

## Chapter 5

### **Why do Emotions Matter in Museums and heritage sites?**

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All cultures have what we might call an ‘emotional scale’; appropriate emotional responses to individual and community events. Such official emotional expressions are often embedded and enacted through a range of ceremonies and common experiences which form a process of remembering in an appropriate or publicly approved manner. This revisiting of the past provides a reminder of the ‘affect’ of the emotions associated with the events thus commemorated. The past is thus accorded an emotional register and the present is understood, in part, through feelings associated with events and individuals long ago. However, such emotions will tell as much about the present as the past. New emotions can be ascribed to past events as part of the evolving nature of historical understanding. Such emotions embody values and moralities which underpin certain types of social relations and which help to make sense of events and people in the past.

It is the purpose of this paper to explore how history museums in particular are sites of emotional expression and regulation, how they produce affective responses, and how the values associated with such emotions are expressed – in other words how they not only stimulate us to think but also to feel and what that tells us about the histories they produce and ourselves. Thus this paper is about what emotions do and how their evocation is used deliberately or accidentally in museums, and why this should matter to us, particularly when we come to understand how people learn and understand the past. It uses examples drawn from museums in the UK, Turkey and Germany, and considers histories relating to slavery, the ethnic origins of nations and national identity, and draws on theories of historical distancing, along with the notion of empathy as a tool for learning.

## **Emotions**

It is surprising that so little attention has been paid to the ways in which museums generate emotions and how this affects learning, in particular about the past. While it has long been recognised that enjoyment is an important aid to learning and that empathy can help people understand other people's emotions as well as their ideas there is no comprehensive study of the emotional lives of museum visitors as they grapple with historical characters and events.<sup>1</sup> It is understood that they need to feel welcomed and comfortable in their surroundings and that a positive attitude towards a museum visit facilitates learning. There has been some research as to how certain types of material culture, when handled by school children, can affect the senses and generate feelings.<sup>2</sup> However, there is little understanding of the ways in which different emotional experiences can be engendered in history museums for the general visiting public, and how and why this affects what is learned. Some chapters have sought to open up this topic and this chapter seeks to add to these discussions.<sup>3</sup> Before we go further it is important to clarify that here we are interested not in what emotions are but how they are used by institutions and visitors to facilitate understanding. The arguments are based on the premise that emotions are 'social and cultural practices' both in the present and in the past.<sup>4</sup> In other words we do react emotionally to certain events and objects in culturally conditioned ways and our reactions are as much to do with social relations as they are to do with individual emotional attitudes and predispositions.

## **Historical Distancing and the Myth of Dispassionate History**

Much historical tradition eschews in principle the idea of emotional engagement with the historical subject. Oakshott described 'history as a mode of enquiry and understanding in terms of an idea of past, an idea of an event and of some significant relationship to be

established between events, and an idea of change.<sup>5</sup> In this definition the emphasis is on thinking (ideas) not emotions (feelings). Many historians train themselves to try and avoid emotional responses and this requires a form of historical distancing, a standing back and reasoning, in theory if not always in practice. They stress the distance between then and now. The implication is that if the historian, and here we include those who curate exhibitions, allow their emotions to affect them then they become 'enacted upon' as they react to their feelings and lose their impartial framework.<sup>6</sup> In the process they may, it is assumed, become biased and unable to operate as professional historians. In theory historical distance as understood in this context acts as a regulatory practice.<sup>7</sup> This convention also enables historians and museum professionals to avoid having to attempt the management of their own emotional responses and that of their readers and visitors. By ignoring them these practitioners can appear impartial and scientific.

