

## **Living Histories**

### **Performing Work and Working Lives in the Industrial Museum**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## Abstract

This research uses theory from the field of performance studies with which to analyse museum performances, and more specifically, considers the notion of the ‘interpretive performance’. Using a case study approach and being based on a collaboration with the National Coal Mining Museum, it considers a range of interpretive activities characteristic of the industrial museum and heritage site. Other case study sites chosen for comparison specialise in the representation and display of work and working lives from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries in the North of England. This research looks how these museums/sites produce ‘first’ and ‘third person’ interpretation as well as guided tours and demonstrations in order to interpret this history. A wide definition of performance is used with which to consider a range of interpretive activities, so that both the scripted and acted, theatre-like scenarios produced by ‘first person’ actors can be considered alongside the under-researched ‘third person’ performance that uses less characterisation and acting.

The idea of ‘bringing history to life’ is central to this research, as ‘performed interpretation’ aims to restore the presence of the people from the past, and animate museum space. The interpretive aspects of this type of performance are that they produce a dialogic space where visitors/audiences are invited to be more active in their meaning-making. The interpretive performance uses the museum’s materiality: its architecture, spaces and artefacts and the histories connected with it to explain, illustrate and illuminate and relate to the visitor’s memory and imagination. However, although desirable in its ability to produce a sense of liveliness, presence and living, performing history also has the effect of questioning the representational practices of the museum, as this ‘bringing to life’ is always re-making history in the present. This research therefore considers the relationship between performance and authenticity in the museum through these interpretations of history.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Figures .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Interview and Observation Codes .....	12
Document References .....	14
<b>Glossary of Terms.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Abbreviations .....	17
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Aims of the Research.....	20
Research Questions.....	24
Research Context .....	25
Museum Theatre, Live Interpretation and Living History – Defining Terms.....	25
Interpretation.....	29
Industrial Museums and Industrial Heritage Sites .....	31
Authenticity and Performing History .....	34
Anti-theatricality.....	35
Representing History.....	37
Representation – Mediating the Real.....	38
Museum Space as Performance Space.....	40
The Presence of ‘the Real’ .....	42
Key Issues.....	43
Functionality.....	44
Anti-theatricality.....	45
Mimetic Realism as the Basis of ‘Truth’ .....	46
Commercialism .....	46
Liveness .....	47

The Subject/Object Balance.....	47
Introduction to Case Studies .....	49
The National Coal Mining Museum for England.....	49
Bradford Industrial Museum .....	50
Quarry Bank Mill.....	51
Manchester Museum of Science and Industry .....	52
Beamish .....	54
Case Study Museums' Use of First and Third Person Performance .....	55
Case Study Rationale .....	58
Place Authenticity.....	59
Living History.....	59
Performance Practices.....	60
Methodology.....	63
Research Methods and Research Undertaken .....	65
Documents Consulted.....	66
Observation.....	68
Interviews .....	70
Data Analysis .....	72
Ethical Considerations .....	74
Informed Consent .....	74
Storage of Data.....	74
Research Timetable .....	75
Chapter Introduction.....	76
<b>Chapter One - First and Third Person Interpretation .....</b>	<b>79</b>
Introduction .....	79
Case Study Accounts: First and Third Person Interpretation .....	84
Mrs Lockwood, NCMME, 2007-2009 .....	84
Fred at the Pithead Baths, NCMME, 2007-2009.....	87
Engineer Eric, MOSI, August 2009 .....	90
Jack Alcock, MOSI, August 2009 .....	93
Third Person Interpretation, NCMME, 2007-2009.....	98
Use of First and Third Person Interpretation at Case Study Sites....	101

NCMME.....	101
MOSI.....	103
Beamish.....	104
Presentation and Representation.....	106
Framing Performance .....	108
Performance Space .....	110
Interaction and Participation.....	116
Identity, Role, Character and Acting.....	119
Presentation – Representation Continuum .....	119
From Not Acting to Acting .....	121
The Interpreter and their Role .....	126
History, Realism and Performance .....	129
Forms of Realism.....	131
Mimetic Realism.....	131
Emotional Realism .....	133
Bringing the Past to Life .....	135
Conclusion .....	137
<b>Chapter Two - The Guided Tour.....</b>	<b>140</b>
Introduction .....	140
Authenticity and Touring .....	146
Case Study Museums' Use of the Guided Tour .....	149
The Underground Tour.....	149
The Apprentice House .....	152
Tour Observation 1: The Apprentice House, Quarry Bank Mill .....	154
Tour Observation 2: The Underground Tour, NCMME .....	161
The Guided Tour and Performance .....	168
Mapping Tour Space.....	168
Boundaries .....	173
The Tour as Narrative Performance.....	178
Verbal Narratives .....	180
Bodily Narratives .....	183
Contested Histories.....	184

The Tour as Pilgrimage .....	186
Perceptions of Authenticity.....	190
The Role of the Miner-Guide at the NCMME .....	190
The Work of the Interpreter at Quarry Bank Mill .....	194
The Visitor Experience – Underground Tour.....	195
Visitor Experience – Quarry Bank Mill.....	196
Conclusion .....	198
<b>Chapter 3 – The Demonstration .....</b>	<b>201</b>
Introduction .....	201
Case Study Use of Demonstrations .....	203
Bradford Industrial Museum .....	206
Beamish .....	207
MOSI.....	208
Quarry Bank Mill.....	209
Research Context to the Demonstration .....	210
The Demonstration and Authenticity .....	214
The Meaning Making Process and Demonstrations.....	215
Object as Physical Presence .....	216
Object as Example of Type .....	216
Object as Historically Significant .....	216
Object Handling.....	217
Animation .....	221
Machine Animation.....	225
Narrative.....	227
Machine/Person Demonstrations .....	228
Punctuation Type Demonstrations .....	234
The Educational Role of Objects.....	235
The Dialogic Narrative.....	237
Spatial Organisation.....	238
Time and Space .....	239
Story-lines .....	240
Illumination .....	242

The Body.....	243
Conclusion .....	246
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>248</b>
Sources of Presence, Living and Liveliness .....	250
Memory .....	250
Animation .....	251
Emotion.....	251
An Alteration of Spatial and Temporal Boundaries .....	252
Key Characteristics of the Interpretive Performance.....	253
Accessing History Through Transformation .....	253
The Presentational Layer .....	254
Enacting Journeys.....	255
Spatiality .....	255
Objects and Artefacts in Performance .....	256
Use of Metonymy .....	256
Interactivity .....	258
Authenticity.....	259
Interpretation and the Sustainability of Museums .....	264
Proposals for the Future of Performed Interpretation.....	266
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>270</b>
Re-imagining Performance .....	270
Re-imagining the Visitor .....	271
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>292</b>
Appendix a) Schedule of Interview Questions.....	292
Appendix b) Observation Schedule.....	296

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1. National Coal Mining Museum for England .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Figure 2. Machinery at Bradford Industrial Museum.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Figure 3. Quarry Bank Mill.....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Figure 4. Manchester Museum of Science and Industry .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Figure 5. The Town, Beamish .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Figure 6. Mrs Lockwood's Kitchen .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Figure 7. series from Mrs Lockwood.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Figure 8. Pithead Baths .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Figure 9. series from Fred at the Pithead Baths.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Figure 10. Performance Space, Engineer Eric.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Figure 11. series, Engineer Eric.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Figure 12. Air and Space Gallery, MOSI .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Figure 13. series Jack Alcock .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Figure 14. The Town, Beamish .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Figure 15. series, Beamish.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Figure 16. series, Beamish.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Figure 17. Miner-guides, NCMME .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Figure 18. Miner-guides in the Lampproom .....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Figure 19. Miner-guide and 'Audience'.....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Figure 20. Interior of Pit Village Cottage, Beamish .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Figure 21. Three Modes of Acting: States' and Kirby's Theories Combined .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Figure 22. Model of the NCMME site showing underground seams... </b>	<b>149</b>
<b>Figure 23. series Apprentice House .....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Figure 24. <sup>1</sup>Schoolroom, Apprentice House © National Trust.....</b>	<b>155</b>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 45 are provided with permission of The National Trust.

<b>Figure 25. Children's beds, Apprentice House, © National Trust .....</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Figure 26. Treatment Room, Apprentice House, © National Trust.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Figure 27. Superintendent's Parlour, Apprentice House, © National Trust .....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Figure 28. Kitchen, Apprentice House, © National Trust .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Figure 29. series, The Lampproom .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Figure 30. Tour party waiting to receive their 'checks' .....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Figure 31. Underground 'Roadway', NCMME.....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Figure 32. 'Ripper' Mannequin, NCMME.....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Figure 33. Underground Tools, NCMME.....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Figure 34. Site Map, NCMME.....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Figure 35. Approach to Quarry Bank Mill.....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Figure 36. Miner-guide doing maintenance work at the NCMME .....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Figure 37. Lampproom Doorway, NCMME .....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Figure 38. Waterwheel Part, Quarry Bank Mill.....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>Figure 39. Motive Power Gallery, Bradford Industrial Museum .....</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>Figure 40. Rag Rugging in a Pit Cottage at Beamish.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Figure 41. Demonstrating in the Lamp Cabin, Beamish .....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>Figure 42. Steam Demonstration, Bradford Industrial Museum.....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>Figure 43. Textile Gallery, Bradford.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Figure 44. Animated Machinery at Bradford Industrial Museum.....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Figure 45. Looms, Quarry Bank Mill © National Trust .....</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Figure 46. The Durn Mill Demonstration, MOSI .....</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Figure 47. Manchester Mills Display Area, MOSI.....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Figure 48. Presenting Manchester Mills, MOSI.....</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Figure 49. Presenting Manchester Mills, MOSI.....</b>	<b>245</b>

## References

### Interview and Observation Codes

Type	Date	Coded
Richard Talbot and Carran		
Waterfield	09.08.08	Talbot & Waterfield/08
Ivor Brown, NCMME	11.02.09	Ivor Brown/NCM/09
Miner-guide, NCMME	13.11.08	Mg01/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	13.11.08	Mg02/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	20.11.08	Mg03/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	20.11.08	Mg04/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	20.11.08	Mg05/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	27.11.08	Mg06/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	04.12.08	Mg07/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	04.12.08	Mg08/NCM/08
Miner-guide, NCMME	15.12.08	Mg09/NCM/08
Interpreter, NCMME	19.11.08	Int01/NCM/08
Interpreter, NCMME	15.12.08	Int02/NCM/08
Visitor underground tour, NCMME	18.08.09	Ugv09/NCM/09
Visitor underground tour, NCMME	18.08.09	Ugv12/NCM/09
Visitor underground tour, NCMME	21.02.08	Ugv21/NCM/08
Visitor underground tour, NCMME	20.02.08	Ugv08/NCM/08
Visitor, Fred at the pithead baths	20.08.09	FPv03/NCM/09
Visitor, Fred at the pithead baths	20.08.09	FPv03/NCM/09
Visitor, Fred at the pithead baths	20.08.09	FPv04/NCM/09
Visitor Mrs Lockwood, NCMME	18.02.08	MLv04/NCM/08

Visitor Mrs Lockwood, NCMME	18.02.08	MLv04/NCM/08
Focus group with curatorial team Team, NCMME	25.03.09	Cur/fg/NCM/09
Tour Observation at NCMME	20.11.08	UgObs/a/NCM/08
Tour Observation at NCMME	30.01.09	UgObs/b/NCM/09
Tour Observation at NCMME	11.06.09	UgObs/c/NCM/09
Manager, Beamish	14.05.09	Mgr02/Bea/09
Curator, Beamish	13.05.09	Cur03/Bea/09
Head of Engagement, Beamish	14.05.09	Mgr01/ Bea/09
Interpreter, Beamish	13.05.09	Int01/Bea/09
Curator, Beamish	14.05.09	Cur02/Bea/09
Interpreter, MOSI	20.02.09	Int02/MOSI/09
Head of Interpretation and Learning MOSI	20.02.09	Mgr/MOSI/09
Observation at MOSI	11-12.08.09	Obs/MOSI/09
Learning and Interpretation Officer Quarry Bank Mill	18.02.09	Mgr/QB/09
Interpreter, Quarry Bank Mill	18.02.09	Int01/QB/09
Interpreter, Quarry Bank Mill	18.02.09	Int02/QB/09
Interpreter, Quarry Bank Mill	18.02.09	Int05/QB/09
Quarry Bank tour observation	04.05.08	Obs/QB/08
Quarry Bank mill observation	04.05.09	Obs/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv01/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv02/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv09/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv10/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv03/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv04/QB/09
Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv11/QB/09

Apprentice house visitor	04.05.09	AHv05/QB/09
Demonstrator Bradford	10.06.09	Int01/BIM/09
Demonstrator Bradford	10.06.09	Int02/BIM/09

## Document References

Type	Date	Code
Presentation by Education Officer: Introduction to Education Service, NCMME	27/1/08	pres/NCM/08
Unofficial DVD of Underground Tour, Produced by miner-guide	2009	internal DVD
Meeting notes, Making Sense of Mining	27.11.08	msm/mtg/27.11.08
NCMME Guidebook	2008	Guidebook/NCM/08
Conservation Policy, NCMME	2007	Conservation Policy/NCM/07
NCMME Learning Policy	2008- 2011	Learning Policy/NCM/08-11
Underground Development Design Brief	2009	UG dev design brief/NCM/09
HLF bid for new underground development	2007	HLF bid/NCM/07
Forward Plan NCMME	2008- 2010	Forward Plan/NCM/08-10

Beamish Guidebook	2003	Guidebook/Bea/03
Beamish Collections Management Plan	2005-2009	Collections Plan/Bea/05-09
Visitor Leaflet, Quarry Bank Mill: 'What's On at Quarry Bank'	2007	What's On Leaflet/QB/07
Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate Learning & Interpretation Action Plan	2008 – 2011	Int Plan/QB/08-11
Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate Guidebook	2007	Guidebook/QB/07
Welcome to Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate Leaflet	2007	Leaflet/QB/07
Interpretation Panel, Quarry Bank	2009	Int panel/QB/09
Visitor Leaflet, 'Welcome to Bradford Industrial Museum'	2009	Leaflet/BIM/09
Manchester Museum of Science and Industry Interpretation Policy & Strategy	2007-12	Interpretation Strategy/MOSI/2007-12

## Glossary of Terms

### **Interpretation**

All the activities the museum carries out to make its artefacts, buildings and spaces accessible and comprehensible to the visitor, as well as all the work the visitor does to make meaning in the museum.

### **Live Interpretation**

Activities carried out by museum/heritage site staff and ‘working’ artefacts in the presence of visitors. This is an umbrella term that can cover any live interactions between the museum and its visitors and may include first and third person interpretation, living history activities, tours, theatre performances, workshops and demonstrations.

### **Performed Interpretation**

Performed interpretation covers the same range of activities listed above in ‘live interpretation’ but the term ‘performed interpretation’ is used in this thesis to draw attention to the performative nature of interpretation and more specifically frame it as a performance practice.

### **Museum Theatre**

‘The use of theatre and theatrical techniques as a means of mediating knowledge and understanding in the context of museum education’ (Jackson & Rees Leahy 2005, 304).

### **Living History**

Historically themed activities based on simulating the milieu of a particular past time. It may involve first person interpretation and characterisation or costumed third person interpretation.

### **First Person Interpretation**

Acting in role as a ‘character’, either real or fictional from the past. Interpreters may create the impression that visitors have ‘gone back in time’, or that they have ‘travelled’ to the visitors’ time.

### **Third Person Interpretation**

Acting as an informant or witness to the past whilst not taking on the role of a character. Third person interpreters may be costumed, in which case

they go some way towards producing the effect of a character, or they may be dressed ‘as’ museum staff.

### **Interpreter**

The term interpreter is used here to refer to all staff at case study sites who carry out first and third person interpretation even where job titles vary. The terms actor-interpreter, living history interpreter, presenter, demonstrator and guide are also used where appropriate.

### **Industrial Museum**

This term is used to refer to any museum which references and displays artefacts relating to work, industry, the industrial revolution and working lives even if they are *also* regarded as a science museum, open-air museum, heritage site or history museum.

### **Abbreviations**

NCMME	National Coal Mining Museum for England
MOSI	Manchester Museum of Science and Industry
Bea	Beamish
BIM	Bradford Industrial Museum
QB	Quarry Bank Mill
IMTAL	International Museum Theatre Alliance

## Introduction

Museums use performance in two major ways: scenographically, in the creation of displays and display environments, and narratively in the telling of stories associated with the site/buildings and collections. The scenographic and the narrative are both forms of interpretation which can be regarded as a way of translating the content of the museums' collections and its site and buildings into meaning for the visitor. This production of meaning traditionally takes the form of the written text panel that accompanies museum artefacts, and in this case, interpretation may be imagined as something the museum does *for* the visitor. Meaning here is often regarded as something that occurs in a textual form, and the process of transferring this meaning imagined as a cognitive exchange between object + label that delivers information to the visitor. However, recent thinking based on constructivist educational theory, hermeneutics and reader response theories (Falk and Dierking 1992; Fish 1980; Gadamer 1976; Hein 1998; Hooper Greenhill 1994, 2000, 2007; Iser 1978), suggests that interpretation is actually an active encounter that happens in the spaces between the museum visitor and the museum - its objects, texts, staff, site and spaces - and is conditioned by the particularities of the individual visitor's social, cognitive and imaginative contexts. This implies therefore that interpretation is an event and something that is performed by both the museum and the visitor at the same time.

The idea of interpretation as an active encounter that happens between the texts of the museum and the journeys of the visitor lies behind this study of performance in the museum, as well as the idea from the field of performance studies that performance happens in the realms of 'everyday' life, as well as in the theatre. I have chosen to look at a selection of performance practices from a range of museums that allow me to explore what I am terming 'performed interpretation'. The museum performs interpretation by producing a series of performative narratives such as labels that explain the purpose and meaning of objects, or environments that attempt to recreate an environment from the past, as well as using actor/interpreters to perform characters and narratives. The visitor may choose to activate, enact or take part in these, thus in turn performing their

own interpretation. I propose that underpinning the performance of interpretation are the principles of *translation* and *revelation* which make their way into characteristic forms of performance which will be outlined throughout this thesis. Translation suggests that one form of narrative may be turned into, or may stand for, another one, for example, a series of objects can be made into a story, or a series of scenes made into a walk, or most obviously a collection of objects may be translated into text. Although it should be noted that there is only the *possibility* of translation because, in practice, 'narratives' from different systems of comprehension cannot neatly map onto each other and will contain various elisions and excesses. Revelation is both an intentional practice as well as an effect in performed interpretation: interpreter/actors often refer to shocking, visceral or emotional details of history in order to capture the attention of their audience and elicit empathy. The combination of a real or realistic site accompanied by contextualized artefacts, can be suddenly be 'brought alive' by an interpreter's narrative and the visitor may surprised and/or enlightened about the history being depicted.

In order to explore the idea of performed interpretation, this research explores the following modes of interpretation:

- first and third person interpretation
- the guided tour
- the demonstration

which are of particular relevance to my chosen context: the industrial museum or industrial heritage site. These places have a particular concern with sustainability and visitability. They often use authentic working machinery or employ ex-workers to appear as 'working' or 'living' sites - both practices with a limited life, as there may be no ex-workers for certain industries and machinery may become too fragile to operate. 'Realness' or 'authenticity' that is pursued by the suggestion of the live presence of particular kinds of objects, buildings, forms of work and people, may in future only *reference* it via interpretation and performance. What the visitor perceives as an authentic experience may be entirely driven by performances that reference authenticity, rather than direct contact with 'real' things. Performing interpretation is therefore intimately related to concepts of working and living in these museums and affects the way authenticity is produced and perceived.

This thesis has been driven by a collaboration with the National Coal Mining Museum for England (NCMME) and their concerns and practices have affected both the choice of comparative case studies and the conceptualising and exploration of the idea of performed interpretation. This museum has a particular concern with the sustainability of its interpretation as the men who lead the popular underground tour are close to or past retirement age and a new way of leading visitors around this area of the site will need to be found. The museum is also concerned with the ‘visitor experience’ and aims to find ways of engaging a wide range of visitors with their site and producing a deeper understanding of mining and the legacy of the coal mining industry in this country. The NCMME were interested in research that looked at their underground tour (led by ex-miners) and/or their ‘living history interpretation’ (first person performances led by actor/interpreters) which were considered very different practices, with a view to maintaining and improving these forms of interpretation in future. I found that these two practices were in fact similar in many ways, and that there were, for example, interesting comparisons to be made in the area of the spatial dynamics or scenography of both practices, the use of artefacts, the varying levels of characterisation that the interpreter/guides employed and the interactions with the audience.

It seemed that the role of interpretation in relation to the different kind of performances that the underground tour and the living history interpretation represented needed exploring, and there needed to be a better understanding of the differences and potential uses of first and third person interpretation. The issue of what was real and what was fictional in relation to history was also frequently referred to by various members of staff at this museum in relation to performance, and so seemed to be a central concern of this kind of performance. Consequently the aims of the research were outlined as follows:

## Aims of the Research

- **To determine and analyse the key modes of interpretive performance in the industrial museum/industrial heritage site**

Four additional case study sites were selected (see *Introduction to Case Studies* p. 49) in addition to the NCMME to provide comparisons in terms of type of site and ways of performing interpretation. It was considered, after visiting a number of sites,

that the demonstration was a key form of interpretation in the industrial museum producing its own form of performance that could be analysed alongside the guided tour, as well as examples of first and third person interpretation, even though this was not the predominant form of interpretation at the NCMME<sup>2</sup>. As was mentioned earlier, the choice to use first or third person interpretation was thought to be significant and the gradations in amounts of acting and styles of performance interesting. Therefore, a wider range of activities than is usually thought of as performance has been chosen for analysis and these have been categorized into the following chapters:

- *First and Third Person Interpretation*
- *The Guided Tour*
- *The Demonstration*

The industrial museum/industrial heritage site, which has a particular focus on work and working lives has never been studied as having its own characteristic forms of performance and there is little consideration of the ways in which the guided tour and the demonstration are a definable form of performance in this context. Although the first person performance has been widely studied, the third person form has received little consideration.

The methodology pursued looks at these performances from the multiple perspectives of:

- Museum management
- The museum interpreter/actor
- The museum visitor

The museum performance is thus studied from 'inside' as well as 'outside', thus increasing the validity of the research (see *Methodology* p. 63). Management issues in relation to planning and organising performance have also been considered which will be of benefit to museums who want to use or continue using these strategies in future (see *Recommendations* p. 270).

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<sup>2</sup> There is a certain amount of 'running' machinery here on a regular basis such as the winding engine and small train, and other large machines are run on particular days throughout the year.

- **To assess the relationship between interpretation and performance in the industrial museum**

A major contribution of this research is to map the interpretive performance. This entails outlining a theory of performance-based interpretation which has not so far been done in the field of museum studies or in the field of performance studies. Usually referred to as either: 'museum theatre', 'live/costumed interpretation' or 'living history', it is thought of as being both an educational activity and a form of entertainment for museum visitors. This research takes a different focus to much of the research literature, which tends to look at the benefits and functions of performance and instead looks at what characteristic features make the performance interpretive and where performance practices are being drawn on to produce a sense of 'realness' or 'liveness'. The representation of industry and work is of particular interest here.

As well as a theoretical focus, the research has a practical application for museums with industrial collections in particular and also museums more generally, in that it considers a range of different kinds of interpretive performances, their construction and use by the management and visitors of the museum, and it will lead to a greater understanding of the way interpretive performance may be used as a technique. Of particular interest is the approach I have taken which looks at the contribution of museum site (its buildings and spaces) and the museum object to the interpretive performance, which sees them as co-performers, along with the museum, the museum interpreter and the visitor or audience. I use a broad definition of performance that moves outside the realms of the scripted, acted, character-based performance to consider activities carried out by non-performer staff such as guides, interpreters and demonstrators. These activities are not generally thought of within museums as *being* performances, but doing so will allow for an overarching new form of performer training specifically for museums to be created, which currently does not exist (see *Recommendations* p. 270).

- **To examine the particular contribution of performance to perceptions of authenticity in the museum**

Authenticity is considered to be a key issue in relation to the museum performance. This research aims to show how the industrial museum/heritage site utilises the 'realness' of its site, collections or members of its staff (who may be ex-workers) both to attract visitors and to maintain its authority within the museum field. It explores how certain forms of performance may contribute to or sustain this sense of authenticity, but also how they may also undermine it. It will also consider the sustainability of interpretation that relies on using real places, real things and real people. This is particularly important to the industrial museum/heritage site that uses working machinery, relies on the knowledge of ex-workers and which presents a past that is still within 'living memory'. The museums in question represent histories that for many visitors connect with their own or their family's working lives. An important consideration is whether these visitors recognise the history being performed as 'their' history. These museums could be thought to be in transition as we move further into a post industrial age when visitors will be less 'connected' with the forms of industry that they represent.

## Research Questions

The research aims outlined above lead to the following questions:

- What is an interpretive performance?
  - How may it be characterised 'as' performance and how does it work as interpretation?
  - How does the site, its buildings, spaces and artefacts contribute to these performances?
- What are the key modes of interpretive performance in the industrial museum/heritage site?
  - How are these performances created, managed and received?
- What relationship do these interpretive performances in the industrial museum and heritage site have with authenticity?

## Research Context

### ***Museum Theatre, Live Interpretation and Living History – Defining Terms***

This research is situated within the areas of what are variously called museum theatre, live interpretation and living history. More accurately it is located *in between* these areas, as they are not discrete territories that represent clear-cut areas of knowledge or even distinct activities. These types of performance are not part of a clearly defined research field and so may be regarded within museology as forms of education or interpretation, or within the field of performance studies as applied theatre, site specific performance or as particular forms of cultural performance. They are also considered within the fields of heritage and tourism. Although there is a general interdisciplinarity to this research, it resides mainly in the fields of performance and museum studies where there is a lack of theory - particularly in museum studies - with which to deal with the phenomenon of the museum performance. This research will widen and deepen the theoretical knowledge base for the museum performance and situate *performed interpretation* more firmly as a discrete area of interpretation within museum studies.

This section outlines the place of this research within its field and notes its particular areas of originality (pp. 25-31). The rest of the *Research Context* from page 31 onwards concentrates on the theoretical ground that will be covered within this work and summarises the key theories that will be used.

The terms ‘museum theatre’, ‘live interpretation’ and ‘living history’ are in practice often interchanged, and yet there are some recognisable differences between them which I will explore briefly in this introductory section. However I would argue that they are essentially *interpretive* practices, and thus produce a characteristically *interpretive performance*, and the main focus of this research is to determine what *kind* of performance that is, rather than explore the specificities of the terms. In practice, museums intend performance to produce interpretation, with the aim of enlightening and entertaining their visitors. However it needs to be considered *how* these performances are interpretive and how interpretation draws on performance practices as well as considering the conditions that surround these productions. Research in this field has tended to concentrate on the functionality of the performance in terms of how well it succeeds in terms of education and entertainment, which I think it is fair to say, is more important to most museums, than how well it may succeed in aesthetic terms or how it works as interpretation.

The functional aspects of museum performance then tend to be foregrounded in much of the literature on the subject.

This is the case for **museum theatre** which is defined as: 'the use of theatre and theatrical techniques as a means of mediating knowledge and understanding in the context of museum education' (Jackson & Rees Leahy 2005, 304). Museum theatre derives in part from the Theatre-in-Education movement and can be thought to have a social aim: 'to effect a transformation in people's lives, whether that be the activation of a process of *attitudinal* or *behavioural change* on the part of the audience or the creation or consolidation of *consciousness* about the audience's place in the world or, more modestly, the *triggering of curiosity* about a specific issue' (Jackson 2007, 1-2). However, Prendergast and Saxton note that applied theatre, which for them includes museum theatre, has a role which is to either reassert or undermine socio-political norms, and that museum theatre's role is most often to reassert and celebrate memory and history (Prendergast & Saxton 2009, 8) rather than disrupt the status quo. I would agree with this, arguing that on the whole, history tends to be presented conservatively in museums and heritage sites. This tension between the potential that performance has to effect change and the limited use that is necessitated by a conservative approach is one of the key issues in this research and will be discussed in later chapters. Anthony Jackson has led much of the recent research in this field in the UK, notably most recently, a major research project: *Performance Learning and Heritage* looking at the effectiveness of different forms of museum performance in terms of learning outcomes (Jackson & Kidd 2008). Jackson's contribution to the field of educational museum performance is considerable, but on the whole, this is a young discipline in academic terms and 'notably under-researched' (Jackson & Rees Leahy 2005, 304), which means that much writing on the subject tends to be descriptive with the aim of attracting the attention of museums as to its potential communicative and educational benefits (Alsford & Parry 1991; Bridal 2004; Cannizzo and Parry 1994; Ford 1997 and 2000; Hughes 1998; Malcolm-Davies 2004), or provides evaluative data on the effects of theatre on its audiences (Bicknell & Fisher 1993, Baum & Hughes 2001; Tzibazi 2007). The concentration on the social use of performance and its educational effectiveness (all writers refer to it as an educational medium) means that the rationale for using performance and the effects of performance are more often studied than the particular qualities of the performance itself. This also affects the performances themselves which tend to be 'child-friendly' and aimed at schools or family audiences. My research into certain forms of 'performed interpretation' considers a wider range of performances than would be considered

as museum theatre, some of them unintentional, some carried out by ‘non-performers’ and looks at the contribution of the museum site, buildings and artefacts as co-performers to these performances. This is a valuable contribution to the field of museum performance as this range has not hitherto been assessed in terms of performance studies. This situates the museum performance in the wider sociologically and anthropologically influenced field of performance studies, following the work of Auslander (1997); Bateson (2004 [1972]); Carlson (1996); Goffman (1959, 1974); MacAloon (1984); Schechner (1985, 2002); Singer (1972) and Turner (1982 and 1986), and so although the term ‘museum theatre’ continues to be used, the term ‘performance’ will take precedence in the work that follows.

I use Carlson’s definition of performance where he states that ‘the recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as “performance,” or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself’ (Carlson 1996, 4). He outlines three types of performance: one involving the ‘display of skills’, another ‘also involving display, but less of particular skills than of a recognized and culturally coded pattern of behavior’ and another which is to do with ‘the general success of the activity in light of some standard of achievement’ (Carlson 1996,4-5) with the awareness that for an action to be considered a performance, it is done with a certain kind of awareness or self-consciousness, if not in the presence of an actual audience. A certain doubleness relating to performance is noted here and also by Schechner (2006) which is not just the difference between the thing done and the performed thing being done, which is referred to by Schechner as ‘restored behavior’ but also between the thing done and the comparison between this and some other behaviour or act that has gone before: ‘through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action’ (Bauman in Carlson 1996, 5). This idea of the ‘original’ model or mode of behaviour will be shown to be particularly pertinent to the museum performance which has a fundamentally different relationship with authenticity than the theatre performance. Schechner’s idea of restored behaviour encompassing ‘physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first-time; that are prepared or rehearsed’ (Schechner 2006, 29) is valuable here because restored behaviour forms the basis for the widest range of performance types from the everyday re-enactment of habits, routines and rituals, to theatre and theatrical displays. Schechner’s distinction between ‘as’ and ‘is’ performance is also useful here. He states that ‘There are limits to what “is” performance’ but ‘just about anything can

be studied ‘as’ performance’ (Schechner 2006, 38). This potential wideness of the term ‘performance’ lies behind the choice to study a range of interpretative behaviours rather than be restricted to the term ‘museum theatre’.

The term **live interpretation** tends to refer to a wider range of activities than museum theatre. IMTAL state that it is: ‘A broad term used to cover any live interaction between museum/site staff and visitors. This includes many living history-type activities, ranging from non-costumed demonstrations of historical craft to storytelling and costumed first- and third-person interpretation, but is also used to cover activities such as guided tours, education workshops, theatre performances and demonstrations.’ (IMTAL<sup>3</sup> website 2010). Whereas museum theatre tends to be used to refer to performances produced by ‘trained actors working in this field, often in dedicated performance spaces within museums and galleries’ (IMTAL website 2010), live interpretation may refer to activities that contain little theatricality and is often carried out by museum staff with no background in performance or drama. There is however very little written about this range of activities (that extend outside the scope of museum theatre), and what is written is not done so from a performance studies perspective. Many writers writing about live interpretation come from the field of heritage and museum studies (Malcolm-Davies 2002; Risk 1994; Tilden 1957; Uzzell 1994 and1998) and again are presenting guides on how to use the medium or are evaluating its effectiveness. Although descriptions of the differences between first and third person interpretation are mentioned in some studies (Ford 1998; Goodacre and Baldwin 2002; Robertshaw 2006), no work has been done which analyses them comparatively as performances using different amounts and styles of acting or a different style of audience engagement for example, or which considers the presentational style of the third person form of interpretation in comparison with the first person’s representational style. This research looks at a range of live interpretation from a performance studies perspective and looks at how it works as performance *and* as interpretation. Of particular value is the study of third person interpretation which although referred to by Jackson and Kidd as ‘undoubtedly performative’(Jackson & Kidd 2008, 19), has not been researched in its own right as performance. The study of the contribution of the ex-worker to the industrial museum’s third person interpretation and the particular effects this has in relation to the formation of identity and characterization within interpretation is an original

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<sup>3</sup> International Museum Theatre Alliance - European Division

contribution to the research field and a particularly valuable one as 'real' ex-workers are now a dwindling resource in today's industrial museums.

The kind of performance that live interpretation is, lies closer to the social or cultural performance that is within the sphere of everyday life behaviours rather than the more marked-as-performance 'museum theatre'. The issue of what is 'real' and what is 'theatrical' behaviour in the museum is very complicated and is dealt with in more detail later in this section, but the question is central to the practice and theory of **living history** - a capacious term with a range of meanings. It has been mentioned in relation to a range of characteristic 'activities' within the definition of live interpretation above. These tend to be craft activities such as candle making, cooking, weaving etc. But it also refers to museums that use an environmental site-based approach involving reconstructed environments relative to a set period in history along with costumed staff who may be either using a first or a third person style of interpretation. In fact this style of interpretation is sometimes referred to as living history with or without the appropriate material historical context. It should be noted that these types of museum/site tend to be called 'open-air museums' in this country and that they rarely practice first person interpretation across the whole site. The authentically and carefully detailed reconstructed environment is thought to provide a more 'natural' backdrop for the museum artefact and the restoration of the 'original' context of use is thought to be more comprehensible and more enjoyable for the visitor (Shafernich 1993, 43).

### ***Interpretation***

Having defined live interpretation and first and third person interpretation, interpretation itself needs defining as a museum practice. Interpretation is often conceptualised by museums as a message that the museum produces for visitors (Black 2005; Cunningham 2004; Hooper-Greenhill 1994), suggesting a behaviourist model of interpretation in which exhibition material that is organised in a particular way will impart its information along with learning objectives to the visitor. Lisa Roberts (1997) describes how for most of museum history, it has been curators with their scientific and historical approaches to knowledge who have held authority over the various functions in museums and so consequently, the mode of knowledge employed by the curatorial community - cognitive, rational thought - has dominated and shaped the way collections and exhibitions have traditionally been treated. This means that interpretation is regarded mainly as a narrative form of communication that transfers curatorial knowledge into an

accessible format<sup>4</sup>. The following definition of interpretation was given in *Museum Practice* - a journal for museum professionals in 1997 which illustrates this tendency:

It is the process of using displays and associated information to convey messages about objects and the meanings which museums attach to them; and of selecting appropriate media and techniques to communicate effectively with target audiences (Martin 1997, 36).

Here, interpretation is something *the museum* does. If it does it well, the museum's 'target audiences' will know what it wants them to know. This deterministic view of what interpretation is sees the message as a product which needs to be consumed. Graham Black suggests that the concept of learning as a product in the form of fact-based knowledge lies behind almost all museum education and positions the visitor as a passive consumer. In addition, this transmission of knowledge can only happen if the audience members have the 'right' level of background interest, knowledge and understanding (Black 2005, 132).

Interpretation can be regarded as a text-based message. A more holistic view of it regards interpretation as almost everything that is done in relation to the display and presentation of objects and spaces in the museum. So it is something that happens when curators research the meaning and history of objects, when they are put on display, when a label is written, when pictures and audio-visual material is presented, when a site is restored and opened to the public, when a machine is set running or when a dramatic scene is played out on-site by actors. David Uzzell argues that visitors make meaning constantly as they navigate space. 'They may need to be given a sense of direction, guidance, a cognitive map in order to begin to recognize the significance and meaning of objects and places' (Uzzell 1994, 297). Therefore the whole environment of the museum or historic site can be thought of as being 'readable'. The idea that the visitor 'reads' the site is a more visitor-centred model of interpretation than the previous definition. The visitor centred view of interpretation is influenced by constructivist educational theory, reader response, semiotic, phenomenological and hermeneutic theories. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill suggests that 'in hermeneutics,... you are the interpreter for yourself. Interpretation is the process of *constructing* meaning' (Hooper-Greenhill 1994, 13). Looking on its own is inadequate to capture the meaning of our surroundings, as we do not literally 'see' things. Both Roberts (1997) and Urry (1990) describe how we encounter objects which are constituted as signs in a

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<sup>4</sup> see *Recommendations*, no. 2.

postmodern environment with the result that 'it is no longer possible to represent reality except in a mediated fashion' (Roberts 1997, 100). It is also now realised that the visitor's personal, physical and social contexts affect the way they experience the museum' (Falk and Dierking 1992). As Roberts points out, now it is no longer possible to regard museums as simply interpreting objects to visitors - 'Rather, visitors interpret their encounters in museums according to personal interests and goals which shape what they see' (Roberts 1997, 98).

The practice of what may be termed 'heritage interpretation' is another important strand in interpretation theory. This originates from the work of Freeman Tilden's who wrote *Interpreting Our Heritage* in 1957 from the perspective of the American National Park Service which refers primarily to a person-based form of dialogue, or the role of people to understand the natural landscape, although he does consider his ideas on interpretation to be relevant to museums and historic sites. His definition of interpretation is that it is:

an education activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects by firsthand experience and illustrated media rather than simply to communicate factual information (Tilden 1977 [1957], 8).

This has become a very commonly used definition of interpretation particularly in relation to heritage interpretation. It is a definition which is very amenable to the use of performance because of its reference to revealing meanings and firsthand experience, which imply that interpretation is inherently performative. The Association for Heritage Interpretation also refer to the work of interpretation as being revelatory when they say that interpreters: 'reveal hidden stories and meanings; bring places, objects and ideas to life' (AHI website 2011).

### ***Industrial Museums and Industrial Heritage Sites***

Many industrial heritage sites such as Beamish, The Black Country Living Museum and Ironbridge are also open air museums, which is somewhat ironic given the fact that the open-air museum movement from the nineteenth century onwards aimed to preserve the ways of life of communities 'in danger' from progress and change as a result of industrialisation. These museums situate industry in rural settings and have a more nostalgic feel than the more urban industrial museums that are closer in type to the science museum. The industrial museum, in contrast has its roots in the popular displays of mechanic and engineering arts which were epitomised by the Great Exhibition of 1851. Richard Altick in *The Shows of London* (1978) describes in detail the range of institutions and events that were intended to advance practical knowledge and to showcase

the nation's industry from the late eighteenth century, as well as amaze the general public such as the lectures at the Royal Institution which catered for a growing interest in science and a need for science instruction. These public lectures could be seen as the precursor for the modern museum 'science show' (Altick 1978, 375-389). Kenneth Hudson explains how in 1851, and for perhaps thirty years afterwards, it was not too difficult to present science, technology and art in the same museum and for the same public (Hudson 1987, 54), but after this time there began to be increasing specialisation within the sciences and the arts, and the collections became divided. Hudson explains how in a pre-television age, the museum had an important social role in explaining different branches of technology to people. Early museums of science and industry contained collections of what were new artefacts at the cutting edge of industry and were used as teaching tools (Hudson 1987, 88). Museums too were used to attract potential workers into industry. For instance, in 1947 the Coal Board who were keen to interest boys in becoming miners developed a mining exhibit in the cellar of Temple Newsam, a country house (Ivor Brown/NCM/09). As industrial artefacts became historic rather than modern, the museums that contained them became history museums to show the development of various processes or were used on a local basis to highlight the industries relevant to the area. This meant that the industrial museum became a museum of industrialisation rather than a museum of industry (Hudson 1987, 108). The science museum then took over the task of representing modern science and technology to the public.

Both these influences (the open air heritage museum and the museum of science and industry) make their way into the case study museums chosen as part of this research (see pp. 49-55). Changing perceptions of heritage are also influential in relation to these museums/sites and to performance practices in museums more generally. From the 1970s through to the 1990s, there was a dramatic growth in heritage attractions which became known as the 'heritage boom' (Walsh 1992). In the 1980s, Robert Lumley could write that the museum could be said to be undergoing a 'renaissance': 'In Britain new museums are being set up at the rate of one a fortnight' (Lumley 1988, 1). This was happening at the same time as many of Britain's manufacturing industries were closing down and could be seen as a consequence of de-industrialisation. Urry describes how 'a profound sense of loss' was partly mitigated by the creation of museums that represented lost industries and how local authorities used these museums to develop local economies and generate local jobs (Urry 1990, 107). Urry states that the development of the industrial museum in an old mill is a metonymic sign of the

development of a post-industrial society' (Urry 1990, 129). These museums were in part fuelled by nostalgia and a sense of loss but were accompanied by an increasing public interest in recent history – sometimes known as 'people's history' (Samuel 1994, 25). In addition, from the 1960s onwards, what was known as 'industrial archaeology' became a fashionable minority pursuit. Stratton and Trinder note that 'quite suddenly, in the mid 1960s, parts of the industrial heritage became destinations for excursions' (Stratton and Trinder 2000,196).

Accompanying this surge in museum openings was a hostile critical commentary towards the new prospect of the heritage museum. Critics like Tony Bennett (1988) argued that the apparently democratic interest shown in ordinary people's lives by these museums is undermined or trivialized in the context of the dominant (middle class) culture and that ordinary people are encountered 'in those massively idealized and deeply regressive forms which stalk the middle-class imagination' (Bennett 1988, 64). Kevin Walsh like Bennett was highly critical of open-air museums, which 'provide representations of life-styles that are devoid of conflict and antisocial behaviour, and exist within a calming rural landscape (Walsh 1992, 97). Robert Hewison is probably the most well known critic of what he called 'the heritage industry', arguing that the growth in heritage attractions exemplifies a country obsessed with its past and unable to face its future. The mass interest in the past was seen negatively by these commentators as a dangerous nostalgia which was fed by inauthentic and sanitised representations of the past 'brought to life' in a vivid way that prevented people from seeing social inequities, dirt, disease and propaganda.

More recently heritage has been re-evaluated as a potentially positive force for the development and expression of what have often been undervalued or unknown cultural identities<sup>5</sup> and something that museum visitors can use as a resource (Bagnall 2003; Dicks 2003 and 2003 a; Smith 2006). Bella Dicks describes how industrial heritage 'allows ex-industrial workers to lay claim to public heritage in the form of their own lives and workplaces, as opposed to the traditional heritage fare of castles and cathedrals' (Dicks 2003, 30). Laurajane Smith has been particularly influential in challenging traditional definitions of heritage and she argues that 'the criticism that museums like these offer sanitized titillation or are sops to deindustrialization cannot be sustained. Rather, visitors critically and actively utilize these places as cultural and social tools in remembering and

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<sup>5</sup> see *Recommendations*, no. 3

memory making that underwrite a self-conscious sense of class and regional identity' (Smith 2006, 196).

### ***Authenticity and Performing History***

Heritage museums often use costumed interpreters, a practice regarded by Hewison (1987) as mere entertainment and detrimental to the educational intent of the museum. These museums also often use the period room set and reconstructed period building and/or have areas of the site reconstructed to a particular time period. The totally reconstructed site, which is referred to as a 'historical envelope' in Jackson (2000) may 'create the illusion that you have really travelled back in time and entered another world' (Anderson 1985, 455), thus relies on the willing suspension of disbelief in the visitor. This does though present some awkward questions about authenticity and realism. The 'other world' entered is a constructed one and many commentators discuss the sanitised and partial version of the past that these museums who produce reconstructed historical space create (Bennett 1988; Handler & Gable 1996; Leon & Piatt 1989; Lowenthal 1985; Magelssen 2004; 2007; Wallace 1981; Walsh 1992; West 1988), noting that they produce a *visitable version* of the past rather than a true picture. Costumed guides may be acting or look like they are acting when they carry out 'period' activities. Leon and Piatt state that visitors are often confused between what is reality and what an illusion: 'visitors ask interpreters, "Is that object real?" "Are you really a weaver?" "Is this building real?" and "are you actually doing that work?"' (Leon & Piatt 1989, 91). Karp points out that both museums and theme parks use the costumed guide *either* authentically *or* playfully: 'thus the same display technique can be used in settings that assert either authenticity or fantasy' (Karp 2001, 280). Many conclude that in fact these museums are not simply representing the real past but are, or should be seen as a version of theatre (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1993; Leon and Piatt 1989; Schechner 1985; Snow 1993), where 'the sets are more complete and accurate than in most plays and the goal is to use the setting and the cast of characters to teach about the past' (Leon and Piatt 1989, 91). The living history museum which achieves its most extensive realization in the United States<sup>6</sup> has been referred to by Schechner (1985) and Snow (1993) as 'environmental theater' where the 'fourth wall' between performers and audience has been removed and the action improvised. Many museums (particularly open-air

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<sup>6</sup> I refer to the large and well known living history museums in the United States such as: Plimoth Plantation, Colonial Williamsburg and Old Sturbridge Village.

museums) use the fully contextualized display environment but few in this country staff their museums with the number of interpreters that would be necessary to provide the illusion of being in another time and still fewer practice first person interpretation<sup>7</sup>. Third person interpretation is generally felt more appropriate to the open-air museum environment. Frank Atkinson the founder of Beamish preferred the third person interpreter because he felt they were more ‘credible’: ‘he or she is less embarrassing to many visitors and this role is much easier to perform, in not requiring the training of an actor’ (Atkinson 1999, 211). The question of whether third person interpreters require the training of an actor is debatable especially in the light of discussion in *Chapter One – First and Third Person Interpretation* on acting and characterisation in relation to the third person interpreter.

### *Anti-theatricality*

Having stated that living history museums are a form of theatre, it is fair to say that theatricality is not always well regarded in the museum world. Many interpreters at the above mentioned living history museums will insist that they are not acting and associate acting with an inappropriate kind of theatricality and fakeness (Magelssen 2007; Snow 1993). Richard Talbot of innovative museum theatre practitioners *Triangle Theatre Company* reflected in an interview on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 2008 on the difficulty of using performance in museums: ‘that’s the nature of performance I think – it disturbs, it troubles the museum’. The company *Past Pleasures* who are leading historical interpreters in the UK, claim that their work is not theatre: ‘It shares many attributes with theatre but is not theatre; visitors to historic sites are not audiences, there is no stage, no lights, no fourth wall and Past Pleasures Ltd rarely uses scripts’ (Past Pleasures 2010). It is debatable whether this is entirely the case, or that the lack of a stage, lights, fourth wall or scripts means that a performance is not theatre, suggesting that there is some sort of perception problem to do with theatre in museums which may derive from an ancient anti-theatrical bias. It is certainly the case that history and performance have a difficult relationship. A common perception is that the practice of historiography is connected with scholarship and truthfulness, and that performance is connected with entertainment and commercialism. Anthony Jackson and Helen Rees Leahy argue that many museum professionals resist the use of theatrical performances, which they regard as fictionalising and thus

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<sup>7</sup> Llancaich Fawr is a notable exception.

deflecting learning away from the interpretation of material evidence and towards performance (Jackson and Leahy 2005). They argue that 'the resistance to theatrical performance implies a disavowal of the performative nature of museum displays and indeed museum visiting, while distrust of the fictionalising effect of museum theatre is based on a refusal to acknowledge the role of the subject, the arbitrary and the expedient in the construction and narration of history in the museum (Jackson and Leahy 2005, 305). This association of particular forms of interpretation with commercialisation, conservativeness and fakeness means that performance is regarded with suspicion in many museums. Anthony Jackson quotes a museum Education Director who warned: 'museums are not theatres. Visitors are not audiences. History is not Drama. Character interpretation in museums is not acting' (quoted in Jackson, 2000, 199). Not only do many museum professionals resent any suggestion that they are part of the leisure and entertainment market, they regard the use of drama or theatre within the museum as an 'inherently fictionalizing medium of interpretation' (Jackson and Rees-Leahy 2005, 305), which threatens the seriousness and status of authenticity of the museum and its artefacts. Even the 'staging' of a museum display may be regarded by the museum critic with horror, as this quotation indicates:

The National Trust has done a magnificent job of maintaining a superlative collection of buildings. This it has done with fastidious scholarship and meticulous craftsmanship, encouraging professional standards of interior design and restoration that are unrivalled....And now its chairman, Sir Simon Jenkins, wants to wreck it with a sort of cretinised vulgarity that would bring Walt Disney into disrepute. In pursuit of an undefined and unquantifiable populist (which is to say "patronising") target, Sir Simon now intends to insert elements of retro-kitsch fantasy into the Trust's great houses. There will be chewed chicken drumsticks on kitchen floors, guttering candles on mantelpieces. You will find Bess's ripped bodice in Hardwick Hall together with the discarded cod-piece of a husband, a moment "preserved" from an unhealthily imagined Elizabethan copulatory frenzy. There will be four-posters with linen stained as if by an incontinent Jacobean Tracey Emin. Sir Simon says these *tableaux vivants* will bring buildings to life. No one, as they say, ever went bust underestimating the public's taste. But a line between instruction and entertainment has been crossed (Stephen Bayley, *The Independent*, 2010).

This quotation shows a contempt for scenographic practice in a museum context as well as demonstrating that the indication of the presence of a live human body as part of the historic display is controversial and problematic. This suggests a clash between modes of representation - performance's being the live body and the museum's being the object.

The reconstructed environment though is extremely popular with visitors. Museum performance in addition, as the *Performance Learning and Heritage* research team has found (Jackson & Kidd, 2008), has some significant educational benefits. Performance has long term impact on the visitor; enhances appreciation and critical understanding; engenders interest and empathy with other people's lives; gives voice to marginalised histories and represents stories that the artefacts do not show; and instigates debate and dialogue (Jackson & Kidd 2008, 134). In spite of this, many commentators refer to the embarrassing or inauthentic nature of many museum performances: 'Ham-acting that makes you squirm, faux olde worlde country accents and tatty frilly frocks more suited to a tea room - often an audience shuffles out from museum theatre more embarrassed than starstruck' (Birkett 2006, 38). As Jackson and Kidd note: 'Museum theatre often suffers in many people's eyes from being 'worthy' and rather predictable, or from being aimed at children or at the lowest common denominator' (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 70).

### *Representing History*

Authenticity is already in question when history is not to be trusted. Hayden White's influential essay: *The Fictions of Factual Representation* demonstrates how reliant on fiction the history making process is. He argues that 'although historians and writers of fiction may be interested in different kinds of events, both the forms of their respective discourses and their aims in writing are often the same' (White 2004, 22), noting that it has only been since the early nineteenth century that it became conventional to identify truth with fact and to regard fiction as the opposite of truth (White 2004, 24). He argues that 'the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensive totality, capable of serving as the object of a representation is a poetic process' (White 2004, 26). White points out narratives are a problem because real events do not offer themselves as a story (White 1980, 8). Narration and narrativity are the 'instruments by which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in a discourse' (White 1980, 8). Richard Schechner points out that historical narratives that seem to produce a seamless continuity from past to present are fictions: 'the past is full of holes' and 'all historical narratives are haunted by what/who is erased, threatened by what/who demands representation.' This makes the writing of history and the representing of events into an ongoing performative process (Schechner 2002). In *Exceptional Spaces*, Della Pollock looks at the relationship of history and performance and notes that 'the writing of history becomes the ultimate historical

performance, making events meaningful by talking about them' (Pollock 1998, 13). This edited collection is important because it looks at history and historical places using performance as a mode of enquiry. In the introduction, Pollock describes how performance studies changes the object-status of the text to being one of the 'text-in-performance as an always already intertextual rite – as an event that occurs between and among participants whose meanings are therefore emergent and unpredictable' (Pollock 1998, 22). If 'text' here can be thought of as history, this shows how history is challenged by performance, which *only* exists in the present and *only* exists through the medium of real people. This has a dual effect – it can make history 'go' by making it seem real but can also make it seem to 'go away' by 'exercising its representational tactics so vigorously that history can no longer be seen' which is 'the central irony of representation – its tendency to make absent the very thing it wishes to make present' (Pollock 1998, 22).

### *Representation – Mediating the Real*

Although some museum professionals may imagine the authenticity of their sites, buildings and objects to be unassailable and possibly inimical to performance, many critics question the basis on which that assumption is made. In many of today's museums, the encounter between object and visitor is heavily mediated by thematised information and by contextualised environments that reconstruct the 'original' context of use and by an array of audio-visual technologies that all have the potential to dominate the objects on display. Many commentators discuss the blurring boundaries of history/science/art museum with theme park and shopping centre (Dicks 2003; Heumann-Gurian 2005; Hudson 1999; Macdonald and Silverstone 1999; Preziosi and Farago 2004; Urry 1990), one of the effects of which is that what were once called 'truths' are increasingly being dubbed 'fictions' (Macdonald and Silverstone 1999). It may be that the representational practices of the museum as discussed by Scott Magelssen and Handler and Gable in relation to living history museums are what creates a sense of authenticity for the visitor (Handler & Gable 1997; Magelssen 2007, 2004). Simply by being in a museum space creates 'meaning' for an object or artefact or performer irrespective of the multiple meanings they 'naturally' possess by virtue of the fact that they have now become a representation. The historic site transformed into a museum is double: a representational layer over a 'real' past core and so when we look at the real site we are looking through the representational lens of the museum.

The display environment of the museum has become heavily influenced by film and television in terms of both the technology it uses and the way the visitor

now looks at the display (Dicks 2003; Macdonald & Silverstone 1999; Sandberg 1995), with a camera-centred perspective. Bella Dicks argues that this perspective has 'allowed us to consider a new kind of authenticity – one that is not dependent on aura but on mimesis, or the faithful reconstruction of reality. The camera suggests that views of life which are more extensive *and* detailed can be gained through its power than by the naked eye (Dicks 2003, 20). This alters the basis of the museum object/museum visitor encounter. The realness of the object now derives not solely from its auratic status but from how well the environment 'works' to produce the appearance or effect of authenticity for the public. Artefacts that are taken out of the glass case and put into room sets or a more widely contextualised environment may seem more real because the visitor can imagine them being used. Many writers comment on both the production and the visitor expectation of increasingly engaging, lively and experiential museum displays where the visitor is active in the meaning-making process (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Macdonald and Silverstone 1999; Urry 1990). The production of more lively, engaging, interactive and staged spaces privileges the visitor 'experience' which may be one of actually *being* in another time and place, and this transformation of what is representational into what is real, *by being felt as real* by the visitor shifts the location of authenticity from the object to the visitor and from the material to the existential. This also shifts the moment when authenticity is created from the curatorial time of display to the event when the audience comes into contact with it. Now, 'it is in the place/time of the event when the audience comes into contact with the object and takes part in co-creating social meaning that authenticity occurs' (Crew and Sims 1991, 174). Therefore, authenticity which 'lies at the heart of all museum activity' (Saumarez-Smith 1989) is significantly destabilised.

Jenny Kidd reports that one of the major findings from the *Performance Learning and Heritage* project was that research participants' conceptions of authenticity featured strongly in their analyses of performances they experienced and these affected the ways they understood and made sense of them (Kidd 2011 b, 26). Some visitors referred to the correlation between the (imagined) objectively real past and the performance, some noted that performance enabled them to temporarily 'inhabit' the past on the part of the visitor. Others referred to the 'real' status of the museum object in performance and others referred to an authentic personal sense of the past that was activated by performance (Kidd 2011 b, 26-30). A sense of authenticity then seems to derive from the relationship the visitor forms with the museum and not entirely on some sort of objective reality that is being referred to. Others similarly refer to the visitors' experience of authenticity. Gaynor

Bagnall refers to an ‘emotional realism’ which sites may engender in the visitor that allows them to have feelings that are meaningful and real (Bagnall 2003, 88). An argument for performance in museums is that the act of retrieving history may produce insight and recreate the experience of perhaps what has been deeply felt and thus go some way to restoring the ‘feel’ - the ‘texture’ of what the past was like. Although the museums use their authentic materiality to suggest that it is possible to ‘revisit’ the past, it is not the material past that we visit, but an experience based on memories and emotion which is a differently authentic form of reliving.

### *Museum Space as Performance Space*

It seems then that the museum as an authority and the organisation and design of museum space play a part in constructing the authenticity that the visitor experiences. Several commentators note how similar exhibitions are to theatre (Heumann-Gurian 1991, 188; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 3). The creation of mimetic recreations such as period rooms or more fully realised environments in museums alter the status of the object and the relationship the visitor has with them. In the traditional museum display which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls the ‘in-context’, performance depends on the drama of the artefact: ‘Objects are the actors and knowledge animates them....their script is a series of labels....The performative mode is exposition and demonstration’ (ibid 1998, 3), whereas in the recreated environmental display which she calls the ‘insitu display’ the visitor experience is privileged as they can enter another ‘world’ (ibid 1998,4). This re-positioning of the object within a contextualized environment means that the visitor does not experience the object, but the *performance* of the object, meaning that ‘the postmodern viewer celebrates the “aesthetic displacement” of the proscenium; finding comfort in their “inner stage” where they are both the actor and director, spectator and participant’ (Casey 2005, 85). In this case, the museum is not only the stage for visitors to perform interpretation in relation to certain arrangements of space, it positions the visitor as a multi-roled actor. Carol Duncan argues that museums evoke ritual performances which may be ‘something an individual enacts alone by following a prescribed route, by repeating a prayer, by recalling a narrative, or by engaging in some other structured experience that relates to the history or meaning of the site’ (Duncan 1991, 81). An example of this from my research is when the underground tour at the NCMME is undertaken by ex-miners who feel they are re-visiting their own pasts. The ‘theatrical event’ in the museum could be regarded as the live encounter between display and audience or the

performance of interpretation. Tracy Davis (1995) and Patraka (2003) also consider the interpretive performances of the visitor which in the case of the Holocaust Museum in the US changes the visitor's role from one of bystander to that of witness: 'we are asked to become performers in the event of understanding and remembering' (Patraka 2003, 90). Davis (1995) considers installations in museums that are 'constructed in such a way that a performance about the underlying meaning of the place occurs' when the visitor comes into contact with them, moves around, and experiences them. She describes how in these instances: 'visitors are in part like the audience of a realist stage play deciding whether to be caught in the simulacrum of a depicted time and place, and in part like the spectators at a promenade performance where they are at liberty to move from staging post to staging post and direct their attention at will' (Davis 1995, 15-16). Other commentators discuss the museum or heritage attraction as a performance space: (Annis 1994; Bowman 1998, 2006; Edensor 2000; Neumann 1988). The spaces of the museum and its arrangement of content can be imagined as scenography that both physically directs the visitor around the museum and produces meaning from the juxtaposition of particular kinds of space, objects, text and visual images. But it can be imagined as a performative environment because it makes us see the ordinary as extraordinary. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to this as the 'museum effect': 'museum exhibitions transform how people look at their own immediate environs. The museum effect works both ways. Not only do ordinary things become special when placed in museum settings, but the museum experience itself becomes a model for experiencing life outside its walls' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988, 51). As museums produce increasingly performative environments the museum visitor is increasingly viewed as a performer. Abercrombie and Longhurst argue that a new paradigm can be used for conceptualising audiences which they call the 'spectacle/performance' paradigm in which individuals are treated simultaneously as consumers and as members of an audience where the 'qualities and experiences of being a member of an audience have begun to *leak out* from specific performance events which previously contained them, into the wider realms of everyday life' (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, 36-7). In contemporary society everyone is an audience all the time - it is no longer an exceptional or an everyday event and is in fact constitutive of everyday life (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998, 68-9).

### *The Presence of 'the Real'*

The 'problem' with authenticity in performance is related to the material 'realness' that the museum represents. The real thing in the museum is associated with a certain aura that the real thing or the real place or the real person may have invested in them. Aura is described by Walter Benjamin in his well known essay: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1968 [1935]) and derives both from the object's (or work of art's) accumulated history throughout its existence as well as the association with its creator. This aura or presence that certain objects, buildings and places possess is considered as an integral and powerful feature of the museum (Dudley 2010; Greenblatt 1991; Latham 2007; Moore 1987; Saumarez-Smith 1989). Material authenticity is in fact the bedrock on which the foundation of the museum rests and is represented by the mission of museums to protect and conserve artefacts for posterity.

