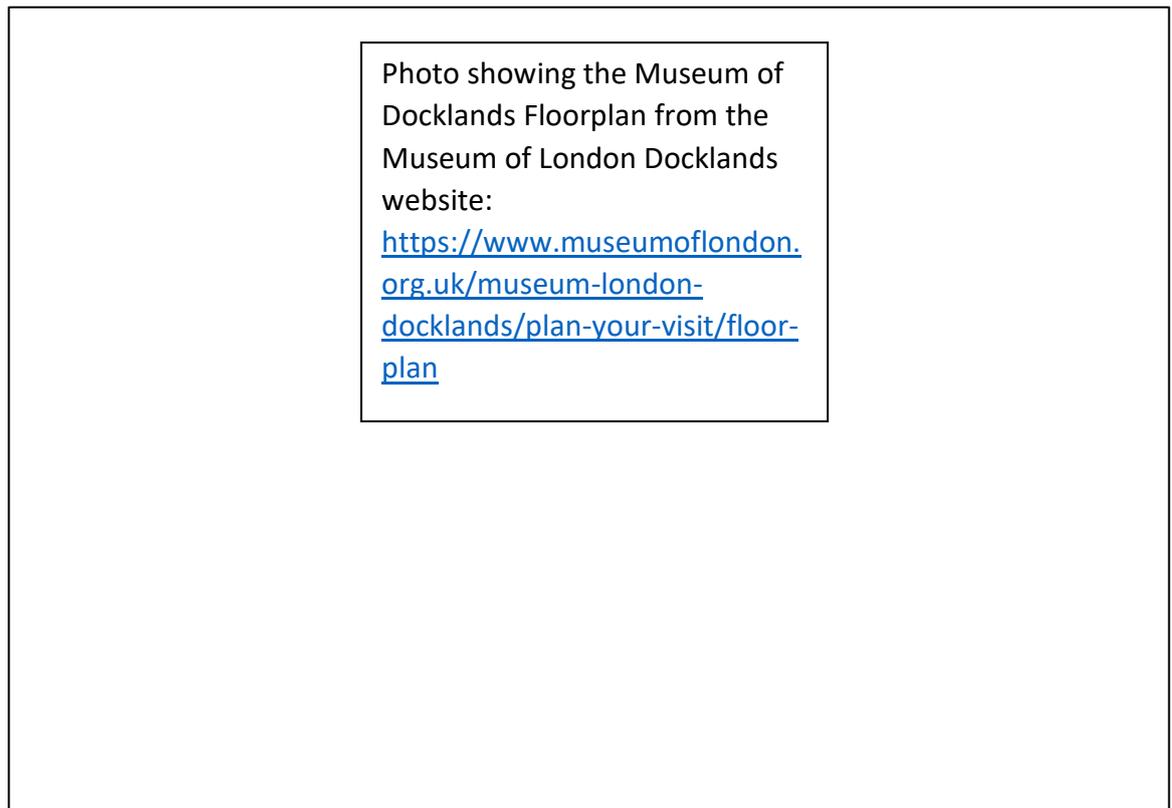
Figure 41: Museum of London Docklands floorplan, 2007.
Source: <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/plan-your-visit/floor-plan>, accessed 4th September 2019.

The 'LSS' gallery was located on the third floor of the Museum (figure 41), after 'Thames Highway AD43-1600', 'Trade and Expansion 1600-1800', and 'Legal Quay 1790s'. The introduction to the 'LSS' gallery in the 2011 MoLD Museum Highlights book provides the following summary:

> Until comparatively recently, London's role in the transatlantic slave trade had been forgotten. Within the last few years, research by a transatlantic team of scholars has revealed once again the extent of London's involvement in this wicked trade. It is now realised that London was the fourth most important slave trading port in the world [...] London, however, benefitted more than any of those [Liverpool, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro] ports from the profits of slavery. Money raised from the sale of

the enslaved or the sugar and rum they produced, found its way into the commercial world of the capital…[764]

On entering the gallery, visitors encountered a list of ships, discussed in more detail below, that traded slaves from the West India Quay (figure 42). The gallery then moves on to discuss the economics of slavery, and of how the money made from it shaped the city of London, particularly the financial centres. The exhibition also deals with resistance and abolition, contemporary representations of black people in popular culture and how the legacies of slavery and the racism which remains 'unresolved and continue as a legacy for our society today'.[765] The gallery dealt explicitly with the brutality of slavery evidencing a demonstrable shift in interpretation, moving away from this motif of 'warehouse of the world' to accepting the difficult legacies of empire. One major acquisition for the gallery was The Mills Papers. These were a collection of manuscripts produced by Thomas and John Mills, both plantation owners in St. Kitts and Nevis. The papers included letter books, and journals of their daily work, which provide a window to the horrible conditions endured by slaves, and the types of punishments dealt out by plantation owners in the 1760s-1770s.[766] The gallery content exposed a much more critical history of slavery and empire.