Drawing on the work of Ahmed who seeks to understand emotions in a national context, we can see that museums are, on the whole, selective in the ways that they encourage or discourage emotional responses from individuals.<sup>8</sup> Many appear to adopt what Ahmed calls an evolutionary approach to the idea of emotion in that some emotions are elevated into a means of expressing a cultivated attitude, including the aesthetic which gives pleasure, and the notion of empathy which permits pity for others.<sup>9</sup> Other emotions, such as rage, fear and disgust which, following an evolutionary interpretation, suggest weakness or primitiveness, and are examined and explained to the visitor, but rarely encouraged as a visitor response. When they are evoked, such as in the National Military Museum, Istanbul, in its explanation of the Armenian massacre, an event the Turkish Government denies to have been genocide, they are evoked for political reasons, as a form of defence against such stories. Black and white photographs of mutilated Turkish bodies dominate the exhibition. They are framed within a discourse that seeks to justify Turkish military actions against the Armenians in the

past while, at the same time, denying Armenian claims to be the only or main victims. As such these photographs do not necessarily achieve their aim amongst foreign visitors who are aware of different narratives and are not emotionally attached to this version of the Turkish nation's history, but it would be interesting to examine what sort of emotions these displays elicit in native Turks particularly as the government has made it clear that patriotic Turks should not believe the Armenian claims. Few Turkish scholars (with notable exceptions such as Taner Akçam), have recognized the Armenian version of events and those who do may find themselves accused of insulting the Turkish nation.<sup>10</sup> Thus emotions in the museum are regulated not only by the cultural context in which they are placed but by notions of what sorts of emotions are politically permissible in museums. These decisions are framed within the context of an evolutionary pattern of development that understands the control of emotions as a form of civilised superiority. Here the historical past is suddenly vivid in the present when the visitor encounters the images of mutilated men, women and children – made all the more shocking by the infrequency with which such images are shown in museums, even military ones. In this example we can see that the museum chose to 'transgress' the accepted evolutionary order of emotional responses to encourage anger (along with shock, disgust, pity and horror) but only in a regulated political context. In contrast such emotions can be seen as acceptable within the concept of art and aesthetic taste where affective responses are moderated by individual's judgments based on experience and knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Here disgust or pleasure is mediated through aesthetic judgments based on education, experience, knowledge and, in many cases class and wealth. There are fewer such mediating conventions in history museums and thus these emotional responses are usually only deliberately provoked for specifically moral, ethical or political reasons.

Thus we have seen that in museums the present imprints upon our attempts to distance the past and emotions can be used to bring the past into focus for modern political purposes.

For historians such as Phillips historical distance itself emerges as ‘a complex balance that has as much to do with the emotional or political uses of the past as with its explanatory functions or its formal design’.<sup>12</sup> Historical distance includes ‘formal, affective, ideological, and cognitive dimensions, each of which plays a role in historical representation, although often in varying degrees of intensity. Historical distance, then, is not merely shorthand for temporal distance, as in common parlance, but rather indicates a variety of strategies employed by historians to achieve effects of proximity and separation’.<sup>13</sup> Thus, in the practices of historical distancing, topics or behavior in the past that are deemed irrelevant today tend to be forgotten, omitted, or positioned in a distant past, however long ago they took place. Alternatively temporal distance can be used to make acceptable and even admirable certain behaviours that would be reprehensible in the society of the time. For example eighteenth century pirates are romanticized in fiction and in film despite the fact that they were cruel, selfish and destructive and caused innocent people pain and suffering.

The traditional Western premise of understanding the past through the dispassionate lens of the present leads us to ignore the emotional affect and effect of the past upon those who experience it. How we understand the past, whether it is represented by material culture, museum displays, the latest technology, the written text, is determined by our present needs. Museums by their very nature are places where people move and talk, see, think and feel, becoming theatres of the emotion whereby the threads of materiality that link us metaphorically to the past are engaged with the senses as well as the intellect. It is this notion of feeling and its relationship to emotion that this paper discusses. In so doing it adopts a position that all history in museums, whether apparently dispassionate or not, operates through an idea of time which understands the present through the past and thus engages with emotions regardless of the design intention.