However, performance alters the material basis of authenticity and moves its location to the existential. Sarah Rubidge suggests that in performance authenticity can be created at every interaction between performer and audience (Rubidge 1996, 219) and most problematically for the museum, Boal states that in the aesthetic world of the performance 'everything is true, even lies' (Boal, 1995, 26). At each instance of performance and moment of interpretation in the museum, the audience/visitor comes into contact with the 'real thing' which has a particular presence. The concept of theatrical presence is akin to the aura surrounding a museum object and in both cases, this is the source of the performance's or the object's potential 'truthfulness'. Elinor Fuchs describes how theatrical presence has two parts: the unique self-completion of the world of the spectacle, and the circle of heightened awareness flowing from the actor to spectator and back that sustains the world' (Fuchs 1985, 163). It is this presence that can be particularly activated by performance in the museum. The research that follows notes a particular reality effect that is referred to by the terms 'living' or 'coming to life' in relation to museum spaces or objects. This can derive from the auratic object or space and its cluster of associated meanings but is most often described as being 'brought out' by the interpreter who uses verbal narratives and gestures to act alongside the object and space. Visitors' memories are as Kidd notes (see 'hot authenticity' in Kidd 2011 b, 30) an important source of this. The interpretive performance on the part of the museum is often accompanied by a performance of reminiscence by the visitor who may be able to relive earlier perceptions so that the past comes to life again in a highly personal form.

## Key Issues

This research has identified seven key issues in relation to performing interpretation, performing history, and to performing in the industrial museum which will be developed throughout this thesis. These are:

- The dominance of one-way textual narratives in museum interpretation
- Functionalism
- Anti-theatricality
- Mimetic realism as the basis of 'truth'
- Commercialism
- Liveness
- The subject/object balance

### ***The dominance of one-way textual narratives in museum interpretation***

Interpretation in museums tends to be regarded as textual, or deriving from textual narratives, and as something that is done *for* the visitor, whereas current theory from the areas of semiotics, hermeneutics, phenomenology, constructivist education and reception theory as discussed on pages 29-31, suggests that it is an interactive process that happens in the present, whenever the visitor/audience comes into contact with museum space, objects and information and seeks to make meaning from them. Museums tend to regard their interpretation as the written and spoken messages that 'translate' the meaning of the artefacts, but ignore the larger 'text' of the museum as a whole, including space and the organisation of walks and vantage points. As Bal (1985) notes, there are non-linguistic texts at work in the museum such as the visual display. The spatiality of the museum may 'speak' to the visitor or may be spoken for in many different ways. In addition, although many museums and museum staff have been influenced by ideas from constructivist educational theory, they do not always recognise the effect of the social context of visitors on interpretation or the effect of other people in the museum on the way the museum may be apprehended<sup>8</sup>. In a parallel with the theatre, as Anne Ubersfeld notes, we do not visit alone. Here she describes the effect of multiple spectators in the theatre:

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<sup>8</sup> see *Recommendations*, no. 2

there is no one spectator; rather there is a multiplicity of spectators who react to each other. Not only do we rarely go to the theatre alone, but also we cannot be alone at the theatre. Any message received by one spectator is refracted (upon fellow spectators), echoed, taken up, and sent off again in a very complex exchange (Ubersfeld 1999, 20).

The work of interpretation is thus a group process as well as an individual one. We are all audiences for each others' acts of interpretation. This all suggests that interpretation is inherently performative and that the addition of performers (costumed interpreters, actors or guides) is just another step forwards in a performative direction rather than (as some believe) an anomaly in the museum<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Functionalism***

Performances in museums tend to be produced for educational or commercial reasons, rather than interpretive ones. They are often produced as 'packages' which 'fit' well into the National Curriculum or which will be entertaining for family visitors in school holidays. In either case, this means that they tend to be very child orientated. Whilst the advent of the Labour Government in 1997 saw a drive towards increasing the standards and content of learning and education in museums, this was often in effect translated into a schools 'offer' which was predominantly primary in focus. There is a need for museums to cater for children, but considering performance as *just* for children means that serious or unusual performances will be perceived as lacking a potential audience and thus too risky for the museum to consider. This is very limiting for the museum and its visitors (see *Recommendations*, no. 8). A quotation from Thomas Söderqvist and Ken Arnold written in relation to exhibition planning is relevant here:

If you aim at educationally under-achieving primary school children, it will be impossible to engage anyone else (and you are unlikely to engage even your target audience). Many children and teenagers are keenly attracted to adult culture, but very few adults see the attraction of young material (Söderqvist and Arnold 2011, 26).

The educational remit of museums has another effect on performance that is noted by Jackson. The educational content of the performance needs to be spelt out so that it shows it is fulfilling its brief, which means that performers in museums 'can take on, or find themselves endowed with, the mantle of communicating and reinforcing the overt narrative of the museum, performances perceived as being 'authorised' by the museum and representative of a certain kind of historical truth.'

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<sup>9</sup> see *Recommendations*, no. 1.

(Jackson 2011, 23). The past in performance is often made into an easily understandable monological story for ease of access which, as well as reproducing the voice of authority reduces the performance's capacity to question the past and effect transformation.

### ***Anti-theatricality***

Whilst the costumed third person interpreter is generally seen as a valuable source of interpretation, the first person interpreter is regarded with far more suspicion. Any kind of obvious fictionality or overt 'theatricality' - particularly if it does not have an clear educational message is regarded with extreme unease in many museums. At Beamish (one of my case study sites) there was an experiment made with first person interpretation that was considered to be unsuccessful. Chris Ford used Beamish as part of a PhD studying museum theatre, and found that this first person 'experiment' was problematic for visitors:

The contracts, through which visitors know how to interact with interpreters ... were, during this period, seriously flawed. Visitors were not able to interact with the museum through active participation in learning, but were being forced into active participation of a different kind. The whole structure of visitors being able to relate to the content of the museum collapsed and was replaced by a process of looking on to re-enactments of daily living in which you were no longer an active element but rather viewed the characters like objects in a case. Where interaction did occur, visitors found it uncomfortable and were distracted by the need to establish their own role in proceedings which seemed now to be different to that of 'self-as-visitor' (Ford 1998, 89).

Whilst this reflects the difficulty of this particular style of contextualised 'whole-site' first person interpretation rather than first person interpretation *per-se*, criticisms of the first person form often refer to the fact that it makes some visitors uncomfortable. There are also (as Ford also notes) problems with a lack of 'accuracy'. A respondent of his states: 'Some of my curatorial colleagues were very worried about the messages that we were giving out from people who were actually in role. [They] were saying, "well this is invalid, this is incorrect. A Methodist in 1913 wouldn't have said that"' (Ford 1998, 89). This highlights the seeming disjunction between modes of meaning making as well as spectatorial practice in the theatre and in the museum. It shows that staff in museums tend to adhere to the idea of a historical 'truth' that lies behind representation and that visitors to museums do not expect to have to become an audience. It is possible though that people (both staff and visitors) who have a problem with a particular kind of museum performance are reacting to a performance quality issue. When performance has to produce educational outcomes and a series of museum

authorised ‘facts’ it can reduce the performer to a talking label who is forced to manufacture a comedic persona in the manner of a children’s entertainer in order to appear at all interesting. The performance and the performer then have the quality of pastiche, and so it becomes difficult for the visitor to interact with them on a serious level<sup>10</sup>.

Because there is little understanding of the way performance is implicated in all interpretation and in some quarters about what interpretation is at all, and little knowledge of how third person interpretation is also performance, performance can sometimes be seen as an ‘add on’ that is mainly suitable for children or for entertainment purposes. In some sites it may only be practiced by freelance or companies of actor/interpreters who develop their own work and then performance skill and knowledge is not built up inside the museum. This means that the type and quality of performances that could be performed in museums is limited, and there is no specialist training available for performing interpreters.

### ***Mimetic Realism as the Basis of ‘Truth’***

Although many museum staff now will be familiar with postmodern notions of history relating to subjectivity, truth, fiction and authority, this knowledge does not generally make its way into the interpretive performance. The historical performance invariably pursues mimetic realism and performers often state in an overly literal manner that we are ‘going back in time’ in pursuit of this sense of the past. The kind of authenticity pursued in performance tends to be related to what is known as historically factual and what is ‘representative’ of the museum. Situations and/or characters that do not correlate to the core messages that the museum want to convey for example by not being in the ‘right’ time period will not be considered. There is often an attempt to produce a kind of ‘universal’ or objective history and interpreters will be told what they can and cannot say with no awareness that history is made up of multiple conflicting voices and stories<sup>11</sup>.

### ***Commercialism***

Museums need to be visitor attractions as well as educational resources. This can be a challenge for industrial museums/sites particularly, who may not have wide appeal, as they may be considered by some as the preserve of the

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<sup>10</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 8.

<sup>11</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 6 and 7.

(male) specialist. The need to appeal to a broad audience means that these museums/sites will concentrate on aspects of their collections and histories that are spectacular, entertaining, scenic or nostalgic and will (along with many museums) focus on the visitor experience. This may produce a partial version of history that is easily recognisable and usable to the visitor as cultural memory, or may downplay the unpalatable and unpleasant in preference to the cosy and nostalgic. They may, on the contrary foreground 'dark' histories as spectacle, so they become anything other than ordinary. This can make history either too much like or too unlike our own present. In addition, history may be de-politicised. From studying a selection of industrial museums/heritage sites I have noticed that class issues tend to be downplayed, and although this is a generalisation that may not universally apply, workers are often referred in ways that stress either their heroic or their victim-like qualities<sup>12</sup>.

### ***Liveness***

Industrial museums also have a particular issue with sustainability. In pursuit of visibility, industrial museums and heritage sites often try to convey a sense of relevance and interest through maintaining a *connection* to the past in the form of the working display. A sense of liveness is desirable in relation to machinery that may otherwise seem to be 'only' a lump of metal. Keeping the past 'alive' is also desirable in the sense of sustaining histories that are still within living memory. This is particularly important in relation to maintaining particular work identities that may otherwise vanish along with the industry that no longer exists in its past form. Some industrial museums/heritage sites particularly aim to represent the real life stories of working people, requiring interpretation to focus on the human story and give visitors an opportunity to identify with the people of the past. This may take the form of live interpretation which in some cases will be carried out by the ex-workers of the industry the museum represents. These forms of liveness are difficult to maintain, as old machinery may be too fragile and expensive to keep going and ex-workers are now in short supply.

### ***The Subject/Object Balance***

This focus on the human story may conflict with a museum's aim to present its artefacts as the 'stars of the show'. Because much time, effort and expense is devoted in museums to preserving, conserving and displaying objects and

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<sup>12</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 6.

artefacts, they can be seen as the main reason for the museum existing. An object-focus - whether it is to chart chronology or taxonomy - can hide people's stories, patterns of use and the social effects of industry, but they are all that remains and what can be seen and experienced, and so the personal, human and subjective stories may be effaced. Telling these stories, through the textual or performed narrative though, can have the effect of narrowing the meanings of the museums' objects. Performance in particular can make the museum object seem to recede into the background or take on the status of 'prop' rather than star<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 5.

## Introduction to Case Studies

The following museums were chosen for comparison with the National Coal Mining Museum for England (which will also be known as NCMME):

- Bradford Industrial Museum
- Quarry Bank Mill
- Manchester Museum of Science and Industry (which will also be known as MOSI)
- Beamish

A brief description of each site follows:

### ***The National Coal Mining Museum for England***



Figure 1. National Coal Mining Museum for England

This 17 acre site is the former location of Caphouse Colliery and Hope Pit and was opened to the public in 1988. The site and buildings are kept to look 'as far as possible as they were when the colliery closed in 1985' (Conservation Policy/NCM/07). Some buildings have been adapted to become gallery and display

spaces and some conserved, along with many original fittings such as the winding engine house and the pithead baths. This is a 'rescued' site which was chosen over other redundant pits to become what was initially the Yorkshire Mining Museum when it was realized by the local authorities that the coal mining industry was in fast decline and there needed to be a site that could represent the industry and 'keep coal mining alive'. It was realized also that this site could be a tourist attraction and become an opportunity to use redundant facilities as well as go some way towards improving the local economy. It became a National Museum in 1995 partly because it had acquired the British Coal Collection and partly because it had the only surviving underground region open to the public in England. Its mission statement is:

to keep coal mining alive by collecting and preserving the industry's rich heritage, creating enjoyable and inspiring ways to learn for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities (Forward Plan/NCM/08-10).

The NCMME employ two 'living history interpreters' to run workshops with schools in term time and for family audiences in the school holidays, and around forty miner-guides who carry out the underground tour.

### ***Bradford Industrial Museum***



Figure 2. Machinery at Bradford Industrial Museum

Bradford Industrial Museum – a local authority museum – was opened in the 1970s on the site of Moorside Mills, a former worsted mill originating from the 1870s. The mill is accompanied by examples of domestic accommodation on the site: both a mill manager's house and a terrace of back-to-back houses showing how mill workers lived at different times in history. The interior of the mill building is laid out as gallery space with spinning and weaving galleries on the upper floors. This museum aims to reflect Bradford's considerable importance in the worsted textile industry as well as other industries and has an educational role in promoting cultural diversity and social cohesion as part of its remit as a local authority museum. It aims to provide an experience-based visit for people offering the opportunity: 'to experience the sight and sounds of the industrial age with live demonstrations in motive power and textiles' (Leaflet/BIM/09). Steam powered engines and weaving and spinning machines are demonstrated intermittently throughout the week and a team of ex-printers volunteer in the printing gallery on Wednesdays.

### ***Quarry Bank Mill***



Figure 3. Quarry Bank Mill

Quarry Bank Mill is a National Trust property dating from 1784, which is described in promotional literature as 'one of the most important industrial heritage

sites in the world' (Leaflet/QB/07). It consists of a Georgian cotton mill, maintained and restored to house working spinning and weaving equipment (dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries), an apprentice house which once housed the child apprentices who worked in the mill, the owner's house (which is not yet open to the public), gardens, and an estate which includes some village houses. The mill gives demonstrations of cotton machinery along with the 'sounds and smells of steam and water powered engines' along with a tour of the apprentice house which will show you 'how hard life was for a child worker' (Leaflet/QB/07). The apprentice house is particularly popular with visitors as it has been meticulously restored to look as it would have in the 1830s. There are no text panels, as it is interpreted by costumed interpreters who guide visitors at set times round the house and tell the story of the building and its previous occupants. Quarry Bank Mill employs other interpreters in the mill to demonstrate hand weaving and spinning processes and keep certain of the machines running.

### ***Manchester Museum of Science and Industry***



Figure 4. Manchester Museum of Science and Industry

This city centre museum is on the site of Manchester's Liverpool Road Station, which was the first intercity passenger railway station in the world. The site, in what was a run-down area, was rescued in the 1970s and bought by the Greater Manchester Council for £1. The museum itself opened in 1983. The focus on science and industry presents a progress-based view of history and looks to the

future of technology in particular in relation to Manchester and the city's place in the world. The museum aims to be:

an iconic attraction in Manchester...The Museum's storyline revolves around Manchester's role in the industrial revolution and subsequent technological innovations that have shaped the world we live in today. The aim is to create a captivating interactive experience exploring the rise of technology, its impact on our lives and communities, and how the people of Manchester helped make it happen (Interpretation Policy and Strategy 2007-12).

It presents Manchester's '200 years of ground-breaking scientific discoveries and advances' and shows how 'Manchester emerged as the worlds' first industrial city through king cotton and its legacy' (MOSI 2011). The kinds of work referenced are those relating to cotton manufacture, transportation, the textile industry, paper making and machine tools and they all relate to this regional theme.

There are many interactive exhibits to demonstrate scientific principles and many working machines on site such as steam engines and cotton mill machinery. The mill machinery is activated at a set time every day as a half hourly demonstration. A team of presenters produce all the performed interpretation at this site, and they are responsible for presenting information in the galleries, doing science shows, machinery demonstrations, storytelling events as well as performing costumed interpretation.

### **Beamish**



Figure 5. The Town, Beamish

Beamish in County Durham is a well-known example of an open air or 'living history' museum. It was established in 1970 by Frank Atkinson who planned to run Beamish as an innovative open air museum. Atkinson set about collecting artefacts relating to the industries of the North East as a reaction to a concern 'that the region was losing its identity' (Guidebook/Bea/03). He proposed that the new museum would 'illustrate vividly the way of life ...of the ordinary people' (Guidebook/Bea/03), and he intended it to be a museum of the people, for the people. The 'Beamish Charter' is:

to present, in a dynamic museum, the social history of the people of the North East of England, and to ensure that our visitors are engaged, informed, entertained, educated and become our best advocates (Collections Plan/Bea/05-09).

It focuses on the recent and vernacular past and has an 'environmental' approach to display in which objects are placed in the context of their use. It contains clusters of buildings such as farms, a pit village including cottages, a

school, a church and a colliery and a town with shops and businesses which are linked by period trams and buses.

Interpretation is done at Beamish through contextualizing displays to belong to particular time periods and through costumed interpreters using a third person style of interpretation.

### ***Case Study Museums' Use of First and Third Person Performance***

The museums in question use a 'live' form of interpretation for a variety of reasons which will be outlined on a case by case basis in Chapter One. In general though, first and third person interpretation is used where there is a perceived need to create additional interpretation for the visitor – where what can be seen or read is maybe not enough to give a full picture, in an area of the site that is perceived as having less intrinsic or obvious interest. A museum may want its visitors to stay longer or know more. Museum performance as Jackson and Kidd argue may provide museums or historic sites with a resource 'that helps them fill some of the inevitable gaps in their collections and associated narratives' and this is particularly about 'finding the human stories that give life, meaning and context to those collections'. 'For every object on display there are probably many narratives that could be told, voices heard and alternative cultural meanings revealed' (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 71). Live interpretation can be used for purely functional reasons such as where there is a need to monitor or regulate visitor behaviour. Interpreters who do something around the site like produce demonstrations, lead tours or produce performances are often regarded as being popular with visitors and may increase particular kinds of visitor numbers, such as school groups in term times who will pay for workshops led by interpreters or family visitors in the school holidays, who feel that it gives the site 'added value'. Malcolm-Davies notes that 'people are a source of authentic experience for visitors' (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 131), and can 'provide experiential reactions and stronger personal feelings' (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 129). Many believe that 'personal interpretation' is the 'highest' and best form of interaction with visitors (Tilden 1957; Risk 1994). Some believe that the addition of people in costume and especially in role as first person interpreters adds to the particular 'power of the real' that museums possess (Moore 1987, 133), a combination of 'real thing', 'real place' and 'real person' (*ibid*). The educational value of museum performance has been emphasised by many and as has been mentioned earlier, the *Performance Learning and Heritage Report* (Jackson and Kidd 2008) has outlined its significant impact (see p. 37 of *Research Context*).

However, the question of whether to use first or third person interpretation can be a problematic one for many museums. The anti-theatrical bias of many museum professionals has been noted previously and it is common to read critiques of first person interpretation that state that it can cause embarrassment or confusion for some visitors (Bicknell and Fisher 1993) and may reproduce inaccurate or misleading versions of the past for entertainment value alone (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 107). Stacy Roth notes that:

Its detractors argue that the attempt to re-create the past is quixotical [*sic*], misleading, incomplete, inaccurate, lopsided, rude, embarrassing, nostalgic, phony, too entertaining or theatrical, too shockingly unlike the present, or alternately, too homogenous with the present (Roth 1998, 21).

My research on-site at case study museums also returned some negative views of first person interpretation amongst interpreters and managers and curators. A staff member respondent at Beamish told me:

I can't stand first person. I think it's extremely awkward - unless you're a brilliant actor otherwise there's nothing worse than some croaky voiced teenager on his summer holiday going 'my name's Will Timms and I was born in 1820' – you weren't, clearly, you know, it just doesn't work unless they can grab you with the power of their performance. So I think the third person's fine, it works well, it's less threatening perhaps. I can't stand it when someone does first person. I'm quite wary of that I just don't want to get involved (Cur03/Bea/09).

It is generally regarded as a technique that is more difficult to do well than third person interpretation as interpreters need to be skilled actors, communicators and teachers - and one which requires more research and training<sup>14</sup> as Alsford and Parry point out:

Theatre in a museum context is subject to many constraints not felt by conventional theatre. One is that you cannot hire just any good actor. Actor interpreters are required: individuals able not only to act effectively onstage, but also to talk with audiences afterwards about the themes of the plays, and about related exhibits, in an informal, accurate and interesting way. Few people combine the quite different skills and talents of actors and interpreters; it may be necessary to create them through training (Alsford and Parry 1991,18).

Many commentators note the need for training so that interpreters produce a high standard of performance: (Birkett 2007, 38; Jackson 2000, 212; Lewis 2004; Malcolm Davies 2002 and 2004). Jackson states that first person interpretation needs to be:

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<sup>14</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 10.

undertaken by specialist interpreters who are equally adept in interpretation and in *performance*. If the visitor is to be persuasively taken on a journey to another time and place, there does need to be a complex combination of highly skilled character portrayal, naturalistic plausibility, an ability to tell a good tale, a Brechtian capacity to 'demonstrate' the character, and the TIE performer's ability to be both teacher and actor at the same time. (Jackson 2000 , 212).

This issue is particularly relevant to first person interpreters where there is no standard accredited training available, although IMTAL do run occasional training sessions. The third person interpreter's skill and training is dealt with more comprehensively within the field of heritage interpretation (Abramoff Levy et al 2001; Alderson and Payne Low 1996; Cunningham 2004; Knudson et al 1996.; Uzzell 1998, Risk 1994; Malcolm-Davies 2004 and 2002; Tilden 1957), but these tend to be practical guides to improving communication skill and interpreting a historical site and it should be noted that the majority of training advice comes from the United States which may not be entirely transferable to this country.

## Case Study Rationale

The choice to use these particular case studies was made in order to represent a variety of industrial type museums and heritage sites that used a range of interpretive practices, so that the sites could be compared side by side. I wanted to include a local authority museum (Bradford) alongside a National Trust property (Quarry Bank Mill) alongside a science and industry museum (MOSI) alongside a heritage museum (Beamish) in relation to the NCMME. This methodology changed as the research was being carried out as I decided it would be more valuable to use the contrast of *types* of interpretation as an organizing structure. At the time of research, all the sites used either third or first person interpretation (or a combination of both), three utilised tours and three demonstrations. An important consideration was that the sites should employ ex-workers to do interpretation as this is a feature of the NCMME<sup>15</sup>.

These are all museums that represent industrial history, broadly within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and have a strong connection with the development of particular industries, a collection of artefacts and machinery relating to this and a focus on the social histories of people employed in those industries. However, it should be noted that Quarry Bank Mill refers to itself as an 'industrial site' rather a museum and although Beamish refers to itself as a museum, it avoids the term 'industrial', preferring instead the term 'living'. All these museums are associated with a 'rescued' industrial site which is symptomatic of their heritage-related status, but this rescue also refers obliquely to the salvaging of working-class or people's history from oblivion. This is explicitly referred to at Beamish where Frank Atkinson, its founder described how he wanted:

to rescue a representative collection of objects illustrating a way of life in the region, which was rapidly disappearing; to represent this in an exciting and relatively novel way which would enthuse visitors; and through all this to help encourage the people of the North East to appreciate that the history of their forbears and their past way of life and work were worth remembering and something to be proud of (Atkinson 1999, 87).

All the sites have re-used industrial buildings in some way, some of which are restored to look as they would have done when they were built, and some have been left looking like they did at the point they were abandoned. Some of these

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<sup>15</sup> Although all sites chosen did employ ex-workers, none did so on the scale of the NCMME.

buildings have been adapted to become gallery spaces and some maintain their original identity. Some historic buildings are left as containers for artefacts of varying periods and some have been contextualized by the presence of original or relevant items. The setting of these museums also varies, from city centre to rural isolation.

### ***Place Authenticity***

Issues relating to the re-use of space and reconstruction of history through the staging of work scenarios using working machinery and actors or interpreters and the production of a ‘living’ environment all relate to constructions of authenticity. As noted in the research context, the staging of museum space into a simulacra of a past time is a performance practice which makes the museum into a ‘stage’ for memory production and imaginative use. Each of these sites draws on their ‘realness’ as original sites of industry with the notable exception of Beamish who have resituated original buildings and artefacts into a site which originally contained only a drift mine and farm. There is a balance at all sites between maintaining the authenticity of the original place and augmenting and replacing this with staged and what might be termed more ‘visitable’ space. Place authenticity will be shown in the following chapters (particularly *Chapter 2 - The Guided Tour*) to be an important part of the interpretive performance.

### ***Living History***

The idea of ‘living history’ is an important concept in relation to the case study museums. The NCMME call their first person interpretation ‘living history interpretation’ whilst the miner-guides’ giving of the underground tour is simply ‘the Underground Tour’ and was not referred to by museum staff as a form of interpretation, although the interpretation of a mine by an ex-miner is arguably the ultimate form of living history. The idea of living seems to be important to this museum also because they use the term ‘keeping mining alive’ on certain policy documents and promotional material. Beamish refer to themselves as ‘the living museum of the North’ and here, living means that it uses its historic spaces and artefacts by running vehicles, giving demonstrations and handling objects as well as producing a ‘peopled’ environment in the form of the third person costumed interpreter. The idea of ‘living memory’ is particularly important at the NCMME and Beamish as these are sites that particularly aim to connect certain visitors’ memories with the history on display which is regarded by many visitors as ‘their’ heritage. Quarry Bank Mill is a ‘working museum’ (Int01/QB/09) because it runs a

waterwheel as well as various pieces of textile weaving and spinning machinery. It also produces a small amount of cotton cloth for sale. Bradford and MOSI both demonstrate and run machinery. MOSI is particularly concerned to produce a lively and engaging environment. The interpretation strategy describes how the museum aims to ‘create a captivating interactive experience exploring the rise of technology’ (Interpretation Strategy/MOSI/2007-12), using working displays and live interpretation.

### **Performance Practices**

The NCMME uses ex-miners to show visitors around the underground regions and employ ‘living history interpreters’ (who tend to have acting and/or teaching experience) to do character-based workshops in specific locations on the site on certain days. The underground tour is a permanent feature of the museum and is carried out every day, whereas the living history interpretation is only produced for school audiences and for families in the school holidays. These workshops are very much the same whether they are run for primary schools or family audiences and have a child focus. The underground tour by contrast can be challenging for young children as it is potentially a fairly frightening environment. The living history interpretation is part of the education department whereas the underground tour falls within the auspices of the Mine Manager (who is a ‘real’ ex-mine manager). Therefore what I am regarding as two complementary forms of interpretation is not regarded in this way by staff at the museum. They are seen as very much separate practices, with the living history having its basis in reality but using the vehicle of a fictional scenario and the underground tour as being (almost) entirely factual. There were many concerns expressed by various members of staff at the NCMME during the course of this research about the ‘real’ versus the ‘fictional’ status of the living history interpretation, with some staff expressing the fear that the living history interpreters would be seen as actually being the characters they were playing which would be ‘untrue’. But the characters chosen were deliberately ones who would ‘naturally’ be at a colliery site, not too far back in time, so to visitors they did seem extremely believable. In addition, a living history approach was interpreted by the living history interpreters (at the time of research) as extreme realism and not ever coming out of character. By contrast, The miner-guides were not regarded by museum managers as having any conflict between who they were and who they portrayed themselves as.

Quarry Bank Mill similarly employs a range of different types of interpreters some of whom have a teaching/acting background who tend to do the tours of the apprentice house and machine demonstrators in the mill who may either be

members of the Spinners and Weavers Guild, ex-industry workers or interpreters without specialist experience. The site uses third person interpretation throughout apart from some Theatre-in-Education workshops in the apprentice house that are run for schools at certain times.

Bradford Industrial Museum has far fewer interpreters than the above two museums, possibly as it is a local authority museum. They employ a couple of ex-workers to do machinery demonstrations on certain days and do role-play workshops for schools only, using actor/interpreters.

MOSI has many working machines set to run continuously when the museum is open and demonstrate various machines and engines at certain times. It employs a team of 'presenters' to do 'costumed interpretation' in particular locations on certain days who have a similar background to the living history interpreters at the NCMME. There is no clear distinction at this site between first and third person interpretation as there is at the NCMME. All presenters may use either form, or a mixture depending on the style of presentation they are giving. Presentations range from the science show to costumed interpretation pieces.

Beamish employs many third person interpreters to 'people' the site and give tours and demonstrations on whatever part of the site is open. (It is only partially open in the winter months). These interpretive performances are partly about creating a lively environment that visitors can engage with and learn from and partly about creating a certain kind of experience for the visitor.

First person interpretation tended to be produced at case study sites only at school holiday times (where it was used) and so although I intended to study this form alongside the third person form, it had a somewhat different character because of the family and school holiday nature of these performances. As noted above in the key issues, the child focus of the first person performances tends to produce a simplified and straightforward lesson-like version of history. This is less in evidence with the third person performances, and because the third person interpretation at the above sites was carried out at all times, it seemed to have less of a child focus.

Only Quarry Bank Mill from my case study sites produced a guided tour of comparable length to the underground tour at the NCMME. Beamish do short tours of their drift mine but I concentrated on the apprentice house tour as I wanted to compare a very different kind of tour that looked at a different kind of work.

Demonstrations at the above sites are carried out because there is working machinery that can still be operated and which produces an interesting display for visitors and is a better way of illustrating the working object. I extended the

demonstration into examples of object handling in order to consider the source of the presence and liveness that these events produced. Demonstrations and tours are carried out by third person interpreters and are not thought of as performances at these sites. The staff carrying them out do not rely on delivering a storyline in the same way as the first person interpretation, and so here I was able to consider the interplay between objects, space and interpreter as producing a certain kind of narrative that referenced history in a different manner to the first person performance. Because the third person performance is less 'problematic' in terms of its fictionality it is worth considering its 'realistic' status in relation to the first person performance.

## Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was selected in order to explore attitudes and perceptions in relation to the interpretive performance, as well as the quality of the experience of that performance. Complementing an over-arching case study approach, a phenomenological approach was pursued as it allowed the multiple subjectivities involved in performing history in the museum/heritage site to be expressed and was a valuable way of exploring the various constituents' perceptions, attitudes and feelings. Denscombe (2007) describes phenomenology as 'an approach that focuses on how life is experienced' from the point of view of participants (Denscombe 2007, 76). Phenomenology also allows for a consideration of the researcher's perspective. This methodology led me to triangulate the research by considering performed interpretation from the view of:

- **the museum** by looking at the spaces it allocates to performers and audiences, the types of display it constructs, as well as its official policies and promotional materials.
- **the management of the museum** and its aims and objectives for performance and interpretation, audiences and performers.
- **the interpreters** and their interpretational and performance processes and their views on these.
- **the audience or museum visitor** and their reception of the interpretive performance.
- **My own observations** of events and performances.

The effect of this is that an 'official' voice in the form of policies and promotional literature is juxtaposed with first person accounts of performances, with views on the performances taken by various members of staff and by visitors. This contrasts a subjective 'voice' alongside a more objective third person account. This is reflected throughout the thesis where first person accounts of performance occur alongside analysis. Participants' voices can be 'heard' through the insertion of direct quotations both within the first person accounts and the analysis. They are also presented tangentially in brackets and here they provide more of an association than a direct link to the research and allow a critical space to exist. The use of photographs alongside text is also an attempt to pursue a phenomenological approach as they produce an alternative view to the analysis which sometimes

supports the text and sometimes comments on it. This attention to the experiences of participants and the juxtaposition of different ‘voices’ is an attempt to produce a ‘thick description’ as described by Geertz (1973) which builds an understanding of the context of events as well as the events themselves.

Four additional sites were chosen in addition to the NCMME as discussed on page 58, in order to provide comparisons between type of site and type of performance. As well as the museum/site as case, I considered the interpretive performance types themselves as cases and this became an organising framework for the thesis. Comparing museums/sites with each other meant that comparisons could be made across issues of management and organization of performed interpretation, the execution of performance by interpreters and audience reception. However, it was not possible to do exactly the same type and amounts of research at each site as I was granted different levels of access and time. In particular, this meant that interviews with visitors were only carried out at two sites and there was consequently more of an emphasis on the *production* of interpretation than its reception for the entire research project.

As noted earlier, a decision was made at the NCMME to concentrate on both the underground tour, and the living history performances, in order to look at the range of performance from first to third person forms. The underground tour is carried out daily at this site by a large number of ex-miners (around 40 in total) in comparison to more occasional use of the living history interpretation which was (at the time) carried out by only two members of staff. Investigations of the underground tour therefore provided a large amount of rich data which was not entirely matched by any other form of interpretation.

The justification for case study selection can be seen on page 58. As the major case study, the majority of research time was spent on site at the NCMME, and so the research here was ethnographic in character, as I worked alongside the education department of the museum over a period of three years as they developed new ‘living history’ performances and during a period of time in which a new area of the underground area of the museum was being developed<sup>16</sup>. This gave me a deeper understanding of the particular organisational culture of this museum and an insight into the various departmental priorities for interpretive activities. The ethnographic methodology was an attempt to understand things

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<sup>16</sup> This HLF funded project was titled ‘Making Sense of Mining’.

from the point of view of the people involved and was ‘committed in some measure to reconstructing the actor’s own world-view, not in a lordly way but faithful to the everyday life of the subject’ (Rock 2007, 30). I have been aware of my role at this museum as an ‘in-betweenner’: sometimes an observer on the margins of events, and sometimes taking a more active role, for example attending meetings and participating in the work of the education department on occasion. As I have also worked in a museum education department and worked as an interpreter this may have made me more of an insider than if I had not. And on occasions I felt ‘like’ a member of staff and absorbed some of the concerns and attitudes of this department. Outside the education department I was much more of an outsider although some members of staff in other parts of the museum saw me as ‘part of’ the education department which may have influenced how they behaved and talked to me. However I always attempted to maintain the awareness of the position of researcher in order to see the culture of the museum with fresh eyes.

### ***Research Methods and Research Undertaken***

Data was gathered naturally from the staff and visitors to the case study museums in conjunction with my own observations of the museum sites, display spaces and interpretive performances. I used film, audio-visual recordings and photography to capture performances in addition to note-making. This was combined with a survey of relevant documentation such as websites, museums’ promotional literature, and policy documents, alongside secondary reading.

In order to explore the interpretive museum performance from these four perspectives:

- The museum
- The interpreter
- The visitor
- My own

I considered a range of research materials from each perspective:

#### **The museum**

- Documentation such as policy statements and promotional literature
- Attendance at meetings and data gathered from fieldwork at the NCMME

- Interviews with managers responsible for interpretive policy and/or interpretive staff

### **The interpreter**

- Interviews
- Observations

### **The visitor**

- Interviews
- Observations

### **My own**

- Observations of performances, tours and demonstrations

### **The following research methods were chosen:**

- Participant observation
- Non participant observation
- Semi-structured long interviews (with managers and interpreters)
- Semi-structured short interviews (with visitors)
- Focus groups
- Filming performance
- Photographing performance
- Document analysis

This resulted in large amounts of notes, films, photographs, documents and interview data for observations and interviews at each site which was partially analysed as the research carried on, in order to develop themes and theories from the research itself.

### *Documents Consulted<sup>17</sup>*

#### **NCMME**

- Unofficial DVD of underground tour, produced by miner-guide (undated)

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<sup>17</sup> (see also page 14 - *Document References* and *Bibliography for full listing*).

- Guidebook, 2008
- Education Department brochure - *Discover Education at the National Coal Mining Museum for England: Teacher's Guide 2008-2009*
- Promotional Leaflets
- Conservation Policy, 2007
- Learning Policy, 2008-2011
- Brief Summary of the History of the National Coal Mining Museum for England Trust, 2005
- Underground Development Design Brief, 2009
- HLF bid for new underground development, 2007
- Forward Plan NCMME 2008-2011
- Meeting notes and minutes from curatorial meetings and Making Sense of Mining Meetings
- NCMME website

### **Beamish**

- Beamish Guidebook, 2003
- Beamish Collections Management Plan, 2003-2009
- Promotional Leaflets
- Frank Atkinson (1999): *The Man Who Made Beamish: An Autobiography*
- Beamish website

### **Quarry Bank Mill**

- Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate Guidebook
- Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate Learning & Interpretation Action Plan, 2008-2011
- Promotional Leaflet - *What's On at Quarry Bank*
- Promotional Leaflet - *Welcome to Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate*
- National Trust Strategy - (2010): *Going Local: Fresh Tracks Down Old Roads. Our strategy for the next decade*
- Quarry Bank Mill website

### **Bradford Industrial Museum**

- Brochure - *What's On for Schools 2008-9*, undated
- Teacher pack – *Group Visits Bradford Museums & Galleries*, undated
- Visitor Leaflet - *Welcome to Bradford Industrial Museum*, undated
- Bradford Industrial Museum website

### **Manchester Museum of Science and Industry**

- Brochure – *The Little Book of the Big Museum*, undated
- Promotional Leaflets
- *What's On April – September 2008*
- Interpretation Policy & Strategy, 2007
- MOSI website

#### *Observation*

Observation as a research method is associated with ethnography.

'Ethnographic research has developed out of a concern to understand the world-views and ways of life of actual people in the contexts of their everyday lived experiences. Participant observation is the core means by which ethnographers have tried to do this' (Crang and Cook 2007, 37). Participant observation was carried out at all sites where I visited 'as' a visitor, which made it easy to be unobtrusive as an observer and in relation to other visitors. Here, I observed the physical spaces of the sites, the kinds of interpretive performances that happened there, and the interactions that happened between visitors as well as between interpreters and visitors. Notes were made - sometimes during - and always after the event when I was on my own. In addition to this, more systematic observations were carried out in relation to pre-arranged specific interpretive performances where an observation schedule was filled in at the time of performance (see Appendix b) noting the style of performance, space it took place in, levels of audience interaction, levels of characterisation and types of narratives being used etc. The systematic observation then took on the character of non-participant observation as I was clearly not acting 'as' an ordinary visitor. The amount of systematic observation varied according to the level of access I was granted and the time I had available at each site. In cases (participant and systematic), film and photography was also used to capture information.

The following systematic observations were made<sup>18</sup>:

#### **NCMME**

- Underground tours

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<sup>18</sup> See *Interview and Observation Codes*, p. 12 for interviews and observations referred to in the thesis.

- 25.10.07
- 1.11.07
- 28.11.07
- 20.11.08
- 26.01.08
- 4.12.08
- 15.12.08
- 30.1.09
- 11.06.09
- 18.08.09
- Fred at the Pithead Baths
  - 4 performances 20-21 August 2009
  - 4 performances 24-25 March 2008
- Mrs Lockwood
  - 1 performance 6 February 2008
  - 3 performances 18-19 February 2008
  - 2 performances 15 August 2008

### **Quarry Bank Mill**

- Apprentice house tour
  - 1 tour 3 May 2008
  - 2 tours 18 Feb 2009
  - 1 tour 29 October 2009
- Demonstrations of machinery in the mill
  - 3 May 2008
  - 18 February 2009
  - 29 October 2009

### **Bradford Industrial Museum**

- Demonstrations of machinery
  - 10 June 2009
  - 27 October 2009

### **MOSI**

- Costumed performances
  - 20 February 2009

- 11-12 August 2009

### **Beamish**

- Observations of 3<sup>rd</sup> person interactions
  - 13-15 May 2009

### *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted to explore a range of participants' opinions and attitudes and experiences of the interpretive performance. They ranged from the very informal conversations that occurred naturally in various areas of case study settings to semi-formal, in-depth, pre-arranged and recorded interviews that took place in a pre-booked meeting room.

#### **Informal unstructured conversations**

These arose spontaneously as a result of spending time at the various case study sites and meeting members of staff and visitors. Notes were made subsequently as a result of these conversations and observations.

#### **Semi-structured formal interviews with members of staff**

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were carried out so that I could be flexible in terms of the order in which topics were considered and 'to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised' (Denscombe 2007, 176). These in-depth interviews were scheduled in advance and were all one-to-one interviews carried out in museum office or meeting room space. Interviews were carried out with a pre-determined list of questions to be addressed (see Appendix a), although in line with the practice of semi-structured interviewing described above, questions were not necessarily asked in the same order and additional questions were sometimes asked as conversation flowed into potentially interesting areas. I differentiated between managers and interpreters and assigned different questions accordingly. These interviews lasted approximately one hour, and each one was transcribed.

#### **Interviews with visitors**

These were carried out at two sites: the NCMME and at Quarry Bank Mill as I did not have access to visitors at other sites. They occurred straight after a tour or a performance had finished and happened on the location of that tour or performance. In the case of the two tours, recorded interviews were conducted just outside the spaces of the tour. These interviews were short (five to fifteen minutes) as they were designed to 'catch' visitors when they had just witnessed a

performance or a tour, so that their immediate impressions would be still fresh in their minds. They were kept short because they had not been pre-arranged, and visitors were generally keen to move on. Visitors were interviewed just outside tour space and in the case of the NCMME when they had just come up from the underground regions. Interviews were carried out in school holiday times as I wished to focus on family groups. Family group interviewees were selected randomly. Again, an interview schedule was used to direct questions but in some cases, not all the questions were asked as there was not enough time.

### **Focus groups**

Three focus groups were carried out at the NCMME in addition to individual interviews. This method was selected to assess perceptions and attitudes within groups of similarly occupied people and particular attention was paid to the interaction within the group as a contribution to those perceptions and attitudes. Curatorial staff (curators and educators) were chosen to assess perceptions of authenticity in relation to performance in museums, and primary teachers were chosen to assess perceptions of the underground tour.

### **Interviews carried out**

#### **NCMME**

- mine manager 14 November 2007
- 10 miner-guides
  - 13 November 2008
  - 13 November 2008
  - 20 November 2008
  - 20 November 2008
  - 20 November 2008
  - 27 November 2008
  - 27 November 2008
  - 4 December 2008
  - 4 December 2008
  - 15 December 2008
- 2 living history interpreters 15 December 2008 and 18 November 2008

- 49 visitors from Underground Tour
  - 20-21 February 2008
  - 18-19 August 2009
- 39 visitors to Living History Interpretation
  - 20-21 August 2009
  - 18-19 February 2008
- Curatorial staff (1 focus group - 25 March 2009)
- Teachers (2 focus groups – 22 January 2009 and 25 February 2009)

*Beamish*

- 3 curators 13 May 2009
- 2 managers 14 May 2009
- 1 interpreter 14 May 2009

*Quarry Bank Mill*

- 1 manager 18 February 2009
- 5 interpreters – 3 May 2008, 29 October 2009, 18 February 2009
- 11 visitors – 3 May 2008

*Bradford Industrial Museum*

- 2 interpreters - 10 June 2009
- 1 manager – 7 November 2008

MOSI

- 1 manager – 20 February 2009
- 2 interpreters – 20 February 2009 and 2 July 2008

*Data Analysis*

Data was imported into Nvivo 8 (qualitative research software program) where it could be more easily managed. Different types of data such as interview transcripts, photographs, and other documents were imported so that they could be accessed by type (interview, observation, policy document etc. ), by organisation (NCMME, Beamish etc.), or by performance type (demonstration, tour, first or third person performance). This data was then analysed as it was gathered, by

assigning codes to categories. Initially all data (documents, observation schedules, field notes and interview transcripts were read to generate a list of themes or ideas which seemed significant. An example of some initial codes assigned to interviews with underground visitors is given below:

- Acting with objects
- Revelations
- Difficult subjects
- Emotions
- Feeling real
- Humour
- Sense of place
- Interpreter

These categories were then attached to the data in the relevant places. ‘Tree’ or hierarchical codes developed from this initial coding after a substantial body of initial coding had been completed to correspond with written sections of the thesis. Data was then revisited in the light of the new ‘tree’ codes so that I could begin to write sections of the thesis. An example of a tree code is:

- Interpreter

Which divides into:

- Job role
- Interpretive style
- Motivation
- Interpreter’s background
- Coming to this job
- Skill
- Management and training

This method of generating analysis meant that a wide range of data sources could be synthesised according to theme.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Research with human subjects was carried out according to the guidelines supplied by the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at Leeds University. In addition, research undertaken at case study sites was carried out according to the regulations stipulated by individual organisations.

#### Informed Consent

All staff who participated in semi-structured, hour long interviews filled in an interview consent form which they and I signed, and they retained a copy of. This gave me permission to use interview material as part of this thesis and for any associated publications. Participants were given details of the research project along with my contact details and reminded that their participation had been voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw their consent to participate at any time. Interviewees had the option to view their interview data prior to it being used in the thesis with ability to subsequently opt out. They were also told that they would remain anonymous unless they wanted to be named. Visitors who participated in short interviews were given verbal information about the project and asked if they would like to participate. They were subsequently given an information slip telling them that information from their interviews would only be used in an anonymised form along with my contact details. In relation to observations involving the general public, it was not practicable to obtain participants' fully informed consent, but as these were public spaces this was regarded as ethically acceptable, especially as data relating to this was anonymous. Children were only spoken to in the presence of parents or carers.

Unless otherwise requested by participants, the identities of individual interviewees has therefore not been disclosed. Interviewees have been coded according to participant type i.e. manager, interpreter or visitor (see p. 12 *References*) or referred to as a particular job title.

#### Storage of Data

Data has been stored securely and not used for any other purposes than this research project. All data is stored on my computer, and in addition paper copies of interview transcripts have been filed along with handwritten observation schedules and field notes. Audio files have additionally been stored on memory cards.

**Research Timetable**

Site	Method	Date
NCMME	Regular observations of living history interpretation and underground tours Interviews with interpreters Interviews with miner-guides Focus group with curators Interviews with visitors to underground tour  Interviews and observations with visitors to Fred at pithead baths Interviews and observations with visitors to Mrs Lockwood Focus group with teachers	Throughout 2007-2010 November and December 2008 November and December 2008 March 2009 February 2008 August 2009  March 2008 August 2009 February 2008 January and February 2009
Quarry Bank Mill	Non-participant observation  Interviews with Learning Officer and interpreters  Participant observation Interviews with visitors	Feb 2009 October 2009  May 2008 October 2009 February 2009  May 2008 May 2009
Beamish	Observations  Interviews with Managers, Curators and Interpreter	May 2009 May 2009
Bradford Industrial Museum	Interview with Demonstrators Interviews with Education Manager and observation Observation	June 2009 November 2008 October 2009
MOSI	Interview with interpreter Interview with Head of Learning and Interpretation Interview with interpreter Observations	June 2008 February 2009 February 2009 August 2009

## Chapter Introduction

The following chapters consist of: *Chapter One - First and Third Person Interpretation; Chapter Two - The Guided Tour and Chapter Three - The Demonstration*. This organisation has been made because I propose that these activities form the basis of the interpretive performance in the industrial museum or industrial heritage site. Part of the reason for organising the research material this way was so that I could focus on people – their representation and characterisation in Chapter One, on spatiality and the importance of place in Chapter Two and on objects and artefacts in Chapter Three. Although first person interpretation may be regarded as performance, third person interpretation tends not to be, and therefore the demonstration and the guided tour tend not to be considered as performances either. But as Schechner notes: ‘There are limits to what “is” performance’ but ‘just about anything can be studied “as” performance’ (Schechner 2006 38). This is an original contribution to knowledge in the field because whereas certain aspects of the guided tour’s performative qualities have been studied, (Fine and Haskell Speer (1985); Holloway (1981); Katriel (1997); MacCannell 1976 [1999]), the museum demonstration has not been considered at all from within the field of performance studies. The study made of the third person form of interpretation is particularly valuable, as it has not been theorised to the extent of the first person form.

I deal with first and third person performances initially in order to distinguish the characteristics of the more scripted and acted first person form alongside the less character and storyline based third person form. Case studies of first person performance are taken from the NCMME and MOSI in comparison to third person material taken from the NCMME and Beamish. Although the third person form will also be considered in the other two chapters, here a consideration of them side by side allows for a continuum of performative behaviour to be outlined that begins to establish the characteristics of the interpretive performance. The distinction between the representational and the presentational in performance and the importance of mimesis and realism is a key theme in this chapter and another way of linking the first person form with the third. An important contribution of this research is also to study the effect of the museum space and objects on, and within the performance. This scenographic element of the performance is not often considered outside analyses made of the living history museum, but I regard it as an important component of the interpretive performance.

The issue of spatiality is dealt with in Chapter Two where the guided tour is considered as a production of space and place as well as a series of narratives provided by guides and visitors. Case study material is taken from the NCMME and Quarry Bank Mill. The idea of the interpretive performance as utilising the idea of revelation is particularly relevant to the guided tour as it provides access to a space that cannot normally be seen and literally enacts a revealing of space and history. The idea of the journey is also thought to be a characteristic feature of the interpretive performance which is epitomised by the tour. The journey works on several levels: as a literal movement from one place to another and as a metaphor. We travel 'back' in time and we are informed and enlightened, which both suggest a sense of transformation happening. The sense of authenticity which in *First and Third Person Interpretation* is dealt with via the issue of mimetic realism is considered in *The Guided Tour* in relation to the production of authentic space which generates another form of realism.

*The Demonstration* chapter considers the acting of interpreters alongside machines and other objects that produce a characteristic form of relying on the presence of the non-human subject to bring history 'to life'. Here a shifting sense of agency is particularly noticeable from subject to object and back again and also in terms of the third person interpreter who may have the role (amongst others) of an 'expert', machine handler or professional interpreter. Demonstrations work with the idea of storyline in a different manner to an acted first person scenario and may be driven by industrial processes, as shown by a machine. The idea of revelation is also dealt with here differently to the guided tour. the handling of and description around objects will be shown to rely on metonymy which means that larger structures of meaning can be suggested by objects, and potent images summoned up by the juxtaposition of the interpreter's body alongside industrial objects along with suggestive verbal narratives. Data for this chapter is taken from Bradford Industrial Museum, MOSI and Beamish and Quarry Bank Mill.

The structuring of these chapters sees an introduction followed by observations of various performances in a first person style (in chapters one and two). This is then followed by analysis. I have not used first person observations for the demonstrations in Chapter Three because these tended to be short or fragmentary performances and I observed far more of them than I did of the other performances referred to in Chapters One and Two. Quotations from interviews are used throughout in two ways. The first is to place the quotation within the text to illustrate a point being made within the analysis and secondly to juxtapose an

inset quotations of a more tangential nature to the analysis in order to give an alternate or supporting view.

## Chapter One - First and Third Person Interpretation

### Introduction

This chapter explores the use of first and third person interpretation as forms of performed interpretation in museums and heritage sites with industrial collections. The first and particularly third person form of interpretation are commonly used in museums and heritage sites and at the case study sites chosen for this research, they are an important means of communicating with visitors. Costumed interpreters may create a visual narrative by appearing alongside period buildings and room sets and/or producing various kinds of verbal narrative that interpret the spaces of the museum or artefacts within them. Acting may be used in the case of first person interpretation in order to exceed the boundaries of the museum spaces and times, and extend interpretation far beyond what can be immediately perceived, although it should be noted that there are varying amounts and 'levels' of acting used which will be explored later in the chapter. In order to determine what an interpretive performance is, this chapter considers the particular qualities of the first and third person form focusing on: issues of presentation and representation, the 'framing' of performance, performance space, interaction and participation with visitors, the construction of identity, role and character and how much acting is present within the performance and also looks at the relationship between history and realism in performance. This will develop ideas from the research context about the way museums represent history and the problematic relationship between the 'truth' and performance, and considers what museums mean when they refer to history 'living' or 'being brought to life'. As mentioned in the research context, there are many definitions of museum performance which tend to regard it as either a form of applied theatre or as a form of museum interpretation, but there has been little work done to look at what makes a performance interpretive and where interpretation is performative. There also has been very little study of the third person interpretation as a form of performance.

This chapter aims to remedy this by using six examples of interpretation from three of my case study sites. Four of these are examples of **first person interpretation from the NCMME and MOSI**, and two are of **third person interpretation from the NCMME and Beamish**. I will particularly focus on the distinction between presentational (featured strongly in the third person

performance) and representational (exemplified by the mimetic first person performance) aspects of these performances and the corresponding gradations in types of role or character produced, and the corresponding verbal narratives of the performer, as this is particularly relevant to the production and consumption of authenticity. It also begins to produce a taxonomy or scale of performative behaviour that allows the third person performance to take its place alongside the first person performance. I use here Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton's distinction between presentational and representational forms of theatre, where the *representational* has as its 'organizing principle the creation of another fictional and hypothetical onstage world performed by actors who are intentionally hidden behind the mask of character from those who sit and observe in the audience'

(Prendergast and Saxton 2009, 12), as distinct from the *presentational* which is:

more interested in presenting non-fictional material within thinly-disguised fictions of authentic contemporary reality. The actor in presentational theatre is less hidden behind the mask of character and is closer to being him or herself[...] (Prendergast and Saxton 2009, 12-13).

Although third person interpretation, which does not create a fictional world or a clearly defined character is not generally considered theatre in the sense of the above quotation, the presentational performance can be said to be a particular feature of the museum or heritage site. It should be noted that the terms presentation and representation are not used in a Brechtian sense. By representation, I refer to what in Brechtian terms is an illusionary practice that hides the signs of its own construction. The presentational performance however, is not akin to a Brechtian representation that subverts this illusion by distancing the actor from the role and the action in the manner of 'Epic Theater' (Brecht 1949 [trans. Bentley]). This does not mean that there is no possibility for using this style of performance, or that it would not be an effective pedagogic tool. It would in fact be valuable to produce a critical distance between the performer and the role, in order for the audience to reflect on the social conditions that have brought about such a characterisation<sup>19</sup> for example, but it would also be a challenge to the museum's historiographic practices. In practice (certainly within the case study sites in question), these performances attempt to convey realism, and aim for an empathetic identification with the people from the past.

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<sup>19</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 9 and no. 6.

This chapter considers what kind of performances first and third person interpretation produces, along with the intentions of their producers, as well as audience reception, which draws on interviews and observations with interpreters, managers and museum visitors. There can be said to be a continuum of performative behaviour within the interpretative performance that ranges from the more staged first-person interpretation utilising a script along with a defined performance space and time, to the less representational and character-based third-person form that takes place in a more improvised manner. However it is difficult to categorise individual performances at particular points on such a continuum because one characteristic of the interpretative performance, as this research shows, is that they are very fluid in relation to their adoption of first person and third person forms and will typically use elements of both. Another difficulty is that the third person interpreter who references some 'other' person from the past may also *be* one of those 'others' – a complicated situation which will be seen to be particularly the case for the ex-worker employed by a museum to represent their former industry. It is possible to define loosely the two forms though: first person interpretation means that the museum interpreter in the role of a historical character acts as if they and the visitor are in the same time and space – the 'I' and the 'you' of now. This could be referred to as a *mimetic* mode in that it requires a certain suspension of disbelief in order to 'work'. First person interpretation shifts time and place boundaries and either brings the visitor into the historical character's world or brings the actor/interpreter as a historical character into the now of the present.

Third person interpretation by contrast, relates to the past without recourse to the creation of a historical character or changing the boundaries of time and space. The past tense is used, which maintains the customary distance between then and now. This is a *diegetic* mode that gives the interpreter the status of narrator. This narrative function may be achieved by the interpreter as a reporter or informant on events in the past or as has been described by a member of staff at Beamish as a 'conduit' for information (Mgr01/Bea/09), which implies that the interpreter is a 'medium' through whom the past can speak.

The idea of second person interpretation is produced by highly participatory forms of museum theatre that may occur at living history sites where the whole site is contextualised to appear to be 'in' a particular time in history, along with the interpreters taking the role of characters from the past, or at sites that utilise theatre-in-education type practices. This form of interpretation is outside the scope of this research as I believe it to be represented by events where the audience is

prepared in advance to take on a role along with knowledge of a ‘storyline’, in the manner of Theatre-in-Education work (such as that done at Clarke Hall<sup>20</sup>) or certain kinds of re-enactment (such as those done at Kentwell<sup>21</sup>).

This chapter will also consider how the interpretive performance draws on museum space in order to produce a scenographic narrative which works hand in hand with the verbal narratives of interpreter and audience. Spatiality is a vital component of the performance which typically uses ‘found’ space rather than designated performance space, and where there is often no clear audience/performer boundary or designated ‘stage’. I will be considering in this respect the differences between interpretive performances that are both fixed in time and space and those that are more mobile and improvisational, and look at the relationship of display space to interpretive performance.

It will be seen that the idea of the guided tour and that of the demonstration, as typical interpretational forms hover behind first and third person interpretation. This is a particular feature of the industrial museum/site interpretation studied here, and potentially all museum interpretive performances. This chapter explores how performance may be considered work-like, and correspondingly how work may be referenced through performance. The following chapters: *The Guided Tour* and *The Demonstration* will investigate these particular forms of interpretation in detail, but within this chapter, ideas of work and working are particularly referenced in relation to being able to view the workplace and being shown work happening. This chapter also explores how ideas of work and working are explored through performance and how these performances particularly reference production and consumption, which in a leisure setting is an especially pertinent juxtaposition. It should also be noted that the role of the visitor in the museum has work-like overtones. As Tim Edensor states: ‘tourism is often considered to be a time of play and fun, a ludic and liminal spell away from the quotidian, yet such assumptions are apt to ignore the sheer work that goes into being a tourist much of the time’ (Edensor 2000, 334).

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<sup>20</sup> This is a seventeenth century house that is used for educational role-play with pre-booked school groups.

<sup>21</sup> This house has several ‘re-creation’ events every year where the public and schools can become involved in re-enacting life from a given period.

The initial performance descriptions on pages 84 to 100 employ a subjective first person point of view, however some of them (the NCMME examples) are a composite account produced from a number of similar occasions, whereas the observations from the other case study sites took place on one occasion (see *Methodology* for listing of observations).

## Case Study Accounts: First and Third Person Interpretation

### *Mrs Lockwood, NCMME, 2007-2009*



Figure 6. Mrs Lockwood's Kitchen



Maureen makes her way from the education office to the 'Home Life' gallery of the museum. She has added an apron, turban and fingerless gloves to her regular attire of a blouse and skirt and she carries a basket of artefacts. As she steps out in to the public area of the museum she 'becomes' Mrs Lockwood, a housewife from 1949, and she will now no longer talk to me 'as' an interpreter. I therefore no longer talk to her 'as' a researcher and follow at what I imagine to be a more appropriate distance, now that she has created a performance zone around herself. She asks the few families she meets on



Figure 7. series from Mrs Lockwood

this short journey to her ‘kitchen’ whether they want to ‘go back in time’ which entices a few to join her. She has a bustling, no-nonsense manner and draws her small audience to her and keeps them close by constantly maintaining eye contact with them and initiating a playful dialogue in the manner of a stand-up comedian. She asks visitors: Where do you come from? What’s your name? In order to establish where *she* is (in a village near Caphouse colliery in 1949) and who *she* is (‘Mrs Mabel Lockwood – but tha can call me Auntie Mabel’). When they answer, they become part of the performance. Her dialogue invites closeness and suggests the possibility of becoming an insider. It establishes Mabel Lockwood as a recognisable ‘nana-like’ working class character but also erects barriers and provides elements of strangeness. Mabel is in charge and doesn’t let the audience talk unless she wants them to and she is alien to some, as she often uses Yorkshire dialect and refers to objects and people from the past that only older members of the audience will recognise (tripe, chitlins, Wilfred Pickles, George Formby). Some people love this banter and answer back in a way that demonstrates that they are willing to ‘play the game’ but others hang back in the background, pressed against the walls of the gallery. The more reserved members of the audience may be observed as being ‘proper posh’ in order to ‘explain’ their reserve: ‘I bet you’re so posh ‘ere, I bet you put fruit on t’sideboard when there’s nobody ill’. When Mabel has established who her audience are and where they’re from and determined the ‘rules’: ‘I want you to remember you’re coming into my house, there’s no touching unless you’re invited to, and I want to see you all

stood with your hands by your sides, shoulders straight, chins up', we are allowed 'into' her house which is a small model kitchen within the gallery. Although we are invited in, we are also held at arm's length: we may not enter through the front door (because she has just 'donkey stoned' the front step), we have to be well behaved, we may not use the 'facilities' (because 'our Elsie' has forgotten to tear up the strips of newspaper that serve as toilet paper), and so there is always the possibility of being excluded.