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[764] Sandra Pisano (ed.), *Museum of London Docklands: Museum Highlights* (London: Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers ltd, 2011), p. 22.
[765] Ibid*,* p. 28.
[766] Ibid*,* p. 26.

Figure 42: Introductory Panel to 'London, Sugar and Slavery', 2007.
Source: Museum of London Docklands, <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/permanent-galleries/london-sugar-slavery>, accessed 28th September 2019.

One of the more striking elements of the gallery is a large panel near the entrance of the exhibition which documents the names, captains and owners of the ships that traded in enslaved Africans, whose names were not recorded (figure 42). This device helped to establish the concrete but intimate involvement of London and the docks in the slave trade. It also marked a change in the type of display techniques used previously at the MoLD and MoL. This particular display speaks more to memorialisation and symbolism in helping the visitor to interrogate the politics of memory around London's role in the slave trade, and the nature of the trade itself.

The emergence of memorial museums in response to violence and atrocities of the twentieth century led to a development of new museum practices, and an acknowledgement that museums are useful spaces 'for addressing past injustices and legitimating nations or groups in the eyes of the international community—by recognizing past victimization and demonstrating a new regime's willingness to learn from history.'[767]

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[767] Amy Sodaro, *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museum and the Politics of the Past* (London: Rutgers University Press 2018), p. 4.

Memorial museums developed a set of common practices such as walls of names, with the aim of encouraging visitors to empathise through an emphasis on individual victims and survivors.[768] Such devices were markedly different from display techniques used before at the MoL and MoLD.

In summary, the MoLD's 'LSS' gallery was both a departure from other postcolonial exhibitions and interventions at the MoL and MoLD, using new display techniques and engaging more critically than before with histories of slavery and empire. Some of the messages in the 'LSS' gallery, however, were not entirely different, highlighting, for example, the presence of Black people in Britain since the sixteenth century. Ultimately, 'LSS' represented a significant shift in public engagement around Britain's relationship with the past, facilitated by community engagement and greater willingness to engage with Britain's colonial past. Empire and histories of slavery were now becoming central to contemporary issues of diversity, as histories of immigration had been in the 1990s with 'Peopling'.

The Legacy of 'Peopling'

What then was the legacy of 'Peopling' or trace of it on the main MoL and the MoLD beyond 1994 when the exhibition ended? In answering this, it is worth pausing to think about how museums perceive their options. Simon Knell, in discussing how museums change, has argued that 'museums are always reacting to a perceived future – they are all opportunists – but yet they must also reflect upon their past and on the inertia that surrounds them.'[769]

> The museum sees two possible futures, one that reflects the present trajectory and one that can be obtained by reinvention. One needs to understand that this is in many respects a managing of myths, as neither past nor future are neutral or factual; both are political… museums are constantly in flux, and change is often fine scale rather than pervasive.[770]

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[768] Ibid, p. 25.
[769] Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod, and Sheila Watson (ed.), *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and Are Changed* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. xix.
[770] Ibid, p. xx.

'Peopling' responded to a perceived future, and present, in which cultural diversity posed challenges to the way that it approached its collecting and display practices. This fed into broader conversations about its role as a city museum and encouraged the MoL to embrace its unique position as a city museum to engage in contemporary issues around urban change. Change was not at first pervasive, but the message and spirit of 'Peopling' informed much of what it did with regards to more inclusive and postcolonial histories of London.