## **Authenticity**

In a similar way our notion of authenticity is one that appears to be dispassionate but is rooted in emotional responses to nature and material culture in all its manifestations, mediated by museum and heritage practices. So called museum-like approaches to authenticity focus on the use of originals but the significance of the original will vary from individual visitor to visitor.<sup>14</sup> The museum curator may judge an object to be authentic but it does not mean that the visitor will, nor will the visitor necessarily place the same values on objects as a curator. The existential authenticity idea of the postmodernists suggests that authenticity is not really to do with the objects but it is something inside the person and that it is experience orientated and transient – it depends on feelings, emotions, sensations, relationships and self. Thus we can interpret authenticity as something to do with the motivation and experience of visitors.<sup>15</sup> However, there is a strong interaction between site and object and the experience of the visitor – in other words the way the object is exhibited and the values ascribed to it by the museum will affect the visitor's engagement with it.<sup>16</sup> Walter Benjamin's idea of the aura of the object is an influential one that suggests its subjective and experiential nature.<sup>17</sup> The very positioning of an object in a museum and the information provided with it gives the former status and authenticity. A brick is just a brick but if it is exhibited in the Political Museum in St Petersburg with the information that it was prised from the Reichstag building in 1945, then for Russians it is more than a brick. It is a symbol of the victory for survival in the Great Patriotic War of 1941 – 1945.<sup>18</sup> As a non-Russian, who was not brought up with the stories of the 20 million lost Russian lives in that war. I do not know the emotions it elicits but I am sure such a brick engenders feelings and emotions in native visitors I can only guess at.

Yet evidence suggests that the public, at least in the UK, does not understand museums in this way. In a recent survey of British Museums by the Museums Association there was a consensus amongst those consulted that museums were for everyone and their

most important function was an educational one. Above all they were considered to be places where people go to find information and expect museums to remain neutral. They are seen as ‘one of the last vestiges of trust (particularly in comparison to the government and the media which are seen as untrustworthy and agenda driven). The public want to keep their trust in museums by believing that they are being given unbiased and non-politically driven information’.<sup>19</sup>

This suggests that in the UK at least, many visitors ‘read’ or experience the displays with relatively uncritical eyes. The ‘truth’ of what they see and learn is underpinned by the authenticity of the original objects on display and the authority they accord the curators and designers. Apparent distancing will be accepted as neutral though it may well be a political and emotional act. If we assume that such an attitude is not confined to the UK then we will begin to understand how museums by presenting a seemingly distant past nevertheless create a reading or experience of history that is anything but dispassionate.

### **How do Museums use Historical Distancing?**

If we take for example, the Deutsches Historisches Museum (the German Historical Museum) in Berlin, the narrative of the development of the German nation from the German tribes opposing the Romans to the unification of Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 is told in a dispassionate manner. Only occasionally do emotions intrude into the narrative, particularly at time of struggle. However this apparently uncontroversial story is deeply political. It presents the Germans as one unified ethnic group throughout historic time. For the purpose of this paper we will focus on the idea of so called full blown ethnic communities or ethnies whose members are united by shared memories and traditions. These can be defined as *‘named and self-defined human populations with myths of common origins, shared historical memories, elements of common culture, and a measure of ethnic solidarity.’*<sup>20</sup>

These ethnies often have members abroad and have common symbols and values. Their stories may involve self sacrifice and are often linked to landscapes which have been defended in times past. What is important here is felt or imagined history which is crucial to a sense of group identity and creates ties to the nation.<sup>21</sup>

In the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin Germany, we find the story of the German people or ethnie, formerly divided by the post war politics of communism, now restored to its ancient completeness by the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Here there are few ethnic minorities in its long tale of German history. Merchants, traders and immigrants from across Europe make occasional appearances but disappear into the sands of time leaving only ethnic Germans living in the land that is now Germany, with the odd case representing Jewish Germans with their distinct cultural practices, separated from the rest of the inhabitants of Germany. This leaves visitors unsure whether these are ethnic Germans or not. We can presume that such a narrative of the ethnic origins of the nation will appeal intellectually and emotionally to many Germans where the notion of who is a German until recently relied in part on the idea of an ethnic group, prioritizing the right of return to the motherland of those born outside the nation in the former Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> In England, in contrast, narratives such as those in the Museum of London (perhaps the nearest thing England has to a national history museum of England) stress migration and multiculturalism from a very early period. This in turn appeals emotionally to the idea that the English, whilst retaining strong associations with a Germanic past, like to think of themselves as a mixture of many so called ethnic groups.