The kitchen is both enticing, as it has elements of the 'real' 1940s kitchen such as the dresser, the sink, the range and the light, and we are now more clearly looking at a 'stage' area, and disappointing as we know we will never see the rest of Mabel's house 'for real'. Mabel asks for two children to volunteer to come into her kitchen and become 'her children', who are then dressed with hat, waistcoat and an apron and a turban depending on gender. Her rich and evocative verbal descriptions draw a picture of the rest of the house as well as describe a possible alternative scenario, thus producing additional off-stage spaces and times: 'Now if there was just you here, and little lass, I'd invite you straight away in t'parlour... I'd sit you down. We'd have a cup of tea and a fondant fancy'. The verbal descriptions are full of sensory detail but they are always anchored in the 'real' world by the presence of the authentic kitchen objects. A description of getting a 'twink' - a perm, will be in relation to the presence of the sink (where the hair was washed); the games that the children play can be verified by the presence of the cup and ball and the football rattle that are passed around the audience. We are drawn into Mabel's house through her verbal narrative which extends what can be seen into what cannot. The closed door which we can see in the background of the visible kitchen suggests the possibility of access as well as debarring us from the 'rest' of the house. As we 'travel' through the house, noting Mabel's weekly schedule of work and the children's leisure pursuits, we are given the opportunity to remember or fantasize about washday, payday, Saturday etc., using our own memories and/or imaginations. We are also required to participate as co-performers by singing along to 'Down the 'ole to fetch the coal', as well as being frequently addressed and asked questions. Levels of participation for some members of the audience become higher and higher throughout the performance, which culminates in a final 'game' of 'the farmer's in his den' which transforms the most willing into game players and less willing into a circle of people holding hands around them. The patting of the bone is the most intense example of audience participation which seems to please some audience members and make others feel

uneasy. Finally the scenario is ended and the farmer, his wife, the dog and the bone are released from their roles by a round of applause.

**Fred at the Pithead Baths, NCMME, 2007-2009**

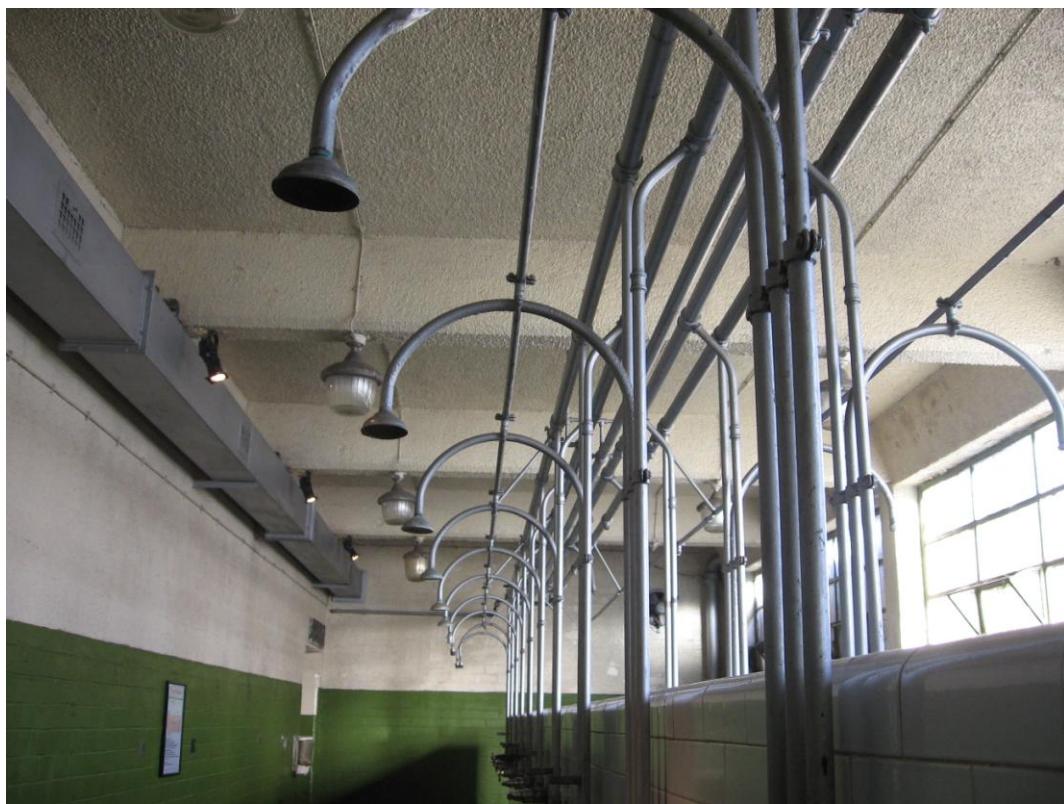
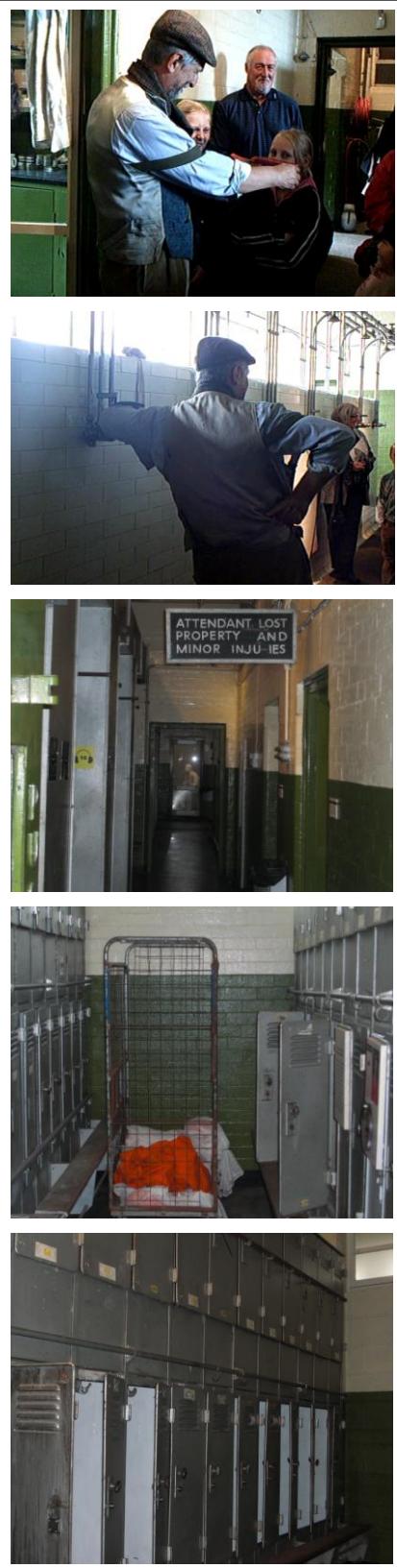


Figure 8. Pithead Baths



Fred waits outside the entrance to the pithead baths, which are the genuine, reconditioned baths that were used when the site was a working colliery. There are not many people around in this area – it's at the edge of the museum site and next to some of the museum's offices. Fred tells anyone he sees loitering nearby: 'I'm going to be doing a tour here in ten minutes' to gather up potential audience members. He stands at the entrance to the baths looking like he *might* be an actor dressed in a costume: a shirt, waistcoat, scarf and flat cap, although he could pass for a

twenty-first century member of museum staff as well. He has one arm leaning into the door frame in a proprietorial manner. Anyone who wants to enter the baths



building now will have to wait until Fred lets them in. When a small crowd has assembled, Fred invites everyone into the foyer, and tells us: 'my job is to show you round and tell you a bit about my life'. I am not entirely sure if Fred is acting or not. We are bunched into a small space at the entrance to the baths and cannot see very much. It is cold in here and has a particular smell, which might be carbolic soap. It is also very echoey because all the walls are tiled in cream and green. Fred's voice carries well around the building. People who enter when the performance has started and don't want to stay and listen will tiptoe around the building talking quietly so as not to disturb him. There are some original signs in this building and some interpretational panels and displays arranged by the museum but it feels like a genuine baths building and seems to contain everything it would have when it was originally working.

Fred begins his 'tour' by saying: 'what year do you reckon it is? 2009? Well in here it's 1938'. He then tells us how he came to be working in the baths following a career as a miner who had his leg 'smashed to pieces'. Before we are let into the main area of the baths, we are shown a small tin bath and a volunteer is called for. The children present look dubious and no-one else volunteers. Fred gets in to the tin bath himself, and describes how miners would have to wash at home in here in the years before the pithead baths were built. When it is time to

move to the next area, Fred tells us a little about what we might see next, and then gets us to come with him by saying: 'if you want to come with me (and he beckons), I'll tell you more about it'. We are encouraged to follow Fred to his office to see where the men would collect their soap and towels. We are also shown some carbolic soap and allowed to smell it, which many children enjoy as the smell is



Figure 9. series from Fred at the Pithead Baths

very pungent. Fred's role as a pithead baths attendant becomes more evident as he describes how he regulates the behaviour of the miners and keeps the baths clean and tidy. Sometimes we are told stories about Fred's past and sometimes stories about the miner's lives and given lots of contextual details about 1938. We are asked questions as if we were in 1938 like: 'has anyone been to York to see the Mallard?' Fred also asks us lots of questions about what we can see around us and what we think things are. We are also given instructions like the miners would be. Fred points to the sign that says: 'no money, no soap', and repeats it loudly, so that we become potential miners wanting to use the baths. We are further advised that if we were coming in here for a shower, we should be aware that there is a dirty side and a clean side and he doesn't want us messing up the clean side with our dirty clothes. We are therefore imaginatively drawn into a scenario of the baths being used, which may pull us further into this fictional 1938 world. We are invited to imagine the possibility of a naked miner 'still' being in the shower area in order to tempt us in to view this area. In here someone remarks that it is like a swimming pool shower area. We are shown the objects the miners might have used such as a metal mirror and a toothbrush and told stories that accompany these, like how some miners were

too shy to have showers in front of other men and how they would have blue scars all over their backs and that any cuts they had would have to have the coal dust scrubbed out with a toothbrush. Some of us squirm and imagine the damaged skin of the miners. Fred moves us around the baths by verbally 'completing' the activity that might have taken place in each area. Like the miners from the past, when we've finished our 'tour', we are allowed to imagine the leisure pursuits that might

have taken place, such as going to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at the cinema. The tour therefore then concludes with the imaginative recreation of the working day as well as the working week, and this sense of circularity is enhanced by the circular actions within this location, such as the coming in, changing clothes, washing, changing clothes, and going out.

### ***Engineer Eric, MOSI, August 2009***

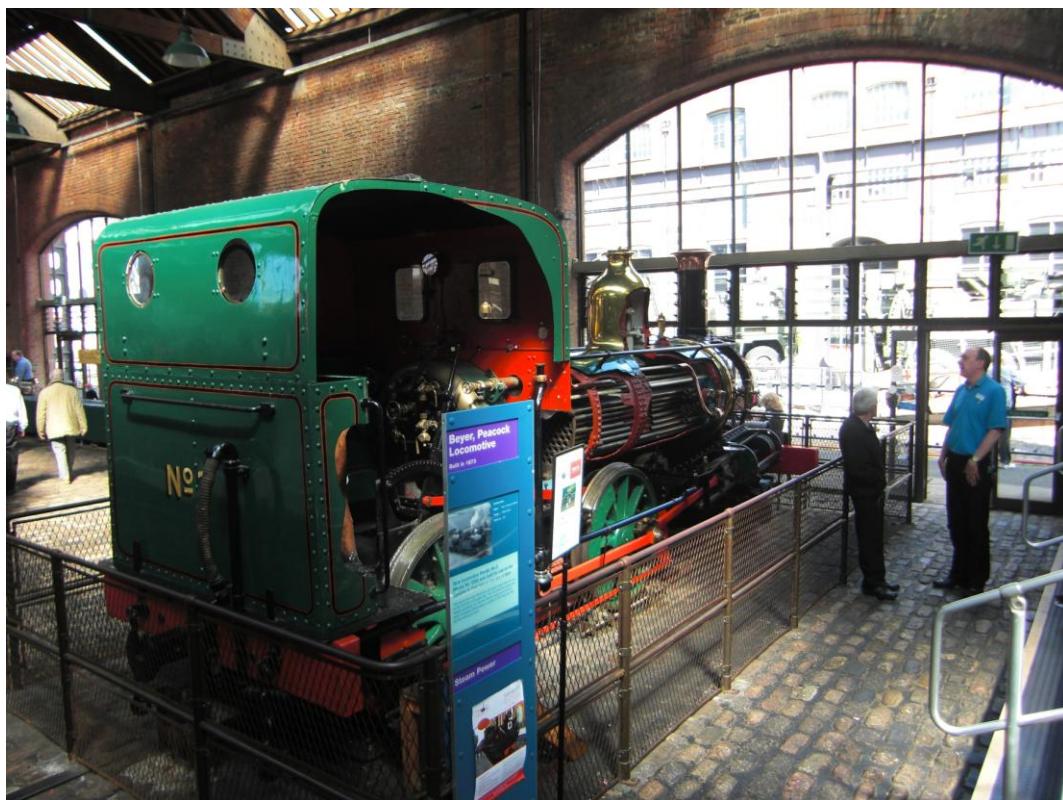


Figure 10. Performance Space, Engineer Eric

It is a weekday in the summer holidays, and there is a 'transport festival' happening at the museum. A steam engine runs back and forth along the track adjacent to the gallery (the Power Hall) which can be seen and heard from inside. At a particular time, an audience starts to gather on a flight of wide shallow steps in front of a steam engine that has had part of its sides cut away to reveal its workings. The audience which contains a lot of young children and their parents either sit on the steps or stand at the sides. The large gallery is very noisy with the sound of machinery working and children running and shouting to each other. The working machinery is also distributing an oily smell around the gallery. A man in blue overalls and a peaked hat walks towards us from behind the engine and starts polishing it with a cloth. He doesn't seem to see us at first, but then turns and says: 'hello everybody, I didn't expect to see you here'. It is obvious from his tone



Figure 11. series, Engineer Eric

that he is talking to the children in the audience. He introduces himself as Engineer Eric and introduces the 'beautiful steam locomotive' called Pender who has 'brothers and sisters on the Isle of Man'. As Eric talks, he uses lots of gestures such as: polishing the engine with his cloth; indicating the appropriate response from the audience by miming emotions like putting both hands to his mouth and looking surprised; indicating that he wants the children to provide an answer by cupping his ear in his hand or putting his own hand up. Children are kept constantly involved in Eric's narrative by his frequent interactions and questions. He then tells us he has an assistant called Forgetful Fred who has forgotten to wake up and so we have to wake him up by shouting: 'wake up Fred' louder and louder. We hear Fred yawning loudly out of sight, and then he appears in a comedy hat which the children laugh loudly at. The children now need to look carefully at Fred to see what is 'wrong' with him and the way he is dressed which involves them in the action and keeps them looking at what is happening. Fred is completely unable to remember or carry out instructions which the children find funny and allows them to take over and remember for him, shouting out the steps he needs to take in order to get the engine working such as: standing on the footplate, checking the coal in the bunker and checking the water in the tank. The children become increasingly knowledgeable throughout this performance. They use their tacit knowledge of this kind of double-act performance which will be familiar to them from TV and possibly pantomime, and know that they are 'allowed' to shout out at the performers because they are being encouraged to

do so. They learn to react 'appropriately' to the sad story of incompetent Fred who is in danger of losing his job by responding to his amplified and mimed moods. They also learn the various parts of the engine and tasks needed to get an engine started because it is necessary for them to instruct Fred, not just because they are having their knowledge tested. As they become increasingly involved in the performance they move closer and closer to the barrier and by the end are hanging over the edges and trying to touch Fred. One girl begins to cry when Fred loses his job but cannot be persuaded to come away from the barriers and return to her mother. Although the roles taken by the two performers are archetypal and comedic, the involvement of the children has become increasingly intense and many of them are captivated by the unfolding story. Although the performers are 'really' there to enliven the engine display and demonstrate how an engine works, they tap into the emotions of the children by having a child-like adult character with whom they can identify. The end of the scene comes with the children insisting that Fred be given his job back and so there is a loud final applause because there has been the sense of a real kind of accomplishment on the part of both the audience and the performers. With the help of the children, Fred has prevailed, and the engine has been made to 'work'.

**Jack Alcock, MOSI, August 2009**



Figure 12. Air and Space Gallery, MOSI



This performance takes place in the Air and Space Gallery which is a large high-ceilinged, former warehouse building. There is a temporary display area set out in front of a biplane with a table full of artefacts, a flipchart and a couple of rows of chairs for the audience. I arrive just after the advertised time for this performance, and find a performer dressed in an RAF costume, standing behind the table talking to the small audience of around eight people. There is only space to sit in the front row which is only a few feet from the performer who describes how he will ‘be’ Jack Alcock – the man who made the first transatlantic flight. ‘Jack’ says in a very loud voice (to counter the noise in the gallery): ‘I’m taking you back – the sign says over here [gestures to sign]– to the days of experimental



Figure 13. series Jack Alcock

flying', which suggests we will be 'taken' to another time in the past but also that the boundaries of the museum will never quite disappear. The 'character' of Jack is never firmly established as the interpreter tends to frequently talk about the history of flying and refers to the artefacts around us in the gallery and on the table in front of him. His educational role is very noticeable in this respect. However when he points with a pointer to his 'transatlantic flight plan' which is a flip chart with a summary of the 'action', he 'becomes' Jack and says 'I always knew exactly what I wanted to do when I was younger'. The first note on the flipchart says 'childhood dreams'. When he steps away from the flip chart he is a presenter again and contextualises Jack with some history about flying. The flip chart acts as a sort of transitional object enabling the transfer from the fictional world to the present day world. The story of Jack is presented as a heroic tale: 'a tale of derring do (or derring don't)', as Jack puts it, in a series of snapshots, and in this way seems like the comic book stories he refers to: 'I used to read comics, I don't know if you still read comics these days. The kind of thing I used to read was this. [showing magazine] This is an original magazine.' The presenter frequently refers to history and the various documents that talk about Jack's life such as newspaper articles, and says at one point: 'I knew I wanted to go down in the history books'. This makes me think of Jack as an illustration rather than a three dimensional person. The presenter/Jack talks frequently to the children in the audience and suggests that they might want to be inspired by this adventurer's tale and

asked if they have anything they want to do when they grow up. The children ‘work’ with the presenter to ‘solve’ Jack’s problems like ice on the windscreen or how to land the plane. Taking this further, a child volunteer is asked for at one point to ‘become’ another character in the story - Max Muller and told to either say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in response to the presenter’s questions. The story world of Jack is visited frequently but always within the context of museum ‘frame’. The presenter tells the audience:

when we talk about these things in museums - especially for the children’s benefit, we collect objects. The idea is to look after them but also to share the stories, so occasionally it is important for us to tell the story of Jack Alcock because without them, we probably wouldn’t be flying.

This journey between the situation of the interpretive event and the story is travelled for other reasons. As the performance takes place in the path of visitors in the gallery and people join in once the performance has begun and the presenter has to re-frame his performance as he is going along, and so he has to introduce himself and recap on what has ‘happened’ so far which makes this a very self-reflecting and episodic performance, where we are aware of a story inside a story.

### ***Third Person Interpretation, Beamish, May***

**2009**



Figure 14. The Town, Beamish



Figure 15. series Beamish

The landscape and exterior of the buildings at Beamish sets a scene that ‘tells’ us that we are ‘in’ the past by presenting a historic-looking site with very little visual intrusion from the present. Each building also ‘tells’ us what its function is because it is recognisable in connection with modern building types: farm, shop, mine or cottage for example. Each cluster of buildings also forms a separate community. There is the colliery village, the town, home farm and Pockerley Manor that contain a range of buildings that signify particular industries and types of housing. It isn’t possible to tell *exactly* where we are in time from this exterior scene unless we have read somewhere that the site is presented as either being in 1913 or 1820. We rely on our familiarity with particular kinds of buildings and scenes to make sense of the environment, but they also seem strange because they occupy the liminal zone of ‘in-between’ past and present. Inside the buildings, there are no signs, and very few indications of what you are, or are not allowed to do here as there might be in a historic house environment. The costumed interpreters dotted around the site are supposed to provide the kind of information that would normally be present in a museum on wall panels and to regulate the behaviour of visitors. I walk through the door of the Pockerley Manor house and into what seems to be a kitchen with a wood fire burning, a scrubbed kitchen table with a recipe for ‘Parkin Biscuits’ left out like a clue. There is a dresser with blue and white plates, a grandfather clock and a dark carved cupboard in here. The room is full of implements that I don’t recognise. I walk through into what looks like a dining room or

parlour with a table and chairs, a more elaborate fireplace and paintings on the walls. From the far room, I can hear someone having a conversation. They seem to be in a larder. I move closer so I can hear what they are saying. Two visitors are



asking an interpreter about the pictures of 'very fat cows' that are on the walls. I would like to know about the items hanging in the pantry that look like hams and pheasants, which is the room they are standing in but can't go in as it would interrupt them. The interpreter talks to the couple about feeding farm animals. It seems rude to listen to their conversation so I go upstairs and see more hams and what looks like kippers hung up in one of the bedrooms as well as boxes of fleece and baskets of string. When I come downstairs again, the interpreter who is dressed in a white blouse, white bonnet, long blue skirt is not talking to anyone else and so I ask her: 'I saw hams hanging upstairs and was it kippers as well?'. She says 'yes, smoked kippers'. To try and get her to tell me more about the kippers I ask: 'it doesn't smell in there of kippers though does it?' She then tells me that: 'what they would have done is smoked them overnight' but that it doesn't ever get really smoky in there because they always have the doors open. I wanted to know why they were hanging upstairs and now I realise that it is because they were smoked upstairs via the smoke from the fires downstairs and she doesn't need to tell me all that because I have previously seen all the 'clues' downstairs. I then ask her:

'who are you?' and she looks slightly confused and says 'I would be one of the domestic maids' and I then say: 'you're not the wife then?' and she says 'no, not dressed like this. There would be maybe four domestic maids to a house this size, maybe half a dozen men'. She tells me how at harvest time they would have even more servants, who would probably have to sleep outside. Now we are joined by another visitor who has been listening and says: 'it was a rough life, a hard life' and

Figure 16. series Beamish

then goes on to tell me about her mother who was in service and the long hours she had to work. This visitor then goes on to talk to the interpreter and I realise that my time is up – my ‘place’ has been taken, and so I leave the house although there is lots more that I would like to know about.

### ***Third Person Interpretation, NCMME, 2007-2009***



Figure 17. Miner-guides, NCMME

The miner-guides display their identity as ex-miners to visitors, to other museum staff and to each other by being visible doing work around the site whilst wearing their miner’s orange overalls, and by being a tour-guide for visitors. The question of who they are being when they do this is not straightforward. The men portray the role of a miner when they do the tour by talking about what ‘we’ used to do in various situations, sometimes in the present tense – giving the impression of ‘real’ work. When you wait in the queue with the rest of your tour party in the lamp room, you may see or hear the miners shouting or talking to one another and you will be addressed eventually by your guide who will tell you his name. He will have two names: his ‘real’ name and his work nick-name that will be written above his hat. He may tell you he is an ex-miner but sometimes does not. If you’ve met miners before, these men would be instantly recognisable to you, but their language and their behaviour can be impenetrable. Each miner-guide tends to establish their identity by having verbal and visual or verbal/visual trademarks

which are particular to them. They may wear their 'uniform' in a certain way or carry specific tools or present themselves in particular ways. For instance, during a tour, one miner-guide constantly refers to being bald. When we step out of the



Figure 18. Miner-guides in the  
Lamproom

'cage' he says: 'expect a breeze' and tells us why they keep the doors closed. He says it: 'blew me cap off last time' and refers to his 'dandelion head' which presents a particular visual image of his head in a breeze. Some of the miner-guides have particular phrases they repeat such as: 'don't think you're here to enjoy yourself' and as a follow up to: 'are there any questions?' one man repeatedly adds: 'where's the sandwiches?' Some of the men have particular 'twists' or ways of describing things. One miner-guide talks about his own 'little learning curve', which is a stand-up comedian-like performance he gives in the middle of his tour, and is an imaginative reconstruction of a woman getting ready to go out for the evening and putting on her make-up. He uses women in the audience to refer to here. After a long and detailed description of the various forms of make-up the woman has used he asks: 'right what has she just done?' Well she's just rubbed coal muck over her face, because every

little bit of that make up that we've just talked about is all a product of coal'. The miner-guides' joking is usually received with amusement by visitors, but it can be confusing, as you may not know whether they are joking or not. The men particularly like to 'banter' with each other which involves being rude or making fun of each other, and this can extend into interactions with visitors. The visitors' fears are often turned into a joke to make light of anxious situations. When going underground in the 'cage', where we can hear the dripping and running of water, one miner talks about the water that has to be constantly pumped out of the mine – thousands of gallons a week and adds: 'we might have done it today'. Another talks about how long the tour will be and adds: 'when we get out – *if* we get out'. The men often add well-worn, one-liners to routine actions or pieces of information.

When visitors hand in their bags for example one man says: 'There are no shops down there'.

The miner-guides talk about the mining past in various ways. What is seen underground is not exactly as a working mine would be and so the guides tell us what it would be like if we were 'really' there. One says: 'if this were a working face we'd have travelled 200 yards. The air would be dirtier and hotter, this gives you a better idea of what it's like.' They also relay information and facts about the past such as the standard procedures that would have been carried out underground and the history of mining and do this in the manner of a history lesson where the past is presented in the past tense. They also talk about the past as if it is happening now, and this is particularly done at the stopping points on the tour where there are tableaux-like scenes, some incorporating mannequins. At these points the men tend to talk in the present tense about these scenes from the past: 'Here's a family working together... If you look in here you'll see mum and dad. Dad is known as a getter and the person who's nearest to us is known as a hurrier. They recreate the scene with words that add immediacy to the static display. The men also talk about their own lives in the past tense: One says in front of a display: 'When I were working underground we used compressed sand or water filled plastic bags'. Another talks about the dust thrown out by machinery and says:

We used to have to wear dust masks. These were fantastic for about 5 minutes then you start to sweat and your skin becomes irritated. Nobody wore them. To their detriment - their lungs became full of dust.

The miner-guides also have a way of referring to their own pasts but with the addition of an apocryphal story. When talking to visitors about the rope haulage system which had the potential to take your fingers off, one man says: 'you could always tell haulage people. When you went to the pub they'd say 4 pints please. [holding up one hand with the fingers curled down]. And so a story which was completely believable and horrific, now has a comic status. Here the guide is referring to his own remembered past whilst impersonating another miner.

## Use of First and Third Person Interpretation at Case Study Sites

### **NCMME**

The underground tour is a key feature of this museum, and the expertise of the ex-miners is essential to its running. As mentioned earlier, these men who are referred to as 'miner-guides' are not regarded as interpreters, possibly because they are already 'the real thing' with a professional role as ex-miners and a duty to carry out maintenance work on-site depending on their former mining role, which might have been electrician, fitter, deputy etc. They are expected to be able to present what are regarded as the core 'facts' linked to the stopping points on the tour which they will embellish according to their own interests and level of knowledge. They are not given a script or told to present their information in any particular kind of way, and they learn their tour primarily by shadowing other men giving tours. The value to the visitor of their being ex-miners is considerable, and adds to the sense that this was, or even still is, a real working mine. One miner-guide told me in interview: '*We tell them things that we've actually experienced. Well we've lived there, we've done that. ... it's a living museum. I think that's the good thing about this museum'* (Mg08/NCM/09).

The underground tour 'gives visitors the opportunity to see a real coal mine and relate directly to the men who worked in the coalfields' (Learning Policy/NCM/08-11). Although the fact that these men are ex-miners is an integral part of the tour, this is not particularly promoted by the museum as a 'selling-feature' and research indicates that many visitors to the underground tour were not initially aware that their guide would be an ex-miner. However, visitors who weren't aware of this initially, on the whole come to realise it throughout the tour, through the way the guides talk so knowledgeably and demonstrate their mining expertise: '*Oh yes he's done it, he's been there, he knows the machinery*' (Ugv09/NCM/09).

The idea of 'living history' is very important to this museum. The term 'keeping mining alive' is used on the museum's policy documents and some promotional material. This can be interpreted in different ways. Some staff at the museum regard it as representing what is still within living memory, which is easier to portray accurately: '*I think it's easier to provide an authentic feel for something that is not too far away from our existence*' (Cur/fg/NCM/09). 'Living' may be the experiential sense of reality that the visitor may gain from their contact with a

person from the past, whether 'real' or acted. During informal conversation, the Curatorial Director stressed that she wants visitors to be able to *feel* what being a miner was like, not just to know facts about mining, which is more easily done through live interaction with someone who has lived the life of a miner.

However the miners' tour is not referred to as living history. This title is given to the first person interpretation that is given by the professional actor/interpreters. Conversations with staff indicate that the impetus for living history workshops was to provide a 'balance' to the underground tour so that there would be a (female-led) above ground attraction. The Mrs Lockwood performance began in 1998 since then many workshops have been added.<sup>22</sup> The living history workshops are now an important educational resource for the museum and attraction for family visitors in the school holidays. The word performance tends not to be used - the school sessions are called 'workshops' and family sessions called simply 'living history'. The work of the living history interpreters falls under the auspices of the museum's education department and therefore their work is closely linked to the educational objectives of the museum which are 'to excite curiosity and interest in coal mining's rich heritage by creating a range of enjoyable, inspiring and stimulating learning opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities' (Learning Policy/NCM/08-10). The education department define living history as 'an attempt by people to simulate life in another time' (pres/NCM/Jan 08), which is able to 'involve participants physically, mentally and emotionally and offer an experience, which cannot be replicated elsewhere' (*ibid*). The living history interpreters aim to 'bring history to life' (Int01/NCM/08), as well as 'bring the site to life'(Int02/NCM/08) through the means of first person interpretation, and they do this by recreating a 'composite' character from historically documented sources who they then 'act out' in an appropriate setting, using a script (fairly loosely) along with improvisation based on audience reactions. These performances typically last

When she came out I thought, my Nan used to look like that. To me that looked accurate. My mum used to say those kind of words (MLv04/NCM/08).

a lot of people find us rather hard to cope with and a lot of people think of us as a bit of a joke and I can't blame them to be honest (Int02/NCM/08).

<sup>22</sup> As well as Fred at the Pithead Baths the following workshops have also been created: Sally or Sam Fletcher (1830s); Sir Humphrey Davy (19<sup>th</sup> century); The Pit Nurse (20<sup>th</sup> century); Mrs Harvey (WWII); Jeff the Bevin Boy (20<sup>th</sup> century).

between 20 to 30 minutes. The particular style of the interpreters studied here is to practice a very strict form of first person interpretation where character is never broken in order to produce the effect of realism. It is difficult to tell whether this was entirely their choice or a preference suggested by the museum, but the first person form of interpretation is certainly how the education department interpret the concept of living history. Informal discussions with certain curatorial staff indicate a certain amount of unease with the living history characters. One member of staff told me that she didn't want the interpreters to be too much like caricatures or stereotypes and produce a 'side-show' which was 'just' entertainment for entertainment's sake. Other staff noted that the role of the living history workshops should be above all an 'interactive learning tool' for visitors.

### **MOSI**

MOSI produced their first 'costumed interpretation' piece in 2002 – James Watt, developed by a member of staff who has both acting and engineering training. Since then, the technique which is broadly first person interpretation involving various important<sup>23</sup> historic figures from the past has grown and developed, and there are now a range of 'characters' who may be utilised in particular areas of the site at certain times. These pieces involve the recreation of historic characters, but they are also influenced by the techniques of the 'science show' which is also used elsewhere in the museum. This means that scientific principles and feats of engineering are presented in a lively and visual manner. There is less dependence than the NCMME on the idea of mimetic realism in relation to the historical past. The costumed interpretation may be performed by any of the team of presenters at the museum who are also responsible for: presenting information in the galleries, doing science shows, machinery demonstrations and storytelling events. This versatility requires a range of skills and many presenters have no acting background. This means that many produce interpretation that is less developed in terms of character. One of the interpreters described in interview how his approach to interpretation differed from one of the other presenters:

[His is] much more about the performance, it's more of a kind of a scripted piece whereas mine is more of a science show really. You'll

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<sup>23</sup> This ranges from figures like James Watt and Marie Stopes to more generic working class characters who have not had their histories recorded but who played an important role in the development of industrial Manchester.

find that [named presenter], I guess is kind of, a bit more real in the character whereas I kind of slip in and out of third person and first person a little bit whereas [named presenter] for example would have taken months to prepare this performance because he's a perfectionist and he is an actor and he would go out there and he would want people to go away believing that they had seen someone from the eighteenth century (Int02/MOSI/09).

The Head of Interpretation and Learning explained in interview that the museum use costumed interpretation because they have found that it is a useful means of communication with different audiences, and that it 'has great impact with people' (Mgr/MOSI/09). It is felt that they can provide a level of interest and inspiration that can't be done with a written label or a video screen. Bringing exhibits 'to life' is one of the roles for the interpretation because: 'for us a fair chunk of what we have is just lumps of metal at the end of the day, they do need to be brought to life in some way to explain what they are and their significance and meaning' (Mgr/MOSI/09). MOSI's approach to interpretation is focused on 'telling stories', and 'centres on transforming the existing site, collections, galleries and programmes by presenting a coherent and compelling storyline' (Interpretation Strategy/MOSI/2007-12). It is thought that costumed interpretation is a particularly good vehicle for this. This story or narrative-led approach is imagined as linking together the separate buildings and themes of the site.

### ***Beamish***

Beamish choose to use third person interpretation because they feel it is easier for visitors to understand and interact with than first person interpretation. First person interpretation has been tried there, but the Head of Engagement told me in interview that:

just before I started in 1995, previous to my then boss there'd been a leader of the interpretation team who had tried first person interpretation, and that was done in the cottages and in the town and there was a number of different ways of working then as well. There were a number of different periods of time within the cottages and the Co-op was in the 1920s and so there was a bit of mixing around of times and people doing first person. Now that was evaluated to see how successful it was and it worked very well within larger more open spaces, but it didn't work very well in the cottages which are small and you do need the visitor to feel that they can enter without 'am I intruding on someone's tea?' ... and when you talk to people who've been here a long time and interpreted there they say it was uncomfortable because you were in first person so you couldn't say 'oh come in we're just having our breakfast' so there was many lost opportunities for visitors just going past (Mgr01/Bea/09).

Interpreters need to produce a lived-in feel to the site but also to seem approachable to visitors in order to maximise opportunities for engagement:

You want the visitor to feel like they can have a conversation, and if we can get it right every single time, then it would be: 'hello there' and a smile. Doing something, but the interpreter watching to see what the person's looking at, that picture's of a man who's using a clacker to scare birds, and if the visitor goes 'ah', that often just means 'tell me a little bit more'. A lot of the time the visitor wants to ask but doesn't know what to ask so you need to be: 'ah do you want to know about that? (Mgr01/Bea/09).

Because the site is sizeable, it needs a fairly large number of interpreters to work in the key areas, although I was told that there is a limit to the amount of people they can afford to employ. Some interpreters seem to be 'experts' in their area, such as the ones at the mine, a number of whom are ex-miners. I was told that there is also an ex-printer who works in the print shop, and the men who drive the vehicles tend to be specialists in their areas. However, most staff in the summer season are casual and will work all over the site. I was given the impression by talking to staff members that the role of interpreter had a lower status at this site than at MOSI or the NCMME. This may be because third person interpretation is considered easier than first person or because interpreter numbers are far greater than at any other site studied, and because this isn't so much of a 'specialist' role they are paid less than an actor-interpreter would be. Interpreters are trained by watching other interpreters' work, and following guidelines in a manual. They are given specific training sessions (in contrast to other case study sites, whose interpreters 'shadow' more experienced members of staff as a mode of training):

We talk about using visual aids and spaces which also helps a new interpreter who's just learning. If we give them 5 or 6 pieces that they can talk about, at least they've got some information that they can give that person on that first day when that person's there. They can always build on that information as they work in the space so an example of that would be Miss Smith's in Ravensworth Terrace in the town - and a good interpreter would use the range, the glass rolling pin, the knife cleaner, the bird cage[...] (Mgr01/Bea/09).

An interpreter told me that these objects were 'hooks' that enabled them to interact with visitors: 'we have the lamp, pick a lamp up and explain that, or the machine in the dentists, you've got the drill and the gas and you're explaining' (Int01/Bea/09).

The interpreters are trained not to be intrusive with visitors, which means that they tend to wait until asked before they will offer information and part of their

training is to facilitate the reminiscing of visitors. In interview, the Head of Engagement said:

It's absolutely wonderful when you get a group in, if the interpreter can be the conduit if you like, to facilitate that discussion with a school group or a family or with a group of friends. Maybe if there's an older person with them, it's wonderful to see them doing the interpretation. It's not to say the interpreter then becomes redundant but it's so lovely to see people say 'I used to have a tin bath, come and have a look at this. I used to get really hot on that side by the fire and this side was freezing cold.' That's their experience and if someone can talk about their personal experience of something that's much more real to somebody else and something which might seem really alien to a youngster or anybody if their grandmother or mother or someone they've met actually did that: 'they actually did that, they had a toilet in the back yard I can't believe it' - you couldn't make that more real and that's what we're about. We're not about high art, we're not about the living of the aristocracy, we're about you, you, you, you - this is *your* life had you been here in 1920, 1930 whatever that is and this is about you (Mgr01/Bea/09).

This style of third person interpretation is visitor-led and is more about prompting memories and releasing information, than it is about giving information in a presentational style. One of the senior interpreters told me that being able to listen to people was a key skill for the Beamish interpreter and that this makes it a very accessible place for visitors who may not be traditional museum-goers. The other key point interpreters are told is that they are not supposed to keep anyone too long in any particular area: 'We don't want to keep anyone more than 5 minutes, it's a big museum so we don't want to keep anyone more than five minutes' (Int01/Bea/09), so although they are required to 'engage' with visitors, this is supposed to be a brief engagement. This necessarily affects the amount and depth of information that can be given to visitors.

## Presentation and Representation

The museum or heritage site performance has strongly presentational aspects. These have been referred to earlier as making reference to the non-fictional and using 'thinly-disguised fictions' (Prendergast and Saxton 2009, 12-13). Third person interpretation is essentially presentational performance, where the interpreter's 'self' is on show rather than some 'other' character. Interpreters may have the status of an informant, reporter or expert witness who may provide information either actively, or in response to visitor questions, or through doing some kind of physical demonstration-type activity, in which case information may be non-verbal. As mentioned earlier, the presentational performer is not making

reference in a Brechtian way to a historical role that they stand alongside. They are *like* the ‘demonstrator’ referred to by Brecht in *A Model for Epic Theater*, whose job is not to create illusion but to ‘repeat something’ (Brecht [trans. Bentley] 1949, 427), but they are not doing this intentionally to show the social conditions that influence our behaviour in ‘real life’, on the contrary, they are re-enacting the past in a similar manner to the first person interpreter. As noted earlier, the third person role has the potential to produce a space of critical distance with which to comment on our representations of the past and to supply alternative and/or counter-narratives, although this possibility has not yet been explored in the sites under consideration<sup>24</sup>.

The *diegetic* mode of the third person interpreter gives them the status of narrator, as they speak on behalf of the people of the past. First person interpretation is more representational. It relies on the interpreter assuming a character and creating a fictional world such as Mabel’s kitchen or the 1938 pithead baths. This *mimetic* mode requires a certain suspension of disbelief in order to sustain the fictional worlds being created. My descriptions of the presentational as well as the representational performance may widen the sense of what may usually be considered performance in the museum. Interpreters doing third person interpretation are not generally thought of as being performers although I will show that they work with role, identity and character as do first person interpreters, and they have particular ways of interacting with visitors and referring to the ‘others’ of the past. In conceptualising the interpretive performance I will be considering the ‘eventness’ (Sauter 2000) and situatedness of the first and third person performances outlined earlier, which places them in the wider context of a communicative, hermeneutic act. Gay McAuley conceptualises performance away from the dramatised text and towards a situated event noting that:

the specificity of theatre is not to be found in its relationship to the dramatic...but in that it consists essentially of the interaction between performers and spectators in a given space. Theatre is a social event, occurring in the auditorium as well as on the stage (McAuley 2000, 5).

This spatially influenced definition of theatre that refers to it as an interaction and a social event is particularly useful in relation to considering the interpretive performance in museums and I will be borrowing from and adapting McAuley’s taxonomy of spatial function along with Jackson and Kidd’s (2008)

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<sup>24</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 9 and no. 6.

description of performance ‘frames’ to analyse the performances outlined previously.

## Framing Performance

Jackson and Kidd state that ‘the audience’s *quality of engagement* and the *extent of their learning* will depend not just on the novelty of the experience (though that should not be lightly dismissed), nor just on the quality of the performance itself, nor the volume of information conveyed, but, as least as much, on the way the experience is framed’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 56). They outline three key frames which are: 1. *The institutional frame* which is the institutional context within which the performance is staged and includes ‘the architectural style of the building and its permutation of spaces, the style and foci of the collections, and its location’; 2. *The performance frame*, ‘which marks out the theatre event itself as theatre and signals where and how the audience will position itself, and the role (if any) expected of audience members (e.g. via the entry point into the performance area, including the collection of tickets where applicable, the formal seating or ‘promenade’ setting, the marking out of the ‘stage’ if any, the level of formality that is established, and whether or not we are being encouraged to ‘play’)’ and 3. *The internal frames* which are in operation once the performance is underway and include ‘devices used to signal shifts of time, place, character and relationship with the audience, including invitations to interact’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 57).

The institutional frame includes what McAuley refers to as ‘theatre space’ which is the theatre building containing ‘performance space’ and ‘audience space’. The design of the building ‘the kind of access it invites or denies, are all part of the experience of theatre for both practitioners and spectators’ (McAuley 2000, 24). The same can be said for the museum building. Here too the architecture and spatial layout conditions the museum experience for staff and visitors. There is perhaps less division between back stage and auditorium space in the museum where the majority of space is display space where members of staff may mingle with visitors. The museum offices and storage spaces where the collections not on display are kept compare to the theatre’s ‘practitioner space’ and ‘rehearsal space’. This museum space produces an expectation of behaviour for the visitor, where they may be expecting a place of cultural learning and entertainment or at certain heritage sites where visitors may have family or work connections where they may visit in order to ‘pay their respects’ or to remember. For the visitor then, museum visiting is an event separate from everyday life and part of either educational or

leisure activities, and their visit conditioned by the expectations they bring with them which applies also to how they regard the museum performance. Falk and Dierking stress the importance of the visitors' context which they conceptualise as three interlocking spheres: 1. the personal context which includes the experiences, knowledge and interests each visitors has along with their own personal agendas and expectations from the visit; 2. the social context which differs according to the particular character of the social group the visitor is part of and 3. the physical context which includes the architecture and 'feel' of the building as well as the objects (Falk and Dierking 1992, 2-3).

The interpretation the visitor performs is very much conditioned by the presence and behaviour of other visitors. The visitor will look at what other people are doing and check that their behaviour is appropriate, as well as spending a considerable amount of time interacting with the people they came with (Heumann Gurian (1991). The case study examples of first person performance given earlier were all examples of family performances given in the school holidays. The presence of children had a very strong impact on these performances which in any case are often used for primary school groups as well. There is a clear child orientation here where comprehensibility and fun are key elements. One interpreter told me after one performance:

what's been interesting with this performance is, because of the February half term aspect of it, it's become much more of a child's performance . There's a lot of interaction with the kids which wasn't necessarily intended at first, that's something you just have to kind of - interact with them and the kind of - the puppets and stuff and just the fact that it's a bit loud and they like the funny voice and the outfit and stuff means that they don't tend to lose interest really (Int02/MOSI/09).

The composition of the audience then, affects the level of interaction and style of the performance. Because the performance is given largely *to* the children, the interpretive frame that the audience may place around the event themselves is that both performance and learning are 'for' children. Visitors interviewed after performances of Mabel Lockwood and Fred at the pithead baths often said that they felt the performances were particularly good for the children: that it was a good way of learning history and that it made their museum visit more enjoyable (MLv/NCM/08 and FPv/NCM/09).

The institutional frame is the same for the third person performance as it is for first person, but the performance frame differs. Where a 'set-piece' first person performance will need to establish its boundaries – when it begins and ends and where in time and space it is - the third person performance, even when it does

have an obvious beginning and end (such as in the case of a tour or a demonstration) has a less obvious performance frame. The frame here tends to be denoted by the *type* of event it is. If visitors come to a tour, they expect to line up and follow a leader and if they come to watch a demonstration they will stand in a group and not interrupt until the demonstrator has finished, for example. The obvious signalling of altered temporal and spatial zones and the indication that a character is being taken on in the first person performance is made much more subtly in the third person performance. The third person interpreters studied here all wore costume that indicated that they 'belonged' in the past which is often as far as third person characterisation goes, but these interpreters give the impression that they are to some extent taking the place of the people from the past in the way that they occupy 'their' space and do the kind of things 'they' would have done. It is also the case in these examples that the space the interpretation happens in has already been altered by the museum to look as if the mine has just shut (in the case of the NCMME) and as if we were in 1820 or 1913 in the case of Beamish. These interpreters display themselves as if they might be people from the past and in the case of the miner-guides they are also those very people. They also encourage us to use our imaginations by asking us to imagine what it was like to work here, how hot or cramped, dark or dangerous it might have been which is like the more formal invitation 'to play' that a first person interpreter might offer. There is an obvious difference between the more structured set-piece performance of the guided tour, and the more 'improvised' performance of the visitor encounters at Beamish in terms of setting boundaries to the performance as there would be with first person interpretation. When an audience is large, a performance frame needs to be established so that they know 'the rules', but when there may only be a short conversation between one visitor and one interpreter, these 'rules' are established by normal conversational methods such as maintaining eye-contact, asking questions or turning away when a cessation of contact is required.

### ***Performance Space***

The framing of performance in museums is particularly significant because conventions signifying that a performance is taking place in traditional theatrical venues such as the stage, seating, lowered lighting and the separation of performer and audience, may not be apparent. Also, interpretive performances have functions that may not be present in traditional theatre such as: demonstrating machinery or skill and the giving of tours. It is therefore sometimes difficult to note the subtle changes between the general performance space of the museum and

the performance frame that may signal a ‘set-piece’ performance that has been allocated a specific place and time in the museum. Unlike a stage performance, the surroundings of the museum are always noticeable in an interpretive performance. There is no dimming of lights and no reduction in noise.

First person ‘pieces’ of interpretation such as the ones described above at the NCMME and at MOSI tend to have fixed time boundaries. They are advertised in advance and have posters giving a loose description of the event and where it will happen. When the performer arrives into the general performance space of the museum they may mingle with visitors and create no particular impression until they address visitors in a louder ‘performer’ voice. At many first person performances in museums the performers need to ‘gather’ their audience into the right place at the right time, and when this has been accomplished, the area the audience and the performer occupy could be said to be the stage space. When a performer moves around in this space talking about what will be happening and ‘setting the scene’ for the performance, this could be referred to as taking place in presentational space. When the presenter in Jack Alcock at MOSI for example refers to the ‘sign’ near his stage space that talks about ‘experimental’ flying’ and says that we will be ‘going back in time, we know that he is working in presentational space. When Mabel Lockwood walks about the ‘Home Life’ gallery gathering her audience and asking them questions about where they come from, she is in presentational space. In this case there is no stage around her except for what McAuley citing Huston refers to as ‘the simple stage’ that appears around a street performer (McAuley 2000, 27) and when she moves into her kitchen she enters the stage space and then additionally creates the fictional space of the rest of her house.

For the miner-guides, the museum is their performance space, but the underground regions are their stage which one miner-guide explicitly refers to, when he says ‘welcome to my world’ (internal dvd). There is a distinct difference between this stage space and the rest of the museum as it is both ‘time-themed’ and it is in Goffman’s (1959) terms a ‘back region’ which the miner-guides allow us access to (see *Chapter 2 - The Guided Tour* for an explanation of this). At each stopping point on the tour the miner-guides have an opportunity to perform, which may take the form of an explanation of the physical surroundings or a tableau scene where the miner-guide ‘accompanies’ or tells the story of the mannequins on display. It may be an opportunity for them to tell a story from their own life, or an opportunity to present themselves alongside the display as if they were part of it by demonstrating how they may have ‘worked’ in a particular area.



Figure 19. Miner-guide and 'Audience'

At Beamish, the whole site may be thought of as potential stage space, as there may be encounters with staff as they move around the museum, but the internal spaces of the houses, shops and workplaces are more like stage spaces often with built in demarcated areas for visitors and staff such as a kitchen table or a counter of some sort. At MOSI a stage is similarly created by the backdrop of an engine and by barriers in *Engineer Eric* that divide the display of the locomotive from the audience space of tiered steps, and in *Jack Alcock* by the barriers that divide the display of aeroplanes from the audience as well as Jack's table of artefacts. Even where a stage space is created by the addition of seating and barriers and a 'backdrop' that implies that the performance will be fairly static, the audience may take up a fairly loose attachment to their designated audience space and hover at the edges. It is very frequent for audience members to come and go during a performance as they may treat the performance like any other display in the museum.



Figure 20. Interior of Pit Village Cottage, Beamish

Interpreters will often refer to the performance frames that surround them. Third person interpreters in particular will refer to their surroundings as part of their role is to explain their contextualised setting. They may also explain how and why the museum has produced certain displays and may even talk about what it is like to work in them. Certain first person interpreters like Jack Alcock frequently reference the museum or institutional frame by referring to why he and the audience are there and noting the other exhibits. He also refers to the performance frame by bringing the audience 'into' the action by setting the scene and asking questions about it. He also moves around in time and space in between the present time of performance and the past time of Jack's story thus shifting the internal performance frames. Very 'realistic' first person interpreters such as those at the NCMME are more constrained in this regard, as they are supposed to *be* who they say they are, and they then cannot refer to the museum or themselves as interpreters. Their performances have been carefully designed so that they have ample reason to be where they are and to have a reason for an audience to be there as well. The unfolding of their narrative is set up to seem entirely natural: the pithead baths have just opened, so the baths attendant

believes people are here to have a look around, visitors to Mabel's kitchen are simply visitors passing through her village who want to have a look at where she lives. Although Fred at the pithead baths has no clearly demarcated stage space, the whole of the building as it is 'real' historical space could be imagined as the stage, thus making it easier for him to stay in his fictional time of 1939 and in character as Fred. The fact that this doesn't really happen is interesting. As I have noted, the role of the interpreter in this performance is always apparent; it is difficult to suspend disbelief and feel that we are 'really' in 1939. This may be as a result of the realness of the environment which can so easily be 'brought to life' that it would be then difficult to differentiate between museum space and performance space.

So far I have considered the costume and the framing statements of the performer along with their positioning with a backdrop and often some sort of barrier, as instances of a 'performance frame'. In the more 'fixed' first person performances the physical situation of the performance can be said to direct the point of view of the visitor as if through a 'proscenium arch'. This is occasionally present in the more mobile third person performances at Beamish and during the NCMME's underground tour. I would like to differentiate between the effects of the picture-like contextualised display and the effect of being able to 'enter' the picture and be surrounded by a three-dimensional display because I think these are two subtly different modes of apprehending. The mode of looking as if through a frame is contained in both my case study examples. At Beamish, many of the houses and buildings have two doors open, on two sides or at either end to allow for both being able to see into the house and for ease of through-flow, and all the buildings also have windows. This creates a framing effect in itself and within the rooms that are consistently staffed there are other 'frames': the fireplace, the kitchen table or the counter may provide a frame through which to focus the gaze and a space for the interpreter to situate themselves. These 'entry points' may be as far as the visitor gets. Some spaces may not seem appealing or may be too crowded to enter. But this initial viewing point is carefully considered by the management at Beamish. The Head of Engagement described the construction of 'lived-in' space:

how am I going to make this space look as if I've just left it? I've just gone to the back door or I've just gone to fill the coal bucket or I've just gone to get some more flour. So it frustrates me a little when I go to an exhibit when it's all set and its facing the door because actually, is it how that room would have looked? I encourage the staff to go in even if it's a room they don't use after 10 o'clock with the public, that while they're opening up, to pop into the room and to busy themselves in that room and leave things. Now I've lit the fire, I'll leave those here because I'll need those later when I come back later to lock up and I'll just pick up that ball and I'll put it to one side because I need to put

those papers on that table. So now I'm going out so that when the visitor looks in, it's got an air of usage in a non-stagnant way and sometimes we get it wrong, sometimes I go along to the town and say ooh that looks like it's been set up in a glass case: facing the visitor, but I think folk are really getting into the kind of idea and I see them on a morning opening up areas and going...'umm...let's make this look as if we're making scones today'. If I were making scones - I've just mixed and I put that spoon down and I'm about to pour the milk, and then when they stand back and look, that looks as if I've just nipped out and that's the air I want to try and get in the non-staffed exhibits (Mgr02/Bea/09).

In other areas of Beamish though, such as at Pockerley Manor, or in the outdoor spaces, there is less sense of having your looking guided for you. This may subtly alter the 'rules' of engagement for the visitor. As Magelssen notes, the removal of the proscenium arch:

erases the normal rules of theatre perception. With the absence of the arch, the objective viewpoint is erased and the spectator may become immersed in the milieu without the separating, objective distance. Such a space allows for a different mode of perception – no longer a mirror of reality on the other side of the picture frame, but a total surface, in which a multiplicity of realities may exist. Here, because of the erasure of the boundary between two distinct times, several histories could exist alongside one another (Magelssen 2004, 11).

It is useful to bear in mind the importance of the scenographic element to these performances of interpretation when considering presentation alongside representation. As I have noted earlier but not yet explored, the spatial narratives of the museum work hand in hand with the verbal narratives of the interpreter. By spatial narratives, I mean the physical design of the museum site, the way the buildings look both inside and outside and the paths provided for the visitor to travel around the museum, which tell the visitor where they are in history. The representational 'world' of the past is very strongly suggested by the physical displays and artefacts all around the visitor in some museums. At Beamish, the visitor may feel as if they are in this other world or alternatively 'in' a stage set. At the NCMME there are various areas which are reconstructed to look like they were at a particular point in time - which includes the underground tour, which may give this effect. There is less total reconstruction at MOSI who primarily use traditional gallery displays. So as well as a sense of the representational working alongside the presentational during the interpretive performance, there is representational space alongside the presentational space in the museum. This duality is similar to theatrical performances, where as Gay McAuley describes: there is the relationship between physical space and fictional

place. The physical space of the stage contains the elements of presentational space – the place where the scenery and decor is organised and the place where the actors appear, which is complemented by fictional space – which is references to places ‘presented, represented or evoked onstage and off’ (McAuley 2000, 29). The critical difference is that the representational world being referred to in museum performances is to be regarded as real rather than fictional.

## Interaction and Participation

There is considerable difference between the role of the visitor in a third person performance to that of a first person performance. The obvious character production and fictional space of the first person performance necessarily alters the visitor’s role from that of visitor or spectator to that of audience, and more so than this - because of the interactive nature of first person performances, they become interlocutors, although this level of interaction is not as participatory as the Boalian ideal described in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979).

The spectator does not generally become a ‘spect-actor’ in the museum although they are sometimes given a role which has been pre-scripted for them. Examples of this are in the *Jack Alcock* performance at MOSI when a child from the audience is asked to ‘become’ Max Muller. His ‘acting’ is limited by the fact that he can only be part of the performance by placing his head into the painted picture of a pilot’s body<sup>25</sup> and told that he may only answer ‘yes’ at one point and ‘no’ at another. Mrs Lockwood gives children the ‘roles’ of her children but again they are restricted to saying ‘yes mother’ and ‘no mother’. These performances are highly structured and give the *impression* of being a dialogue rather than actually giving the audience much agency. The style of *Mabel Lockwood* references entertainment of the era and the character of Mabel is also ‘like’ an early twentieth-century music-hall performer as well as a housewife. This reference to entertainment of comedy allows the audience a role ‘as’ an audience

when you go to the theatre you know exactly what your role is – you are a spectator more often than not. When you come to the museum - to the workshops, whether they are family workshops or whether they are school workshops, you are a participator, you are not a spectator (Int01/NCM/08).

<sup>25</sup> See figure 13. on page 94

in a format they will probably familiar with and know how to interact with. This is also the case at MOSI with *Engineer Eric* where the familiar pantomime and double act references allow the children to participate and shout back at the performers.

The strongly presentational aspect of the museum performance that requires the audience to be seen and be heard alongside the presence of museum artefacts makes these performances very much about the *act* of looking and listening. This is a much more active engagement with display space than is normal in the museum, and so it may be said that one of the purposes of museum performances is to teach the visitor *how* to look in the museum. For example, one visitor interviewed after a performance of *Mabel Lockwood* said: ‘it sets me up for the rest of the visit because I can relate it to the performance’ (MLv04/NCM/08).

The performance here is literally a frame for the whole museum visit.

Elements in the performances outlined earlier that could be regarded as presentational are: audience/performer interactivity and lack of a clear divide between the two, persistence of the museum ‘frame’ and interpretive/educational intent. Firstly the performers in all the performances outline, acknowledge and interact with their audiences and require that interactivity to make the performances progress or ‘work’. There is often no clear stage space and performers may mingle with the audience. This is the case in many of the spaces at Beamish where visitors may enter the indoor spaces and use the same areas as the interpreters. Many interpretive performances move around, particularly those that are designed to interpret space such as *Fred at the pithead baths* and the underground tour, and so the position of the audience and the performer is never fixed.

Both Sauter (2000) and Beckerman (1990) describe presentation as a mode of performance where actions are presented or projected to receivers, who then deliver ‘overt and covert messages to the performer’ (Beckerman 1990, 87) based on the performance. This circular feedback loop is similarly described by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill who uses hermeneutic and constructivist theory to conceptualise the interpretation process in museums where:

The encounter between an individual subject and an object is influenced by prior experience and knowledge. Meaning is to be found neither wholly in the object nor wholly in the viewer. Meaning is dialogic – a dialogue between viewer and object (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 117).

This dialogic meaning-making process is characteristic of interpretation in museums, and of the interactive or participatory performance. As mentioned earlier, the typical interpretive performance is not as interactive as for instance

Boal's Forum Theatre where the audience can make interventions into the stage space and the performance and direct the course of the performance towards some transformatory goal. Most museum performance is closer to the semi-interactive performance of the stand-up comedian which relies on audience participation but which uses a great deal of scripted material and where the audience do not actually alter the course or outcome of the performance. It is also similar to the role of a teacher who requires feedback from their pupils but who directs their 'performance' along pre-determined lines. The semi-interactive performer needs to capture and maintain their audience's attention, and maintain the highly controlled dialogue needed to progress the narrative. Comedy and questioning are means of gathering this attention and it has been noted during the course of this research that a comedy with an occasionally aggressive 'edge' is occasionally used as a way of controlling the audience.

There is though a key difference between the theatre performance and the museum performance in relation to the way presentation may be regarded. When there is an obvious disconnect in the theatre between the fictional world and the performative acts generated by the actors, this may be referred to as 'presentationalism' or 'theatricalism' (Beckerman 1990; Davis and Postlewait 2003). Brechtian theatre practice for example may seem a correlate to the presentational museum performance where the actor stands apart from her/his character and the theatrical 'frame' is exposed. Brecht intended to draw attention to the enforced passivity of the audience in relation to mimetic realism on stage through his *Verfremdungseffekt*, and contextualise the performance as situated in history. As Brecht explained: 'in order to engage audiences' critical faculties it is necessary to show actors being moved by social circumstances' (Brecht 1978 [trans. Willett]). However, as previously mentioned, the museum as an organisation and set of practices tends not to be similarly motivated. The presentational museum performance makes the physicality of the museum, in the form of authentic buildings and objects, 'felt' around the performance. This draws attention to the artificiality of the performance in the museum at the same time as enhancing the status of the museum objects, thus drawing attention to the 'real' stars of the show, who are the artefacts, objects and buildings on display.

Finally, the educational and interpretational intent is always clear in these performances. The *Engineer Eric* performance is designed for children to learn how a steam engine works, *Jack Alcock* is to give information about the man and his first flight across the Atlantic, the nature of early flying and to inspire children to consider careers in science and engineering, *Mabel Lockwood's* is to inform

audiences about the role of a housewife in a 1940s mining community, *Fred at the pithead baths* is there to explain the baths' function, the miner-guides show visitors around the underground regions of the museum and the third person interpreters at Beamish explain the functions and uses of the interior artefacts in the spaces of the museum. It is often clear when educational 'points' are being made, for example, the interpreter will often ask the audience a question when they want to introduce a key idea or expand on a point, or they will introduce an artefact to prompt a new area of discussion. The dialogue that is generally maintained with the audience can often seem more classroom-like than entertainment. There is, in addition, often a sense of accomplishment that occurs at the end of an interpretive performance such as Engineer Eric's getting the engine to work or the completion of Jack Alcock's struggle to fly across the Atlantic, or, in the case of the NCMME, the completion of what can be a challenging underground tour. At Beamish this sense of accomplishment might be the revelation of some information that wasn't previously available or the release of a personal or family memory.