Through 'Peopling' the MoL developed a suite or repertoire of actions, that allowed it to frame old collections in new ways and to develop representations that reflected London's postcolonial present. These changes continued along shifting social, cultural and political discourses around racism, multiculturalism, diversity and globalisation. Much of this precipitated fine scale changes, later resulting in larger changes to the permanent galleries. The MoL's interpretation of empire evolved towards a more global perspective whereby invocations of, for example, the Windrush moment allowed for more inclusive approaches to histories of empire to foster ideas of social exclusion, but also to challenge more difficult aspects of that history. Subsequent additions to the permanent galleries such as 'London Now' and 'The World City' did the same.

The Museum of London also had to reflect also on its own inertia. The MoL could not be all things, to all people, at all times. This is a challenge faced by all city museums in covering the history of a metropolis. The MoL remained bound by its genealogy, its site and the layout of its permanent galleries, which engendered a teleological narrative that was not easily disrupted without large structural change. This remained a point of contention for the MoL and a challenge for creating new visitor experiences.

The MoLD provided the opportunity to engage more critically and radically with histories of empire precipitated in part by the immediate challenge posed by the West India Quay Warehouse site to explore histories of slavery. The MoLD itself did not represent a step change in representation when it opened in 2003. Only with 'LSS' highlighting the brutality of empire and the slave trade can we see a significant representational shift. In much the same way that the Roman gallery and working life in London was the core story at the MoL, the MoLD was itself a project about the history of dockers and vanishing trades, and though using some of the 'Peopling' devices, it took further external stimuli, much like with

changes after the renewal of the Roman gallery, for greater change around the immigration story to take root, and challenge its deeply embedded historical genealogy. Those additional stimuli are borne out in this chapter by providing a new perspectives on the history of the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, demonstrating how the confluence of funding, support from authorities and the selection of an effective steering committee could make fundamental changes in approach at the new museum, changes that might not have been made without the commemoration funds.

One of the more significant contributions of this chapter is to show how analysis of temporary exhibitions like 'Peopling', paying close attention to its broader institutional function in setting new multicultural agendas, leads to interesting questions about the perceived ephemeral nature of temporary and seemingly smaller creative interventions at museums. Despite the fact that 'Peopling' was a temporary programme, it had creative and long-term impacts, and was anything but ephemeral, allowing the Museum to develop new processes, partnerships, approaches and, however slowly, affecting the permanent displays. With regards to methodology, my analysis of 'Peopling' and its legacy suggests that future museum histories that analyse the contributions of temporary museum exhibitions should take seriously the processes and tangents initiated by these temporary interventions, which work slowly, invisible to the visitor's eye immediately after, but powerful nonetheless. And, as museums seek to test new ways of telling stories with the aim of integrating them into their permanent galleries[771] more research is needed on how museums have developed embedding strategies historically and how successful they've been in integrating new interpretations and perspectives across their programming historically. This chapter provides a method and approach for addressing these questions.

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[771] Jonathan Wallis, 'The Past is Now: Birmingham and the British Empire, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery', *Museums Journal,* 118/02, (2018), pp. 52-55.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

The Museum of London has largely been ignored, or passed over in footnotes, in debates around the relationship between museums and empire. This is due to the fact that much of the literature in museum studies, and also of cultural histories, has focused on 'indigenous concerns and anthropological collections, particularly in terms of colonialism and post-colonialism […] of the official histories of national institutions in the wake of late-twentieth century debates about the "nation", national anniversaries and the importance of official collective memory.'[772] Yet, the Museum of London, arguably Britain's foremost city museum, provides an exciting space to analyse the underlying conditions of shifting representations of empire in the postcolonial period. After all, the MoL is located in what was once the imperial metropole, a city with a culturally diverse population many of whom have been migrants and the descendants of migrants from former colonies of the British Empire.

The Museum of London opened in 1976, after Britain's empire had been severely diminished through decolonisation. This was a formative period for Britain. Decolonisation was not uniformly expressed in British culture, rather '…the demise of empire posed a formidable challenge, not only to the idea of Britain as a world power, but also the legitimacy and credibility of key ideas, assumptions and values that had become implicated in the British imperial experience.'[773] As a Museum whose mission was to capture '…the whole of this great complex [London]; the life, work and play of its people; its buildings; its specific history as a capital city', a city at one time the capital of Britain's empire, it provides an exciting case study.[774] The MoL is an excellent space in which to examine how heritage institutions have negotiated the legacies of empire during a period in which decolonisation eroded colonial assumptions and ideas. It also provides an excellent opportunity to analyse how a major city museum adapted its interpretation of histories of colonialism in response

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[772] Bronwyn Labrum, 'Making Pakeha Histories in New Zealand Museums: Community and identity in the post-war period', in Simon J. Knell, Suzanne McLeod and Sheila Watson (ed), *Museum Revolutions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 149.