Such apparent dispassionate narratives can be found in museums all over the world. However, some institutions are paying more attention to the emotional responses their historical exhibitions elicit and are attempting to evoke emotions in a deliberate manner,<sup>23</sup> and this affect (both sensory and emotional) can be triggered by narrative and testimonies,

material culture, new media involving sound, light and text and the physical experience of the museum itself which can include sound, smells and temperature variations.<sup>24</sup> The very nature of much historical writing, in a narrative form, whether in a book or a museum creates a story in which the readers' or viewers' (in the case of material transferred to film and television) interest is held by conventions which require empathetic and emotional responses. Stories of triumph over tragedy, endurance, suffering, victory and achievement are common in historical narratives in museums. Approaches that include personal testimonies and the experiences of witnesses, popular in literature, museums and other media, also encourage empathetic responses. The postmodernist trend that sees the past from a multiple set of perspectives requires the ability to understand, if not empathise with, the different emotional states of the subject.

Little research has, however, been undertaken into how visitors experience deliberate affective techniques. We can presume that they do not always work in the way in which they are intended. For example, the Imperial War Museum, North, was designed by Libeskind. It is described thus in the website:

Clad in aluminium, the landmark building is a visionary symbol of the effects of war. The design is based on the concept of a world shattered by conflict, a fragmented globe reassembled in three interlocking shards. These shards represent conflict on land, water and in the air.<sup>25</sup>

Inside the building floors slope and areas are dimly lit; attempts to create some of the confusion of war. However, the intention is not always realised. The author was confused but also annoyed by the lack of signage and the dim lighting on her first visit and did not associate this experience with war but with poor design. Here the visitor has to be told what

emotion is required. Then the emotion engendered is a cerebral one, understood through the mind. Moreover, confusion caused by lack of signage and sloping floors is hardly the same as the terror and visceral sense of dislocation caused by war.

Having established that museums do elicit emotional responses from visitors, either deliberately or through conventions such as historical distancing that are often governed by political intentions, though these may not produce the intended emotions, we turn now to ask how and why should we be concerned with emotion as an educational tool? We have to ask ourselves are emotions a good thing? Why should we care about the emotional effect museum displays have on visitors? Are they desirable in institutions that have an educational function? Is there a danger that emotions will overcome reason? Indeed perhaps we should try and reduce the emotional impact of our exhibitions. After all it has been argued that ‘d[D]ominant traditions within both psychology and philosophy conceptualize the emotions as in conflict with, and subversive of, moral reasoning’.<sup>26</sup> Some would go so far to suggest that our apparent inability to control our emotions is a flaw in our evolution.<sup>27</sup> However, recent research suggests that ‘capacities for emotional processing and empathetic responsiveness support the development of moral cognition in children and help the sustaining of moral competencies in healthy adults’<sup>28</sup>, and thus the ability to feel as well as to think is a useful additional skill in human society. This research is counter to the arguments that moral judgements – what are right and wrong – are the ‘domain of higher, deliberative, (affect free) processes’.<sup>29</sup> It supports another tradition that ‘intuitive emotional responses have a substantial impact on our moral judgements’.<sup>30</sup>

Langdon and Mackenzie referring to Fitzgerald and Goldie argue that ‘everyday moral discourse and reflection abounds with “thick” moral concepts such as shameful, kind, courageous, brutal or generous.’<sup>31</sup> These concepts are not, as they point out, emotion free. ‘Thick concepts are descriptively fine grained, evaluative, and connected to complex social

emotions and to social norms concerning appropriate behaviour.<sup>32</sup> They also point out that there is a danger of simplifying and separating out the rational from the emotional, and that with moral judgements we tend to ignore the reflective emotional processes that affect our moral reflection and moral agency.<sup>33</sup>