## **Identity, Role, Character and Acting**

I propose then that there is a constant juxtaposition in the museum between the presentational and representational elements of the interpretive performance, where one element is always dominant but the other is never entirely overshadowed. This relates to performance space and audience interactivity as well as the area of role, character and acting which will be dealt with next. It is possible to place the performances analysed on a continuum in relation to their representational and presentational features:

### ***Presentation – Representation Continuum***

<b>Most presentational</b>	<b>Most representational</b>
Beamish interpreters   Miner-guides   Jack Alcock   Engineer Eric   Fred   Mrs Lockwood	

The style and quality of acting in interpretive performances varies enormously. Although first person interpretation is characterised by the acting out of a historical character and third person interpretation is done by interpreters 'being themselves', some first person performances can contain very little acting, and an actor/interpreter may frequently come 'out of character' such as the *Jack Alcock* performance, and some third person performances where the interpreter may put themselves in the position of someone else or display themselves in a particular

way may seem to contain quite a lot of a certain kind of acting, such as in the case of the miner-guides. There is also another category of interpreter noted at case study sites which is the costumed interpreter who may seem to be more visual display than actor. They do not address the visitor or elicit a performance but they appear as if they could do so. This form of interpretation as well as third person interpretation more generally, is not on the whole thought of as involving any acting, and is not necessarily thought of as performance, and so there needs to be some way of exploring the various methods of communicating with visitors and the different ways that character is taken on or referred to<sup>26</sup>. Michael Kirby's acting continuum outlined in *On Acting and Not Acting* (1995) is a useful tool with which to explore acting in relation to first and third person interpretation because in one sense it is possible to see that an obvious difference between the two is that the former simply involves *more* acting than the latter (see chart below).

NOT ACTING	ACTING
Nonmatrixed Performing	Symbolized Matrix

(Kirby, 2002 [1995], 45)

In sum, Kirby states that non matrixed performing may be represented by those who appear on stage - for example as stage hands or attendants - but who are 'not embedded...in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place, and time' (Kirby 2002 [1995], 41), whereas the symbolized matrix performer similarly does not act 'and yet his or her costume represents something or someone' (*ibid*). Moving along the continuum, received acting occurs when the performer accumulates so many references to fictional place and time through their costuming, behaviour and context that they can be seen as an actor, and a 'character' within the performance even if they are not actively acting. Kirby states that acting begins when 'the performer does something to simulate, represent, impersonate' (Kirby 2002 [1995], 43) and occurs in everyday situations when people seem to be on stage and project aspects of their personality to onlookers. Simple acting becomes complex acting when emotion is used, and 'more and more elements are incorporated into the pretense' (Kirby 2002 [1995], 45). The more complex acting becomes, the more skill and technical ability is required of the actor. Whilst Kirby's theory is useful for analysing the range of heritage performances that utilise a scale of first to third person interpretation, it is not

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<sup>26</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 9.

entirely translatable to the heritage setting. The categories of nonmatrixed and symbolised matrix performer are less relevant in a context where the entire environment is a representational space and therefore to a certain extent, a 'stage'. Any member of staff appearing in costume within the representational space of the heritage site is likely to be thought of as 'standing in' for the people of the past in some way, even if they do not do or say anything and in Kirby's terms then they can be regarded as carrying out received acting. Therefore, I will only use half of Kirby's continuum and consider complex acting, simple acting and received acting in relation to my chosen case study examples.

### ***From Not Acting to Acting***

The fictional world, if it is created at all, may be very weak in a presentational performance and the actor or interpreter very close to being themselves. However all first and third person performance has at its core the notion of representing the people of the past. In some first person performances such as *Mabel Lockwood*, the character produced gives a strong sense of being 'like' a 1940s housewife which is due to the acting ability and historical research of the interpreter concerned. The two actor/interpreters at the NCMME worked hard at producing a highly convincing character by researching their roles fully and aimed at producing realistic performances. Consider the assessment of the interpreter who plays Fred:

I know more about the characters than I tell the audience....I mean having done my research I realise that Fred in the bathhouse would have actually been in the first World War and I sort of mention it I say: 'after the Great War I couldn't settle'. I don't talk about the First World War but I could [laughs]. I even actually know how he dies (Int02/NCM/08).

Viewed through Kirby's matrix, this is an example of *complex acting* which involves presenting physical and emotional states and a complete characterization using a high level of acting skills. Both the interpreters who perform these roles have a great deal of acting experience. One interpreter told me how she had a background in amateur theatre and described how she: 'grew up in the wings' because her father was a scene painter at Morecambe Winter Gardens Theatre (Int02/NCM/08). The other described his background in drama-in-education:

I... was a teacher and I taught drama and there's some very strong links between the kind of drama – the kind of Dorothy Heathcote type drama that I used to ...do and this kind of performance - in a sense I'm really just doing a drama lesson because I often did work in role (Int02/NCM/08).

It is important to The NCMME that the characters portrayed as 'living history' are ones which are highly representative of a particular role in mining and which 'fit' into the time periods on display at the museum. This tends to produce 'archetypes' rather than a specific historic personage. Although, when a performer adopts the character of this figure it necessarily becomes individualised. The interpreter who plays *Fred at the pithead baths* for example has a complete backstory for Fred.

In others there is a weaker sense of character, or more of a duality between the interpreter role and the character role referred to. This has been seen in the performance of *Jack Alcock*. This is an intentional strategy at MOSI as the Head of Interpretation explained to me: 'we're not trying to do it *just* as the character, as they were' (Mgr/MOSI/09). He describes how when characters are played by a particular interpreter, the personality of the interpreter almost sits alongside that character:

William Huskinson or the reporter for Lady Heath who's [named interpreter] or Max Woosnam the footballer who's [named interpreter] or when James Sadler is done by [named interpreter], it's all done with a Lancashire accent because that's [named interpreter] you know and it's commented on within the staff oh that's [named interpreter] and his mannerisms and his voice doing that character now, and it's because we've not really tried to get people being as authentic as possible and us needing to have to be a method actor, in the character of the person and really getting into it in that way (Mgr/MOSI/09).

This is an example of Kirby's *simple acting* which involves anything done 'to simulate, represent, impersonate', and which does not need to involve characterization. Kirby argues that 'simple acting' exists 'in the smallest and simplest action that involves pretense' (Kirby 2002 [1995], 43). First person interpreters are using simple acting when they do not fully 'inhabit' their characters, either moving from a first to a third person mode of address or not fully producing a characterisation. This occurs with *Jack Alcock* and with *Engineer Eric* where the role of an interpreter and entertainer is noticeable alongside the characters produced. The making of interpretational 'points' is considered more valuable than the creation of a truly believable character here. An important consideration in relation to this is that many presenters and interpreters in museums do not have any actor training and so need to be able to perform interpretation using their presentation skills alone. I would argue that third person interpreters use simple acting when they do more than just appear in costume. When they re-enact the activities of the past for visitors by giving demonstrations, 'use' artefacts or evoke a sense of a past time by referring to what it may have felt like to have been there

then, this utilises simple acting. Observations at case study sites have noted many occasions when third person interpreters use the present continuous tense to refer to actions of the past to give a sense of immediacy. Miner-guides on the underground tour will often refer to the mannequins 'as' real and in the present. For example on one tour stop a guide says: 'Mum drags coal in total darkness. This boy here is only six, he's got rats and mice running round his legs' (UgObs/c/NCM/09) and then asks us to imagine how this would feel. At another stopping point beside a mannequin, a guide says: 'I'd like to introduce you to Douggie. Douggie could be about forty five years old. He could have broken fingers, a leg, he could have inhaled lots of dust. He can't work to the same physical intensity as he used to' (UgObs/b/NCM/09). As well as this 'scene setting' using mannequins, the miner-guides on the underground tour use simple acting when they adopt the persona of an entertainer and present their tour using storytelling techniques.

Although the presentation techniques of interpreters can be regarded as using simple acting, the idea of acting is problematic in relation to living history. The living history or reconstructive approach that attempts to reproduce a mimetically real environment approach is associated with historical research rather than performance. Many commentators report that the people who 'do' living history do not believe that they are acting (Carlson 1996; Magelssen 2004; Snow 1993). Stacy Roth comments that:

Raising the subject of the relationship between theatre (or entertainment) and first-person interpretation around a group of interpreters can be as incendiary as bringing up politics at the dinner table. Interpreters at one end of the spectrum consider themselves strictly educators and/or historians; they blanch at any insinuation that they are acting. Those at the opposite pole claim first-person is theatre. In the middle are those who describe it as a hybrid that marries history and education with effective performance technique (Roth 1998, 51).

And similarly many people believe that actors are not the best people to do the job of interpreter. Magelssen reports that his interpreter interviewees thought that actors found live interpretation difficult because it requires the ability to improvise, doesn't stick to a script, that actors need directing and being 'theatrical' is too overpowering for visitors (Magelssen 2007, 112). My research supports this. Many managerial and interpreter interviewees believed that actors preferred to work with highly scripted presentations, found it difficult to work in an improvisational and interactive way with audiences, expected a higher rate of pay

than is the norm in museums and didn't have the flexibility that is required to carry out the wide range of tasks that are involved in presenting and interpreting. This downplaying of acting within the interpretation role means that complex acting is less prevalent in a museum setting than simple acting and it also means that people carrying out 'acting' according to the Kirby continuum, will probably not consider themselves, or be considered by other members of staff, as actors.

It is important though to consider the performative quality of 'costumed' staff at a museum who may *appear* to be representing someone other but who do not seem to act at all. *Received acting* requires the 'actor' to be in costume as well as appear in contextualised space. Visitors may be more likely to perceive interpreters in spaces that have been specially marked out for performance, such as the underground region, the pithead baths or Mrs Lockwood's kitchen 'as' acting in comparison to seeing them in the more 'in-between' spaces such as pathways and thoroughfares or in less historically contextualised spaces. Interpreters may be 'off duty' or not yet ready to talk to visitors, and in this case, they are performing received acting rather than simple acting. The miner-guides' dual role which is to guide as well as perform some aspect of their former mining role means that sometimes they may be seen doing various jobs around the site. Here they are also performing as received actors, producing a display of mining site activity, because they are working in a museum rather than a 'real mine, although they are actually also working 'for real'.

Kirby's theory though is not wholly adequate to conceptualise acting in the context of the museum or heritage site. His is primarily a semiotic analysis which privileges the visual and scenographic element of the performance. In order to reflect the wider social context of the heritage performance and to capture the presence of the audience within the performance, Bert States' phenomenological theory (2002 [1995]) of the actor's presence can bring another dimension to the question of acting, role and characterisation in heritage settings. He describes three 'pronominal modes' which reflect the actor's relationship to an audience during a performance, and these are illustrated below:

I (actor)	=	Self-expressive mode
You (audience)	=	Collaborative mode
He (character)	=	Representational mode (States 2002 [1995], 24).

In the self expressive mode the actor 'seems to be performing on his own behalf' (States 2002 [1995]), 25). Here actors show themselves off, as well as their virtuosity as actors. This is not a question of the actor stepping out of role, but of

finding ‘the fissure in the text that allows him to make his unique contribution: he self-creates the real ground of his character’s ideality’ (States 2002 [1995]), 26). In the self-expressive mode, we are aware of the actor as an artist skilfully producing their role. Whilst it is not outside the bounds of possibility for the museum performer to work in the self-expressive mode, this mode of performance is more applicable to the traditional theatre where the fourth wall convention allows for an intense concentration on characterisation . Where States’ theory is most relevant for the analysis of the heritage performance is in his description of the ‘collaborative mode’. This mode ‘breaks down the distance between the actor and audience and gives the spectator something more than a passive role in the theatre exchange’ (States 2002 [1995]), 29). This especially reflects the interpretive performance which typically acknowledges and produces a dialogue with its audience - although, as previously noted, audience participation in the interpretive performance is limited and often pre-scripted. States gives comedy as a form which particularly requires the engagement of an audience as well as ‘comedy’s next-door neighbors’ (States 2002 [1995], 30), realism and irony. These forms are reflected in the interpretive performance, which in its first person form, commonly undercuts a realistic fact-based narrative with comic asides and/or a comedic characterisation as well as a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ attitude in a ‘knowing’ voice. States refers here to Brechtian theatre as an example of working in the collaborative mode for the purpose of critiquing social life. States’ other mode: the representational is related to what in this chapter has been referred to as the ‘presentational’. It is a third person mode of performance ‘in which we look in objectively on a “drama”...It has nothing to do with credulity; the audience simply sees through the “sign language” of the art to the “signified” beyond (States 2002 [1995],33). Transposed to a heritage or museum setting this could reflect the third person performance which does not attempt to produce an illusionary other world in the same manner as the first person performance. Here the audience knows the costumed interpreter is a member of staff who is there to represent the past in a (reasonably) objective manner and who may do so via the familiar vehicles of a guided tour or a demonstration.

It is possible to layer States’ phenomenological model of acting onto Kirby’s continuum (see figure 21) to represent the amounts of and modes of acting taking place in a museum or heritage setting. Here the three modes of acting: self expressive, collaborative and representational encase each other to form a whole where the self expressive mode forms a central core (which is rarely reached), the collaborative (the space of the interpreter interacting with the visitor) surrounding the core, with the representational mode surrounding this. As we travel through the

core from the centre to its periphery, the acting (from Kirby's continuum) is likely to change from complex through to simple and ending with received acting.

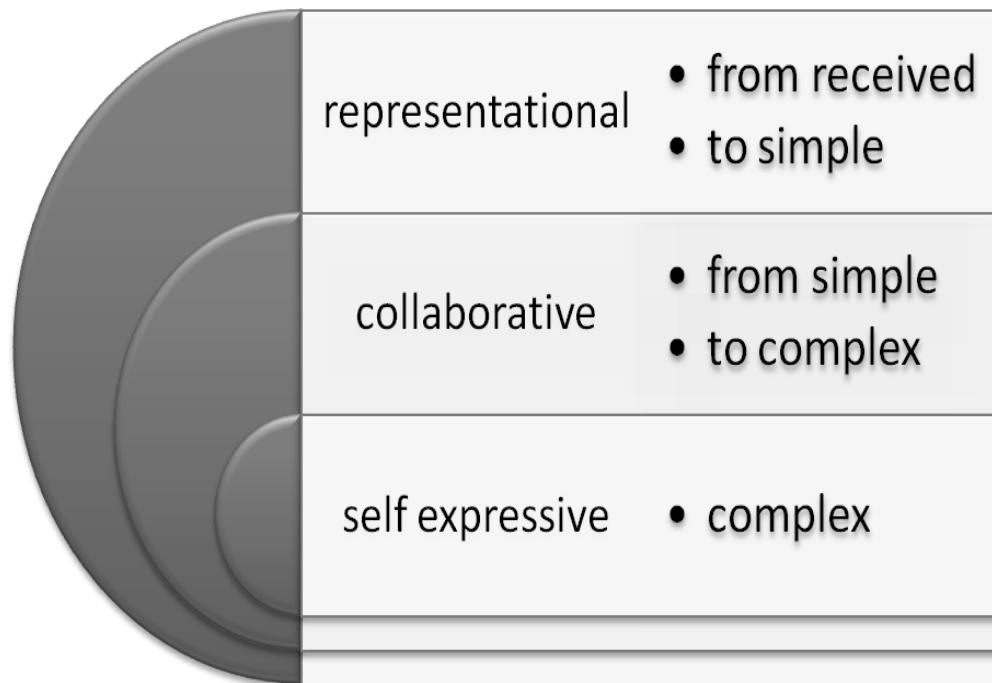


Figure 21, Three Modes of Acting: States' and Kirby's Theories Combined

I have re-organised States' modes of acting in this way so that they can be perceived spatially in the context of the heritage site. However in practice, as States describes, the modes do not have fixed boundaries, one may shift into the other depending on the relationship of performer to audience.

### ***The Interpreter and their Role***

The collaborative mode of performance prevalent in the museum means that the 'role' of the interpreter is usually noticeable, even in a first person performance and shadows the character being portrayed, so that even when an actor/interpreter completely inhabits their role, there seems to be a ghost of this other interpretive one. This is a figure similar to McAuley's 'stage figure' who is 'the physical manifestation of the character or persona constructed by the actor and the other artists involved in the production' that lies in between the actor and the character that the actor presents. McAuley goes on to state that these elements can be mapped onto the physical/fictional relationship area of her spatial taxonomy outlined earlier: stage space, presentational space and fictional place (McAuley 2000, 94). Stage space links with the actor, presentational space links with the

stage figure and fictional place is linked with character. The latter two categories can be loosely mapped on to the museum's interpretive performance but the idea of the stage and the actor is generally not obvious in the museum, and so replacing this category might be the role of a member of staff in the museum space. Mrs Lockwood's kitchen and the pithead baths are museum artefact/museum space, performance space *and* a fictional place. When Mabel refers to the 'other' areas of her house and as an extension, the pit village and then the wider world of 1949, these are fictional spaces that grow from the real/fictional space of the kitchen. Fred similarly creates a fictional space within the current real space of the baths when he refers to the miners that might be still in the baths and when he talks in the present tense about the pithead baths' practices and he, like Mabel, extends this to the wider pit village and world of 1939, and in addition creates a still wider world of the earlier past when he talks about how he 'couldn't settle' after the Great War. It is very common in a first person performance to hear that we will be 'going back in time' and although this may seem unnecessary when a costumed performer is clearly performing, this 'time framing' may indicate a performance boundary similar to a stage that needs to be initiated in a non-theatrical venue.

A similar framing effect is produced by the costume of the interpreter. A recognisable costume is particularly important when the performance frame is not absolutely clear. Visitors need to know that performers are performers and not just other museum visitors. First person interpreters use costume to denote character and their fictional status whereas third person interpreters seem to use costume to increase the effect of historical authenticity within the display area that they take part in. This distinction is not necessarily that clear and visitors may attempt (as I did) to talk to a third person interpreter 'as if' they were a character or conversely, refuse to accept the characterisation of a first person interpreter. The wearing of a costume in a public space is what Sauter refers to as an 'exhibitory action' that may 'trigger positive or negative feelings' in an audience and this may work on a sensory level: 'including notions like recognition, comparison, expectations, and also wishful identification with certain aspects of the body and personality that the actor exposes' (Sauter 2000, 59). Jane Malcolm-Davies suggests that dressing interpreters in historic clothing 'draws on the conventional use of clothes as a form of communication' (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 137) and can communicate about the past in the same ways as other artefacts on the site. In both cases, costume renders the body 'strange or different' (McAuley 2000, 115). Having a live person wearing a 'historic' costume can suggest that the visitor can experience 'the other'. A costumed character in a modern setting may produce a certain estrangement

and a questioning of identity especially where there is no obvious performance frame or stage space.

Work is a consistent theme in the industrial museum and the idea of the interpreter as another kind of worker – a miner, housewife, pilot or engine driver that hovers behind the characterisation - produces another layer of subjectivity that is not entirely similar to the character being created. Third person interpreters are seen primarily as interpreters, and in this case the idea of a character hovers behind the role of the interpreter. At Beamish the interpreters nominally represent people from the past through the costumes they wear, the settings they work in and the tasks they carry out. They will also, though, talk to visitors about their interpreting job and discuss the different areas they work in, their shift pattern and how long they have been doing the job. This kind of dialogue also happens with the miner-guides at the NCMME, although it generally takes place within the context of the underground tour and discussions about work are more easily mapped onto the work scenes that are present in the underground area.

The narrative function of the third person interpreter implies that the interpreter is a ‘medium’ through whom the past can speak, and the distance between the past and the present may confer a level of objectivity to their speaking. This does suggest though that the interpreter has *some* sort of role that is not the same as simply being themselves and which may require a degree of acting, even if it is only as Goffman (1959) describes, to do with the ‘everyday’ performance of impression management that involves role playing in social situations and performance related aspects of everyday behaviour. What complicates this position of objectivity in relation to the past is the frequent costuming of the third person interpreter who then *appears* to be a historical character until they begin to speak to us. The costuming of third person interpreters, that is seldom, if ever, referred to, suggests a double subjectivity: of the interpreter-as-themselves and of the interpreter-as-other. What may further complicate this situation is that third person interpreters will sometimes ‘slip into’ first person interpretation so we cannot be sure who they are representing. Third person interpreters’ subjectivity can be especially multiple: the ex-worker such as the miner-guides at the NCMME are both interpreters reporting on mining in the past and miners from the past who appear in costume to look much as they were when they were in that past.<sup>27</sup> They may talk

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<sup>27</sup> Some of the miner-guides at the museum are in fact still working as miners at one of the few remaining working pits.

as interpreters referring to a past that has now ended or as miners who are still in the present. The issue of authority is interesting in relation to this multiple subjectivity. Sometimes the interpreter talks on behalf of the museum when they present an 'institutionalised history' such as the story of the development of mining and the progress that was made in terms of safety, but at other times the miner guides will use their authority as ex-miners to explain things from first-hand experience which is something that visitors repeatedly reported as being notable during the course of my research.

It seems that effective performances require a high level of narrative competence in order for interpreters to convey the impression that they have the authority to speak. The kind of performance needed here is Bauman's 'spoken verbal communication' where the performance lies in the 'assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways' (Bauman 1977, 11). In order to take the lead and perform interpretation especially where there are no clear guidelines for the visitor to know what to expect, an interpreter has to have considerable authority – the ability to get people to listen to them and find them believable, interesting and engaging. Some roles are naturally authoritative such as the miner guides who lead visitors where they couldn't possibly go themselves, but others are less so. Interpreters who are representing working class characters in their homes, and who are being visited, need to be accommodating rather than authoritative. At this site the audience 'leads' the interpretation and interpreters do not present themselves as performers. Interpreters may be bound by their connotative role, which is often a lowly or subservient one in the industrial museum: servant, miner, working class person, shop assistant, and this may subtly give the visitor the 'upper hand' or at least make the interpreter seem accessible.

He came across as an ex-miner. He talked about the pits in the area and the pits I knew about anyway, so, and he lived near where we live and that was a heavy mining area at one time: East Leeds, Rothwell... and those places - and he talked about those places (Ugv09/NCM/09).

## History, Realism and Performance

A significant feature of the museum performance is the relationship with its source material, or what might be regarded in theatre as the 'texts' of performance. In theatre there are three 'texts': the dramatic text (play-script), the theatre text

(what is done with that text by performers) and the performance text (the event where the audience is present). In the museum, the ‘text’ being referred to is history – both written and artefactual. The interpretive museum performance has a different relationship with this text than a theatre production has with its, as the realisation of the historical text is not ‘supposed’ to involve fictionality. As McAuley notes, performance automatically fictionalizes: ‘As soon as the performer standing in the stage space says “I”, we have fiction, or a blurring of fiction and reality’ (McAuley 2000, 127). First person performance is problematic in museums because it breaks down the fact/fiction divide that normally separates museum from theatre which as has been noted earlier causes problems for some museum staff (Jackson and Rees Leahy 2005, 304). For many museum staff, history is a matter of fact not conjecture, and so the use of imaginative and creative performance to interpret history for some, borders on heresy (see quotation on p.36).

The evidence of this research indicates that there is little awareness amongst interpreters and their managers that postmodern ideas about history mean that it is impossible to faithfully represent history ‘as it was’<sup>28</sup>. Museum performances are often thought to be ‘giving life’ to history by reproducing real characters from the past and playing out events that actually happened, and as a result, most museum performance is characterised by mimetic realism. Because museums and heritage sites rely on and promote the authenticity of their artefacts and buildings in order to attract visitors and maintain authority, it is this material authenticity that forms the basis of the interpretive performance. Museum staff and commentators who regard theatricality as inauthentic and inappropriate do not seem to notice that the re-presentation or simulation of original environments and artefacts involves performance choices akin to those being selected for the production of first person interpretation. During the course of this research it was noted that there seemed to be a great deal of ambiguity about the construction, representation and consumption of authenticity in the museum/heritage site, which I would argue has

I'm having to take anecdotal evidence from right across the country to make a composite and of course...that creates problems because things like the terminology - its different in different parts of the country or the salaries were different in different parts of the country so whether my Victorian miner character or my bathhouse attendant actually *would* have used all the experiences I've created ... (Int01/NCM/08)

<sup>28</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 6.

some bearing on the way performance is regarded. For instance the display of 'original' or 'real' environments that occur at all case study sites to a greater or lesser degree, have been largely reconstructed or completely constructed, even where there is an original site, building or contents. Sometimes great lengths are taken to accurately reproduce original building materials or the 'look' of the original area (which is seldom referred to), but in other areas of a site this may be undermined by more 'modern' features.

First person interpretation has a fundamentally different basis for authenticity than material authenticity as it requires the performer and the audience to 'play' at being authentic and suspend disbelief that 'they' or 'we' are in a different time/place, whereas elsewhere in the museum we are expected to 'read' the displays literally and not metaphorically. The status of third person interpreters in relation to the production of realism is as complex as the first person interpreter. They are often dressed as if they have another 'role' on the site and they are situated where that role would be carried out, but they tend not to inhabit that role. If they do 'real' work such as operating machinery or give displays of skill, we may expect them to 'be' who they seem to be. Sometimes, costumed third person interpreters are who they seem to be (in the case of ex-workers) and yet they cannot fully inhabit that role, as they are also required to be interpreters. In addition, third person interpreters can seem inauthentic when they seem to only have a superficial knowledge of the history they are representing.

## ***Forms of Realism***

### ***Mimetic Realism***

'Whether it is the street, a workshop, or a period room, it seems to me that the more complete the reconstruction, the less history is conveyed' (O'Neill 1994, 59). This quotation indicates the difficulty in interpretive terms with producing a contextualised historic environment. Less history may be conveyed here because the work of the museum is obscured by the realistic effect and this realism is in any case only superficial. Handler and Gable take the view that: 'Mimetic realism...destroys history...erases all the interpretive work that goes into the museum's story' (Handler and Gable 1997, 224). Magelssen refers to living history museums in the US when he says:

the combination of authoritative site, an explicit focus on scientific accuracy, and the mimetic realism of first-person interpretation produces an environment of trust. Here, the museums invite the visitor to suspend his or her disbelief without the peripheral doubt that

what he or she sees is anything but total scientific accuracy. ...There are, however, certain problems with the institutional encouragement of willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the visitor. While living history museums physically incorporate staging models that break the audience-spectator relationship of the proscenium theatre, the periphery of knowledge remains marginal and outside of the focus of interpretation. The authoritative, institutional voice that constructs the space as one of real, authentic history manipulates the willing suspension of disbelief of the spectator and allows for only certain histories to be voiced (Magelssen 2004, 19).

The mimetic approach to performance is problematic because it produces a singular monological past which does not allow 'other' voices to be heard.

Magelssen suggests that third person interpretation has the potential to counteract this, as here 'the multiplicity of historical narratives may all exist in the same plane. This model presents a rich and compelling possibility for a radically different temporal space – a plane in which a multiplicity of themes can exist simultaneously' (Magelssen 2004, 60). However, the suspension of disbelief created by a realistic museum environment may not necessarily be used in the service of authority. Museums of 'everyday life' which are particularly represented by open-air museums such as Beamish were established expressly to counter traditional museums' 'official collections representing social, cultural or political elites' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 2007, 213), and were part of the 'radical history' movement which developed out of social history in the 1960s and 1970s.

In practice, visitors use museums for their own purposes and mix 'official' knowledge with their own memories and knowledge drawn from experience. The living history approach that is particularly noticeable at Beamish and in areas of the NCMME relies on the activation of visitors' memories and imaginations. The importance of living memory is a particular concern at Beamish where reminiscence is frequently practiced by visitors. The reminiscence function, which my research indicates is particularly important both to the visitor and the museum, requires the period on display to be familiar. One respondent believed that the time periods displayed at Beamish would have to change as we move forward in time because the boundaries of living memory were now becoming strained: 'we're stretching that. 1913 - no one remembers that now' (Cur02/Bea/09). It was also felt by some of my respondents that performing history that was within living memory was likely to be more effective than trying to recreate a more distant past. It was thought that more 'concessions' would have to be made to twenty first century audiences the further back you went in time and that it would be harder and harder to represent things like language (Cur/fg/NCM/09). This illustrates the importance of visitor memories in producing 'everyday' scenes from the past. At

sites where visitors are likely to do ‘memory work’ there may be dissonance between memory and history. They may dispute the museum’s portrayal of a past that they remember. When the sources of the museum’s history comes from a wide range of material : ‘historical events, personalities, folk memories, mythologies, literary associations and surviving physical relics, together with the places...with which they are symbolically associated it may be difficult to ensure accuracy and consistency’ (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 112). The contribution of interpreters’ own version of history may add another layer of difference: ‘legends abound in any historic site, and simple facts get twisted into fantastic tales’ (Malcolm-Davies 2002, 212). Realism whether it is produced by the museum or the visitor is never stable.

### *Emotional Realism*

During the course of this research I noted many times at the NCMME the ‘problems’ various members of staff had with the realness (or not) of the living history interpreters’ characters. One character (Sir Humphrey Davy’s brother) was ‘disliked’ because he didn’t ‘belong’ on this site – would never have *been* there and slightly predated the opening of the colliery site. One of the living history interpreters wrestled with the issue of his age in relation to his playing of a Bevin Boy – he was too young to have ‘really’ been a Bevin boy, which he felt would detract from the realism of his performance. One member of staff described how she didn’t want members of the public to think that the living history characters might have really been who they say they were (as they sometimes did), as this was untruthful and misleading. However this pursuit of fact based realism runs in tandem with an emotional realism that may depart somewhat from the written record. The interpreter who plays Fred explained in interview how he aimed to produce ‘an emotional truth’

There are lots of people who come through this museum who aren’t touched by it at all - who just see it as a load of old junk, particularly I think children, and *I know* that I can touch them so I’m prepared to compromise strict historical truth if I can do that (Int02/NCM/08).

One of the ways that Fred’s story may depart from the historical ‘truth’ is his selling things the management wouldn’t know about:

I had a certain qualm because I empathetically thought that the bathhouse attendant would actually sell things that the management didn’t know about, and clearly there wouldn’t be records about that because it was illegal and I ran the risk of putting it in and I’m confirming it only because talking to people as I do I meet ex-miners that they say that that sort of thing went on. One of them used the phrase ‘everybody knew about it but nobody knew about it’ and in his

case it was actually the guy in the pay office that sold cigarettes on the sly but that seems to be a reasonable deduction to say that the bathhouse attendant *might* and it has the effect of making it real, more real, so though I cannot hand on heart say there is definite quantifiable evidence that the bathhouse attendant here sold cigarettes and took bets, I do use it and I think it's legitimate (Int02/NCM/08).

Both interpreters at the NCMME wanted their performances to engender empathy in their audiences and to make them care about the people being represented. They felt that this encouraged a greater understanding about the past and was also intrinsically a more engaging way for visitors to learn about history. However this subjective view can also be regarded as problematic. The *Performance Learning and Heritage* research project (2008) found that although empathy can provide insight and understanding and motivate learning, there were also negative effects. It can 'narrow the perspective, offer a very partial 'monocular' reading of events and therefore, perhaps, deny or discourage the opportunity to see the larger picture. Empathic engagement with a character from the past may offer us one set of understandings but at the same time narrow our vision, induce us into thinking that's "how it was" and all we need to know.' (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 115). This may be particularly the case with children who may not yet have the skills or information to create that larger picture. I would argue though that a subjective view of history provided by a historic 'character' can be almost an antidote or at least a supplement to the objective voice that is often heard in the museum. The experiential authenticity that can be engendered through an audience engaging with an emotional realism is also a valuable adjunct to the material authenticity present in the historic spaces and artefacts.

At case study sites who used first person interpretation, scripts were used, partly so that the information contained within them could be 'fact-checked' by curatorial staff. However several interpreters reported that it was almost impossible to stick to a script in an interactive performance. An interpreter at MOSI said in interview: 'well I can send you a script but come and see the show and it'll be nothing like that. We've got a script we can give you ... but it's not that show. You just react to the public you know' (Int02/MOSI/08). An interpreter at the NCMME told me: 'I was certainly given a script and I've latterly discovered that really I was supposed to stick with it and it was supposed to be *agreed* ...[laughing] at a higher level but I have to say that by that time it was too late because I really had evolved my own' (Int02/NCM/08).

Third person interpretation has a different relationship with authenticity but even here in many cases, curatorial or managerial staff were concerned with the

presentation of ‘inaccurate’ or wrong information by interpretive staff. Interpreters were reported by managers as doing their own research or bringing their own interests into their interactions with visitors which whilst showing an real interest in history could be thought to go ‘too far’ and produce an inaccurate or biased picture. The need for schools sessions to adhere to the National Curriculum also shapes the interpretive session. I was told by a manager at Quarry Bank Mill that whilst the interpreters have a certain amount of autonomy in what they say they have to deliver what school groups want:

they've all got their own interests and they all bring those in and I really wouldn't want to go to a script but...I think it depends, if it's with a school group then I'd be much more wary about bringing out lots of different things that weren't relevant to what they were studying because they come on site - they come between 10 and 2 o'clock, they've got a limited time period and you can't...it costs them an awful lot of money now to come out, the coaches are really expensive and you can't be wasting their time (Mgr/QB/09).

### *Bringing the Past to Life*

Realistic first person performance or a living history approach is often used to connect the ‘now’ of the encounter with character and audience, and the ‘then’ of the past. Sauter states that in the museum: ‘visitors are invited to bridge the gap in time and space, to take part in the exhibition of things which otherwise would be concealed by temporal and spatial distances’ (Sauter 2000, 100). ‘Bringing the past to life’ as an aim and as an effect has been mentioned frequently by respondents within this research, by both managers, interpreters and visitors, so this would seem to be something that is highly associated with performed interpretation in my case study museums. It is a general assumption that the past is brought to life through the reproduction of ‘the real’ - which may be a materially real environment with genuine artefacts or in the case of performance, a narrativised version of archive material produced with the aid of a ‘character’ together with the presence of the physically real artefacts . A visitor describes below how Fred at the pithead baths made the baths environment ‘come alive’:

[Father] we've been here probably about half a dozen times, possibly more, and we've walked through these pithead baths every time we've been here - I can explain to the kids how it actually worked but when you've got somebody there who's playing the part, it brings it to life. It changes from being...

[Boy] boring

[Father] I was going to use sterile - to actually alive you know (FPv03/NCM/09).

It is debatable though whether this realism is transferred directly to the visitor and whether what they perceive as authentic and realistic is produced solely through the effect of mimesis. Visitors produce a certain kind of memory-related performance in relation to museum and heritage settings explored by Bagnall (2003) and Smith (2006), which is aided by performed interpretation: 'Visitors construct, and use as a resource, imagined worlds based on past and existing experiences and relationships through work, family and other social relationships. Significantly, it is the emotional engagement of visitors with such worlds that plays a major role in their ability to 'imagine' at the sites' (Bagnall 2003, 243). My research indicated that memory does play a large part in the engagement of many visitors with performed interpretation. Examples of this are visitors interviewed after the 'Fred' performance who believed that the portrayal of Fred was very realistic because it 'fitted' with their memories:

to be perfectly honest, I left the industry in 1994 and our pithead baths were exactly the same as these. They didn't change from the day they were built. Everything he were saying applied right until the mines closed.

it definitely brought back memories to me. Mainly of pithead bath attendants. They were little demi-gods you know, they did have control and if you lost your soap you had to negotiate a bar of soap . You had to buy it at an inflated price. Also when he was talking about the ducted air which is going through these pipes it reminded me if one person catches fleas in a week, everybody had fleas. Because they just travelled across the air (FPv03/NCM/09).

At this museum a large percentage of visitors have a mining connection or were ex-miners themselves. My research indicates that this figure is around 30% of visitors. There is an indication that these visitors are more likely to recognise the 'fit' between their memories and the displays and performances than they are to be critical. The living history interpreter who plays Fred said in interview that when he began to play this part he was surprised that he was not denounced by ex-miners who would find his performance inaccurate and lacking in some way, but found that ex-miners were among the most appreciative of visitors. This shows to some extent that these people use the museum performance in order to reminisce.

But I would like to suggest that it is not just mimesis that activates reminiscence but also unfamiliarity and the distancing or estrangement effects produced by performance. Another interviewee after a performance informed me that: 'It just reminded me of having to stand in the tin bath and get washed. *I don't remember it* but it was just with seeing it, it makes you think about it doesn't it?' [my italics] (FPv04/NCM/09). She is 'reminded' but actually this isn't her own memory, she uses the idea of 'remembering' or interprets the museum performance as a

form of memory which may not be personal but is connected to a wider cultural memory. Boal refers to the ‘aesthetic space’ that is produced by performance and happens as a result of the separation between actor and spectator and as a result of the juxtaposition of different times in the same space. Aesthetic space having two dimensions: the affective realm (related to memory) in which the observer or audiences’ ‘emotions, sensations and thoughts’ are awakened and the oneiric (related to the imagination) in which they penetrate ‘into their own projections and anything is possible’ (Boal 1995, 19-22). Performance works in this liminal zone of memory/imagination where the real is what is *felt* as real. Visitors to a first person performance of Fred at the pithead baths (performed by an actor/interpreter) were as convinced by its realism and believability as they were by the more authentic miner-guides who don’t necessarily advertise their authenticity. Fred seems real because he ‘acts’ real. The quote below is from the previous visitor who was highly convinced by Fred’s characterisation: ‘he knows people that have been miners. I think he’s probably lived in a mining community and... obviously he knows the heritage of the industry’ (FPv04/NCM/09).

## Conclusion

I consider that the first and third person mode of performance is the basis for the interpretive performance in museums (at least those with a history and/or heritage bias), and this chapter has endeavoured to go some way towards outlining a framework for understanding the significant and characteristic features of this form. In order to do this, it has been necessary to ask: what is an interpretive performance? In order to answer this, I have placed a representative sample of first person performances from my case study museums alongside the same for third person performances in order to look at their similarities and differences. It should be noted though that the third person performance is used far more widely on a day to day basis in museums and heritage sites, and so deserves more consideration as a form of performance that may have the potential to deliver outcomes comparative to the first person performance. The third person performance needs to be better understood so that its status is raised, and so that it may benefit from performer training along with the first person form.

In this chapter I have compared first and third person performances in the spheres of: presentation and representation; framing performance; performance space; interaction and participation; identity, role, character and acting; the interpreter and their role and history, realism and performance. This research has

found that, although in practice the first person and third person form slide into each other, it is possible to place them on a continuum of greater or lesser amounts of presentational or representational behaviour. The mimetic representational performance creates a performance frame in a different manner to the more diegetic presentational performance. It is concerned with altering time and space boundaries in order to create aesthetic space where performer and audience may 'play' with role and potential fictional scenarios. The presentational performance relies more heavily on the scenography of the museum - its spatial organisation and the presence of artefacts to direct the visitor's viewing and patterns of interaction with the interpreter. The third person performance is generally thought to be more factual, as interpreters tend to be who they say they are, where they say they are, and yet the third person performance borrows a certain element of characterisation from the first person performance form in that interpreters often wear a 'historic' costume and they play at 'being' a character from the past without actually attempting to become one. They can in Kirby's (1995) terms be imagined as producing 'simple acting'. Third person interpreters look as if they were representative of the past whilst speaking as members of the present. They have the benefit of being able to move around in time and talk about the successive changes that have been made over time which the first person interpreter cannot do.

The third person interpreter is also closer to the visitor in the role they play. They do not require the visitor to take on the role of audience or other person 'in' the past as the first person interpreter does (although they might). They - like the visitor - are an intermediary, partly in the milieu of the past and partly in the present. It is therefore easier for the visitor to interact with them and ask questions. I consider a key characteristic of the interpretive performance to be a dialogic form of communication. Although the visitor/audience may not have very much agency in the exchanges that happen between them and the interpreter, the fact is that they are frequently questioned, and although the outcome of these questions has generally been pre-determined by the interpreter, the questioning process does allow the visitor to have their thoughts guided in directions they may not have previously considered. Because first and third person performances are almost entirely solo performances, they tend to take the form of a conversation with the visitor/audience as well as a conversation of sorts with the physical performance environment and artefacts. Third person performers at Beamish will work with certain objects like a miner's lamp or a rag rug to make them 'go' or to show how they work which is a non-verbal conversation that may be accompanied by a

descriptive narrative. Being in reconstructed historic space that is clearly qualitatively different to 'normal' space makes us ask how it was used. By the means of walking through it and imagining it 'coming to life' we are communicating with it.

The question of what the relationship the interpretive performance has with authenticity is dealt with by considering the various forms of realism these performances employ. Mimetic realism is intrinsically linked with the idea of living history, but even at museums/sites that do not refer to living history, the predominant mode of historical presentation is mimetic realism. It is particularly difficult for museums to imagine their first person performances produced in any other way because as I have noted earlier they are very child-centred and have a pedagogical bias and so they are very much tied to the idea of delivering curriculum 'points'. This is a very unsubtle way of understanding history for adults and therefore the third person form of performance may give more scope to explore the representation of the past<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 8.

## Chapter Two - The Guided Tour

### Introduction

The last chapter explored the taking on of character and role, and the production of interpretive performances in order to interpret the work and work spaces of the past. This chapter explores another aspect of the interpretive performance – that of the guided tour. The guided tour is a classic form of heritage interpretation and a key mode of interpretation at the case study sites in question. Two guided tours have been chosen from my case study sites for comparative analysis: the **underground tour at the NCMME** and the **apprentice house tour at Quarry Bank Mill**. Research at these sites in the form of observations and interviews has looked at how the tour has been imagined and constructed by the NCMME and The National Trust, and how tours are regarded and managed by the interpreters who implement them. Visitors to both tours have also been interviewed in order to assess their experiences and perceptions. This chapter considers the performative qualities of the guided tour and looks at the ways it might be regarded as an interpretive performance. It will also consider what relationship this form of performed interpretation has with authenticity.

Analysis will use theory from performance studies and tourism studies although tours and touring are treated differently in these fields. Tours in relation to performance studies are usually regarded as a form of site specific performance or a form of walking practice. The work of Wrights and Sites (2006; 2006a; 2003) is particularly representative of this. The guided tour may be defined as performance given Schechner's (2002) definition: 'ritualized behaviour conditioned/permeated by play' (Schechner 2002, 89). It can also be defined as a 'cultural performance' according to MacAloon's description: as an 'occasion in which as a culture of society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others' (MacAloon in Carlson 1996, 24-5). Guided tours do not seem to be considered within the literature from museum studies but they are recognised in the field of heritage interpretation and tourism and leisure as a distinctive interpretive practice. There is therefore very little work that considers the guided tour as an aesthetic practice from the perspective of performance studies and nothing that considers the entirety of the guided tour including its

spatial aspects as a specific kind of (interpretive) performance. In order to bridge this gap, this chapter uses and extends David Wiles' theory of 'processional theatre' outlined in *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (2003) in order to consider the tour from the perspective of performance studies whilst maintaining an emphasis on its spatial qualities. I will therefore be regarding the guided tour in performance terms as a form of procession. Wiles suggests that there are four different aspects or functions of a procession: that of a pilgrimage, a parade, a map, or a narrative (Wiles 2003, 64). The features of pilgrimage, map and narrative seem most suitable for the tours in question and I will not then be considering the aspect of the parade.

The structure of the chapter moves from an introduction to tours and touring practice to consider the use of the guided tour at the case study sites. It then moves to a first person observational analysis of the two tours in question: the underground tour at the NCMME and the apprentice house tour at Quarry Bank Mill. Analysis of the tours that follows this will focus on David Wiles' (2003) theory of the tour as a procession-like performance. Therefore sections follow which deal with the tour as a map, and a mapping of space. Wiles suggests that a map articulates and defines space by marking a boundary or axis, and therefore that the map is performed by a tour's processing along its boundaries in order to lay claim to the ownership of that space (Wiles 2003, 64). These two tours are both sought after features of both their respective sites by visitors, and as such have an iconic quality, partly provided by the limiting of access: both tours need to be booked on to and there are a limited number of places. There is also the suggestion that visitors are being able to visit what would normally be a 'hidden' space: both tour spaces have a quality of being 'normally' inaccessible. The apprentice house is displayed as a lived-in house rather than a museum with no text panels or barriers and the tour gives visitors the ability to touch, sit on and use artefacts. The underground mine is a place that visitors would never 'normally' be able to see. I have referred in the previous chapter to how acting may be used in performance in order to exceed the boundaries of the museum spaces and present time, and extend interpretation far beyond what can be immediately perceived. In this chapter, a similar extension is produced by the production and revelation of a normally unseen space. Both tours are surrounded by boundaries, real in the case of fences, barriers and doorways and metaphorical in the sense of a passing into a different time. These require certain negotiations along with a circumscribed procession around tour space. The boundaries and the travelling around them in this manner indicate the presence of a performance space.

The next section of the chapter deals with the tour as narrative. Wiles describes how the ‘sequence of places passed by the procession may also carry the bones of a story, clarified when the procession halts at key locations’ (Wiles 2003, 64). The tours tell their stories through the organisation of space into a logical progression – in the case of the underground tour that moves from the late eighteenth century into the 1980s and in the case of the apprentice house, that moves around the children’s lives, room by room, exploring different aspects of their work in each. The persuasive rhetoric of this spatial organisation that propels visitors along a pre-determined route is complemented by the guide’s narrative and I will show how the visual narratives of the tour space work alongside the verbal narratives of the guide to produce a characteristic type of interpretive performance. The stories and revelations of the guides in the ‘real’ seeming spaces of the tour produce an aesthetic space which Boal describes as being ‘where there is a separation of actor and spectator and where there is a dissociation of two times in the same place’ (Boal 1995, 19). It has two dimensions: the affective and the oneiric. The affective is responsible for the introduction of memory: ‘the affective dimension fills the aesthetic space with new significations and awakens in each observer, in diverse forms and intensities, emotions, sensations and thoughts’ (Boal 1995, 21). The oneiric dimension brings the imaginary into play. Here, the observer becomes less aware of concrete, real, physical space, penetrates into their own projections and here ‘anything is possible’ (Boal 1995, 22). In contrast with what might be regarded as the more permanent and objective representative ‘placeness’ of the museum, aesthetic space is temporary and dichotomous: it juxtaposes the real world with an illusory one, and creates an opportunity for histories to multiply.

The final section of the chapter deals with the tour as a pilgrimage. Wiles describes the pilgrimage as a procession ‘to somewhere, to some sacred destination’, and that it is also an expression of ‘communitas’, as pilgrims all engage in a common activity. The pilgrimage can be regarded as transformatory, as it allows its members to see the world afresh. The idea of the museum visitor as a ‘spiritual pilgrim’ is also suggested by Falk as one of the identities that the museum visitor may ‘enact’ during their visit. The spiritual pilgrim visits ‘in order to reflect, rejuvenate, or generally just bask in the wonder of the place’ (Falk 2006, 158). The notion of the pilgrimage is on the whole used as a metaphor in this context, but there is also the potential (as will be explained later) for the guided tour to be a ‘real’ ritual for certain visitors. Similarly, the term ‘rite of passage’ may also be used in relation to the guided tour - both in a playful and metaphorical way - as

well as being the constituent part of such rituals. Turner describes rite of passage rituals in *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), along with the liminal states that accompany them. In this chapter, the term liminal is used in relation to *both* the activity of a guided tour, as well as the space it happens in. The term 'liminoid' as Turner describes it (Turner 1982, 20-59) may more accurately describe the metaphorical use of ritual in this context, but as the terms 'liminal' and 'liminality' are also widely used outside anthropological theory to mean being in-between two existentially different planes, they will also be used in this wider sense. Liminality may refer to both a psychological state of mind as well as a place. Liminal places have a quality of marginality, so are well represented by places such as: border lands, thresholds, doorways and tunnels. Schechner describes liminal space as: 'a threshold or sill, a thin strip neither inside nor outside a building or room linking one space to another, a passageway between places rather than a place in itself' (Schechner 2002, 66).

On a guided tour, we may literally be visiting the scene of our relatives' or own former workplace. But even if we are less connected with the place than this, we are still visiting our ancestors in a wider sense and looking for enlightenment as to a place's former purpose and role in the social, economic and political spheres. The pilgrimage-like quality of the underground tour at the NCMME is particularly noticeable as there are many ex-miners and their families who come to the museum to remember the past and honour the memory of particular relatives who worked underground. The underground tour can have a strong emotional effect on visitors, who may feel a particular sense of belonging or gratitude to their ancestors, which may impact on their own sense of identity. But even if there is no family connection with the mining past, many visitors are impressed, amazed and horrified by the hardship and difficulties of working underground, particularly in the pre-mechanised era. At the apprentice house, there is less of a sense of working class solidarity, but the house has a powerful emotional impact due to the fact that we are looking at the lives of poor, vulnerable children.

There are many ritual-like behaviours on both tours: such as the 'crossing rites' that happen when we are on the threshold of tour space. At the apprentice house, this happens when we wait in the garden for a bell to ring that gives us permission to enter the house, and where at the NCMME, our miner guide collects us, re-clothes us and gives us a symbolic numbered brass 'check' which gives us temporary 'membership' to the mine. The last section of this chapter will deal with perceptions of authenticity from the perspective of the interpreter and the visitor to these tours.

Whilst *First and Third Person Interpretation* described the work of communicating with visitors through the interpretive performance, *The Guided Tour* looks at how a site packages elements of itself into a specifically linear performance format, which is very much about how they want to be seen. The guided tour is a place – a location that may be visited, and a series of spaces that are designed to be viewed in a cumulative fashion. The space of the tour is a particularly immersive environment for the visitor as it uses the familiar museum practice of reconstructing scenes from the past, but envelops us with that environment during the time of the tour and requires our presence and attention for the duration of it. A guided tour can be a more participative experience for the visitor than some of the examples of first and third person performances detailed in the previous chapter. In performance terms, this kind of participation is referred to by Jenny Kidd as being ‘scripted bodily participation’ where the actors and the spectators and the actors are ‘expected to physically embody the narrative being portrayed’, and where the actor/interpreter directs the activities of the visitor/audience (Kidd 2011a, 212). This description is perhaps more indicative of a promenade-type performance, with a scripted narrative rather than a guided tour which is less ‘story-like’, and where the ‘simple’ acting of third person interpreters is used, as opposed to the complex acting of a fully characterized first person performance. However, although guided tours may not be considered principally as performances, they have been treated as such by Fine and Haskell Speer (1985) and Katriel (1997) who focus on the verbal performance of tour guides. Performance in its sociological and anthropological aspects where both tourists and hosts are engaged in producing a variety of staged and scripted behaviours is a concept widely associated with tourism as a practice (Bowman 2006 and 1998; Coleman and Crang 2002; Crang 1996; Edensor 2000; Lippard 1999; Neumann 1988). Both the ritual and the playful qualities of tourism are explored by Graburn 1989 [1977]) and MacCannell who, quoting Goffman, notes that guided tours are ‘extensive ceremonial agendas involving long strings of obligatory rites’ (MacCannell 1999 [1976], 43). Goffman’s use of a dramaturgical metaphor in order to analyse everyday life is an important influence on MacCannell, whose seminal work *The Tourist*, explores the production of tourist sites/sights and the construction of authenticity in tourism. His ideas (originating with Goffman) on front and back regions are particularly pertinent to the guided tour and will be used throughout this chapter.

The journey as both practical reality and metaphor for a variety of transformative life events is used within the guided tour. As I mentioned in the

*Chapter Introduction*, the idea of the journey lies behind many of the museum performances studied during the course of this research. It may be that as an archetype it is particularly useful in the museum as it indicates that we find our way round the museum as we become increasingly enlightened and entertained as a result of our encounters with artefacts and display space. Or it may be that the kind of history-related performance that takes place in the museum necessarily needs to refer to its temporal status by indicating that it is going ‘back’ or coming ‘forward’ in time. The journey as an archetype is also associated with transformation and changes in time and space. Graburn explains that ‘An almost universal motif for the explanation and description of life is the journey, for journeys are marked by beginnings and ends, and by a succession of events along the way’ (Graburn 1989 [1977], 28). The illuminations and revelations that I consider to be a feature of the interpretative performance work particularly well with this journey archetype and it will be shown later in this chapter how these are staged in a guided tour to correspond with the transformations in time and space that are enacted by the physical location and scenography of tour space that are augmented by tour guide narratives.

The guided tour is one of a range of interpretive practices that is driven by the need for museums to be interactive experiential places and influenced by the performativity of the ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore 1999). As Dicks (2003, 43) argues, people don’t just want to see things, they want to participate in a cultural event’. As a practice: ‘Popular cultural tourism is essentially ‘*experiential*’ cultural tourism, the accumulation of experiences rather than of bodies of more schematic knowledge (Prentice 2001, 7). Experiential cultural tourism is likely to feature performance and/or suggest performative ways of engaging with cultural resources for the visitor. The active tourist may take many roles, one of which is the pilgrim.

However the origins of the guided tour seem to derive from the Grand Tours taken as part of the education of the English landed classes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the association between historic buildings, travel and education was established (Graburn 1989 [1977], 29; Light 1995, 118). Light describes how the influx of ‘grand tourists’ generated services, one of which was the provision of guided tours (Light 1995, 118). Classen (2005) describes how early tours of private museums, which would have only been available to a few, matched the house tour. The curator would show visitors round on a guided tour and allow them to handle the objects which ‘enacted ancient notions of hospitality’ (Classen 2005, 276). As mass travel became available from the nineteenth century

onwards, touring began to become democratized and available to all classes of society. Light describes how urbanization and industrialisation at this time resulted in a sense of dislocation that began to become assuaged by museums and heritage sites ‘which offered stability and comfort in an uncertain age’ (Light 1995, 123). With the growth of heritage sites from the 1980s onwards, Light notes that interpretation, which often took the form of the guided tour became an expected feature of a heritage site.

This brief historical background to the guided tour suggests then that there are strands of influence from practices associated with high culture and elite viewing practices; from popular culture, where heritage site visiting is often associated with nostalgia and entertainment; and from the pilgrimage which suggests ritual activity and identity seeking. These strands will be seen to make their way into the case study examples chosen for this chapter. These elements also have implications for the production and reception of authenticity in relation to the guided tour. This will consider another aspect of the research question ‘what relationship do these interpretive performances in the industrial museum and heritage site have with authenticity?’, as touring practices have a different relationship to authenticity than the performances considered in the last chapter. This chapter shows that the guided tour as a performance practice and more specifically as an interpretive performance has distinctive features which have so far been under-researched. This chapter will therefore address the research questions by considering what kind of an interpretive performance the guided tour is and particularly looks at how the site, its buildings, spaces and artefacts contribute to this performance.

### ***Authenticity and Touring***

The experience economy that museums are very much a part of suggests that ‘work is theatre and every business a stage’ (Pine and Gilmore 1999), and this has implications for the authenticity of touring practices. The transient and wandering role of tourist is recognized by Bauman as emblematic of our postmodern condition (Bauman 2006, 24). Part of this condition is to be part of an increasingly performative society where one may be either an audience or a performer, or both all the time. Lippard notes that ‘the tourist experience is a kind of art form’ (Lippard 1999, 13). This may involve staged activities and the acceptance of roles and directions (Edensor 2000). In a museum and heritage site setting, this means that visitors are ‘required to assent to the historical authenticity and reality of what they see, while they simultaneously recognise its artificial, fabricated nature’

(Jordanova 1989, 25). The concept of authenticity seems to be subjective and negotiable here. Cohen argues that ‘most tourists entertain concepts of “authenticity” which are much looser than those entertained by intellectuals and experts’...Indeed, for many tourists, tourism is a form of play, which like all play, has profound roots in reality, but for the success of which a great deal of make-believe, on part of both performers and audience is necessary’ (Cohen 1988, 383).

There seems to be a blend or juxtaposition at the case study sites between notions of authenticity as an ‘original’ object or site and as historically accurate and that of ‘staged authenticity’ where the original objects and sites are manipulated and combined with constructed items and space in order to seem more ‘realistic’. Both tours are carefully constructed to seem authentic in the way they look. Their environments are produced to appear very much like they did - in the case of the apprentice house when the children were in residence in 1830, and in the case of the underground tour, when the pit closed in the late 1980s. This realism though, only partly derives from the originality of the ‘real’ space and is largely produced through reconstruction and restoration. There is also the matter of existential authenticity, where what the visitor feels as authentic is what matters. Existential authenticity as described by Wang (1999) is where people feel more authentic or ‘themselves’ in a tourist setting than in everyday life. Bowman describes how:

Tourism promises transformation into, or self-actualization of, a more authentic self by virtue of contacts or encounters with extraordinary phenomena. Like film to the surrealists, it promises to lift the veil from our eyes, reminding us of the marvellous, intoxicating character of the world around us (Bowman 2006, 125).

It is not just the extraordinary that prompts a sense of existential authenticity, it is also the familiar and recognizable. As I note in the previous chapter, ex-workers from the mining industry on visits to the NCMME particularly recognize authenticity in the correlations between their past lives and what is on display, even where constructions such as the first person (acted) performance is produced, or the ‘real’ spaces of the museum are heavily reconstructed. There is debate in tourism literature about whether visitors seek authenticity through the real-life displays of others as MacCannell (1999 [1976]) suggests they do, because they have become alienated from their own work and lives. Moscardo and Pearce (1986) and Goulding (2000) suggest that in fact the desire for authenticity is a motivating factor for visitors to heritage sites, but others disagree. Rojek argues that ‘the quest for authenticity is a declining force in tourist motivation’ (Rojek 1997, 71). Urry (1990) and Feifer (1985) refer to the ‘post-tourist’ who ‘knows that they are a tourist and that tourism is a game’ (Urry 1990, 100).

It is likely that different visitors have different conceptions of authenticity that they apply throughout their visits to museums and heritage sites (see Kidd (2011 b) and Goulding (2000). This research shows that during guided tours, visitors are aware of both the genuine aspects of the tour space and the constructed ones, that they accept some ‘facts’ provided by the museum, reject others and go on to use their own memories and imaginations to create their own visiting experience. The construction of guided tours in museums and heritage sites similarly relies on aspects of material reality: ‘place authenticity’ which is being on the location where something significant has happened (Prentice 2001, 17), and also ‘constructed authenticity’ which Prentice argues is particularly relevant to the ‘time journeys’ encountered at museums and heritage sites (Prentice 2001, 21). The guided tours in question construct their tour using the ‘real’ mine, the ex-miner and the ‘real’ apprentice house, along with all the reconstructive work that goes into producing and maintaining historic tour space, as well as a range of ‘histories’ that come from archival ‘evidence’ and personal testimony - with the addition of some myth and fantasy. Rojek argues that ‘myth and fantasy play an unusually large role in the social construction of all travel and tourist sights’ (Rojek 1997,53), because we not only speculate about what we might find there, but we also have a body of symbols and fantasies which surround a given sight such as ‘cultural metaphors, allegories and fabrications’ (Rojek 1997, 53). Producing guided tours involves utilising what Dicks (2003) calls ‘cultural repertoires’ which are inevitably condensed and intertextual (Dicks 2003, 65).

## Case Study Museums' Use of the Guided Tour

### *The Underground Tour*



Figure 22. Model of the NCMME site showing underground seams

The aim at the NCMME generally is to preserve the 'integrity' of the original colliery site as far as possible, allowing for the 'inevitable changes' that have to be made in order to function as a public museum (Conservation Policy/NCM/07). The site and buildings are conserved and maintained as far as possible 'as they were when the joint collieries ceased production in October 1985' (HLF bid/NCM/07). However, the fact that this is 'a colliery site with statutory requirements under the Mines and Quarries Act' (Conservation Policy/NCM/07), means that the underground area needs to be maintained according to modern safety standards. This may mean that the maintenance work that the miner-guides do, does not always accord with curatorial standards of display. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the miner guides and curatorial staff sometimes have different views of the value of what may be regarded variously as artefacts, tools or 'rubbish' lying around in the underground regions. There is also the balance to be made between the authenticity of the 'original' site and its production as a visitor attraction. The lamproom (see *Tour Observation*, p.161), for example has actually been created from rooms with quite different functions but looks to the casual visitor like a room

that was always used for this purpose. The tools and artefacts that seem to be 'left' here have actually been put here to look like 'set dressing' although they are now regarded by some as 'a mess' (msm/mtg/27.11.08), and are subject to alteration as part of an ongoing redevelopment programme.