[773] Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 11.

[774] MoL Business Archives, Box 1, Formative Years, 19A/E, Confidential Letter to the Board 1972, p. 2.

to shifting socio-political and cultural contexts around race, immigration and anti-racist protest; and in response to overlapping museological and institutional concerns.

How and why did the Museum of London begin to engage more critically with histories of British colonialism? How was this framed in a local context, specific to London and its communities? How did this change between 1976 and 2007? These questions guided my thesis, which builds on a body of literature that has analysed shifting representations of empire in museums across the UK and in the former British colonies. My introduction set out a story in which empire was vital to museums. It is now widely held that as museums '…developed in Britain and throughout its burgeoning empire, [they] were inextricably bound up with the nature and practices of imperialism.'[775] Despite this strong formative relationship, however, it is important to move away from 'overarching pronouncements about the role of "the museum" in buttressing perceived ideologies of empire', recognising the specific historical contexts of individual museums over time.[776]

Chapter two charted the development of the Guildhall Museum and London Museum, and the amalgamation of the two. Whilst the evolution of museums in the nineteenth century was inextricably linked to empire and nation building, these two museums and their collections showed no direct acknowledgment of empire, or representation of London as an imperial city. The Guildhall was an early, if not reluctant, civic museum which sought to protect London's Roman remains in face of accelerating municipal redevelopment. The London Museum was an early city museum, which sought to capture the lives of ordinary working Londoners, stimulated also by civic reform and civic pride to mark London as a great European capital. Ironically, when the two merged, just after the main period of decolonisation of the 1940s-1960s, empire played a much more significant role in the MoL displays. Historians have argued that the relationship outlined above between museums and empire underwent a significant rupture with decolonisation, and the end of empire meant 're-invention' and the erasure of colonial allusions.[777] Chapter three demonstrated that contrary to historians 'colonial erasure' thesis, empire was central to the MoL

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[775] Sarah Longair and John McAleer, 'Introduction', in Sarah Longair and John McAleer (ed.), *Curating empire: museums and the British imperial experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 3.

[776] Ibid, p. 5.

[777] Robert Aldrich, 'Colonial museums in postcolonial Europe', in Dominic Thomas (ed.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge 2012), p. 18.

permanent galleries and interpretation of London in 1976, resembling an old-fashioned linear story of unfolding success with empire as its apogee. The MoL's 'Imperial London' gallery was explicit about the benefits that overseas expansion and trade brought to London. Though the degree and nature of the colonial link was often partially disguised through euphemistic language, or by divorcing notions of consumption from production. Contrary to the idea that the loss of empire was central to the way the museums treated the subject, empire had receded by this time far enough into the past that it found new life in a nostalgic reimagining of London as a foreign country, a golden age, when London was its most prosperous.

How and why did change come to the Museum of London? Change came from 1989, when the MoL began planning for their 1993-94 temporary exhibition *The Peopling of London Fifteen Thousand Years of Settlement from Oversea*s*.* 'Peopling' was a formative project that sought to reimagine metropolitan narratives for the multicultural and postcolonial present, informed by broader museological shifts overlapping with shifting socio-political contexts bound up with anti-immigrant and multicultural discourse. 'Peopling' cannot, however, be viewed as a one-dimensional response to postcolonial critiques that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s. 'Peopling' also needs to be examined in its specific museological and historical context, as well as being set against a broader postcolonial shift which began in the latter half of the twentieth century as those 'who are "collected"' were 'demanding a voice in their own representation.'[778] It is, however, within several overlapping processes which converged around broader museological shifts, predominantly concerned with a recognition of the importance of visitors to their survival and their social role, where we find the why and how.