Feelings and emotions can be conceptualised as well as experienced. Empathy is a key tool for managing and regulating emotion and can be understood in various ways. It can be used to describe responsiveness toward the ‘other’ that is more in keeping with others’ feelings than with one’s own. The notion can be further refined into cognitive and affective ways of appreciating what another person might think and feel.<sup>34</sup> It is understood to begin from the thinking process. Thus empathy is firmly associated with reason and requires an ability to imagine another’s feelings. Ravenscroft in a study of fiction suggests that stories can scaffold and extend our imaginative capacities to empathize with others.<sup>35</sup> Note how there can be two levels of understanding that lead to empathy – first person (empathetic) and third person (conceptual). The first person requires imagination and uses this to produce emotional responses. The third person conceptual method may also use imagination but does this in a way that allows individuals to disassociate themselves from feelings that would otherwise be elicited by the material encountered. Thus the visit to the Imperial War Museum North and the confusion engendered by the architecture may, once it is explained, result in a conceptual form of empathy. However, a story in the same museum, told through the Big Picture show in which a woman talks of her experience as a an unknown German Jewish Kindertransport child refugee may elicit an imaginative understanding of the bewilderment and distress she felt when she said ‘[W]hen Hitler came it became very difficult for us. The children we played with spat on us’.<sup>36</sup> This results in an imaginative sympathy for the feelings of the child, a form of ‘hot’ empathy<sup>37</sup>. However, this empathy does not allow us to feel exactly as that child did – we are in a safe artificial space where we can chose to engage with the sound

and light show in the museum, or not. Our emotions are mediated through our current circumstances and past experiences.<sup>38</sup> For most people fortunate enough to grow up in a tolerant society empathy here elicits feelings of sympathy for the fear and bewilderment no doubt felt by the child at the time but not that child's specific emotions.

Without the ability to enter imaginatively into the lives of others and to have emotions 'an ethics of impartial respect for human dignity will fail to engage real human beings'.<sup>39</sup> However, there is no reason to think that rational and thinking engagement with the emotional states of others cannot elicit respect for them and understanding of their plight. If we apply this concept to the notion of historical distancing, where engagement with individual situations in the past, pleasant or otherwise, is made more difficult by a sense of the passage of time from the past to the present, then we can begin to understand that emotional engagement can take place in different ways – it can be both 'thinking' or 'feeling.' In whatever way we theorise empathy, we can argue that emotions in the museum are not only about helping us understand the feelings and emotional experiences of those who lived in the past but are also about how we view the world through a moral lens. Some museums seek to promote themselves as places that can play an active role in supporting social justice<sup>40</sup> and this ethical and moral purpose can be understood through the role emotion plays in the museum not only in eliciting feelings in visitors but also in encouraging them to action.

Studies as to how individuals react to stories in literature suggest that emotions, elicited by a story, vary from individual to individual and these emotions in turn affect how the story is understood rationally,<sup>41</sup> and we can assume these emotions therefore influence how individuals make sense of it within their moral framework. One of the most interesting findings is gender differences in emotional responses to written text. Women on the whole register more emotional responses than men and are equally capable of empathising with male feelings as with female ones. Male readers, on the other hand, empathise more with male

characters and, on the whole, express less empathy or feeling towards women in the story. Research also indicates that women show higher emotional responsivity in affective empathy.<sup>42</sup> For both genders if emotions of pity are aroused individuals tend to look back in time and react relatively passively, albeit with sympathy. If anger is aroused individuals look forward in time as though anger requires action.<sup>43</sup> This raises interesting questions for museums. If the same pattern of empathy were repeated in individual responses to historical narratives in museums we can assume that these might be affected not only by culture but by gender. Moreover museum exhibitions attempting to elicit changes in public attitudes and behaviour would, one might assume, do better to make their visitors angry rather than sad. Exhibitions that seek to arouse sympathy for victims but do not encourage anger against perpetrators may not make much, if any, change to individual's attitudes as to how they can change society to prevent such events happening again. Exhibiting pain and suffering, eliciting pity, may not be enough to make a difference in the future if museums see their role as active promoters of social, political and cultural justice. This is, of course, speculation and needs more research to discover if anger is such a powerful agent of change. However, before museums decide to invoke emotions of anger there are moral and ethical issues to consider.