The roughly hour long underground tour aims to show 'the historic colliery and its machinery in situ as if the pit had just stopped working' along with showing 'historic methods of working' and 'to encourage empathy with the working lives of miners' (UG dev design brief/NCM/09). The experiential quality of the tour is a big attraction to visitors who can descend 134 metres into a dark, cramped environment with uneven floors and can walk through and touch real old coal workings. For some, the tour is the highlight of their visit. Many visitors interviewed said they wouldn't come if they couldn't go underground: 'It's the main part. We mainly come to get the experience. It wouldn't be the same without it. Not a day out. It wouldn't be exciting or interactive enough' (ugv08/NCM/08). In fact the original concept of the Mining Museum was imagined around 'The Underground Experience':

There was some debate as to whether it would be called a museum at all: 'there was a very strong impetus not to call this a museum. When we had introductory discussions there was a very strong lobby for it to be called something other than what would not have the negative connotations [associated with museum] (Cur/fg/NCM/09).

The 'negative connotations' referred to are that museums are stuffy boring places and also possibly that the consigning of the mining industry to a museum would be a sign of its death. Visitors to the NCMME are often imagined by staff as having a preference for exciting experiences such as represented by the underground tour rather than the visual/cognitive activities represented by the gallery spaces:

I think the tour is more like going on a ride whereas the museum is more like going to the library. Most people would choose to go on a ride on their day out and they don't necessarily want to spend their day in the library, and I think the museum has that sort of connotation (Cur/fg/NCM/09).

This quote illustrates the belief held by one member of staff that the two regions of the museum: the underground and the above ground areas are 'read' differently by visitors. This perceived difference can be accounted for in several ways. At the NCMME, the underground tour is regarded both by staff and visitors as primarily an experiential space which has a lot of popular appeal, whereas the above ground displays are regarded more as traditional museum spaces which are

accessed mainly through looking<sup>30</sup>: ‘the museum top is only... you’re limited to what you can see really aren’t you?’ (Mg08/NCM/08) This difference puts the tour into the category of fun and the museum into the category of education. There is a general belief that the underground tour represents much that is ‘fun’ about the NCMME. In a funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the museum state that: ‘take away the underground and much of the fun and excitement represented by a visit to the NCMME disappears’ (HLF bid/NCM/07).

It is difficult to assess whether the underground tour is regarded by the museum primarily as a collection of historic spaces and artefacts, or as the tour given by its ex-mining staff. As I noted in Chapter One, the museum doesn’t particularly promote the possibility of meeting an ex-miner. However, it is believed by some staff at the museum that the whole point of the tour is for people to encounter a miner, not necessarily to see all the things that there are underground. This seems to represent a certain ambiguity towards the status of the miner-guides on this site, but it should be remembered that different constituencies of staff in an institution will always have different points of view. For many visitors the experience that is represented by the miner-guide gives the tour its authenticity. Many visitors commented in interview that they valued the fact that the miner-guides talk ‘from experience’ rather than from books. This is important for the guides themselves who feel it makes their narratives more authentic:

I always think that’s a good thing that’s unique about this particular museum I mean I’ve been to museums as you’ll have done and people tell you things, but it’s what they’ve read out of books. We tell them things that we’ve actually experienced. Well we’ve lived there, we’ve done that. They ask you questions about so and so: “Well when I were mining, what we did: we did this” and they like to hear things (Mg03/NCM/08).

New underground areas are currently being developed with a different style and focus to the current tour. It is said that the new areas which are being designed to have a heavy emphasis on themed sensory and interactive experiences are being created in order to provide an enhanced experience and to cater for certain types of group (such as special needs) better. This is in response to perceived demand: ‘There are signs,... that visitor expectations are rising, with comments starting to creep in which suggest that the tour experience should be more interactive and more closely tailored to specific user groups, instead of adopting a one size fits all approach’ (HLF bid/NCM/07). These new spaces are

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<sup>30</sup> Though a range of audio, audio-visual and interactive displays are also present.

also a way of moving away from the dependence on the miner-guide led tour<sup>31</sup>. The museum states that: 'while the present tour is seen by our visitors as the most important aspect of the visit to the historic site it does not provide opportunities for further learning, and interaction is entirely through the guide. Visitors can only respond to this, albeit a most enjoyable experience' (HLF bid/NCM/07).

### ***The Apprentice House***

Quarry Bank Mill 'tells the story of the early textile industrial revolution, from the founding of the first mill to a living community today'. And this story of 'real people' is told through the evidence of the buildings and the site. The range of different buildings within the mill complex also allows contrasts to be made between the situation of workers and owners and between home and work (Int Plan/QB/08-11). The apprentice house is particularly valuable in showing this contrast as it provides a kind of 'below stairs' zone that in a more traditional country house is often provided by the 'servant areas' such as the kitchens. Quarry Bank Mill has restored its apprentice house along with vegetable garden 'as closely as possible to how we believe it would have appeared around the year 1830' (Int panel/QB/09). This closeness to the 'original' is guaranteed by archive evidence: 'the Apprentice House at Styal is unique not only because it has survived, but also because of the quality of the archive evidence' (Guidebook/QB/07). This sense of realism may be particularly enhanced here because Quarry Bank was originally envisaged as a 'working museum with the noisy, clattering cotton milling machinery actually making cloth and the former mill workers explaining the processes involved' (Taylor 2006, 99). Although now machinery is operated simply to show it working and not for the purposes of cloth production. The Learning and Interpretation Officer explained how: 'we demonstrate to show the public what happened here in the past, we're not demonstrating to produce ...cloth is now a by-product of our demonstration rather than the focus of why we're demonstrating' (Mgr/QB/09). This was described as a 'financial decision'.

The tour is designed to give visitors access to the real lives of the past and show 'how hard life was for a child worker' (What's On Leaflet/QB/07). All the furnishings and artefacts in the apprentice house can be touched by visitors and there are no text panels or other 'modern' interpretive devices to detract from this

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<sup>31</sup> Although there will always be a need for a trained miner to accompany every party that goes underground in order to comply with the Mines and Quarries Act.

period look and feel. It is particularly important to the National Trust to provide a sense of ‘atmosphere’ at its properties, and I heard this word repeated many times in my interviews and conversations with staff members. Each National Trust property has a ‘Statement of Significance’ that gives expression to this ‘spirit of place’:

significance can be about historical features but it might also cover social or cultural records associated with the place such as folklore. There might be particular aesthetic responses such as peace and tranquillity or the intimacy or the wildness of a place (Taylor 2006, 103).

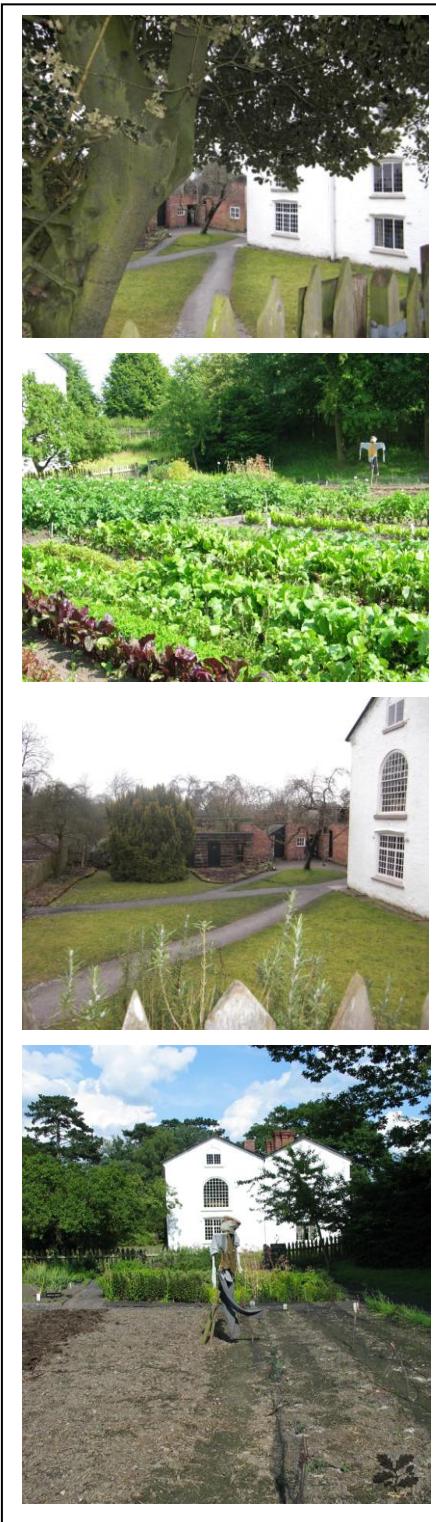
The apprentice house aims to produce this ‘atmosphere’ through the original and restored physical surroundings and by giving visitors the opportunity to ‘smell, touch, hear and crunch up the straw’ (Mgr/QB/09). The tour is designed to last for 45 minutes, is led by ‘costumed guides’ who are third person interpreters, and is billed as an opportunity to ‘experience life as an apprentice in the 1830s’ (Welcome Leaflet/QB/2007). The atmosphere of the house and the narratives of the guide are thought to produce much of this ‘experience’:

I think the house is quite atmospheric and I guess we try and get that without going into the first person, by having someone in costume, by being in the house. The house is very tactile, you can sit on anything and touch anything you know, that’s not a problem, so I guess we go as far as we can with the third person without taking it into the first person (Mgr/QB/09).

Guides are used as interpreters as they can provide more information than the house alone and can provide protection to the house due to limiting its access. The Learning and Interpretation Officer felt that visitors liked ‘someone to talk them through all the [stories]’ and that this information: ‘comes better from a person than from a panel’ (Mgr/QB/09).

## Tour Observation 1: The Apprentice House, Quarry Bank Mill

Visited Feb 2009, May 2008, Oct 2009



Quarry Bank Mill is situated picturesquely in a river valley, surrounded by woodland and looking from a distance too beautiful to be a factory. The apprentice house is part of the estate but is set apart from the main mill complex. I find my way to the tour by following signs and staying on the path. It is a fair, uphill walk and so I feel like I'm making an effort to get there. In the distance I can see a pretty, white house. When I get closer I find that this is in fact the apprentice house, set in its own grounds looking idyllic and rural. The fencing contains the vegetable gardens and orchard, along with redbrick outbuildings and stops visitors just wandering in. I stop and look into the garden. It is autumn - the leaves have nearly all fallen from the trees and the vegetable garden is scattered with them. There are rows and squares of well-tended vegetables waiting to be harvested: onions, spinach, kale, cabbage, beans. They are watched by a scarecrow in period costume. Empty earth has been carefully raked over and the garden is starting to look spare. I go through the gate into the garden. Here, groups of people waiting for their tours walk along the clinker paths admiring the well cared for gardens. Another picket fence encloses the house and outbuildings, with a sign that tells us that we should stay here until we are called for our tour. When it is time, we hear a hand bell ringing -

Figure 23. series Apprentice House

the sort that marks the end of playtime. So we go through the gate which we were formerly unable to enter and walk towards what seems to be the back door of the house. There is a member of staff wearing a dark dress with a white apron and white cap and clogs standing at the door counting people coming in with a clicker and making sure everyone has paid and checking the stickers we have to wear with the time of our tour on. The tour has now begun.



Figure 24. Schoolroom, Apprentice House © National Trust

Our guide leads us into 'the schoolroom', which is cool and smells damp. The walls are whitewashed with deposits of black above the candles hung on the walls. The room is lit with small lamps hanging from the walls reminding us that the only light source would have originally been candles. The floors are worn stone flags and three rows of long wooden table-like desks and benches fill the room rising in height towards the back of the room. There is little colour in the room except the grey of the floor, the white of the walls and the brown of the wood furniture. There is a freestanding blackboard at the front of the room written up with an alphabet in large copperplate letters and today's date. There is also a lectern standing at the front. On the desks are small slates and slate pencils, goose feather quills with ink and a sand tray. The room is now full of visitors who take

their places at the long desks. We seem to become pupils as we sit at them. Our guide stands at the lectern to tell us about the room we are in and introduce the story of the child apprentices. The specific example of child labourers at Quarry Bank Mill is contrasted with the wider picture of children working in mills in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The guide directs most of her questions to the children in the audience comparing them with the child apprentices, asking what age they are, what size their hands are, what kind of work they do, and asks them to imagine what it would have been like to leave your parents and brothers and sisters and come to live in an apprentice house: 'you had what was called an indenture: a legal contract and this says you're going to work for Samuel Greg for 12 hours a day, 6 days a week for the next 9 years. If you ran away, that is against the law. You will be fined, taken to court, and walked back to the mill for a punishment.' We are told that the Gregs employed far more girls to work in the mills than boys because the girls were 'less truculent'. The guide demonstrates the kind of punishments the children would have been subjected to by telling us that she has been writing with her left hand which was forbidden and she therefore has to punish herself by standing with her face to the wall holding out dumbbells. The guide frequently emphasises that the Gregs were model employers and would have been a great deal kinder to their children than the vast majority of mill owners and they didn't allow the children to be physically punished and they only allowed them to work 13 hours a day in the mill as opposed to the 16 hours they may have had to work in other mills.



Figure 25. Children's beds, Apprentice House, © National Trust

We are then invited to follow the guide upstairs and we hear her wooden clogs going up the stairs and above us on the wooden floors. We then enter the 'girls' dormitory'. Again, the room is spartan, with two rows of square bare wooden beds along the walls with grey blankets and white sheets. The guide tells us there would have been many more beds in here to accommodate all the girls who worked in the mill and that the children would sleep two to a bed. Again the colours of grey, dirty white and brown are repeated in the blankets, walls and wooden floors. There are bunches of lavender and tansy hanging up. We are allowed to sit in the beds and when we feel the mattresses we find they are made of straw. The guide punctuates her narrative with questions, which the children in the audience tend to answer, she holds up a bucket and says: 'So there's no toilets in the house and you were locked in your bedroom. So what were you going to use when you want to go to the toilet in the night?' The children are asked to imagine using these along with straw instead of toilet paper, and having to carry them downstairs in the morning and empty them.



Figure 26. Treatment Room, Apprentice House, © National Trust

We are led into the next room and reassemble ourselves by sitting on the long benches that are placed along the walls of the room. When we are moving from room to room, we can talk to each other about what we are seeing. We have no freedom to decide in which order we will see the rooms though, and we listen and wait for the guide to tell us what to look at and when we might speak. This next room is the 'treatment room', which was originally the smaller, boy's dormitory.

This room was created to show that the children were looked after by the Greg's own doctor. This gives an example to learn about medicine, and the health of the children. We are shown via the guide's narrative and the bottles of medicine and dried plants the 'insides' of the children. Vivid descriptions are given of the infected eyes, lost fingers and swollen knees and stomach disorders they would suffer:

[cotton] went into your lungs and you got what we call bichenosis, but it was also in your mouth, you couldn't go and have a drink, you weren't allowed to. All you could do was put your finger in and try and get it out that way. It got in your eyes. Your eyes became infected, they got gunged up, they swelled up, closed up and you couldn't see, and you were barefoot in the mill on your hands and knees underneath the machinery. Your knees got swollen and damaged as well (Obs/QB/08).

Being shown and told about medicine used to treat the children is a vehicle for us to imagine their working lives in the mill because the cures reference the accidents and illnesses that occurred as a result of working there. On the walls in front of us are shelves with rows of bottles and bunches of herbs hanging around the walls. We have various unpleasant sounding remedies described to us and are shown some of the ingredients. A bowl of live leeches in water that would have been used to treat various ailments is passed round, which causes some disquiet and lots of discussion among the visitors. The remedies used to treat the children often sound dangerous and some of them seem as horrific as the punishments the children may have endured.



Figure 27. Superintendent's Parlour, Apprentice House, © National Trust

We move downstairs again and are taken to the ‘superintendent’s parlour’, where again we can sit on the chairs if we want to. This room is more recognisable as a living room, as it has chairs, a small table, curtains and a cupboard full of crockery. The ‘luxuries’ the superintendents were allowed such as tea and sugar are an opportunity to discuss the colonies and the slave trade and we reflect on the commodities that the wealthy could afford. This highlights the Greg’s involvement in the slave trade, which could be thought to be at odds with their involvement in the Unitarian Church. This is another opportunity to discuss punishment, as the children came in here to be punished. We are reminded of the work of the National Trust as conservators when we are told that the stone flags on this floor have been removed from the mill and resituated here.



Figure 28. Kitchen, Apprentice House, © National Trust

In the kitchen there is a coal fire which smells sooty and there are piles of home grown vegetables on the table which come from the garden. The room could seem like an ‘ideal’ country kitchen with its stone floor, scrubbed wooden table and a fire blazing in the corner. So we tend to see the idyllic and have to be reminded that the stone floors were hard, cold and difficult to clean, there was no hot water or any electricity or machinery. We have to learn to look behind the picturesque to the real. The beautiful array of home grown vegetables shows how productive this

part of the estate was, but also indicates the repetitive and mainly vegetable nature of the children's diet:

Whatever vegetables were in season at the time, that's what you get in your porridge. You come up here for your evening meal and that's a vegetable stew called lobscouse and you have bacon with that twice a week and on Sundays you have a special meal of boiled pork, boiled potatoes and whatever vegetables are in season (Obs/QB/08).

Again it is repeated that the Gregs provided plenty of food for their apprentices.

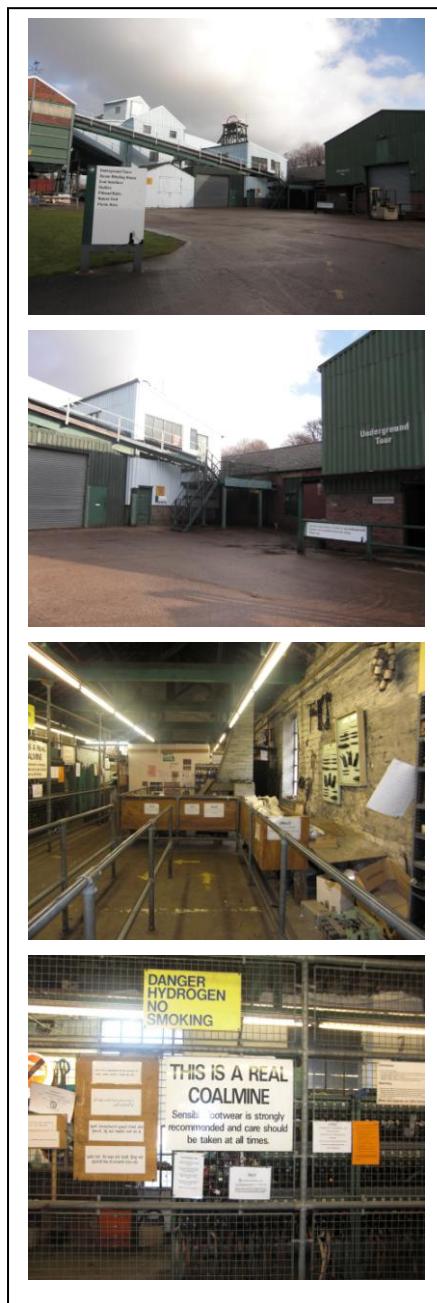
Their role as model employers makes the children's lives seem more bearable – we are looking here at an example of good practice, not just gawping at the horrors of their lives. The hardship and danger of their lives is frequently referred to by our guide, both to shock and enlighten us. The dangers involved in domestic work are emphasised in the kitchen:

servants would come along - if you were a bit careless, you're going to get your skirt caught on fire, your apron goes up in flames. If you're careless taking the top of this off, you're going get blasted by steam so there was a lot of injuries and deaths here (Obs/QB/08).

The kitchen is the last room of the tour. The back door is open and we are invited to go into the cobbled yard where we can see the outbuildings. We may not re-enter the house after this point.

## Tour Observation 2: The Underground Tour, NCMME

Visited 2007- 2009



The underground tour needs to be booked on arrival to the museum, and so we begin our museum visit with a time in mind when we must arrive at the start of the tour. If we check our map or if we have roamed around the site a little, we will find a building with a sign on saying 'Underground Tour'. We are not sure what to expect as we enter 'the lamp room' and don't know how we will get underground. In here it seems like a real work space that has been left 'as it was', rather than a museum. It is lit with neon strip lights, with dusty shelves along one side full of unlabelled tools and equipment and so it is easy to imagine it being occupied and used by miners. The room is divided vertically with a metal grille. On one side, is the queuing space for the visitor which is further divided with metal barriers and yellow arrows painted on the concrete floor denoting the way forward. There are various signs along the other wall telling us that 'this is a real coal mine' and giving safety information and a large diagram of a mine on the other wall.

There are other people waiting here for their tour and they have already collected a hard hat from a container.

Figure 29. series, The Lamproom



Figure 30. Tour party waiting to receive their 'checks'

Everyone seems rather nervous and they wait quietly. On the other side of metal grille is a space that belongs to the miner-guides which contains the battery packs and head lamps, shelves full of equipment, cupboards and filing cabinets. We notice men dressed in orange overalls with hard hats, knee pads and an array of equipment attached to belts on this side of the divide. As we line up there are a few miners wandering through, past the lamp room joking with the miner who is to take us down. A miner-guide tells one child: 'don't think you're here to enjoy yourself'. When the queue fills the room, a man appears in his miner's overalls and gathers us up. He is an imposing, yet reassuring figure and instantly indicates that he is in charge by looking over the group, checking that we're here for the right tour and making sure we are dressed properly. He introduces himself as our miner guide, leads us forward, and tells us how long we will be underground and what we may not take with us: anything which has a battery or which may cause a spark which is 'contraband'. We are also not allowed to take our bags with us. These have to be left behind in the lamproom. Some people feel anxious about leaving their valuables behind. This rather formal ritual highlights the fact that we are 'really' going underground, it is potentially dangerous and that we need permission to be there. This is both frightening (when we think about the potential dangers) and

reassuring (when we think about all the regulations there must be). There is some discussion about this within the group and someone asks about pacemakers. We are told that we have to hand in our ‘contraband’ and exchange it for a belt with a battery and a lamp. We take it in turns to do this and make this exchange across a counter to the lamproom attendant who stands behind a barrier and gives out lamps. There is some banter between the lamproom attendant and the guide. He asks: ‘you’re not going to say one of your jokes are you?’ and the guide answers: ‘I don’t want to talk about it’. This seems part of an improvised yet well-rehearsed routine. The men are brusque with each other and less solicitous with their party of visitors than I am expecting here. Some of their comments can seem rude: a child complaining about the weight of their battery pack is told: ‘what do you want me to do about it; I can’t do anything can I?’ Although potentially rude, this type of talk is also regarded by some visitors as humorous, and may also be regarded as ‘a bit of an act’. When we are all wearing our hard hats and battery packs that power our head lights, our guide tells us how to operate our lamps and more about the tour – how far we will be going underground. The distance is referred to ‘as far down as the Blackpool Tower is tall – 134 metres. This is a useful visual reminder of distance.

We pass through a door way and are each given a brass ‘check’ – a kind of numbered token which we have to keep while we are underground. We pass through a series of doorways and eventually reach ‘the cage’. This is the equivalent of a lift but much more utilitarian. The back is exposed and we can hear water trickling down the shaft. It is completely unlit in here. It is also cold and damp. Both this, the small size of the space, and the descent feel overwhelming, and our guide keeps talking the whole way down. He tells us that the tour is in the fourth seam down, and if we look through the back of the cage we can see the various seams of coal that have been mined over the years as we descend. Many of the group look frightened. One little girl says: ‘I get claustrophobia’ and her mum says: ‘no you don’t’. Someone else says: ‘this is weird; this is like being on a roller coaster’. The cage takes two minutes to descend but it feels much longer. Our guide tells us that in ‘his day’, it would have taken 30 seconds to get down.

When we get out, there is a sense of relief, the area here is lit and there are two large doors which we travel through. We then stand in a hallway-like area in between these doors and another set, so our guide can tell us that these were air doors and need to be kept closed to keep the mine properly ventilated. When we get into what seems like the ‘real’ mine area a child says: ‘can you get lost?’ and the guide says: ‘you can’t get lost with me’. It is now dark and we need the light

from our lamps to see. We are told here about a nineteenth century pit disaster where many children working underground were drowned by a sudden flood. This is an opportunity to point out the 'second means of egress' or another tunnel that leads to the surface that is now mandatory in all mines in case one shaft became blocked. When we have been given this parcel of knowledge we move on and follow our guide in a necessarily linear manner. There is just enough height in the tunnel to stand up straight but we often only have enough space to walk one behind the other. I can only see the back of the person in front of me. If I look around I can see that the space has not been cleaned up at all, the floors are uneven, there are loose wires running along the sides of the walls. It feels very authentic. The stone of the walls is glittery with minerals, some has been painted and some has been boarded up. The children in our party are asked if they want to crawl through a wooden tunnel to show how early mines would have had extremely limited space and they all crawl through enthusiastically.



Figure 31. Underground 'Roadway', NCMME

We reach an area with a model of a small child sitting by a door they hold open with a rope. Our guide tells us this is a family working together in the early nineteenth century: 'If you look in here you'll see mum and dad. Dad is known as a getter and the person who's nearest to us is known as a hurrier.' The little boy is the trapper and we are all horrified to learn that this child who might have only been six years old, would have had to sit in the dark all day, opening the door when his

parents wanted to come through with a coal tub. We already feel that we are in the dark even though we have the light from our lamps and then the guide asks: 'do you want to experience total darkness?' Someone says' not really'. We are all told to turn our lights off and I hear people gasp, someone says: 'Jesus'. The total darkness is shocking. The horror of the image of the child in darkness is mitigated by the information that laws were implemented in 1842 to stop women and children working underground. We are also shown an example of a horses' stable and a model horse which gives the guide an opportunity to tell us that horses replaced women underground and tell a 'joke': 'one nag in, one nag out', causing some in the audience to laugh. At this point, the tour group seem more relaxed and have got used to the underground environment.



Figure 32. 'Ripper' Mannequin, NCMME

The tour progresses in a consistent pattern of a period of quiet walking one behind the other and a stopping point where the guide will illuminate an important process in mining where we stand and watch, bend down to see further, where we are invited to hold artefacts and to imagine scenes from the past. These stopping points have wider spaces carved out and a staged, scenic reproduction of particular practices, and we need to turn to the side to look at them. We may also be asked to 'participate' in the scene by entering the tableau scene, looking closer, touching or holding objects and re-enacting certain procedures. The 'deputy'

scene – a model holding a miner's lamp is approached by the guide: 'This man (touches the model on the shoulder) measures how much gas there is in the atmosphere'. We can 'come in' and look at all the artefacts and tools associated with gas testing. This exhibit is further forwards in time than the last. The deputy looks like he might have come from the 1920s or '30s. We are asked questions about different gasses and about canaries. We move on to look at 'the ripper' (see figure 32) who is drilling through the rock face. We are told that he has a particularly physically hard job and that he worked in a rain of fine dust that might give him silicosis or pneumoconiosis and would only live until he was 40 or 45 years old. We are asked if we want to pick up the enormous drill bit he is using to see if we would be able to use it. We are also shown explosives that would have been used. The next section is where the explosives would be detonated and the miner guide frightens us by shouting 'firing' loudly and banging on the wooden wall panel to simulate the sound of an explosion. After the explosion we are told that there would be acrid fumes and thick dust. Our guide says that when he was mining, they were told at this point: 'right lads go and get your snap'. And he tells us 'you'd get more of a filling in your sandwiches that way'. We move on to look at an 'endless rope haulage' system with an example of ropes and pulleys and told about another disaster in Wales that happened in 1913 when the signalling system that was used to stop and start the haulage system sparked, ignited gas and caused an explosion that killed 439 miners. Our guide also tells us how men would lose fingers in the system. 'He's good this chap isn't he?' someone says.

We are given a lot of information and have to move carefully around a limited space, which makes the tour very tiring. I wish we were near the end, and because I am not wearing a watch, don't have any sense of how long we've been underground. We then walk along to a scene representing the work of the 'button presser', with a model who has seen better days. Our guide says: 'I'd like to introduce you to Douggie. Douggie could be about 45 years old. He could have broken fingers, a leg; he could have inhaled lots of dust. He can't work to the same physical intensity as he used to. It was very important that Douggie paid attention'. This man would have stopped and started the conveyors moving the coal around which was a very easy and boring job. Alongside this exhibit is a 'snap tin' and water bottles which gives our guide the chance to talk about the food the miners may have eaten and drunk during their working day, and a toy mouse is used to show how everything had to be put out of the way of rats and mice. We are told that the most common sandwich filling was either jam or dripping. Our guide says that smells were very intense underground from all the machines, dust and

decaying animals, and these smells used to take over the taste of your lunch but jam and dripping kept its 'ordinary' taste.

As we move on to the more 'modern' areas of the tour, larger machines take the place of the mannequins. We are told we have moved forwards in time, and entered the 'mechanised district'. The machines are painted white but have become rusty. It is difficult to imagine them moving or working. There is less sensational story telling at this end of the tour. The space widens out as it would have had to accommodate large machinery and it is explained how these cut through the coal face and produced large volumes of coal. It seems a less personal area. When we have looked at several large machines, our guide says: 'you're not going to know now't else' and the tour is over. We arrive back at the cage and it is time to return to the lamproom. One woman says on the way up: 'that was very strange, I shan't sleep tonight'.



Figure 33. Underground Tools, NCMME

## The Guided Tour and Performance

Quarry Bank Mill and the NCMME use a guided tour to show what might otherwise be difficult to see. In both cases, access needs to be limited for safety and conservation reasons. In addition, both tours aim to produce a realistic physical environment that would be made less so by interpretive text panels and signs. At both sites, the choice has been made to produce tour space as an immersive environment that gives the sense of being in another time. Instead of reading meaning and looking at a visual scene – the ‘usual’ way of making meaning in a museum, the visitor walks through a series of ‘views’, whilst having their viewing directed by a guide and hearing a guide’s verbal narratives. This combination of seeing, listening and experiencing allows for an *extra-visibility* which can be revelatory, and extends space beyond what may be perceived by the senses into the realms of the oneiric and affective. The guided tour literally opens up space for meaning to be created, so in this sense it is performative. Its revelatory qualities derive both from the permission we are granted to view what might be regarded a semi-private space, and from the narratives of the tour guide, which produce a gradual enlightenment.

Adults they come round and it's completely alien to anybody this house really, unless you work here and you see the way it is and the way it's all set up and sleeping on beds like that - the way we dressed. It's completely strange and for children especially, they're used to computers and games and things and what they do in their spare time, this is completely different so at the very least for a lot of them it's a shock - sometimes they've been in tears (Int02/QB/09).

### **Mapping Tour Space**

I will now move on to consider the map-like aspects of the guided tour which is one of Wiles’ aspects of a processional performance. One of the representational practices of museums generally is the production of a map of itself. This is part of the process of ‘sight sacralization’ referred to by MacCannell (1976 [1999]) where tourist sights or sites are named, framed and elevated. Elevation is the putting on display and framing is the placement of an official boundary around the object (MacCannell 1967 [1999, 44]). Bowman notes that sight sacralisation ‘is not simply a semiotic affair of creating a readable, meaningful “text”; it is more akin to a directorial affair where actors are put into motion, prompted to say and do things that will allow them to experience and enact the tacit meanings and value of the sight/site’(Bowman 2006, 119). Maps are the

representational forms of ‘script’ for this performance of visiting/doing the sites in question, that may be consulted and followed by visitors. The map performs the function of the guide that will be needed on the guided tours. They allow the visitor to imagine themselves travelling around the space and delineate potential ‘routes and walks’ (NCMME site map), and note places of interest. These maps produce a particular way of looking at the museum. Here it is an objective view - from a fixed point, from above showing the boundaries, links and pathways between places.



Figure 34. Site Map, NCMME

This map of the NCMME site is a staging of the museum site’s geography to make it visible and approachable. It suggests a blurring of the ‘natural’ landscape and the industrial landscape, as the site encompasses woodland walks and scenic views. The map of the NCMME transposes dotted lines indicating pathways and numbered labels over what looks like an overhead photograph of the site, thus seeming to give a spatially accurate representation of the site. This can be considered one of the ways the visitor begins to ‘see’ the museum and is part of its ‘institutional frame’ mentioned in Chapter One, which will be complemented by guidebooks, advertising and when on-site by ‘the architectural style of the building and its permutation of spaces, the style and foci of the collections and its location’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008).

The two case study museums in question are both site-based museums in rural surroundings, meaning that they are a collection of buildings set in an outdoor

area that forms part of the museum in terms of linking the indoor spaces and as a space in its own right which operates both as a view and as series of buildings and 'scenes'. Both museums can be regarded as industrial in theme, but neither they nor their visitors may necessarily refer to themselves as industrial museums. Quarry Bank Mill for example is termed 'a property': the site is framed as an estate which brings with it connotations and meanings relating to the country house which are complex in relation to ideas of work and leisure. The NCMME is termed a museum but shows itself on the map (figure 33) as two collieries: Hope Pit and Caphouse Colliery, so we can see that the museum is on the site of a former workplace. The NCMME has many historic mining buildings, and the history of the site dates back to the eighteenth century. There is a certain amount of suggestion in the museum's promotional material that the site is 'in' another time: 'step back to a time when coal mining was the most important industry in Britain' (Guidebook/NCM/08), which may be a reference to the historically contextualised spaces around the museum including the underground tour. This tour is presented as a 'unique opportunity to 'travel 140 metres underground down one of Britain's oldest working mines' (website/NCM/11), the word 'working' suggesting current use<sup>32</sup>.

Quarry Bank Mill as a National Trust Property will benefit from visitors' perceptions of the Trust's image and conservation ethos and will expect certain standards of display and levels of visitor services. Here, the picturesque qualities of the site are linked with its importance as an early industrial site. The website asks us to:

Visit one of the North West's greatest and most complete industrial heritage sites - Quarry Bank Mill, Garden and Styal estate in Cheshire. Tucked away in the valley of the River Bollin, this atmospheric 18th-century working Georgian cotton mill, with its Victorian Apprentice House, newly opened 18th-century garden, mill workers' village and wider riverside and woodland estate offers a great family day out (website/QB/11).

Again the 'working' nature of the mill is part of its attraction and like the NCMME produces an additional source of place authenticity. This goes towards making up the institutional frame that will produce expectations for the visitor. The particular expectations we have in relation to looking may be to see somewhere beautiful and picturesque. Quarry Bank Mill shares many features with other National Trust

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<sup>32</sup> The mine is only 'working' in the sense that it is used and therefore falls under the auspices of the Mines and Quarries Act which stipulate a range of maintenance and safety procedures that must be adhered to.

properties in that it is surrounded by its own land and is approached via a long, picturesque drive, building up a sense of rural tranquility and a certain expectation of splendour. Access to the Mill from the car park is on foot and this slow revealing of the mill building through woodland makes it seem very much like a country house property. The effect that the well-conserved estate has is to produce a sense of aesthetic enjoyment which has some bearing on how the industrial contents of the mill will be seen. Urry's theory of the 'tourist gaze' incorporates 'the Romantic gaze', or a way of looking that we may employ at a picturesque place, which is to do with solitude and the relationship of the individual viewer with a natural place of undisturbed beauty 'more obviously auratic, concerned with the elitist – and solitary – appreciation of magnificent scenery, and appreciation which requires considerable cultural capital' (Urry 1990, 86). The romantic gaze is more associated with scenic outdoor places, but can be connected with the aims of The National Trust, as they particularly emphasise the spiritual qualities of their sites:



Figure 35. Approach to Quarry Bank Mill

'At each we must celebrate a distinctive spirit of place. Each too must nurture a web of human links – with those who loved it in the past or will do in the future, with neighbours and local communities' (National Trust Strategy 2010). The 'atmosphere' of Quarry Bank Mill may produce a certain kind of experience for its visitors, and the above quotation shows how this is explicitly linked with ideas of

ownership. The Trust requires us to want to become paid up ‘members’ in order to continue their work and so they promote a sense of connection with the aesthetic qualities of their sites in order to do this. If we are members, then we may cover the boundaries and axes of the site in a rather more proprietorial manner, as Wiles suggests – laying claim to it.

At the NCMME, I would suggest, we do a different kind of looking. At this industrial site we expect our view to be less aesthetically framed and more utilitarian. As Raymond Williams says: ‘A working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation’ (Williams 1973, 120). A site that is not a landscape may relate more to Urry’s ‘collective gaze’ which is ‘based on mechanical and electronic reproduction, on popular pleasures, on an anti-elitism with little separation of art from social life; it has typically involved not contemplation but high levels of audience participation’



Figure 36. Miner-guide doing maintenance work at the NCMME

(Urry 1990, 86). The landscape here is one that has produced seams of coal, a colliery for processing the coal and a working community. When we arrive at the site, it is the carpark we see first and a range of functional looking buildings. We read the site not in order to gain pleasure from its scenic qualities but in order to

know how to use it. We may though have a sense of collective ownership if we feel (as many visitors do) that mining is part of 'our' heritage. For some visitors, the museum is tied up with their personal, familial, and wider sense of identity and they may feel a sense of pride that 'their' history is being shown.

### *Boundaries*

As I have suggested previously, the guided tours in question are a key attraction within their respective sites. The value of the tour area is suggested by the fact that it can only be accessed via a guided tour and so both the *idea* of guided tour and its spatiality delineate a particularly important area of the museum. This value may be indicated by the presence of boundaries, which as I have noted earlier, produce the 'performance frame' of the tour. Both tours need to be booked at set times and in the case of Quarry Bank Mill, paid extra for, and we need to carry our ticket with us to gain entrance. The tours contain a threshold which we can only pass through if we have permission. The apprentice house is surrounded by carefully marked out gardens, paths and is bordered by fences and signs. The underground tour in contrast cannot be actually seen from afar. It appears initially as a sign on a building which when entered is organised in a heavily demarcated way with barriers, signs and arrows. In the case of both guided tours – the garden and the lamp room play the same function which is to be the threshold or initial 'frame' for the tour. This could be regarded as a liminal space that divides tour space off from the rest of the museum. Liminality here refers to the quality in-between-ness that these waiting room- like areas have, when we are not quite in the museum and not quite on the tour. Visitors respond to the boundaries by 'reading' them as entry points and behaviour modifiers, and experience them as a particular type of routinised space where they may be subject to surveillance. This liminal zone conditions us to how to behave, how to look and 'read' the actual tour. In these two liminal spaces, we are outsiders looking in and will only be admitted when our group is complete, at the correct time. At the NCMME visitors will need to have chosen appropriate clothing and give up some of their possessions which become in mine terms: 'contraband'. They will give up some of their customary boundaries in return for becoming part of this group and will need to move around, talk and listen in a co-ordinated way with their other group members. They will also give up a customary way of looking in a tourist area - through a camera as neither tour allows these.

The rules are not all provided by the museums in question. Visitors are also subject to the 'disciplinary gaze' of other tourists which 'may restrict the scope of

tourists' performances and help to underscore communal conventions about "appropriate" ways of acting as a tourist' (Bowman 2006, 126). This awareness of each other is produced both by the increasing performativity of everyday life as well as the museum's construction of performance spaces which: 'prompts phenomenological reflexivity: that is to say, we become aware not only of our own embodied practice, but of the relation between ourselves and others within the shared space of the museum, past and present' (Rees Leahy 2011, 35).

Other social and behavioural boundaries are established by the tour guide. On each tour, the guide/interpreter establishes themselves as a 'native' or inhabitant of the space initially through their dress which highlights the fact that we do not 'belong' in the same way that they do. The miner guide is dressed as a miner would be, with hardhat, orange overalls and carrying tools, and the apprentice house guide is dressed as an eighteenth century servant or superintendent of the house. They further develop their role as leader by telling us 'the rules' and establishing what Tamar Katriel calls: 'storytelling rights', involving the claim to narrative authenticity and relevance (Katriel 1997, 75). At the apprentice house, this is done in the setting of the schoolroom, where the guide



Figure 37. Lamprroom Doorway, NCMME

assumes the position of teacher and introduces us to the house. At the NCMME our miner-guide establishes his leadership by taking responsibility for our safety, ensuring we have identified our ‘contraband’ and are wearing a hard hat. This part of the tour is where guides look over their group to assess for potential problems and to decide what kind of tour they will give. Groups are sized up in relation to whether you can ‘have a laugh with them’, and if not, the tour will be what the guides refer to as more ‘educational’. Also, potential troublemakers are singled out early on. One guide told me: ‘you always get the odd one or two which is a little bit mouthy – like, and they want to impress their mates. Now then we’ve, our skills, what we learn over the years, we know how to make them be quiet’ (Mg05/NCM/08).

The ‘placeness’ of the tour is undermined by it not being very visible, we cannot take pictures. We can only see it with our own small light and through the words of the guide and what we are looking at may not look ‘like’ something worth looking at in aesthetic terms. It is also somewhere we can only pass through, thus making it in Augé’s (1995) terms a ‘non-place’. The guide though, iterates its ‘placeness’ through the naming of regions. We are told ‘where’ we are: ‘the drift’ or ‘the cage’ or ‘in the 1830s’. The scenes at the stopping points are also given names: ‘the ripper’ or ‘the deputy’, or ‘Douggie’. In addition, the guides often refer to common phrases like: ‘shut yer gob’ and ‘not worth a light’ that they tell us derive from mining practice. The apprentice house is more visible (we still cannot take pictures) as a place but again this visibility is underscored by the use of the guide’s naming of the different areas and the pointing out of unfamiliar words.

The marking off or separation of tour space with boundaries establishes the tour as a performance space. One of the features of this space is its inaccessible quality. The use of Goffman’s sociological theory on front and back regions explored in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1990 [1959]) is useful here. This theory is concerned with the distinction between public and private spaces, particularly in relation to the workplace. These ‘bounded regions’ (Goffman 1990 [1959],109): the ‘front’ or public spaces, where behaviour has to reach certain standards is complemented by the ‘back region’, where workers can drop their ‘front’ somewhat<sup>33</sup> and be themselves. In the context of the museum, the front

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<sup>33</sup> Goffman states that: ‘when one’s activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed. It is clear that accentuated facts make their appearance in which I have called a front region; it should be just as clear that there may be another region – a ‘back region’ or

region is the public spaces that the visitor has access to, and where staff are required to be ‘on show’, and the back region is the private offices, archives, and restrooms. However, because the museums in question are staged realistically - partly as homes (in the case of the apprentice house) and partly as workplaces (in the case of the underground tour) - there is some ambiguity about the quality of spaces that the costumed interpreter inhabits. Tour space *should* in Goffman’s terms be the ultimate front region of a museum – a space of extra-visibility that displays the most unique and valuable parts of the museum, but it is presented by both Quarry Bank Mill and the NCMME as a ‘real’, behind-the-scenes place, where the ‘real’ suggests an unmediated encounter with the past. These areas then, I would suggest, have the quality of a ‘back region’ in Goffman’s (1990 [1959]) terms. The underground mining regions in addition are the domain of the miner-guides as they alone are ‘allowed’ to take visitors underground. We are permitted access to their inner sanctum where they show us what being a miner was ‘really’ like. However, although this area can be regarded as the museum’s back region it is the miner-guide’s stage or front region where they can perform being themselves. The sense of authenticity that is presented by access to the real thing is therefore complex here. MacCannell’s development of Goffman’s theory provides a valuable extension to the ideas of front and back regions as it specifically relates to the development of the back region in tourism. He says that we are always tempted in a touristic setting with the thought of being able to see behind the scenes and access the more authentic regions to ‘see things as they really are’(MacCannell 1999 [1976], 94). He talks about sites like museums where these ‘back regions’ are opened up for visitation to cater for this need. He describes the phenomenon of the ‘behind the scenes’ guided tour where ‘on tour outsiders are allowed further *in* than regular patrons....At the same time, there is a staged quality to the proceedings that lends to them an aura of superficiality’. What is actually being shown is not the real backstage where the inhabitants of the region act naturally but a ‘staged back region’ (MacCannell 1999 [1976], 98-99). The tours are thus an area of ‘staged authenticity’ where the guides use performance techniques such as partial characterisation and storytelling, to indicate that the past is a place that can be ‘brought to life’, and that this is a ‘real’ workplace as well as a museum.

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‘backstage’ – where the suppressed facts make an appearance (Goffman 1990 [1959], 114).

I would suggest that the ‘otherworldly’ quality of both tours is produced by this juxtaposition between performance and authenticity. The performance frame initiated by the separation of tour space and the performance of that space as an authentic ‘other’ region along with the performance of the guides makes the visitor pay attention to this juxtaposition. The representational processes that the museums necessarily enact when they re-situate and recontextualise objects along with the echoes of the original site in amongst the reconstructed areas suggests that a museum site can be read for meaning, its ‘real’, ‘original’ signifiers juxtaposing themselves with those of ‘reconstructed’, ‘illusory’ and ‘representational’ ones. The museum visitor moves from area to area in the museum ‘reading’ them and making meaning through distinguishing that setting from others that they encounter in other similar sites and others that they encounter in their everyday lives. We look, we read and decide what is ‘like’ we thought it was or similar to something we already know or have experienced, or we are jolted out of the familiar by seeing something we thought we knew in a new context or something that is completely unfamiliar. The performance frame makes us pay attention to difference and produces an abundance of signs.

The juxtaposition of work (in the form of a former workplace) and leisure (visiting the museum) in the same place affect how we ‘see’ work and how we ‘do’ leisure. Urry’s ‘tourist gaze’ is able to produce meanings in an industrial museum that normal participation in work cannot, and gives the objects viewed a new value. The museum that takes over a real former workplace like the NCMME and Quarry Bank Mill makes what may have been considered obsolete, historic and available for consumption in the form of heritage. Removed from the everyday sphere and framed as exceptional in some way, the industrial museum portrays work, which would have once been exceptionally ordinary, as special and unusual. Tools become artefacts, which we can only look at and use to produce knowledge, memories or imaginative scenarios. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that this recycling of meaning into a heritage product produces an effect of estrangement leading to a proliferation of meanings (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 157). The recreation of what look like lived in spaces along with mannequin figures (in the case of the underground tour) can increase this sense of alienation as: ‘human displays teeter-totter on a kind of semiotic seesaw, equivoiced between the

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animate and the inanimate, the living and the dead' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 35).

But also, the museum space is a performative environment because it makes us see the ordinary as extraordinary. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett refers to this as the 'museum effect':

once the seal of the quotidian is pierced, life is experienced as if represented...museum exhibitions transform how people look at their own immediate environs. The museum effect works both ways. Not only do ordinary things become special when placed in museum settings, but the museum experience itself becomes a model for experiencing life outside its walls (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 51).

This suggests that museums are part of what is regarded as an increasing sense of performativity in everyday life, and possibly that there is now a blurring of the boundaries between the museum-created display and our own visitor-led displays of encounter with the museum. The postmodern tourist is thought to: 'enjoy what can best be described as a postmodern thrill at the mix or close coincidence of contradictory categories' (Schechner 1985, 87). The museum's creation of 'atmospheric space' and performance of 'extra-visibility' then may be less about accessing the past and more about creating a stage for our own performances of witnessing and remembering.

### ***The Tour as Narrative Performance***

This section of the chapter deals with the tour as narrative. Wiles describes how the procession-like performance may produce narrative through its movement and stopping points in key places. Both tours tell their stories through the use of spatial and verbal/visual narratives. As I have shown, the museum's 'institutional frame', the stories it tells us, the image it projects, and its spatial organisation produces a sense of place that we as the visitor can physically engage with, by roaming around and consuming the site, traversing its boundaries. The practices of the guided tour produce a performance frame within the institutional frame that indicate a different kind of behaviour and a different kind of looking. The spatial rhetoric of the tour is the idea of travel to another region and another time. The space of the tour that has been made 'other' by reconstructing a past time and by juxtaposing work and leisure practices in the same place is now performance space which may be transformed by the effects of memory and the imagination. The series of scenic reconstructions on **the underground tour** takes us to different temporal zones which are ordered as a passage 'through' time from the 'primitive' un-mechanised hand working of family groups to the improved safety and efficiency of the recent past. These must be seen 'in order, in a directed fashion. Our literal

progress through chronology enacts the meaning of progress. Women and children were taken out of mines, physical work was replaced with machines, increasing regulation improved safety etc. In this way, underground space becomes historical. We can 'see' history through being here, and we can walk through it via the route the tour gives us. We are also given a method of seeing: that involves seeing and not seeing; showing and hiding. Our guide permits and enables us to see these things - their direction of our vision and of our movements allows us to enact a series of understandings and revelations. The act of illuminating the underground regions of the mine is actively demonstrated by the wearing or carrying of headlights in what is a largely unlit space. Our light enables us to see the way forwards and perform the group's directing of attention to the stopping points or scenes where we stand and listen.

The presence of the models and mannequins in each scenic tableau produce a qualitatively different kind of interpretation. The difference here is to do with the generation of a sense of 'liveness'. The tableaux give some sort of agency to the real/unreal mannequins and make them 'characters' in a story that seems like it is carrying on without us. This produces a certain amount of narrative that doesn't necessarily need a guide or a visitor to complete. These explicitly diegetic scenes may be complemented by the guide who may take up a position alongside the mannequin, extending the visual narrative with a verbal exposition and by the visitor who is asked to enter both physically by coming in and looking closer, and also by using their imaginations to think about what it would have felt like to 'be' the model had they been alive. There is therefore a complicated process of 'standing in' for the people of the past, and a transposing of audience/actor positions: we may be their audience as they continually act out a frozen scene in front of us, they may be our audience as we stand and try and make sense of what is in front of us and put ourselves in their position.

In the **apprentice house**, we move through the rooms of the house that represent different functions: teaching, sleeping, medical treatment cooking/eating, supervision. These functions represent the work of the children, and they have a connotative role in relation to the children's work in the cotton mill. The schoolroom for example, highlights the fact that the children had barely any time to be educated because they worked 12-13 hours a day in the mill, the bedroom depicts the lack of leisure the children had, the treatment room indicates the hazards relating to the work that happened in the mill. We are therefore looking at the absence of leisure, the absence of parents and the absence of health. And so in this way, the tour shows us what we cannot see, through the vehicle of certain objects: the leeches,

the beds, the dumbbells, the vegetables. These objects are potent metaphors for the children's lives as well acting metonymically. They stand in for the presence of the children and indicate the past. We can 'see' the undersized children by looking at their beds and imagine the kitchen being used, by seeing all the implements in their proper places. We can see the food and the medicine that went inside their bodies, use 'their' writing implements and see the same environment that they would have seen. We can therefore imagine them as present at the same time as imagining ourselves as them.

### *Verbal Narratives*

During interviews, many of the miner-guides doing the **underground tour** referred to the fact that doing the tour was like telling a story: 'we're telling the story from 1791 - first mining on this site to 1985 when we shut and as the air flows round, you're blown through the tour, carries you on this river of time, ribbon of time' (Mg09/NCM/08). Another man referred to it as 'a jigsaw that's unfolding as you're going round' (Mg01/NCM/08), which suggests the guide and the visitor (although the metaphor is mixed) fit the pieces of the 'story' together as they move around. Telling the story involves many stories: some documented history, some apocryphal stories, some true-life stories and some made up stories or jokes. Two narrative forms relevant to this kind of verbal narrative are described by Goodacre and Baldwin (2002). These are 'story' and 'historical recount'. Story is used to entertain and establish a connection between storyteller and listener, and historical recount is used to retell past events and build up a historical understanding of events (Goodacre and Baldwin 2002, 143). These two forms are evident in the miner-guides' narratives. Sometimes there is a more objective retelling of a past event such as the Huskar pit disaster in 1838 where 26 young people were drowned underground. This gives an opportunity to talk about safety improvements. A more personal story might follow. For example, at this point in the tour, one of the miner-guides says: 'in my time everyone had to leave by the emergency exit once a month' (UgObs/NCM/08). In the apprentice house, there is less variation in the 'level' of narrative and less opportunity to question the status of information. This work is a skilful performance on the part of guides who need to establish 'storytelling rights' involving as Katriel describes 'claims to narrative fidelity and authenticity and secondly the claim to relevance' (Katriel 1997, 75). These 'rights' may be established by the guide's role as a guardian of the space we are entering. Cohen describes a guide's leadership role as relating to 'pathfinding' where they provide: 'privileged access to an otherwise non-public territory' and that

of mediator and cultural broker (Cohen 1985, 10) where they may both integrate their party into the visited setting as well as insulate it from that setting:

He [sic] does this by interposing himself between the party and the environment thus making it non-threatening to the tourist. Thereby he comes to represent the party to the setting, as well as the setting to the party (Cohen 1985, 12).

Guides use words to direct visitors around the tour space as well as making the tour environment less alien (particularly in the case of the underground tour) and more comprehensible, and to bring alive what may seem dead or non-existent. They employ a range of modes of speech in order to do this: Fine and Haskell Speer refer to Roman Jakobson's model of verbal communication to expand on this and suggest that the discourse between tour guide and tourists has expressive, referential, conative, poetic, metalingual, and phatic functions. Referential discourse is about the features of the site being viewed, the expressive refers to guides' talking about their own experiences and feelings, conative discourse is directive, poetic discourse relates to guide performances such as storytelling, metalingual discourse is when guides may be talking about their job, and other tours they may have given, phatic discourse is 'chit-chat' (Fine and Haskell Speer 1985, 77). I will particularly consider here the expressive and poetic level of discourse that has been observed and described in the course of this research. Humour, comedy, joking and playfulness are noticeable features of both tours and it is used for different reasons. Many guides interviewed indicated that they wanted their visitors to have fun and enjoy themselves: 'it's about enjoyment. It's entertainment at the end of the day isn't it?' (Int02/QB/09). Holloway describes how guides often employ dramaturgical skills to 'de-routinize the excursion'. They use acting skills 'to involve the audience emotionally, or they may invite members of the group to share some deeply felt personal perspective of the site' (Holloway 1981, 388). Holloway describes how every tour is 'a unique performance involving a different audience. That audience must be evaluated in the opening moments of contact, to sense the mood of the group and select the appropriate appeal' (Holloway 1981, 387). A miner-guide described how:

you tailor it according to them and you can tell when their heads go down and they're not listening so it's time to move on, so you try to involve all in other ways: "I'm doing this wrong, I'll alter this round a little bit", it's like an artist on stage you know the first few songs - the opening is feeling the audience in't it? and feeling how they react and so you play that game and "aye that struck well I'll carry on with that theme" or "that's not working, I'll do this" or whatever (Mg07/NCM/09).

Many miner-guides talked about getting a reaction from their tour parties and hoped that jokes and 'banter' would elicit this. When it doesn't happen, the

tour is described as 'hard work': 'you can throw all jokes out, you can throw all your funnies out and you don't get anything back. When you don't get anything back it's hard work, very hard work' (Mg06/NCM/08). Joking is also used to lighten unpleasant subject matter: 'sticking to the subject matter totally, it would be very dire, very grim, so you break it up by putting some stories in that's happened to yer, to just make it a bit more light-hearted' (Mg07/NCM/08). An interpreter at the apprentice house similarly described how he balanced pathos with humour:

I think a good tour myself is, you know, like when you watch a film and sometimes it will play with your emotions and you might be upset at one point and happy at another point and I've noticed I've tried to do that sometimes on my tours and that works better than just giving them an education because you're not there just to tell people, it is part of an interaction (Int02/QB/09).

Miner-guides particularly seem to use humour to induce a feeling of community, because when everyone in a group laughs it is easier to interact with them and also to direct them around the tour space. Some guides seem to enjoy the 'danger' of potentially offensive humour:

I'm on the line a little bit because when we get down to the trapper, you've been down there? You know where pony is, you've seen pony in stable? Well in 1842 that's when pit ponies came in to take place of the wives and I always say well that's not a bad swap that your horse for your wife is it? Now that gets a little laugh, but then, and this is where I tread on very thin ice – I usually say if you have a right good look at them they look the same from back don't they. And I have to be careful who I say that to but I know before I get there if I can say it or not because I weigh 'em all up (Mg06/NCM/08).

These 'jokes' are repeated so frequently, the timing becomes perfect. The above comment would come at the end of a stopping point when it was time to lead the visitor away and when eye contact could be broken and people could re-position themselves, thus dispersing any kind of antagonism. Some guides almost become stand up comedians with their well rehearsed stories:

can you imagine the er, residue you get from 70,000 horses? I do apologise I normally use a much shorter word – it starts with s and ends in a t. Are you with me now? And they go "aye" and I say "well you shouldn't be". Are you thinking about the same word as me? cos I'm thinking about soot, cos as you know in this area about 80% of the all world's rhubarb is grown in this area cos all the residue from horses and all soot from industry is ideal conditions for rhubarb (Mg07/NCM/08).

Jokes like these are part of the poetic discourse of the miners. They are based on factual information but become 'embroidered' and formulaic and often turn a personal story into a generalised and more widely representative story.

Then in 1984 I went on strike. I went on strike before - I'm quite good at it actually '72 and '74 they were good strikes but nowt prepared me for 84. I didn't realise in 84 that a year later I would still be on strike and during that year there were nobody in these mines and nothing for rats to eat apart from each other. When we came back in March '85 there were only one left but it weren't half a big un. When we took it out of the mine it went on that Bodmin Moor and he's doing all right an' all (Mg07/NCM/08).

The miners know far more than they can ever tell visitors on a tour: 'if I were to tell people everything I knew we'd be down there for days or weeks, you know it's just impossible, so you've got to curtail information and stick to the storyline' (Mg07/NCM/09). They are full of knowledge about the mine and stories about mining that visitors probably only get a glimpse of, and this knowledge is often only unlocked when visitors ask specific questions. Their memories in the form of expressive discourse are like windows opening into oneric and affective space.

This miner-guide described talking to a group at the deputy stop:

I get the oil lamp and tell them all about the oil lamps and then I'll say to em, I'll say when I first went down pit at 15, one of first smells I smelt was the smell of an oil light, you never forget it, so I get all kids smelling oil lamp and things like that (Mg05/NCM/08).

Visitors may even supply the story for the miner-guides to fill in. One miner-guide told me how he particularly enjoyed taking tours of people who were coming to the mine to revisit the scene of work for a family member who had described for them what it was like to work in mining:

you address what they want to know and you tell them about things or show 'em things that'll trigger them to say "me dad talked about this or that" and you can tell them more about it, and then you're just trying to contextualise and fill the gaps in this story that they've already got. Did you ever have them magic painting books? They've got the magic painting book, you've got the brush and the water and you put the colours on (Mg09/NCM/09).

Here the tour guide narrative is referred to almost as the work of an artist and the visitors here take the role of the director.

### *Bodily Narratives*

The body is used on the tour as a vehicle for translation, and as a metaphor. On both tours the guide employs the visitors' bodies in order to witness/experience the physical experience that is being referenced. At the **apprentice house**, the guides will ask visitors and children to try and feel, and they do this by showing objects like slates, quill pens, the furniture, herbs and allowing people to hold, smell or touch them. They tend to extend this sensory impression by producing an image which is often sensational:

These are senna pods, you can boil them up with rhubarb, you can drink the medicine, a few hours down the line you're going to be dashing on to the chamber pot there's going to be lots of diarrhoea, hopefully going flush out all that sadness and you're going to be happy again. Simple as that (Int02/QB/09).

References to the children's bodies are very frequent: we can see them being fed, walking to church, being clothed, working in the mill, doing housework, doing school work, by seeing and feeling their environment. But in addition, being in the actual location they were in adds to the sense that we are really witnessing their lives.

On the **underground tour** impressions of physicality are also very noticeable. We are asked as visitors to 'bear' a fraction of that by enduring the difficult space. Every stopping point on the tour is an opportunity to think about the extreme physical impact of mining on the human body. We are told about disasters where miners were crushed, burned or drowned, we think about thick dust in the environment, gas, rats and the darkness. These frequent references to danger and death come close to being the 'dark tourism' that Stone and Sharpley talk about which 'may provide a means for confronting the inevitability of one's own death and that of others. More specifically, dark tourism allows the re-conceptualization of death and mortality into forms that stimulate something other than primordial terror and dread' (Stone and Sharpley 2008, 585-6).

The guides also use the impression of activity as a form of embodied learning and to break up their narratives and to direct attention to a new area. One miner guide described how he would show children how to 'use' a machine by pretending he was actually setting it working and said:

then they can understand what you're saying. You can do it while you're on move, so you're not actually bombarding them with words you're giving them a process and taking them through that process of getting coal out. I just say: 'now you're a miner now' (Mg01/NCM/08).

As far as possible, guides want visitors to be able to interact with their environment, so it will be more memorable and so they are not just walking and listening.