Those more specific socio-political concerns over representation, and contemporary discourse around immigration, were to the fore in Merriman's exhibition proposal. 'Peopling' was a museological response to toxic anti-immigrant and racist rhetoric that had been exacerbated with the rise of far-right groups such as the BNP in the 1980s which called into question Britain's self-perceived tolerance of others. Merriman himself has stated that at this time he was not aware of formative postcolonial theory or critiques, and that these

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[778] Hilde S. Klein, *The Museum in Transition: a philosophical perspective* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), p. 42.

were not responsible for his conceptualisation of the exhibition. 'Peopling' was an example of a community history approach in line with contemporary multiculturalism which sought to foreground the 'separate histories of individual national or ethnic groups, in terms of how they arrived, settled and contributed to London' in defence of Britain's multiracial society.[779] This brought Merriman and the Museum into contact with Rozina Visram, who was instrumental in shaping 'Peopling', allying the exhibition with a historical shift to represent the Black presence in Britain, which in part built on the Black Art Movement which 'came of age in the 1980s with a militant stance against the exclusion of minorities from British art institutions.'[780] A parallel movement emerged which challenged exclusionary narratives in museums, evidenced through Visram's work with the Geffrye Museum, and which brought museums into the same debate.

The 'Peopling' programme was also shaped by museological shifts precipitated by the New Museology, responding to calls for museums to be more inclusive. 'Peopling' was an exercise in broadening the Museum's demographic and making the museum more accessible to ethnic minority communities. Bound up with representational concerns, 'Peopling' encapsulated a shift in thinking in which city museums in particular were wrestling with the challenge of how to represent their multi-ethnic communities. This needs to be seen within a broader transnational context. My archival research revealed, tentatively, transnational exchanges and dialogue with other urban history and migration museums, demonstrating that museums in former settler colonies were engaged in conversations around how to respond to their multicultural demographics. A transnational research study of city museums in other imperial cities to further contextualise the role of city museums and their engagements with histories of colonialism in the UK is greatly needed.

The visibility of this representational shift in the displays and broader programme of 'Peopling' was dealt with in chapters five and six. In their reconceptualisation of London's development from pre-history to the present through the lens of immigration we find an ambiguous engagement with histories of colonialism. When 'Peopling' is viewed alongside

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[779] Catherine Ross, 'From Migration to Diversity and Beyond: The Museum of London Approach', in in Christopher Whitehead, Susannah Eckersley, Katherine Lloyd, and Rhiannon Mason (ed.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: People, Places and Identities* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 66.
[780] Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe after Empire: Decolonization, Society and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 349.

similar exhibitions in North American and Australia, we find that its engagement with colonial histories was shaped by a similar fraught negotiation trying to present a more positive history of the contribution of ethnic minorities, whilst simultaneously trying to deal with negative aspects of London's past. Tom Hume's original conceptualisation of the Museum to instil a sense of pride of place clearly loomed large and long over the Museum's development. This resulted in histories that in some ways worked against their aim by presenting communities as essentially different, and other. Despite this ambiguous engagement, chapters five and six show that there was a shift in interpretation of histories of colonialism, dealing more critically with, for example, the history of slavery and racism, when set against the original galleries.

Chapter seven, through an analysis of visitor comment books, shows that some visitors framed their experience using those these socio-political contexts outlined in chapter four, and at times were conscious of the historical continuity between Britain's colonial past and contemporary issues around immigration. If the exhibition wasn't officially about empire, then for some visitors, though by no means a majority, it was unofficially about empire. Alongside other important structuring issues such as race, representation and anti-racist activism which emerged, my analysis also revealed interesting socio-dialogic practices and debates between visitors within the visitor books indicative of more contemporary social media practices.

In chapter eight, I mapped changes across permanent and temporary programming, outreach activities and community events at the MoL using annual reports after 'Peopling' had concluded. This demonstrated how the Museum developed a suite of actions through 'Peopling' to sustain more diverse representations and histories, including: the ability to 'generate' oral histories and to capture diverse experiences of London life; building community relationships to source expertise and new perspectives from local community groups and ethnic minority groups; and opening up the museum space for discussions concerning London's ethnic minority communities. All of these compounded to help the Museum to further develop postcolonial representations. Despite introducing these new practices, change was at first slow and incremental. At first, fine scale changes were made to existing galleries. More significant change came with the making of new exhibitions which took a more global approach to London's history, at times linking centre and

periphery which exposed London's imperial entanglements. This was true with subsequent exhibitions such as 'Windrush: Sea Change' (1998) which dealt explicitly with the devastation wrought on Jamaica as a result of colonisation.