At the same time museums might wish to think about how different genders will respond to their stories. However, we have very little idea at the moment how and why emotions that are aroused during a visit impact upon visitors both in the short and the long term and whether or not they facilitate this kind of learning, though we may well hope that they do. We need research into this area but in the meantime we have to look to the research that has been undertaken with visitors where emotional engagement with exhibitions has been examined, such as that undertaken into the impact of exhibitions to commemorate and celebrate the Act for the Abolition of Slavery in 2007.

## Slavery

In the West we no longer know what is the perspective from which to see the world and the past is now blurred into the present and the future is uncertain.<sup>44</sup> Respect for authority is also questioned as well as the idea that we all share similar values<sup>45</sup> and, one might add common emotional responses to events. Migration has resulted in populations where the past is seen from many perspectives. However, people still approach museums with certain expectations as to how certain stories should be told which allows them to experience a traditional emotional response. Thus many British citizens have been brought up to admire Britain for its opposition to the slave trade, rather than prioritising the suffering its traders inflicted on slaves transported to its colonies and the long term impact of enforced migration and slavery upon the descendants of slaves. Research into the way museums commemorated the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade in Britain in 2007 indicated that many focussed on the 'hidden history' of local participation in the slave trade.<sup>46</sup> Studies of visitor responses revealed how resistant most White British visitors were to this new approach<sup>47</sup>, exhibited as part of an attempt by UK institutions to acknowledge not only the abolition of the slave trade but also the involvement of many individuals in society in slavery, the economic benefits of such a trade to the perpetrators, and the impact and legacy upon those enslaved and their descendants. Responses to these exhibitions were often complex and demonstrated how uncomfortable and resistant some White British people were to new interpretations that did not correspond to their traditional emotional registers of patriotic pride. They engaged with the museum story only to be confused when their culturally conditioned emotional responses of celebration and self-congratulation were challenged. It is not surprising that the researchers found that many visitors adopted 'strategies of disengagement centred primarily on the avoidance of feelings of responsibility, guilt and discomfort'.<sup>48</sup> Barbara Herrnstein Smith

states that when one's deeply held personal beliefs are brought into question this can bring about a condition of 'cognitive dissonance'

'an impression of inescapable noise or acute disorder, a rush of adrenalin, sensations of alarm, a sense of unbalance or chaos, residual feeling of nausea and anxiety. These are the forms of bodily distress that occur when one's ingrained, taken-for-granted sense of how certain things are – and thus presumably will be and in some sense *should* be – is suddenly or insistently confronted by something very much at odds with it.' [italics in original]<sup>49</sup>

As she points out our responses to ideas that are incompatible with our own beliefs, particularly if they elicit negative emotions such as guilt or relate to identity and dignity will range 'from perplexed and resentful withdrawal, to elaborate condescension, detailed counterargument, virulent attack or attempted suppression'<sup>50</sup>

The Bicentenary had been seen as an opportunity to remind the British of the nation's role in slavery rather than in its role in abolition and to allow Black British citizens an alternative national story. The emphasis on suffering and post slavery discrimination and disadvantage, however well meant as a means of promoting a form of 'politics of recognition' whereby 'culture, history and memory become important arenas of struggle for equity'<sup>51</sup>, did not necessarily result in better understanding of the impact of slavery amongst sections of the target audience.

It would be naive of us to attribute this White British resistance to a new message to widespread racism or prejudice. Respected individuals demanded a more traditional celebratory tone in reasoned arguments. For example, Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, argued publicly that the British should not apologise for slavery but celebrate

Britain's role in helping to bring it to an end, pointing out that the Africans and Arabs all played a role in the development and sustaining of the slave trade.<sup>52</sup> Academics also debated the notion of guilt and how far actions from the past could be the responsibility of the present descendants of perpetrators. For example Bruckner abhors what he sees as a European tendency to self blame and argues that such attitudes become an obstacle to dealing with contemporary atrocities. With particular regard to the topic in question he points out that '...taking over from Arabs and Africans it [Europe] instituted the transatlantic slave trade, but it also engendered abolitionism and put an end to slavery before other nations did'.<sup>53</sup>

Public reactions to new interpretations of the bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave trade in 2007 were, with hindsight, unsurprising, but they serve to remind us how important it is for us to understand how and why people engage emotionally with museums, and in particular how empathy can be evoked and what it can do. The example above shows all too clearly how White visitors to the bicentenary exhibitions, on the whole, were disinclined to display as much empathy for the enslaved and their descendants as the exhibition designers had hoped.