### *Contested Histories*

A guided tour aims to presents a representative picture of the sight in question. Although dark, dangerous and shocking facts may be presented, what may be difficult for the museum to present in view of the relationship with its own history may be smoothed over. In the case of the **apprentice house**, the slave labour of the children is seen in the light of the founding owners - the Greg family's benevolence towards them and their unusually high (for the time) living and working

standards. This seems to represent the respect that the National Trust accord their properties' original owners. At NCMME I was told by the miner-guides that for many years on the **Underground Tour** they were not 'allowed' to talk about the miner's strikes with visitors and that any conflicting stories or dissent should be carefully managed. One man told me:

You don't argue about anything wi' anybody. You just say "sorry but that is my opinion not the museum's". Like for instance if some people start talking about the strike- *now* we are allowed to answer, but in *our* opinion not the museum's. Same wi 'politics (Mg06/NCM/08).

At the NCMME I was told that the miner-guides' stories might be 'embroidered somewhat, but everything's based on truth and the embroidery is only to make it less dour and more humorous' (Mg08/NCM/08). The miner-guides are a particular kind of interpreter though. As ex-workers in the mining industry they know from experience what they are talking about and they don't necessarily believe everything they are supposed to. One miner-guide told me:

There's certain things what they say happened ere that I don't believe happened cos I've looked on internet ...when they're on about sitting down 12 hours a day - little un – I don't believe that to be true and I've looked at internet and it's not true. Well that's so inhumane is that to have someone sat there 12 hours a day (Mg04/NCM/08).

At sites where visitors are likely to do 'memory work' there may be dissonance between memory and history. They may dispute the museum's portrayal of a past that they remember. When the sources of the museum's history comes from a wide range of material there is likely to be some disagreement. During my research I noticed many occasions when what guides and interpreters were saying might have been construed as their own personal view, or a fictionalised account, or a comedy version of the truth or a ghost story. Two interpreters may give a slightly different account of the same story. I heard visiting ex-miners disputing 'the facts' they were being told on the underground tour as they didn't match their own experiences which may have been different because they came from a different region of the country or because their memory has altered things. But as Laurajane Smith argues: 'all heritage is dissonant and controversial, and what may be inclusive and comfortable to one person or community will always be exclusionary and discomforting to another' (Smith 2011, 70).

However interpreters at all sites generally told me that they base all their information on the facts or the truth:

It's all the information that we've read and learnt, the sources, we've got a cabinet full of documents and things and there's a lot down in the archives down at the mill. And it's when I when I do me tour I

always refer to the sources, I'll always say like for example Thomas Priestly and Joseph Sefton who ran away in 1806, they tell us this that and the other and they also tell us this and they tell us that. So I don't actually tell anybody anything that I've not read not just from a document, from a source, not just secondary sources I mean primary sources (Int02/QB/09).

At Quarry Bank Mill the history is 'further away' than at the NCMME so the 'problem' of first hand history being assimilated is not the same. At the **apprentice house** they make much of their wealth of archive material and interestingly, much of the material they base the tour on has been provided by the child runaways:

We're grateful to our runaways because we've got the statements they gave to the courts so we know why they ran away and what life was like here for them. We can compare them with statements from other runaways from other mills and that's how we know that this was one of the best mills to come to (Obs/QB/08).

But is also provided by the 'evidence' from the house itself: 'When they renovated the house, they scraped back the layers of plaster and found marks on the walls where the beds had been rubbing against the walls, so we know they're the right height' (Obs/QB/08).

### ***The Tour as Pilgrimage***

The third aspect of Wiles' processional performance is the pilgrimage. The tour as a space of entertainment and fun, is accompanied by a more ritualistic and pilgrimage-like element. Victor Turner describes pilgrimages as 'liminal phenomena' in which the pilgrim 'is confronted by sequences of sacred objects and participates in symbolic activities which he believes are efficacious in changing his inner, and sometimes, hopefully, outer condition' (Turner 1974,197). As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the idea of pilgrimage is particularly relevant for some visitors who come to the NCMME in particular to see where they or their ancestors worked, although there seemed less sense of this with visitors to the apprentice house<sup>34</sup>. This may be because the period displayed at the NCMME is within living memory, whereas Quarry Bank Mill shows an eighteenth century past. Cotton production on a large scale also ceased before the end of mass coal production and so there will be less people who remember it. The pilgrimage has some goal in mind, which for the visitor who comes as if to visit a shrine, is a sense of a return to their roots and a passing on of knowledge to their children. Some

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<sup>34</sup> It should be noted though that I interviewed considerably more visitors at the NCMME than at Quarry Bank Mill.

visitors mention a sense of obligation especially in relation to the **underground tour** stating that we *should* investigate the workings of an industry that has played an important economic role in our country's history, that we *should* know about the hardship that miners faced, and that we need to visit 'our heritage'. There is the sense, for some visitors, of going back': 'we've all got to see what we were' (Ugv18/NCM/09). Some visitors are actually performing a ritual of belonging and of memorial. Some make extraordinary journeys just to get to the mine. One visitor (a former miner) came every few years from his new home in Australia and he described how for him visiting the mine was:

a comfort thing...because it's what I were - it's what I did for a big part of my life. 11 years I did in Markham in North Derbyshire... I live in Australia now. I've come all this way just to come down pit again (Ugv12/NCM/09).

One of the miner-guides described the visit of a 93 year old woman:

When we got out she'd got tears down her face because she told me then that her husband used to work in mines as a Bevin boy and she always promised him that she would go down a coal mine and whilst he were living she never did. And that's why she came from London - all the way from London and went down here just to say to herself: 'at least I've been down a coal mine, and now I know what he used to do'. And she got on a bus and she went all way back to London on her own – 93 year old (Mg06/NCM/08).

In these cases, the outer physical journey is matched by an inner psychological one which has importance for the subject's sense of self and connection with family. However this role is not relevant for everyone. Some visitors visit to see what is different and alien to their own pasts and presents and may enjoy a sense of defamiliarisation. This is less a return, than a recycling of meaning and it playfully borrows the idea of the pilgrimage as a temporary taking on of roles. A pilgrimage requires a sense of purpose: 'to somewhere, to some sacred destination' (Wiles 2003, 64), although in fact, we never do arrive anywhere. Both tours have a very circular structure so that we end up (spatially) in the same place we started. This suggests that these tours use the *idea* of destination, which for some visitors may have a ritual quality but for others may be more playful.

The imagined destination may be the quest for authenticity that MacCannell refers to. He describes the tourist as a modern pilgrim who tours 'work displays' as a leisure practice, citing as examples, Parisian tours of 'the tobacco factory, the slaughterhouse, and the like' (MacCannell 1999 [1976], 58). The tourist is driven by a need to find an authenticity that is missing in their own lives. For example touring the workplace of others is the only way we can grasp the meaning of work when we are alienated from our own labour:

As a worker, the individual's relationship to his society is partial and limited, secured by a fragile "work ethic," and restricted to a single position among millions in the division of labor. As a tourist, the individual may attempt to grasp the division of labor as a phenomenon *sui generis* and become a moral witness of its masterpieces of virtue and viciousness (MacCannell 1999 [1976], 7).

We may tour the workplace in order to discover the meaning of our own work and its place in our lives. The museum, which belongs to the leisure economy can be imagined as Victor Turner describes it: 'a betwixt-and-between, a neither-this-nor-that domain between two spells of work or between occupational and familial and civic activity' (Turner 1982, 40). An industrial site is also a bridge between the transitions from pre-to post industrial society, symbolising a passage between times and spaces. In this space, we may imagine how far we have travelled in terms of work practice and as a nation. It is also a space where we may examine the family. Both tours noticeably feature the family and family values in relation to early industrialisation. The underground tour shows a family working underground and miner-guides refer to the familial bond that there was between miners. The apprentice house shows the broken family: children who were taken away from their parents and who became supervised by the demands of the factory system.

As noted earlier, tour space itself is very suggestive of a liminal space as it is separate from the rest of the museum and kept apart by physical and social boundaries. These boundaries enact a kind of ritual defamiliarisation and perform references to transformation in a ritual way. Tour space has a quality of inversion: we go backwards to a past time, we go underground or we go back to childhood in the case of the **apprentice house**. On a tour and touring, we are separated from normal time and space and in the case of the **underground tour**, quite radically so, as we cannot wander back again unless we are accompanied by a miner-guide. This is mirrored by the liminal status of the original inhabitants of these tour spaces. The **apprentice house** children were taken from workhouses away from their parents or other relatives from all over the country to work in the Greg's cotton mill. They were dressed alike and their time was strictly regulated. They 'signed' their indentures when they entered the house which meant they were contracted to work for their employers for the whole of the rest of their childhood. As I have said, if they left the mill they were considered runaways and would be brought back by the police. Miners too were often referred to as a race apart from the rest of humanity: 'The miners and their families, commonly referred to as a separate race of humans, were increasingly ostracized by society' (Freese 2006, 45). Another feature of the liminality of both spaces is the questions of whether this is a home or

a workplace. For the miner-guides, the mine is wholly familiar and they do feel at home there and have a sense of camaraderie with each other which is similar or close to that of family, but for the casual visitor, this can be an entirely alien and frightening place.

**The underground tour** seems to be particularly patterned as a rite of passage journey, which contributes to its status as a liminal/liminoid phenomena. The rite of passage in tribal societies involves three stages: separation, transition and incorporation (Turner 1982, 24). In the separation stage Turner says there needs to be a rite which demarcates the alteration in space and time that will be undergone. During transition, ritual subjects pass into a liminal zone or area of ambiguity. During this phase, subjects are physically separated from the rest of society and a sequence of subversive and ludic events occur. Turner describes how ‘in liminality people “play” with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them’ (Turner 1982, 27). Turner describes how separation rites may involve a levelling process where signs of subjects’ pre-liminal status are destroyed and signs of their liminal non-status applied (Turner 1982, 26). The underground tour is on the whole a liminoid activity that uses the *idea* of a rite of passage, but - as noted earlier - for some visitors this may be a ritual re-visiting of the mine-as-workplace. Certain features of the tour correspond with Turner’s descriptions of the rite of passage. When visitors go underground they are given new clothes to wear, they must hand in their possessions to the lamproom attendant, and they may be given a new temporary name by their miner-guide. During the tour a series of events happen that reverse customary norms. We go backwards through time to the ‘beginnings’ of mining, we are literally in the dark and have to be shown what and where to look. We may be the subject of our guide’s jokes and banter, and children are often given ‘work’ to do (rather than adults) in order to demonstrate aspects of the display for example. We also share a space with non-human mannequins who are referred to as if they were alive. These events could be thought of as being like the subversive and ludic events that turner describes in rite of passage rituals (Turner 1982, 27).

Another feature of the pilgrimage is a sense of communitas. As Turner suggests, the guided tour may be a way of reaching a sense of communitas, which is very broadly a social bond and feeling of group purpose, both with our tour party and with the community of our ancestors. He argues that ‘it is within leisure, and sometimes aided by the projections of art that this way of experiencing one’s fellows can be portrayed, grasped and sometimes realised’ (Turner 1982, 46). Turner’s use of the word ‘communitas’ is complex, and his theorising of the

different types of communitas is not necessary for the purposes of this research, but it is a useful way of describing the group dynamics of certain kinds of tour group. It is particularly relevant to the underground tour, because the words 'comradeship' and 'camaraderie' were used extensively by the miner-guides in interview to express their relationships with each other. They talked about the strong sense of community they had felt as miners, which was maintained or brought back for them when they came to work at the museum. To some extent, the miner-guides still feel this sense of solidarity for each other and for their mining predecessors and ancestors. This makes its way into tour narratives which stress the braveness and toughness of miners, and the harshness of their lives. Many visitors (particularly those with family connections) expressed the feeling of empathy they had for miners after they had experienced an underground tour. In addition, many of the tour parties observed were composed of family members who seemed to be reinforcing their communal identity as they talked with each other throughout the tour about what they were seeing and hearing. Tour groups tend to be composed of smaller groups of people (it is very unusual to see a single person on a tour). These sub-groups may have their own 'agenda' and may resist somewhat the discipline of the tour guide. I was told by several miner-guides that ex-miners could be a 'nuisance' as they tended to conduct their own tours with family members. These family were often 'led' by their children. Children took the lead on tours in the sense that they were the ones being addressed by the guide and I noted many occasions when children were bringing their parents to experience a tour they had done previously with school. The image of the family working underground in the early nineteenth century is a very powerful one at the beginning of the underground tour, which family visitors particularly relate to. The idea of community and family is strongly reiterated on both tours. The close-knit mining community is represented on the underground tour and an early industrial community is represented by Quarry Bank Mill and they both represent living and working in the same place.

## **Perceptions of Authenticity**

### ***The Role of the Miner-Guide at the NCMME***

Leading the tour has some important functions for the miner guides. They

can continue (in a limited way)<sup>35</sup> their original trade, they can work with men who share the same history, they can re-produce their former job and mining history for visitors as valuable knowledge and they can show themselves off if they want to. For men who had been away from mining for many years, coming back to a pit was described as relief and a return to their 'real' former life. One man who had been working in other industries for several years after mining said:

I'd missed it, there were a big gap in my life because everywhere I'd worked you struggled to get that atmosphere, you could not, you couldn't recreate that atmosphere that were underground. And coming back here with people who was my age, it was just like coming back in time and I'd been dropped straight back in it as it were when I left it (Mg01/NCM/08).

Coming back and fitting straight in was frequently mentioned. One man said he 'just slotted in as if I had been at it all me life' (Mg04/NCM/08). For these men they are 'back' somewhere they feel at home. Many men mentioned that working at the museum was 'like' it was working in the pits before the strike in the 1980s, and there is the sense that this is a set aside space for them where they can 'be' their former selves. The question of whether this is their 'real' self, or is a persona based on their idealised picture of a miner, is reflected in the complex array of roles that the men assume both in front of each other and in front of visitors. When the guide invites us in to his underground world, in the manner of a gatekeeper who is granting us permission, he assumes the position of host who is obliged but also compelled to show his visitors round, taking responsibility for their safety and showing off the environment. They may also take the role of a missionary: One miner-guide referred to his job as a vocation and a personal mission: 'I like the history and all this knowledge that's in my head; I don't want it to die with me' (Mg07/NCM/08). This man felt he had almost an excess of information and memories that need to be reiterated even though some of them were traumatic. And in this way his words were a kind of memorial to his former workmates:

I've done that, bin there, done that, and all them experiences - Houghton Main - the explosion, in 85 like - 5 of me mates got killed. Them's bad, bad times, but there have been good times alongside of it and there's *all these memories*. In their memory you know (Mg07/NCM/08).

The guides indicated that their main role was to provide information about

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<sup>35</sup> Men are employed in a dual role at the museum as guide plus whatever mine role they had before, so there will be electrician/guides, deputy/guides, ventilation/guides etc. They all pointed out to me that the guiding comes first though and for most men takes up the majority of their time.

the history of mining and the role of miners in the past and this was about being a mediator between the past and the present in order to influence people's ideas and perceptions today:

I want people to know, and remember what the miners have done for this country in the past you know: give us coal and tomorrow we'll give you gold. We're still waiting for gold by the way, you know, and the memories of the industry - my aim is to keep that alive  
(Mg07/NCM/08).

Many visitors are surprised and shocked at what they see and learn underground. They often express a horror of early mining working conditions and have a sense of gratitude towards the guides for showing them this. The men have a sense of pride in their former work and are pleased that they can recreate it in some way for visitors:

I talk to people when I've been down and I don't get many that say they haven't enjoyed it. I get quite a lot say we didn't realise mining were like this. You deserve a medal for going down there. But we never thought about it that way. I can honestly say I loved every minute of it until 't' strike and then I didn't like it at all. The atmosphere changed completely. That's another story. It were a pleasure to get up to go to work. I like to try and get that over to kids  
(Mg02/NCM/08).

The miner-guides enjoy being able to display themselves as hard workers. It is interesting that the guides often referred to their current work as a guide as not being 'real' work, as many of the men didn't seem to regard managing groups of people and talking as work: 'No work involved is there? "what do you do"? I get dressed and talk a lot' (Mg09/NCM/09). Although they did often describe how hard they found it initially to stand up in front of a group of people and talk to them with confidence. In discussing their jobs, various skills were described such as being able to put people at ease, dealing with difficult groups such as people with learning difficulties or unruly teenagers, being able to 'read' a party of people, keeping people's interest, 'pitching' the tour at various levels at different times according to the audience, making people laugh, 'lightening' 'dark' information with humour, getting visitors to interact, role playing, storytelling and re-enacting situations. It is clearly not the case that doing the tour is an easy job, but clearly doesn't have the same status for the men as their previous work.

I have mentioned the sense of memorial that one man described as his motivation for doing the job. This spiritual element is connected with the camaraderie or bond that miners and the mining community had with each other. This bond was described as producing a particular working 'atmosphere' which was described as unique to mining. This for many men made the job of mining worth

doing and what makes their current job particularly satisfactory: 'Comradeship – fantastic, you could never, ever wish to meet a better bunch of men, really, to work together' (Mg02/NCM/08). This camaraderie is something which dissolves hostility and produces a safe, tight-knit working community: 'you might not get on with a person away from the pit but when you were in the pit you got on with one another' (Mg01/NCM/08). It also produces the effect of being in a family group: 'You're like a family, when you work down pit, and if anything were to happen to anybody down the mine, all them men that have been around you during the day would not go out of that mine until they'd know you were all right' (Mg06/NCM/09). This comradeship is continued in the museum environment even though the job of miner-guide is not physically demanding and dangerous and the men do not need to rely on each other in the same way as they did when they were working as miners. Now it helps them to 'get on' and minimise 'bad feelings' (Mg02/NCM/08). This camaraderie is partly produced and maintained through the miner's unique sense of humour: 'one thing they did have, that they don't have anywhere else is a sense of humour' (Mg01/NCM/09). This humour is often referred to as 'banter' which is both fun and cruel and something that you have to be able to both give and take: 'you've got to be able to take the banter and the stick they dish out. It can be cruel sometimes, but you just laugh at it' (Mg01/NCM/08). The function of this 'banter' is to inject fun and enjoyment into the working day which when the men were working underground 'for real' was hard, dangerous and could be monotonous. Bantering has an element of hostility, it cuts people down to size and shows them their place but it seems ultimately to preserve the harmonious social status-quo. The miner-guides' humour also helps to produce and maintain a group identity for the men and maintain their organisational culture.

This sense of camaraderie may be temporarily extended to visitors underground depending on group dynamics. Some tour parties engage in a lot of humour and joking and interactions between themselves and the guide. There may be sub-groups within the main group who have mining connections or ancestry and the tour may provide them with a link between family members that can become a stronger bond. Their sense of communitas may extend to their guide who is the channel for this link:

Generally when you take 19 people underground, at end of the tour you get somebody'll say "Oh my dad worked at the mine, I remember him doing that, I remember him telling me about that" and they really thank you and that's the good thing about it (Mg03/NCM/08).

Both the controlling and the tension-relieving aspects of the 'banter' are maintained to a certain extent with visitors on the tour. Miner-guides referred to

themselves as both teachers and entertainers who were firmly in command of their groups and who could provide a controlled flow of information, but who could also make people laugh and produce an almost alchemical change in the environment from darkness and dullness to liveliness. Several men referred to the fact that they made the space of the tour come alive: 'I think we fetch it all to life'

(Mg08/NCM/08). A static display without the presence of the miner would have a very different status. One man described how his narrative prevented visitors from noticing any inadequacies in the underground environment. He described the lights going on in a nightclub 'when all the smoke and mirrors have been cleaned away' that he imagines the tour would be on its own without the live narrative. He says: 'I think what you say to people in conversation, draws 'em in, it takes, draws focus away from some of the rubbish' (Mg09/NCM/08). The rubbish being the parts of the physical tour area that are made from less 'authentic' materials (like plasterboard), show their construction or have seen better days.

### ***The Work of the Interpreter at Quarry Bank Mill***

One of the apprentice house interpreters told me in interview that he believed the interpreters brought the house to life and that the house would be very difficult to understand without them:

you're being *told* with us, and we bring the house to life, so they say and otherwise if you look round... If you come on my tour and you look round, there's not much in. Very sparse. I mean the girls' dormitory is just beds. Chamber pots - that's it you know. And there's nothing really, people... to just walk round the house, I don't think people would be thrilled with it like they are with the guides (Int02/QB/09).

I was told that the interpreters came from a teaching and an acting background. In order to learn the history of the house, they are given a folder of information derived from the mill's archives and given 'core points' to learn but they can research the information according to their own interests and are not compelled to talk from a script. The tours I observed often referred to archive material and told stories that had been 'officially' recorded to stress their authenticity. Interpreters are trained in addition by following several of the other interpreter's tours until: 'you just have to jump in at the deep end and do a tour and its usually when you get sick of following people around you know you're pretty ready to do it yourself' (Int02/QB/09). This interpreter stressed the importance of being enthusiastic: 'so that people think you are really into it because then there's the opportunity for *them* to get into it' and also to give everyone in the tour party a fair amount of attention because: 'we don't talk about it but people are paying to go on these tours and they expect a fair deal don't they?' (Int02/QB/09).

### ***The Visitor Experience – Underground Tour***

From the 49 visitors interviewed after their underground tour, around three quarters of them seemed to show a strong response to it. Many were quite emotional about what they had seen. Many people seemed to have felt some sort of empathy with the miners and expressed the feeling that they were shocked at the kind of thing that went on in the industry, they hadn't realised that mining was so hard and unpleasant – particularly further back in the past, and were grateful to miners for having done all that work. Many people on the tours I researched were there with members of their family and there were lots of children present. Often people said they were glad that they could inform children about the mining past. Typical comments were: 'it's our heritage isn't it?' (Ugv23/NCM/09) and: 'Its brilliant showing kids our history - for the young ones - because it's gone' (Ugv05/NCM/08).

Many visitors to the museum have ex-miners in their family and there were many comments made by visitors expressing a sense of loss for the passing of the mining industry: 'great sadness of course - it's an industry lost. Maybe that was the most memorable thing. You are aware that it's an industry gone which won't return, I mean my family were miners; my grandfather was a miner but not a Yorkshire miner' (Ugv07/NCM/09). Visitors who were ex-miners themselves often mentioned that the tour 'brought it back' for them: 'I've been here twice. Mick's been a few more times but for me it's just like, it's a comfort thing'. This man described how he would sit and think about his tour when he got home: 'I'll sit and think about that for 20 minutes tonight having a cup of tea and go through it again in my mind. It just brings everything back. It's very good' (Ugv12/NCM/09).

Many people mentioned the experiential qualities of the tour – the darkness, the cramped space, the shock of seeing scenes of young children working underground. Many people found the darkness surprising and evocative: 'Surprisingly dark. That sounds stupid, that sounds stupid. Because it was an organised tour I thought it might be lit. So I was surprised to see how authentic it was' (Ugv18/NCM/09). Many people noted a sense of revelation:

a revelation really yes, a sort of real glimpse of how it would have been – very realistic I thought, from *my* point of view I'm sure. It's very much sanitised of course but I think the guide and the exhibits and the tour itself I think give a very true picture – the best you can in a museum setting of the real metier of the world down there (Ugv10/NCM/09).

There was a general awareness that this had been a real mine and that it portrayed the 'real' mining past but that there were certain areas of material inauthenticity: 'obviously it's set up for tourists now so you know it couldn't suddenly

tomorrow be a working mine, but you got the atmosphere didn't you? (Ugv13/NCM/09). However, there were also a few visitors who thought the underground environment was less real than the real thing. These tended to be visitors who had either mining experience or who had family members who had worked in mines. One visitor compared the two: 'a working mine – totally different, the noises and the heat and stuff like that'. Another visitor was aware that the museum would have to 'clean up' the mine and felt that it wasn't like a real mine in comparison to her existing knowledge: 'it were a lot grimmer in them days I think and they had running water and rats but I mean you can't show that in a museum can you? (Ugv03/NCM/09)

Although the above visitor refers to what *can't* be shown in a museum, many people mentioned the fact that the tour was an 'eye-opener' which suggests it reveals a surprising amount of information. One woman described how it made her 're-see' her past:

I did enjoy it but it really brought it home to you the fact that you actually lived through that but not known it was going on as well, because he did mention in the 1960s how they were still working in quite tribal conditions and I was a child then and all my family were miners but I had no idea - I mean not my direct family, my ancestors have all been miners in the Normanton, Castleford area but it just makes you realise what they've actually gone through, how horrible it was (Ugv04/NCM/09).

Visitors were overwhelmingly positive about their experience with a guide who they recognised as knowing what they were talking about. Comments such as: 'You know he's lived it and worked it' (Ugv21/NCM/08), and 'it adds authenticity – you can believe what they're saying' (Ugv12/NCM/08). One Australian visitor told me how she began to become aware that her guide was not just 'show-paneing': 'I said to him my daughter's father in law, I said "I have the feeling he's not just showpaneing" ... not just a sort of professional guide, you know - obviously he knew a lot about the actualities' (Ugv22/NCM/09). This really added a sense of realism and people were impressed by the level and quantity of information they were given.

### ***Visitor Experience – Quarry Bank Mill***

Visitors enjoyed the realism of the house and appreciated the detail and the accuracy that has been represented: 'the thing I've noticed is that where you've got mantle pieces and they've got candles, the walls are blackened. Now that's probably been recreated but...' (AHv/QB/09). They also liked being able to move

around the house without being kept behind rope or other kinds of barrier and being able to touch or sit on the furniture and feel and smell things:

I like tactile museums because years ago you never used to be able to touch anything and now it makes you sort of more aware of what the real fabrics felt like and the sense of how things really were because you can touch it and play with things and it just makes you feel a part of it and helps you to feel like you could have been there (AHv02/QB/09).

This kind of reconstruction that aims for a high level of accuracy such as hiding electric lights, no central heating and no interpretation panels makes the house feel more 'real' for some people: 'Yeah it kind of brings it alive more, it's more real than rather than just standing and looking at something in the distance, you get more involved and feel more a part of it perhaps' (AHv09/QB/09). The house gave visitors the sense of 'being there':

I think when you can actually see and spend time in a place which has been laid out and done like this it gives you a much better idea of what it was like. It's all right looking at books or seeing it on the television but if you actually stand in places like this, especially when they're coal fired, you get the smell so you get a bit more of the atmosphere. That gives you an idea of what it was like, especially the smells – they're quite good, quite interesting (AHv10/QB/09).

Some visitors felt that this realism allowed them to 'become' an apprentice: 'I kind of got lost and imagined myself as a child' (AHv03/QB/09). Although one visitor mentioned that the presence of other visitors prevented somewhat the kind of imaginative identification that the above visitor talks about:

I suppose cos you're in the place with a lot of other people you know, we're all dressed as we're dressed. You feel a bit out of place. Yeah but I suppose it was as authentic as it can get (AHv04/QB/09).

Being able to enter the house and both experiencing its visual and tactile qualities and listening to the guide gave visitors a 'feel for what it was probably like'. The combination of looking, feeling and listening was thought to be particularly memorable: 'I think once you've been in somewhere like this, you remember this place, you remember the beds, you remember the leeches, you remember the kitchen. Whereas, reading about something, you've to visualise it' (AHv11/QB/09). The ability to 'get a feel' for history through direct encounter with a place and a range of sensory experiences within that space produces a certain kind of historical understanding which differs from 'taught history':

when I was at school I was never really interested in history probably cos too much political history, but this kind of history, I think, coming round a house like this and experiencing and listening you can get a feel for what it was probably like (AHv05/QB/09).

Visitors often referred to their preference for 'live' or 'personal' interpretation which they said they favoured over reading, which may be related to ease of access and a greater quantity and quality of information. A visitor told me: 'personally I like guided tours 'because you don't miss anything and you find out the detail without having to stand and read things for ages - as well you often get more information' (AHv02/QB/09). But more than this, it seems the presence of the guide/interpreter is able to produce a different 'feeling' which is partly to do with their costuming. This costuming begins to get people's imagination and curiosity working, and this, along with the special access the guide gives visitors both physically to the space and verbally to historical narratives makes the visitor feel that they are getting 'inside information'. Visitors expressed a preference for both 'being told' at the same time as 'being there':

[Visitor]I mean we've been to these sort of things before and you sort of walk in and they say this is where they lived and that and you sort of look at it but you don't get it the same do you really?

[Interviewer] Is that because you're being shown round by a guide?

[Visitor] it's because they're explaining it. If you read about it you'd know about it but it doesn't click with you the same as being told while you're there well this is what they did here and that's what happened. You'd read about it on a sheet of paper but you wouldn't quite see it the same I don't think, do you? (AHv01/AB/09)

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored a range of constructions of authenticity in relation to the guided tour. *Place authenticity* is where sites use the 'realness' of the original workplace to establish their guided tours on the site where history actually happened. This place authenticity is reinforced by 'time-themed' display that organises the site in certain respects to seem like it 'would have been' at a certain point in the past. It is also supported by visitor expectations as well as the cultural ideas, myths and associations that they bring with them. The knowledge that this is a real mine and a real apprentice house goes some way towards maintaining a sense of authenticity even where there is obvious construction or staging that have the potential to produce the opposite effect. *Constructed authenticity* seems to be negotiated by interpreters and visitors. There is some evidence from interpreters that their narratives and the management of the visitor experience may counteract any material inauthenticity or lack of meaning that the spatiality of the tour presents. A proportion of visitors interviewed noted the 'staging' of both tours or the fact that they had been 'set up' for tourists but found that the realistic effect

produced by this superseded any sense of inauthenticity. The sense of realism or *experiential authenticity* that many visitors comment on did not seem to derive from any one source but seemed to be a combination of a partially real and partially staged environment along with a believable and knowledgeable guide as well as the willingness to 'play' at 'really being there'. The performance space created by this juxtaposition of place performance and interpreter performance allows a temporary window of *performed authenticity* to exist. Some visitors were less likely to imagine themselves in the past and would notice discrepancies between what they imagined the real past was like and this 'sanitised' version on both tours. Other visitors had a different 'version' of the past produced by their own experience or knowledge and noted the lack of correlation between the displayed past and their own feelings about it. A sense of *existential authenticity* was noted by miner-guides and people with mining connections who felt their past lives were being re-lived and their experiences validated by the underground tour. Ex-miners could be 'themselves' again and visitors visit their own pasts. One miner-guide refers to his doing of the tour as being partly a memorial to mining colleagues who died underground and others referred to the importance of keeping the memory of the coal mining industry alive through the work of the tour.

The use of Wiles' (2003) theory on processional space has outlined in what ways the guided tour might be regarded as a performance that particularly draws on its spatiality. Mapping is a function of tours that allows us to 'see' in different registers. We may be able to imagine history better by connecting a visual scene, with an experience of authenticity along with narrativised information. Guided tours play with the notion of being able to see what might be normally hidden. The tour's performative uncovering of space/information is produced by spatial and verbal narratives that gradually reveal a series of views along with a collection of revelations that may produce shock, horror, pathos or empathy for example. These narratives are characterised by inversions which, I would argue, produce a sense of defamiliarisation. We go 'back' in time, we lose our usual autonomy and need to be led. We are shown mannequins 'as if' they were alive, and we may play at 'being' one of the people from the past. We are shown the 'ordinary' details of the past such as child labour and child punishment as extraordinary, which makes what visitors half-know or thought they knew seem especially real and unpleasant. This is an example of extra-visibility that is invoked by the production of atmosphere and the co-performance between tour space, interpreter and the visitor imagination. The pilgrimage aspect of the tour suggests a sense of transformation that happens as a result of taking part in it. Some visitors do use the underground tour as a way

of connecting with their pasts and reinforcing a sense of identity. The guided tour for them is a stage for the eliciting of memories and the imagination. The archetype of the journey goes hand in hand with this which is a powerful way of imagining ourselves in space accumulating experiences and knowledge.

The guided tour as a characteristic form of performed interpretation has been examined here as a performance practice that opens up space and allows transformation to happen. This is an important contribution to the field of museum performance which has not so far considered the guided tour as performance.

## Chapter 3 – The Demonstration

### Introduction

The first chapter explored the use of first and third person interpreters to bring the environment of the museum ‘to life’ along with the stories inherent in the buildings and objects, and particularly focused on the use of mimetic realism and the production of a sense of the past through the use of various levels of characterisation and dramatised storytelling. The last chapter looked at the production of scenic and experiential spaces and the routinised acting out of a passage through time that the guided tour offers the museum visitor. This chapter considers the role of the demonstration in the former industrial site. Here, the focus is less on the role-taking of interpreters or on the experience of place, and more on the objects and artefacts themselves - bringing the site to life in a different manner. The use of demonstrations in industrial museums and heritage sites is a familiar and well established practice. It is a way of showing artefacts being used and ways of life being practiced, thus indicating the value of the social practices and the web of connections that surround the museum object or artefact. It also is associated with a ‘living’ mode of display that is a feature of open-air museums like Beamish. This chapter introduces examples of demonstration under discussion, divides demonstrations into types and discusses how they are used at case study sites, then provides a brief review of relevant research and discusses authenticity in this particular context. The majority of the chapter provides a detailed discussion of three types of demonstration which I categorise here as: object handling, animation and punctuation type demonstrations.

Research at case study sites indicates that the demonstration is a key form of interpretive performance. This chapter focuses particularly on the role of objects and artefacts in the demonstration, and the relationships they have with human subjects – interpreters and visitors. This object focus therefore complements the focus on Chapter Two on spatiality and in Chapter One on people, and plays a part in answering the research question: ‘How does the site, its buildings, spaces and artefacts contribute to these performances?’ The demonstration has the dual aspect of being explicitly pedagogical as well as being a ‘show’. It has the aim of explaining or making clear, and can use its visual qualities to enhance understanding as well as produce a mesmerising display. The demonstration in the

industrial museum or site is usually a demonstration of work where what is performed may be the operation of a machine, the completion of a task or the making of a product, but its context (the museum) makes it less work-like and more show-like. Importantly this is a ‘live’ form of display which derives its liveness from objects being handled, processes being set in motion, or animated machinery, as well as the human interpreter and their audience.

The case study sites used here to represent the demonstration as a practice are: **Quarry Bank Mill, MOSI, Bradford Industrial Museum** and **Beamish**. As noted previously, demonstrations are not customarily referred to as performances. Like the guided tour, all the demonstrations observed for this research use a third person mode of address even where the costumed demonstrator/interpreter *looked* like they might have been adopting a role. Jackson and Kidd refer to the third person mode of interpretation saying that it is ‘just as performative’ as first person interpretation: ‘the costumed interpreter may not be in role as a 19th century textile worker, but she is demonstrating a skill “as if” in role and her (21st century) explanations to her 21st century audience are undoubtedly performative in their own way’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 19). They are a very common feature in the open-air museum where they may be used to demonstrate ‘traditional’ skills such as sweet-making, baking, printing, pottery-making, chain-making, nail-making, blacksmithing, milling, weaving, slate-splitting etc. But in the gallery spaces of the industrial museum, demonstrations are more likely to show machinery running. At the above case study sites, demonstrations were observed of:

Quarry Bank Mill	hand and machine spinning, weaving
MOSI	machine textile manufacture, engines
Bradford	engines, spinning and weaving machinery
Beamish	sweet-making, baking, winding engine, everyday objects being used, vehicles being driven

Because the majority of the demonstrations I encountered were of running machinery and very few could be said to be demonstrations of skill, I extended the remit of the demonstration into examples of object handling, which I consider to be a much looser and less structured mode of demonstration in order to look at a wider range of types of behaviour and person/object interactions. In order to analyse the demonstration as a form of performed interpretation and to assess its performance-like and interpretation-like qualities, I organise (and list below)

demonstrations into three categories that capture the main types or forms of demonstration observed. This is a means of addressing the research question: 'What is an interpretive performance? How may it be characterised 'as' performance and how does it work as interpretation?'

### **Object Handling**

Here the objects are broken out of their scenic role where they have operated as signs and symbols. The demonstrations of objects at Beamish fall into this category. They may be singled out by the visitor and made into the subject of conversation and potentially handled or touched by the visitor, or the interpreter takes the lead and selects the object from its place in the display and uses it as a prop to organise their dialogue with the visitor. This style of object demonstration allows the visitor to treat the museum as a stage for their performances of reminiscence.

### **Animation**

These are machinery displays that may 'go' by themselves or be made to work by a demonstrator/interpreter. This style of demonstration is represented by the demonstrations of textile spinning and weaving at MOSI, Bradford Industrial Museum and Quarry Bank Mill. Here the object performs itself as it works and the visitor becomes an audience. There are two levels of animated demonstration: 1) the machine working by itself, and 2) the machine being operated by an interpreter where small amounts of narrative are attached by an interpreter to the working of the machinery.

### **Punctuation**

Artefacts here are used within a narrative framework and they perform as punctuation in that they highlight, expand, stop and start the 'story'. The Durn Mill and the Manchester Mills demonstration at MOSI will be used to explore this type. This form of demonstration tends to require feedback from the audience who may supply information to drive the demonstration forwards.

### **Case Study Use of Demonstrations**

In order to address the question: 'how are these performances created, managed and received? I will move on to an analysis of the case study sites and the question of how and why they use demonstrations. They all demonstrate their former function and current purpose as museum and industrial heritage sites by

showing objects in the context of their former use, and by operating various pieces of machinery. These typically produce a visual display accompanied by a narrative of some sort which may be improvised in relation to questioning by individual visitors, or may be entirely scripted in order to cater for a group of people. The attempt to keep machinery 'going' is linked to the issue of sustainability for the industrial museum because without the production of a live display, large machinery and other kinds of industrial object can be difficult to understand for the visitor and contain little aesthetic appeal. How are they to understand a room full of looms that don't do anything? They may be considered fascinating aesthetic objects, tools that are liable to make something, or props that denote nineteenth-century industrialisation. Many of the staff working in my case study museums indicated that machinery that isn't working 'doesn't mean' anything and that visitors would have very little interest in a 'lump of metal' (Mgr/MOSI/09) unless it was moving, making a noise, a smell or producing something. 'Working' exhibits are thought to be 'learning experiences' (Mgr/QB/09) for the visitor who can more easily make sense of the process and its social and economic context when they are participating in the noise, the smell, the sight and the feel of something working. The museum staff who work with machinery also like to keep it working. It may be part of their job to keep it going, repair it, coax it into action and it is thought that this does a better job of conservation than keeping it quiet and tidy. It can also be thought more 'natural' to have a machine working than not, as this quotation from a museum manual entitled *Larger and Working Objects* indicates: 'there is something "unnatural" about a dead steam locomotive forbiddingly roped off on the floor of a warm gallery, festooned with 'keep off' signs' (Ball 1997, 24). It is hard though to keep very old machinery working - the skill is not now readily available and nor are the spare parts. Machines can also sustain damage in their operation and if this happens, the museum is no longer carrying out its conservation function.

by doing demonstrations I think you automatically engage more of a person because you engage a lot of their senses and I think also it means you can engage on different levels. You don't have to talk to somebody, you can just stand and watch and listen (Mgr/QB/09)

The words 'object' and 'artefact' are used interchangeably throughout this chapter, as they are in practice in museums, although the term 'artefact' has a narrower meaning, referring to the man-made object that 'demonstrates skill and human effort' (Hooper Greenhill 2000, 10). The term 'object' is particularly useful when considering the relationships people have with the material world and the subject/object dyad that is present in any interaction between people and artefacts.

I also use the terms ‘tool’, ‘machine’, ‘product’, and ‘prop’. While various terms may be used to describe the same things in the museum, what is particularly interesting is that these terms change according to how an object is used or handled.

Curatorial staff interviewed as part of a focus group at the NCMME indicated that when artefacts are ‘used’ they may no longer be seen as museum objects but as ‘tools’ or ‘props’. But they then have the potential to ‘re-become’ artefacts when they are put back into their static display

(Cur/fg/NCM/09). This suggests that objects that ‘perform’ in some way are changed. But there are various ways of ‘using’ artefacts. They may be carefully handled as museum objects that are being shown to the visitor, or handled in passing as is the case at Beamish where their context and use is considered more important. Objects may be used in a re-animation or a demonstration of process, as is the case at Bradford and Quarry

a lot of the objects that we have - some of them are jaw dropping and you straight away know what it is, like the massive Beyer-Garrett locomotive in the power hall - you know ‘gosh a loco the size of that’, and what have you, but there are things that don’t really readily explain to visitors what they are and I think a lot of what interpretation in museums is about or should be about is telling stories (Mgr/MOSI/09).

Bank Mill or act as part of a storyline, as is the case at MOSI where they may be either props and/or actors. Performance then may necessitate a temporary change such as when an object comes into the foreground as the subject of interpretation or it may bring about a more permanent change, such as when an object or series of objects is re-valued through the attachment of memory and/or new role as actor in a story.

In ceasing to be functional objects, museum objects are as Baudrillard suggests symbolic rather than functional and become ‘marginal objects’ whose main value is to be historical (Baudrillard 2005 [1968], 14). Simply by being in a museum, an object acquires status because it is considered worthy of preservation and is taken out of economic exchange. However, the kind of objects that fill industrial museums may resist this ‘extra-valuation’. Waterwheels, crankshafts, engines, spindles, anvils, chains and pistons and a range of highly specialised machinery may not be displayed in a way that indicates that they are museum items. A museum on the site of former industry may have items that have simply been ‘left behind’ rather than actively collected and they may be left outside looking like they are lying around rather than being actively displayed and interpreted. This is relevant to the demonstration because showing utilitarian objects ‘in use’ or ‘working’ produces more meaning and hence more value that cannot be accessed

by simply viewing them in their static form. The demonstration goes further towards recovering the *experience* of people's working lives as it partially restores the live context of that work. Museum objects that are demonstrated are vehicles for accessing history, which changes their status again from symbolic to functional. This potential for transformation suggests that the demonstrated museum object may become an actor.



Figure 38. Waterwheel Part, Quarry Bank Mill

#### *Bradford Industrial Museum*

Bradford Industrial Museum demonstrate engines in the Motive Power Gallery and textile machinery for short periods on most days and demonstrate some steam engines and printing equipment on one day a week. Visitors can also see heavy horses at work outside in the stable area. The demonstrations of steam and spinning and weaving – run by two ex-textile industry members of staff seem to be mainly intended for parties of school children, but they are accessible for members of the public as well, although they only happen for short periods and on certain days. However, the demonstrators who have the job title: 'front of house staff' are not part of the education service of the museum and seem to have a multi-functional job which is described as such by one of the demonstrators: 'it's

one of these jobs - it can be anything from cleaning toilets to running engines. You've got to be very flexible in your approach and really in a lot of ways ... you're a bit of an ambassador for Bradford' (Int02/BIM/09). This perhaps indicates the status of the demonstration function at this museum. These two members of staff described designing their own structure and style for their demonstrations from their own experience of working with textile machinery, with little input from other staff at the museum and talked about learning how to interpret 'on the job', although they don't refer to themselves as interpreters. One man told me: 'I just think of myself as a guy that's worked in a mill, that knows a bit about what they're talking about and I just try and pass that on - just tell them how it works and a bit about what the work was like' (Int01/BIM/09).

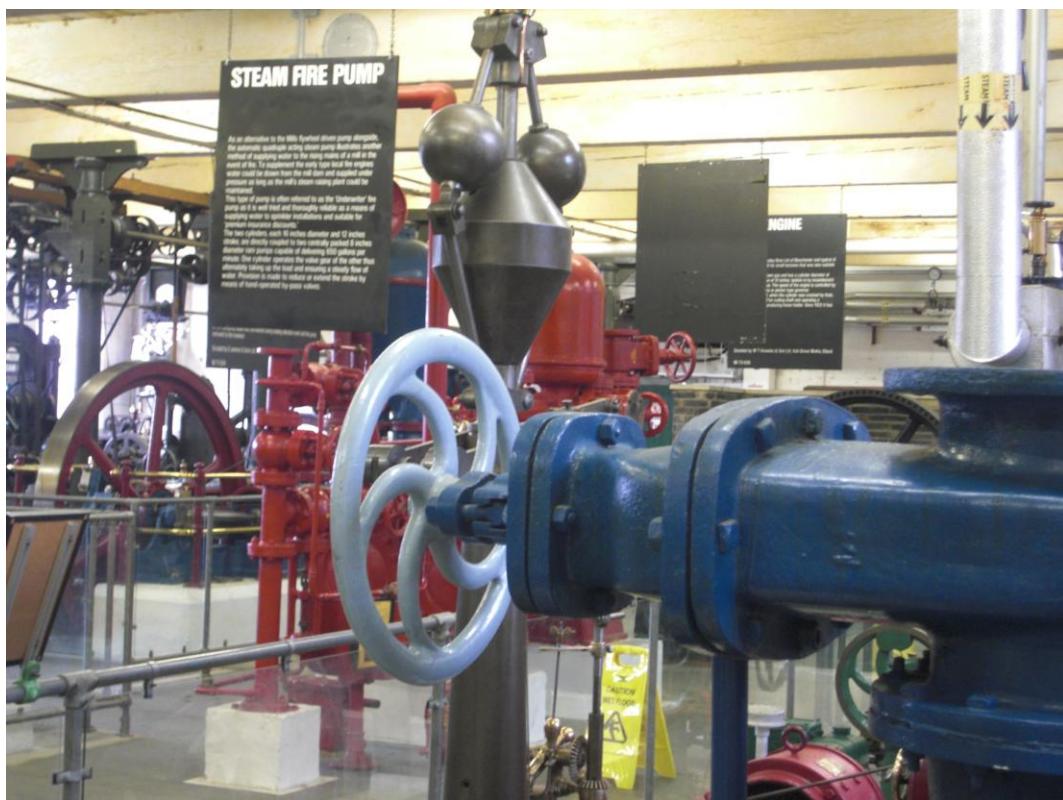


Figure 39. Motive Power Gallery, Bradford Industrial Museum

### *Beamish*

Although machinery is demonstrated at Beamish such as vehicles and mining machinery, I concentrate here on the object-rich displays in the buildings that are, and have the potential to be *handled*. Interpreters at Beamish are referred to as 'demonstrators' which suggests that idea of the demonstration lies behind all their interactions with visitors. Beamish have a very strong visitor focus. A manager described how 'all those people here who work with me are here to engage and everything they do has to be done with the visitor in mind'. She also described how she wanted the visitor interaction with Beamish to be productive:

I want them to go away with something physical, sometimes I want them to leave with a piece of cake in their hands - this was from Beamish and look what I found - its stuck in my jumper, you know, do you remember that? .... I want them to go away with a feeling that they enjoyed their day but they felt like they learnt something as well (Mgr02/Bea/09).

Demonstrators are supposed to look 'as if' they are doing everyday work: for instance, at Home Farm: 'a fire crackles merrily in the grate and the farmer's wife goes about her daily chores' (Beamish website 2011). The visitor 'reads' the buildings and their contents by walking into their environment and piecing meaning together using the objects as clues. The array of things that surround the visitor, and the lack of obvious barriers like glass cases and roped off areas gives the impression that the objects here are available to be used. However, this sense of access may just remain an impression. Visitors may not be able to understand what the objects represent. They need a certain amount of their own knowledge to be able to 'complete' the picture. Where there is no interpreter present, or if visitors do not bring any particular knowledge or memories to these spaces that may attach themselves to some or any of the objects, they remain as a scenic background. If there is an interpreter working inside one of the living or working spaces, visitors tend to gather around them and look at what they are doing. Here any objects they handle may move into the foreground. Visitors interact with demonstrators by 'interrupting' their daily activity rather than by waiting to be addressed. The examples of interaction with visitors I observed were all driven by visitors walking into a space, looking around and talking to the demonstrator in that space. Objects are often the prompt to start a conversation and the way for the visitor to begin asking questions. Demonstrators may be already 'using' objects as they go about their task of inhabiting the buildings although my experience of visiting was that things were giving the impression of being used rather than being more formally 'demonstrated'. A manager suggests that this is the case when she talks about how she wants the demonstrators to think in relation to their work/display spaces: 'how am I going to make this space *look* as if I've just left it? let's make this *look* as if we're making scones today' [my italics] (Mgr02/Bea/09).

### MOSI

At MOSI, there were originally two teams of presenters: demonstrators who were responsible for running engines and machinery in the Power Hall and in the Textile Gallery, and facilitators who worked in 'Experiment' - the interactive science gallery. These teams were merged to become one 'public programmes team' (Mgr/MOSI/09) and these staff became 'presenters'. The various types of interpretation: science shows, demonstrations and costumed

interpretation are referred to as ‘strands’ within the interpretation strategy that aims to:

Provide a varied ‘experiential’ style of interpretation which is both contextual and dynamic, including stunning objects, working historic machinery, walk-through displays, multimedia interpretation, interactive exhibits and activities, demonstrations and live interpretation  
(Interpretation Strategy/MOSI/2007-12).

This merging seems to have resulted in a more ‘performed’ type of demonstration. I observed two ‘acted’ demonstrations in the Power Hall (James Watt and the Durn Mill), carried out as first-person interpretation as well as a scripted textile demonstration that used the ‘storyline’ of Manchester’s development as a major cotton producer. The Durn engine is a steam engine which once powered the Durn Mill in Rochdale. It is interpreted by a nineteenth century engineer who chats to visitors in character, in front of the engine in the Power Hall and then runs through all the processes necessary to start and run steam engines using models like a small piston to demonstrate, questioning the visitors all the way through, and miming gestures and verbal repetition for emphasis. Eventually the demonstration culminates in the engine running. The Head of Interpretation explained that the Textile Gallery was organised to facilitate demonstrations that showed the processing of cotton from its raw form through spinning to weaving. Manchester Mills is the longest demonstration observed: about 30-40 minutes. The demonstration takes visitors around the machinery on a raised walkway so that it is easier to see and hear what is going on. Each ‘stage’ in cotton production is imagined in its factory setting. Visitors are told we are going to ‘go’ to our carding room for example. And at each stage they are given a piece of the cotton to feel how the process has changed it. Along the way they are given contextualising information about the working and living conditions of mill workers and the dangers involved in mill work. Time progresses from the early nineteenth century to the early Twentieth Century during this demonstration without being drawn attention to. So by the end of the demonstration in the weaving section, visitors learn about women working in mills at the beginning of the twentieth century.

### *Quarry Bank Mill*

Quarry Bank Mill use the machine demonstration on a wider basis than any of the other museums surveyed. This is in line with their having formerly been a ‘working mill’. The Learning and Interpretation Manager explained how in the past the Mill was staffed almost entirely by ex-mill workers, and cotton products were produced in order to sell in the mill shop, but for ‘financial reasons’ the National

Trust decided to end this practice and demonstrate the machinery solely in order to show 'what happened here in the past' rather than to be actually productive. In addition, the supply of ex-mill workers has dwindled greatly over the years and machine demonstrators are often interpreters rather than ex-mill workers. This was seen as a problem in relation to the loss of skills that the ex-workers possessed:

It's not just a question of switching on a piece of machinery, its months and months and months of training and you can learn to switch the machinery on but we can't just have people here that just switch the machines on because the machines will stop, so we've now got a mixture of people who've been here a long time: some people who've worked in mills themselves and newer people and it probably works quite well now because we've got a nice mix of people but obviously in the future those people who have those skills won't be available anymore and I've talked this over, I don't know what the answer is. The only thing is we're trying to share our skills as much as possible - where once people came and worked on one floor on limited machinery now we try and train on every floor (Mgr/QB/09).

The eighteenth century mill building is used to demonstrate water power, and various types of cotton spinning and weaving from early hand-working to the mechanised eighteenth to the twentieth-centuries. The beginning of the textile process is represented by demonstrations of spinning and weaving using hand machinery. This section is staffed by two demonstrators using hand-looms and spinning wheels in a reproduction cottage with thatched roof, stone floor, fireplace and two bags of raw cotton. The next section of the mill shows mechanised carding and spinning and here timed demonstrations of various machines occur throughout the day. On another floor there are a range of looms with one demonstrator weaving with a number of looms running at a time. On my visits there was roughly one demonstrator to every floor to show the variety of mechanised processes and machinery was operated for a few minutes at a time and then the demonstrator would talk to any visitors who had gathered around them.

## Research Context to the Demonstration

Although the demonstration is a widely used practice, very little study has been made in relation to it. It is considered as part of a range of interpretive practices, but comment is limited to description of how the practice may be used to facilitate interpretation (Alfrey and Putnam 1992; Alsford and Parry 1991; Colsell 1993; Price 2006; Risk 1994) rather than analyse its constituent parts or look at it as a performance practice. Although this research considers a range of demonstrations that may not be entirely representative of the practice as a whole

(craft demonstrations are a notable exception) it begins to develop an analytical framework which is missing for this form of interpretation. It also places the demonstration alongside the guided tour as an typical form of performed interpretation.

In relation to the display of machinery in industrial museums, many critics note the difficulty of representing the human context of industrialisation when machinery is put on display and/or operated (Alfrey and Putnam 1992, 7; Davies 1996, 105; Price 2006, 115). In relation to the communicative potential of objects generally in museums there has been much debate about how much they can communicate by themselves without a museum-imposed narrative. Whilst the majority of this important area is outside the scope of this thesis, it is worth noting that there are broadly two positions. A relativist position argues that 'objects have no intrinsic value or meaning ...apart from the particular social contexts in which we may encounter them' (Handler 1992, 21). Another position suggests that objects do communicate through their materiality, and that human agency is not absent from perception when gazing at the industrial object: 'visitors can perceive materials, texture, process, complexity, agency, and scale when they view industrial products and tools. These perceptions do not depend on verbal messages' (Roth 2000, 42). Lubar also argues for the communicative potential of industrial objects: 'Because of the place of machines in industrial society, at the intersections of the interactions of groups as well as the interactions of individuals, they are among the most revealing of cultural artifacts' (Lubar 1993, 198). Berner notes that 'the representations of users and usage are built into the design of technological objects' (Berner 2008, 320) and so what may seem in some industrial museums to be a de-contextualised and depopulated version of industrial history is not – it *implies* the human. In the design of complex and/or vast machinery: we may be able to imagine someone's grand ideas of increased production and economic expansion for example. The absence of the human is actually very suggestive. Margaret Mead noted in 1953 that 'the machine is not body patterned. It has its own existence, its own rhythm, to which man must submit' (Mead in Classen 2005, 407). An array of machinery that seems to have no 'room' for the human makes us think harder about what it must have been like to have been here and survived in such conditions.

A key issue of this research is that of subject and object. Although museums aim to tell the human stories behind their artefacts, they have a necessarily object focus. The most frequent mode of display in relation to industrial machinery noted at the museums in question is one which highlights process, and

secondary to that, chronology. However the sense of living and working that these museums aim to produce is as much a production made by members of staff as it is by working machinery. This chapter aims to consider the various senses of animation that the demonstration produces. The idea of presence and aura is useful here. The sense of aura that Walter Benjamin (1968 [1935]) describes relates to the work of art and is associated with its uniqueness and life-history. Technological artefacts are not generally regarded as works of art (although in some senses they could be) because they are part of the productive rather than the aesthetic sphere but they do possess a sense of aura. Their rareness and association with particular inventors and manufacturers may produce this, but it is also created by use. This incorporates the operating, manufacturing and repair skills that have gone into the object over the years, but also its continual relationship with the human user. A key question about the demonstration, then, is how its performance brings out or develops this sense of aura that surrounds the objects in the industrial museum and whether the theatrical sense of presence that is associated with the live performance can be said to belong to the live animated machine and/or the human demonstrator. The traces of past human presence can be explored in demonstrations that draw attention to bodily practices that accumulate around an object or when an object's sensory associations are manifested by demonstrating noise, complex movement, smell, vibration or by producing a visual/verbal spectacle that may create a sense of vicarious horror or pathos. Aura and presence can be created by a sense of authenticity which in the industrial museum may also derive from the presence of ex-workers as well as authentic machinery and objects. Is it the work the object does that animates, punctuates or creates a scene, or that of the interpreter? How far can it be said that being activated *is* performing? I will consider the shifting sense of agency that may transfer into objects when they 'do' something. I would suggest that the demonstration can destabilise subject/object boundaries present in these situations so that the agency that is usually ascribed only to the human subject can attach itself to the presented object which may then become a subject of sorts in its own right. The object in interpretation thus could be said to share a sense of agency with its human counterpart<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 9.

In order to develop a nuanced understanding of the performative aspects of the demonstration, this chapter shows specifically how it draws on different forms of presence:

- The atmosphere of a ‘working’ space
- The presence of the ‘real thing’
- The insight that occurs when an event of animation makes a certain process meaningful
- The presence of skill
- The presence of the past through the creation of experience

These aspects will be seen throughout the following sections of this chapter: object handling, animation and punctuation.

Semiotic and phenomenological theory is valuable in considering the ‘reading’ and perception of the scenography of the industrial museum, particularly in relation to the ‘working’, moving or handled object. Objects and machinery being used mean something different to when they are not. They move out of the purely visual realm of perception and into a more phenomenal mode. The demonstration uses what Eco refers to as the most basic form of performance – ostension (Eco 1999, 103), where what is being said is performed by directing the gaze to a visual scene or activity of some sort that encapsulates and represents the message, and which may remove the need for words. Semiotic analysis is particularly relevant to a reading of the museum’s visual ‘scene’ but less so when it comes to the perceptual impressions that demonstrations may have on their audiences. The dominant mode of museum display is ‘ocularcentric’ (Classen 2005, Dudley 2010), and the museum has developed primarily as a visual site which corresponds to the emphasis on the visual aspect of culture in general in the nineteenth-century (Classen 2005, 283). Classen explains how sight became prioritized at the top of an evolutionary scale and that touch became associated with ‘non rational or infantile behaviour’ (Classen 2005, 283). Now that museums prioritize the visitor experience, appeals to the senses are frequent. In the demonstration these are represented by the feel, the smell and the sound of working machinery and through narratives which ask us to imagine what it was like to be in these places when they were working ‘for real’. Like the performances described in Chapters One and Two, the demonstration alters the visitor’s mode of perception in the museum from a dominantly visual one to a more embodied one. The connotative and denotative meanings of objects shift with this alteration. The ‘working’ display that is brought to life in some way, may share semiosis with the theatre here. Bert States

describes how:

Theatre ingests the world of objects and signs only to bring images to life. In the image, a defamiliarized and desymbolized object is “uplifted to the view” where we see it as being phenomenally heavy with itself. A transitional moment of shock signals the onset of the image....One might say that the force of its significations, felt all at once, overloads the artistic circuit...it is perceived not as a signifier but as a signified (States 1992, 27).

Theatre transforms the real world of objects into a version of themselves in the same ways as the museum re-figures objects' meanings, but the 'acting' of the object as a display of 'working' breaks it out of that representative frame. It is no longer 'standing for' but 'is'. The way objects are displayed and 'brought to life' by working or being handled in the museum alters the meanings they may have for visitors. The varying styles of demonstration used contribute to this meaning-making, as each creates a different situation and range of practices that the visitor may adopt.

## The Demonstration and Authenticity

As I discuss in Chapter Two, the *material authenticity* of the museum – its location and or buildings that were once 'original' workplaces go a long way towards creating an authentic experience for visitors. In addition, a demonstration may show 'real' workers who have experienced working with the artefacts and machinery and know how to use it. Here we are looking at the skill of an ex-industry worker (in the case of **Bradford** and **Quarry Bank Mill**), or the interpreter who *indicates* the skill of an industrial worker alongside the operation of machinery. However, none of the industrial museums I visited in the course of this research particularly highlighted the presence of ex-industrial workers - maybe because there were so few of them. At **MOSI** I was told there was only one textile worker left, at **Bradford** there were two, at **Quarry Bank**, a handful and at **Beamish**, again only a handful - mostly in the drift mine exhibit. It may be the case that operating machinery is less 'scenic' than a craft demonstration and although their skill and handling of machinery may be something exceptional and well worth watching, it can be difficult to understand<sup>37</sup>.

The physical presence of large and working machines can produce an *experiential authenticity*, where the museum frame disappears and there is the

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<sup>37</sup> See *Recommendations* no. 10.

impression of unmediated access to reality. The visitor may become mesmerised by the working of machinery and feel themselves to be *inside* the display. Very large objects working or several machines together can be said to produce a sense of the sublime, referred to by Matthew Roth (quoting Nye) as the ‘technological sublime’ (Roth 2000, 41). The sublime is associated with visual spectacle and magnificence but is not necessarily a pleasant or even entirely enjoyable experience. It is associated with scale – which is generally unimaginably vast, but which could also in this context represent extraordinary complexity; extreme feelings of shock or wonder and the workings of the imagination which can hardly encompass what may seem alien in comparison to our own human bodies and minds. This sense of the sublime may be also produced by the shadow image of the human work that is woven into the work of the machine. This work may be imagined as the ingenuity and persistence of the inventor who created the machine, but is more often imagined as the gruelling, tedious and extremely dangerous work of the machine operators who had to work for long hours in what now seem impossibly inhumane conditions. Thus the industrial sublime can produce a sense of horror and wonder as it conjures up images of the past as viscerally real. But because we only have access to objects – the waterwheels, looms and steam engines in the industrial museum, there is always a distance or deferral between our human subjectivity and those of the past. This can allow for a certain romanticisation which the following quotation from Laura Barton writing for *The Guardian* about Quarry Bank Mill indicates:

Stand among the looms today, feel the heat brush your face and the floorboards shake, and listen to the roar of the flyer frames. There stretch the beams of yarn and the 500 bobbins set out in the creel, each holding up to 12 miles of cotton. A cool, damp stairway leads down to the wheel, itself; a giant, a monster, grown mossy and rusted, its colossal spokes still turning, heaving the river. You can get lost in the vastness of it, in the motion of it, in the grumble and groan of its working, feel yourself floored by this rush of the past’ (Barton 2009).