The Museum of London Docklands represented more significant representational change, though limited in its first incarnation. At its opening in 2003 the MoLD's galleries were fairly traditional in its interpretation. As Ana Lucia Araujo noted the MoLD initially failed to connect with the Docklands imperial past, neglecting to engage with the implicit history of the West India Quay, and strongly resembling its parent organisation in 1976. This was due in part to the deeply historically embedded mission in both organisations and the perspectives of their directors. Both museums were principally concerned with representing the working class. Given this focus both museum's failed to look much further to those, for example, transported on slave ships to plantations. It took another external influence to get make a final qualitative leap and activation of the suite of actions developed through 'Peopling'. Of course, with the MoLD, they brought in one of the key exponents of the New Imperial Histories, Catherine Hall, who as discussed in the introduction had helped develop more complex understandings of the relationship between Britain and its empire. The extra stimuli on top of this gathering museum engagement with postcolonial critiques and shifting socio-political contexts, was the immediacy of the bicentenary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and accompanying public debate, as well as the promise of Heritage Lottery Funding.

These two vectors created an urgent need, and urgent financial opportunity (the MoLD received almost £700,000). The result was the new 'London Sugar, and Slavery' gallery which opened in 2007. This new gallery was developed using community consultation, working with activists like Baroness Young, prominent academics like Catherine Hall and community partners. The resulting gallery represented a qualitatively different narrative of slavery and empire more broadly. It dealt explicitly with London's intimate involvement with the darkest aspects of empire. The Museum sought out new and more radical interpretive methods. More difficult and provocative objects were used such as the inclusion of slave manacles. The installation which lists the ships that traded in slaves, and which brings attention to the absence of the names of the enslaved, used elements of remembrance and sorrow for those who suffered in that making of London, its river and port communities, and its global connections.

Today, more than ever, as competing 'interpretations of Britain's imperial past and the meanings it carries for our current condition' are constantly renegotiated, museums continue to play a crucial role in negotiating Britain's imperial past and their legacies in the present.[781] As Dominic Thomas has eloquently put it, 'The study of exhibition sites in Europe during both the colonial and postcolonial eras provides an opportunity to engage in comparative historical analysis and to improve the contextualisation of the official and public discourses they have triggered.'[782] Museums are also sites through which we can locate moments of change and discontinuity. But we need to expand our case studies to include a variety of different museums if we are to understand more fully the cultural impact of empire in the twentieth and twenty-first century. We must also be careful not to overlook more mundane concerns that occupy the minds of museum administrators and which limit the actions and ambitions of curators in their daily practices. Museums have made significant changes to their practices over the last three decades, opening up the museum to new voices and perspectives, taking more critically informed approaches to more difficult histories, not afraid to engage with contemporary issues, however imperfect at times.

Returning to Simon Knell, '…museums are constantly in flux, and change is often fine scale rather than pervasive. Nevertheless, each change incrementally, and sometimes fundamentally, changes the institution.'[783] The Museum of London is currently engaged in a new move from its London Wall site to West Smithfield into the currently dilapidated market buildings. As Catherine Hall has argued, 'Efforts to reshape historical memory can […] be made through history writing, school textbooks, exhibitions in museums, memorials, statues and commemorative plaques. Many of the activities associated with 2007 were indeed of this kind.'[784] 'Peopling' and the 'LSS' gallery, are testament the MoL's deepening engagement with colonial histories and an understanding of the contestations over its interpretation. This move to West Smithfield provides an opportunity for the museum to

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[781] Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 132.

[782] Dominic Thomas, 'Introduction', in Dominic Thomas (ed.), *Museums in Postcolonial Europe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 1.

[783] Simon J. Knell, 'Introduction', in Simon J. Knell *et al* (ed.), *Museum Revolutions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. xx.

[784] Catherine Hall, 'Doing reparatory history: bringing 'race' and slavery home', *Race and Class,* Vol. 60, No. 1, (2018), p. 9.

consolidate all that it has learnt, the suite of actions and practices it has developed in creating postcolonial representations since 'Peopling', to reimagine a museum where these historical inequities are made explicit. Hopefully the Museum will continue on their current trajectory, taking stock of more and more of the myriad voices calling not only for the inclusion of their histories but the inclusion of Black agency in the making of the record.[785]

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[785] Colin Prescod, 'Archives, race, class and rage', *Race and Class,* Vol. 58, No. 4, (2017), pp. 76-84.

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