## **Conclusion**

If we return to the premise with which we began this paper, that emotions are culturally conditioned, and apply this to history in the museum, then we need to think how we can tell stories and exhibit objects in such a way that museum design produces the emotional responses upon which the learning desired by the museum may, as we have seen in the example above, in part, depend.

Learning itself is often understood as a form of communication by which individuals make meanings.<sup>54</sup> Emphasis is placed on the ways in which representation in the museum conveys meanings and values and how culture is contrasted and shared by this means in the

museum.<sup>55</sup> Much learning theory now assumes that learning is an active process that depends as much on the learner as the teacher.<sup>56</sup> However, little attempt has been undertaken in Museum Studies literature to understand how emotions can affect this interaction. How can we develop a theory that will help us analyse and plan to elicit emotional responses in the museum, avoiding mistakes such as those made in the 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade exhibitions? Oatley, working on written texts, divides a story, a narrative in fiction (and in our case we can apply this to a historical narrative in a museum), into four kinds of structures: the event, discourse, suggestion and realization structures.<sup>57</sup> The event structure is the way key events and individuals are arranged to make sense to the reader or, in the case of the museum, the visitor. The discourse structure is mechanism by which the story is told which can include individual ‘voices’ and, in the case of museums, the structure of the exhibition itself and the media chosen to convey the story. The suggestion structure recognises the constructivist theory of learning and acknowledges that the visitor’s recognition of elements of the story will interact with their own experience, knowledge, emotions and, one might add, cultural patterns of thinking and behaviour. At this point the reader or visitor moves to the fourth structure - the realisation structure. It is here that the visitor personalises the story and reacts to any emotion they find within the exhibition whether within their encounter with objects or in the structures used to support the narrative such as multi media and the use of individual stories. A great deal of attention has been paid in museum studies literature to the event and discourse structures of the exhibition process but less to the emotional element of the suggestion and realization structures. This paper suggests that the time has come to rethink this.

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<sup>16</sup> Dudley, *Museum Materialities*.

<sup>17</sup> Rickly-Boyd, *Authenticity and Aura*; W. Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, ed H. Arendt, London, 1999, 211-244.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, 'Emotions in the History Museum', 292-293.

<sup>19</sup> Museums Association, *Public Perceptions of – and Attitudes to – the Purposes of Museums in Society*. A report prepared by BritainThinks for Museums Association, March 2013, 6.

[www.museumsassociation.org/news/03042013-public-attitudes-research-published](http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/03042013-public-attitudes-research-published)

Accessed 4 April 2013. See also Watson, 'Emotions in the History Museum', 288.

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<sup>20</sup> A. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant and Republic*, Malden and Oxford, 2008, 30-31. Italics in original.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Not until 2000 were laws passed to allow children of foreign born workers in Germany the right to citizenship.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, 'Myth, Memory and the Senses', 204-223.

<sup>24</sup> S. Watson, R. Kirk and J. Steward, 'Arsenic, Wells and Herring Curing: Making New Meanings in an Old Fish Factory', in *Museum making, Narratives, Architectures, Exhibitions*, eds S. MacLeod, L. Hourston Hanks and J. Hale, London, 2012, 157- 168.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-north/about> Accessed 2 May 2013. See also Watson, 'Emotions in the History Museum'.

<sup>26</sup> R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, 'Introduction: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives on Moral Cognition', in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, New York and Hove, 2012, 2.