The technological sublime may produce a ‘short cut’ to the sense of *performed authenticity* mentioned in Chapter Two which is a combination of a partially real and partially staged environment as well as the willingness to ‘play’ at ‘really being there’ which in the case of animated machinery takes us into the past through the experience of sensory excess.

## **The Meaning Making Process and Demonstrations**

In order to begin unravelling how a demonstration is an interpretive

performance and to develop knowledge in the field of museum performance I outline three ways that industrial objects may produce meaning via the demonstration<sup>38</sup>. This draws somewhat on Sauter's (2000) theory of the theatrical event, in which he argues that meaning is made in relation to the sensory, the artistic and the symbolic levels of 'theatrical communication' (Sauter 2000, 31-33). The categorisation of the meaning making process in the demonstration I am making here is a valuable contribution to knowledge in this field as it enables a link to be made between the performativity of objects with performances that are made around them by the museum, museum staff and visitors.

### ***Object as Physical Presence***

This is to do with the object's *physical presence* and the sensory impressions the visitor perceives when they witness its physicality. This can be a complex of sensory, emotional, intellectual and imaginary responses. What the object does here may be to perform a series of movements in the case of the animation type demonstration, or physically illustrate a verbal point being made or produce a visual/sensory impression in the form of a picture.

### ***Object as Example of Type***

This and the next category are more connected with the object's *symbolic* meanings. This category deals with the objects' meaning in a sequential or taxonomic structure which may be more functional. This can be chronological or process-led. In the sense of animation, it can demonstrate how advanced it is or what process it does. In the case of punctuating a narrative it can play the part of initiating a story, answering a question or standing in for words. In the case of the handled object, meaning is made by linking objects that belong together either by type or by time period.

### ***Object as Historically Significant***

The next level is connected with the object's meaning as *historical* object – the part they play in history. This may be an archival history referred to by the museum, or a personal history that is brought to the site by the visitor. Fantasies myths and memories may attach themselves to objects, which are part of the way they may be interpreted.

These categories will be applied to the following discussion of the three types of demonstration under consideration: Object handling, animation and

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<sup>38</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 5.

punctuation type demonstrations.

## Object Handling



Figure 40. Rag Rugging in a Pit Cottage at Beamish

At **Beamish**, contextualised display is the main mode of producing interpretation. Here objects are put ‘back’ into their ‘original’ surroundings or given a new original context to be part of. Here, there is a strong emphasis on social history and the people of the period and so the social context predominates as an organising concept. This is in contrast to the more usual chronological or process-led display in the museum or industrial site where objects are placed in groups according to their function. At Bradford for example all the weaving and spinning equipment is in the weaving gallery and all the engines in the motive power gallery and at Quarry Bank Mill the process of cotton production moves from spinning wheels and handlooms to mechanical spinning and weaving equipment. At Beamish we do not have this sense of chronology or the ability to compare different ways of doing the same thing; we are in the perpetual present where we become part of the visual scene. This ‘presentness’ produces the effect of something being about to happen. 1913 as a time period with which to organise the exhibits has been chosen deliberately. It was the year of maximum coal production in the

region and so there would have been a sense of wealth and productivity but as we know, things changed dramatically the next year in 1914 with the advent of the First World War. The knowledge visitors have about ‘what happened next’ allows them to ‘complete’ the display. Therefore, time ‘standing still’ is a useful construct to allow the visitor access to the world of the display. We make time ‘go’ again by ‘continuing’ the history in both an objective way (as we piece together what we know of historical events) and a personal one (when we attach the history we know or have experienced to the displays). In this way, it is the visitor who makes the history ‘living’.

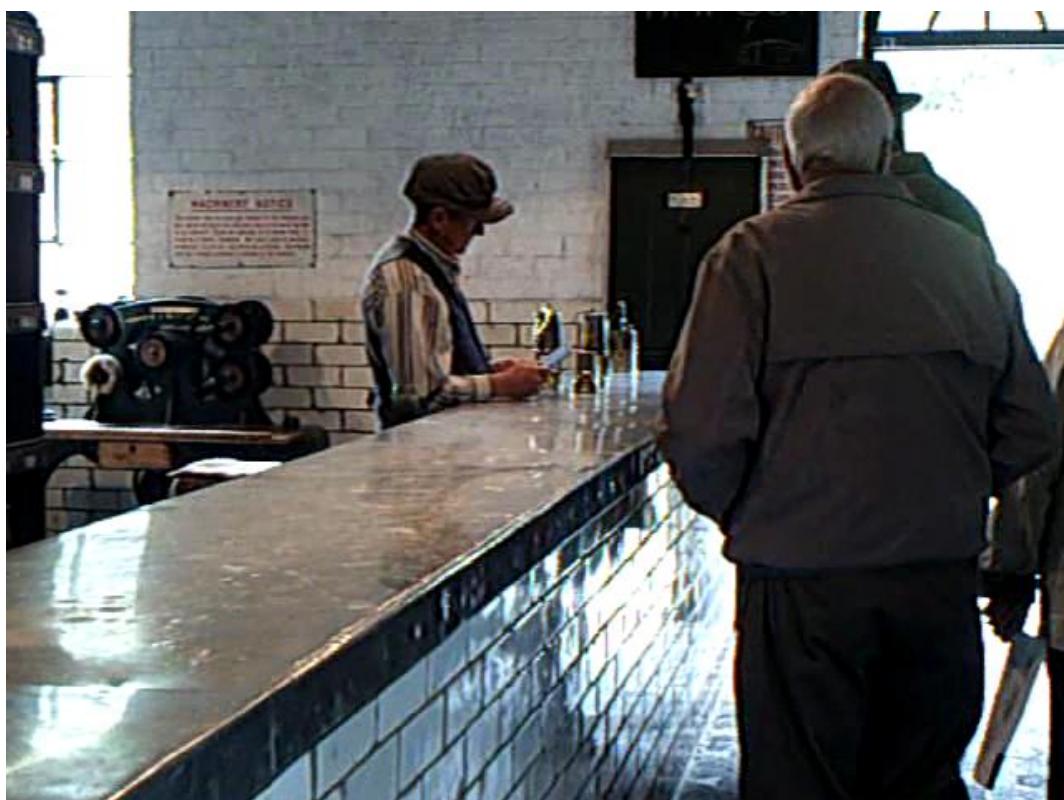


Figure 41. Demonstrating in the Lamp Cabin, Beamish

In contrast to a more linear chronology or typology type display, here objects are organised in concentric circles based on communities. One of these circles is the Pit Village which encompasses cottages, the schoolroom, the chapel, the lamp cabin and the drift mine. Each of these buildings encloses a set of representative objects and there is a display space that may be walked into where objects are available to be touched surrounded by things that may be fenced off or out of reach. Here in a highly contextualised display setting, the dominant mode of performance is the *mise-en-scene* or the physical space that may be filled or brought alive by the visitors’ imaginations and memories. The museum *mise-en-scene* communicates meaning by providing a rich visual environment that gives a

sense of 'being' in a different time or place. This kind of display space can be used by visitors as a stage as they put themselves 'into the picture'. This living history style of display aims to give the impression of naturalness and tries to erase the impression of the museum's work in its representation. This technique allows the visitor a greater sense of access and the 'illusion of experiential connection with the objects of their vision' (Sandberg 1995, 325). This contextualisation generates a sense of reality through the resituating of objects in the context of their original use, in both senses 'as if' the original inhabitants had just stepped out of the picture.

There is the feeling of being in the presence of 'the real thing' along with the suggested presence of the original inhabitants. The sense of being a living museum is intended by the site seeming like it is a working community. The shops are genuinely used for commercial purposes, the vehicles are used to transport visitors around the site, it seems as if the 'householders' in the cottages are doing something. Therefore many of the artefacts in this museum are being used, but in fact, they are only being used to show the visitor how 'they would' have been used and to provide a usable physical environment.

At this museum the visitor experience is paramount, and so the history that is provided here is designed above all else to be accessible, familiar and preferably within living memory. The original concept for the museum was that it would be collected from 'ordinary' people's lives: 'a representative collection of objects illustrating a way of life in the region, which was rapidly disappearing' (Atkinson 1999, 87). A member of staff explained how this familiarity worked:

There's an element of reminiscence but there's also an opportunity to experience something that you have no concept of as well, so although when you look round the site, the Masonic Hall is different from the rest of the museum, when you go to the chapel, most people have been to church. And you go to the school and everybody has been to school. You can go to the sweetshop, we've got sweetshops today. So if you imagine going round Pockerley ...you can relate that to your own kitchen today (Mgr02/Bea/09).

During interviews with members of staff, the issue of the Masonic Hall came up several times as an example of a type of environment that most people would not be familiar with, and which was somewhat at odds with the production of a familiar environment. There was also the question of living memory moving ever onwards so that eventually the years 1830 and 1913 would contain very little that visitors of the future would be able to recognise and talk about, and so the museum recognise that a strategy for continuing relevance needs to exist. A member of staff described how seeing the past displayed in a physically contextualised form was useful for the visitor:

I think coming to the museum and seeing objects in their correct setting and seeing people in the costume and talking about doing proggy mats and so on, and then watching a television documentary about the strikes - about how the miners went on strike and what that felt like - and the two things are connected because I can place that. I can place that person in that cottage and imagine them living that life (Mgr02/Bea/09).

Beamish makes it easier for people to 'place' the past in its right place and provides a physically generated resource which allows connections to be made. Further to this, the visitor may then have a different 'picture of their own family's history:

it's within living memory, so grandmas can talk to their grandsons or their granddaughters and say 'my grandma had one of these ... when I was little so again then that changes the picture you have about your family in the past and...it's about layer on layer (Mgr02/Bea/09).

Although this is a museum, the suggestion of *use* in relation to the objects in the buildings gives them a different status to artefacts that might be in glass cases in gallery space. They are less valued for their aesthetic or rarity value and more for the fact that they have been used. Research respondents at Beamish referred to artefacts variously as 'hooks' or 'visual aids' suggesting a different sense of access to artefacts for the visitor than is usual in a museum. This experience-driven relation of the visitor to the artefact may also make the objects 'clues' for the visitor who then works out 'where' they are in time and space according to the situation of the clues. There are a variety of ways in which the visitor may interact with the objects on display. Although a sensory appreciation is suggested, the primary mode of apprehension is visual. When visiting Beamish I walked into buildings, gave the display a good look and then maybe touched some of the things within reach. I also tended to brush the edges of tables, hold door frames and stroke textiles. Looking may generate a focus on a particular object which may be selected for extra visual attention or may be able to be held. If there is an interpreter present, they may be asked about this particular thing. This may generate further gentle handling. Sometimes the interpreter connects the visitor with the artefact by singling it out. I observed in the lamp cabin an interpreter standing behind the counter with an array of miner's lamps in front of him. He was talking to a couple of people and then reached out and gestured to a woman to hold out her hand. He then placed the handle of the lamp in her hand and she then held it suspended over the counter. 'It's quite heavy isn't it?' he then says. Very commonly, other visitors are talking to interpreters and it is then possible to overhear what they are saying and temporarily adopt their focus. The interpreter thus negotiates our access to objects. They may complement our looking with a

guided looking of their own. In the previously mentioned lamp cabin, demonstrators are there to add information to what is not seen. One man held a book open in front of visitors to show them a picture of a canary being revived in a cage with an oxygen bottle over the top of it in order to add a layer of information to the display. In this way Beamish produce meaning by making archival history personal. The demonstrator stands in for the people in the past as they inhabit ‘their’ spaces. History is also made personal by the memories and stories of the visitor which are often ‘added’ to the display. This represents the third type of meaning generation mentioned above: *objects as historically significant*. Handling objects may make them familiar to us or their history be revealed by an interpreter and it may then assume a special significance. This relies on a network of associations, memories, stories and myths. Demonstrating objects like this may release the ‘strength of feeling’ (Pearce 1994) that exists in them or in us, which may be initiated by our touching or paying regard to them. Here the presence of the real thing may become augmented by a kind of flow that travels between person and thing which is the experience of a certain kind of reality. This is the location of authenticity for performances of reminiscence.

## Animation

The meaning of the animated display relies heavily on its physical presence which produces a visual and experiential narrative not reliant on words to carry its meaning. The idea of *animism* where non-human objects can be imagined as being alive or having some sort of life force can be influential here. Many museum workers who use and care for machinery are ‘enthusiasts’ who have a passion for a particular process, type of manufacture or type of object. A demonstrator at **Bradford Industrial Museum** described working with steam engines as ‘a labour of love’ and talked about how the steam engines he used required a high level of attention and care:

You know, you’re listening all the time for them changing noise, things going wrong - you know you’re constantly watching and checking them and looking and walking round with an oil can in your hand all day, you know...I suppose it’s a bit like a child, you know the sound of your own child - you know if it’s right. My partner calls them my babies, they’re me babies, aye (Int/02/BIM/09).

People with a particular interest and fascination with particular types of machines may have a special bond with them and those who use them and may (as the above quotation indicates) ascribe human characteristics to them. As Berner states: ‘Working with machines is an emotional task’ and this is because we

may not be able to make them work properly, we may feel reduced to being a part of the machine and have to compensate for this by producing for ourselves the identity of an expert, who can handle and understand the machine and its ways (Berner 2008, 330-331). I will consider firstly the animated machine on its own and then move on to look at the relationship between the interpreter and the machine and how that affects the physical presence of the machine and of the person. Animation in this context is associated with the ‘bringing to life’ of the artefact, which for a machine means making it ‘go’ or setting it in motion. This involves a preparation and turning on process which in some cases (such as steam powered machinery) can take time, a certain amount of running time which

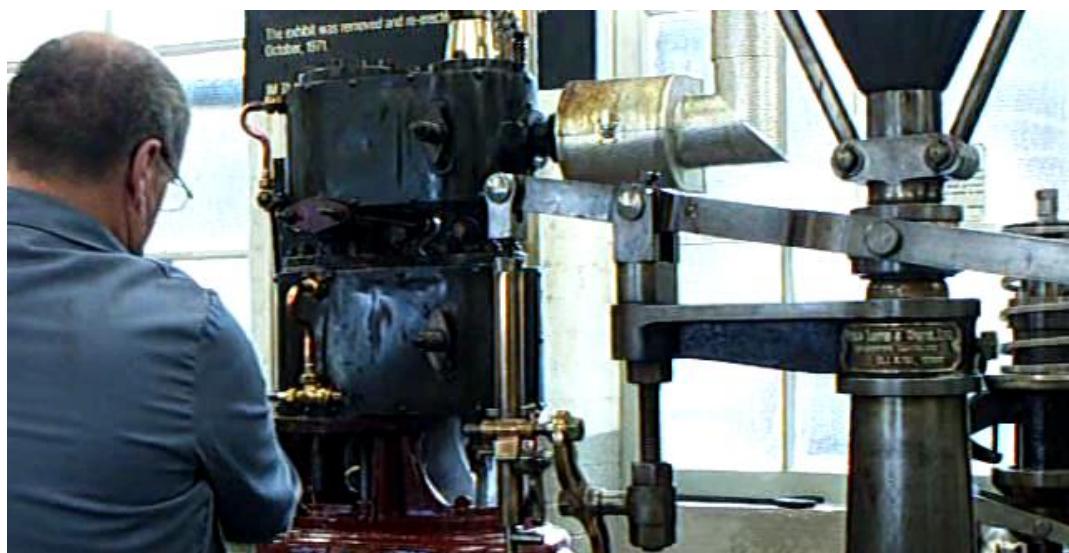


Figure 42. Steam Demonstration, Bradford Industrial Museum

can be as little as a couple of minutes (particularly in the case of mechanised spinning and weaving machinery) but can be much longer if the machine can easily keep itself going and does not produce too much noise, and then a turning off or shutting down. There are two senses of animation that occur in their demonstration. One is the machine ‘working’, when it is powered through some energy source and certain of its working parts are moving, and the other is the sense of the machine producing its animation via human intervention. For example a spinning wheel needs the interpreter’s arms and legs to make it work. This distinction is not just the difference between hand production and mechanised production: powered machinery simply requires a different kind of human intervention. In this consideration of the various ways that machinery can produce interpretation it seems that animating a machine can produce both a visual ‘script’ that shows how it works, as well as a visual sense of liveliness that relates to its

former productivity. McAuley (whilst not considering machinery particularly) notes that 'objects contain a script' which can be activated physically and contain their own 'gestural demands' and Berner describes how the industrial worker enacts the machine's script that is inscribed within it (Berner 2008, 321). This idea of script refers to the many ways the object or machine can be used or set in motion. In a museum like Beamish objects may be made to perform their 'original' tasks: mantelpieces hold ornaments, jugs contain water, breadboards are used for cutting bread, printing presses used to print leaflets, and they are also used in performances of reminiscence where they are often only looked at, but occasionally held reverentially, held up to be seen better, or stroked gently. There are a set number of processes that a machine contains that can be set in action by an operator but in the museum these are limited by the age of the machine that may be wearing out. The machine's script may not be performed the same every time it is turned on, as different parts are liable to break. People performing with machines enact these scripts with gestures that indicate how they use the object, how practised they are in doing so and which betray their attitude to that object. The gestures that people use when demonstrating machinery may exceed the movement needed to operate that machinery and may suggest a mimicking of some aspect of the machine's movement or the effect that the machine may have on the human. The demonstrator's gestures may be necessary for the working of the machine or they may be disassociated from it and done in order to express the working of a machine. Thus, the expressive human body may accompany or replace the moving object and so it is hard to 'place' the source of the liveness that the human demonstrator brings into being.



Figure 43. Textile Gallery, Bradford

I would suggest that the presence created by the demonstration derives partly from the living human - both in terms of the demonstrator who works the machine and in terms of the audience, and partly from the machine. Is it us who give 'life' back to the machine or does it in some way 'live' without us? It may seem obvious that without us, machines simply wouldn't exist, and yet there is a certain life force they contain. This may consist of all the past and potential future meanings they embody and a sense of past and potential action that may produce a semiotic excess akin to 'liveness'. It may be the museum that keeps these obsolete machines alive through the potential the museum space holds to make juxtapositions and transformations between one thing and another, and between ideas and things. It may be these juxtapositions that allow objects to 'speak': that position objects as familiar and recognisable, that could fit into our own remembered life history or that make them strange and alien – outside our own experience or culture. Museums embody the idea of the biographical or the life history and extend this from the person to the material object. Objects have life histories too, they are more permanent than us, more durable and they can have many different incarnations. The issue of productivity is another factor in the 'liveliness' of the machine that 'goes'. It may simply be running in order to produce a sense of movement and an indication of how it may have worked when it was connected to its original power source, was linked to other machines and/or made an end product. This is the most common form of animation and is the case for most of the demonstrations analysed here. The only form of commodity productiveness in the animated demonstrations I have observed are those of spinning and weaving, where cloth is produced and sometimes sold. This is a feature of Quarry Bank Mill who until recently were calling themselves a 'working mill' because they were able to produce quantities of cotton cloth for sale, whereas now they cannot and so refer to themselves as a 'working museum'.

In relation to the categories of meaning-making introduced earlier, the animated machine demonstration relies on the physical presence of the machine and the sensory impressions the visitor perceives when they witness its physicality which can be sensory, emotional, intellectual and imaginary. The working machine changes a museum display from a static visual scene to an event – a performance of doing as well as a performance of work. The status of authenticity that the machine as object may possess is altered by this event and this is connected with the shift from a dominant visual perception to that of experiential perception.

### ***Machine Animation***

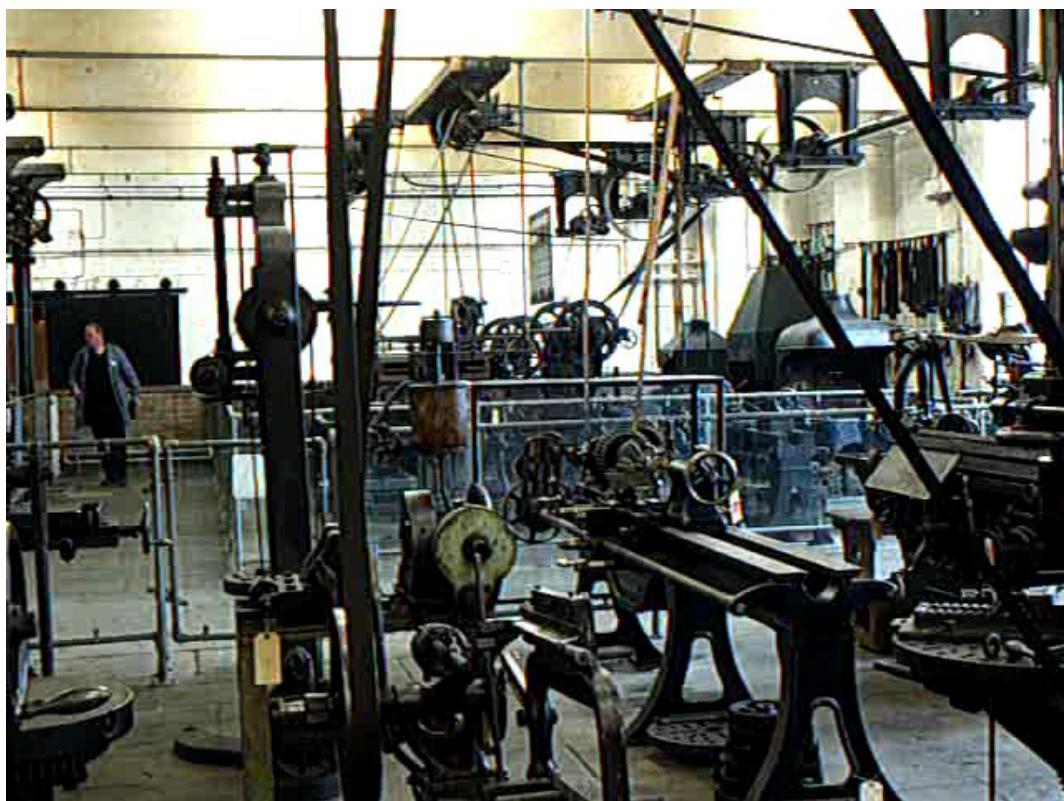


Figure 44. Animated Machinery at Bradford Industrial Museum

What the machine *is* changes by means of animation to what it *does*. A cotton spinning mule may be a rare example of its type. Standing in a museum it conveys information about its materiality, manufacture and age. We deduce the fact of its productiveness from its contextualisation in the industrial museum and we may compare it with other types of spinning machine. Looking at the machine may trigger an aesthetic response, but it will be hard to imagine how it moved and how people interacted with it. Setting it in motion immediately restores the social context to the machine. We can see how its vast scale is disproportionate to that of the human body. Its movement across the floor, the intense noise it produces and the numerous threads it spins makes working with it, keeping it going, stopping the threads from snapping and cleaning the loose cotton fibres out from around the machine, difficult and hazardous. This machine performance can produce an intense sensory experience for the visitor. This 'happening' of the machine working directly connects us to the past through the machine that performs its original function. However, this animation may actually only convey a fragment of its original activity in the sense that the working machine is not often connected to its original power source, or to other machines, or to its end product.

The direct connection we feel with the past and the sense of authenticity the machine conveys is actually produced by the reproduction of an original event. The passage from a ‘working mill’ to a ‘working museum’ to a museum with some working objects may make that original event seem further away. As ex-workers are replaced with professional interpreters there may be even less sense of the past. A delicate balance needs to be struck in order to maintain the aura of the original workplace between creating a sense of ‘how it was’ by using ‘original’ machinery and ex-workers, and creating a sense of liveliness and comprehensibility.

The animated mode of demonstration produces a visual spectacle which can be very compelling, producing the ‘enchanted looking’ that Stephen Greenblatt describes ‘when the act of attention draws a circle around itself from which everything but the object is excluded, when intensity of regard blocks out all circumambient images, stills all murmuring voices’ (Greenblatt 1991, 49). The workings of machinery can produce a mesmerising effect where attention is captured by the rhythmic repetitions of the various parts of the machine – the shuttle that flies back and forth, the wheel that turns endlessly. Machinery that is ‘left’ to run continuously such as at **MOSI** who have a power gallery with a range of different types of engines from different periods, and at **Bradford** where the various kinds of engines are set to work for short periods, can draw attention into the machine and away from the general surroundings of the museum. Merleau Ponty describes how when we concentrate on an object its background disappears:

I become anchored within it...I close up the landscape and open the object...It is necessary to put the surroundings in abeyance the better to see the object, and lose in background what one gains in focal figure, because to look at the object is to plunge oneself into it’ (Merleau Ponty 2002 [1945], 78).

Being drawn into the workings of the machine can temporarily obliterate the rest of the museum. Although it is very absorbing of attention, I found it more difficult to ‘see’ the machinery that was left running without the presence of an interpreter and the captivation that these moving wheels and pistons created became an unfocused kind of looking where the eye is drawn to one part and then another and the rhythmic sounds become soothing. I would agree with Price that: ‘the physical sensations of a process can be seductive to the extent that the process itself is sidelined’ (Price 2006, 115), but this is only a temporary absorption into the rhythm of the machine. When our attention is broken by the machine stopping or by us having had enough of it, we may then imagine this machine as a small part in the process and be more able to imagine the immensity of the whole

industrial process. I would argue that animated machinery draws its meaning from the object's physical presence. We are temporarily unable to consider it as an example of a type or its place in a chronology of industrial objects but the value of the sensory impression that the visitor receives can be very intense and memorable. Here we feel that we are in the presence of the 'real thing'.

The animated machine is primarily a visual form of spectacle but the observation of an object can induce a range of sensory impressions: tactile, kinaesthetic and haptic, which can blur the visual and non-visual qualities of the object. And in addition, the operation of machinery produces sound, movement, heat and additional visual effects. The noise of these machines operating can be extremely loud, possibly disturbing or maybe musical in its rhythms and juxtapositions of different sounds.

Some machines such as the steam engine I watched at Bradford made a series of mysterious hissing and clanking noises and it was impossible to see where they came from or what was happening inside the engine.

Mechanised spinning and weaving processes are the noisiest of all the machinery I observed, even though only two or three machines are ever running at the same time, which gives an indication of the sheer volume of noise that would be heard when a whole mill of machines were working together. There are often oily smells and feelings of heat and vibration. **Quarry Bank Mill**, particularly because of its wooden floors and ceilings, vibrates with the thundering of the spinning and weaving machines. The experience of the mill is very intense partly because the visitor is obliged to enter on the top floor and work their way down and across every floor. This visual/sensory complex is a form of interpretation that relies on the physical aspects of the objects which have 'multidimensional qualities relating to sight, sound, smell, taste and touch' (Tilley 2001, 260).

if you've got a person there you can explain the social history, you can look at the working conditions which people are really interested in ...you can do that with panels but it's not as evocative as if you walk around a mill and you know there's the smells and the noise and there's a person there explaining and I think as well they all will say 'well you know you've got to be careful cos I could get my fingers in there' or 'I've cut myself on this before' and their personal experience also helps to bring it to life  
(Mgr/QB/09).

### Narrative

With animation, the machine can work to interpret itself without verbal or written narratives. It *is* itself as well as standing for the whole of a particular production process or area of history. However there is usually written information

provided about most of the machinery at all the case study sites but it can often be very technical and difficult to understand. This type of description is more akin to a manual or instruction booklet. Even the industry-specific words in the above quotation: 'flyer frames', 'beams', 'creel' are foreign to most people and conjure up an arcane and exotic 'other' world rather than produce a sense of comprehension. The narrative supplied by the interpreters – both verbal and visual as they work with the machine makes comprehension easier as they tend to reduce complex technical terms to everyday language but still the major force of the interpretation when it comes to animation is that of the working machine and its context. An interpreter at **Quarry Bank Mill** who worked in the hand spinning and weaving section told me in interview:

I think we can talk ourselves stupid and most of what we say doesn't go in, but what they will take home...what I hope they see is that visual impact of the cottage, this person in costume, how the spinning happened, how the weaving was done and that will give them the sort of the feel, the rhythm, the atmosphere and then they go downstairs and they see these great big metal machines, they're noisy, they're loud they're - what was that like to work there? So I think we can talk a great deal about it all and I think 90% of that washes past people (Int01/QB/09).

In fact, words do not always work well with animated demonstrations. Many of the demonstrations I watched were difficult to hear and because some have no set times you may arrive in the middle and struggle to follow what is happening. The greatest barrier to comprehension I found was the partial nature of the animated demonstration. Where the narrative is mainly provided by the working machine and its context, spoken narratives tend to follow one particular process and it can be hard to link them together or even situate them in a historical context. The visitor needs to work to piece these chunks of information together on their way around the mill and arrive at a 'complete' story. At **Bradford Industrial Museum** the demonstrations are even more partial and rely on the visitor asking a demonstrator to show them a particular process. Otherwise they will just get on with working with a particular machine and will provide a few pieces of additional information if a group of people gather round to watch them.

### ***Machine/Person Demonstrations***

A machine working with an interpreter produces a different kind of understanding to that of the machine working on its own. The role of the demonstrator varies as does their method of demonstration. There seem to be broadly two very different styles, depending on the status and background of the demonstrator. The first is that of the specialist who may have a passion for the

kind of machinery they are operating and a long history of working with these kinds of machines. The second is the professional interpreter. At **Bradford Industrial Museum** an interpreter told me in interview:

It's in your blood, it's a fascination. I mean going back to what Neil said earlier about being a bit of an anorak. I suppose in a way you are. It's a specialised thing in its own right but my pleasure is from seeing other people enjoying it and keeping 'em running' (Int02/BIM/09).

This was a man who had spent all his working life in the textile industry and had been involved with steam engines from an early age. He works in the motive power gallery at Bradford and the other demonstrator who also has a background as a textile worker. They have a great deal of specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject, but have not been trained as interpreters. They demonstrate primarily by *using* the machine. You can see that their hands know exactly where to go and that it is more natural for them to operate the machine than it is to talk about operating it. The steam demonstrator wears gloves because as he says: 'they are alive, I mean if you go up to that now without a pair of gloves on you're gonna get burnt, you're gonna get *bit*, it will hurt yer' (Int02/BIM/09).

Their physical demonstrations show great experience and skill and their handling of the machines shows both familiarity and respect, that they know all the little quirks of that particular machine, how slow or fast to do something and what to do when something goes wrong. Their accompanying verbal narrative is less assured. Their demonstrations are improvised and they have been given little guidance as to what they should say or how to say it<sup>39</sup>. One of them explained to me how difficult he found it to work out how to demonstrate weaving when he started work as a demonstrator:

Nobody knew about this until I got here so there were no set way of doing it, so I had to put what I do in practice which was natural because I'd been trained to do it and I'd been doing it a lot of years. What was natural for me to get on and do without thinking about it, to put that to somebody that I was talking to and tell them what I were doing because I were doing stuff like: 'what you doing now?', 'oh yeah I'm doing so and so' and then I'd go on to me next stage of me job and I'd do it and they'd say 'what you doing now?' and I thought 'no hang on they don't actually know what I'm doing'. I'm doing stuff that is simple to me and I just go like that with my hand while I'm doing the main bit so I'll be working on this bit and I'll see that and I'll do that and they'll go 'what you doing over there?' (Int01/BIM/09)

He describes how his familiarity with the machine, and its operation was not

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<sup>39</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 10.

easily translatable into words and how he had to ‘break’ the actions of the machine into discrete chunks that could be explained rather than just do what he was used to doing. This style of demonstration is that of having privileged access to the workplace and being able to watch an expert at work and have them talk about what they are doing. This is very typical of the demonstration that is performed by the ex-worker. They are considered to be industrial specialists rather than performers and tend to have to work out how to communicate their skill to visitors in an improvised fashion and how to talk about history as well as demonstrate. One interpreter described for instance how the steam engine was ‘like’ a body:

Your heart pumps blood so that's the piston on the engine, that's the cylinder. Cos it's got, it pumps the blood round, so your comparison is the steam engine, pumps the steam round. The connecting rods, the pistons are what make it move, so they're like your legs you know cos they're what make you move. And at end of day, the whole sort of, part of our bodies is to produce power so that we can move, without us being able to move, we wouldn't be able to do anything and that's how industry works. It gives that power to move things and it's a good way of, especially with the little ones without going into sort of, you know the technical side of it (Int02/BIM/09).

**Quarry Bank Mill** employ a different kind of demonstrator specialist to operate the hand spinning and weaving equipment. I was told by their supervisor that they were recruited from the Spinning and Weaving Guild and so this is both their hobby and their field of expertise. They too will make the working of the machine their focus, and will start working without talking about what they are doing. It is not until a group of people have built up in front of their display area that they start addressing their audience. This is a structured and fairly scripted demonstration that leads the demonstrator from a spinning wheel and an early handloom through to the ‘next room’ containing a later handloom, finishing with a demonstration of a Spinning Jenny which initiated the change to mechanised spinning and effectively ended the practice of spinning and weaving at home. Meaning making here uses the second category described earlier: ‘object as example of type’ which deals with the objects’ meaning in a sequential or taxonomic structure which may be more functional so that we can see the process of cotton making progress from raw cotton fibre to woven fabric and so that we are aware of the changes in machine types that happen through time. Demonstrations here are brief and each machine is only used for around a minute or two. While the women operate each machine they stop talking and concentrate on what is quite a complex procedure. Although these women are dressed in eighteenth century costume with long dresses, aprons and white caps and they work in a reconstructed ‘cottage’, they do not appear to be acting in any way and so whilst

their demonstration is framed as a historical performance with the cottage as a place frame and a stage they do not take on a role. However, the costume does give them the double subjectivity I mentioned in the first chapter, of handloom weaver as well as interpreter. This kind of ‘acting’ might be termed ‘received acting’ according to Kirby’s (1972) continuum (see p. 231). They look like they are acting because their demonstration is part of a historically themed *mise-en-scene*, but they are not, because they actually *are* handloom weavers : ‘showing us how cotton was produced 300 years ago’ (Obs/QB/09). Although many of these demonstrators have what was referred to by their supervisor as a ‘huge hinterland of knowledge’, and it was obvious that they had a high level of skill in operating their machines, there was little opportunity to talk to the demonstrators because they had the next group to deal with.

Another kind of specialist demonstrator at Quarry Bank Mill is the ex-worker. I spoke to a weaving demonstrator at Quarry Bank Mill who was weaving with several cast-iron Lancashire looms from the 1880s. He was one of the last demonstrators left at Quarry Bank who had worked in the textile industry and so he trains staff here to work with the machinery. He told me:

You’ve got to know what you’re doing otherwise you’re going to get injured, so you have to give the machinery that kind of respect. You need a lot of confidence and you have to give the machine respect and you have to stay focused on what you’re doing. I mean I haven’t got a problem with that. It’s not for everybody (Int05/QB/09).

This necessary focus on the machine does not easily accommodate a customer focus. This man explained how he assessed whether or not to talk to visitors who stand and watch him: ‘I generally go on body language, I can tell when somebody wants a conversation, whether somebody’s not interested or somebody just wants to see the machines run.’ His method of operation is to: ‘give them a good blast, and just at the point when I think they’re going to walk away I stop the machines and give them the opportunity to say something’(Int05/QB/09). The ‘good blast’ is an opportunity to be impressed by the efficacy of these ancient looms which still work and the skill of the weaver who can keep several going at one time. Knowing what to say to someone who has just turned off their machine can be difficult unless you have a particular question to ask, as you don’t know how much the demonstrator knows or what kind of person they are, so it relies on the visitor to provide their own interpretation of the situation and then question the demonstrator accordingly. These demonstrations are thus improvised and unscripted except for school groups where there are certain themes the



Figure 45. Looms, Quarry Bank Mill © National Trust

demonstrators will try to 'get across' in their own particular areas. This style of demonstration relies on the animation of a machine to produce interpretation although these animations are a complex of machine and human movement. The script here is the visual narrative of machinery working in a complex and dense way accompanied by the body and hands of a skilled worker which is often richer than the verbal narratives that may accompany them.

The other form of demonstrator given by a professional interpreter analysed here is that of spinning at **Quarry Bank Mill**. There are timed demonstrations given on the spinning floor of Quarry Bank Mill and so there may be a large crowd of people waiting at a certain time. Visitors can look at a machine with what look like tubes of cotton coming out and curling themselves into long metal canisters and a couple of photographs of an early twentieth century mill showing the same process happening while they are waiting. The demonstration in this case is very child focused because it happens to be half-term. Children are given ropes of raw cotton to 'show what children would have done' when they worked in the mill and the children have to join the two ends of cotton rope together by imagining that it is a snake with an open mouth that is eating its tail. The demonstrator starts three machines at the same time by pressing a button and these machines show various

stages of spinning the thick rope into a thinner fibre. The children are encouraged to look at what the different fibres look like at the end of each stage and this is often referred to work that children did. This demonstration is very focused on process and explains the cotton changing in terms like: 'this is very bumpy', 'we want to put this in here and get all the fibres going the same way', 'this machine does the same as those ladies in there with brushes'. There are lots of examples given that the children in the audience will understand like: 'it comes off like a spider's web' and translates these activities into phrases people may have heard of like: 'It was the apprentice's job to make sure the containers always got to her. The cans were always there. Otherwise the apprentice was carrying the can for her. That's where we get carrying the can from'. However it is also a very technically dense verbal narrative that talks about one process after another which can be hard to follow. The child focus fits with the theme of child labour which is initiated by the apprentice house part of the museum, however the mill building in its fittings and types of machinery is not how it would have looked in the eighteenth century. It is more representative of the early twentieth century when children would not have worked in mills, thus producing a lack of visual contextualisation. The machines are operated here to produce different stages of cotton fibre that can then be talked about. They are quite spectacular in their noisiness and complexity but are not difficult machines to operate, they are simply switched on so the interpreter here doesn't have to do anything particularly skilled. The demonstrator's narrative follows the process of cotton production and each particular function of the machines she is showing. This demonstration is an example of the demonstrator as professional interpreter who doesn't have a professional level of skill in handling machinery and who uses it more as an aid to their interpretation in the manner of a prop rather than someone who looks like they are doing a job of work. Using the machine as a tool, which the skilled workers do changes its status and produces a different kind of demonstration. When the demonstration requires skill and concentration there is more of a focus on the work the demonstrator is doing with their hands and bodies. This produces an intense focus on the demonstrator and gives them a sense of presence. The less skilled demonstration that may simply involve switching something on produces more of a focus on the machine itself as it seems to be working all on its own.

The idea of presence has been important in these analyses of animated demonstrations. I have described how animating machinery in a museum may restore somewhat the aura of the original workplace. This is particularly the case at Quarry Bank Mill who employ a team of machine demonstrators to operate the

machinery in the Mill. The sound, feeling and scale of some of this machinery may be overwhelming and produce a sense of the past through a high level of sensory engagement. The presence of history may also be felt by an awareness of chronology and the development of a particular production process over time. The organisation of types of machinery into certain areas of Quarry Bank Mill and Bradford Industrial Museum allow the visitor to trace change through time and grasp the network of practices that are associated with industrialisation. I have also outlined a sense of presence that may be generated when an experienced worker operates a machine they are familiar with. Their skill and the complex interactions of person and machine makes it easier for the visitor to imagine the former workplace when it was in action ‘for real’. Therefore animation may produce moments of illumination such as indicated in the quotation by Laura Barton on page 215 where the visitor feels they knew how the past really was. An animated display may also suddenly reveal the meaning that has been supplied in a written or verbal form but not fully understood.

## Punctuation Type Demonstrations

I consider here the style of demonstration that uses objects to punctuate a largely verbal narrative. I am using the word punctuation because it works well with a narrative-driven style of interpretation and because it indicates a marking of text with pauses, connections, questions, insertions, ends and beginnings. The spoken narratives I am considering here are punctuated with physical objects which mark breaks and pauses and provide the opportunity to focus elsewhere - either on the ‘next’ object or to illuminate some imaginary scene ‘elsewhere’. The sequential use of objects in the interpretations give the spoken narratives a sense of order and logic and a sense of situatedness. As well as changing the focus of the demonstration, these objects may also change its mood. There is also a sense within the word ‘punctuation’ of a puncturing, where the smooth verbal narrative is broken or disrupted by the insertion of another system of comprehension. Physical objects are not of the same order as words, they may exceed them in the way they multiply meanings. Because of this, narratives may always be in danger of being overshadowed by the objects that punctuate them.

I have developed the idea in the previous section *Animated Demonstrations* that an object can perform through its activation, so that its work may be perceived from seeing it go and seeing it being used, and I suggested that the object performs its meaning through its physical presence. I also described how

handling objects at Beamish performs their historical significance. I will now consider how industrial objects may perform as examples of type within a network of contexts, associations and thematic relationships. The role of the industrial object here is not so much to act out its meaning but to be spoken for by an interpreter. I am considering two punctuation-type demonstrations from my case study examples: of the **Durn Mill** and the **Manchester Mills** demonstrations at **MOSI**. These are narrative-based interpretations and introduce an object or a range of objects that may be looked and/or handled by interpreters and by visitors. Here the storyline or narrative tends to have a broader theme than 'animated' demonstrations and typically takes longer to complete. The 20 minute **Durn Mill** demonstration uses characterisation and first person interpretation in the production of a nineteenth century engineer figure to make comprehensible the working of a steam engine and to make visible the boiler that would have powered a whole textile mill as part of the Durn Mill in Rochdale. The Manchester Mills demonstration which takes around 20-30 minutes, begins with the description of the raw material of cotton and moves through the various stages of manufacture from carding to spinning to weaving. It also has a geographical range, moving from the country of origin for cotton, to Manchester as a hub for cotton production in the nineteenth century and focuses on the place of Manchester as the 'first industrial city' and its importance for cotton production, and the situation of the museum as a warehouse and transport location.

### ***The Educational Role of Objects***

It is worth considering the educational role of objects here, as although all demonstrations have a pedagogic aim, in the punctuation type demonstration this is made explicit. The educational function of The **Durn Mill** and **Manchester Mills** demonstrations are signalled by a timed and structured format and a teacher-like address from the interpreter. Using objects to teach is a fundamental method of museum education. Many writers suggest that objects are particularly simulating and motivating when handled and observed closely. They can ground abstract knowledge, enable recall and are relevant to all age and ability ranges; are suitable for all kinds of learning styles; produce sensory impact along with detailed knowledge about colour, pattern, tactile evidence, manufacture, design as well as a 'feeling of age' (Davis and Gardner 1994; Durbin et al 1990; Hooper Greenhill 1994; Hennigar Shuh 1994).

The two demonstrations outlined here use elements of first person dramatisation along with elements of the science show, but they use dramatisation

to make scientific principles and mechanical processes visible and real, and are less focused on producing historical detail in order to simply 'bring the past to life'.

The **Manchester Mills** demonstration focuses more on the object as example of type in a sequential or taxonomic structure and is both chronological and process led. This makes the demonstration very linear. The performance of the **Durn Mill** demonstration allows the historical significance of the object to manifest itself through its 'working' as part of a performance. The performance frame that is created when two girls dressed in what looks like Edwardian costume and wheeling a bicycle to the side of the steam engine and telling us that they are bringing 'dad' his supper allows for an extension of space to happen and a transformation of temporal boundaries. When one of the girls says: 'I expect you're wondering why we're in this dirty, greasy oily place' we realise that this place is not the museum but is now the Durn Mill, Rochdale. The suggestion of the presence of the past re-contextualises the engine to its former home and illustrates its historical significance and of the role of Manchester in the industrial revolution. The dialogic form of both sessions makes explicit a hermeneutic and constructivist approach to knowledge creation where the process of making meaning moves between the whole and the part of the object and between the present and past simultaneously and where a continuous process of dialogue operates; answers to questions build on questions that have already been asked and answered. The method of teaching that both sessions use is to give a certain amount of verbal information punctuated with objects which have the following functions:

- Illustration
- focusing the gaze
- handling/sensory impact
- evidence or proof
- beginning or ending a section of information
- provoking an imaginary response
- to be metonymical or metaphorical

These functions will be explored in more detail throughout this section of the chapter.



Figure 46. The Durn Mill Demonstration, MOSI

### ***The Dialogic Narrative***

The dialogic nature of the interpretation is signified by the questions that the interpreters direct at their audiences centring on the objects being displayed. This focuses attention visually on the object, marks a pause, and makes the audience think. Typical kinds of questions are asking what things are used for or how did a particular process happen, so that visitors can become active in the meaning making process and actually create a dialogue with the interpreter (although this is very structured and quite limited) or are active in the sense that they ask themselves questions in their minds. Some interpreters use this style more than others and certain types of demonstrations are more suitable for this kind of interaction. The Durn Mill demonstration is very dialogic. The audience is small, they are very close to the presenter/actor and there are about equal numbers of adults and children. The task of the presentation is based on a problem solving model of finding out how a steam engine works and to see it working. The audience is constantly questioned: 'Who can tell me how do you make steam?'; 'How you gonna heat all that water?'; 'What are we gonna burn in the fire?'; Now what shape is that? 'Does anybody know what's inside there?' for example. Every time an audience member answers a question, the engineer repeats it if it is either correct or funny, and so he constantly echoes the audience. In the Manchester Mills demonstration there is less questioning of the audience because there is more

physical distance between them and the interpreters and it is noisier generally, but they do use this technique. An example of this is when a machine is running - the interpreter says: 'what's the first thing you notice? The audiences' answer 'noise' allows him to move to a section of information about communicating via exaggerated mouth movements in mills and hearing loss among mill workers. Asking questions about an object can draw the audience into the demonstration. An interpreter holds up a shuttle and asks: 'does anyone know how the weaver would get that thread through that small hole? Any ideas at all? The audience have to focus on the shuttle and think about how they would solve this 'problem'.

### ***Spatial Organisation***

**The Durn Mill** is a static demonstration where the audience first looks one way towards the two girls, and when it is time to hand over to 'Dad' they ask us to turn to look where 'Dad' stands at the steam engine. It has a linear format where knowledge is processed, accumulated and comes out at the other end as meaning, which is illustrated and mirrored by the boiler which swallows up coal until enough steam has built up for it to work. **Manchester Mills** is more circular because the audience move around the gallery and look down into what is a stage-like area that may represent a factory-like environment. There are large hanging cloth banners around this area with enlarged photographs of factory scenes printed on them. The cotton producing machinery is arranged in a processual fashion so that the interpreter and the visitor can move around from the early to the later processes of cotton production. The audience arrange themselves in front of the interpreter as he begins the demonstration in front of the first machine and will move as he moves from machine to machine. The audience are standing and may have to jostle for room with other visitors and may not be able to see clearly if they do not find themselves in the best position. Looking down on the demonstration gives an overhead view so that it is easier to see the whole machine working. The organisation of interpreter standing next to the machine focuses the audience's gaze onto the appropriate object in question although subsidiary objects may be used such as a bolt of cloth, a stalk of cotton and photographs. Small models may also be produced as visual aids and props. Both demonstrations are active also in the sense that they give the audience an opportunity to move about physically and see things from different angles, to hear as well as to see and to feel pieces of cotton, straw, plants and vegetables.

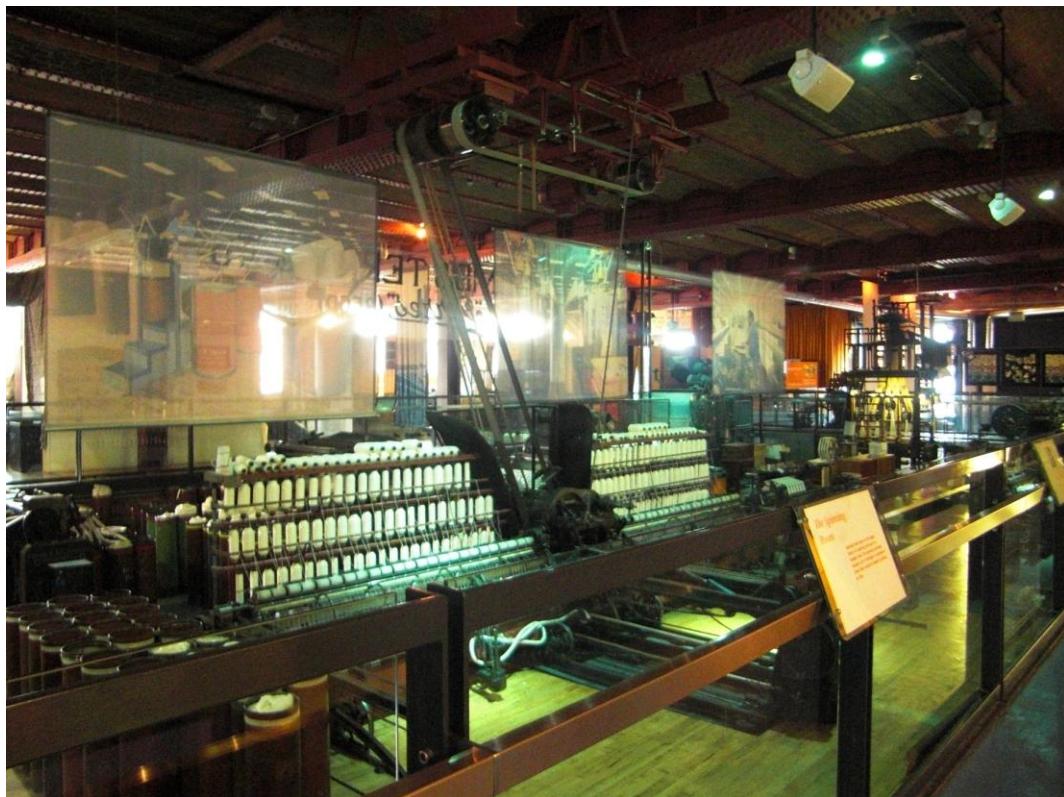


Figure 47. Manchester Mills Display Area, MOSI

### ***Time and Space***

Time and space have been altered by the performance frame that has settled around the **Durn Mill** demonstration. We are not in MOSI the museum, we are in The Durn Mill, Rochdale. This transformation may make the process of museum representation more visible as it reverses the process of removing the working steam engine to be an exhibit in a museum. In The **Manchester Mills** demonstration the physical sequence of the objects encountered provides both a visual correspondence to the verbal narrative and is also a lesson in looking as we learn to proceed from early to later processes. The observer is thus being trained in how to look in the museum by looking appropriately, paying close attention and matching words to the visual scene. They learn to look at the object as a part of a 'bigger picture', imagining their use in the 'original' context. Here objects are used to project into an imaginative recreation of their use in the 'other' setting of the early industrial world. The visitor may be asked to multiply in their minds. In **The Manchester Mills** demonstration we see a few ropes of raw cotton fibre being spun into hundreds of threads and the interpreters tell us:

Thanks to Samuel Crompton and friends, thanks to the industrial revolution you've got hundreds and hundreds of threads all being spun at the same time. Now these machines were huge, they were

built to fit the room, some of them went up to 2000 spindles and they always came in pairs (Obs/MOSI/09).

These threads turn spun thread into woven cloth via the ‘thousands and thousands of these machines...365 mills in Oldham alone’ which seems an extraordinary fact when the visitor tries to imagine the amount of cotton produced which at one point in time, we are told, was three quarters of the world’s total production. We are also invited to imagine working in amongst large moving machinery such as the cotton spinning mule: ‘you’re going to get three of these in a row, the room is three times longer than this, you’re going to be darting in and out all day long’, which seems unbelievably dangerous. As well as quantity, lengths of time are also stressed here. We are asked to think about the amount of time workers spent with their machines: ‘They’d work 10-12 hours a day and you’d work 6 days a week, you might fall asleep or fall into the machine so it’s a horrible existence’. The sequence of objects (one per function) is used to stand for a whole range of other objects in a taxonomic way, but also as metaphors for the effects of the sheer volume of industrial productivity and how an excessive generation of material goods used up human lives.

The demonstration too is process driven. It follows a logical progression from one machine to another. Visitors are moved around the rectangular display by showing sequential processes in turn. The next machine moves us on to the next chunk of information and the ‘next step’ of the process and the idea that that this small area of machines may extend into a whole factory is suggested by the interpreter suggesting that we are moving from ‘room’ to room: ‘we take our 40lb lap from our blowing room to our carding room and that’s where we’re going to go now’ - this is a fictional device as the audience do not go further than a few feet. The various machines we see operating produce different stages of cotton, little pieces of which the audience is handed so they can compare the look and the feel and the density of it.

### ***Story-lines***

This leads us to a necessary discussion of the role of ‘story’ in these interpretations. The **Manchester Mills** demonstration has a dominant verbal narrative that provides a context and a meaning for the object that is spread across a network of relationships with various thematic elements. The storylines seem to occur ‘naturally’ from the objects present which minimises the role of the fictional, the arbitrary and the subjective in story-telling and seems to guarantee the authenticity of the stories being told.

The verbal narrative of **Manchester Mills** uses objects to move around the cycle of cotton production both in terms of the processing of the raw fibre into a woven cloth and in terms of the import of cotton into Manchester, the development of commerce that this initiates and then the re-exportation of printed cloth to the colonies. The life-cycle of a cotton plant is discussed along with the industrialisation of Manchester via the cotton industry, by showing a bolt of finished calico cloth alongside a stalk of cotton alongside a tray of cotton seeds that are used to make other products in the vicinity of an array of machines some of which were invented in the North-West with various stages of thread passing through them and coming out of the other side. Manchester as a locality is also circumnavigated through the lens of cotton production as it has a canal basin, a damp climate and the museum is on the site of the world's first passenger and goods railway. This shows a series of 'firsts' which happened here giving the demonstration and the museum the impression of a tangible uniqueness associated with its stated aim to be an 'iconic attraction' (InterpretationStrategy/MOSI/2007-12). This is not just a demonstration of cotton production, it demonstrates through its location and its artefacts, the museum's authentic claim to be able to speak for this particular industry. Here there are two stories: one the story of cotton from seed to finished cloth. The other is of the workers who worked in cotton mills from the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Their story is told by describing how dangerous and difficult it was to work with the machinery. The **Durn Mill** demonstration restores the subjectivity of the industrial worker through first person interpretation but he is talking 'for' the machine rather than telling his own story. This demonstration uses metonymy to demonstrate the North-West being at the forefront of the industrial revolution. It produces the fictional scenario of Dad, his daughter and her friend who stand in as representatives of cotton mill workers at some point in the nineteenth century. Dad and the boiler are at the heart of this enterprise as they are at the centre of the mill which is also at the centre of the industrial revolution.

The museum's storyline revolves around Manchester's role in the industrial revolution and subsequent technological innovations that have shaped the world we live in today. The aim is to create a captivating interactive experience exploring the rise of technology, its impact on our lives and communities, and how the people of Manchester helped make it happen, from the pioneering inventions that sparked the industrial revolution in the Manchester region right through to the scientific and technological breakthroughs influencing the future of our planet (InterpretationStrategy/MOSI/2007-12).

### **Illumination**

The next role I want to consider for objects is their role of illumination and provoking the imagination; in this role they may take the place of what is not there. In the **Durn Mill** demonstration, Dad stands for the boiler and the boiler stands for Dad as it cannot work without an engineer, the boiler stands for the factory, and the factory stands for the North-West and then Britain which indicates industrial supremacy. The processes involved in the moving parts of an engine are illustrated here with a model of a cylinder. The steam and the fire are not in evidence and so the engine and the prop of the engineer's pipe he 'smokes' provide metonymical 'clues' to produce them. The presence of motion is at first indicated, then accomplished for real when the engineer turns a small wheel and the pistons slowly move back and forth and then power the wheel which begins turning smoothly. When the boiler starts to work many children in the audience call out 'wow' because it seems almost miraculous. Being able to 'see' like this produces a moment of revelation that may make some of the words we are left with echoing in our minds whilst they are translated into the workings of a live moving object. The audience is then left to watch the horizontal steam engine on their own. The objects in a demonstration provide a visual corollary for the unfolding narrative but they do more than just illustrate the narrative in the manner of the pictures in a book. The carding engine, drawing frame, flyer frame, spinning machines and looms that stand in **Manchester Mills** demonstration space are 'neutral' examples or representatives of a range of different processes, but are also witnesses to a repressive factory system that held and squeezed workers into a room with hundreds of noisy and dangerous machines and transformed people into objects or 'tools' of the machine that had to be kept productive for as long as possible without stopping. There is a sense that the machinery was more valuable than the people operating it because *it* was the thing that was making money and the people could be easily replaced, thus inverting the 'natural' relationship between the person who is a subject and the machine which is an object. The danger associated with these machines is frequently referred to at MOSI because horror stories have a lot of impact with the audience. The interpreter holds a claw-like hook which he refers to as a 'Freddy Kruger, Wolverine type device', words which initiate the horror theme, and then he describes how one job was to hack into the hard bales of raw cotton with this hook. Because the bales are packed so tightly it was possible to bounce off them so that 'you can snag your guts, take a few with you', with the hook. Another example of this kind of 'horror scene' in Manchester Mills is with the leather belts that lead up from each machine up to the

roof of the room and connect to the line shafting. When the leather broke it could be sewn but was often punched together with metal studs for speed which could then snag on your clothes. The interpreter makes this more dramatic by gazing up to the ceiling and saying:

now if it snags on your sleeve you're going to be lucky to see a wisp of cotton going up into the line shafting. If you're not so lucky you'll be stood here and you'll watch your arm going up into the line shafting. Now women would often get little bits of hair ripped off, they'd be scalped, we've got examples of children working who'd be so small and so light they'd be taken up into the line shafting (Obs/MOSI/09).

These descriptions are shocking and produce an emotive jolt in the audience like a slight electrification. The stories themselves invite a sense of horror but the visual sight of objects that were so dangerous intensify this through an imaginative-sensory connection with the object and thus the 'original' event. The 'kissing shuttle' story too has this impact. When the interpreter answers how the weaver would re-thread a shuttle with cotton thread she describes how a weaver would 'kiss' the shuttle or suck the thread through the hole. We are asked to 'think about all the dirt and the oil and the cotton dust and the spit and the blood collecting. She'd be sucking all that gunk into her lungs'. These stories intensify interest around particular objects and parts of the demonstration and provide an impact or a high point where attention can be focused and the imagination will be given free reign.