<sup>27</sup> A. Koestler, *Janus: A Summing Up*, London, 1978 cited in J.P. Forgas, 'Introduction: the Role of Affect in Social Cognition', in *Feeling and Thinking: the Role of Affect in Social Cognition*, ed J.P. Forgas, Cambridge and Paris, 2000, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Langdon and Mackenzie, 'Introduction', 2.

<sup>29</sup> T.I. Case, M.J. Oaten and R.J. Stevenson, 'Disgust and Moral Judgement', in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, New York and Hove, 2012, 196.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 196.

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<sup>31</sup> Langdon and Mackenzie, 'Introduction', 8 referring to C. Fitzgerald and P. Goldie, 'Thick Concepts and their Role in Moral Psychology', in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, New York and Hove, 2012, 219-236.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>34</sup> D.J. Hawes and M.R. Dadds, 'Revisiting the Role of Empathy in Childhood: Pathways to Antisocial Behaviour', in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, New York and Hove, 2012, 45- 70; Langdon and Mackenzie, 'Introduction', 3.

<sup>35</sup> I. Ravenscroft, 'Fiction, Imagination and Ethics', in *Emotions, Imagination and Moral Reasoning*, eds R. Langdon and C. Mackenzie, New York and Hove, 2012, 71-89.

<sup>36</sup> Anon, *Imperial War Museum North Guidebook*, Northampton, 2010, 9.

<sup>37</sup> E. Peters, D. Västfjäll, T. Gärling, P. Slovic 'Affect and decision making: a "hot" topic' *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, Special Issue: The Role of Affect in Decision Making, 19 (2) (2006): 79–85.  
[Langdon and Mackenzie 2012: 3](#)

<sup>38</sup> Watson, 'Emotions in the History Museum'.

<sup>39</sup> M. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity. A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*, Cambridge, 1997, xvi cited in Ravenscroft, 'Fiction, Imagination and Ethics', 73. See also Watson, 'Emotions in the History Museum', 286.

<sup>40</sup> R. Sandell and E. Nightingale, *Museums, Equality and Social Justice*, London and New York, 2012; R. Sandell, J. Dodd and R. Garland Thomson eds, (2010) *Re-Presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, London and New York, 2010.

<sup>41</sup> K. Oatley, 'From the Emotions of Conversation to the Passions of Fiction', in *Feelings and Emotions*, eds A.S.R. Manstead, N. Frijda and A. Fischer, Cambridge, 2004, 109.

<sup>42</sup> [L. Christov-Moore](#), [E. Simpson](#), [G. Coudé](#), [K. Grigaityte](#), [M. Jacoboni](#), [P. F. Ferrari](#),

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<sup>43</sup> Oatley, 'From the Emotions of Conversation to the Passions of Fiction', 108-109.

<sup>44</sup> B. Southgate, *Postmodernism in History: Fear or Freedom?*, London, 2003, 13-14.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>46</sup> G. Cubitt, 'Bringing it Home: making Local Meaning in 2007 Bicentenary Exhibitions', *Slavery and Abolition* 30, no. 2 (2009): 266.

<sup>47</sup> L. Smith, "'Man's Inhumanity to Man" and Other Platitudes of Avoidance and Misrecognition: an Analysis of Visitor Responses to Exhibitions Marking the 1807 Bicentenary', *Museum and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 193-214.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>49</sup> B. Herstein Smith, *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy*, London, 1997 cited in Southgate, *Postmodernism in History*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Herrstein Smith, *Belief and Resistance*, xiv, 148 cited in Southgate, *Postmodernism in History*, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, "'Man's Inhumanity to Man'", 194.

<sup>52</sup> Anon, [www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/reviews/dailymail.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/media/reviews/dailymail.html)  
1807 Commemorated website. Accessed 20 March 2013.

<sup>53</sup> P. Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt: An Essay on Western Masochism*, Princeton and Oxford, 2010, 28.

<sup>54</sup> E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London and New York, 2000, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; H. Gardner, *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice. A Reader*, New York, 1993.

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<sup>57</sup> Oatley, 'From the Emotions of Conversation', 105.