### ***The Body***

I will look here at how interpreters use their bodies and the bodies of the audiences in these sessions to help produce the interpretation. I have shown above how interpreters try and convey sensation by giving what can be startling narratives as well as showing, handling and passing round objects so that through the feeling of the object can anchor these descriptions in a physical experience. I have mentioned how the audience is given pieces of cotton at various stages of the production process at MOSI. In the **Manchester Mills** demonstration, interpreters use their bodies, particularly to gesture in and amongst the machinery. They need to be particularly physically expressive here because they are separated from their audience and it is a noisy environment. I have earlier described how the script of the machine is performed by its working. The narratives of these interpreters are

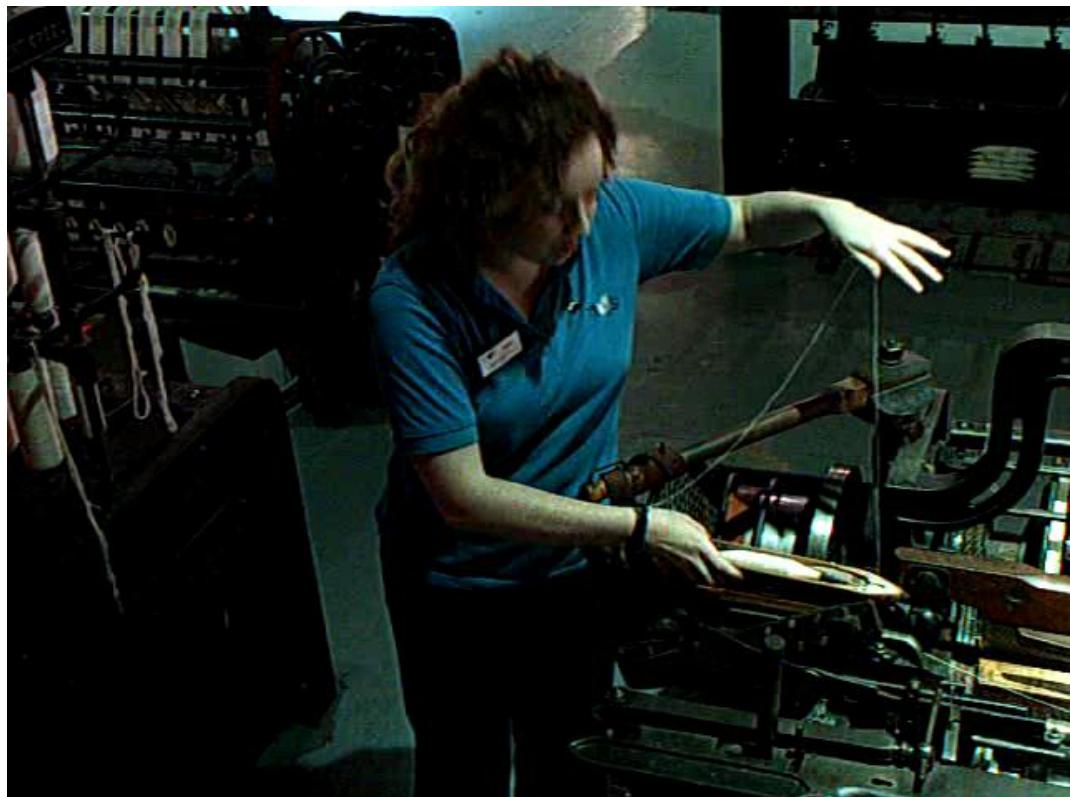


Figure 48. Presenting Manchester Mills, MOSI

also a script (both textual and improvised) and it can be said that their gestures punctuate this script with indications of the machines to which they refer. The interpreter here points to various parts of the machines to indicate what they will do and how they will move when they are turned on, he manipulates the machine so it will work and indicates with his body how things work. If the machine moves in a particular way, he may move his body to imitate that form of movement. He may hold out his arms and spin round to mime the actions of a bobbin or make a gesture that indicates the speed of a movement. He pulls at his shirt to indicate that clothing needs to be hardwearing. Each of the machines that are used



Figure 49. Presenting Manchester Mills, MOSI

carry in them potential gestures in the sense that the operator has to move in a certain way or manipulate parts of the machine at certain times and fragments of these 'original' gestures seem to make their way into the interpreters' movements. In the **Durn Mill** demonstration, Dad the engineer indicates the pressure of steam by moving his arms like pistons and by indicating the transfer of movement from side to side to round and round. These taking of parts of the machine and turning them into gestures are highly performative and produce a script of their own which combined with the verbal narrative, the illumination provided by the various senses of presence that the demonstrations produce, are what makes the demonstration a performance. The actions of the machines join in with the actions of the interpreters' bodies which accompany the action in the story-telling so that visitors can be carried through a whole sequence of events and can move through time and space. Both the body and the machine can be a vehicle for the imagination in this way.

## Conclusion

This chapter has analysed an under-researched area of museum practice. *The Demonstration* considers the role of objects and artefacts within the museum/heritage site and the relationship the demonstrator/interpreter and audience may have with them. This research has contributed to knowledge of the museum performance in that the demonstration now takes its place as a form of performed interpretation; third person interpretation has been further explored and the role of objects and spaces within these performances has been analysed.

A demonstration is a particularly 'object heavy' form of performance where objects may be said to perform as they destabilise object/subject boundaries. As I have noted, industrial objects may be both functional and symbolic at the same time. They may seem to be an artefact as well as a tool, as well as a prop within the interpretive performance. As they are used by interpreters and/or visitors, they may temporarily become subjects as they seem to become alive. I have noted the animism and to a certain extent anthropomorphism connected with certain types of working machine who may be said to possess their own 'personalities'. As they 'come alive' they may transform the status of their human counterparts to subsidiary subjects who serve the machine or even objects as they stand for the low status factory workers of the nineteenth century. I have noted how the bodies of interpreters in two types of demonstrations acted for the machine at various times as well as acted out the role of the people in the past. The demonstration may also use the industrial object as an illustration where a verbal narrative is dominant, it may be used as an 'object-lesson' in the sense of an example that typifies a principle. For instance, the machine may metonymically stand for the horror of child labour or for industrialisation as a whole. The object may also act as a conduit for visitors to explore their own pasts as I have described at Beamish, and the object-rich environment become a stage for them to explore what their ancestors may have done in the past or even imagine themselves living in the past.

A particular feature of this type of interpretive performance is this potential transformation of subjectivity and of subject and object. Another feature is the dialogic narrative where words may produce a 'translation' of sorts for the working of the machine as the interpreter endeavours to explain what is happening in terms of the process and the context of that process in the wider industrial world. Alternatively the interpreter may need to explain what an object is, what it does and what it was generally used for. Here the interpreter's narrative and the visual scene communicate with each other in the work of interpretation. The interpreter's dialogue with the audience is seen particularly in the punctuation type

demonstration. The audience are questioned continually and the correct answers drive the demonstration onto the next point.

The potential of the demonstration to illuminate is another characteristic of the interpretive performance. I have noted the potential for the working display to produce an aesthetic space that transforms space and time and makes the visitor feel that they were either ‘there’ in the past or that the past is carrying on concurrently with the present. Illumination may also refer to the sudden clarity of meaning that occurs when words are accompanied by a physical display. A demonstration may also provide illumination in the sense that the visitor feels that they have had an ‘eye-opening’ revelation or window onto the past and some aspect of it that they didn’t know has been revealed to them. What is shocking, visceral or extraordinary may also produce this revelatory effect and this has been noted in the punctuation type demonstration.

Through the interpretive performance of the demonstration, it is possible to consider what it is to *act* in the museum/heritage site. The interpreter may not take on the role or a character but they are often acting as if they were. For instance, some of the third person demonstrators I observed were wearing costume. This applies to Beamish, and to the hand-spinners and weavers at Quarry Bank Mill. Others were ‘the real thing’, for example at Bradford where the two demonstrators had used the machinery they demonstrated as part of their other jobs. One of them (the weaver) was demonstrating by weaving cloth ‘for real’ that was going to be used as part of the heavy horses’ bridles. The Durn Mill demonstration used acting and characterisation to accompany a nineteenth century steam engine. All these forms of ‘acting’ create a stage for the performance of interpretation that is completed by the visitor who then is acting as an interpreter themselves.

The forms of presence and aura I have discussed in this chapter are also connected with performance. The bringing of the museum ‘to life’ by producing ‘living’ displays of real and or used objects allow for the significance of the physical presence of the machine or object to be demonstrated as well as its symbolic status as an example of type and its historical significance as potentially meaningful. It is the connection between interpreter, object and audience that activate this presence during the interpretive performance and therefore a connection to the past can be established.

## Conclusions

The question of what ‘living’ might be in relation to history in the industrial museum or heritage site is at the heart of this thesis. As noted earlier, The NCMME use the term ‘living history interpretation’ for their first person interpretation and the phrase ‘keeping coal mining alive’ on many of its documents and leaflets, and yet the ex-miners’ underground tours are not referred to as living history by staff at the museum. Doing living history at this site is reserved for actor/interpreters who research the past and prepare semi-scripted interactive workshops using the vehicle of a ‘first person’ character. Beamish refers to itself as ‘the living museum of the North’, and by this, it means that it represents history by showing artefacts in the ‘original’ context of use and by organising the space into a simulacra of a community, which is brought alive through use and the process of interpretation. The ‘work’ that goes on at the site: the printing, baking, shop keeping, sweet making, farming, housework, transportation and teaching is supplemented by a *version* of the work that cannot be done for real: mining or dentistry for example, which is complemented by the work of the visitor who performs reminiscence. I have suggested several uses of the word living here: live performance, living memory, the human artefact, the spatial simulacra of the past and reminiscence.

These senses of ‘living’ are all linked by their connection to a former reality – the histories that happened either on the actual sites or in relation to the artefacts that the sites contain. However the idea of history ‘living’ is a problematic one, as is the idea of the living museum. The living history museum or the museum that produces living history is clearly performing history and this ‘doing’ of history is in a performative sense, also making history in the present. It is to some extent paradoxical for museums to maintain their obligation to the past through the work of conservation as well as living in the present and looking forwards, which means that the past will necessarily be altered. Museums manage this paradox by conceptualising history in different ways. Firstly by employing the traditional scholarly idea that it is a written archive, but also by imagining it as a knowledge of what happened in the past – unwritten and *contained* in places, objects or human memories. They use both these perceptions of history: the written archive organises and validates the collections, but the idea that history is inherent in the

museum's spaces, objects and subjects always waiting to be interpreted is what lies behind the idea of the 'living museum'.

The modes of interpretive performance I have outlined in the preceding chapters all aim to produce a sense of presence that is commonly referred to by respondents (both managers, interpreters and visitors) as 'bringing the past to life'. I have organised chapters around what I have determined as the fundamental forms of performed interpretation in the industrial museum or heritage site, in answer to the question: **What are the key modes of interpretive performance in the industrial museum/heritage site?** But these chapter divisions also represent the shifting focus of this 'bringing to life'. *First and Third Person Interpretation* considers the production of historical 'characters' or references to the people of the past (in the case of third person interpretation) to accompany the museum's displays and re-enact various historical narratives. *The Guided Tour* looks more closely at the creation of performance space that works to drive and augment tour narratives, and *The Demonstration* considers the various animations of objects and machinery that are the focus of the demonstration-type performance. Throughout these chapters I have explored the subtly different sense of life, liveliness and living that each form of performed interpretation in the industrial museum or heritage site seems to both draw on and produce. This is an important contribution to the knowledge of performance in museums as the interpretive performance has not been previously categorised in this way.

I chose to use the term 'performed interpretation' in preference to the more usual 'live interpretation' because I wanted to explore a wide spectrum of interpretative activities that could be using either first or third person interpretation and I wanted to consider the performative qualities of third person interpretation, guided tours and demonstrations that commonly use this form. Guided tours and demonstrations are not generally considered as performances although there is an awareness in some quarters that they have performance-like qualities. Considering them in this way notices the potential complexities of these forms and makes it easier to conceptualise the 'visitor experience' they produce as well as raise the status of the interpreter who may be called a 'guide' or a 'demonstrator'. An awareness of what performed interpretation is: how the performance is interpretive and how the interpretation is performative is essential to museums who aim to produce history that 'lives'. The value of this research is that it articulates a structure through which the third person performance may be considered alongside first person performance as also using acting, character and role; its ability to

supply ‘missing narratives’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 71) and offer ‘alternative and complementary versions of history’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 73); and its capacity to produce an interactive or participatory experience for the visitor.

Below I indicate the ways in which a sense of presence, living, or liveliness derives from performing interpretation which can be summarised as being through memory, animation, emotion and the alteration of spatial and temporal boundaries. I will move on to consider the key characteristics of the interpretive performance, then to a discussion of authenticity and finally consider the current climate for museum interpretation and performance. This chapter will then conclude with recommendations that have developed from the issues outlined here.

## Sources of Presence, Living and Liveliness

### ***Memory***

I have described how the idea of ‘living memory’ is particularly important at the NCMME and Beamish. The NCMME’s aim of ‘keeping coal mining alive’ is partly about keeping safe and passing on the memories of mining and mining communities that exist currently in the generation of people who experienced it. In this way these museums may act as a memorial for certain people who feel they are revisiting their own pasts or those of their families. This is particularly the case at the NCMME where some visitors make special journeys to visit ‘their’ pasts. The miner-guides use their personal experiences and memories of mining to illuminate and contrast with the more representative or objective versions of mining history they present on the underground tour. At Beamish, the past on display is close enough for many visitors to be able to identify with and recognise the scenes and artefacts from their own and their ancestors’ lives, and a key role of the museum is to provide a connection between everyday life then and now. At both these sites, performing reminiscence is an important function. I have mentioned that Beamish wanted to represent the past that older people still remember and because of this, they will ‘need’ to ‘move’ forward in time as its visitors age. Since the research was carried out here, they have altered their time ‘frames’ and now refer to three looser and more extensive time periods: ‘Edwardian, Georgian and late Victorian’ which is to give them ‘more flexibility’ but which will allow them to more easily move into the twentieth century. The idea of heritage is relevant here, as Beamish manifests the idea of inheritance. It was explained to me how visitors passed on their own

histories to their families whilst being prompted by the displays at Beamish and how the museum has 'rescued' a part of 'ordinary' people's lives for them to revisit.

### ***Animation***

In *The Demonstration* chapter I described the way machinery and objects were made to 'go' by using them or handling them. This activity makes the museum seem a 'working' or 'living' museum because it still performs elements of some 'original' function, which in the industrial museum or heritage site references the work of the past. The interpreter is also a source of animation whether they are a first or a third person interpreter. They provide a human presence alongside a display of artefacts or historic space which can bring that space or artefact 'to life'. Because the interpreter has to present *themselves* in an accessible way, along with a certain amount of information, they are also a source of liveliness, and in many cases they produce a persona or an act which invites a high level of verbal interaction. The introduction of acting and characterisations of people from the past also animates a representative or archetypal figure who then 'comes alive' in the present. All these senses of animation use the Schechnerian idea of 'restored behavior' (1985), where an act in the present re-produces some original earlier act or form of behaviour. The visitor completes this act of living by being there and experiencing it at the same time it is produced, and even though there may not be a level of interaction that allows the visitor to have a significant impact on the course of events or a meaningful level of dialogue, a space is nevertheless produced for the visitor to do or to be 'otherwise' and imagine themselves taking part in the past.

### ***Emotion***

First and third person interpreters aim to induce emotional effects in their audiences - particularly sympathy and empathy - by referring to the dangerous conditions and harsh lives of workers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They may do this by creating a sympathetic character in the case of first person interpretation who invites the visitor to identify with them, or via third person interpretation, by asking the visitor to observe or witness scenes or objects associated with hardship, cruelty, punishment and fear. An altered emotional state is very conducive to seeing things with new eyes and this is particularly relevant to the underground tour at the NCMME which produces a mild state of fear and apprehension. Emotion may be elicited by non verbal experiences of the spectacular or sublime, as in the case of large, powerful working machinery or the

working of machinery alongside people where danger may be sensed. The past in the form of a visual scene can also have a poignant effect as we may be affected by nostalgia or the awareness of things lost in the past.

### ***An Alteration of Spatial and Temporal Boundaries***

Certain kinds of museum space are liminal and have the quality of being neither one thing nor another - neither entirely real nor wholly representational. Both guided tour spaces and the whole of Beamish produce this effect. In the case of both guided tours, formerly real space is turned into representational space by restoring some features and recreating others. At Beamish the whole museum is a recreation of how certain communities might have looked at certain points in time. The immersive quality of both thoroughly contextualised spaces can produce the illusion of 'being there' in another time. First person interpretation can also have this effect as we are invited to 'come on a journey' with the interpreter to another time and place. Both these practices produce 'aesthetic space' in Boal's (1995) terms which stimulate the visitor's memory and imagination and produce a sense of altered reality.

I consider this tendency of performance to indicate presence, or represent living or liveliness to be the main objective of the interpretive performance that overrides any functional goals such as the 'teaching' of a particular message or the explanation of the workings of a machine, even though it is the latter that are referred to as interpretive aims by the museums in question. 'Bringing to life' tends to be mentioned more as an effect of performance rather than its object, but I would argue that the performance only 'works' when it creates this effect. This is an important finding of this research and it is recommended that museums pay attention to the sense of liveness and presence that their interpretive performances draw on and create<sup>40</sup>.

I have noted throughout this thesis instances of liminality (particularly in relation to guided tours, see pages 143, 173 and pages 186-189). The juxtaposition of the senses of living that the interpretive performance produces, alongside the knowledge that the past is over or dead, is a liminal effect and one which is inevitable given the aforementioned paradoxical nature of living history. These occur when the authentic materiality of the museum is drawn upon to convey *both* the 'reality' of a performance *and* the 'proof' of having gone 'back' in time; when we

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<sup>40</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 5.

notice ‘anachronisms’ such as a first person performance that shifts in between first and third person; when we are aware of conflicting stories being presented and we are not sure where to position ourselves; or when a performance creates such a strong fictional world that the museum ‘disappears’, or on the contrary when it doesn’t ‘work’ and we feel uncomfortable and wish we weren’t there. This liminality then has both positive and negative aspects not unlike the ‘unsettlement’ the *Performance, Learning and Heritage Report* (Jackson and Kidd, 2008) refers to in relation to performance, where audiences may have their ‘expectations overturned, assumptions about the subject-matter challenged, of finding that they were personally being confronted with strong emotion or were expected to participate verbally or even physically’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 70). The liminality that the aesthetic space of performance opens up in the museum then is potentially a very productive one for the production of both education and entertainment.

## **Key Characteristics of the Interpretive Performance**

### ***Accessing History Through Transformation***

I will expand on the key characteristics of the interpretive performance here in answer to the research question: **what is an interpretive performance?** This question is important because although, as I have noted earlier, live interpretation and museum theatre have been studied in relation to how well they succeed in terms of education and entertainment, there has been little consideration of what makes interpretation performative or a performance interpretive, in relation to guided tours and demonstrations. Performed interpretation makes the past accessible by making it seem alive – it transforms what may seem as dead and inaccessible to something live in the present. This sense of access is facilitated by the various performances studied as part of this research. Each performance has a different way of allowing us ‘in’ which is often facilitated by a transformation of space and time. In the case of the guided tour, tour space is created as a ‘back region’ that we may be allowed into if we perform the necessary crossing rituals. Another transformation of time/space is the performance frame of the first person performance. For example: at the threshold of the pithead baths Fred tells visitors ‘out there it is 2008 but in here it is 1938’. In the case of the demonstration, we are allowed ‘inside’ the machine. Its workings allow us to see how it works, which allows us to see both inside the machine and inside the factory. These frames or boundaries are like an invitation to proceed to the visitor. Of course visitors may resist, or cross the line and go back again. The *Performing Heritage* project found

that ‘there are complex transitions that take place between the roles of (for example) “visitor”, “audience”, “participant”, and “learner”’ and that ‘Often they will switch back and forth between those roles from moment to moment as they negotiate their relationship both with the performance and with the museum or site environment’(Jackson 2011,12). My research was less focused on the visitor and more concerned to investigate the nature of the interpretive performance, but findings show that a shifting sense of agency is characteristic of this type of performance which may transform interpreters, artefacts *and* audiences. Performance brings with it a transfer to a subjective rather than an objective focus even when it is in the third person and it alters the visitor’s customary viewing habits. This is most extreme in the case of the guided tour where visitors are required to enact a tour route by performing a highly structured set of behaviours. But in the demonstration too, objects and artefacts alter customary subject/object boundaries. The dialogic or more often interrogative nature of the interpretive performance implicates and questions the role of the visitor even if they do not become an audience or a participant.

### *The Presentational Layer*

I noted in Chapter One the persistence of the presentational performance. The presentational ‘layer’ that exists around the first person performance clearly indicates a performance frame and again is an invitation to ‘enter’ the performance and what I have termed the representational world of first person performance. It is almost impossible to be always ‘inside’ this fictional world of the museum first person performance because of the intrusion of the noise and visual surroundings of the rest of the museum and because the audience is frequently standing during these performances. The presentational layer is a kind of ‘buffer’ space which allows the transformation (when it occurs) to the ‘other’ world of the first person performance. Third person interpretation is almost entirely presentational and the sense of the ‘other’ world of the past is produced less through the story and character vehicle of the first person interpreter and more through visuality and the indication of the presence of people from the past. Interpreters access that past world by being where ‘they’ used to be: inhabiting their space and doing what they used to do in these spaces, which allows the visitor to mentally inhabit those spaces along with them.

### *Enacting Journeys*

The idea of travel and journeys is very notable in the examples of performed interpretation studied. Mrs Lockwood asks us to come with her into her house and look round the various rooms, Fred shows us around the pithead baths and they both ask us to go 'back' in time with them, Engineer Eric endeavours to make a train 'go', Jack Alcock talks about his transatlantic flight, and of course both guided tours are examples of travelling through space and time. This travel trope is partly to do with the nature of museum visiting and the notion of travelling back in time. It is also to do with the transient nature of the performances – they are short, the space may only be temporarily occupied by performers, and visitors often travel *through* them. As I am suggesting here, spatiality is a key component of the interpretive performance along with the use of objects and artefacts, both of which use metonymy as a device to transform and move around in time and space.

### *Spatiality*

This research has endeavoured to find out how the site, its buildings and spaces work in the interpretive performances. In answer to the research question: **How does the site, its buildings, spaces and artefacts contribute to these performances?** It has been found that the contribution of spaces, buildings and artefacts is so great that they may be regarded as co-performers. I have already referred to the production of aesthetic space that may extend the boundaries of space and time. I suggest that the emphasis on spatiality in performance may increase a sense of access to knowledge that museums more generally represent. Performances may be driven by the need to interpret particular spaces such as in the case of the two guided tours, and at Beamish where we are immersed in those spaces that may speak to us, or which we may use by travelling through them. These particular places are interpreted by third person interpreters who work symbiotically with the spaces of the museum - and by that I mean that the interpreters do not try to overlay the realism of the space as it is now with a fictional world of the past. By contrast, in the first person interpretation examples at the NCMME, the interpreters transform the space as part of a fictional 'other' narrative which *references* the current space whilst drawing us back to another fictional manifestation of it. In more traditional gallery based performances such as at MOSI, the scenography and visual narratives of the museum display are more of a backdrop for the interpretive performance but they may still produce their own 'story lines' by the way they join with or possibly contradict the narratives of the interpreter.

### *Objects and Artefacts in Performance*

Another way of accessing history through performed interpretation is through the use of objects and artefacts. Artefacts are always present during interpretive performances even if they are not used. They often drive the narrative in the same way that the spaces and buildings within the site do, and may be used as storytellers in their own right, such as when machinery is demonstrated by making it ‘work’ or in the way artefacts form part of a tableau scene that creates meaning through contextualisation. They may be used to illustrate the narrative of an interpreter such as when objects are held up to be ‘examples’: when Fred holds up the bar of carbolic soap or Mrs Lockwood shows visitors the donkey stone. I have suggested in *The Demonstration* chapter that objects used in demonstration can share a sense of agency with their human counterparts and certainly their use in performed interpretation alters the sense of presence or aura they possess on their ‘own’. As Jenny Kidd has noted<sup>41</sup>, this sense of liveness is related to the ability of the object to transform, or transformations to be made around the object as much as it is about the thing being used. I have focused on this issue in *Chapter Three - The Demonstration*, where it was found that the transformation from representative object to ‘live’ object in performance is fundamental to the interpretive performance and is a way of ‘revealing’ the histories that objects carry within them. I consider metonymy to be the principle that performs this transformation and revelation.

### *Use of Metonymy*

This is such a common device in the interpretive performance that it may be considered a distinguishing feature of it. The principle of metonymy allows for transformations to be made and means that space, objects and performers may all be able to stand in for each other at different times. Performers stand in for the people of the past in a particular way. They are usually considered ‘representative’ or archetypal – at the NCMME both the miner guides and the living history characters represent all miners and all working class roles associated with working in a mining community. Mrs Lockwood was chosen to represent women in a

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<sup>41</sup> Objects are a taken-for-granted means of “accessing” the past, yet their use in performance requires different forms of identification; a recognition of the collision between their role as perceived objective manifestations of knowledge and “things” whose use value and/or tangibility is being demonstrated: they are “alive” (Kidd 2011 b, 29).

mining community for example which was thought to ‘balance’ the male focus of the underground tour and the miner-guides. As I have shown in the preceding chapters, the spaces of the museum where live interpretation happens suggests the presence of people by producing the impression of recent habitation and continual use. Objects in interpretation act metonymically as well. I have shown how at Quarry Bank Mill for example objects such as vegetables, beds, medicine, pens and slates stand for the various tasks that the children performed and allow us to ‘see’ the apprentice children by looking at the artefacts they would have used. In demonstrations, objects may perform metonymically by standing for a part or a whole of the industrial process such as with the Durn Mill demonstration at MOSI where Dad stands for the boiler and the boiler stands for Dad as it cannot work without an engineer, the boiler stands for the factory, and the factory stands for the North-West and then Britain which indicates industrial supremacy, which shows how parts can refer to a structure of larger meaning. Objects may punctuate a demonstration and suggest more than can be shown, for example in the Manchester Mills demonstration at MOSI where the interpreters hold up objects like the cotton at various stages of production to show what ‘has’ happened to it and to stand for what cannot be seen such as the re-sewn leather belt that attaches the spinning machine to the line shafting that ‘shows’ how it may have once broken and taken a millworker’s arm off. Interpreters use their own bodies to stand in place of other past bodies to complete the scene or to show how objects may have looked whilst they were being used. They also use the bodies of audience members by moving people physically and emotionally and suggesting that the audience also take the place of the people in the past.

A hermeneutic structure is suggested by the parts standing for wholes which underlies the interpretations’ pedagogical intent. As Hooper-Greenhill notes, hermeneutic theory is a useful way of conceptualising the practice of interpretation where the construction of meaning depends on prior knowledge and on beliefs and values, and where understanding develops through the continuous movement between the whole and the parts of a work, and where meaning is constantly modified as further relationships are encountered (Hooper Greenhill 1994, 13-48). Larger structures of meaning can be referred to or suggested via the use of metonymy. A hermeneutic structure is suggested by frequent circularity of the interpretive performance. Mrs Lockwood travels around her house: ‘in’ the back door, to the parlour and then ‘upstairs’ and then outside again. She also travels around a working week noting the tasks that would be done on particular days. Fred describes the cycle of men coming to work, using the baths, going home and

coming to work again along with the cycle of dirty to clean and clean to dirty. The Manchester Mills demonstration shows the life-cycle of cotton and the process of cotton importation into Manchester and the export of finished cloth.

Demonstrations generally show a fraction of the process that they more widely represent and it is necessary for the visitor to ‘complete’ the cycle by visiting more of the museum and imagining the ‘whole’ process.

### *Interactivity*

Interactivity is a feature of the interpretive performance, or at least the suggestion of it, and this is an important issue in the field of research for museum performance. Jackson and Kidd define interactivity as ‘activity where comingling is a desired and actual outcome of a piece, where physical and/or verbal exchange takes place, or where audiences can intervene at will in performance proceedings’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 89). However, Kidd notes that ‘participation more honestly and adequately captures the nature of many of these encounters’ (Kidd 2011a, 206) which are often limited to ‘controlled verbal responses where audience members have no narrative influence over the progression of the piece’. She goes on to list a selection of increasingly interactive types of performance, from this ‘controlled verbal response’ through ‘scripted bodily participation’ where visitors are moved around a space or a site but where control over the proceedings is still with the performer through to ‘contextual interactivity’ where interactions are ‘modelled on the ability of visitors or audiences either to “query” or “browse” within an environment (Kidd 2011a, 214). The most interactive is ‘negotiated interactivity’ where audiences can occasionally take on the role of performer. According to this schema, my research indicates that the first person performances would all come under the category of the ‘call and response’ type of participation, the guided tours would be examples of ‘scripted bodily participation’ and Beamish would be an example of ‘contextual interactivity’. This indicates that although acting and the taking on of roles *can* be extended to the visitor to produce a ‘negotiated interactivity’, in practice the first person examples from my research show that they are very controlled and do not allow for this level of visitor interaction. A key issue relating to this is the child focus of much museum performance and particularly first person interpretation. Evidence suggests that performances are overtly child focused and they take place for either school audiences or for family audiences in the school holidays. They are very controlled performances because they have to work to strict time deadlines and they are generally developed in relation to the Primary National Curriculum even when they are performed for family audiences or

when there are family groups present at performances the interpreter often aims all their questions or calls for participation at the children<sup>42</sup>.

So in performance terms, the museum performance is not particularly interactive and often merely suggests the idea of interactivity which is modelled on a school question and answer session. However, my research suggests that third person interpretation is *potentially* more interactive as it tends to be less scripted and the interpreter is not bound to represent a character taking on more of a go-between or informant role between the past and the present, although the research found that only the encounters with interpreters at Beamish were completely improvised and driven by the visitor. Other third person sessions were as structured as the first person sessions. The kind of ‘controlled verbal response’ that is characteristic within the interpretive performance though is accompanied by another kind of interactivity. I would suggest that there are more interactions going on here than the verbal ones. Guided tours for example demand physical effort, and carry within them the suggestion that visitors allow space to ‘act’ on them. Although this may be as Kidd describes a ‘scripted bodily participation’ in a choreographic sense, there is a level of communication that occurs between the visitor and the space that is not directed by the guide. Similarly with demonstrations, objects and machinery may ‘talk’ to the visitor around or over and above the verbal narratives that the demonstrator or the visitor initiates. Performed interaction models the *kind* of interactions the visitor *could* have with the museum: a kind of directed looking, listening and re-thinking stimulated by memory and the imagination, which the visitor may use in their self-directed interactions with the museum environment<sup>43</sup>.

## Authenticity

The issue of liveness is inextricably linked to a sense of what is real or authentic in the museum, and so the research question that asks **what relationship does the interpretive performance in the industrial museum and heritage site have with authenticity?** can be answered by considering *where* in the museum and heritage site a sense of living or liveness is produced. At this type

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<sup>42</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 8.

<sup>43</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 2.

of museum/site, a key concern is the maintenance of a sense of work and life going on in order to represent a past world of work. This is particularly the case for museums with large amounts of reconstructed space like Beamish, but the NCMME, Bradford and Quarry Bank Mill also contain areas where it is ‘like’ stepping back into the past. MOSI use their historic space to a certain extent, but this is juxtaposed with modern buildings and generally, this museum uses the traditional gallery format. Here the real things in their real places are made to ‘go’ or in the case of MOSI (which is as much a science museum as a history museum) the past is brought into the present by the continuing relevance of science and by the reiteration of the importance of Manchester as a place and its relationship to science and industry. The sense of the ‘real’ place is established at the NCMME, MOSI, Quarry Bank Mill and Bradford Industrial Museum by the fact that they stand on the site of former industry. The NCMME and Quarry Bank Mill establish an ‘entire’ site where the buildings have been left ‘as’ they were to a large extent and who represent the original site’s industry. This kind of realism depends on fixing the site at a certain period in time, and this may be considered inauthentic as it does not adequately represent the site at different times in its history, and which effaces the reconstructive work of the museum.

Here, performance techniques of scenography are used to produce a ‘realistic’ living environment but as I have argued, all types of performed interpretation work to produce a sense of presence and liveness. I have described above how the interpretive performance uses memory to connect the visitor to the past which now seems authentic because it is part of the visitor’s life experiences. However memory is inseparable from the imagination. As Boal points out, the two cannot exist without each other: ‘I could not imagine if I did not have a memory. I cannot recall something without imagination, since memory itself forms part of the process of imagination’ (Boal 1995, 21). This means that the memories reproduced and elicited by the museum may not be entirely ‘true’ because they cannot reproduce the original event. The phenomenologist Robert Sokolowski describes how when we remember we exercise the perception we had then, but we make errors by projecting things into the remembered event as we ‘oscillate between memory and imagination’, and in fact, ‘Memory and imagination are structurally very similar, and one easily slips into the other’ (Sokolowski 2000, 69-71). It seems that the memories that museums use actually rely on absence: the missing memory, the memory overridden by the imaginary and nostalgia. Nostalgia is memory coloured by a sense of loss and the sense of a need yet inability to return to some past world. Recreations of the past based on nostalgia are bound

to be partial and use elements of the past that will make us feel good about the present.

Using the visitor's emotions to bring the past 'alive' again produces partial histories. As I have noted in earlier chapters, interpreters attempt to elicit empathy in their audiences by telling stories about the dangerous, hard and cruel elements of industry for workers. Producing verbal/visual spectacle is a common feature of the interpretive performance but this ignores the mundane or the ordinary aspect of working lives and does not give a sense of context or perspective. When we are always presented with images of child labour in industrial museums it is hard to know what percentage of the child population actually worked or whether excessively cruel treatment was indeed regarded as normal for the majority of the population. A certain amount of the storytelling in museums involves the circulation of myth and legend and I have found that the real environment in the form of the real workplace and the real interpreter in the form of the ex-worker are most likely to produce mythologised or potentially altered histories. Real workplaces have large amounts of cultural 'baggage' surrounding them. Ghost stories for example abound in historic sites. The mine and miners have mythic resonances: there is a great deal of mystery and fear surrounding the underground world of miners.

Barbara Freese describes how the:

symbolic importance of British coal miners comes from more than their once dominant numbers. It comes from the unique mixture of awe, sympathy, guilt, and fear that these workers have long inspired. It comes from their work in that most mysterious and dangerous of places, the deep underground, and from their distinctive and isolated tight-knit communities (Freese 2006, 233-4).

As noted earlier, the liveness that I suggest is a feature of performed interpretation has an awkward relationship with history<sup>44</sup>. Living history is often imagined as a 'live' experience of the past based on an authentic material environment along with interpreters who play the part of someone from that past. All sites surveyed used this mode of production to various extents and used the idea that we were being 'taken' to some past time/place. This only 'works' to the extent that we are prepared, as Jenny Kidd notes, to see the museum as a 'playframe' where all messages and signals are recognized as "in a certain sense not true" (Kidd 2011b, 25 quoting Bateson). We are not seeing the past as real, we are having an experience in the present and the authentic is less about the

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<sup>44</sup> See *Recommendations*, no.6.

authentic resource or ways that may be displayed but more about visitors' experiences of authenticity' (Kidd 2011b, 25). The importance of the visitor experience was particularly reiterated at Beamish by many of my respondents. One curator told me: 'it's their [the visitors'] interaction with heritage that's important. ... You've had a sense of what it was like. You've smelt it, been burnt by it, touched it, got dirty by it' (Cur03/Bea/09). This 'live' experience is precipitated by the extensive contextualised environment but the use-value of this site to visitors is more important than absolute material authenticity. I was also told: 'the authentic experience for me is very important so if that means we have to compromise on something now and again in order for the visitor to experience something then I'm quite comfortable with that' (Mgr01/Bea/09). Similarly MOSI were relaxed about period accuracy demonstrated by their first person performances which have a strong presentational layer. The Head of Interpretation and Learning told me:

a lot of what one presents, it's difficult to get that completely accurate, completely objective, really as to how it was. So if you start on that sort of premise, as it were, then try to do the best you can in terms of ensuring accuracy of the facts that are there, then yeah you just accept it's a medium of communication (Mgr/MOSI/09).

However, at Quarry Bank Mill and the NCMME there were more problems with producing 'real' versions of history. There was more concern at these sites with history being 'distorted' in some way by interpreters who have their own interests and focus on them, or who tell stories that are at odds with the site's official messages. At these two sites, performance was regarded as problematic in relation to 'real' history. An example of this 'problem' is from the NCMME whose education department produced a 'story-telling' session in relation to a temporary exhibition of photography. I was told that this was not living history because it was less character based and more 'fictional' than living history, but in effect, it had exactly the same basis in reality as the living history. The interpreter concerned did her own research using information from her own experiences of the 1960s, oral histories from mining communities (from the internet) and incorporated stories that she was given by ex-miners who came to her performances. She made this information into stories around the photographs in the same way that the other living history interpreters made stories around the characters of Mabel and Fred and their living environments.

What is most problematic in relation to history is first person performance because it alters the location of authenticity from the seemingly solid, material 'belongings' of the museum, to the transient transformatory fictional world of the present. The authenticity of a performance involving acting derives from the

performer and the quality of their performance, and this can ‘reduce’ the status of the museum artefact to a ‘prop’. ‘Even though exhibitions and material culture are often seen as being more innately ‘authentic’ it is the performances that are the more ‘real’ experience.’ (Jackson and Kidd 2008, 130). This is seen as belittling in some way for some museum professionals to the original museum object. In performance terms also, the first person performance can be regarded as inauthentic. As I have noted, the surroundings of the museum force the performance to compete with other types of display, and the pedagogical intent of the museum may make the performance earnestly didactic on the one hand and comedic on the other.

I would argue that a representational style of performance as described in Chapter One only ‘works’ if it does not acknowledge the audience, and as soon as it does it becomes a presentational performance and loses the ability to create an aesthetic ‘other’ world. However, it is not performance that reduces the status of the object or the museum that makes performance inauthentic, it is the attempt to produce a mimetically real performance<sup>45</sup>. Phil Smith argues that the ‘dominant discourse in contemporary theatricality to which heritage and museum institutions now turn is a ‘late’ mimetics.’ And that:

When performed in a museum or heritage site, this behaviourist theatre competes directly over scarce expressive surface space with the very artefacts and historic fabrics that its performance is supposedly illuminating. Realism, even when conscientiously done, tends to *mask* the site, not only in the sense of obscuring it, but also in making it subservient to the immediate conditions of its re-representation’ (Smith 2011, 165).

I would argue that another reason for the difficulties that the museum often has with first person performance is the privileging of material history over oral history and the spoken narrative, because this changes the authoritative museum voice into a subjective and dialogic one. An example of this is the interpretation of ex-workers or what might be called ‘specialists’ in the museum. I have found that they do not get very much opportunity to use their special knowledge. They are called upon because they have particular skills which are very useful in maintaining an industrial museum and its machinery and yet on the whole, they are expected to give very limited information about the processes they are show or demonstrate<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 6.

<sup>46</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 10.

It may be that the demonstrator does not have the presentation skills to present themselves or their skill and knowledge effectively or that the museum wants to control the information it gives to visitors. I have found that the ex-worker is often caught between being a worker and a performer and will veer between 'getting on' with their work or presenting work in a very technical manner and attempting to be an entertainer and impressing their audiences with verbal routines. I have noted that performed interpretation is often based around National Curriculum demands even when it is aimed at family audiences, and this means that for example interpreters focus on nineteenth century history rather than talking about the twentieth century which is where their particular work experience comes from.

## **Interpretation and the Sustainability of Museums**

Some concern has been expressed at my case study sites about maintaining a sense of living and working when it is reliant on the ex-workers who are now coming to the end of their working careers, for example at the NCMME, and at other sites such as MOSI, Bradford and Quarry Bank Mill where very old and fragile machinery produces a sense of work and liveliness. The question of 'living' for many museums now is one of survival and whether they will be able to alter the balance of their revenue generating mechanisms to be less reliant on public funding. In the current climate, museums face an uncertain future. An era of central government funded expansion has turned to one of contraction, and this is currently resulting in many museums having to make staff redundant, the introduction of entrance fees in certain cases and other museums shortening their opening hours or closing. Museums like Beamish and Quarry Bank Mill from my case studies who do not rely on government funding (and who charge entrance fees) are in a better position to weather the economic climate, although it remains to be seen what will happen to their visitor numbers. Questions of survival and the changing cultural landscape for publicly funded museums have been addressed by the Leading Museums group - formed in October 2009 by the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) under the chairmanship of Professor Tom Schuller. The resulting report (*Leading Museums: A Vision and Strategic Action Plan for English Museum*) pays 'particular attention to the risks and challenges of the current political and economic situation' (MLA website 2011). It suggests that museums need to focus less on conserving their collections and more on sharing and opening them up to a wider audience: 'The objective is to liberate collections and enable people to participate in interpretation and story-telling; and especially to

broaden their appeal to non-traditional audiences from more diverse segments of the community' (MLA 2009, 6). As well as this focus on 'sharing' collections and moving out of the institution of the museum to connect with new audiences is an emphasis on openness. Tom Shuller writes in the *Leading Museums Group Findings*:

Museums must become increasingly open - physically, psychologically and virtually. They should share their buildings, knowledge and resources to turn them into true public learning spaces; one of the few places in contemporary Britain where diverse members of different communities can meet and converse (Shuller 2010, 2).

The report suggests that museums share their resources and collaborate with other public services and functions such as: 'libraries, heritage and science centres, archives and the visual and performing arts' (MLA 2009, 4). It also suggests that they become more commercially aware: 'New, more entrepreneurial partnerships are needed for many museums and museum services (MLA 2009, 7) this means making 'stronger contributions to the creative and tourism economies' (MLA 2009, 7) and learning from more commercial organisations. Tom Shuller suggests in the *Museums Journal* that museum staff could learn from retail store professionals with their knowledge of attracting customers and directing them around their stores (Shuller 2011,16). Now museums will have to think about becoming more commercially viable whilst maintaining their mandate to be socially responsible and a provider of cultural learning, which are priorities that have the potential to conflict.

This policy direction emphasises the role of interpretation and communicating with audiences, and downplays a former focus on the objects themselves: 'Primarily museums are about interactions between people (individually and in families and groups) and collections – what could be called "conversations"' (Shuller 2010, 2). This has an impact on the role of the curator who has responsibility for the production of exhibitions involving artefacts that they have detailed knowledge about. Curators play a leading role in deciding what will go on display and producing interpretive text panels for example but they rarely communicate directly with visitors. This has been the task of educational or interpretational staff who deliver workshops, talks, presentations, tours and demonstrations. I would argue that the in-depth and specialist knowledge of curators is not always in evidence in the performed interpretation that has been observed throughout this thesis and there is often a gap between the information and its delivery, so that quite basic messages are passed on to front-line staff or as

I have noted very frequently, educational and interpretational staff do their own research which sometimes lacks rigour and complexity<sup>47</sup>.

### ***Proposals for the Future of Performed Interpretation***

*Leading Museums* suggests that curators become better at creating and maintaining the aforementioned ‘conversations’ and interactions between the museum, its artefacts and the visitor: ‘Museum training programmes need to develop the communication skills of curators, so that interaction with the public becomes more instinctive’ (MLA 2009, 6). Interestingly, this report mentions the advanced communication skills of the actor-interpreter in this context which it suggests curators learn from, although the actor-interpreters themselves are regarded rather as an expensive luxury and even worse, it is suggested that they ‘can reduce the scope for reflective participation by the public’ (*ibid*). This criticism is maybe the result of a certain view of performance in the museum but it does implicate the limited interactivity of the typical (though not all) first person performance. The problem with interactivity in first person performances is that it is hampered by functionalism. It is used often to drive up visitor numbers and/or to produce National Curriculum centred learning sessions. I would say that a way forward for this kind of work is either to produce a less interactive performance that is more akin to theatre, which could then be surrounded by interaction via the presentational layer I refer to in Chapter One. In an interpretive performance, I think this is necessary in order to produce space for the ‘character’ and the audience to question their representation and the ‘facts’ of history. Another choice would be to innovate with third person interpretation, seeing it as a performance choice in its own right and not just a certain kind of customer service. The option of increasing visitor interactivity and producing what Kidd terms ‘negotiated interactivity’ where the visitor plays a role in the performance and may determine its outcome (illustrated by the work of Triangle Theatre Company) is very challenging for both sites and visitors and may only work well in situations where performers have a high level of respect and autonomy. I would say that this particular style of performance is inimical to functionalism and the delivery of teaching goals.

None of the interpreters I interviewed had been trained by their institutions to produce performance and many did not even think of themselves as interpreters. Interpretation itself isn’t always well understood. Whilst all case study sites had

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<sup>47</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 7

education officers/managers, only MOSI and Beamish had a dedicated interpretation officer/manager. At the NCMME it is not regarded as a function in its own right and there is no interpretation plan<sup>48</sup>. At all these sites there is a wealth of curatorial knowledge which does not always make its way into the interactions interpreters have with visitors. Whilst I believe this 'expert' knowledge is a critical part of the 'conversation' museums have with visitors, this should not shut out 'other knowledges' brought to the museum by other members of staff or by visitors. Museums are a place where we can come into contact with expert discourses on history and where we can place ourselves (and our history) in the flow of the past and get a sense of the bigger picture. But as well as this, they should be places of exchange where knowledge can be brought, contrasted, exchanged, abandoned and augmented. So it is important that there is both the expert and the outsider view. Museums tend to want to produce objective, homogenous histories and simplify instead of producing multi-vocal histories and complicating stories. There is a need to understand interpretation as a performative encounter between museum and visitor not as a one way flow of information. Interpretation isn't (just) information. It resides in the spaces the visitor accesses, the objects, information about objects and any performances given in and around them, and is activated when the visitor comes into contact with any/all of the above and makes some kind of meaning. This means that interpretation is a process rather than a product, and so the museum's role is to provide conducive space for interpretation to happen rather than producing interpretative messages. If this is the case, there would be less concern about 'fictional' messages that distort 'true' history. If interpretation is the process by which the visitor makes sense of the museum's narratives then there is no need to produce pre-digested narratives or try to insist that spoken and written narratives adhere to the imagined truthfulness of the material artefact. There is a need as Phil Smith suggests for 'a new kind of interpretation, where the point is not what lurks beneath or before or organises from above, but is the story of levels themselves, sliding about each other' (Smith 2011, 167).

Current trends such as: the using of collections rather than just conserving them, the active audience and increasing entrepreneurship and innovation, suggest that there is great scope for performance strategies to deliver cutting edge interpretation to museums and heritage sites. The shift in knowledge production makes the museum a more performative place. Gregory and Witcomb state that in

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<sup>48</sup> See *Recommendations*, no. 4.

a world increasingly defined by experiential and immersive technologies, traditional ways of producing and disseminating knowledge are not sufficient and that this shift in knowledge production privileges performative models of democratic engagement rather than pedagogical ones (Gregory and Witcomb 2007, 263). The National Trust are an example of the use of increasingly performative interpretation. They describe how they are developing ‘new ways to bring places to life’ by ‘firing the imaginations of the widest possible range of visitors’, and to do this they are experimenting with different kinds of presentation to ‘reduce the look, don’t touch’ atmosphere. They say they are ‘experimenting with creating the look, sounds and smell of houses at crucial moments in their history’, and tell ‘moving stories of sadness or joy through presenting rooms as if they have just been left moments earlier by their historic owners’ (National Trust Strategy 2010, 7-9). Whilst this increased accessibility is driven partly by the desire to increase membership numbers it does show a willingness to experiment with ways of displaying and interpreting what is often seen as elite history.<sup>49</sup>

The National Trust Strategy is a clear example of performance based interpretation that produces the effect of a living environment that the visitor can take part in rather than just look at. The challenge for industrial museums is that their sites can be less amenable to visitor use. Houses can be easily occupied or show signs of occupation but workplaces are a different question. For example, at Quarry Bank Mill it is much easier to imagine life going on in the apprentice house than it is in the mill which shows a collection of processes from different time periods in history. Industrial Museums/heritage sites have a head start in being accessible to a wide audience in their aim to show peoples’ history rather than elite history. They also show a more recent history. A possibility for keeping industrial museums and sites ‘living’ is moving them into the future in some way so that the histories of work they show may be connected with our experience of working *now* rather than being islands of extraordinary practice, and so that visitors can feel more connection with what is on display. To be relevant, museums need to be progressive and put forward alternative views, promote critical thinking and not provide a security blanket for a small number of people. What we have to ask is how the museum is useful to us now. Weil suggests that the museum is an instrument of empowerment: ‘its goal as such would be to provide the members of

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<sup>49</sup> Quarry Bank Mill from my case studies is different in this respect as it represents an industrial community, and features a semi-productive textile mill and so the stories of workers and the workplace are well represented.

its public with a knowledge of the methods, processes, and techniques through which they, in turn, could make better informed judgements about their own past and more insightful choices about their future (Weil 1994, 88). These 'conversations' and 'arguments' that the museum can have with their visitors are particularly well suited to performance practice.

Performance is of particular value within interpretation in relation to the transformations that it can enact and model. Performing with and around museum objects has a particularly valuable role related to their potential transformation as it questions their status as representative objects and models their journey from the useful to the symbolic realm. This research has demonstrated the ways in which an interpretive performance can work with objects and spaces conceptualising the shifts in agency between subject and object, who is acting/who is acted upon; the interplay between the presentational and the representational content of first and third person interpretation and the tour as an enactment of a revelatory quest for knowledge and/or origins.

## Recommendations

In order to capture the value of this research, I am making a number of recommendations that make clear the direct applicability of this research. This relates to the research question: **how are these performances created, managed and received?** that has been considered throughout this thesis. Whilst these recommendations are based on a limited number of case studies and may not have universal relevance, they will be of particular value to museums and heritage sites who:

- Employ interpreters/actors/performers/guides/presenters
- Use a living history approach
- Have 'working' displays
- Display and/or use machinery
- Use guided tours
- Demonstrate skills and/or processes

## *Re-imagining Performance*

An awareness of the performativity of a wide range of interpretive events that extends further than the more normally considered-as-performance first person interpretation is essential if museums want to think about what 'works' in relation to their visitors. Many managers and interpreters at the case study sites interviewed referred to the 'stories' or 'storylines' that they believed their interpretation could draw out of the material resource. But interpretation is not just a matter of providing a narrative in an alternative format. To imagine performed interpretation as simply a rather more engaging form of display is to miss its transformative qualities. These have been outlined throughout the conclusion to this thesis, but can be summarised as:

- Making what is dead seem alive
- For the visitor: moving between roles of spectator, learner, pilgrim, participant and audience
- Multiplying the subjectivity of the interpreter
- Altering space and time
- Shifts between subject and object positions
- Making history seem 'real'
- Reanimating memories

- Making ‘museum’ space ‘living’ and ‘working’ space

The same creative choices that are available to the actor/interpreter such as altering space and time, working with character, historical texts, and transforming object meanings, are available to the third person interpreter who may create the same kind of aesthetic space that activates memory and the imagination that the first person interpreter does. Too often tours and demonstrations are little more than talking labels that offer little in the way of creativity and challenge. They are also very repetitive for the staff who perform them, who sometimes have little autonomy and a lack of ability to make creative choices in their interpretation. If the connection between bringing to life and performativity is consciously made , their potential to produce meaningful interactions with visitors and produce change - to ‘do’ history in the present - is enormous (see no. 9 below).

### ***Re-imagining the Visitor***

There is great opportunity to produce difficult/better/more challenging tours, demonstrations and interpretation but I would argue that if the sites in question want to do this they need to re-imagine their visitors. In the pursuit of a very high level of accessibility and the widest possible audience, evidence from this research indicates that there is a tendency for museums to aim at the ‘lowest common denominator’. Because these museums are in some way a corrective to elitist or ‘high’ culture, their version of ‘accessible’ can often be too ‘easy’. It should be said that the need to be commercially viable also mitigates against challenging visitors. These museums/sites are part of the tourist economy, and there is clearly a balance to be struck between producing enjoyable experiences and making history difficult for visitors. Imagining some visitors as potential researchers, historians or investigators as well as consumers or pupils, capable of tolerating ambiguity and complexity, would allow sites to produce innovative interpretation.

As a consequence of these two ‘re-imaginings’, I recommend that:

1. **Staff who manage interpretation have an awareness of performativity and what performance is in a museum context (see p. 44).** This is not just a question of bringing in performers; it is about the role of narration and narrative which can done with spaces and objects as well as people. Seeing performance this way, in its widest sense may help to counter negative perceptions of performance in the museum which tend to be based on

certain kinds of first person performances<sup>50</sup>. As has been noted<sup>51</sup> earlier, the museum environment and reconstructed heritage site are performative environments that may be ‘read’ and acted upon and within by a range of players. See for example the way that museum space may seem to become performance space as outlined on pages 110-116.

2. **Staff bear in mind that interpretation is all the meaning-making that visitors do in relation to the museum or site as well as all the work the museum/site do to make themselves understandable (See pp. 30, 43 and 259).** Performed interpretation is inherently dialogic even if it does not produce verbal interactivity. See for example, page 139 within *Chapter 2 - The Guided Tour* for a description of how the act of walking through performative space is a performance of interpretation by both interpreter and visitor. There are many performative ‘narratives’ at these sites: the messages delivered by scenography, addresses to the visitor made by interpreters, visitor interactions with scenic space, displays and interpreters. There can be many different kinds of ‘conversation’ then that happen between visitor and space; visitor and object; visitor and interpreter<sup>52</sup>.
3. **Understand that these dialogues are a valuable way of questioning history and countering authoritative discourses (see p. 33).** The interactions visitors have with historic space, objects and performers produce unpredictable experiences of history that may rely as much on visitors’ own pasts and memories as much as the information that is supplied to them by the museum/heritage site. I have noted the performances of reminiscence (see p. 250 for a discussion of this at Beamish and *The Tour as Pilgrimage* section) that may happen at heritage sites. There is also much potential within performed interpretation for

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<sup>50</sup> See pp. 33-37 for discussion of negative view in relation to performance.

<sup>51</sup> See pp. 38-40 for the performativity of museum space and displays.

<sup>52</sup> See pp. 29-31 for descriptions of the interpretive process as inherently interactive

multiple voices to be heard<sup>53</sup> and contrasting views of history to be presented, which should be welcomed.

**4. Integrate performance within an over-arching interpretation policy**

(see p. 267). Regarding some interpretation as performance because it uses a temporal ‘other’ world, and other as not, because it simply presents the ‘facts’ or the processes indicates that museums are not fully aware of their role in the representation of culture. Not having an interpretation policy that recognises performance and its potential effects on the visitor reduces the scope and effectiveness of communication. Not having an interpretation policy at all means that interpretation is not integrated into wider strategic priorities.

**5. Managers use performance strategies to interpret collections and spaces<sup>54</sup> (see pp. 48, 216 and 252), with the awareness that the sense of liveness and presence that performance draws on and creates is produced in relation to<sup>55</sup>:**

- **Memory** - which can be the living memories of the staff in the museum or of the visitor. The re-use or re-awakening of memory has a compensatory aspect, as identities can strengthened or remade<sup>56</sup> in relation to it.
- **Animation** - which is produced by machinery and objects as well as people.<sup>57</sup>
- **Emotion and empathy** - which can be a wider range than just danger or fear.

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<sup>53</sup> See p. 133-135 and 184-5 for constructions of history involving fictionality and ‘dissonant’ histories.

<sup>54</sup> Producing a ‘living’ or ‘working’ site is related to case study sites’ ‘rescue’ from oblivion see p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> See *Conclusions* p. 250 for *Sources of Presence, Living and Liveliness*.

<sup>56</sup> See p. 32 for heritage as a compensation and see p. 178 for the heritage museum as a stage for the visitor to reminisce.

<sup>57</sup> See pp. 48 and 254 for performance and relationship of subjectivity to museum objects.

- **The alteration of spatial and temporal boundaries** - that can be produced by a range of visual, sensory, aural and spoken narratives.

Performance strategies are especially valuable for their potential to create moments of revelation where the past can be sensed as particularly present.<sup>58</sup>

6. **Problematise historical representation and allow challenging information and material to be presented (see pp. 46, 47, 80, 107, 130, 261 and 263).** Museums do not want to upset anyone<sup>59</sup>, but the past needs to be disturbed for any change to be made in the present, and this should be the nature of their educational role<sup>60</sup>. Sites should employ a knowledge of what the postmodern era has done to history and not rely on the production of mimetic realism<sup>61</sup>. In the context of the interpretive performance, this means:
  - a. being aware of the slippages between fact and fiction and drawing attention to them rather than by attempting to recreate a piece of the past as inevitable and completed.
  - b. playing with authority, characterisation, materiality, the arbitrary and ephemeral presence and absence.
7. **Use the expertise of curators in producing performance (see pp. 46 and 266),** not just to fact check or sign off scripts but to share their knowledge of the complexities of history and range of historical discourses.

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<sup>58</sup> See pp. 31, and 168 for the role and practice of revelation.

<sup>59</sup> See p. 45 for the ‘problem’ with first person performance.

<sup>60</sup> See p. 47 for commercialism and the limits of historical representation.

<sup>61</sup> See p. 46 for discussion of mimetic realism as the basis for truth, also pp. 129-135 – *History Realism and Performance* and pp.198-199 for different versions of authenticity.

8. **Produce first person performances for adult audiences (see pp. 44, 46, 139 and 259)** as well as for children<sup>62</sup>, leaving space to question that representation within or after the performance.
9. **Innovate with third person performance (see pp. 80, 107, 120 and 212)** and the ways the presence of the past may be suggested through metonymy<sup>63</sup>. Look at the ways interpreters may use spaces and objects bearing in mind their status as complementary or alternative storytellers. Experiment with multiple narratives especially the non verbal ones, as much can be done with gesture for example, without using words. This would be particularly useful in noisy environments or with non English speaking audiences.<sup>64</sup>
10. **Value interpretive staff more highly and train them appropriately . (see pp. 56, 214, 229 and 263).** A common way of training interpreters is to provide them with a body of knowledge or a manual of information and then the interpreter will ‘shadow’ a more experienced member of staff for a number of sessions until they feel ‘ready’ to undertake their own session. Whilst a high level of customer service is demanded now by sites, and there is a need for enhanced communication skills, the potential value of interactions with interpreters is so high that the doing of history needs to made more complex than the possession of a body of ‘facts’. Performance training would greatly enhance the third person performance.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See pp. 44, 61 and 109 for discussion of the child-focus of many museum performances.

<sup>63</sup> See for example 179-180 for discussion of metonymy in relation to apprentice children on the apprentice house tour at Quarry Bank Mill.

<sup>64</sup> See particularly *Chapter 3 – The Demonstration* for the communicative potential of industrial museum objects, the juxtaposition of visual/sensory/spoken narratives, the presence and liveness of machinery, and the shifting sense of agency between subject and object.

<sup>65</sup> See page 229.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix a) Schedule of Interview Questions**

#### **Questions for curators**

What is your role here?

How do the curators work with other staff in the museum?

In an ideal world, how would you like interpreters to present history?

How do you ensure historical accuracy?

What does living history/live interpretation mean to you?

#### **Questions for Managers**

What is your role here?

How did you come to be doing this form of interpretation here?

How has it developed?

What are the goals for interpretation?

How do you interpret the different kinds of spaces here?

How do you feel about historical accuracy?

How do you control the information your staff give to visitors?

How do you train staff?

What's the impact you want your overall interpretation to have on visitors?

What do you want the visitor to go away with?

#### **Questions for Interpreters**

Can you describe your role at the museum?

How did you come to be doing this job?

What is your aim for the performances you do?

How is the role of the living history interpreter regarded by other staff in the museum?

How did you train to do this job?

How do you let the audience know what their role is?

How do you get the audience to interact with you?

What do you want the audience to get out of it?

How do you develop the character role you play (for first person interpreters), or how do you find out about the people you refer to in your workshops (for third person interpreters)?

(For third person interpreters ) Do you ever slip into character?

How real do you try and make it – do you want the audience to suspend their belief think that they are in a different time period?

How do you balance historical authenticity with entertaining people?

How do you use the space you work in?

### **Focus group questions for Teachers (NCMME)**

When did you last visit the museum?

How do you feel about the current underground tour?

What is the most important part of the underground tour?

How could the current tour be improved?

How important is the interaction with an ex-miner?

What are your educational objectives for this visit?

### **Underground Visitors (NCMME)**

What was it like for you being underground?

did it feel like being in a real mine?

did you think that was an accurate portrayal of the past?

Was it like you expected it to be?

Did anything surprise you about what you learnt down there?

Do you have a connection with the mining industry?

Did you know you were being shown round by an ex-miner?

(if they did) How did that come across?

How did he do his tour?

Was there anything particularly memorable about this tour?

### **Visitors Quarry Bank Mill**

Did you enjoy your tour?

Have you ever been here before?

How do you feel about being shown round by a guide?

How does that help you appreciate or imagine the history of the time and the place?

Did history seem real here?

Was it being in the house that did that or was it the guide?

### **Living History workshops**

What did you think of the presentation today?

What did you expect this was going to be like before it started?

Did anything surprise you?

Was it realistic?

Did it remind you of anything?

Do you have a connection with this industry?

Do you think it's a good way of learning about history?

Is there anything you didn't like about it?

What does this add to your experience of this place?

### **Miner guides**

Can you describe your job?

How did you come to be working here?

What do you think your role is here at the museum?

How do other staff perceive you at the museum?

How do you feel about doing this job?

What do you think the most important thing or fact is that you're trying to get across to people?

Do you have a particular way of doing your tour?

What do you think it feels like for visitors coming underground?

Do you think it's a realistic picture of mining you give people?

How much of your working life do you put into your tour?

How did you learn to do tours?

Have you changed how you've done the tour over time?

**Focus Group with curatorial staff at NCMME**

What does authenticity mean to you?

Are there different kinds of authenticity?

Much of this site is how it was when it closed as a mine and some of it is reconstructed and so it seems to be important that it seems to be a real working mine, so how do you maintain that balance between being authentic and seeming authentic ?

Thinking about how the museum staff use objects to demonstrate or to re-enact or within a living history performance - Do you think it changes the status of objects when they are being used?

How do you represent or reproduce real past lives through the vehicle of real people? Is it convincing?

## **Appendix b) Observation Schedule**

Date:

Time:

Place:

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### **Event**

Description of event; performance space; who performs; temporal boundaries

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### **Narrative**

Style of narrative; interactivity; role and characterisation

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### **Audience**

Position; behaviour; interactions